Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria
DAANES

Documentation of Recent Violations in Aleppo

13 January 2026

Violations Against Kurdish Neighborhoods in Aleppo

Chronological Sequence of Events

The Siege Imposed on Kurdish Neighborhoods and Living Conditions

Since December 23, 2025, the Syrian government and its affiliated forces have imposed a comprehensive siege on the Kurdish neighborhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud, Ashrafieh, and Bani Zeid in the city of Aleppo. These neighborhoods are home to more than 500,000 civilians, including approximately 55,000 Kurdish families, in addition to thousands of Kurds forcibly displaced from the Afrin region following its occupation by Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) factions in 2018.[1]

The siege represents a continuation of longstanding efforts to marginalize and isolate Kurdish populations in northern Syria, perpetuating patterns of collective punishment and ethnic targeting that have been documented since the onset of the Syrian conflict in 2011. These neighborhoods had remained relatively stable compared to other war-torn areas until this renewed military escalation.

All seven access roads leading into the Kurdish neighborhoods were sealed by Ministry of Defense checkpoints, leaving only one route intermittently open under heavy military control. This blockade has severely restricted the entry of essential goods including food, medicine, fuel, and humanitarian assistance, worsening an already dire humanitarian crisis. The siege effectively deprives hundreds of thousands of civilians of their basic right to sustenance and medical care, violating international humanitarian law principles and amounting to collective punishment. [2]

Despite repeated communications and formal meetings with Syrian government representatives requesting the lifting of the siege or the entry of basic supplies, no response or relief was provided, exacerbating civilian suffering and increasing the risk of starvation and disease.

Commencement of the Attacks

On January 6, 2026, factions affiliated with the Damascus government launched a large-scale military assault on the neighborhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafieh. Participating units included the 60th, 62nd, 72nd, and 86th Divisions of the Syrian Army, supported by armored columns, heavy artillery, Grad and Katyusha rocket launchers, mortars, DShK heavy machine guns, and suicide drones. [3]

The assault deliberately targeted civilian infrastructure and residential areas, constituting clear violations of the laws of armed conflict which require distinction between military and civilian targets. The initial use of suicide drones against civilian population centers indicates a strategy of terrorizing and breaking civilian resistance.

The attack began with suicide drone strikes targeting civilian areas, followed by indiscriminate shelling of residential neighborhoods populated by unarmed civilians. Tanks and armored vehicles advanced toward Kurdish districts while civilians in adjacent areas were forcibly displaced from their homes. Snipers were positioned on high-rise buildings surrounding the neighborhoods.

Despite the presence of a dense civilian population, the Syrian Ministry of Defense declared the neighborhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafieh 'military zones. [4] This designation was followed by the use of heavy weapons and indiscriminate shelling in residential areas, raising serious concerns regarding its use to justify violations of the principle of distinction and the protection of civilians under international humanitarian law.

On January 8, the offensive escalated with the deployment of hardline jihadist factions, including Asaib al-Hamra (The Red Headbands), a group formerly affiliated with al-Qaeda. Significant reinforcements arrived from Idlib and other provinces. Turkish-backed SNA factions joined the operation, while Turkish reconnaissance drones (Bayraktar) provided aerial surveillance and intelligence support. Since the morning of January 8, operations were overseen by Major General Ali al-Naasan, Chief of Staff of the Syrian Army. [5]

The involvement of extremist groups alongside regular Syrian army units, as well as the complicity of foreign actors, underscores the complexity of alliances fueling continued violations and war crimes in the region.

The assault was accompanied by intense bombardment using tanks, heavy artillery, rocket systems, mortars, and large numbers of suicide drones carrying high-explosive payloads, causing widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure. [6]

Ground Incursions and Targeting of Medical Facilities

Following more than twelve hours of continuous shelling, Syrian army factions initiated coordinated ground incursions into Kurdish neighborhoods at approximately 9:00 p.m. on January 7, advancing along three main axes. [7]

On January 8, Othman Hospital in Ashrafieh and Khaled Fajr Hospital—the only functioning hospital in Sheikh Maqsoud—were repeatedly bombed. The attacks caused severe structural damage, rendering Khaled Fajr Hospital completely inoperable while wounded civilians, patients, and medical staff were still inside. Several healthcare workers were killed, constituting a grave violation of international humanitarian law. [8]

Othman Hospital in Ashrafieh and Khaled Fajr Hospital were repeatedly struck, causing severe structural damage and rendering Khaled Fajr Hospital inoperable while patients and medical staff were inside.

Medical facilities are protected under the Geneva Conventions, and attacks against them may constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law.

Occupation of Ashrafieh and Continued Assault on Sheikh Maqsoud

Between January 9 and 10, Ashrafieh was fully occupied by the attacking forces. Military operations then concentrated on Sheikh Maqsoud. Civilians, including wounded individuals, children, elderly persons, and entire families, remained trapped inside Khaled Fajr Hospital despite its non-operational status. Continued shelling resulted in additional civilian and medical staff casualties. The hospital remained the last refuge for civilians unable to flee.

Civilians, including wounded individuals, children, and elderly persons, remained trapped inside and around Khaled Fajr Hospital during continued shelling. International humanitarian law prohibits the use of civilians and medical facilities in ways that expose them to attack, and such conduct may amount to serious violations.

Ceasefire and Forced Evacuation

Following an understanding mediated by international actors on the evening of January 10, a ceasefire came into effect in the early hours of January 11. The agreement facilitated the evacuation of the deceased, injured civilians, and remaining members of the Internal Security Forces from Sheikh Maqsoud to areas in northeastern Syria. Subsequently, clashes ceased and Internal Security Forces withdrew from the neighborhood.

While the ceasefire offered a temporary reprieve, the long-term humanitarian and political consequences remain deeply concerning.

Human Toll of the Attacks

According to local administrative records and still-incomplete documentation, the toll of the attacks between January 6 and 10 stands at:

a) 47 civilians killed, including women, children, and the elderly
b) 133 civilians wounded
c) At least 276 civilians missing, many believed to have been arbitrarily detained

Human rights organizations warn that these figures likely underestimate the true scale of casualties due to restricted access, ongoing detentions, and the critical condition of many wounded.

Mass displacement followed the offensive, with estimates indicating that between 148,000 and 155,000 Kurdish civilians were forcibly displaced from Aleppo's Kurdish neighborhoods.

Foreign Elements and Documented War Crimes

Foreign fighters played a documented role in the attacks, as confirmed by photographs and videos released by the perpetrators themselves. This evidence substantiates the commission of serious violations that may amount to war crimes.

Documented cases include:

All visual and testimonial evidence referenced above has been archived, time-stamped, and preserved to ensure evidentiary integrity.

All the supporting evidence available at the following link:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Ao2qb-rtcFtpTREQGr29ggXKQHsxToQ5?usp=sharing

- Fighters wearing ISIS insignia participating openly in attacks on Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafieh during live media broadcasts. (see supporting evidence in file n°1).
- Khalil Yavuz, a Turkish national affiliated with the Turkish Grey Wolves, documented boasting about the siege and threatening civilians with death. (see supporting evidence in file n°2).
- Ahmed Mansour, an Egyptian national, filmed participating in the killing and mutilation of a female member of the Internal Security Forces. He has been implicated in previous massacres on the Syrian coast and in Suwayda. (see supporting evidence in file n° 3).

- Samit Dagol (Abdul Samad), a Turkish national wanted for association with ISIS and al-Qaeda, posing as a journalist affiliated with Asaib al-Hamra while present during the attacks. (see supporting evidence in file n° 4).
- Members of the Turkish Grey Wolves kidnapping Kurdish youth, with credible fears of summary execution. (see supporting evidence in file n° 5).

Additional violations documented include:

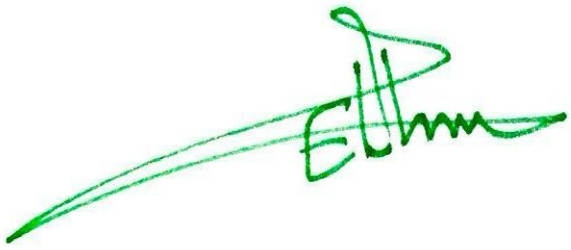
- The use of tanks and heavy weapons in densely populated residential areas near Khaled Fajr Hospital (see supporting evidence in file n°6+ 9).
- Direct targeting of the Great Mosque in Sheikh Maqsoud under false pretexts. (see supporting evidence in file n°7).
- Dragging, mutilation, and desecration of bodies accompanied by racist and sectarian insults. (see supporting evidence in file n°8).
- Abuse and humiliation of detained civilians, including families and elderly individuals. (see supporting evidence in file n°10).
- Civilian testimonies describing widespread terror, looting, and abuse during the five-day assault. (see supporting evidence in file n°11).

Post-Ceasefire Conditions

Despite the ceasefire, Kurdish neighborhoods remain under an effective siege. Arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, harassment, and restrictions on movement continue unabated. Humanitarian access remains severely limited, and the presence of extremist militias integrated into state security structures poses an ongoing threat to civilian safety.

Call to Action

The international community must urgently deploy independent monitors to oversee the ceasefire and prevent further abuses. Diplomatic recognition of, and assistance to, Syria must be made conditional upon the verified protection and political inclusion of Kurds and other minorities. The March 10 agreement safeguarding Kurdish rights must be fully implemented, and extremist militias must be removed from state security forces. Inclusive political participation for all Syrian communities is essential to achieving lasting peace.



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3. Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) – Documenting conflict and violations in Syria, with detailed reporting on Kurdish areas: https://www.syriahr.com/en .
4. Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP) – Legal and human rights advocacy for Kurds: https://khrp.org .
5. Kurdistan24 English – Kurdish news outlet with comprehensive coverage of Kurdish issues in Syria: https://www.kurdistan24.net/en .
6. European Center for Kurdish Studies – Research and reporting on Kurdish political and human rights issues: https://www.kurdishstudies.eu .
7. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – Syria reports – For humanitarian and conflict updates: https://www.unocha.org/syria .
8. Human Rights Watch (HRW) – Syria Reports – Documenting war crimes and violations including in Kurdish regions: https://www.hrw.org/middle-east/n-africa/syria .