

Information Center of Afrin Resistance



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AFRIN
RESISTANCE

Weekly News Bulletin from Afrin

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04.05.2018 - 10.05.2018

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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Contact:

Email: ic.afrinresistance@gmail.com

Tel: 00963-998113029

The Developments in Afrin and Northern Syria

4th May – 10th May, 2018

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. Since the beginning of March, all districts and the city centre of Afrin had been under heavy bombardments, shelling and drone surveillance by the Turkish army targeting especially civilians. On March 18th more than 200,000 people left the town centre which was evacuated in order to avoid a physical genocide. Since then the majority of refugees is staying in the Shehba region without security guarantee nor international support.

In this new phase, the confrontation between the international powers and their interests is increasing all over Syria.

Last week's Developments inside Afrin

After 111 days of resistance against the second biggest army of the NATO, hundreds of people from Afrin Canton are still displaced and are facing difficult conditions. The Turkish army and its FSA allies are implementing ethnic cleansing, assimilation and colonisation policies, preventing the population to return to their villages and continuing preparations to add the region Afrin to Turkey's state territory. The resistance of YPG-YPJ forces in the all districts of Canton Afrin carries on, as well as the resistance of the displaced people from Afrin in Shehba Canton.

Afrin

The occupation of the city of Afrin by the Turkish army and FSA forces has been followed by the policy of Turkification to annex the region to Turkey. Before Afrin, similar processes have been put into practice by Turkey in other occupied areas such as Jarablus and al-Bab [1]. Afrin Canton's people suffer from killing, abduction and torture by the Turkish army and its jihadist allies, coinciding with continuous demographical change. Local sources in Afrin city report that the women are forced to wear burqas and they can't go outside without a man [2]. The occupying forces mark houses of families accused of having connections to the autonomous self-administration. Approaching these houses will be punished by the FSA groups. In Sherawa district FSA forces kidnapped several men from Basoute village. Among them, Battal Zaki Hamsho was taken to an unknown destination where he was tortured and later released. Adel Hassan Khaled was tortured 20 days after he was kidnapped by FSA group Liwa al-Fatah's militiamen [3]. Sefqan Xelîl (23 years old) was kidnapped by the Turkish-backed Hamza Division and tortured for 40 days. They asked his

family a ransom of \$200,000 and threatened to kill him if they didn't pay. They finally paid 12,000 for his release [4]. On March 23rd, the FSA forces have kidnapped the citizen Subhî Nasir. Now, ask 4 million LS to his family as ransom to liberate him. The Turkish army and FSA forces turned the school of Hekitche village (Shiye district) into a large prison to detain the people of four villages: Hekitche, Meraniye, Senare and Anqele [5].

According to the USA State Department, 140,000 people have been displaced from Afrin, and they are not being allowed back into their homes. Approximately 71,000 people were transported to the North-West of Syria since mid-March from Eastern Ghouta and Eastern Qalamoun [6]. These circumstances are also confirmed to the UN by reports saying that Turkish troops are preventing refugees from returning to their homes in Afrin. Several hundreds of Palestinian refugees who fled the regime's assault on the Yarmouk Camp to rebel-held southern Damascus have now been forcibly displaced to IDP camps in northern Aleppo and Afrin [7].

On May 5th, people of Kûra village in Jindirese district protested against the occupying Turkish army and FSA forces.

On May 2nd, YPG/YPJ killed Jamal al-Zakhlool, who was responsible for organizing the placement of people brought to Afrin from various places in Syria. Al-Zakhlool was also tasked by MIT with establishing internal security forces, civilian administration and courts in the occupied Afrin. The action against the vehicle of Al-Zakhlool was carried out in the area between Kurzele and Basoute villages and resulted in his death. Three more FSA militiamen were killed and two military vehicles were destroyed [8].

Shehba and Northern Syria

The displaced people from Afrin still suffer difficult conditions, especially regarding medical health care. There are a lot of diseases, injuries and inflammations, which can't be treated because of the poor capacities and resources.

In Fafine area, 3092 persons are living in Berxwedan Camp. They all are people from Afrin who were forced to flee their villages. The 650 tents are occupied by 670 families, among them 755 children under 10 years old and 990 women. In the area, the health center is the main venue for ill people but only a small amount of volunteers and 4 doctors work there to cope with the needs of the people [9]. Sabah Zinal, a 62-year-old woman from the countryside of Jinderese, lost her life in regime held village of Nubl, because of the lack of medical care and the absence of role the international organization to relief displaced people from Afrin [10]. A further serious problem is the big amount of mines in the area, which are remains of the occupation by the IS. There are continuously mines exploding, injuring or killing civilians. While he was clearing mines in the Shehba Canton to make the zone safe for the displaced people of Afrin the YPG fighter Reşîd Zîron lost his life [11]. Also the 16-year-old Hisen Mihemed Şexo from Afrin suffered critical injuries

after the explosion of a mine planted by FSA forces in Ahdas village of Fafin district in Shehba Canton [12].

The Women's House in Ain Issa opened its doors in order to support oppressed women and to stand up against the masculine mentality that imposes itself upon women [13].

In Raqqa, bodies are still extracted from mass graves. A special team linked to the Reconstruction Committee of Raqqa Civil Assembly is continuing the work of excavation and identification of the bodies of this civilians buried by IS. According to Ronahi TV, 750 bodies have been extracted up to May 8th.

On May 5th, in the city of Al-Bab protesters gathered amid a general strike on the market against Turkish backed groups (linked to Al-Hamza Divison), because, according to local sources "they broke out into the city hospital during night and killed medical staff". During the protest Turkish soldiers opened fire on the crowd [14]. Al- Bab seized by Turkish army and FSA forces in 2016 is still in a state of instability due to the arbitrary arrests, thefts and attacks on civilian property by some Turkey-backed military groups. According to "Syrian Civil War Map", fightings erupted between Ahrar al-Sharqiya and other Turkish-backed rebels in the Al-Bab city on May 6th. They resulted in several injured and dead among which there were also civilians [15-16].

Turkey-backed militias continue to split. Two dissidents surrendered to Manbij Military Council and reported the extent of mistreatment and torture they receive from the Turkish intelligence, who incite them to fight against the Syrian regime. Moreover they asserted that Turkey backed militia rely on smuggling, banditry and kidnapping to make money [17].

On May 5th, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) scored a major advance against Daish (IS) in the southeastern countryside of the Al-Hasakah Governorate. After intense clashes with the IS forces near the Iraqi border the SDF managed to capture at least three towns (Al-Dahou, Al-Hassou, and Hassoun Basha) in the Badiya region. Under the same circumstances, Iraqi warplanes targeted IS bases in al-Dashisha area, inside Syria, following an order by the Prime Minister of Iraq.

On May 6th, Syrian Democratic Forces captured Salhya town in the Northern countryside of Deir ez-Zor, after Syrian government forces withdrew.

Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran

On May 2nd, a team of experts from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons have returned from a mission to the Syrian town of Douma, where they took samples and interviewed witnesses to determine whether banned munitions were used in an attack last month.

On May 9th, the spokesperson of Manbij Military Council stated that U.S. forces set up a new base in Manbij (Northern Syria) some three months ago after Turkish threats on the region [18].

According to Stockholm Center for Freedom, there are 192 journalists arrested, 142 journalists wanted, 62 journalists convicted by Erdoğan regime in Turkey up to May 8th. On May 3rd, the Human Rights Association's (İHD) Istanbul branch released a report on violations of rights in the

sector of education. The number of dismissed teachers has reached 34,000, that of academics 5,882 and university personnel 1,372, as part of a post-coup crackdown conducted by the Turkish government [19]. Due to these circumstances, HDP Foreign Relations Department invited delegations of observers to the Presidential and General elections in Turkey on June 24th this year [20].

According to Jin News, Êzidîs who were forcibly taken out from the refugee camp in Diyarbakır province to AFAD camp located in Mardin province, have been constantly subjected to hate speech by camp staff and officials. They are only allowed to leave the camp two days a week. They have difficulties to be attended by a doctor. There is few medicine available and in the camp they have to pay to get medicine [21].

The 3rd of May marks the beginning of the Dêrsim genocide: under Atatürk's command 70,000 Alevi Kurds were massacred and more than 100,000 were deported in 1937-1938.

On May 5th, new morning detentions took place in Istanbul as a result of police house raids: 7 people, including Peace Mothers and HDP Party Council member have been detained. The names of the detained are : Asiye Kolçak, Fatma Kaya, Canşah Çelik, Ayten Ay, Zeynep Calihan, Zübeyde Akdağ and D.O. Turkish President R.T. Erdogan told in the meeting with party members that he was willing to step aside once the people told him "enough". Prompting opponents to propel the word in Turkish to the top of worldwide Twitter trends: "T A M A M" (OK in Turkish) reached number one in worldwide trends on Twitter. [22]

According to local sources, aircrafts of the Turkish army bombed Kevot Hill's vicinity near Lêlikan Hill of Bradost area in South Kurdistan / Kurdish Iraq on May 7th.

The parliamentary elections in Iraq will be held on May 12th. Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister, Nechirvan Barzani, set the date of the next elections for the Kurdistan Region's parliament. The elections will be held, on September 30th of this year.

An armed confrontation occurred following an attack by IS fighters on Iran-backed Shia Hashd al-Shaabi, in the vicinity of the towns of Suleiman Begg and Jabara. On May 8th, ISIS group attacked the joint Iraq and Germiyan Asayish point in Khanaqin's Gulala town with heavy weapons. Clashes broke out when security forces retaliated the IS attack.

The Iranian forces have killed more than 90 horses since the beginning of the strike in Rojhilat in order to attack the Kurdish protesters. In fact, the horses are important to move goods through the Iraq-Iran border.

Solidarity for Afrin

On May 3rd, German women's delegation reached Northern Syria to support the resistance in Afrin and the campaign #WomenRiseUpForAfrin launched by Kongra Star. On May 6th, the delegation reached Shehba, where they observed the situation in Berxwedan Camp (Fafine) and meet responsible of Women's and Health Organisations. During a press conference on May 8th, German women's delegation said: "we condemn the cooperation of NATO states like Germany with the Turkish state. We support the demand of Afrin's people to return to their homes in Afrin safely. As

health care workers we observe an urgent need of sustainable health care and infrastructures, especially for women and children in Shehba. We demand the recognition of the displaced people from Afrin as refugees by the international institutions as UNHCR. And there is an urgent imperative to stop any weapon supply to the Turkish state.” [23]

On May 5th, in Düsseldorf (Germany) a big demonstration took place against the German weapon company “Rheinmetall” which is producing the Leopard tanks used in Afrin. On May 7th, a demonstration has been held against weapon producer Rheinmetall in Berlin. The slogan of the demonstrators was "Rheinmetall out of Rojava! - No deals with Erdogan". In Hamburg (Germany), a large mural says "solidarity is a weapon" for the YPJ at Hafensstraße St. Pauli.

In Buenos Aires, a commemoration to Alina Sanchez (Legerîn Çiya) has been held in a Workers association [24].

Statements and analysis

In the conference held due to May 3 World Press Freedom Day at the European Parliament, the European Parliament President Antonio Tajani addressing the topic said: "without an immediate radical change, there is no place for this Turkey in our Union" [25]. On May 9th, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said “It is difficult to imagine how credible elections can be held in an environment where dissenting views and challenges to the ruling party are penalized so severely” [26]. On May 5th, in his first interview with international media since being announced as candidate by the Peoples Democratic Party (HDP), Selahattin Demirtaş said: “It is impossible for there to be fair elections in such an environment” [27].

On May 6th, Arabic's clans sheikhs in Raqqa city said that the council formed by the Turkish occupation forces in Afrin is illegal, because the original residents are not in Afrin. They also denounced the demographic change carried out by the Turkish State. Moreover, notable of clans al-Matyaf Ali al-Ali said: " The Turkish state is the Ottoman Empire occupied Afrin city because it is a strategic location in North Syria and it aims to spread the terrorist thought in all Syria." [28]

As well, the secretary of the Leftist Kurdish Party in Syria, Mohammed Mousa denounce the Turkish occupation in Başûr Kurdistan and the silence of the Iraqi government. "It is shameful to penetrate the state borders of another state without the latter even to denounce the matter." [29] UNODC Goodwill Ambassador Nadia Murad criticizes the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) for not rebuilding Sinjar. She said "Both of the governments are punishing Yazidis and playing politics with their lives by putting a blockade on Yazidis areas, putting restrictions on the work of NOGs that provide services in Sinjar". [30]

The Iraqi government officially renewed its demand that Turkish troops must leave Iraqi soil. The Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari also said that he expressed his country's opposition to Iraqi soil being used for attacks against neighboring countries [31].

Tensions between U.S and Turkey continue as Turkish Foreign Minister attacked the United States for slamming the Turkish policy of demographic change in the occupied Afrin canton: “The Spokesperson of the US State Department, under the influence of the smear campaign of the PYD/YPG terrorist organization and by referring to unverified assumptions, has made an

unfortunate statement about the Operation Olive Branch” [32]. As well, Turkey risks U.S. Sanctions over ‘hostage’ American Priest. With a judge ordering Presbyterian Pastor back to jail, U.S. officials are considering retaliation against what they see as a policy of “hostage diplomacy” by Turkish President Erdogan [33]. Moreover, the White House wants to hold off on U.S. weapons sales to NATO ally Turkey until a report is created to analyse worsening tensions between Washington and Ankara [34]. However, the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Turkey would launch cross-border offensives in Syria after snap polls on June 24 [35], because the neo-othman expansionist project is an important part of Erdogan electoral propaganda.

The US-Turkey tensions mirrors the Russia-US strategical confrontation over Syria [36]. The US decision to withdraw from the nuclear deal with Iran could destabilize the situation even further. This decision has been taken under Israel influence, in order to weaken Iran. Many contradictions among different regional and global powers are increasing in Middle-East and Syria could be the main stage in which a new phase of the conflict will take place [37].

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