

The Democratic Society Movement, TEV-DEM



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39 French senators urge the government to support Kurds in Afrin

39 senators from all political groups in France have called on the government to “support Kurds in Afrin”.

39 senators have signed the call for an immediate stop to the Turkish invasion Afrin and the withdrawal of the Turkish army. 17 of the senators are from the Socialist and Republican group, 10 from the Democratic and Social Europe group, 5 are Republicans, 3 are Communists and Ecologists, 1 is from the Central Union and 1 is from the governing Republican March group. The call was launched on January 30 by Oliver Leonhardt’s lead, and other senators are expected to join in.

The call to the government states that the Kurds are the best alliance France has in the fight against ISIS, and that “Thousands of them have lost their lives in this war for our freedom and our security.”

The senators state that the Kurds are subjected to the attacks of the Turkish President’s “authoritarian regime” today, and that the villages and towns in the Afrin canton are under bombardment by Turkish fighter jets and heavy artilleries.

The call includes a reminder that there have been no threats or attacks against Turkey from the Kurdish region, and adds that over 800.000 Kurdish and Arab civilians’ lives are at risk due to Turkish attacks. The senators state that the Turkish invasion attempt is “an unacceptable attack, a severe violation of international law and a serious threat on the region’s peace and stability.”

The senators say: “It is a moral imperative for France, the US and all members of the International Coalition to defend those who sacrifice their lives for our freedom and be in solidarity with our allies and our comrades in arms. It is time to break this deaf silence by the international community in the face of this attack. We are calling on France to speak up, and to use all the influence the country has in the UN Security Council and Europe to demand an immediate withdrawal of the Turkish army from Afrin and an immediate end to their intervention.”¹

Calls for U.S. sanctions, arms embargo on Turkey

The director of outreach at Washington D.C.-based non-profit Kurdistan Aid said that the U.S. should respond to Turkey’s Afrin offensive with an arms embargo to the country and targeted sanctions to Turkish officials.

In an article for the U.S. defence magazine, Defense One, Meghan Bodette, a Kurdish rights activist, criticised the U.S. policy of restraint against Turkey’s military offensive in Syria and said that it was counterproductive.

¹ <https://anfenglish.com/news/39-french-senators-urge-the-government-to-support-kurds-in-afrin-24835>

Bodette, in her article, said that Ankara's interests are illegitimate and are at odds with every other major player in Syria's war: "If the invasion succeeds and Turkey's proposed 'buffer zone' is implemented, it will enable al-Qaeda and ISIS, prolong the war, and lead to the displacement of thousands — all destabilising outcomes in which the U.S. and Europe will lose."

Bodette claimed that Turkey employs "al-Qaeda-aligned proxies" and aims to change Afrin's demographics and remove its Kurdish majority by force.

The U.S. administration should instead provide more advanced weapons to the Syrian Kurdish [fighters] to defend themselves from Turkish attacks and focus once again on defeating the Islamic State together with the global coalition, Bodette suggested.²

Kurdistan Parliament delegation arrives in Afrin, delivers aid to civilians

AFRIN, Kurdistan Region (Kurdistan 24) – Delegates from the Kurdistan Region's Parliament on Sunday evening arrived in the Kurdish enclave of Afrin in Syrian Kurdistan (Rojava) and were welcomed by people and Kurdish officials in the region.

The purpose of the visit is to help supply medical aid to local hospitals and assess the situation which is continuously evolving.

The delegates are Ali Halo from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Abbas Fatah from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Sherko Hama-Amin from Gorran (Change), Abu Karwan from the Communist Party of Kurdistan, and Sohrab Mikael from the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU).

In a welcoming ceremony, the delegates were greeted by Kurdish officials and civilians in Afrin's Square of Martyrs.

The Afrin Canton Executive Council Co-presidents, Osman Sheikh Issa and Hevi Mustafa, warmly welcomed their delegation, adding that their visit made the embargoed Kurds "proud," and that it served Kurdish "national unity."

"The people of Afrin, with their loyalty and strength, can combat any country in the world, including those using advanced and modern military technology. With their might, they registered another victory to go into the pages of Kurdish history," Ali Halo told Kurdistan 24 Correspondent Akram Salih in Afrin.

Asia Abdullah, co-chair of the ruling Democratic Union Party (PYD), told Kurdistan 24 that, "the visit by members of the Kurdistan Parliament sent an important message to the people of Afrin and all people of Kurdistan. We welcome them and send our greetings to all people of the Kurdistan Region. Today, Afrin's resistance against the occupation of Turkey and their

² <https://ahvalnews.com/us-turkey/activist-calls-us-sanctions-arms-embargo-turkey>

rebels is fierce. The assault on Afrin is an assault on the people of Kurdistan, and Afrin's victory will be that of all of Kurdistan.”

The Kurdistan Parliament on Jan. 30 held a special session on the Turkish military operation in Afrin. As a result of the meeting, the Parliament elected to send humanitarian assistance to people and civilians affected by the conflict and opened the Pesh Khabur border crossing with Rojava to facilitate the shipment of aid...³

Turkish state bombs civilian areas in Afrin

The invading Turkish state continues targeting civilian settlements during its attacks against Afrin Canton of Northern Syria. Several villages and towns have been bombed since the launch of invasion operation on January 20.

Turkish warplanes shelled Derbalut village and Dewa Hill in Afrin's Jindires district on Monday. Simultaneously with the bombardment, clash erupted between SDF fighters and Turkish invasion forces in Derbalut village.

In Jindires, the water treatment plant in Kefer Sefre village was targeted by artillery attacks. The water treatment plant in Metina village of Shera district had also been targeted and severely damaged by attacks previously

The invading forces also attacked Miske village in Rajo district as well as Big Enherece and Small Enherece villages in Mabata district with artillery.

Attacks by the invading forces target civilians, civilian settlements and civilian sub-structure. At least 150 civilians lost their lives and hundreds of others got wounded in the attacks, while some neighborhoods were completely destroyed.

In Shera district, three residents of Omer Simo village were abducted by the gangs under the command of Turkish forces. The abducted villagers were identified as Mehmud Mihemed Xedro (46), Henif Welid Welo (42) and his wife Ceylan İmad Mihemed (33) and their aftermath is unknown. Turkish forces had been documented torturing civilians before.

The bombardments on Rajo demolished hundreds of houses, workplaces, school and bakery in the district, and severely damaged the civilian sub-structure. Agriculture centers, building of Kurdish Red Crescent Heyva Sor and healthcare centers were also demolished as a result of attacks, while the district market known as Trade Street fell into ruin.

In Jindires district, at least 200 of the total 400 houses in Jer neighborhood were completely destroyed as a result of Turkish airstrikes. The neighborhood is inhabited by Kurds and Arabs.⁴

³ <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/bdab94a2-959c-4699-a757-bd63772c922c>

⁴ <https://anfenglish.com/rojava/turkish-state-bombs-civilian-areas-in-afrin-24882>

Migrant in Atme Camp: Turkish forces use us as human shields

A migrant in Atme Refugee Camp, from where the Turkish state conducts attacks against Afrin, stated that they are being used as human shields by Turkish forces.

The Turkish state and allied terrorist groups that continue their inhuman attacks against Afrin were exposed to be carrying out attacks on Afrin from the Atme Refugee Camp, in an effort to make the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) respond to these attacks and eventually commit a massacre against the displaced people in the camp.

A group of news agencies went to the Atme Camp and talked to the migrants sheltered here. Videos by these news agencies clearly show that the camp is being used as a center of attacks by the Turkish state.

A migrant spoke to Ined Beledi News Agency and said they took shelter in this camp after fleeing from the repression of the Ba'ath regime. He told that; "We do not feel safe here because the Turkish state is using us as human shields in their attacks against Afrin. The Turkish state is attacking Afrin from this camp where we are sheltered. We cannot sleep at night because of the artillery attacks carried out from the camp."⁵

CNN: The world's most progressive democracy is being born. Don't let it get strangled

We are only three weeks into the invasion of Afrin in Northern Syria by Turkey and their quislings in the Free Syrian Army, a dangerous turn for the Syrian civil war, and yet it no longer features on our front pages and television news.

The mounting daily death toll of civilians, pictures of wounded women and children, hollowed out buildings with their twisted iron spines, plumes of black smoke -- fail to move people sufficiently. But compassion fatigue is not some inexplicable human condition; it is the result of being bombarded with images of devastation without proper context.

Syria, in particular, with its seven-year long civil war, a battleground for almost all the major world and regional powers with a seemingly invincible dictator, Bashar al-Assad, at the helm induces in us a very particular sense of powerlessness. Since the self-described caliphate of ISIS has been reduced to a thumbnail, Syria has further lost its fascination for us.

But the very people, the Kurds, who led the successful battle against ISIS are now under attack in Afrin. The United States, which provided air cover in that battle, has proved to be an unfaithful ally.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, by refusing to condemn Turkey's invasion, has given it carte blanche to bomb the United States' own allies because Turkey has "legitimate" concerns about its borders, as long as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of Turkey, shows restraint and avoids

⁵ <https://anfenglish.com/rojava/migrant-in-atme-camp-turkish-forces-use-us-as-human-shields-24874>

civilian casualties. A World Health Organization report emerging from that area indicates it is in fact civilians who have fallen victim to Turkey's random bombing. So much for Turkey heeding the advice of its powerful NATO ally!

The same report goes on to say that the Syrian government troops have blocked all but one exit out of Afrin. The Turkish invasion from the north of Afrin is creating refugees while the Syrian government is kettling them from the south.

Instead of Syria feeling threatened by Turkey's invasion, Assad appears to be letting Turkey do the dirty work on his behalf, cooperating implicitly with Turkey by creating a pincer movement to choke off their common enemy, the Kurds. This is a strategy that Assad has used with Syrian rebels across Syria, sealing them in to an area, then bombarding and starving them into submission.

Why we should care

So why should we care about this latest development in the Syrian war? Because Afrin, along with the cantons of Euphrates and Jazira, is experimenting with a form of bottom-up, direct democracy that is arguably more progressive than any other system in the West. When I visited Rojava -- or the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria [DFNS], as these cantons are collectively known -- in March 2016, I witnessed a revolution unlike any other; women's equality, with the end of patriarchy their avowed goal, is driving this revolution.

Is your hair standing on end yet? Every institution -- local councils, schools, hospitals -- is run on a co-presidency rule with a man and a woman sharing all posts, including the command of their defense forces.

Photos of the women of the YPJ in military fatigues and colorful scarves in the front line against ISIS have been the outside world's only peek into this society. Parallel to an administration with equal quotas for men and women, there are women-only structures that have the power of veto on all policies relating to women.

After the fall of Raqqa, there were amusing reports from the refugee camps being run by the multiethnic, Kurdish-led, Syrian Democratic Forces, the SDF, that Arab men, recently escaped from ISIS, were complaining about SDF insistence on gender equality. One said, "They give a lot of rights to women. If I raise my voice at a woman, they might put me in jail."

The DFNS is totally wedded to the idea of racial inclusivity. Dr. Alan Semo, UK representative of the Democratic Union Party, the main political party in DFNS, described the quota system in operation. The Kurdish people have voluntarily surrendered their majority status in their Parliament and taken a 10% stake alongside Arabs and Syriacs (Christians), even though there is a long history of discrimination by the Arabs against the Kurds.

A refreshing counter to sectarian strife

In a country torn apart by sectarian struggle, this secular society provides a refreshing countercurrent, a sanctuary to 2 million refugees from the rest of Syria and Iraq. Yet instead of seeking to replicate this model not just across Syria but across the Middle East and, I would argue, across the whole world, the powers that be are seeking to extinguish this flame ...

The Rojava (DFNS) revolution is midwife to the birth of another world. Erdoğan has declared that, "Our mission is to strangle it before it is even born."

It has been born. It could spawn a more humane, rational, ethical and equal world. We should do everything in our power to keep the revolution alive. We could start by stopping the sale of arms to Turkey and demanding that they be booted out of NATO.⁶

SDF: 862 Turkish soldiers and jihadists killed in Afrin in 23 days

The Turkish invasion with its Jihadist factions against Afrin district has started at 5 PM of February,20,2018 and is still ongoing until 12-Feb-2018. The following are the numeric statistic of the Turkish invasion:

1-Civilian martyrs: due to the Turkish attacks on civilian targets, whether by airstrikes or artillery shelling, 180 civilians martyred including children, women and old aged. All of the names were officially documented in Afrin hospital's records.

2-The wounded civilians: due to the Turkish attacks on the civilians, 413 civilians were wounded including children, women and old aged. All of the names are archived in Afrin hospital.

3- SDF Martyrs: during a chivalric resistance by our forces against the Turkish invasion army and its Jihadist factions, 98 of our fighters got martyred and were held by formal and public burial ceremonies.

4- Enemy Death Toll: during the military operation conducted by our forces, 862 enemy were confirmed by our forces to be killed in the battlefield.

5-Air Attacks: the Turkish warplanes carried out 668 indiscriminate raids. The raids targeted civilian locations and the infrastructure in Afrin such as fresh water pump, schools, bakeries and animal farms.

6-Hovercraft Attacks: the Turkish invasion army has carried out 16 helicopter attacks against populated locations and the infrastructure.

7- Heavy Weapon Shelling: the Turkish invasion army and its Jihadist factions conducted 2645 indiscriminate shelling, using tanks and artillery.

8-Direct Clashes: our forces engaged with the invaders 409 time in which the results were know, while there were 108 direct engagements in which the results were unknown.

9-Aircraft shooting down: since the begging of the Turkish invasion, our forces have been able to shoot down 2 helicopters, one of them of Copra Brand and the other was Skurski type. The last one was carrying 11 Turkish officers and soldiers. Our forces also shot down 2 reconnaissance planes, one of them was of Bayraqdar type, where the Turkish President signed on its body.

⁶ <http://edition.cnn.com/2018/02/12/opinions/worlds-most-progressive-democracy-born-dont-let-turkey-strange-it-opinion-gupta/index.html>

10-Armored Vehicles Destruction: 51 armored vehicle were completely destroyed including tanks, APCs and 4 wheeled drive vehicles, while 15 vehicles were damaged including tanks and APCs.⁷

Over 1,000 Kurds march in protest from Lausanne to Geneva

Around 1,200 Kurds began a protest march in Lausanne on Monday against the Turkish bombing of Afrine, a Kurdish enclave in Syria. The group will walk in several stages to Geneva, where they plan a demonstration in front of the UN Palais des Nations.

The protesters initially gathered in the centre of Lausanne, before moving to the lakeside port of Ouchy, where the official march began. Their starting point was the Palais de Rumine, where the Treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923. The treaty established the borders for modern Turkey, ending the Kurdish people's aspiration of having their own state.

The participants are protesting against the bombing of the Kurdish enclave of Afrine in Syria, an offensive that began on January 20. Approximately 150 civilians have been killed in the area by the bombing campaign, the organising committee said.

The protesters called on the international community to demand the respect of human rights in the region. The UN needs to stand together to prevent a massacre, the protesters said. Most of the marchers travelled from within Switzerland, but the group consisted of nationalities from 17 different countries.

The next stop for the march is Morges, where they plan to arrive on Monday evening. They expect to reach Geneva on Thursday, before organising a demonstration in front of the UN on Friday.⁸

Swiss MP: “The invasion is unacceptable, action must be taken”

Switzerland Federal MP Denis de la Reussille called the Turkish state's attacks against Afrin an invasion, and called on international forces to take action against the Turkish state. Reactions against the Turkish state and their allied gangs attacking to invade Afrin continue to pour in. Switzerland Workers Party (POP) Federal MP Denis de la Reussille spoke to the ANF and called the Turkish state's attacks against Afrin a direct invasion attempt, while stating that the silence of Europe and Switzerland in the face of recent events is unacceptable.

⁷ <http://sdf-press.com/en/2018/02/the-statistics-of-the-military-operations-in-afrin-since-the-beginning-of-the-turkish-invasion-on-february202018/>

⁸ https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/syria-bombings_over-1-000-kurds-march-in-protest-from-lausanne-to-geneva--/43894568

“ATTACKING KURDS IS A SCANDAL

Reussille also said he is furious against the worldwide silence in the face of the Turkish state’s invasion of Afrin and added: “The Turkish state entering the territory of another country and attacking Kurds who defend democracy in the region is a scandal. This can have no rightful excuse.”

“It was thanks to the Kurdish forces under attack today that the ISIS presence in the region was removed and people were liberated,” said Reussille and added: “Europe has quickly forgotten that the Kurds are the most important force fighting ISIS. It is unacceptable for Switzerland and Europe to remain silent in the face of the Turkish state attacks.”

“TURKEY VIOLATES INTERNATIONAL LAW”

Reussille mentioned the international law Turkey is subject to and stated that the Turkish state entering Syrian territory and attacking the Afrin Canton openly violates international law. Reussille said Turkey has ignored international law before they started attacking Afrin, and stressed that with their support for ISIS and other extremist Islamist groups before, Turkey had in fact been committing more crimes. Reussille continued: “Unfortunately, despite the many protests, Switzerland continues to sell weapons to Turkey who continues to disregard international law. Today, the Turkish state is attacking Kurds together with the jihadist groups they have been sending weapons aid to.”

“IT IS RIDICULOUS TO CALL KURDISH FORCES AS TERRORISTS”

“Standing with the Erdoğan dictatorship instead of the Kurds who have the most democratic system in the region is a great contradiction,” said Reussille and added: “The autonomous structure built in Rojava has the most democratic and progressive structure in my and my party’s opinion. Calling forces therein terrorists, in mimicry of some circles’ discourse, is ridiculous. And, these forces called terrorist structures under fire by Turkey today did receive our support when they were fighting ISIS to defend humanity and democratic values.”

“SUPPORTING KURDS SHOULD BE A DUTY FOR US”

Reussille compared the South African leader Mandela’s movement and the Kurdish movement: “Mandela and his movement were called terrorists as well. But later, with support from international forces, Mandela achieved so much. Mandela was awarded a peace prize. The same is happening today with the Kurds, and I say these forces dubbed ‘terrorists’ have the most democratic structure in the Middle East. The system they built is very important for the future of the region. Kurds today want their most natural right, to be autonomous or independent on their own lands. Unfortunately, this demand of the Kurds does not receive international support. Normally, supporting the Kurds who have the most democratic system in the region should be a duty for us. Most importantly, Europe is condoning these attacks against the Kurds who have a system that is promising for the region today by staying silent. This is unacceptable. Action must be taken against the Turkish state attacks.⁹

⁹ <https://anfenglish.com/news/swiss-mp-the-invasion-is-unacceptable-action-must-be-taken-24889>

Eight Congressmen Asks Tillerson To Convey U.S. Concerns To Turkey On Afrin Ops

SULAIMANI – Eight members of Congress asked U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to convey concerns of the United States to the Turkish government “at the highest level” on its military operation on Afrin region.

Together they penned a letter to Tillerson regarding his visit to Ankara on Thursday (February 15) to talk with senior Turkish officials, aiming at easing tensions with its NATO ally.

“We write with urgency in advance of your upcoming trip to Ankara, Turkey to raise serious concerns about the current humanitarian situation in Afrin, Syria and to ask that you convey these concerns to the Turkish government at the highest level,” Congress members stated on Wednesday.

Turkey is required to ensure the safety of civilians under international law, the letter read. Turkey should also allow access by organizations providing medical and other humanitarian relief.

“We ask you to urge the Turkish government to take steps to address these humanitarian concerns, follow international legal norms with respect to asylum seekers and refugees, and to commit to working towards a cease fire.”

The eight Democrats are from the U.S. House of Representative and four of them are on the Foreign Affairs committee, one of the strongest committees in the U.S. government.

Though writing for themselves, not as a committee, their leadership also represents the states of California, Nevada, Massachusetts, Colorado and Washington.¹⁰

Turkish army continues to bomb Afrin’s historic sites

The invading Turkish army continues its barbaric attacks against Afrin and bombs the historic sites in the region.

The invading Turkish army and their allied Al Qaeda terrorist groups, who have been barbarically attacking Afrin with fighter jets and heavy weapons, continue to kill civilians and target historic sites. After the bombing of the Eyn Darê and Nebi Hori temples, now the Romani Temple has been damaged in a bombing.

The temple stands in the Kalotê village in the Sherawa district and was one of the oldest known sites in the region. The temple is known to have been used as a church after the 4th century, and Muslims who came into the region after the 10th century used the temple as a defensive citadel.

¹⁰ <http://www.nrttv.com/EN/Details.aspx?Jimare=18782>

Damascus University Archaeology Faculty Dean Selaheddin Sino stated that part of the temple had been destroyed in the bombing. Our reporters in the region documented the damage done to the temple.¹¹

¹¹ <https://anfenglish.com/news/turkish-army-continues-to-bomb-afrin-s-historic-sites-24940>