

Report on Situation in North and East Syria, 8am 18 October - 8am 19 October 2019

Rojava Information Center

Overview

Amid ongoing violence in Sere Kaniye, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria has called for international observers to monitor the ceasefire. Turkish shelling, ground clashes and drone strikes have all been reported in Sere Kaniye and surroundings. Sere Kaniye is completely cut off by Turkish forces: wounded are not able to leave, and medical help cannot access. Concern about the possible use of non-conventional weapons grows.

Humanitarian Crisis

There are currently at least 38 injured people in Sere Kaniye hospital unable to leave or access adequate medical care due to the siege of the city by Turkish forces. There is a call for a humanitarian corridor to be established from Sere Kaniye to Tel Tamer, to enable the evacuation of wounded and civilians. The Kurdish Red Crescent has released a statement saying that some wounded people "already passed away due to the lack of blood and other needed medical help." The KRC also documented the damage to the hospital in Sere Kaniye from shelling. The KRC, NGO Cadus and an American relief organisation attempted to reach Sere Kaniye but were unable to reach it due to the presence of proxy forces, drones and ongoing shelling in the area.

The humanitarian situation in Tel Tamer and Hasakah continues to be at crisis point, with over 100,000 displaced people crowded into schools, mosques, gardens and family homes without adequate food, water, or blankets. Several hundred refugees have crossed into Iraq, and have been placed in Bardarash refugee camp near Duhok, and another nearby camp.

On the ground team

On the 18th October members of the Rojava Information Center joined the civilian convoy to Sere Kaniye to be able to get in depth and first hand information of the situation in Sere Kaniye. They joined the convoy, which was made up of around 100 vehicles from Derik, Qamishlo, Hasakah and Tel Tamer, and also carried water, food and medical supplies. Due to concern about shelling and air strikes, the group got out of the vehicles and continued on foot when approximately 5 km away from the city.

However, the convoy was not able to reach Sere Kaniye due to the presence of Turkish proxies on the road, and concerns for safety due to the sound of air planes. Shooting was heard in the distance. They were able to see the city and observe smoke rising from the city. On the way back the convoy encountered a village that had been hit by air strikes in previous days, from which 16 corpses were recovered. The convoy was later joined by ambulances who had been attempting to evacuate the wounded but were not able to.

Sere Kaniye

After the declared ceasefire, Turkey and its proxy forces continued to attack Sere Kaniye within the declared ceasefire zone on the 18th. Turkey targetted the city with artillery fire, drone strikes and air strikes, including around the hospital and surrounding the villages. They also targetted the southern route into the city from Tel Tamer, preventing a civilian convoy, and American NGO and medical staff and ambulances of the Kurdish Red Crescent from entering the city with humanitarian aid and to evacuate the wounded. Turkey removed parts of the border wall near the village Alok east of the city so additional forces can enter.

There have been clashes between SDF and Turkish proxy forces in the villages of Um Eshba, Madaba and Bab al-Khair east of Sere Kaniye. The Co-Chair of the Jazeera region Health Authority announced 8 deaths and 24 injuries from these attacks, who have been moved to Tel Tamer hospital.

According to our team on the ground there were also clashes in the village Birakiz between Sere Kaniye and Zirgan (Abu Khassel). Due to the shelling of the village Zirgane three civilians were killed. We were able to talk to a YPJ commander who informed us that intercepted radio communications reveal that Turkish proxy forces confirm with each other that they will not back down or stop fighting even if there is a ceasefire.

Other regions

Tel Abyad: It is still difficult to get information of the situation in Tel Abyad. In the afternoon intensive Turkish reconnaissance aircraft flights in the area were reported, and a local source saw helicopters and heard artillery shelling.

Kobane: There was a demonstration rejecting the Turkish invasion. Sources from that Asayish Internal Security Forces confirmed that the Syrian Army forces kept their position on the border and that the situation was stable.

Derik: In Derik the situation was stable. Our local sources reported that there were several aircraft flyovers, particularly over the town of Derik and the corner triangle between the borders of Syria, Turkey and Iraq. It is unconfirmed who the aircraft belong to.

Raqqa, Tabqa and Deir Ez-Zor: There were demonstrations against the Syrian Government army presence in Raqqa, Tabqa and Deir ez Zor.