

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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The Developments in Afrin and Northern Syria

25th May - 31st 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 note, the Turkish occupation war on Afrin started on 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 were under heavy bombardments, shelling and drone surveillance by the Turkish army, especially targeting civilians. On March 18th more than 200,000 people left the town centre and were evacuated in order to avoid a genocide. Since then, the majority of refugees are staying in the Shehba region without guarantee of security and international support. In this new phase, confrontation between the own interests of international powers is increasing all over Syria.

Last week's Developments around Afrin

After 130 days of resistance against NATO's second biggest army, hundreds of people from the Afrin Canton are still displaced and facing difficult living conditions. The Turkish army and its FSA allies are implementing ethnic cleansing, assimilation and colonisation policies, preventing the population from returning to their villages, and continuing preparations to add the Afrin region to Turkey's own state territory. The resistance of the YPG-YPJ forces in all districts of the Afrin Canton carries on, as well as the resistance of the displaced people from Afrin in the Shehba region. Tensions between regional and international powers became clear with air strikes by the USA, the UK and France against Syrian facilities.

Afrin

The Turkish army and the FSA forces are carrying on with their occupation, assimilation and demographic change policies. According to the Syrian Women's Council: 119 women have been abducted and subjected to sexual abuse in Afrin[1]. FSA groups occupied Afrinian homes and asked for huge amounts of money to give them back. A video by AFP shows displaced people from Ghouta squatting Afrin's houses emptied by the Turkish and the FSA invasion[2]. Local sources reported that two FSA groups (al-Sultan Morad and Jaish al-Sharqiya) fought each other to take over and confiscate the Good Shepherd Church in Afrin. After the occupation by the Turkish army and FSA forces, only 3 families out of 250 remain in Afrin city[3]. Turkish soldiers and FSA members took 8 civilians from the Cheqmaq village in Rajo district, to the Chiqla village in Jindirese district, where a prison has been set up. Their families have been asked for a ransom of \$7.000 for the release of each person[4].

According to the Turkish journalist Mete Sohtaoğlu, 620 FSA members were deployed in Afrin as a police force after being trained by the Turkish state in Mersin North Kurdistan / Turkey. Two more batches of the Syrian Police will be sent to Afrin to provide security and traffic control[5].

According to Afrin activists, on May 26th unknown people attacked the headquarters of the Ahrar al-Sharqiya FSA faction in Afrin city[6].

Moreover, the Turkish army and FSA forces raided Sinku village for the 3rd time this week and kidnapped civilians; in Kord they abducted six civilians and stabbed two more, who were seriously wounded. Their names are Mustafa Mohammed Surk and Marwan Ali Surk[7]. They also reported that Walid Jamil Sourani and Hussain Abdul Rahman Sager were kidnapped on March 18th. They were from Jekali Gum village (Jindirese district). They were tortured inside the prison. In addition, they reported that a convoy composed by more than 200 vehicles and 1,500 displaced people from the areas of Shehba and the Northern countryside of Aleppo tried to return to Afrin for three days. Near Gilbara village, the first group was attacked by FSA forces, as a result 50 civilians were kidnapped and several were cars stolen[8].

Moreover, Kurdish physician Dr. Lazkin Saleh, who refused to flee Afrin after the incursion by Turkish forces has been kidnapped by FSA forces[9]. On May 26th, local sources reported that Hemid Musa from Bircike village (Jindirese district) was severely tortured by Ahrar Al-Sharqiya groups because he complained about the Turkish occupation. His condition is critical.

According to local sources, the statue of Zarathustra, the founder of Ezidi philosophy, situated in front of their centre in Afrin city has been completely destroyed, as well as the Ezidi Center itself[10].

Shehba and Northern Syria

Shehba, the region that received thousands of refugees from Afrin, demonstrated against the Turkish occupation on the Global Action Day for Afrin on the 26th of May. They pledged to the international community to take action against Turkish war crimes and renew their promise of resistance[11]. At the Berxwedan Camp - Fafin in [Shehba](#), a playground is being set up for over 1,000 children.

Local sources reported that the diesel supply has been blocked in Shehba. Diesel is a main necessity to provide energy for water pumps, bakeries and distributing cars for Afrin's displaced people[12]. According to the Kurdish Red Crescent there is an outbreak of diseases due to polluted water use among the Afrin refugees in the Shehba region[13]. Also, in the Shehba region there is a 50% drop in crop production this season compared to last year, creating fears of weak wheat and barley production due to the lack of rainfall and fertilizer use, and to the loss of the storage warehouses of Afrin[14]. On May 30th, residents of Berxwedan refugee camp showed their discomfort with Russian visitors in Shehba region and forced them to leave[15].

The Manbij Military Council declared that they have captured several Turkish sleeping cells in Manbij. They are considered to be behind an improvised explosive device (IED) attack that happened at the end of last month. On May 30th, the Manbij Military Council (MMC) Spokesperson, Shervan Derwish, denied alleged withdrawal from Manbij and declared that "there are those who are interested in destabilizing the area and so spread lies".

The YPG internationalist Spanish volunteer Ramon Maria Rull Linhoff lost his life after stepping on a mine in Deir ez-zor during the operation to liberate the village of Baghous from ISIS on May 13th. The funeral was held in Derik on May 27th.

According to the BBC, on May 27th the Russian defense ministry said that four Russian military advisers died and three others were injured [16].

Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran

A U.S. Senate committee passed its version of a \$716 billion defense policy bill on May 24th, including a measure to prevent Turkey from purchasing Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jets. "There is tremendous hesitancy (about) transferring sensitive F35 planes and technology to a nation who has purchased a Russian air defense system designed to shoot these very planes down," said Senator Shaheen[17]. Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu was quoted, as shown by broadcaster NTV, saying that Turkey will go elsewhere if the United States does not allow it to buy Lockheed Martin's F-35 jets[18].

On May 23th, Turkey's Supreme Election Board (YSK) refused a request by Selahattin Demirtaş, the jailed presidential candidate of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), to participate by telephone in the Fox Tv program "Leaders in Fox"[19]. After a call was made to Gezi Park for the 5th anniversary of the Gezi Resistance, the police closed the park with barricades. Some roads leading to Taksim were also closed to vehicle traffic[20].

On May 27th, in Lesbos (Greece), a group of Kurdish asylum-seekers said that they were attacked at Moria refugee camp by arabs from Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Algeria, accusing them of being infidels. As a result, ten Kurdish refugees have been seriously injured[21].

On May 30th, clashes between Ahrar al-Sharqiyah and the so-called Free Police erupted in Turkish controlled al-Bab city. According to local sources, as a result of these clashes, a number of civilians were injured, some of them seriously[22].

Former Iraqi general from Kirkuk province warns of increased ISIS activities in southwest Kirkuk province[23].

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights sources, Russian Forces and Iranian Forces disagree about the Tal Rifaat area and the surrounding territories, which were taken from FSA and Islamic factions in early 2016. The disagreement occurred after a Russian offer was made to hand over Tal Rifaat area to the Turkish forces in exchange for the withdrawal of FSA and Islamic factions from the triangle of West Jesr al-Shughur – Sahl al-Ghab – the Northeastern countryside of Latakia[24].

Solidarity for Afrin

On May 21st, Kurdish youth and supporters occupied a vacant building in London. This newly occupied space, 'Kurdistan Place', was squatted by Anna Campbell's friends to promote solidarity with the Kurdish people's struggle[25].

May 25th was the Global Day Action for Afrin. In [Melbourne, Australia](#), people demonstrated against the Turkish occupation in Afrin[26]. Demonstrations were also held in Gothenburg (Sweden), Bern (Switzerland), Oslo (Norway), Bilbao (Basque Country), Copenhagen (Denmark), London (UK), Liege (Belgium), Portland (USA) and Pakistan.

In Hannover, demonstrators denounced the German – Turkish collaboration as German company Rheinmetall produces tanks for the Turkish army. In Badenwürttemberg, several activists gathered in front of the SPD headquarters to denounce, one more time, the involvement of the main German parties. In addition, a demonstration was held in Munich.[27].

Women from Bologna (Italy) demonstrated against patriarchy and the Turkish invasion of Afrin. They understand this invasion as an attack to women's autonomy. In Riace and Cosenza, meetings against the Turkish occupation in Afrin and South Kurdistan (Iraq) took place. Some banners in the arms factory Leonardo in Gorizia denounced the participation of this company in the war crimes of the Turkish state in Afrin[28]. Demonstrations took place in many cities of Northern Syria like Derik and Girke Legi. On May 26th, Hundreds of residents of Amude and members of the civil institutions also demonstrated.

On May 26th, a panel was held in the city of Den Haag (Netherlands). On May 27th, The Basque internationalist organisation Askapena showed their solidarity with the Kurdish resistance.

On the Global Day of Action for Afrin, dozens of NGOs in India issued a statement to call for an end to the Turkish invasion of Afrin and all lands of Kurdistan [29].

Statements and analysis

Two Kurdish political prisoners Zanyar Muradî and Ramin Hossein Panahi sent an open letter and made a public call out for awareness against the Iranian regime's order for their execution. Another prisoner, Mohammad Salas, is already condemn to execution in Iran.

On May 29th, political parties operating under the roof of the Democratic Society Movement (TEV-DEM) published a press release on the violence and brutal attacks carried out by the Turkish army and FSA forces in Afrin[30].

A German delegation in Northern Syria said: "Here, people of all religions and backgrounds can live democratically and govern themselves. They need the support of the international community against the attacks of Turkey that are in violation of international law"[31].

The father of Anna Campbell, Hêlîn Qereçox, has accused the UK government of "back-peddaling" as he tries to bring her body home[32].

30 Kurdish parties, associations, cultural and jurist organizations have sent a letter to UNs' General Secretary António Guterres and High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeyd Raad al-Hussein to highlights the illegal occupation of Afrin[33].

In an interview to Russia Today aired on May 24th, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said "the only problem left in Syria is the SDF," and he added that he would not hesitate to use force to retake the third of the country they control[34].

Turkey's Minister Veysel Eroglu said on a campaign speech : "I swear to you we'll overtake # Britain, Germany and France. We are on the rise and they are in decline. Allah is with the Turkish nation. Therefore don't worry, we'll succeed on this with God's help"[35].

Turkey claimed to have reached an agreement with the US over Manbij, but this has been denied by US officials. The US does not want to leave Syria in order to counter Iran's influence in the region. Tensions between Turkey and the US rose after the proposal by US Senate to prevent Turkey buying F-35 jets. Disagreements between Russia and Iran are also in the rise. Russia and the Syrian regime aim to take control over all syrian territories without concessions to other parties. The situation came to a standstill due to the conflicting interests of the different actors. It is not possible to predict how the situation will evolve, but any imposition by one of these actors can lead to an open war between major global powers.

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