

The file of Religions and nationalities in Afrin



Body of Foreign Affairs – Afrin Region

A Glimpse of Afrin Region:



Afrin is 63 kilometers from Aleppo. It is located in the mountainous area of north-west of Syria. It is bordered on the western side by the “Deep Plain” near the Iskandron and the Black River. It is bordered on the north by the railway line that passes from Midan Akbis to Kilis. In the eastern side is Izaz Plain, and the mountain of Samaan from the south.

In the region of Afrin the majority are Kurds with a population density of about half a million people, according to statistics in 2010.

And bounded by 366 villages and 7 areas. These are as follows:

- Bulbl
- Rajo
- Sharan
- Mabatli
- Sheikh Al - Hadid
- Centre of Afrin
- Gindiris

The Afrin region consists of different nationalities, religions and sects of Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Armenians, Yazidis, and many sects and races. There is fear among some minorities in the city of genocide of the extremist Islamic factions led by the Turkish occupation by bombing mosques, churches and places of worship. The Councils and Churches of Afrin appealed to the international community to put pressure on the Turkish occupation to stop the barbaric shelling of civilians and to stop the massacres of Christians, Yazidis and all civilians in the city of Afrin, where the Rev. Valentine Hanan, the priest of the Church of the “Good Shepherd” in Afrin, called the international community to stop the Turkish shelling the city, and protection from Islamic factions that threaten them by killing.

نداء عاجل
 نحن كنيسة الراعي الصالح في مدينة عفرين ندعوا ونطلب حماية دولية عاجلة على المؤمنين في عفرين
 ووقف هذا القصف التركي واننا في هذه اللحظة نتعرض للقصف العنيف والفصائل الاسلامية تتوعد لدخول
 المنطقة
 ونحن كنيسة نطلب من الرب اولاً الحماية ومن ثم الاخوة للصلاة والمساعدة .
 كنيسة الراعي الصالح في عفرين
 عدد المؤمنين في كنيسة الراعي الصالح ١٩٠ عائلة
 عدد المؤمنين في كنيستنا في راجو ٤٥ عائلة
 عدد المؤمنين في كنيستنا في معيطلي ١٥ عائلة
 القس فالنتين حنان



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According to statistics in 1998, Arabs constitute 1% of the Afrin population. Most of them settled as Arab employees to manage the area. Some of them benefited from the Agrarian Reform Law. They were displaced from Iskenderun after being separated from Syria in 1938 as families of 'Ajan, Sharkhosh, Harkok, Qit and others. And most of the Arabs of Afrin are from the tribe of (Amirat, Ajeel, Poptush, Bubana, Buaasi).

The people of the Na'im and al-Jays tribes have merged with the Kurds. The Arabs, most of them living in the villages of Basutah, Bablet, Kawkabeh, Tel Hamo, Kafir, Feririya, Nisriya and Deir Balut. all of these villages are mixed and there is no any clear Arab village.

In this way, the percentage of Arab citizens was about 1% of the population of the region. Those who came to the region of Afrin (Jiyayeh Kurminj / Kurd's Mount) after the annexation of the region to the Syrian state formed by the Sykes-Picot agreement that divided the Middle East almost 100 years ago until 2011, before the Syrian Revolution against Assad's regime.

However, after the outbreak of the revolution, the population of the Arabs from other governorates, cities and villages, which witnessed bloody events towards the Afrin region, became more and more, leading to a 15% increase in the percentage of Arabs in the center of Afrin.



Arabs live in the villages of (Anab, Maryamin, Shuraga, Shaykh al-Arab, Kewkaba and other villages in the Chumah Plain). others live in Kurdish villages for the purpose of grazing sheep and livestock or forworking in agricultural lands. And others are not belonging to the mentioned tribes but they originally are from the city of Darat Azza and the city of Nobil and Zahra that adjacent to the region of Afrin.

The newcomer Arabs occupy three positions in the Executive Council in the Afrin region. They are divided into the Presidency of the Agriculture and Transport Bodies and the Deputy Chairman of the Executive Council. The Legislative Council also includes 15 members through the Omayrat and Alubana tribes represented in all Bodies and institutions in Afrin region. According to Deputy Chairman of the Executive Council and representative of the Arab component in Self-Administration, "Abdel Hamid Mustafa, that " the Executive Council is working to provide services to all without any discrimination or distinction. "

(Christianity):

There are currently 250 Christian families in the region of Afrin, their following numbers according the church they relate to:

- In frin city, The Church of the Good Shepherd, their number is 190 families.
- In the church of Rajo town, their number is 45 families.
- In the church of Mubatli, their number is 15 families.

Thus, the number of Christians in the area of Afrin and its surrounding areas are 250 Christian families of monks, children and women, according to the Evangelical Christian Union Church in Afrin.

This is one of the holy places in the area of Afrin the Christians visit to pray in it on many occasions:

Qaziqli Shrine:

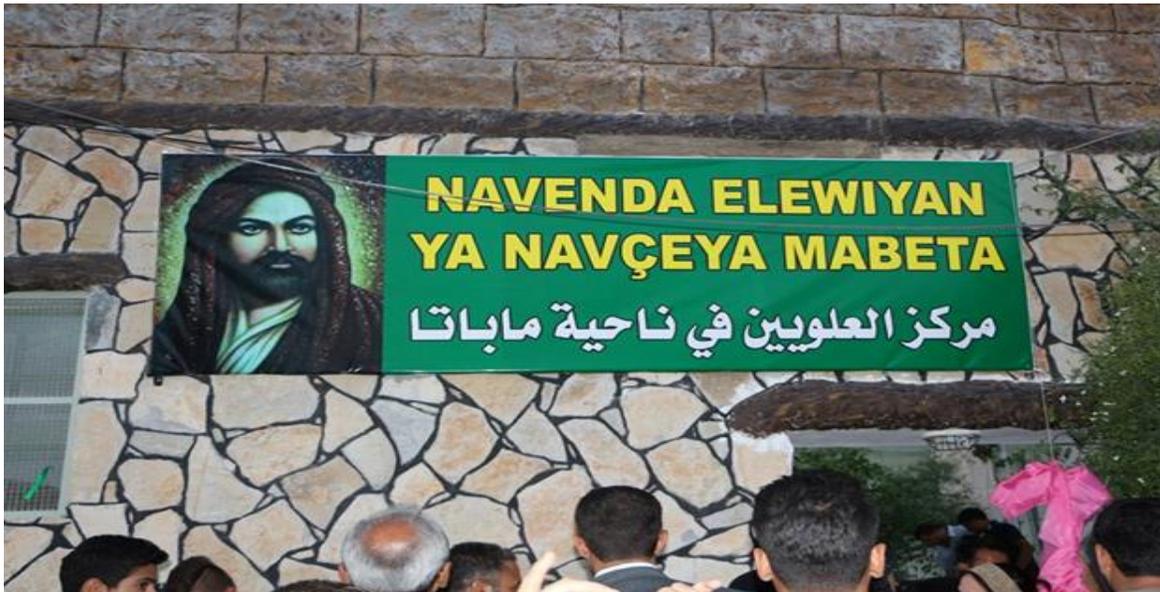


Qaziqli shrine is located at the top of the famous Qazaqli Mountain. The top of the mountain is covered with pine trees. The shrine is a small, square-shaped room in the middle of an ancient archaeological cemetery and Greek monuments, and people are often called by its name.

The name of the shrine is coming from “Qaziq” that means the pillar in Kurdish language, the meaning is full (vertical), and the Stylites are a group of Christian monks who worshiped on the columns, the first of which is in the Saint Simeon Stylites in the famous citadel of Simeon.

This style of worship existed in the region until the fifteenth century AD. And the probability is likely to be the shrine and its name a relationship with a Stylites monk, who was worshiping on his pillar and buried there.

The shrines that endings of the word "Dada": (Alawis)



Is the title of the cleric of the Alawite community, of which there are about ten shrines such as Aslan Dada and Yagmur Dada. This indicates the spread of the Alawite doctrine at a certain historical stage in the region of Mount Kurds –(Jabal Alakrad -Afrin).

The Alawis live in the region of Afrin for hundreds of years. They live with the people of the region brotherly and mutual respect. The center of Mobata is the largest gathering point for them. Historians and religious scholars are in differ in opinion about it as an independent religion.

A few thousand of the Alawites live in Afrin region and the majority of them are in the center of Mubata. Most of the historical research indicates that they came to the region from North of Kurdistan (Turkey) during the Ottoman massacres and the genocide that targeted them. Untill now the Alawites in Afrin have have good relations and connection with the Alwites in Turkey who are their religious reference.

However, the political crisis between Syria under the rule of Hafez al-Assad and Turkey had a negative impact on the continuation of the Alawites on the two sides with each other. So no longer the "Pir" - a religious rank of Alawites similar to the rank of the Supreme Leader of the Shiite - visit them

as before, so the Syrian authorities change their religious references to the Syrian coast.

Dozens of holy shrines spread throughout the region of Afrin. The Alawites and other people from the region come to the region because of their belief in its sanctity. Most of the shrines that end with the word Dada believe that the inhabitants of the region were Alawites but they changed their doctrine for fear of killed by sword.

The most prominent of these shrines are Yagmur Dada, Aslan Dada, Ali Dada and Maryam Dada. The word Dada refers to the community chief in that particular geographical area, as well as three of the most famous shrines in the region are: Sultan Barbaush, Sheikh Hamo, Maam ".

Socially, the Alawites do not distinguish very much in their customs and traditions from the residents of Afrin. There is harmony and mutual respect between them and the believers of all the other religions spread throughout the region, but in the past they did not marry their children other than their community people.

It is said that Alawites of Afrin are preparing to hold meetings to form their own council in the region and organize themselves.

Sultan Barbaush:



It is located in the northern hill of Mobtli. It is for the followers of the Alawite community. The shrine is a traditional building with a heavy spring beside. The special day of the shrine is Wednesday, where sacrifices and vows are offered.

(Yazidi):

According to one of the members of the Yezidi Union in Afrin said “the presence of Yezidis in the Afrin area spread in Mount of Lilon and Mount Kurd Mount (Kurd Dag), where they lived and settled, and we have shrines in the hill of Andar, as well as in the village of Jerna”.

He continued to talk .. “There are 366 villages in Kord Dag. 22 villages of them are Yazidis and because of the invasions and wars against the Yezidis in the region so thier numbers were shrinked.

There are sacred places for the Yazidis in the Afrin region such as shrines, including:

- The village of Qastal Jendoa, shrine (Bars khatouniya) - (Sheikh Hamid).
- The village of Sinka, shrine of (Sheikh Ghraib).

- Village of Pavlon, shrine of (Sheikh Sharafaddin)
- The village of Kafr Jannah, shrine of (Bella Menin) - (Pir Jaafar) -(Hanin)
- The village of Qibar (Jill Khana) - (Malak Kady) - (Hajreka) – and There are others in the village of Qibar.
- The village of Shuhdair (Sheikh Rakkab).
- The village of Trenda (Sheikh Abdul Qadir).

And many other shrines of the Yezidi religion.

Hanan Shrine:

The shrine of Hanan or Abdel Hanan is located south of the village of Mishala, next to the Main Road of Aleppo - Afrin, the shrine is known to the residents of the area.

And about 100 meters to the north and west of them, another shrine of a small building called shrine (Pir Jaafar), whose name indicates that it belongs to religion Yazdi. The Shrine of (Manan), the brother of Hanan, is located on the top of Mount Kafarjana. It is also well-known in that area.

Sultan Sheikhmos Shrine :



The shrine is located in the “Midana / Midaniyat” Plain in the middle of a cemetery surrounded by oak trees. In the site there are huge monumental stone pillars that are scattered, reminiscent of the Roman and Byzantine buildings. The shrine is located in the villages of Midana / Maidaniyat and is a blessing for the people. They are often called their children in the name of the shrine owner “ Sheikhmos”. The inscription on the door of the Shrine was from the Ottoman inscription dating back to 1300 AH / 1882, mentions that the owner of the shrine is (Sheikhmos Anzzali).

Sheikh Barakat Shrine:



It is one of Yezidi Shrines. The Yezidi New Year is celebrated near it. It is located at the top of Mount Sheikh Barakat, and the name of this mountain in Greek was (Kurifa or Corifus) meaning (summit), which is located south of the city of Afrin 30 km and the height of its peak is 870 m. On the top of the mountain is an area of 68 square meters. It is surrounded by a wall whose massive stones were destroyed. On the north side there are large building stones, some of which are inscribed with inscriptions and crosses.

According to the written sources, this shrine is an Islamic shrine after a Greek temple was dedicated to the god, (Zeus) , the god of lightning for the Greeks. The husband of the goddess (Ria). The Syrian geographical dictionary says that it is the remains of two ancient temples of (Jupiter and Cilina) from the Roman period and the first century AD and that the mountain was named after the Mujahid was martyred during the Islamic conquests, called Mohammed Nofal Barakat.

Sheikh Husain who is the sheikh of Afrin's Izidis says that is a Yezidi shrine which is associated with (Mir Ibrahim Adham Bin Derwish) the mysterious religious figure for Yazidis. The shrine is holy to the Druzes community as well.

Malkadi Shrine:



It is located on Mount Lilon, south of the village of Arsh Qibar, 300 meters above a shrine. Its name is the(Malak Adi), which is believed to be derived from the Sheikh Adi (Uday bin Musafir). Its location is very dangerous, with its traditional building next to it the old and present cemetery (for the Yazidis).

(Malak Adi) had a great importance to the Yezidis in the past. Where the rag of poor Yazidi (the ascetic hermit) were painted next to him, a religious ritual in which the poor rag was painted in dark brown.

Qera Jorni Shrine:



This shrine is next to the bridge on the magnificent valley of (Qara jorni) with its trees and huge Sycamore trees.

It is a traditional shrine in terms of construction. But there is a plaque on its facade that was written on it: "This shrine belongs to a martyr named (Hoger). He is a descendant one of Zoroaster priests from the village of Ain Dara. Imad al-Din Zanki was killed in the eleventh century upon his return from the liberation of the city of Riha (Urfa) from the Byzantines.

(Other religions): Muhammad Ali's Shrine:



Mohammed Ali's shrine is located in a valley between the villages of (Holilo and Goran in the Rajo area, it surrounded by oak and olive trees. There is an ancient cemetery in the next. Next to there is a tree decorated with thousands of small cloth pieces of people who come to be blessed. The Shrine is for public and it is well known, and its holy day is Wednesday.

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