



URGENT PRESS RELEASE

Turkish occupation escalates long-term war with regional and global implications

The recent escalation of Turkey's military presence in Iraqi Kurdistan under the pretext of fighting [PKK](#) guerrillas is a blatant violation of Iraqi sovereignty and a threat to regional stability. Turkey's deployment of tanks, soldiers and checkpoints deep inside Iraqi Kurdish territory is a clear attempt to occupy Iraqi Kurdistan. This will lead to an escalation of the long-term war with regional and global implications.

The aggressive actions of the Turkish military, including setting up [checkpoints](#), interrogating road users, and emptying villages, demonstrates a de facto occupation of the region that undermines the sovereignty of Iraq and the Kurdish people. The [reported](#) deployment of hundreds of tanks and armored vehicles - along with the establishment of military bases - raises serious concerns about Turkey's intentions in the region.

There is no official statistic of Turkish military personnel in Iraqi Kurdistan, but local sources report that over 110 military bases have been established up to 35 km inside Iraqi territory. [According](#) to Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT), a US-based human rights organization, Turkey has carried out over 800 attacks on the Kurdistan Region and Nineveh province so far in 2024, resulting in eight civilian deaths.

Duhok (Iraqi-Kurdistan) province has seen a steady increase in Turkish military deployments over the past two months. A recent report by [Channel 8](#) has revealed that the Turkish army has deployed 300 tanks and armored vehicles in Iraqi Kurdistan in the last 10 days. According to the report, about 1,000 Turkish military personnel and their armored vehicles have been stationed in Duhok province since June 25. The Turkish state aims to control the Gara Mountains, which could result in a significant loss of 70-75 percent of the Kurdistan Regional Government's territory in Duhok.

The Assyrian Christian village of Miske in Duhok's Metina region was almost entirely [destroyed](#) by the Turkish military, with even the church being hit by artillery strikes.

Turkish forces are also building 6 new military bases in the Zakho region to secure it for the Iraqi- Turkish Development Road project, with the KRG planning to connect their own road megaproject to it, while the Turkish military cites security concerns to justify their increased presence.

While recent reports have predominantly focused on Duhok's Metina region, there are [indications](#) that incursions extend to the Sulaymaniyah region. A high-level delegation from Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MIT), led by Mutlu Tuka, visited Baghdad on June 27. The intention of this meeting with officials from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) is assumed to be part of Turkey's strategy to pressure the PUK into joining the alliance between Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Turkey against the PKK-led Kurdistan freedom movement. The cooperation of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) with Turkey further complicates the situation.

The PUK faction in the Iraqi parliament [condemned](#) the ongoing violations of the Kurdistan Region and Iraqi sovereignty, citing risks to national security and the safety of citizens. These actions are described as clear violations of international law aimed at disrupting peace and violating Iraqi sovereignty.

The Freedom Movement (Tevgera Azadî) in Iraq and the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) have both raised alarm about Turkey's military presence in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Freedom Movement [called](#) for vigilance and unity against the Turkish occupation, criticizing the deployment of tanks and troops in Duhok province as a violation of international law and Iraqi sovereignty. Similarly, the Kurdistan Communities Union [expressed](#) concern over the lack of response from Baghdad and Erbil to the Turkish occupation, warning that it poses a serious threat to the communities in the region and could lead to permanent annexation.

As the Kurdistan National Congress, we have repeatedly [called](#) on the international community to hold Turkey accountable for its war against the Kurds and its violation of international law and the sovereignty of the Kurdistan Region and Iraq. The

silence of the [international media](#) and institutions in the face of Turkey's military incursions and human rights violations is deeply disturbing.

Regional Instability and Mass Displacement

In 2011, the Arab Spring spread to Iraq and Syria and reshaped the region. Turkey seized the opportunity to assert its influence, aiming to restore the borders of Misak-ı Milli and revive neo-Ottomanism. This included forming alliances with jihadist groups, which led to violent attacks and massacres against Kurds. In 2014, Turkey's support for ISIS's failed invasion of Kobani (Rojava-Kurdistan) was met with strong resistance. However, through diplomatic maneuvers, Turkey occupied Kurdish cities in Syria, Afrin in 2018, followed by Serekaniye and Gire Spi in 2019.

MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli (Erdogan's coalition partner), known for his ultranationalist ideology, pushed for the annexation of Kirkuk and Mosul, which he publicly [promoted](#) as Turkish provinces. Turkey is stoking tensions between the people of the region and arming Turkmen factions. The Misak-ı Milli strategy not only threatens the Kurds, but also risks wider ramifications, including the occupation of Iraq and Syria, regional instability and mass displacement. The ongoing actions in Kurdistan have global implications due to the historical geopolitical significance of the region.

We condemn Turkey's intensified occupation of Iraqi Kurdistan and call for immediate action against it. There is an urgent need to end Turkish militarism by encouraging Turkey to free Abdullah Öcalan and to enter into negotiations with him. A dialogue process similar to the one between the PKK and the Erdoğan government in 2013-2015 could bring stability to Turkey - and the whole region - by resolving the Kurdish question. Urgent action is needed from the Iraqi government, the US, the EU, the UN and the Council of Europe to prevent further violence.

Kurdistan National Congress (KNK)

01.07.2024