

# The Democratic Society Movement, TEV-DEM



## A Weekly News Bulletin From Rojava 23—29 March

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**Dear friends,**

You all know my dear daughter Anna.

She believed in your vision of an ideal society, based on honour of the feminine, inclusion of all ethnicities and respect for nature.

She was willing to defend that ideal with her life, as you also are.

Many hundreds of you have already given your lives defending it from those who are determined to destroy it.

Anna's death, though I could not have wished it, has drawn the world's attention to you.



Anna Campbell lost her life fighting Turkish invaders in Efrîn<sup>1</sup>

But the world doesn't understand why your project, the enclave of Rojava, attracted her so.

Nor does the world understand why the Turkish and Syrian states are so determined to wipe it out.

Worse still, the world doesn't know that the high-tech weapons which have killed so many of you, and which killed my daughter, were designed and manufactured in Britain. You know. You know all this.

I don't have to tell you that the Turkish state hates the Kurds because they think the Kurds threaten their national integrity.

But you may not know that the British state once saw our own minorities, the Irish, Scots and Welsh, as threatening in the same way. We, the British, did to them what the Turks are doing to you now. We realised, perhaps too late, the immorality of our ways.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/19/briton-kurds-anna-campbell-dies-fighting-turkey-syria-afirin>

The Turks have not yet learned this. You Kurds are suffering the same discrimination, expulsions and murders that we inflicted on the Irish, Scots and Welsh. That the Europeans inflicted on the native Americans. That the Nazis inflicted on the Jews.

The world has moved forward. Surely it has - hasn't it? How can anyone see these atrocities as anything but horrible, outrageous, unacceptable - whether or not they are dressed up in superficially plausible arguments? The spurious economic arguments that Britain uses to justify arms sales to Turkey?

That Turkey uses to justify genocide of the Kurds? How can this be? It breaks my heart. It destroys my hope.

Yet there is hope. Many millions of us here in Britain, in Iceland, in all the countries of Europe, in America - we are aware of your plight. We will not let you go unnoticed.

We will bring the injustice and horror of your treatment before our governments. We will not forget you. Just as you will never forget my daughter who lived, laughed, danced, shared, fought and died with you.

Together we will ensure that she did not die in vain.

With love and determination,

Anna's Father

Dirk Campbell

## **UN humanitarianists: 'Occupied' Afrin is inaccessible**

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region — The United Nations labeled Afrin as "occupied," explaining that it is unable to deliver humanitarian aid following Turkey's three-month operation.

"We cannot access Afrin as it's an occupied region," Ali Al-Zatari, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria told AFP, adding that daily attempts to reach the region are underway...

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect said the people of Afrin are facing "war crimes and mass displacement," in statement on Tuesday.

"There are grave concerns for the fate of ethnic Kurdish civilians at the hands of the Turkish-backed forces now occupying Afrin," added the Australian based research centre...<sup>2</sup>

## **Turkish attack destroys the archaeological site of Brad in Afrin**

According to a statement by the Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums under the Syrian Arab Republic's Ministry of Culture, in a new barbaric targeting of Syrian archaeological and religious sites, the Turkish regime planes bombed the archaeological site of

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/220320182>

Brad, 15 km south of Afrin city, which has been on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites since 2011. The bombing destroyed many important archaeological buildings.

The tomb of St. Maron, the patron saint of the Maronite sect, and the Julianus Church, which includes the mausoleum and is one of the oldest Christian churches in the world (built at the end of the fourth century). The sites also include many Byzantine churches and monasteries, as well as a temple, a bath, a house, a contemporary, and tombs dating back to the Roman period (2nd-3rd centuries CE).



This aggression came after the destroying of several archaeological sites in the area of Afrin, including the Temple of Ain Dara and the location of the Prophet Hori (Qurosh), and Tal Jendyres, which indicates the existence of a systematic plan to eliminate the Syrian heritage and all elements of Syrian civilization.

Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums once again appealed to the relevant international organizations, which have registered these sites on their lists, to carry out their moral and humanitarian duty to condemn the continuing Turkish aggression on the sites of the Syrian archaeological heritage and expose it to the world.

It is noteworthy that a French archaeological mission had discovered the tomb of St. Maron in the village of Brad in 2002 and from that time became a site for the tourists from all over the world, especially from the Maronite community, who have established a number of activities and rituals of cultural and religious site.

The Turkish army repeatedly targets the cultural treasures of the region. The approximately 3,000-year-old Ishtar temple in Ayn-Dara was also virtually destroyed by Turkish bombs. Former Director General of Antiquities and Museums, Maamun Abdulkerim, told AFP that this place represents one of the most beautiful aspects of Christian history. He said about the attacks, "Not even the Mongols did that."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <https://anfenglish.com/culture/turkish-attack-destroys-the-archaeological-site-of-brad-in-afrin-25692>

## **France’s Macron phones Erdogan to express ‘concern’ over Afrin**

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region (Kurdistan 24) – French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday expressed his “concern” over Turkey’s military operation in Syrian Kurdistan’s Afrin region, calling on his Turkish counterpart to allow humanitarian aid to reach the area.

According to a statement released by the French President’s office, Macron had spoken with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan over the phone on Friday.

During their conversation, the French President reiterated his country’s “very clear expression of concern over the launch of the Turkish military intervention in Afrin and the need to allow full access to humanitarian aid to civilian populations.”

He also stressed the “strategic importance of our partnership with Turkey, particularly in the fight against terrorism and in all other regional cities,” adding that the war against the Islamic State (IS) was a “top priority” and a “national security issue” for France...<sup>4</sup>

## **Peoples stand up for Afrin worldwide**

Millions took to the streets on March 24, World Action Day for Afrin, to demand an end to the Turkish state’s invasion of Afrin together with jihadist groups derived from ISIS and Al-Nusra.

From Afghan capital Kabul to the US, Australia and Southern Kurdistan, peoples took to the streets and staged mass demonstrations in solidarity with Afrin against attacks.

Some of the cities in which protests were carried out are Hamburg, Leipzig, Bremen, Brussels, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Lisbon, Linz, Stuttgart, Freiburg, Frankfurt, Paris, Torino, Vienna, Marseilles, Zurich, Berlin, Cologne and Kabul...<sup>5</sup>

## **AP: Turkey’s president calls anti-war students “terrorists”**

ISTANBUL — Turkey’s president on Saturday criticized anti-war students at a top university, calling them “terrorists” and promising to oust them from their studies.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said “communist, traitor youth” tried to mess up a student stand opened by “religious, nationalist, local youth” at the public Bogazici University.

Speaking in northern Samsun province, Erdogan announced an investigation and said “we won’t give these terrorist youth the right to study at these universities.”

On Monday, students opened a stand distributing sweets dubbed “Afrin delight” to commemorate fallen soldiers in Turkey’s cross-border operation in Syria.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/12b0a85c-2a60-4bfa-8a0a-3f499b8726bf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://anfenglish.com/news/peoples-stand-up-for-afrin-worldwide-25714>

Another group protested against them, holding anti-war banners and chanting slogans such as “the palace wants war, people want peace,” in reference to Erdogan’s presidential complex...<sup>6</sup>

## **Turkey prevents Kurds from returning to Rojava**

Kurdish youth who migrated to Turkey due to the war in Syria are detained by Turkish intelligence as they arrive at border crossings to return to their homeland.

The Turkish state has invaded areas of Syria like Jarablus, Azaz and Bab under the guise of “Euphrates Shield” and is now taking into custody the Kurdish youth who want to leave the migrant camps in Turkey to return home. The Turkish state had already closed off all border gates to Northern Syrian provinces where citizens forced to migrate to Turkey wanted to return to and allow passage for citizens only through gates in areas under their invasion like Jarablus, Azaz and Bab on religious holidays. They detain and torture Kurdish youth who want to cross these gates to return home.

Kawa Mihemed who lives in Kobanê was detained at the Al Salama border gate by Turkish intelligence as he wanted to go back home. Kawa had crossed to Turkey for work in 2013 and has endured many hardships on his way back. Kawa wanted to go from Azaz to Kobanê some months ago, and he was detained by gangs to be delivered to Turkish intelligence. Kawa said he was captured when his ID papers showed that he is from Kobanê and was imprisoned after allegations that he was going to join the YPG.

Kawa was taken to a prison close to the Azaz border and saw dozens of other young Kurdish men there captured with the same allegations. The gangs told them they would be freed if they paid the gangs, and Kawa was released when his family paid off the gangs. Kawa said the gangs let him stay in the cities controlled by the “Euphrates Shield” groups, but he was threatened by one more year in prison if he left those areas. Kawa later managed to return to Kobanê with ID papers he managed to have made.

Kawa said the prison he was held in was turned into a torture center and added: “Gangs under the Turkish intelligence killed young people there.”<sup>7</sup>

## **Damascus Calls for “Unconditional Withdrawal” of Turkey from Afrin**

ERBIL — The Syrian government has renewed a call on Turkey to withdraw its army from the Kurdish enclave of Afrin, saying that the intervention is a blatant violation of international law.

The state-run Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) quoted an official from the country’s foreign ministry arguing that the presence of the Turkish forces on Syrian territories is unjustified now if Turkey claims it has removed the “threat” from its border strip.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/turkeys-president-refers-to-anti-war-students-as-terrorists/2018/03/24/9c336800-2f68-11e8-8dc9-3b51e028b845\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.3ee3a64dd669](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/turkeys-president-refers-to-anti-war-students-as-terrorists/2018/03/24/9c336800-2f68-11e8-8dc9-3b51e028b845_story.html?utm_term=.3ee3a64dd669)

<sup>7</sup> <https://anfenglish.com/news/turkey-prevents-kurds-from-returning-rojava-25732>

“If we take seriously for once the statements of the Turkish regime’s officials which are deceptive and lack any credibility, the question that poses itself is: if the alleged security threat is gone, what is the Justice and Development Party government waiting for to withdraw its invading forces from Syria,” the source said.

The source stated that Syria reiterates its demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Turkish occupation forces from the Syrian territory...<sup>8</sup>

## **Egypt: “Events in Afrin are reminiscent of the Armenian Genocide”**

The Egyptian Parliamentary committee on the matters of Arab countries issued a statement and stressed that the invasion of Afrin is “an ethnic cleansing”.

The statement warned against an ethnic cleansing against Kurds in Rojava and Southern Kurdistan and stressed that Turkey’s attacks against Afrin and Shengal are attacks against the independence of Syria and Iraq.

The statement also pointed out the massacres and exile involved in the invasion of Afrin and said the events are reminiscent of the genocide against the Armenian people in 1915: “These mass executions are reminiscent of the genocide the Armenian people suffered in the Ottoman empire during World War I.”

The committee’s statement called on the United Nations (UN) and demanded Turkey withdraw their troops from Syria and Iraq and issued the criticism that the silence in the face of the invasions is grieving.<sup>9</sup>

## **Turkish attack on Afrin 'unjustified,' 'ethnic cleansing,' says Swedish party leader**

STOCKHOLM, Sweden (Kurdistan 24) – A Swedish Member of Parliament and party leader told Kurdistan 24 in Stockholm on Sunday that the Turkish military offensive in Afrin was “a massive killing of civilians, it’s an ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of people.”

“We are, of course, deeply concerned about what’s happening in Afrin. We think this Turkish occupation and attack is totally unprovoked and unjustified,” Jonas Sjöstedt, head of Sweden’s Left Party, said.

“We can see how they use these jihadist mercenaries and bandits to attack the people of Afrin... And, it’s really sad, because Afrin was one of the more peaceful regions in Syria, a region that hosted so many refugees,” the Swedish party leader continued.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/middle-east/424872>

<sup>9</sup> <https://anfenglish.com/news/egypt-events-in-afrin-are-reminiscent-of-the-armenian-genocide-25762>

“But, it was apparently very provoking for Erdogan because they also created an autonomy for Kurds and Arabs, and for Christians and Muslims together,” Sjöstedt noted, adding Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan “could not stand that.”

The party leader expressed worry that war will continue and Erdogan “will attack other parts of Rojava and maybe also northern Iraq and Kurdistan.”

The only thing that can stop this, he said, “is the outside world. There has to be stronger condemnations, there has to be economic sanctions, there has to be an immediate stop of the export of arms to Turkey.”

Sjöstedt concluded by saying, “Turkey is becoming a dictatorship that is not only harmful to the Turks and Kurds living in Turkey but the whole region.”<sup>10</sup>

## **Assyrian Leader Urges U.S. to Help Kurdish Allies Who Protected Christians in Afrin**

The U.S. has turned a blind eye to Turkey and their jihadi allies “dismantling” the pluralistic model established by the Kurdish groups in northwestern Syria's Afrin region that allowed Kurds, Christians, and Arabs to live side by side in peace and protected the area from the Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL), suggested a Syriac activist.

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has refused to help the Kurds in Afrin, repeatedly arguing that the American military does not maintain a presence there.

Despite activists and a top United Nations envoy accusing Turkey and its Islamic extremist partners of carrying out ethnic cleansing against the religious minorities in Afrin, namely Christians and Yazidis, the U.S. State Department recently declared, “We remain committed to our NATO ally Turkey, to include their legitimate security concerns.” ...

Echoing other activists during an event sponsored by the Heritage Foundation on March 23, Bassam Ishaak, the president of the Syriac National Council, a Syrian opposition group, said Turkey had seized Afrin with the help of Syrian rebels who are religious extremists.

He urged the United States and the international community as a whole to help liberate the inhabitants of Afrin, which include Syriac Christians and Yazidis, from Turkey and its extremist allies, saying: “[Turkey and its allies have] dismantled the model in Afrin that was run by the people who fought with the international coalition ran by the U.S. and who fought with ISIS in [the terrorist group's former capital] Raqqa. These [Kurdish] people liberated Raqqa, and a month later they were paid by Turkey coming into their homeland and taking it over with religious extremist rebels who want to establish [their own] religious [system].” ...

Ishaak, who has voiced support for a decentralized Syria that includes an autonomous Kurdish region, declared: “We need to support those [Kurdish] political forces ... who acted to implement religious freedom in the region. In the case of northwestern Syria and Afrin, there was a self-administration that was pluralistic--it was made up of Kurds, Syriacs, and Arabs

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/ed5153a8-4af1-4432-972e-908f7b1e37e7>

from the region that have protected the region from ISIS and implemented security which is key for any minority anywhere to be able to survive.” ...<sup>11</sup>

## **Detentions for peace tweets new low for Turkey: HRW**

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region (Kurdistan 24) – Turkey’s detention and prosecution of large numbers of people over social media posts critical of government policies and supportive of a Kurdish-Turkish peace constituted a new low for Ankara, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on Tuesday.

Authorities increased the scope and intensity of a country-wide crackdown on dissenting voices as the Turkish army began its invasion of Afrin in Syrian Kurdistan to oust ... Kurdish forces from the region in late January.

Until late February, police detained 648 people over their social media posts criticizing Turkey’s military campaign against Syrian Kurds.

“Detaining and prosecuting people for tweets calling for peace is a new low for Turkey’s government,” Hugh Williamson, Europe, and Central Asia director at HRW, said.

“Turkish authorities should respect people’s right to peacefully criticize any aspect of government policy, including military operations, and drop these absurd cases,” Williamson added.

HRW noted that the recent social media crackdown had targeted a wide range of people, affecting journalists, human rights activists, politicians—including four members of parliament from the pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP)—members of nongovernmental organizations, academics, construction workers, physicians, and high school and university students...<sup>12</sup>

## **Refugees from Afrin: “Shehba should be declared a safe zone”**

People from Afrin who have had to leave their homes following the invasion attacks by the Turkish state don’t want to leave their lands despite the harsh conditions in Shehba and threats by Turkey. The refugees demand that Shehba be declared a safe zone.

The people of Afrin who had to migrate to the Shehba region following the invasion attacks against Afrin by the invading Turkish state and their Al Qaeda, ISIS and Al Nusra gangs continue their resistance despite difficulties. Citizens live in half-demolished houses in the Shehba region where 150 to 200 thousand people from Afrin have migrated to...<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.aina.org/news/20180327153011.htm>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/d4f86be7-c6f9-496b-b6a3-cbb3a5cd7d93>

<sup>13</sup> <https://anfenglish.com/rojawa/refugees-from-afrin-shehba-should-be-declared-a-safe-zone-25799>