The Democratic Society Movement, TEV-DEM

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Afrin attack: All vehicles and weapons are made in Germany

The Turkish army is using more German-made vehicles in their attack on Afrin than what the public is aware of. In addition to the Leopard tanks, the Turkish soldiers and gangs are using rifles manufactured by Heckler & Koch and Mercedes vehicles.

The Berlin administration is under pressure due to the German-made weapons and military vehicles used in the Turkish army’s attacks and massacres against Afrin. Most recently, the TV program Monitor broadcast on the state television ARD pointed out that the Turkish army has been equipped with German-made military equipment from head to toe.

The program titled “War against Kurds: Made in Germany” stated that the licensing rights to the rifles the Turkish soldiers and their gangs attacking Afrin are held by Germany’s prominent weapons manufacturer Heckler & Koch, and added that the firm has received approval from Germany to have the rifles manufactured in Turkey.

The program also stated that the military vehicles that transported the Turkish army tanks to the Afrin border were manufactured by German automotive giant Mercedes. It was also pointed out that the vehicles transporting Turkish soldiers for the Afrin attack are Mercedes’ Unimog model.

AFRIN BOMBED WITH GERMAN MADE ARTILLERY

The program stated that the German-made vehicles are not only these, and in addition to the Leopard II tanks, the M60 tanks the Turkish army uses are also running on motors manufactured by German automotive giants MTU and Renk, and that the artilleries used in the bombing of Afrin also have MTU motors installed.

The program also pointed out the gangs attacking Afrin along with the Turkish army, and stressed that Western countries deem some of these groups “terrorists” and that the groups have previously been acting together with ISIS. For instance, the Ahhrar Al Sham organization supported by Turkey is identified as a terrorist organization by the German federal chief prosecution.1

Syrian refugees fleeing violence shot at and beaten at Turkish border, Human Rights Watch says

Desperate Syrian refugees fleeing heightened violence in the north-west of Syria are being shot at and beaten at the Turkish border as they try to flee, Human Rights Watch says.

The human rights group said refugees who had succeeded in crossing to Turkey using smuggling routes told of Turkish border guards shooting at them during their crossing, while others reported asylum seekers being detained and denied medical assistance.

"Syrians fleeing to the Turkish border seeking safety and asylum are being forced back with bullets and abuse," said Lama Fakih, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "As fighting in Idlib and Afrin displaces thousands more, the number of Syrians trapped along the border willing to risk their lives to reach Turkey is only likely to increase."

In interviews Human Rights Watch conducted, witnesses described children being among those shot as they tried to cross, while others spoke of being hit by Turkish border guards and forced back after being caught.

One witness told HRW that a woman had given birth while attempting to cross the border but that Turkish border guards sent her and the child back to Syria without providing medical assistance.

The Turkish border is closed to Syrian refugees except for critical medical cases. The reports of the conditions at the Turkish border come as violence increases in the last rebel-held stronghold in north-west Syria, as Syrian regime forces advance into the province.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 40 civilians has been killed in the past four days as bombing escalated.

Warplanes and helicopters struck in Idlib, Hama and Aleppo provinces, including in the towns of Saraqeb and Kafar Nabouda, said the war monitor.

Rescue agencies reported at least seven civilians, including two children and a woman, were killed after Syrian government warplanes targeted the vehicles of families fleeing fighting along the Aleppo-Damascus international road on Friday.

Meanwhile, three civilians were reported killed, including a child, after heavy Syrian army shelling and air raids on Douma, a rebel-held town in Eastern Ghouta near the capital Damascus.

International concern has been rising over the fate of 400,000 people living in besieged, rebel-held eastern Ghouta as acute food and medicine shortages have contributed to what the United Nations has called the worst malnutrition of the war.²

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**Basque Parliament’s call on the EU and UN for Afrin**

Political groups in the Basque Parliament have issued a joint statement against the attacks against Afrin. Political groups in the Basque Parliament demanded the EU and UN to take

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action to stop the attacks against Afrin at once and stressed the struggle the Kurds have waged against ISIS.

The statement includes the following:

“In recent days, Turkey has launched an offensive against Afrin, a Kurdish region in northern Syria, trying to penetrate land by land and launching air strikes, killing and wounding dozens of civilians. This Kurdish canton welcomes thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons who have fled the war and the Al Nusra and DAESH groups. This Turkish military operation is carried out without any provocation or attack by the Kurds in this region, or by Syria.

We ask Turkey to immediately stop its military offensive. We also call for the urgent reactivation of the dialogue in the framework of the Geneva talks on Syria, involving all parties, including the Kurds.

We also recognize that the struggle of the Kurds on the front line against DAESH also contributes to European security. The destabilization that will result from Turkey's attack on this area seriously threatens the security of the entire region. The silence or equidistance between the European Union and the international community is not an option. We ask the EU and the UN to act so that these attacks are stopped immediately.”

Al-Bab villages revolted against Turkish practices

NEWS DESK – The people of Tal Battal village, a Kurdish majority of al-Bab city are subjected to the worst practices by the Turkish occupation army and its terrorists, from kidnapping young people and torturing them, forcing the villagers to declare a general strike against these practices and the closure of all shops.

The villages of the Kurdish majority in al-Bab areas are subjected to the worst practices by the Turkish occupation army and its terrorists from cases of kidnapping, torture, looting and theft, especially after the Turkish aggression on Afrin.

A special source from Tal Battal village, the majority of Kurdish people preferred not to mention their name, explained to our agency that the Kurdish villagers in al-Bab areas are subjected to the worst forms of injustice and torture by the Turkish occupation army and terrorists.

The source pointed out that the terrorists of the Turkish occupation enter the villages with their weapons, and recruit young people to the Turkish aggression on Afrin, and arrested dozens of young people so far. In addition to holding their cars and agricultural machinery for use in battles and personal effects.

As a result of these arbitrary practices against the villagers, the residents of Tal Battal village closed their shops for several days. The leaders of the Turkish occupation army intervened and entered the village and demanded that the villagers open their shops.

The village elders explained the need to stop these practices against the villagers and to stop their oppression against the villagers and to release the detained youths.4

573 people detained in Turkey for social media posts over Afrin

The Ministry of Interior Affairs has announced that 449 people have been detained for social media posts against the Afrin attacks and 124 others were detained for participating in protests.

As the Turkish Armed Forces’ (TAF) attacks against Afrin continue on day 17, the Ministry of Interior Affairs announced the number of detentions against protesters.

The Ministry said 449 people have been detained for social media posts against the Afrin operation and 124 others were detained for participating in protests. According to the Ministry’s statement, the detainees are charged with “terrorist propaganda”.

There are doctors, journalists, union leaders, politicians, writers and activists among the people detained for objecting to the operation since January 20 when it started.5

NY Times: Videos of Syrian Militia Abusing Kurdish Fighter’s Corpse Stir Outrage

KOBAHNI, Syria — One fighter posed for selfies with the woman’s corpse. Another called her a “female pig.” Another man stood on her naked breast as someone said, “She’s beautiful, man.”

Those are some of the low points of two new videos of what appear to be Turkish-backed fighters abusing the mutilated body of a Kurdish fighter.

The videos, which were posted on Saturday by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, have caused an unusual uproar in a war in which hard-to-watch footage has been a regular feature.

The head of the rights group, Rami Abdul Rahman, said on Monday that he had obtained the videos from one of the fighters pictured in them, who identified the group as part of the Free

Syrian Army. The Free Syrian Army is a rebel militia fighting alongside Turkey in its battle against the Kurds in northern Syria.

Although horrifying videos are nothing new in Syria’s seven-year war, in this case the videos were apparently made by a group at least nominally under the command of a NATO country. That the object of abuse was a partly naked woman added to the outrage, with some commentators saying that even the Islamic State would not have behaved as badly….

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**U.S. should answer Turkish threats by recognising Armenian genocide – congressman**

A U.S. Congressman has called for a resolution to be passed recognising the Armenian genocide in reaction to what he says were Turkish threats to U.S. troops in Syria.

“Turkey essentially is telling the United States that we should end our support to Kurdish YPG fighters or risk being targeted by Turkey. In fact they had some pretty specific remarks, threats to U.S. troops and our policy there,” Ted Lieu, a Democratic Party representative for California, said.

“We all understand that the Armenian Genocide happened, it is a historical fact, and the only reason that that resolution has not been passed is that we want to keep our relations with Turkey,” he said.

“Is it now time to pass that resolution and tell Turkey that look, if you are going to take these actions against us, we are going to tell the truth and do some things you just might not like?”

The comments came during a Congress sub-committee hearing on the way forward for Syria in which Turkey was heavily criticised for its ongoing operation against the Kurdish-held Syrian enclave of Afrin.

"Our NATO ally Turkey, who notoriously failed to stem the flow of foreign fighters and cash and weapons across its border for years, is now engaged in operations against U.S.-backed Kurdish and Arab forces in Syria’s northwest, forces that have been essential in our fight against ISIS,” chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen said during her opening remarks.

Congressman David Cicilline described Operation Olive Branch as "the brutal attack that is underway against the Kurdish people of Afrin,” saying that there had been “a devastating impact on civilians” as a result of the military campaign.

“We cannot stand by on the sidelines as these atrocities continue,” Cicilline said, urging the United States to “convey to our NATO ally Turkey that they must abide by international norms and conventions, which require that they protect civilians and allow humanitarian and medical assistance.”

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Cicilline added that he had introduced pictures of children killed by Turkish airstrikes into the official record.

“What is Turkey trying to achieve?” he asked Syria expert Mara Karlin.

“What is Turkey trying to achieve?” he asked Syria expert Mara Karlin.

“Why is the administration allowing an offensive against some troops that we have trained and have been so helpful in our fight against ISIS, what is the impact of this on our allies’ ability to make progress against ISIS, and shouldn’t we be doing more to protect Kurdish civilians, particularly since they have been such great partners with us in the fight against terrorism?”

The Armenian genocide originated with a 1915 order to move the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire en masse to Syria at a time when the Ottomans believed that Armenian militants might sabotage the Ottoman effort during World War One.

Effective death-marches through harsh terrain dotted with bandits were often the result, leading to hundreds of thousands of casualties.

Turkey officially rejects the labelling of the event as genocide.

**Minute’s silence for Afrin martyrs in Swedish Parliament**

A minute’s silence was held in the Swedish Parliament for the people who lost their lives in Afrin.

In yesterday’s session in the Swedish Parliament where the Turkish state’s attacks and massacres against Afrin were discussed, a minute’s silence was observed for the people who lost their lives in Afrin.

Left Party and Greens MPs who took the matter to the parliament’s agenda through written inquiries wore yellow, red and green Kurdistan scarves to the session. Left Party MP Amineh Kakabaveh gave a scarf as a present for the Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström.

After Margot Wallström responded to the inquiries, Jabar Amin took the stand and before he started his speech, invited the parliament to a moment’s silence in memory of the women, children and all the innocent people who lost their lives in the Turkish state attacks against Afrin.

Guests, MPs and Wallström stood up for the minute’s silence, as security guards warned the guests to sit back down, which they refused to do until the minute was over.

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‘Don’t add war to war’: France blasts Turkey for ‘violating international law in Syria’

In the latest episode in the Turkish-French war of words over the ongoing operation against Kurds in northwest Syria, France's foreign minister said Ankara is violating international law through its actions.

In an interview with French BFM TV, the foreign minister called for the withdrawal of all forces that “ought not to be in Syria, including Iranian militia, including Hezbollah.” He added that international law “is being violated by Turkey, by the Damascus regime, by Iran and those who are attacking eastern Ghouta and Idlib.” …

“Ensuring the security of its borders does not mean killing civilians and that should be condemned. In a dangerous situation in Syria, [Turkey] should not add war to war,” Le Drian said on Wednesday.

France earlier criticized Ankara’s ‘Operation Olive Branch,’ with President Emmanuel Macron questioning Turkey’s motives and saying if it turns into “an invasion operation, [then] this becomes a real problem.”

It did not take long for Turkey to respond, as Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim called Macron’s suggestion a “crooked idea.”

“If France is interpreting this issue as an [invasion operation], we need to assess what they have done in Syria accordingly,” he said.9

Former ISIS fighter tells The Independent that Turkey is using the name of “Free Syrian Army” to conceal its use of jihadi mercenaries

Turkey is recruiting and retraining Isis fighters to lead its invasion of the Kurdish enclave of Afrin in northern Syria, according to an ex-Isis source.

“Most of those who are fighting in Afrin against the YPG [People’s Protection Units] are Isis, though Turkey has trained them to change their assault tactics,” said Faraj, a former Isis fighter from north-east Syria who remains in close touch with the jihadi movement.

In a phone interview with The Independent, he added: “Turkey at the beginning of its operation tried to delude people by saying that it is fighting Isis, but actually they are training Isis members and sending them to Afrin.”

An estimated 6,000 Turkish troops and 10,000 Free Syrian Army (FSA) militia crossed into Syria on 20 January, pledging to drive the YPG out of Afrin.

The attack was led by the FSA, which is a largely defunct umbrella grouping of non-Jihadi Syrian rebels once backed by the West. Now, most of its fighters taking part in Turkey’s “Operation Olive Branch” were, until recently, members of Isis.

Some of the FSA troops advancing into Afrin are surprisingly open about their allegiance to al-Qaeda and its offshoots. A video posted online shows three uniformed jihadis singing a song in praise of their past battles and “how we were steadfast in Grozny (Chechnya) and Dagestan (north Caucasus). And we took Tora Bora (the former headquarters of Osama bin Laden). And now Afrin is calling to us”.

Isis suffered heavy defeats last year, losing Mosul in Iraq after a siege of nine months and Raqqa in Syria after a four-month siege. The caliphate, declared by its leader Abu Baqr al-Baghdadi in 2014, was destroyed, and most of its experienced commanders and fighters were killed or dispersed.

But it has shown signs of trying to revive itself in Syria and Iraq over the last two months, assassinating local opponents and launching guerrilla attacks in out-of-the-way and poorly defended places.

Isis fighters are joining the FSA and Turkish-army invasion force because they are put under pressure by the Turkish authorities. From the point of view of Turkey, the recruitment of former Isis combatants means that it can draw on a large pool of professional and experienced soldiers. Another advantage is that they are not Turks, so if they suffer serious casualties this will do no damage to the Turkish government.

Isis and Turkey are seeking to use each other for their own purposes. Faraj, 32, an Arab from the mixed Kurdish-Arab province of Hasakah in north-east Syria, says that he does not like the YPG, but he is suspicious of Turkey and believes that it is trying to manipulate Isis. “Turkey treats Isis like toilet tissues,” he says. “After use they will be thrown away.”

Turkey is evidently aware that using Isis fighters as the spearhead for the assault on Afrin, even if they relabelled as FSA, is likely to attract international criticism.

Faraj says that Turkish commanders have discouraged Isis from using their traditional tactics of extensive use of suicide bombers and car bombs at Afrin because this would make the Isis-Turkish cooperation too blatant.

He says that the FSA men are “professional in planning car-bomb attacks as they have experience before with Isis in Raqqa and Mosul”.

But he cites Turkish officers as discouraging such identifiable tactics, quoting one as telling an FSA group in training that “we leave the suicide attacks for the YPG and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party which carries on guerrilla warfare in Turkey), so that the world will be convinced that they are terrorists”.
Turkey has had an ambivalent relationship with jihadi groups since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011. At first, it allowed foreign jihadi fighters and military supplies to cross into Syria, though this tolerance ebbed after the fall of Mosul in June 2014.

Nevertheless, Ankara made clear by its actions during the siege of the Kurdish city of Kobani that it would have preferred victory to go to Isis rather than the YPG.

As the YPG advanced after Kobani with the support of US air power, Turkey’s priority became to reverse the creation of a de facto Kurdish state in Syria under US military protection.

The US is in a particularly difficult position. It was the YPG who provided the ground troops who, backed by US air strikes, have defeated Isis in many battles.

Without them there would have been no victory over Isis as was claimed by President Trump in his State of the Union message. But the YPG is now facing some of the same Isis fighters in Afrin with whom it fought over the past four years. It will not look good if the US abandons its proven Kurdish allies because it does not want a confrontation with Turkey.

Such a confrontation could be just around the corner. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened at the weekend to expand the Turkish invasion to include the Arab town of Manbij, captured from Isis by the YPG in 2016 after a long siege. He said that the Americans “tell us, ‘Don’t come to Manbij.’ We will come to Manbij to handover these territories to their rightful owners.”

The fighting between Turks and Kurds and the growing confrontation between the US and Turkey are all in the interests of Isis. It does not have the strength to recover from its crushing defeats last year, but the opponents it faced then are now fighting other battles.

Eliminating the last pockets of Isis resistance is no longer their first priority. The YPG has been transferring units that were facing Isis in the far east of Syria to the west where they will face the Turks.

Turkey is not in a very strong position militarily almost three weeks after its invasion of Afrin. It can only win by bombing round the clock, and for this it will need Russian permission, which it probably will not get. If it is going to expand its attacks, it will need more combat soldiers and this will provide an opportunity for Isis to join in a new war.

The Turkish embassy in the UK has been approached for comment but had not responded by the time of publication.\footnote{http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/turkey-isis-afrin-syria-kurds-free-syrian-army-jihadi-video-fighters-recruits-a8199166.html}
WikiLeaks reveals 57,000 emails from the son-in-law of President Erdogan, 'proving his connection to ISIS operation smuggling oil into Turkey'

The emails span a six-year period from 2000 to 2016 and allegedly reveal his level of influence in the country's political scene. The emails appear to have been obtained by Turkish hacktivist group Redhack, and which threatened to make his communications public back in September.

The emails, which allegedly contain details of exchanges between Albayrak and the Turkish 'ruling elite' were briefly published earlier this year, before being taken down following a crackdown by the Turkish government.

WikiLeaks alleges that the emails reveal 'Albayrak's involvement in organisations such as Powertrans, the company implicated in Isis oil imports'. The company has been implicated in oil imports from ISIS-controlled oil fields.

Turkey banned oil transportation by road or railway in or out of the country in more than five years ago, but with provision for limited exceptions such as meeting the needs of the military.

WikiLeaks claims that the Turkish government later gave Powertrans the monopoly on the transit of oil. Julian Assange, WikiLeaks founder, said the emails had been published in response to the Turkish government's silencing of detractors.…

Turkish aircrafts intensify bombardment on Afrin city, its districts

AFRIN- Turkish occupation aircrafts are launching intensive raids on the city of Afrin and its districts including Shera, Bulbul, Janders and their villages and the outskirts of the city are being randomly bombed.

Our correspondents noted that the Turkish occupation aircrafts renewed bombing the canton of Afrin on Thursday night, Ashrafiyah, Mahmoudiya districts in Afrin, in addition, Shera district’s Arab Weran, Baflouna, Sinka villages, Bulbul and Janders districts and their villages have also been bombed.

Consequently, a woman at 50 has martyred in Ashrafiyah district in Afrin city, no information is obtained about the mass of damage inflicted to other regions.

Meantime, the Turkish occupation aircrafts are still hovering over the canton.

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