



A message to the diplomatic and political representations and to the public opinion

Five years of Turkish aggression against Afrin

Translated from Arabic

January 20, 2023 is the fifth anniversary of the Turkish aggression against the Syrian Kurdish region of Afrin with the participation of Syrian mercenary militias under the name of "Syrian National Army" of the Syrian Coalition of Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, and with the blessing of the Syrian Islamic Union – Istanbul, and the recitation of Sura Al-Fath by ninety thousand preachers in Turkish mosques by a decision of the "Waqf-Diyanet", and the use of all kinds of weapons on land and in the air to the maximum extent possible until the occupation of the area on 18. March 2018.

The attack began in the first moment with the bombing of /108/ targets by /72/ fighter planes launched from Turkish territory, and during the /58/ days that followed the attack, the aggression was directed against infrastructure, public utilities, and service facilities (water tanks, bakeries, clinics, hospitals...). The aggression displaced most of the inhabitants of the region, destroyed thousands of houses and not only targeted the civilian population, but also perpetrated cruel massacres against them. The number of victims amounted to more than 5,000 dead and injured, including the elderly, women, and children, and it also targeted archaeological sites and tourist attractions.

From the first day of the occupation until today, terrible crimes and violations have been committed against the population. The number of civilian casualties during this period reached about /275/, including children and women who died either by murder or under other circumstances (by torture, live bullets, explosives, landmines, executions or bombing of areas where the displaced people from Afrin were relocated to the villages and towns of al-Shahba) as well as those who died under the psychological pressure and harsh living conditions due to the occupation and its consequences, not to mention about /500/ prisoners or abductees (Forcibly hidden).

A systematic and widespread demographic shift occurred in the region, as more than 250,000 people from the indigenous population were displaced because of the aggression, leading to a decline in the proportion of Kurds in the region from about 95% to less than 25%. Rather, within less than two years of the occupation, some 500,000 people from the families of the mujahideen and recruits from other provinces were resettled there, and model settlements were built for them with humanitarian and aid names and with Qatari, Kuwaiti, Palestinian, and Turkish funding.

Immediately after the invasion of the region, the armed groups involved in the aggression looted private and public property (houses, stores, warehouses, machinery, equipment, schools, hospitals, and service facilities, even livestock and poultry...) and seized a bout /100.000/ other properties: (olive groves, lands, houses, stores and facilities and their contents), and it continues to this day to steal and plunder the seasons and collect royalties, and cutting down perennial forests and olive groves for the purpose of logging, coal industry, and trade in them, it also dug and bulldozed all the hills, historical sites and religious shrines in search of antiquities and treasures and stole them, In addition, it exposes the remaining indigenous population to different types of attacks and crimes, such as murder, kidnapping, disappearances, arbitrary detention, extortion, etc. All this is done systematically and under the supervision of the Turkish secret service.

The Yazidi Kurds from the region have been forcibly relocated and religiously persecuted, they have also been prevented from practicing their religious beliefs and rituals or celebrating their festivals, and their shrines and cemeteries have been wantonly destroyed, while at the same time Islamic religious activities are taking place in the region and Quran memorization courses and "Imam Khatib" schools are being held.

The region is in a state of chaos, disorder, insecurity, and the phenomenon of armed recruits - in addition to fighters - spreading out and using them indiscriminately, as well as cases of fighting between militias and open expansions of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (Al-Nusra Front) across the geography of the region under the eyes of the Turkish army and intelligence.

Turkey bans the Kurdish language and culture and works to erase the region's heritage and destroy its Kurdish identity by mandating the Turkish language in schools and opening cultural centers that emphasize Ottoman glory.

The displaced people of Afrin in the areas and camps of al-Shahba and the city of Aleppo suffer greatly from the very difficult living conditions. They are caught between the Syrian regime's checkpoints and those of the coalition militants. They are not reached by international aid organizations or free media, nor can they return to their homes because the minimum conditions for safe return are not met.

Turkey's de facto control of Afrin is considered an occupation, but it is shirking its political and legal responsibilities and failing to fulfill its obligations under international covenants and agreements. Rather, it imposes a siege over the region and a media blackout to turn the area of the region into a large prison for the population.

On this occasion, we reiterate our condemnation of the aggression and occupation of Afrin and denounce the daily crimes that have not stopped since the first day of the occupation until today. We also condemn the process of demographic change, which is a form of ethnic cleansing that is itself a crime against humanity.

- We appeal to the United Nations and international organizations to fulfill their duties towards a country that is being crushed by the violence of power and counter-violence, its name is Syria, and to find a political way out to end the chaos, confusion and bloodshed, as well as towards a forgotten spot called "Chiyaye Kurmenj-Afrin", which has been neglected by the regime in Damascus, and which Turkey has left it to the bastards and jihadists to tamper with it and with the lives of its children, and perhaps later launch terrorist actions from there that will affect humanity.

- Put pressure on the government in Ankara to withdraw its army to the international borders, to compensate for the damages caused by the occupation of Afrin and the rest of the occupied territories, to compensate those affected and to work for the safe return of the displaced people.

- ✓ *Freedom for those arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared.*
- ✓ *The voluntary and safe return of displaced persons from their homes.*

18 January 2023

The leading body
For the Kurdish Democratic Unity Party in Syria (Yekiti)