

Information Center of Afrin Resistance



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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 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

During the last week the Turkish army has constantly intensified its attacks on the population and territory of Afrin. In spite deteriorating life conditions and daily casualties the people have been determined to stay on their homeland. So far serious international initiatives are missing which would stop Turkey's violations of international law, occupation and war crimes.

War and Humanitarian Situation

Since the beginning of the war, those who suffered the most is the the civil population of Afrin: Kurds, Arabs, Turkmens, Armenian, Ezidis, Alewites, Christians and Muslims. According to the co-chair of Afrin Health Council between 20th January 2018 and 01st March 2018 due to the attacks of the Turkish army and its affiliated jihadist FSA groups more than 207 civilians in Afrin have been killed and 602 were injured, including children, women and old people.

Continuing from the beginning of the war in Afrin during the last week from 01st March until 08th March 2018 the Turkish state was attacking Afrin province with air-strikes, heavy artillery shelling, drones and tanks, and from the ground with thousands of soldiers and the jihadist FSA groups. During this week their have been heavy fightings and clashes ongoing on all front-lines in the areas of Jindires, Shera, Shiye, Sherawa and Rajo. Especially Jindires, Shera and Rajo districts were witnessing some of the most heavy fightings since the beginning of Turkish invasion and occupation. On Rajo front-line again it was again reported that the Syrian Army militias that came to Afrin more than a week ago had been targeted by the Turkish army. On the other hand even the convoy of the International Red Cross that had arrived in Afrin for humanitarian reasons came under attack of Turkish artillery shelling. Reports from the region more and more testify, that for the Turkish artillery every moving element becomes a possible target. Since the Turkish army is 24 hours a day using their drones for surveillance all over the Afrin region, that is very much possible, too.

Especially Jindires has been a major target of Turkish aggression over this week and actually we can see that since the beginning of war on the 20th January 2018 attacks on Jindires city and district have not stopped even for a day. Since the beginning the civilian settlement areas of Jindires have been under heavy artillery shelling and air-strikes, which is why many people from that region had to leave their homes and were displaced due to the invasion of Turkish army. This week the Turkish army and their allied groups tried to close in on Jindires, which is when they committed several attacks on civilians like on the 5th March when 10 civilians including children were killed or wounded.²

1 Dossier: "Radical Factions and ISIS members participating in Afrin invasion"

2 <https://icafrinresist.wordpress.com/> File about the Massaker in Freriye/Jindires

Since the last ceasefire agreement for 30-days had been announced by the UN Security Council³ the Syrian Democratic Forces declared their full support to that decision, but indicated that they are going to defend themselves if attacked. Since than Turkish attacks have not stopped for a minute, but might have even in increased. In this week there has not been a day without the city center of Afrin being target, which is the clear preparation of the Turkish army to force displacement of the people as much as possible. Since we reported last week about the JOH and POH Turkish special forces reinforcements of the Turkish state being used in Afrin, there have been many clashes with these forces reported by the SDF, claiming that they had killed dozens of members of these special units in result of the battles.

On the 07th March 2018 SDF published its balance sheet concerning the outcomes of the military operation since the beginning of the Turkish aggression on 20th January. According to that until today 283 SDF fighters have been martyred and 1588 Turkish soldiers and members of the jihadist factions were killed. In the defined amount of time 643 clashes which result have been clarified and 176 clashes without knowing the results of it took place, furthermore the Turkish army conducted indiscriminately 1026 air-strikes and 3307 artillery shelling.⁴ It has been reported by YPG, that another internationalist fighter, Haukur Hilmarsson from Iceland, fell in Afrin on February 24.⁵

Due to the war circumstances in all of the districts in Afrin Kanton hundreds of thousands civilians have been displaced from their homes and had to seek refuge in the city center. At the same time the destruction of bakeries and other basic infrastructure and the massive increase of inhabitants in the city leads step by step to an upcoming humanitarian crisis. Prices on the market have drastically risen.

Resistance of people in Afrin

On the 5th March 2018 a women's solidarity convoy made its way from Cizir, Kobane and Minbic to Afrin. More than 1200 women have arrived in Afrin to join the resistance on the 8th March, International Womens Day and to stay in Afrin as Living Shields to protect the people.

On 7th March another convoy with hundreds of people from Cizir Kanton started to make its way and is expected to arrive in Afrin in the evening hours of 8th March 2018.

On the 8th March 2018, International Womens Day we witnessed thousands of women in Afrin taking to the street to show that Rojava Revolution is a women's revolution. Women claimed: "To defend Afrin means to defend a women's revolution."

The people of Afrin continue to be on their feet everyday, joining mass protests, organizing shelter for the displaced people, cooking food for the YPG, YPJ and SDF fighters. They are determined to resist the occupation and the plans of Turkish state to change the region's demography and political order. To support the people of the areas which are targeted most severely by Turkey's attacks several times people made their way from the city center to Jindires and Shera districts.

3 <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13221.doc.htm>

4 <http://sdf-press.com/en/2018/03/the-statistics-of-the-military-operations-since-the-start-of-the-Turkish-aggression-on-afrin-on-20-jan-2018/>

5 <https://anfenglish.com/news/internationalist-fighter-hilmarsson-falls-a-martyr-in-afrin-25320>

Solidarity with Afrin

Solidarity actions, declarations, protests and demonstrations are ongoing all over the world. On the 3rd March 2018 mass demonstrations and protests took place in Berlin/Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Austria, Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Toronto/Canada.

Statements and Analysis

The Pentagon has declared a “operational pause” in Northern Syria in the operation against ISIS. This comes due to the influence that the Turkish aggression in Afrin has on Northern Syria, which on the one side has clearly given ISIS the possibility to start new military campaigns. On the other side due to the Turkish aggressions the SDF, which is the most important force on the ground in the war against ISIS, had to redeploy a big number of their forces from Dair Ezzor to the front-lines in Afrin against the Turkish army. So in fact the prognosis of SDF officials who have been warning that the Turkish invasion in Northern Syria directly effects the fight against ISIS negatively has come true. This situation gives ISIS the possibility to restructure themselves while SDF is forced to concentrate on defending the people of Northern Syria against Turkey’s attacks.⁶

Iran issued a statement this week declaring the Turkish aggression being a violation of international law. Due to the request of the Left party in German Parliament DieLinke, the Scientific Service of German federal Parliament has carried out a research and stated that Turkey had not given any evidence yet, that they were acting in self-defense and that their attack on Syrian soil is a violation of international law.⁷

Jaish Al-Thwar, The brigade of Democratic North, The Kurds Front and Idlib Military Council gave a joined statement on the 6th March 2018, declaring their withdrawal from Cizir front-lines and move to Afrin front-lines to fight the Turkish aggression:

“We, the revolutionary factions operating within Syria Democratic Forces (SDF) under the umbrella of international coalition against terrorism, remorsefully decided to move our forces, who are in trenches against ISIS, from east of Euphrates to the front-lines in Afrin against the Turkish invasion, after fighting ISIS long the past three years in Haseke, Raqqa and Dair Ezzor and the great sacrifices by our forces. We would not take this decision if it had not been for the international silence towards the Turkish aggression”⁸

SDF was condemning the practice of Turkish army and jihadist groups that operate under the name of FSA to torture and kill prisoners and mutilating their bodies: *“What the Turkish forces and the terrorist groups are doing against the Syrian fighters of SDF, YPG and YPJ by torturing and mutilating their corpses, amounts to war crimes and crimes against the humanity.”⁹*

YPG General Command declared about the role of Russia in the present war on Afrin: *“The Russian Federation is a partner of bloodshed with the Turkish state in Afrin”¹⁰*

6 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/03/turkey-olive-branch-disrupts-us-coalition-isis.html>

7 <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/operation-olivenzweig-103.html>

8 <http://sdf-press.com/en/2018/03/statement-to-the-public-opinion-7/>

9 <http://sdf-press.com/en/2018/03/the-killing-of-prisoners-and-the-mutilation-of-their-bodies-is-a-war-crime-and-a-crime-against-humanity/>

10 <http://sdf-press.com/en/2018/03/statement-to-the-media-and-public-opinion/>

In an analysis about the relevance of UNSC Truce in Respect to Turkey's War on Afrin IC Afrin Resistance has concluded: *“On 25 January 2018 UNSC Resolution 2401 on 30-day cessation of hostilities in Syria to enable humanitarian aid was unanimously adopted. (...) The present Western policies have failed to stop Turkey's recklessness and to push Turkey towards respecting international law, decisions and criteria of democracy. To achieve this more serious, determined and deterrent policies are needed. (...) First and foremost, stopping Turkey's invasion and aggression will mean to stop the killings of innocent people which happen every day and at every hour in Afrin. International institutions – due to the purpose of their existence – are responsible to maintain international law and their humanitarian duties. Otherwise, they will have no reliability and credibility any more.”*