

# The Democratic Society Movement, TEV-DEM



## A Weekly News Bulletin From Rojava 15—22 June

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## **HRW: Turkish-backed rebels seizing Kurdish civilians' property in Afrin**

Turkish-backed armed groups have seized, looted and destroyed property of Kurdish civilians after seizing control of Afrin region in March, Human Rights Watch said.

The rights group HRW said in a report on Thursday that the Turkish-backed groups in the Free Syrian Army (FSA) had installed fighters and their families in residents' homes.

They have also destroyed and looted civilian properties without compensating the owners, HRW reported.



“Destroying or moving into the property of people who have had to flee the fighting is not what the Free Syrian Army fighters should be doing when they move into an area,” said Priyanka Motaparthi, acting emergencies director at Human Rights Watch.

“Instead of protecting vulnerable civilians’ rights, these fighters are perpetuating a cycle of abuse.”

Human Rights Watch called on the FSA groups in Afrin to compensate displaced residents whose property have seized, looted or destroyed.

“Those who made the decision to take over Afrin also took on the responsibility of ensuring that both the residents of Afrin, and people there who have been displaced elsewhere have basic shelter in a way that doesn’t infringe on either of those groups’ rights,” Motaparthi said.

“So far it seems that they are failing to do the right thing by either group,” Motaparthi added.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nrttv.com/EN/News.aspx?id=1908&MapID=3>

## **Reconstruction of Raqqa is progressing**

Raqqa Civil Council's Reconstruction Committee continues its work to cleanse the ruins of the war. As part of this work, al-Qitar Street and al-Tawasuhayah district are being cleaned and damaged bridges repaired.



An observer of the reconstruction committee, Sedam El Şihab, reported on the progress of the work: "The debris is currently being removed from the city and used to repair the Sawamah and Raqqa al-Samrah bridges."

Meanwhile, 28 main roads have been cleared of debris and rubble, said El-Şihab. Of the total 16 areas in the city, so far eleven have been cleared. Reconstruction work in Raqqa, according to his information, is progressing at full steam, but is hampered again and again due to the lack of materials for reconstruction in the city.<sup>2</sup>

## **Culture clash: Campaign in Afrin tells women to cover up**

Earlier this year, the tree-lined streets of Afrin in northern Syria witnessed ferocious battles and a weeks-long offensive.

Today, three months after hostilities ended, they are subject to a new conflict – one based on morals, religion and women's dress.

Across the city, posters have been erected instructing women to take the Islamic veil and wear modest clothing, a shock for many residents for whom such religious conservatism is a departure from Afrin's more secular tradition.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://anfenglish.com/news/reconstruction-of-raqqa-is-progressing-27456>

"I have seen signs in the main streets and side streets calling on women to take the veil and wear loose clothing. It is disagreeable for us in Afrin," Elizabeth, a Kurdish resident of Afrin, tells Middle East Eye.



Elizabeth runs a cosmetics shop in the city, which for much of the Syrian war felt relative security under the control of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG).

This all changed in January, when the Turkish military and some 25,000 allied Free Syrian Army rebels began a two-month operation known as "Operation Olive Branch" to take the city...<sup>3</sup>

## **Dashisha town cleared of ISIS**

YPG-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) launched an offensive in the scope of Operation Cizîre Storm on June 3 to liberate the Dashisha town and surrounding villages from ISIS.

The fighters have cleared the town of ISIS mercenaries on Sunday and started mine clearing efforts after securing the control over the area.

ISIS mercenaries were using Dashisha as their base after the heavy defeats they have suffered in Syria and Iraq. Several ISIS leaders were deployed in the town which, thanks to its position, was serving as a major stronghold for the gangs at Iraqi border.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/culture-clash-campaign-syrias-liberal-afrin-tells-women-cover-328145705>

<sup>4</sup> <http://sdf-press.com/en/2018/06/sdf-liberate-the-town-of-dashishah-and-reach-3-km-from-the-iraqi-border/>

## **Women's Academy Şîlan opened in Kobanê**

Kobane has its Women's Academy. On Sunday, with an emotional ceremony the new building has been opened at the presence of some of those who contributed to the reformation of the building.

The Academy is named and dedicated to the first martyr from Kobane, who fell in Iraqi Kurdistan, Martyr Şîlan. It has been financed by the Italian Valdese church, Autonomous Province of Bolzano, Durango city council and the association Ponte Donna, as project's leading association.

The President of Ponte Donna Carla Centioni was in Kobane attending the opening, together with Patrizia Fiocchetto, journalist and writer.

The idea of the Academy had been first discussed in 2015, little after the liberation of Kobane, after a heroic resistance of the YPG and YPJ, the Kurdish People's and Women's Defense Units.



The Academy wants to be a space for women, where women can meet to share ideas, experiences, realities also from other countries.

The experience of women in Rojava is crucial for all women and their path to liberation has been and is inspiring for thousands of women around the world.<sup>5</sup>

## **Allegations of Turkish army entering Manbij a lie**

Manbij Military Council spokesman, Shervan Derwish, said that allegations that the Turkish army has entered the city are unfounded. Derwish also added that “Turkish forces have not stepped into Manbij or any of the fields where our forces are located”.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://anfenglishmobile.com/women/women-s-academy-silan-opened-in-kobane-27506>

The Manbij Military Council spokesman also said that “our forces are still confronting the mercenaries allied of the Turkish army”. Derwish confirmed that “at the same time, US troops are patrolling the areas where our forces are”.<sup>6</sup>

## **Attacks on pro-Syrian regime forces leave 52 dead**

According to a new balance sheet, at least 52 pro-regime fighters, most of whom foreigners, have died in the air attack carried out in the Deir-ez-Zor region, east of Syria.

The attackers targeted El Hari region, near the Iraqi border on Sunday night. The attack targeted troops fighting alongside the Syrian regime.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, at least 52 people, 30 Iraqis and 16 Syrians, died. Among the dead are Syrian troops and members of the militia. According to a previous news, it was reported that 38 people were killed.

It could not be established so far which force carried out the attack. Meanwhile the wounded were moved to the near city of Bukemal and to hospitals in Iraq. A military source at Deir ez-Zor told AFP that warplanes fired on the Iraq-Syria joint positions in Al-Hari.

The Syrian state television blamed the US-led international coalition for the attack, but an official from the coalition in the region said that no American no any other coalition aircraft has carried out air raids on Sunday night.

The same source stated that many Iranian-sponsored Iraqi Shiite militias and Hezbollah fighters are thought to be among the dead and wounded in the raid.<sup>7</sup>

## **US: 'Turkish soldiers will not go into Manbij'**

Despite the start of the implementation of the “roadmap” for the Syrian city of Manbij—endorsed in a June 4 meeting between US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, and Turkish Foreign Minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu—Turkish forces will not enter Manbij itself.

Col. Sean Ryan, Spokesman for the US-led coalition against the Islamic State (IS), formally known as Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), spoke to Pentagon reporters on Tuesday, via teleconference from Baghdad. “I can tell you that Turkish soldiers will not go into Manbij,” Ryan said.

“The Manbij Military Council is in control of all the area,” he affirmed, as he explained that Turkey would be conducting patrols “along the northern demarcation line,” that separates the

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<sup>6</sup> <http://hawarnews.com/en/haber/video-refuted-turkish-claims-to-enter-manbij-h2039.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://anfenglishmobile.com/rojawa/attacks-on-pro-syrian-regime-forces-leave-52-dead-27529>

territory held by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), America’s partner in the anti-IS war, and the territory held by the Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army (FSA.) ...<sup>8</sup>

## **Turkmen in Manbij condemn Turkish policies**

In a press statement released on Tuesday, members of the Turkmen Association in Manbij said the Turkish state’s occupation policy of the Syrian territory is actually ignoring all international laws.



The press statement was read in front of the association office by Fayiz Haydar, one of the association's executives. Haydar said: “As Turkmen people living in Manbij and its villages and as part of the Syrian peoples, we condemn the occupation of Syrian lands by the Turkish state. These military occupation and operations carried out by the Turkish state in fact violate all international laws”.

The statement continued: “We invite all freedom defenders and democratic circles to stand up and reject the policy by the Turkish state implemented in Jarablus, al-Bab, Azaz and Afrin”.

The Turkmen Association ended its statement by saying: “We know that many forces are trying to spread chaos in our lands by occupying Syrian territory. Turkey is the first of these forces and like other occupying forces are deepening the crisis in order to achieve their goals. We have faith in our force and our will of resistance to defend free life. We get this strength from the struggle and resistance of our martyrs.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/36469f4b-7743-424e-b130-ea861e66e371>

<sup>9</sup> <https://anfenglishmobile.com/rojava/turkmens-in-manbij-condemn-turkish-policies-27556>

## **Rojava refugees touched by visit with Angelina Jolie**

Syrian Kurdish refugees living in camps in the Kurdistan Region were touched by a visit from UNHCR special envoy and Hollywood star Angelina Jolie this weekend.

Ronya Mizgin is a single mother of five children. She said she and Jolie bonded as mothers.

“She asked me: ‘How do you raise your children? How do you make ends meet?’ I told her that I do not have anyone here, no one helps us. Even if God helps up, two of my children are ill. She prayed that God may help my children,” recalled Mizgin.

Halima Abdullah and her sisters impressed Jolie with their determination to continue their studies. “She was happy to see us pursuing our study despite our hardship,” said Abdullah.

Visits from officials and celebrities strengthen the hope of families living in refugee and IDP camps because even if they don’t see any immediate result, they still feel the world can hear their voice...<sup>10</sup>

## **Demo in Afrin against Turkish mercenaries’ violations**

Afrin people demonstrated today, condemning the practices and violations of the Turkish occupiers and their mercenaries, after the mercenaries killed Sami Qoj of the Arab Umayrat tribe on Wednesday morning.



On the details of the incident and the demonstration, a source from Afrin reported that a number of Turkish mercenaries broke into the house of Sami Qoj this morning at 5:00 am to steal his car of "service" type. When Sami tried to prevent them from stealing, they killed him and wounded his brother as they fired at them live ammunition.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/180620181>

The source added that the relatives of the victim took his body to the center of the so-called Turkish security in Afrin city, amid an atmosphere of public anger over the occurrence.

Hundreds of people from the Afrin canton of the Kurds and Arabs origins gathered in the city center, protesting against the crimes of the occupationist Turkish army and its jihadi mercenaries. They chanted slogans calling for an abrupt end to the occupation of their city.<sup>11</sup>

## **People of Manbij rallied to say no to Turkish occupation**

Thousands of citizens from Manbij and the surrounding villages joined a rally organized to reaffirm that “Manbij Democratic Autonomy Administration is the Representative of the People.”



Thousands of citizens from Tebqa and Raqqa also joined the march and rally. The march started at El-Beta Boulevard in the south of Manbij and went on to the city square.

Speaking at a rally in the city square, Manbij Military Council deputy General Commander, Abraham Al-Benawi, said that the lands they lived in would turn into shields and would never allow a Turkish state operation in the city. Al-Benawi also underlined that anyone who threatened Manbij security and peace should wait an answer.

Speaking on behalf of the tribes of Manbij, Ibrahim Shelas said: “We condemn the operation Turkey is carrying out on Syrian soil. We won’t allow - he said - Turkey to occupy not even a little bit of land. We will support the Manbij Military Council until the last drop of blood, like all our people.”

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<sup>11</sup> <http://hawarnews.com/en/haber/demo-in-afrin-against-turkish-mercenaries-violations-h2074.html>

Speaking on behalf of the Deir-Ezor Regional Administration, Xelef al-Esed said: “The people of Deir-Ezor is ready to fight against those who target the people of the region.” Al-Esed, called on the people to unite and defend their land and added: “We will fight against all threats to the security of the region.”<sup>12</sup>

## **US general visits Manbij, confirms support for MMC**

A top US General visiting the northern Syrian city of Manbij on Thursday confirmed Washington’s support for the local forces and administration.

“My goal for the visit here is to continue to demonstrate our very strong support for the Manbij Military Council and the civil administration of Manbij, and to visit the soldiers that we have here supporting them,” US Army General Joseph Votel told Kurdistan 24.

Votel is head of the US military’s Central Command, which is responsible for the Middle East and Central Asia, including Iran...

Accompanying Votel on tour at the Manbij market were local forces known as the Manbij Military Council, an SDF ally. On his tour, he confirmed the US troops are staying in Manbij...<sup>13</sup>

## **YPG-YPJ fighters in Afrin keep up resistance**

YPG-YPJ fighters are carrying out actions against the invading Turkish army and their mercenary allies within the scope of the second stage of Afrin Epochal Resistance.

According to the information received from sources in Afrin, the YPG-YPJ fighters have carried out sabotage actions against the occupiers in the neighborhood of Old Afrin in the city center, on Thursday.

Two Turkish soldiers and 5 mercenaries were killed while 6 invaders were wounded as a result of the action. The source pointed out that the actions carried out by Kurdish fighters have spread fear within the ranks of the invading Turkish army and its mercenary allies.

The same source also added that the occupiers opened fire and threw explosive devices at civilian settlements.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <https://anfenglishmobile.com/news/people-of-manbij-rallied-to-say-no-to-turkish-occupation-27576>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/5838e30e-636b-421d-a5e1-5ed869362186>

<sup>14</sup> <http://hawarnews.com/en/haber/afrin-7-turkish-elements-its-gangs-killed-in-unique-ops-h2088.html>