

Syriac Christians on “Genocide Watch”

2019-10-20

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مركز الدراسات الاستراتيجية السريانية
Syriac Strategic Research Center



Syriacs in Qamishli



Fadi Habsouno shell landed in his home in Qamishli



Juliet Nicolas shell landed in her home in Qamishli



Ras al-Ain



Ras al-Ain



George Abdel Ahad was subjected to shrapnel of a shell in the Ras Al Ain.



Syriac Cross



Syriac Cross



Syriac Military Council



Spokesman of Syriac Military Council, Abjar Yaqoob



Orthodox Church in Ras al-Ain

Father Mikhail Yaacoub, pastor of Mar Asya Church in Drbasyah and Mar Toma Syriac



Father George Moshi, pastor of the Evangelical Christian Union Church in al-Qamishli

Our people, the Syriacs (Chaldean-Assyrian-Aramean), as well as the Armenian people are the grandchildren of the survivors of the Ottoman Turkish Genocide that happened in 1915. On the 10th of October 2019, the Turkish army invaded our lands and attacked our people using former ISIS, Al Qaeda and other radical Islamic fighters. These fighters, which are paid by NATO ally Turkey, have committed human rights abuses, declared they will ethnically cleanse the area and support the same ideology as groups like ISIS.

Despite the relative stability of the area due to the SDF and International Coalition Forces fighting to destroy and keep all radical groups out of this area of Syria, Turkey has now allowed them to enter freely and furthermore has armed and paid these radical Islamic fighters. Initially, when the Islamic State fighters attacked our homes in NE Syria they succeeded to take control of towns such as Deir ez-Zor, Raqqa, the villages of Khabour and Tal Abyad. This led to a large migration of Christians and the decrease of their numbers. Whereas the population in this area east of the Euphrates was about 300'000, now there are about 100'000. We are distributed all along the very same border areas (from Derik till Kobane) that Turkey wishes to occupy and expel all the residents in order to replace them with Syrian refugees mostly from other areas inside Syria. Turkey plans to ethnically cleans our towns such as Derik, al-Qamishli, al-Hassaka and Tel Tamer villages of Khabour region. Should Turkey be allowed to do this we will see the end of Christianity in this area.

For the Christians the current situation created a feeling of fear; still their wounds of the brutal massacres by the Ottomans and Turks are not healed. As Christians we are aware that the fundamentalist groups allied with Turkey aim first to kill the Christians.

Humanitarian situation:

The military offensive began in several areas and border towns from Derik to Tal Abyad, and this war led to a significant exodus of Christians from many villages to other cities.

Number	Village	belongs to the city or	Number of displaced
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		town	families
1	Gesir (Pirekeh)	City of Derik	18
2	Bra Beta	City of Derik	12
3	Saramsrakh	City of Derik	10
4	Hiaka	City of Derik	8
5	Kzrjeb	City of Derik	9
6	Tel Jehan	Qabre Hiwore	12
7	Gershamo	Qabre Hiwore	9
8	Khwetla	Qabre Hiwore	16
9	Rotan	Qabre Hiwore	16
10	Mharkan	Qabre Hiwore	22
11	Mla Abas	Qabre Hiwore	9
12	Zorava	Qabre Hiwore	7
13	Shalhomia	Qabre Hiwore	8

In the city of Qamishli, where heavy clashes occurred in the first four days of the war, including Turkey shelling the neighborhoods of Bsheriye and the western district, led to the emptying of the entire border neighborhoods of Christians. These shells caused terrible human casualties and significant damage to all the neighborhoods resulting in Christians and other citizens fleeing for other safer areas of Syria, such as Damascus, Aleppo and Homs.

The city of Ras al-Ain, which witnessed strong battles between SDF forces (made up of Arab tribes, Kurds and Syriac Christians), and Turkey and their Islamic mercenaries, resulted in the displacement of most of our people from this area on the first day of fighting. We had at least 75 families living in Ras al-Ain before the recent Turkish attacks, and there is currently only about 7 - 8 people unaccounted for whose fate is unknown. Most fled initially to Tel Tamer, Tel Wardiyat and al-Hassaka and then they all moved to the city of Hassaka.

Turkey also targeted the border city of Darbasiyah on the second day, subsequently 24 families with many children were displaced to nearby villages at the beginning, and as a result of the proximity of these villages to the border and fear of being targeted, they were displaced to the city of al-Hassaka.

In Tel Tamer and Khabour 500 people from these Syriac-Assyrian villages were displaced and came to al-Hassaka.

As a result of this Turkish aggression, several civilians were injured; following affected Syriac Christians: Fadi Habsouno shell landed in his home in Qamishli.
Juliet Nicolas shell landed in her home in Qamishli.

George Abdel Ahad was subjected to shrapnel of a shell in the Ras Al Ain.
Danny Hanna was exposed to shell fragments in Giser (Pirekeh) village in Derik.

The Syriac Cross Organization for Relief & Development is a local grassroots non-profit that helps the displaced without regard to their religion, ethnicity or nationality. We provide emergency relief such as food baskets and hygiene kits, secure emergency shelter for many displaced families, especially within the city of al-Hassaka, which has received many of the displaced peoples escaping Turkish attacks and missiles. We register the families, checking their immediate condition and situation and provide services accordingly; shelter, placement in schools, clothing and medical assistance. Syriac Cross cooperates with local church organizations, in order to be able to help all displaced families.

Resistance of the Syriac People:

Since the establishment of the Syriac Military Council (MFS) and until now we have defended and participated in the military campaign to defend our land. We fought alongside the International Coalition Forces for the duration of the war against ISIS and other radical Islamic groups. We fought in the famous battles of Raqqa, Deir Ezzor and Bagouz. Now we will also have no choice as the Syriac Military Council to defend our lands from the Turkish occupation and their radical Islamic terrorist forces that seek another genocide of our people (see attached statement posted on the church door on 10/10/2019).

The Syriac Military Council is committed to participate in the ranks of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to stop the Turkish intervention and attacks on all our areas, especially the border and especially on the front of Ras al-Ain.

To this end the spokesman of the Syriac Military Council, Abjar Yaqoob, said that our people are fully prepared and deployed on all border points from Derik to Ras Al Ain to repel the Turkish attack and mercenaries and protect our people and the region as a whole.

The reactions of the Syriac-Assyrian parties and churches to this aggression:

The Syriac-Assyrian parties unanimously rejected and condemned the Turkish threats and their interference in the areas of northeastern Syria, where the Syriac Union Party (SUP) condemned this Turkish military intervention through a statement issued by the executive body of the party on 9/10/2019 which stated:

This war, which would further complicate the situation in Syria and with the Turkish state's dependence on the so-called "national army", which is considered a gathering of the remnants of the mercenary and radical Islamist armed groups that have a history of committing war crimes against civilians in the Syrian areas they controlled, is considered a major threat to the general civilians in northern and eastern Syria, including our Syriac-Chaldean-Assyrian people.

In the face of this situation, we appeal to all our people to stand firm and resist the Turkish occupation and defend our land, and not to abandon it. We must win because the will of our people is stronger than any greed or occupier. We also appeal to the UN Security Council to intervene and stop this Turkish aggression and work for a comprehensive truce on all Syrian lands. We seek to activate a just political solution for all Syrians, which is the only way out of the Syrian crisis.

The Assyrian Democratic Organization condemned the Turkish military operations in a statement issued by the Executive Office on 9/10/2019, which stated:

The Assyrian Democratic Organization warns against repeating the Afrin model, which is burdened by the violations of some factions. It believes that the Turkish military operation, dubbed the spring of peace, cannot bring peace and stability to the region and its people. On the contrary, it portends serious

repercussions that will deepen the gap between components of the region, provoking more absurd conflicts that do not serve anyone.

We call on the international community to act urgently to halt all hostilities in the eastern Euphrates, protect civilians, prevent demographic change through the gate of refugees, spare the region destruction and displacement, and block the return of ISIS.

The Assyrian Democratic Party also condemned these Turkish threats in a statement issued by its political office on 9/10/2019, which stated:

We in the Assyrian Democratic Party condemn these barbaric threats to our homeland. They aim to occupy the territory of a member state of the United Nations. We call on all the forces and institutions concerned in Syria to join forces and confront the defense of the borders of our precious homeland Syria, and we call on all loyalty and opposition to assume their national responsibilities militarily and politically. And diplomatically.

The churches also did not stand far from these threats and events against our regions and our people. Father Mikhail Yaacoub, pastor of Mar Asya Church in Drbasiyah and Mar Toma Syriac Orthodox Church in Ras al-Ain, expressed their rejection of any Turkish intervention in the areas of Northern and Eastern Syria. He also pointed out that, in view of our Christian faith, we reject all kinds of evil and all threats to our regions. He also stressed that the peoples of the region are advocates of peace and coexistence among the components, religions and sects. He also pointed out that the approach of the peoples' brothers is the one that was recommended by Christ.

In the same context, Father George Moshe, pastor of the Evangelical Christian Union Church in al-Qamishli, said that the past few days in the city of al-Qamishli have been going through hardships, and that we all disagree with them, targeting civilians from all parts of the region and that such criminal acts are demonic acts against the people and the country. Because Jesus came to be saved, the devil came to perish, and these events left the people obsessed with fear and anxiety and appealed to the international community to pressure Turkey to stop such criminal acts.

On Sunday, 13/10/2019 following the Turkish intervention in our regions, all the churches in the region held divine masses and prayers were raised.

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