

# No-fly zone over North East Syria Stop the Ottoman Turkish invading North East Syria Don't let Christianity be driven out of North East Syria

2019-10-09



On Sunday the 6th of October, 2019, the President of the USA issued a statement giving Turkey the green light to carry out a military invasion into the area controlled by the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria – DAA. It appears that this decision was not done in coordination with other International Coalition Partners in the area. More importantly the decision to abandon the DAA and their forces (SDF) that fought alongside the International Coalition Forces to push back ISIS, is a betrayal of the DAA and it's people, which compromises not only Kurds, but Christians and Arab tribes that fought together with the USA. This decision will lead to a number of far reaching affects that will cause further instability in the region:

The unilateral withdrawal of USA forces will only benefit Turkey, Iran, Russia and the Assad regime. The DAA will have no choice but fearing brutal extinction similar to Afrin, to make a deal with Russia and the Assad regime to keep out the Turks. This means the end of this model of democracy that has worked in Syria and has successfully kept out a radical Islamic ideology.

The vacuum created by the USA withdrawal will give Iran the opportunity to strengthen the „Shiite crescent“ or „land bridge“ through the Al-Hassaka governorate down through Syria (and to meet up with Hizbollah and Lebanon). Currently American troops act as barrier against Iran (and ISIS). When they withdraw, the land east of the Euphrates will most likely be divided up between the Turks/Islamists in the north and the Assad/Iranian Revolutionary Guards in the south. In addition the current locations controlled by Turkey and their Islamist forces will be as dangerous and chaotic as the current areas Turkey maintains some control over; such as Idlib and Afrin. There will not be any peace in these areas.

When Turkey invades all the major cities housing Christians and Kurds along the Kurdish border this invasion will include Turkish troops and their mercenaries such as the so called Free Syrian Army, and a massacre will happen on a larger scale than what happened in Afrin. Notably, there are no Christians left in Afrin (Turkey and its Islamist allies cleansed over 200 000 DAA citizens from Afrin in January 2018). A Turkish invasion will result in massive flows of refugees as they escape another Turkish genocide. Our experience of Turkey's ethnic cleansing in Afrin, Syria, after they occupied it should indicate Turkey's real intentions in North and East Syria. Importantly they used jihadist groups who adhere to the same ideology as ISIS to commit human rights abuses, theft of property, and displacement of local communities.

Turkey's aggression is a clear and present danger to the stability of NE Syria and its peoples. There have not been any cross border attacks from the DAA into Turkey. In contrast, Turkey is constantly shelling NE Syria and the DAA region. If Turkey attacks and attempts to occupy the DAA region, the SDF does not have the capacity to divide their forces between guarding ISIS prisoners and sleeper cells, and defending itself against Turkey. The USA decision to force the Turks to take responsibility for these ISIS prisoners and fighter cells is a disastrous mistake. Turkey's assistance of ISIS militarily, with supplies, funding and free border access of ISIS militants and especially foreign fighters is well documented.

The result of the Turkish invasion will cause thousands of the ISIS prisoners and jihadis to escape or be released; as the SDF does not have the capacity to fight Turkey and hold ISIS prisoners. Most likely many will flee into Iraq in an attempt to join with other members of ISIS there. This will ensure the comeback of ISIS, which will jeopardise the fragile stability in Iraq (and Syria). Iran is already mobilising troops to protect their Shiite interests in Bagdad. This will cause further instability in Iraq where over 100 civilians had died protesting already this past month.

As co-initiators of the administration of NE Syria, we the Syriac Christians have a long and bloody history with the Turkish Republic. We remind the international community and public opinion of the Turkish Genocide of our people in 1915, which decimated the Syriac Christian population.

### **Current Situation:**

As of Wednesday 9th of October Turkey invaded and they are hitting civilian targets including towns such as Qamishli, where Kurds and Christians lived in peace together. Our people report heavy shelling of civilian homes and within a couple of hours already two Syriac Christians were killed and many injured.

Also the Syriac Military Council point in the village of Ter Cihan in the borders of Al-Qahtaniyah – Qabre Hewore, had been target of Turkish air strikes.

The Kurds are reporting civilian casualties as well as children. In addition Islamic fighters with Al-Qaida, ISIS and other similar radical groups have joined the Turkish ground offensive. We anticipate massive civilian casualties.

### **Recommendations for immediate implementation to safeguard the DAA:**

1. Implement a no-fly zone (similar to 1991), which will protect the people living in this area.
2. The International Coalition must immediately move its troops on to the border between NE Syria and Turkey. The continued presence of the International Coalition Forces in the areas of East of the Euphrates is a guarantee of stability for the region, and will prevent breakout of another war, which would have catastrophic consequences the geopolitical power balance and the DAA. Furthermore, these forces need to stay in place to hold off an ISIS insurgency.
3. The International Coalition should consider Christian and Arab forces to patrol these proposed buffer zone areas so as to decrease tensions with the Kurds and keep Turkish forces out of the DAA.
4. The International Coalition should insist that any political settlement requires the withdrawal of

Iranian forces and their proxies from all Syria.

5. The international community should strongly resist all attempts by Turkey and other regimes to relocate Syrian refugees that are not from the DAA into this region.
6. Appeasement by withdrawing USA forces in favor of Turkey occupying and committing human rights abuses and atrocities in NE Syria, will ultimately lead to a significant conflict between the countries of the International Coalition Forces and NATO ally Turkey. It would seriously risk damaging the USA and Turkey's fragile relationship, and cause greater isolation of Turkey on the world stage.

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