

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 Northern Syria. 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

1st June – 7th 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 background the Turkish occupation 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. Since the beginning of March, all districts and the city centre of Afrin had been under heavy bombardments, shelling and drone surveillance by the Turkish army targeting especially civilians. On March 18th more than 200,000 people left the town centre which was evacuated in order to avoid a physical genocide. Since then the majority of refugees is staying in the Shehba region without security guarantee nor international support.

In this new phase, the confrontation between the international powers and their interests is increasing all over Syria.

Last week's Developments inside Afrin

After 137 days of resistance against the second biggest army of the NATO, hundreds of people from Afrin Canton are still displaced and are facing difficult conditions. The Turkish army and its FSA allies are implementing ethnic cleansing, assimilation and colonisation policies, preventing the population to return to their villages and continuing preparations to add the region Afrin to Turkey's state territory. The resistance of YPG-YPJ forces in the all districts of Canton Afrin carries on, as well as the resistance of the displaced people from Afrin in Shehba Canton.

Afrin

In Afrin city, protests erupted against the continuous violations, abductions, and detentions. On June 3rd, 2 demonstrations took place in Afrin city against the Islamists factions and the Turkish army, demanding release of a media activist and end of FSA violations [1]. Another demonstration took place in the city of Shera, in front of the military police headquarters [2].

After the repair of the Meydanki dam, regular water arrives into Afrin city, but it has been found that the water is not clean, not potable and may cause diseases [3].

On June 5th, FSA members shot at the Kurdish artist Baharin Berno at the Tarnada checkpoint in Afrin [4]. According to ANF, 40 more families brought from Eastern Ghouta by the Turkish army have been settled in the village of Kaxure in Afrin's Mabeta district. Most of them are said to be families of FSA and jihadist fighters in Eastern Ghouta [5].

On June 1st, The YPG Press Office released a new statement about actions carried out in Afrin by YPG and YPJ forces during the previous two days. The actions led to the death of numerous Turkish soldiers and FSA members. 3 YPG fighters lost their lives in this actions [6].

In the first statement made by the Bubana clans in Afrin - after clashes that took place on May 31st between them and other FSA factions – the clans vowed to kill FSA members. They had joined the “Olive Branch Operation” during the attack on Afrin [7].

Shehba and Northern Syria

The Kurdish Red Crescent alerted on the bad quality of the water in Shehba canton. Lot of diseases have been spreading among the Afrin refugees. They called on the authorities to react quickly to make the water drinkable [8]. 90% of cars are out of order due to the diesel shortage induced by the regime embargo.

In Berxwedan Camp (Fafine district) the communes are organizing daily bread distribution for the refugee families, continuing the self-administration system that was in place in their homeland [9].

On June 1st, women from Deir Ezzor and Raqqa gathered at a workshop in the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria organized by the Syrian Women’s Council with support of the UN women agency in order to find solutions for women who suffered under the oppressive rule of ISIS [10].

In Tabqa, one year after the city releasing from ISIS, the Education Committee of the Democratic Civil Administration gave 50.000 school certificates. It was the first year of school in Taqba city in seven years [11].

The next phase of the Jazeera Storm operation led by SDF to clear the last syrian areas from ISIS presence has started, as announced by the SDF spokesperson Kino Gabriel on June 3rd: "The next phase of Operation Round Up/Jazeera Storm begins soon. The end of the caliphate is near. We want freedom and democracy for all the people of Syria" [12]. On the northern ISIS pocket, the SDF are advancing east toward the town of Dashisha as a “continuation of the efforts to protect the security of the Syria-Iraq border southeast of Heseke and all Heseke’s villages from ISIS”, as declared by SDF spokesperson Lilwa El Ebdullah [13]. In this context, on June 5th, the Al-Faqah village has been liberated by SDF forces after fierce fightings against ISIS. In their statement, the SDF repeated that the Jazeera Storm operation “had been paused due to attacks by the Turkish army and their allied gangs against the Afrin Canton, and has been reinstated on May 1”.

On June 2nd, the Turkish army fired gas grenades towards different places west of Serê Kaniyê on the Turkish-Syrian border, and it fired live bullets towards the silos of the area and the village of Jan Temer. No civilian casualties were reported [14].

Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran

In Turkey the snap presidential elections are to be hold on the 24th of June. The campaign is ongoing, while one candidate, Selahattin Demirtaş, from the HDP party is campaigning from his

cell of Edirne prison. The European Parliament Turkey Rapporteur Kati Piri has stated that he should be released for a fair election [15].

In the Nêrduşê village of the district of Şemzînana in Colemêrg (North Kurdistan, Turkish State), Turkish soldiers tortured the shepherds Nasir Taş and Ramazan Aktaş for 2 hours, inflicting severe wounds on their backs [16].

According to Jalal Khalo, deputy mayor in Shingal, US builds a base on Sinjar (Iraqi state) : “Today, 15 military vehicles of US troops arrived on top of Mount Shingal and stationed themselves near Mira peak on the mountain” [17].

Suleyman Soylu, Turkey’s Interior Minister said: "Now our children [the Turkish soldiers] are 26-27 kilometres ahead in northern Iraq", speaking about the Turkish occupation in South Kurdistan – Iraq [18]. During the attacks on South Kurdistan, the Turkish army bombed the village of Bêdehê, near Kanimasi [19]. 13 MP of the parliament of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq signed an Statement asking the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Iraqi authorities to stop the Turkish occupation in South Kurdistan-North Iraq [20].

On June 3rd, Iraq judicial authorities have issued an arrest warrant for Rebwar Talabani, head of the Kirkuk Provincial Council for “hoisting the Kurdish flag on official buildings of Kirkuk and organizing the referendum [of independance] ” in the city [21].

The same day, the Iraqi Parliament held an emergency session on the water crisis caused by the construction of the Ilisu Dam in Turkey, accusing it of cutting water flows of Tigris River by half and warning on large-scale forced migration [22].

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu on May 31st discussed a de-escalation zone in southern Syria with Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman. Iranian forces would withdraw from the Syrian territory which is less than 70-80 km away from to the Syria-Israel frontier [23]. On June 3rd, foreign Minister of Syria, Walid al-Muallem insisted that US forces must evacuate al-Tanf, a small base in Syria’s south-east along its border with Iraq and Jordan. The strategic site sits on a major highway from Iraq to Damascus [24].

Solidarity for Afrin

On June 3rd, Kurdish women staged a demonstration to boycott Turkey in Stockholm (Sweden). They handed out leaflets informing about the invasion, massacres and rights violations committed by the Turkish state in Afrin, North Kurdistan (Turkey) and South Kurdistan (Iraq) [25].

On June 4th, Shengal Autonomous Administration, Co-president Zehra Silêman and Ezidi Women’s Freedom Movement (TJAÊ) executive Zehrî Şemp arrived in Northern Syria on behalf of women from Shengal in solidarity with Afrin and to deliver the aid they had gathered for Afrin refugees in Shehba [26].

Statements and analysis

The Rojava Women's Coordination condemned the abuses of the invading Turkish army in Afrin: "Women abduction, rape, forcing Ezidis to become Muslim, plunder are happening every day under the silence of the international community"[27].

Bashar Al-Assad threatened to reoccupy the SDF held areas in Syria: "The only problem left in Syria is the SDF [...] We have one option, to live with each other as Syrians. If not, we're going to resort... to liberating those areas by force" [28]. The SDF spokesperson Kino Gabriel says they are ready for negotiations with the regime and they do not seek to solve the problems with war: "Any military solution, as far as the SDF is concerned, will lead to more losses and destruction and difficulties for the Syrian people" [29].

Director of Joint Staff General Kenneth McKenzie after Assad threat: "Any interested party in Syria should understand that attacking US forces or our coalition partners will be a bad policy". He refused to put any time frame on US presence in the country [30].

On June 4th, Mike Pompeo met Turkey's foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu in Washington to discuss where about Manbij. The joint statement reports "to include taking steps to ensure the security and stability in Manbij. They endorsed a Road Map to this end and underlined their mutual commitment to its implementation, reflecting agreement to closely follow developments on the ground" [31].

The YPG Press Office announced the withdrawing of its military advisers from Manbij, after the withdrawal of their forces on the ground in 2016. The Manbij Military Council stays in charge of the security in the city and region. Still it is not clear how the agreement between US and Turkey will be implemented. The Turkish threats seems also to be connected to the upcoming elections in Turkey on June 24th, since Erdogan's party tries to get more support by the use of war and security policies and by elating nationalist feelings in his population. In the meanwhile, the SDF, in coordination with Iraqi forces are liberating the last pockets held by ISIS. The operations towards Dhashisha are going on and many ISIS fighters are gathering around Hajin where top ISIS commander are believed to be hiding. While Syrian regime and Russia prepare military operations in Southern Syria, tensions between Russia and Iran are rising.

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