

## **Report on the situation in North and East Syria, 8am 19th October - 8am 20th October**

Rojava Information Center

### **Overview**

Turkish reinforcements have been sent in over the border in Sere Kaniye, raising concerns of an escalation of violence in the coming days. Mazloum Abdi, Commander in Chief of the SDF, stated that "Turkey prevented the withdrawal of our forces." He joined the call of the Kurdish Red Crescent and other humanitarian organisations to establish a humanitarian corridor between Sere Kaniye and Tel Tamer in order to evacuate the wounded and remaining civilians, as well as to recover the bodies of the deceased. Syrian Army and Russian forces are coming from the south, arriving in Ayn Issa and western Raqqa region.

### **Humanitarian Crisis**

*Failure of ceasefire:* On the second day of the so called ceasefire, it has become clear that the terms of the ceasefire are not being observed by Turkey, with ongoing attacks on the ground and with heavy weapons. The Kurdish Red Crescent reports that since the start of the ceasefire, they have documented 20 civilian deaths and 20 serious injuries. Calls for observation and enforcement by a third party are growing, in order to avoid what is being called an "ethnic cleansing" operation. Armenians, an ethnic minority who came to North and East Syria when fleeing from the genocide carried out by the Ottoman "Young Turks" in 1915, expressed fear that there will be a repetition of this brutality and that they are facing "genocide and ethnic cleansing if the international community does not act."

*Convoy:* On the 19th October a medical convoy successfully reached Sere Kaniye hospital and was able to evacuate some of the wounded and deliver medical supplies. Our team on the ground reports that the convoy, made up of 20 ambulances and personnel from Kurdish Red Crescent, Syrian Arab Red Crescent, International Committee of the Red Cross and international volunteers, were given permission to enter the city in the late afternoon after intimidation and obstruction from Turkish proxy forces. The convoy evacuated 30 wounded individuals and 5 deceased. Several wounded had died in previous days because of lack of medical aid, many of whom are buried in Sere Kaniye. We spoke to a convoy participant, who emphasized that there are still more wounded who need to be evacuated but there were not enough vehicles to do so. Kurdish Red Crescent emphasized the call for a humanitarian corridor to be established to evacuate further wounded, recover bodies buried in the rubble and deliver critical medical supplies. The wounded were taken to hospitals in Tel Tamer, Qamishlo and Hasakah.

*Chemical weapons:* The potential usage of chemical weapons is being investigated by UN chemical weapons inspectors. There are currently six patients, including children, who are receiving treatment for burns from "unknown weapons." A local source has informed us that some of the patients with worrying burns have been taken to Iraq, accompanied by a doctor, for inspection by a commission of the chemical weapons committee.

### **ISIS**

There was a breakout of 14 ISIS-linked families from Al Hol camp (14 women and 21 children). Security forces were later able to find them and return them to the camp. The women - from Syria and Iraq - claimed that they wanted to "join the war against the Kurds" or "return to Baghouz."

### **Sere Kaniye**

Early in the morning a local source informed us that the fightings in Sere Kaniye had continued throughout the whole night. Turkey brought additional proxy forces and heavy weapons into the city during the night. A source inside Sere Kaniye said: "There are clashes in Sere Kaniye, in the moment maybe not so heavy, but there are some. There are reconnaissance flights over the city."

Turkey is bringing more proxy forces in, strengthening their positions. The positions didn't change, both SDF and Turkish proxy forces hold their positions." After reconnaissance flights in the morning Turkish planes bombed the city and in the afternoon proxy forces started attacking the overcrowded Sere Kaniye Hospital. Both the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria and the Kurdish Red Crescent had officially issued a call to open a humanitarian corridor to evacuate the wounded. There have been violent clashes in the Shukaria area in the countryside east of Sere Kaniye after Turkey removed a part of the border wall to bring in more proxy forces. An SDF fighter said: "The ceasefire is only symbolic. A big attack is being prepared". The city is still besieged as Turkish proxy forces are now also controlling the intercity road in the south of the city.

### **Other regions**

*Tel Abyad:* There are increasing reports of Turkish proxy forces seizing civilian houses, detaining civilians and looting their homes.

*Dirbesiye:* Villages around the city are organising in local self-defence units in preparation for an attack in the next days.

*Manbij:* In the morning there were attacks by Turkish proxy forces on the village of Umm Adsa northwest of Manbij. The Manbij Military Council didn't return fire. In the night a Turkish military convoy withdrew from Northern Manbij to Jarablus and the Turkish border after the Syrian Army took control of the region.

*Ayn Issa:* Hundreds of people from North and East of Syria protested against Turkey in the Ayn Issa district. In the night new Syrian Army forces arrived in the city.

*Raqqa:* Hundreds of residents of Raqqa city went out this morning in solidarity with the people of Sere Kaniye and in protest of the siege by Turkey and its proxy forces. Demonstrators called on the United Nations to intervene to evacuate the wounded. In the afternoon a Russian armored convoy entered Tabqa in the western Raqqa countryside.