

Information Center of Afrin Resistance



Weekly News Bulletin from Afrin

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The Information Center of Afrin Resistance is providing direct information from the inside of Afrin. Since the 26th January 2018 we report up-to-date about the invasion and war crimes of the Turkish state and the resistance of the people in Afrin.

This is the weekly summary of the developments in and around Afrin.

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Introduction

With the defeat of the IS in Syria and especially after the liberation of Raqqa in October 2017, the Turkish state intensified its threats and attacks on the Democratic Confederation of Northern Syria. On this background the Turkish occupation war on Afrin started the 20th January 2018 violating international law and the sovereignty of its neighbour country. The Turkish army has launched this war in cooperation with jihadist groups of the FSA ranks. Many of them are former Al-Qaida or IS members.^[1]

Last Week's Developments inside Afrin

Since 55 days the people have been resisting against the second biggest NATO army. Though a 30-days ceasefire had been announced by the United Nation Security Council on February 24th for all Syria, the Turkish army has intensified its attacks on Afrin's population day by day. In total more than 232 civilians have been killed by the Turkish aggressions.^[2] Also after the Security Council reiterated its call for implementation of resolution 2401 on March 7th, no change in the line of Turkey could be noted. Instead Erdogan stressed once more that the Turkish army will continue the attacks with the aim of ethnic cleansing and occupying the whole region of Afrin - including the city centre.

War and Humanitarian Situation

The situation in Afrin has become even more tense and extremely dangerous during the last week. In the North and East of the city one arm of the Turkish army reached some 2 km close to the city. The Meydanke dam, which holds the main water resource for the whole region, has been attacked again and the road was cut. Therefore since March 8th the whole population of Afrin has remained without water.^[3] Since March 6th the telephone signal had been cut-off due to the destruction of antennas by the Turkish army. There is a continuous shortcoming of child nutrition and medical supplies as well as of bread, as bakeries have become a main target as well.

These developments have to be regarded on the background that due to the displacement from their villages the majority of Afrin region's population has gathered inside the city. Because of the continuous attacks and fights, they were forced to leave their homes and seeking shelter and refuge inside the center. Every day hundreds or even thousands of people from the outskirts reached Afrin city center. The city became extremely crowded, sheltering more than 850.000 people. Several families are living in the same house.

Due to intensifying shelling and bombings of the town centre a part of the population also has left Afrin city and moved to the Canton of Shehba, which is located in the South East of Afrin Canton and is part of the Federation of Northern Syria as well.

Since March 10 the Turkish army started directly heavy aggressions against the city center and its population. There are constantly several drones circling over the whole area. This gives evidence to the fact, that these attacks on the civilian populated city centre are all well coordinated and no target is being hit by "accident". Through continuous air-strikes and heavy artillery attacks the Turkish army tries to push the resisting population out of town. In the night of March 15, civilians' houses in Afrin city have been directly attacked, resulting to more than 11 dead and many injured inhabitants. The municipality in the center has been destroyed by bombardment as well. During the

hours of writing this bulletin, there are many air-strikes and shelling directly targeting at the city, hitting especially Mahmoudiye and Eshrefiye neighbourhoods. It is still unclear, how many people have been injured or killed by these attacks.

Ambulances of the humanitarian NGO Kurdish Red Crescent, that tried to evacuate 5 killed civilians in Marate village were attacked by Turkish warplanes on March 12th, too.^[4]

Also a group of civilians that tried to go back to their homes became a direct target for the Turkish army, resulting in at least 9 killed in Bedina village.

Furthermore, in the last days a lot of videos recorded by the Turkey-backed jihadist forces have been spread through the internet. They are openly stating that if the “infidel Kurds“ would not convert to their islamist believes, they will behead them all.^[5] Reportedly also a known IS commander was killed by the SDF in Shera district.^[6] This proves once more the background of the Turkish state’s proxy forces.

What we are witnessing is a dangerous threat of genocide on the multicultural and multireligious population of Afrin.

By these means the Turkish state is preparing for its plan to change the demography of the region by settling people from other parts of Syria and families of the jihadist fighters in Afrin, promising them Turkish nationality, “new houses” and money.

Resistance of people in Afrin

Although many people left to Shehba Canton, still around 500.000 people of Afrin are staying inside the city. They refuse to leave their land, knowing that once they would retreat, the Turkish state will occupy it and they will never be able to come back.

The people of Afrin and the solidarity convoys that came from all parts of Northern Syria, as well as all Kurdish regions in Turkey, Iraq and Iran and internationalist volunteers as well, carried out many “human shield“ actions. These actions are highly visible big gatherings to protect villages and neighbourhoods from attacks by the Turkish army and the land from occupation. But still the Turkish army continued to bomb the areas in with mass protests were held.

At the same time the arriving convoys, are proving the possibility to reach Afrin while the Turkish state tries to spread the information that the city would have been already completely surrounded.

In order to organize food and water supply for the population, the democratic Self-Administration and communities of Afrin are organizing the supply through trucks, going to all the neighbourhoods.

Furthermore many people are donating blood in order to help the injured people.

Solidarity with Afrin

During the last week on all continents all over the world protests in solidarity with Afrin have been rising in number and quality. Different actions like marches, blockades, banner drops, paintings and hunger-strikes have been carried out in order to raise the attention on the threat of genocide in Afrin and to support the resistance. Also in the Kurdish region of Iran people went on the streets despite state repression.

On occasion of the International Women's Day a women's convoy went to Afrin and formed part of many human shield actions and joint the March 8 demonstration. This set an important sign of women's solidarity under all conditions to the whole world.

Two more solidarity convoys from Cizire, as well as a delegation of 25 representatives of different political parties and organizations from Southern Kurdistan made their way to Afrin to support the resistance.

Statements and Analysis

In general we can see that the main conflict between USA and Russia influences the positions of all actors on the level of states. More and more a tendency that these power want to divide Syria between themselves becomes obvious, taking the Euphrates as new border. Although the legitimacy of the war on Afrin is being questioned internationally on many levels and openly war crimes and murder of civilians are being known, no state or state union attempts to intervene.

At a press briefing of the US State Department on March 8th, it was stated once more, that the SDF has been a tremendous fighting force, without which it would not have been possible to achieve successes against the IS like in Raqqa. ^[7] But there is neither any approach of fighting IS forces among the Turkish lines, nor fighting against the same practices of killing civilians carried out by the Turkish army itself. Only one commentary was made on March 12th, saying that that the US would intervene if the UN would not. This was directly answered by Russia with a threat of counter attack in such a case. This shows once more that the foreseen area of the US is situated in the East of Euphrates, while Russia already defines the West of Euphrates as its territory.

The scientific service of the German parliament stated that they would have serious doubts on the argumentation of Ankara stating that they would have attacked Afrin due to "reasons of protection": "There is no concrete proof for an armed attack that would legitimize the right for defence." ^[8] Still on March 15th, once more the German government approved weapon exports from Germany to Turkey.

The French Foreign Minister declared that the aggressions of Turkey are unlawful. Further Ex-president Hollande demanded a No Fly Zone for Afrin. But on practical level so far no steps have been taken.

The Mercosur Parliament declared its solidarity with the populations affected by the attacks of the Turkish army and jihadist militias. It called for the cessation of the attacks and the closure of the airspace.

Rami Abdulrahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, stated that in case that the UN would not intervene to stop the killing of civilians by the Turkish army, the situation will end up in a big massacre and humanitarian catastrophe. Furthermore the SOHR blames Turkey for having pushed Jihadists into Syria.

Also Syria's Ambassador at the United Nations, Bashar Jaafari, said that the Turkish government contributed to arming terrorists and financing their activities. Further he reminded that a camp for their military training was established on Turkey's territory, and their access to chemical weapons was facilitated.

A symbolical joint motion for a resolution of the European Parliament has called on the Turkish government to withdraw its troops from Afrin and to stop the operation. Serious worries about the escalating situation in Afrin were expressed.

Today on March 15th in Paris a people's tribunal started to uncover war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against Kurds by the Turkish state under the Erdogan government. In this framework also Turkey's war on Afrin is a matter of the procedures.

In general, we are facing international inaction against the war of Turkey on Afrin and the unprovoked invasion of a NATO member into the territory of another country. This continuing approach can only be evaluated as an acceptance of these violation of international laws. While people and civil society around the world speak up for Afrin, states are ignoring international law, human rights or values of humanity and democracy.

Sources and Further Information

[1] Dossier: <https://icafrinresist.wordpress.com/2018/02/06/which-are-the-jihadist-groups-attacking-afrin-and-the-forces-behind-them/> ;

Dossier: <https://icafrinresist.files.wordpress.com/2018/02/radical-factions-and-isis-members-participating-in-afrin-invasion.pdf>

[2] According to Afrin Canton Health Council declaration on March 12th, during the 52 days since Turkey's launch of the invasion operation against the canton, 232 civilians have been massacred, among them 35 children and 29 women, while 668 civilians, including 90 children and 100 women, have been wounded. ;

List of Heyva Sor, Killed civilians between February 24th and March 6th:

<https://de.scribd.com/document/373596399/Kantonun-Verileri-Ate%C5%9Fkesten-Sonra>

[3] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-rv0H_yrzQ

[4] Reported by Kurdish red crescent Co-chair Jamila Hame

[5] https://twitter.com/Mekut_Mallet/status/972962491788492801;

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-civil-war-assad-regime-turkey-afrin-kurds-eastern-ghouta-us-allies-militia-a8252456.html>

[6] <https://twitter.com/kurdistannews24/status/972877023722049536>

[7] State Department Press Briefing 8/3/2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwzinahA4-w>

[8] <https://www.bundestag.de/blob/546854/07106ad6d7fc869307c6c7495eda3923/wd-2-023-18-pdf-data.pdf>