

# **ISIS is not defeated and Europe can stop a disaster for itself and the people of North-East Syria**

2018-12-21

Since 2014 our Syriac-Assyrian people in Syria and Iraq have suffered greatly under ISIS. Today we can see that ISIS is almost defeated after intense cooperation between SDF and International Coalition. Now however we urge European countries to step in as US forces withdraw from North-East Syria. The Christian communities there fear total destruction by the hands of Turkey, Iran and even ISIS as that is not fully defeated yet. We call on European countries to join the UK and France in finalising the fight against ISIS and keeping North-East Syria stable. We and many experts believe that ISIS otherwise will return in strength.

As European Syriac Union we urge European countries to consider what will happen if there is no replacement of the US forces. Even at this moment it is clear that forces of Assad are planning to invade Idlib. The Turkish proxies that committed already many crimes will wage war against the SDF and end the stability of North-East Syria. Simultaneously these forces will clash against Assad's forces who will undoubtedly try to regain control of North-East Syria as well when Turkey and its jihadis attack the SDF. In this chaos ISIS will rise again and regain rapidly its strength and will create new havoc in the region and elsewhere. This will pose a serious risk to Europe. All that is needed is that four countries send 250 armed forces to replace the 2000 US forces. This will enable the UK and France to continue its operations and presence in North-East Syria. We are convinced that Turkey will not dare to go to war against its NATO allies. Clearly France and UK share that opinion. Europe will be able to avert a disaster for the region and for Europe itself.

In North-East Syria our Syriac-Assyrian people have achieved a special and unique solution in the face of the ISIS invasion. They allied themselves with their neighbours, Kurds and Arabs. Together they created the Syrian Democratic Forces that faced off ISIS and together they created a situation that is unique in the Middle East. They did not just defeat ISIS in cooperation with the US. They created the much-needed freedom and normal governance and created stability in one-third of Syria. Now the Self-Administration of North-East Syria (formerly Federation of Northern Syria) has brought freedom for millions of people.

A multi-ethnic and multi-religious alliance of parties and peoples established secular democracy where men and women work together and where they are equal in all respects. Kurds, Arabs and Syriac-Assyrians, Muslims, Christians and Yazidi's and people of no faith managed to create a society where all are free. They brought real freedom of religion. This freedom of religion does not only mean that the historical Syriac-Assyrian communities are free. Uniquely for the Middle East, those who convert from Islam to Christianity are free to do so and have their own Churches in all openness. This is the freedom we wish to see for all Christians in the Middle East. This is the freedom all men and women of that tortured region need. Kurds, Arabs and Syriac-Assyrian Christians died in the fight against ISIS. They died fighting side by side with the US Army in this battle against that monstrous organisation. Together they liberated millions who were subjugated.

Now Turkey wants to destroy them. We know what Turkey wants to achieve. We know that they invaded Syria before and that they destroyed the Churches of Afrin (North-West Syria) and hunted the Christians down. They also destroyed the peaceful Yazidi's of Afrin who have never harmed anyone. The Turkish army fought side by side with jihadists and Al Qaida in Afrin. Afrin was one region that had the same governance and freedom as North-East Syria. Now it is ruled by sharia enforced by Turkish-backed jihadists. We urge the European countries not to sit down and allow our people and the Yazidi's as well as other peoples in the region to be destroyed again simply by inaction. At this moment European countries can avert disaster by sending a small force in a transition agreement with the US as the UK and France already committed themselves to this end. The benefits of that choice will clearly outweigh the costs.