



INTERNATIONAL
INITIATIVE

AGAINST THE TURKISH
OCCUPATION OF
SOUTH KURDISTAN

REPORT
JUNE 2021

1. Urgent Need for International Delegation to South Kurdistan

We – politicians, human rights advocates, journalists, political activists, ecologists and feminists from all over Europe – we have been closely following the dangerous developments since the start of the Turkish attacks on South Kurdistan. Every day since April 23, we have witnessed the horrible atrocities the Turkish army and its Islamist mercenaries are committing against the people and nature of South Kurdistan. Now, we have decided to show clearly and resolutely that we condemn Turkey`s occupation of South Kurdistan and that we stand in solidarity with the people of South Kurdistan and Kurdish resistance forces in their protection of their homeland.

In the last weeks and months, the people in Kurdistan and in many more places all over the world have shown again and again that they are aware of the dangerous plans of Turkey. Parties, organizations and individuals have stated clearly that it is Turkey`s aim to occupy all of South Kurdistan including the Ezidi region Sinjar, the Maxmur camp – home to thousands of political refugees – and oil-rich Kirkuk and Mosul. Many statements have been made, demonstrations have been organized and locals have repeatedly addressed representatives of the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government) to condemn and act against the Turkish attacks.

As international friends of the Kurdish people we believe that it is our responsibility to stand side by side with the population of South Kurdistan. The latest protests in North-East Syria, Europe and North Kurdistan against Turkey`s dangerous plan to occupy South Kurdistan and change the regions demography have shown us that the whole Kurdish people consider the latest developments as a huge threat to their home Kurdistan. We agree with their warnings and absolutely support their resistance and strong reaction against the occupation of Kurdistan.

Without the political, financial and military support of the Western governments – including the EU, NATO and USA – Turkey would not be able to wage this unjust and inhumane war. Many member states of the EU are today actively supporting the Neo-Ottoman expansion of the Turkish president Erdogan and his ultra-nationalist and fascist ally MHP in the Middle East. The Western powers don`t only remain silent in the face of Turkey`s occupation of its neighboring countries but welcome Turkish state officials in European capitals, sign trade deals with the fascist Turkish regime and sell weapons worth billions of Euros to it. Unfortunately, this facilitates the war crimes, ethnic cleansing, occupation and genocide that Turkey is today carrying out in Kurdistan. But we refuse to accept that Western governments continue to facilitate these crimes in the future. We therefore consider it our moral and political obligation to show our active and practical solidarity with the Kurdish people and their resistance forces. We stand in solidarity not only with their most natural right to live on their own land but also with their dream of a free, equal and democratic life in Kurdistan and the Middle East.

Protests against the Turkish occupation of South Kurdistan have taken place all over the world since the start of the attacks on April 23.

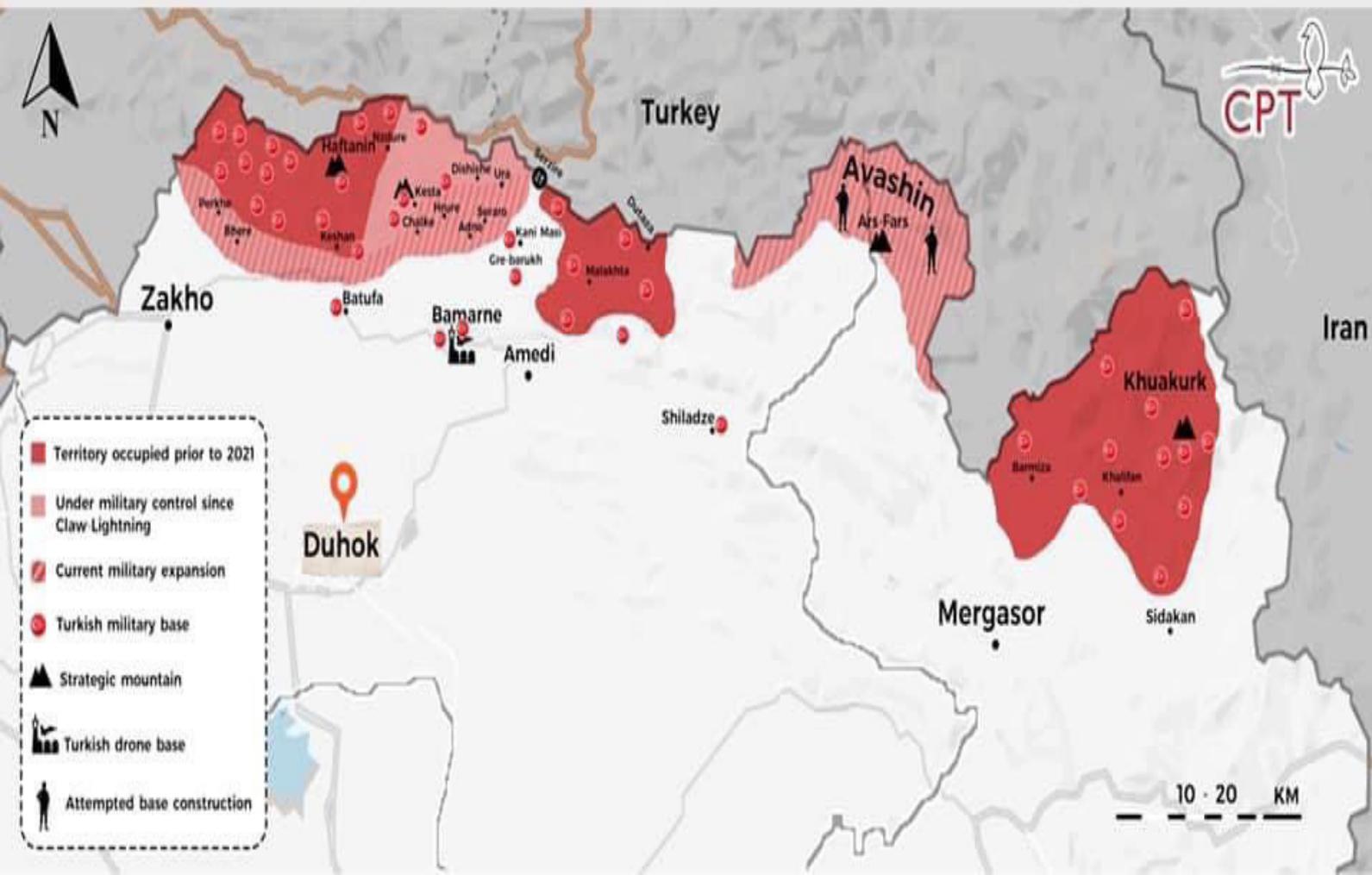


We are surprised to see that both the KRG and the Iraqi government have done little to stop Turkey's occupation attempts. So far, they have limited themselves to vague statements and basically no practical steps to make Turkey understand that it won't be able to occupy South Kurdistan or North Iraq. It has been sad for us to witness how KDP officials have even tried to legitimize the Turkish occupation. The weak and dangerous response by the South Kurdish and Iraqi governments has convinced us even more that it is necessary for the broad community of international friends of the Kurdish people to show their full support for the population of South Kurdistan.

We have therefore started the 'Initiative against the Turkish Occupation of South Kurdistan' with the participation of more than 100 distinguished members. Our aim is to raise the awareness of the international public and send the clear message that the resistance against the Turkish occupation can only be successful if all Kurdish political parties, institutions and people join hands and unite in the protection of their land. We would like to call again on the KRG not to obstruct the resistance against the Turkish attacks but to actively support it. In the past, we have witnessed the great power of a joint Kurdish resistance when the IS (Islamic State) attacks against Kurdistan and the whole world started in 2014. Today, we cannot see any difference between the IS attacks of 2014 and latest Turkish occupation campaign in which the Turkish army is using IS methods and is fighting side by side with former IS members. All of us were grateful for the immediate efforts of the PKK that saved hundreds of thousands of Ezidis in 2014 and for the united struggle of Kurdish guerrilla fighters, Peshmerga forces and the YPG/YPJ in Kobane in 2014/15 and in the KRI (Kurdistan Region Iraq). Now, we would be happy to see the same common attitude against the Turkish occupation of South Kurdistan.

Turkey has already occupied vast areas and seeks to occupy all of South Kurdistan. (map taken from Christian Peacemaker Team report)

Turkish military control and expansion in Kurdistan Region of Iraq



2. A Great Danger: Turkey's Occupation of South Kurdistan

We know that what started on April 23 is not the first attack of Turkey against the Kurdish people. Today, the Kurdish population in North Kurdistan (southeast Turkey) suffers constant oppression by the regime of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Thousands of politicians, journalists, women activists and human rights advocates have been imprisoned. People are being killed almost daily by the Turkish military and police in the Kurdish provinces. Women face the constant threat of violence, rape and murder. In Rojava, Turkey has occupied Afrin, Azaz, Djerablus, Serekaniye and Gire Spi. Hundreds of thousands of people have thus become refugees in their own land. Islamist mercenaries – many of them former members of the IS and Al-Nusra – are today being settled in the villages and towns in these areas. The Euphrates river and many more rivers have been cut leaving the people with the threat of a major food crisis in the region. As if all this was not enough, Erdogan and other Turkish government officials are uttering new threats against Rojava almost every day.

All this has shown us clearly: the goal of the Turkish regime is to occupy all of Rojava and South Kurdistan. It is determined to ethnically cleanse this vast area – 1400 km long – from North-West Syria to the Iraqi-Iranian border. Turkey is willing to carry out a genocide against the Kurdish people. This does not only represent the worst crime one can possibly think of, but also a very real and imminent threat to the people living in these parts of Kurdistan. The occupation campaign of the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his ultra-nationalist ally MHP constitutes a violation of several international agreements including Article 53 of the 4th Geneva Convention (1949) and its 1st protocol (articles 35, 54 and 55), the 19th Geneva additional agreement (1977) which guarantees the protection of natural life, the Geneva 1976 additional protocol which prohibits the change of natural life, the 1980 Geneva Convention protocol that prevents and limits the use of conventional weapons against nature, the Lahey 1958 protocol and article 8 of the International Criminal Court Charter which foresees sanctions against states which commit war crimes and damage to natural life. Therefore, we fully support the local population's determination to defend itself against these dangerous plans of Erdogan's regime and call on all European institutions and governments to act according to the above mentioned international agreements and immediately stop their support for the Turkish occupation.

According to reports of several NGOs, international media outlets and the local population, the Turkish army has been relentless in its attacks since April 23. Thousands of air raids have been carried out in the areas Metina, Zap and Avasin. Armed drones have been hovering over the

Every day the Turkish army cuts thousands of trees in South Kurdistan and illegally takes them to Turkey.

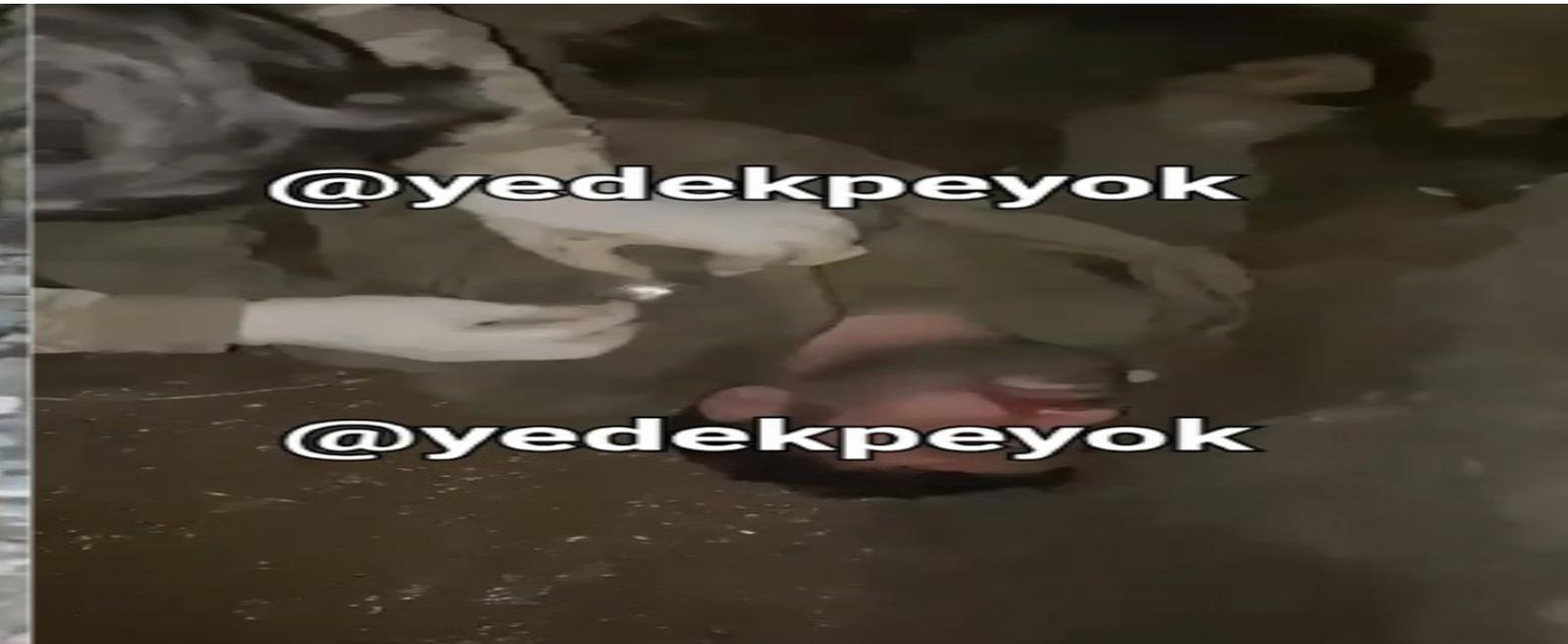


areas 24/7 for the past weeks and months. Many villages have been directly hit by Turkish air strikes wounding over a dozen Kurdish villagers and causing great damage to their livelihoods. More than 20 village have been forcefully depopulated as a result of the Turkish attacks. Turkish soldiers have even dared to enter South Kurdish villages and directly threaten the local population. There are reports of house raids and the consequent destruction of property by Turkish soldiers. The example of the village Keste in the Metina area has made it very clear for us how devastating the effect of the Turkish occupation of South Kurdistan is. In this village, many Ezidi families had sought refuge after the IS attack on Sinjar in 2014. They had found a new home and a safe place for their families. Now, the Keste village is being bombarded almost daily by the Turkish army. Many families – including those from Sinjar – have been forced to leave their homes without knowing where to go next. In total, more than 1500 people – including whole families with children, women and elderly – have been forced to flee their homes. This alone shows that Turkey deliberately tries to depopulate the whole area and thus ethnically cleanse the indigenous population of South Kurdistan.

We have been shocked to hear about the use of chemical weapons by the Turkish army against the guerrilla forces defending South Kurdistan. According to international news coverage, Turkish soldiers have used chemical weapons 13 times leading to the death of several members of the HPG (People's Defense Forces) guerrilla. Shocking videos of the aftermath of these attacks with chemical weapons were even spread by Turkish nationalists online and later published in the British and German newspapers Morning Star and Junge Welt. As much as we are aware of the sad history of the Turkish state and its use of chemical weapons ever since the foundation of the Turkish republic, we cannot accept that Turkey is being allowed today by the international community to use these horrific methods for its occupation of South Kurdistan. We ask ourselves: Which of its international partners has provided Turkey with these chemical weapons? Why do our governments remain silent despite the proof of the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Turkish army?

We are witnessing today that Turkey is using the same strategy it has been using in Afrin/Rojava since 2018. Several news reports have shown that it is not only the Turkish army that is attacking South Kurdish villages. On its side, Islamist mercenaries from Libya and Syria are being deployed. 1000 of them are stationed in the Sirnak province while 560 more are stationed on a Turkish military base in South Kurdistan. Just like in Afrin, Libya and Armenia, the Turkish regime heavily relies on its Islamist partners for its occupation of a foreign land. To make it even worse, we have read reports saying that Turkey has the plan to settle these Islamist

The Turkish army has used chemical weapons 13 times against guerrilla forces which are defending South Kurdistan.



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mercenaries and their families in occupied South Kurdish areas. This would mean repeating the atrocities and crimes that have been committed in Afrin, Serekaniye and Gire Spi.

Turkey does not only have no respect for the Kurdish population in the area but it also does everything it can to destroy and exploit the natural resources of South Kurdistan. In the last weeks intense media coverage has revealed that Turkish companies like the Cengiz Holding together with some local South Kurdish officials are cutting down tons of trees in South Kurdistan every day. On three newly built roads these trees are illegally being transported to Turkey and sold there. In addition, more than 8000 acres of farmland and forests in the areas Metina, Avasin and Zap have been burned due to deliberate Turkish air attacks and artillery fire. These fires are still continuing and new ones are being added every day. This clearly shows that – just like in Afrin – Turkey pursues a policy of relentless destruction and exploitation of all natural resources in South Kurdistan. If this is not stopped, the beautiful and rich nature of the area – its rivers, forests, air and earth – will be burned and polluted by the Erdogan`s regime.

There is absolutely no justification for the Turkish crimes in South Kurdistan. No matter how often Turkish government officials repeat their claims of fighting the PKK, we know that Turkey wants to occupy all of South Kurdistan, ethnically cleanse the area, exploit and destroy its nature and thus carry out a genocide against the Kurdish population. The words of representatives of the Turkish regime and the actions of the Turkish army and their Islamist mercenaries in South Kurdistan have proven this over and over again. As great as the danger the people of South Kurdistan are facing today is, our determination to stand side by side with them against the Turkish attacks is even greater. That is why we consider it our natural right and moral obligation to support the resistance against the Turkish occupation of South Kurdistan.

3. Our Demands

In order to achieve an immediate stop of the Turkish attacks on South Kurdistan and a withdrawal of all Turkish troops and Islamist mercenaries we demand the following:

- Stop the Turkish Occupation, demographic change, instability and ethnic cleansing campaign in South Kurdistan
- No to Erdogan`s Neo-Ottoman expansion project in the Middle East
- No complicity of international and regional powers in the Kurdish genocide
- Stop the destruction and exploitation of Kurdistan`s nature
- Support of all Kurdish parties, institutions and people for the guerrilla`s resistance and their united stance against the Turkish occupation

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