

# Information Center of Afrin Resistance



**Weekly News Bulletin from Afrin**

**# 1**

08.02.2018 - 15.02.2018

**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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## **Last Week's Developments inside Afrin**

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 invasive 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. <sup>[1]</sup>

### **War and Humanitarian Situation**

Since the beginning of the war, those who suffered the most is the civil population of Afrin: Kurds, Arabs, Turkmens, Armenian, Ezidis, Alewites, Christians and Muslims. According to staff of Afrin hospital, between 20 January 2018 until 12 February 2018 due to the attacks of the Turkish army and its affiliated jihadist FSA groups on the people of Afrin more than 160 civilians were killed and 480 were injured, including children, women and old people. <sup>[2] [3] [4]</sup>

From 5 to 7 February the Turkish air-forces did not carry out any air-strikes, though shelling was intensified. Many schools, centers of the democratic self-administration like the commissions for education, trade and agriculture as well as the Kurdish Red Crescent Health Center, mosques, cemeteries and hundreds of civil houses have become the targets of the Turkish artillery. On 8 February the bombardments by Turkish air-forces started again in an even more tense and cruel way, targeting especially civilians and infrastructure. Along with direct attacks on civilian settlements the water purification plant in Metina village (district Shera), the central water station of the district Jinderese, one of the two main bakeries as well as the main market places in the district Rajo and a factory for olive oil production were targeted by air-strikes and shelling of the Turkish army and its allies. Historical heritage like the ancient Palace of Betal Aga in Jeleme (district Jinderese) has been heavily damaged as well. The total number of damaged or destroyed schools reached 27 by the end of the week. Within only two days in the district Rajo more than 200 houses were devastated by bombardments and shelling of the Turkish army on 9 and 10 February,

Due to this situation, many people had to leave their homes or were left without homes. Many families found shelter in old caves or basements. But most of the displaced population is taking refuge in the city center of Afrin. During the last days, also Afrin city centre which is exclusively a civilian area, has also become a main target of the Turkish aggressions. Nearly every day the center and its close surrounding are being hit by Turkish artillery or air-strikes. On 9 February in Bilbile district again two whole families were murdered and buried under the ruins of their bombed houses. On 13th February artillery attacks hit close to the hospital of Afrin. Daily civilians casualties, displacement, and struggle for survival without electricity or water are reported. In villages of the border region that were invaded villagers and refugees were kidnapped, beaten, robbed and threatened by the Turkish army and its affiliated jihadist groups.

Among the areas that have been under permanent attacks were the Ezidi villages Baflune, Arab Weran and Omera in the district Shera. Continuing clashes took place in Rajo, Bilbile, Shera, Shiye

and Jinderese district, accompanied by Turkish air-strikes and heavy artillery shelling. The fights in the surroundings of villages at the front lines were continuing day and night.

According SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) since the attacks on Afrin started, so far 98 of their fighters lost their lives in the defence of Afrin. The deaths of 862 Turkish soldiers and jihadist FSA members were confirmed by the SDF. 668 bombardments by Turkish war-planes and 16 attacks with helicopters were reported. 2645 times the region Afrin was hit by tank and heavy artillery shelling. 517 direct confrontations occurred between the SDF and the Turkish military together with its jihadist accomplices. Furthermore, two Turkish helicopters and two UAVs (drones) were shot down. 51 armoured vehicles of the Turkish army were destroyed and 15 more damaged by SDF forces. <sup>[5]</sup>

[6]

### **Resistance of people in Afrin**

Despite the difficult situation that the people of Afrin are living in, they are not giving up. Solidarity and mutual aid have become the biggest weapons against the war of Turkey especially targeting civilians. People in the city center have opened their homes to shelter other families, that were displaced due to the war. Many people have been donating blood to cover the needs of the wounded. The Kurdish Red Crescent has distributed milk for the children and other aid to victims of war.

After thousands of people who came to Afrin from other regions of North Syria showing their solidarity left Afrin on 7 February, the people of Afrin continued their calls upon the international community to take action for stopping Turkey's occupation war. On 8 February the women's movement Kongra Star held a public statement in Afrin city calling for a global solidarity campaign: "Women Rise Up For Afrin". <sup>[7]</sup> On 13 February, thousands of women protested in the streets of Afrin against the invasion of the Turkish state, while close to them the Turkish army was continuously shelling the town.

On 15 February, thousands of people from the region of Afrin went to Jinderese that has been under intensive attacks of Turkish army and affiliated jihadist groups for 27 days. Despite of heavy clashes going on in the region thousands of people protested in Jindirese against Turkey's war on Afrin and the kidnapping of Abdullah Ocalan on 15 Feb 1999.

### **Solidarity with Afrin**

All around the world people have been protesting against the war of the Turkish state and its affiliated jihadist groups. In all towns of the Democratic Federation North Syria daily mass protests and marches against the Turkish invasion have continued.

On 10 February a delegation of MPs and members of Kurdish Regional Government in South Kurdistan/Iraq came to Afrin to get a picture of the situation and to demand political measures by governments and international bodies. Returning from Afrin the head of the delegation and PDK MP Eli Halo appealed to the KRG, the UN and international aid organisations to support the people in Afrin. Calling for Kurdish unity Eli Halo declared: "I am convinced that the people of Afrin will succeed, because they are showing a very strong will and resistance."<sup>[8]</sup>

Human aid campaigns for the people in Afrin have been organised by different NGOs and the Kurdish Red Crescent. Some medical supplies already reached the Kurdish Red Crescent in Afrin. The campaigns are continuing in different countries as there is desperate need especially for medical equipment, medicine, infant nutrition and milk.<sup>[9]</sup>

All over Europe, Australia, in different Asian countries, Latin and North America solidarity actions and meetings continued to stop the war on Afrin. Long marches were organised in different European countries: Since 8 February, 200 internationalists are marching from Luxembourg to Strasbourg.<sup>[10]</sup> Other long marches took place in Sweden and Switzerland with hundreds of participants. Since 12th February a long march from Lausanne is heading towards the UN representation in Geneva.

Following the call of women from Afrin "Women Rise Up for Afrin" women in many Europe and Latin American countries organised local protest and sent solidarity messages to the resisting women in Afrin were sent from.<sup>[11]</sup>

In Shakran prison of Turkey political prisoners continue in turns their hunger strike in support of the Afrin resistance which started on 5 February. In many countries petitions were published by MPs, local and regional councils and NGOs calling upon the UN, national governments or the US Senator John McCain to take urgent action to stop the Turkey's war on Afrin, to acknowledge Kurdish people's rights and to ensure a political solution to the crisis in Syria.

Some political parties also have criticized the involvement of their own governments in this war (e.g. supplying Turkey with weapons) and demanded sanctions against Turkey.

[12]

## **Statements and Analysis**

While the Turkish government could not reach "an early military victory" as they announced, the government has been escalating its policies of war and repression internal and outside the country day by day accompanied by open fascist, nationalist approaches and rhetoric. Any voice against the war (e.g. sharing on social media) within Turkey is answered with the detainment, with censorship and oppression by Turkish state. Fundamental democratic rights like the freedom of speech and opinion have been abolished. Again, during the last week, hundreds of Turkish citizens have been imprisoned for opposing the war on Afrin.<sup>[13]</sup> Nationalist expansion plans of installing "a second Ottoman Empire" are not even hidden any more as became obvious by rhetoric and expressions of Erdogan like giving an "Ottoman slap" to the US. What Turkey's President Erdogan is trying to accomplish in Afrin are open plans of "ethical cleansing".

On one hand Turkey is blackmailing the EU with new waves of refugees towards Europe and with

prognoses of IS attacks in European metropolises, if they would not conquer Afrin. On the other hand the Turkish state threaten the USA if they would not withdraw from Minbij line.

Against this background neither the US government nor the EU or the UN have so far failed to take clear measures to stop Turkey's war on Afrin which is breaking international and humanitarian law. The US only noticed that the Turkish war on Afrin would slow down the military operation against the IS in Derazore, as the SDF could not focus any more on one front-line.

Furthermore, there have been a number of discussions and special sessions in different parliaments during the last week, e.g. at the European Parliament. Unfortunately, the results of these discussions did not pass a symbolical level of calling for a de-escalation of the conflict and expressing sympathy with the people in Afrin. Up to now, concrete measures to stop the war and genocide in Afrin are lacking.

The double standards of present state policies become obvious also by the new German government coalition agreement, stating their "special interest in good relations with Turkey". Voices of the German public demanding an end to weapon exports to Turkey were ignored. Outstanding weapon trades – like new deals between the German weapon and tank fabricator Rheinmetall and their Turkish partner company BMC - have been approved by the German government. Hereby the German Leopard 2 tank can be upgraded that has used by the Turkish army attacking civilians in Afrin. <sup>[14]</sup>

Until economic and hegemonic interests are dominating political decisions and actions, a political solution for Afrin in accordance with international human right laws and human ethics seems to be difficult.

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