
Increasing Violence in Occupied Afrin

Statistics from the month of August after two and a half years of Turkish Occupation



KONGRA STAR
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In May 2018, the region of Afrin in northwestern Syria was violently occupied by the Turkish state and its mercenaries, which consist of various jihadist groups, many of which are ISIS members, with many civilian victims. The violent occupation took place under the cynical name “Peace Spring” and with the excuse of creating a security zone. But in reality Afrin was one of the safest places in Syria, where many people from different regions found refuge after the beginning of the civil war. The society in Afrin is a multicultural, multiethnic and multi-religious one, which has been peacefully and democratically self-governing for the last 7 years before the occupation.

Two and a half years after Turkey and its jihadist allies invaded the predominantly Kurdish region of Afrin in northwestern Syria, excessive violence, looting and expulsions continue to occur in the formerly self-governing canton. There are almost daily reports of kidnappings, arbitrary arrests, torture, rape and murder in the occupied territories. The cases are increasing from month to month and are becoming more and more brutal as the activities of the jihadists become part of everyday life. Numerous brutal crimes were also reported in August this year..

Below, the crimes such as murder and kidnapping are documented from the month of August. In addition, figures are given for crimes such as death, torture, abduction and rape from the occupation of Afrin in May 2018 to the present day.

As there is no access to the occupied territories for independent human rights observers and organizations (after the occupation of Afrin in 2018, Sere Kaniye and Gire Spi were occupied in October 2019), access to information on human rights violations is very difficult. Human rights organizations and activists conduct research in the strictest secrecy in order to protect the population remaining in Afrin. The cases documented here are those that come to light with the help of these organizations and activists. The number of unreported cases of human rights violations is most likely much higher.



Statistics on the killings and abductions in August 2020

Abductions

Kidnappings and abductions in the occupied territories have become a means for the jihadist mercenaries ruling there to demand ransom and spread fear and terror among the population. According to the Human Rights Organization Afrin, a total of at least 58 civilians were abducted in August. Civilians are being kidnapped who do not fit into the patriarchal and Islamist world view of the mercenaries supported by Turkey. As in the case of the 40-year-old Christian Radwan Muhammad from the village of Jaqmaq Kibir in Rajo, who was arrested and convicted of blasphemy by the Islamist and pro-Turkish group Failaq Al-Sham.

On August 9, 2020, three civilians named Mihemed Sebrî (58), Fewzî Sebrî (56), Hesên Sebrî (49) were abducted from the village of Hêkiçê in the Cindirêse district. Fatmê Kinê, the mother of the three abducted people, was brutally murdered by jihadist mercenary groups in Turkey by strangulation in April of the same year.

Xelîl Menan Seydo (45), Kamîran Xelîl Seydo(22) and Ferdî Xelîl Seydo (40), three Kurds from Afrin, were kidnapped by the Turkish secret service MIT on August 16 and taken to an unknown location.

Another five civilians, three of them women, were abducted on 15 August from the village of Hêkiçê in the Cindirêse district: Hannan Sabri Tana, Malak Sobhi Jalabi, Zahida Khalil Sheikh Mustafa, Maqboola Abdo Tana, Fawzi Muhammad Tana. Their fate is also unknown until today.



Killings

In the month of August alone, 17 people were murdered, including four women and four children. Two minors were shot dead on the border of Afrin while trying to escape from occupied Afrin. Two children were thrown from high-rise buildings by a person of unknown origin. For several months, children, especially infants, have been abducted in Afrin by an unidentified people and have been thrown from tall buildings. Two of the three murdered women were killed by their husbands. One of the husbands is himself a member of one of the jihadist mercenary groups supported by Turkey. The daily violence perpetrated by Turkey's jihadist mercenaries against the population and Turkey's patriarchal misogynist mentality and policies are increasing the violent behavior towards women in the occupied territories. These policies and daily violence impose this mentality on society and increase patriarchal violence.

Some examples

On 3 August, 15-year-old Khalil Sheikho Zarzour was killed and three others injured by Turkish border guards while trying to cross the Syrian-Turkish border near the village of Werkanah in Sharan district of Afrin. After he was shot, his body was taken to a hospital in the Turkish town of Kilis. There they removed and stole his organs and then handed his body over to his family.

20-year-old Estarvan Baker from the village of Qude in the Rajo region was murdered by her husband Abdulqadir Jamil Qarmaz on 8 August when she tried to escape from occupied Afrin.

On August 13, Nuri Jamo Omar Sharaf, a Yazidi person from the village Şadêrê, was executed by the Faylaq al-Sham faction. There were reports that he too had been abducted and tortured in early summer 2019 and that a ransom of US\$12,000 had been demanded for him. After his release, he faced further harassment and threats from armed groups, who then murdered him in August.

The 23-year-old Goli Faraj Khalil Hammo and her 14-year-old relative were both murdered by Goli Faraj Khalil Hammo's husband on the border with Turkey when they tried to escape from occupied Afrin. Her husband is a member of one of the mercenary groups supported by Turkey.



Numbers related to the impact of the occupation since 2018

Since the invasion and occupation of Afrin in 2018 by the Turkish state and its allies, the Human Rights Organization Afrin has collected and documented these crimes as much as has been possible. There are many more cases that are reported, but the figures given here only include those cases that have been confirmed by evidence.

Killings

Since the occupation of Afrin, a total of 565 civilians have been murdered. 500 have been killed during the invasion by Turkey and its mercenary groups, 65 have been killed by torture or extrajudicial executions. Among the 565 murdered are 55 children and 65 women.

Abductions

So far, a total of 6,000 abductions of civilians have been documented, 1000 of them women. Of the 6,000 abducted, the fate of 3,500 civilians is unknown. It is unknown whether they are in one of the prisons of the mercenary groups supported by Turkey or whether they were murdered.

These abductions and arbitrary arrests and the subsequent torture are being used by the armed faction of the Turkish occupation as a means of frightening the population, demanding ransom or, in the case of the abducted women, raping them.

In May 2020, video footage of the Al Hamza Division was recorded and distributed on social media, on which at least 11 women from Afrin, who had disappeared, are visible, who were brought from one place to another after internal conflicts within the different armed groups. Some of them had already been abducted during the Turkish invasion in spring 2018, others only this year. The women were in a wretched state that no laws, customs and social values would accept.

Rape

The Human Rights Organization Afrin has documented 65 cases of rape. The organization only includes cases it can prove. Therefore, through further news, reports and stories it can be assumed that the number of rapes of women is much higher. For example, in the Euphrates region in north-eastern Syria, the security service arrested an agent trained by the Turkish secret service MIT who was working with the jihadist mercenaries and MIT. After his arrest, he confessed that he was ordered to kidnap women and children because he knew the area well. He confessed to kidnapping 20-50 women



and children in some days. These were then distributed among different groups of mercenaries and raped. He himself raped 20 Kurdish women.

Injured and victims of torture

During the invasion attacks as well as the daily attacks on civilians, 680 civilians were injured, including 325 children and 203 women. There were 700 documented cases of torture in captivity and also during attacks.

Suicide

Since the occupation 5 suicides have been documented. It seems important to include them here as well, since the occupation and the violence associated with it strongly influence and traumatize the society. In this respect, suicides are a consequence of the prevailing repressive power structures.

Turkish occupation in Afrin is directed against the society

The situation in Afrin as well as in the other occupied territories such as Sere Kaniye and Gire Spi is becoming more and more drastic. Turkey is trying to build a long-term occupation regime in the regions. In the process, countless acts of violence are being committed and human and international rights are being violated. This dossier deals only with murder, kidnapping and physical and sexual violence, but the list of crimes committed by the Turkish state and its mercenary groups in the occupied regions is much broader. For example, no mention has been made of the destruction of nature, the plundering of the population's property, land theft, forced demographic change, violation of religious freedom and the banning of the Kurdish language in schools, despite the fact that the population of Afrin is predominantly Kurdish. In addition, the water supply to the entire Heseke region, whose water station is located in the occupied territory of Serekaniye and under Turkish control, is being cut off. The Turkish State also turns water into a weapon of war against the population in Northern and Eastern Syria.

The war of occupation by Turkey with the aim of establishing a long-term occupation of the region of northern Syria is very worrying. An end must be put to it so that the more than 200,000 civilians who were displaced and had to flee as a result of the attacks and invasion by Turkey can return to their homes and democratic structures can be rebuilt.

This report was compiled with the information collected by the Human Rights Organization Afrin, which is documenting human rights violations in occupied Afrin.

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