

Report on the Situation in North and East Syria, 8am 16th October - 8am 17th October 2019

Rojava Information Center

Humanitarian Crisis

"We are not scared, but we are hungry and thirsty and we need help."

Schools and community centres in Tel Tamer and Hasakah have been opened as emergency accommodation for displaced families who have nowhere to go. Local associations are helping collect and distribute food and blankets, but the scale of need greatly outstrips their capacity. Some aid has arrived from the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq, which is being distributed by the Kurdish Red Crescent. Some refugees, mostly elders and families with very young children, are crossing into the Kurdish region of Iraq via the Semalka border crossing, where refugee camps have been constructed.

The autopsy of Hevrin Khalaf, the General Secretary of the Syria Future Party who was killed by Turkish proxies on the 12th October, indicates that she was shot several times by hand guns from nearby and beaten, causing severe bleeding and multiple fractures. The United Nations calls on Turkey to open an investigation into the death, which is widely regarded as an "execution." Reports indicate that the Turkish backed group responsible for her death may be Jaish al-Sharqiya.

There have been some questions raised about the use of unconventional weapons in Sere Kaniye, but so far reports appear to be false. However, Mustafa Bali, Head of SDF press office, has requested support from specialist teams from international organisations to investigate further. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports that in the first week of the Turkish invasion, there have been 300,000 displaced and 71 civilian dead.

ISIS Resurgence

Clashes continue to erupt in Ain Issa camp between SDF security forces and ISIS sleeper cells within the camp, with Turkish proxy forces infiltrating the North of the camp, enabling another group of ISIS-linked families to break out. French Foreign Minister confirms that nine French ISIS-linked individuals escaped from a camp in the region.

Sere Kaniye

The SDF successfully repelled several waves of heavy attacks and were in control of Sere Kaniye from the morning of the 16th. There have been ongoing attempts for several days by Turkish proxy forces to seize villages (particularly Menajir) on the road between Sere Kaniye and Tel Tamer, the only road in and out of the city that is not controlled by Turkish-backed ground forces. In the afternoon Turkey launched a new attack with Turkish proxy forces attempting again to enter the city from three axes (west, north, east). There were heavy clashes between SDF and Turkish proxy forces around the quarters Sinayi, Hawarne and the border crossing. At the same time Turkish air planes are bombing the city, accompanied by artillery shelling. There were also clashes again around Tel Helef, which is in the hand of Turkish proxy forces and controls the western road into Sere Kaniye. The fights continued the whole night, with reports that they are the heaviest Turkish attacks since the beginning of the invasion eight days ago. The SDF continues in a defensive position.

Tel Tamer

Our team on the ground has observed that although a lot of Tel Tamer residents have fled, fearing the approach of Turkish proxies from the north and west, the city is still crowded with displaced people. The city has been hit with Turkish artillery, but no air strikes have been confirmed. Attacks on villages between Tel Tamer and Ain Issa and between Tel Tamer and Sere Kaniye, such as Alia and Managir, by Turkish proxies have been ongoing throughout the day. In response, the Syrian Army and the SDF have established position west of the city and are defending. Both sides are attempting to control the M4 international road to the west of Tel Tamer which leads to Ain Issa, a crucial road in North and East Syria.

Ain Issa

The Syrian Army took positions around Ain Issa to support the SDF in the region. Backed up by Syrian aircraft the Syrian Army engaged in clashes between the SDF and Turkish proxy forces both in villages in the northwest between Kobane and Ain Issa and east of Ain Issa. The SDF and the Syrian Army established a string of joint positions around Ain Issa, equipped with tanks and artillery. We spoke to the local administration in Ain Issa who informed us that the presence of the Syrian Army doesn't have any impact on their work, which is continuing as before. According to a local source the SDF and the Syrian Army were able to regain at least ten villages in the north of Ain Issa that have been under the control of Turkish proxy forces coming from Tel Abyad. In the evening we spoke to someone in Ain Issa: "For three days there has been heavy war in the region around Ain Issa and Tel Abyad, especially since the Syrian Army joined. Turkey wants to cut the road between Celebiye and Ain Issa (the Abu Sira road) to cut Ain Issa from Kobane. Turkey and its proxy forces tried it many times, but their attacks always were repelled by SDF/SA. Indiscriminate Turkish shelling of civilians continues to occur, with at least one death and many injuries reported in Al Alef near Ain Issa. Also on the side of Celebi there was heavy war today, with Turkish proxy forces attacking, but they were repelled. Now the airspace is in the hands of Russia, that's why there are all the time Russian and Syrian airplanes and surveillance aircraft over this region in the air. Once these air planes came there were no Turkish air planes any more in this region."

Kobane

The villages Siftak, Buban, Khokhori, Kor Ali, Zormgar and the town of Al-Shuyukh west of the city Kobane witnessed intensive shelling and clashes between Turkish proxy forces and the SDF. The Forces of the Syrian Army arrived in Kobane in the evening, taking positions along the Euphrates between Kobane city and Jarablus, a city held by Turkish proxy forces and on the border with Turkey. A spokesperson of the legislative council explained to us the agreement with the Syrian Army: "The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria never once divided the territorial unity of Syria. We want a federal, decentralised system. In this system the protection of the border is the work of the center, that is the Syrian government. On this basis, the Syrian government has come to protect the border, apart from Sere Kaniye and Tel Abyad, because war is already underway there. Nothing has changed on the administrative level, our administration and civil society organisations are working as before. The army cannot pass into the city, its only work is to protect the border."

Other regions

Dirbesiye: We spoke to a person in the city: "Today the situation was calm. There were no clashes and no attacks by Turkey, only Turkish drones. The road between Dirbesiye and Amude was closed at the beginning of the war and the people were afraid of coming or going. But now the road is open. Many people were displaced and went to Hasakah. And when it is getting dark some go to sleep in the countryside. Until now the Syrian Army didn't come to Dirbesiye".

Manbij: In the evening we spoke to a person about the situation in Manbij: "Peaceful situation, no air planes. The way between Kobane and Manbij is open and nothing is happening. West of Manbij there are still clashes between Turkish proxy forces and the Manbij Military Council because of attempts by Turkish proxy forces to get into the villages. There are also Russian airplanes flying. The Syrian Army forces are along the border, from Sacur until Erime."

Derik: According to local sources Turkey shelled the villages of Qasr Dib and Ain Diwar five times, both in the surroundings of Derik city. Homes were destroyed, but there were no deaths or wounded because the villages had already been evacuated to the city of Derik. The Syrian Army hasn't arrived in the region yet.