

Forced Displacement and Demographic Change in Northern and Eastern Syria

Secretary-General of the United Nations;

The President of the Security Council;

Representatives of the Five Permanent members of the Security Council

During the past three years, the Turkish state has systematically launched its aggression against the North and East of Syria and its occupation of the regions of Afrin and Serekaniye (Ras Al-Ain) and Gire Spi (Tel Abad), which caused the displacement of inhabitants from these cities, forcing them to live in displacement camps inside and outside the Rojava Region. This was a result of the brutal policies practiced by the mercenaries supported by the Turkish state against the civilians and the banning of inhabitants from all sources of life in order to displace the native people, and to house members of the militias and their families, thus applying a policy of demographic change in North and East Syria, destabilizing the former security and peace that these regions witnessed during the years of civil war, in addition to the terrorist attacks that were and are still continuing in many of the Syrian areas. The Turkish occupation and its mercenaries have also committed massacres and violations against the cities where Kurds, Arabs and Assyrians live, as well as violations in the Afrin, Serekaniye, and Gire Spi where arbitrary arrest, disappearance, rape, child murder, theft of the homes and property theft of indigenous people using the policy of spreading fear and making them to forcibly emigrate, and then housing the families of the pro-Turkish Syrian mercenaries. They also applied a suffocating siege on the regions victimizing the inhabitants, cutting off all sources of life in those areas, and making the inhabitants sign documents and give up ownership of their property and forcibly leave their homes. They also kidnapped civilians and released them in exchange for huge ransoms or killed them if the ransom was not paid.

These violations, which constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, played the main role in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of the original inhabitants both in and outside the regions of Rojava, and forced them to live in camps that lack the basic daily necessities. According to International Human Rights Law, Forced Displacement is defined as:

"The evacuation of a group of individuals and inhabitants from their land they live on." This is listed among the war crimes that amount to crimes against humanity in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

According to Article (1/7 / d) of the Rome Statute, the International Criminal Court defines the main elements of the crime of population deportation or the forcible transfer of population, which constitutes a crime against humanity according to the following:

- I. *Forcibly transferred one or more persons to another country or another place by expulsion or any other coercive act for reasons not recognized by state law;*
- II. *The person or persons in question are lawfully residing in the area they were excluded from or transferred forcibly;*
- III. *That the perpetrator is aware of the actual circumstances that prove the legality of this existence of the persons;*
- IV. *That this behaviour is committed as part of a widespread attack or method directed against civilians;*
- V. *The perpetrator knows that the behaviour is part of a large-scale attack or a targeted approach against the inhabitants of cities or that it is intended that this behaviour is part of that attack.*

According to Articles (6, 7 and 8) of the Rome Statute, the removal or illegal transfer constitutes a war crime. The four Geneva Accords of August 12, 1949 and the two protocols attached thereto of 1977 define war crimes as grave violations of the established rules when it comes to forced displacement; article (49) of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 prohibits the forcible transfer, collective and individual transportation of persons or their expulsion from their areas of residence to other areas.

The prohibition of deportation is one of the most important elements stipulated by the international law for the protection of civilians, due to the negative psychological effects of forced displacement. People forcibly displaced from their own lands find themselves living in appalling and unhealthy living conditions unfit for the life of human beings, as is the case of millions of Syrian people.

The process of forced displacement and the acts of genocide carried out by the Turkish regime, the Syrian National Army and the rest of the Free Army battalions under its banner coincide with what was stipulated in Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the

Prevention of the Crime of Genocide that was approved by the United Nations on January 9, 1948 and became effective on January 12, 1951. It considers the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, or religious group as a genocide:

- A. Killing members of the group;
- B. Causing serious bodily or spiritual harm to members of the group;
- C - Deliberately subjugating the group to circumstances with the intent to financially destroy it in whole or in part;
- D. Imposing measures aimed at preventing childbearing within the group;
- E. Forcibly transferring children from the group to another group.

Forced displacement is a practice carried out by governments, quasi-military forces or groups intolerant towards ethnic, religious or sectarian groups with the aim of evacuating a specific land and putting other population groups in their place. This is included among war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity according to International Law and Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is what the Turkish regime, and the Syrian National Army and their brigades did in the areas they occupied in the regions of North and East Syria. Some of the most prominent war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Northern and Eastern Syria that resulted in forced displacement with the aim of demographic change (Afrin, Serekaniye, Gire Spi) are as follows:

1- Afrin: Afrin city is located in a mountainous area in the far north-western corner of Syria and its subordinate / 366 / villages with an area of about / 3,850 / km², which is equivalent to 2% of the area of Syrian, and its population is / 523,258 / people, according to statistics 2010, where the Kurds form about 90% of its population, and the rest were Arab tribes (Bubna, Omarat) and its inhabitants embrace the religions of Islam, Christianity, and Ezidism. After the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, tens of thousands of residents of neighboring areas fled to Afrin from the ongoing battles and clashes. After its occupation by the Turkish army and the Syrian National Army under Operation Olive Branch, launched on 20/01/2018, the Turkish factions and forces committed a number of violations that led to forced displacement, the most prominent of which are:

A. Committing mass killings of innocent civilians and unlawful killing. About 452 were martyred, among whom many were children and women.

B. Targeting residential neighbourhoods and vital centres by the warplanes and artillery of the Turkish army, as well as the heavy and medium weapons of the National Army. They bombed neighbourhoods and destroyed homes. They also targeted water pumps with the aim of cutting off water from residential areas and they bombed communication towers to isolate the area and cut off all means of life.

C. Using unlawful and internationally prohibited weapons—an attack was documented where the chemical weapon chlorine gas was used on two villages.

All these practices in addition to the panic and intimidation that the brigades carried out through the media, social media, and the videos they published of killing, torturing, and threatening to exterminate the “infidel” Kurds, and the constant air and land shelling of the city, villages, and residential neighbourhoods, which led to the displacement of approximately / 325,000 / three hundred twenty-five thousand people from the Afrin region.

Some of the most prominent areas that the residents of Afrin fled to were:

- Al-Shahba areas that are under the control of the Kurdish Protection Units and the Syrian Arab Army, which were liberated in 2016 from the Islamic State where minimum standards of life are not available and where the percentage of homes destroyed is about ninety percent of the total of these liberated areas. These areas are also considered unsafe due to the large numbers of mines planted by the Islamic State, many of which remain unexploded. The displaced were distributed in five camps, known internationally as Tel Rifaat camps, each containing / 800 / eight hundred tents, i.e. eight hundred families within each camp. About / 22,000 / people are also in the city of Tal Rifaat, and the rest are distributed within the villages surrounding the city. This brings the total number of displaced persons in that region to more than one hundred thousand people living in the harshest humanitarian conditions and in the absence of humanitarian aid.

- The areas east of the Euphrates and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where tens of thousands of people headed. The displaced are distributed within cities and towns and in camps like Nowruz, Domeez, Kwilan, Agiri, and Arbad camps.

The war crimes and crimes against humanity during Operation Olive Branch are still ongoing since the occupation of the city in 18/03/2018 until the date of the preparation of this report, and aim to displace the Kurds who are lawfully residing on their lands and in their home which they own by official documents recognized by the Syrian state which are included in its records. This resulted in the replacement, housing, and settlement of Arabs of the National Army and the brigades linked to them and their families, who belong mainly belong in different regions in Syria ranging between Eastern Ghouta, Homs and Hama and Idlib and other areas that witnessed reconciliations by Russia between these brigades and the Syrian Regime. These reconciliations saw the transfer of the fighters and their families to Idlib and from there they were systematically transferred by the Turkish army to the Afrin region, where the percentage of the remaining Kurds range from 20-25% of the total population, so about 300,000 fighters and their families have been settled within those areas. In the region, many forms of killings, kidnappings, disappearances and torture were practiced in the region of Afrin. About / 7000/ only, seven thousand out of /25,000 / twenty-five thousand Ezidis remain in Afrin now. Furthermore, all /350/ Christian families have been displaced.

2- Serekaniye: The number of residents in the region of Serekaniye was / 70 / thousand. The number of villages was/ 185 / villages and the population of the villiages was / 105 / thousand people, therefore the number of residents total / 180 / thousand people. 80% of its area is under The Turkish occupation. The total area is 242 km². The aggression by Turkey and its mercenaries on the Serekaniye area has led to the displacement of more than / 162,000 / civilians who were distributed in the neighbouring cities and villages and in camps and accommodation centres. Both camps of Ain Issa that accommodated 13500 displaced persons and Mabroukeh which accommodated 4750 displaced persons were also targeted, and the camps were therefore emptied. Ain Issa camp accommodated a large number of families of the Islamic State organization (Daesh), who then fled towards areas under the control of the armed factions. A large-scale demographic change was then carried out in Serekaniye (Ras Al-Ain) where /90/ families were brought there from Idlib in 2019 as well as 400 Iraqi militants. In 2020 more than /1400/ Arab families from Idlib and displaced persons from Al-Ghouta were also settled in Serekaniye.

3- Gire Spi (Tal Abyad): It is located in the area of Syrian's Al-Jazeera. It is administratively subordinate to the governorate of Al-Raqqqa and its residents are a mixture of Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, and Armenians. Gire Spi and Serekaniye were occupied in 09/10/2019 as part of Operation Peace Spring by the Turkish regime and the Syrian National Army. This Operation has led to the occupation of parts of the Syrian territories of 150 km long and 32 km deep, which caused the displacement of more than 162,000 civilians from their native areas. Policies of forced displacement were practiced to enforce a demographic change, policies including mass killings, siege of cities, cutting off necessities of life, forcing people to choose between extermination and displacement, the forced sale of real estate, the annexation of these areas to the Turkish state and granting settlers Turkish citizenship, while the native inhabitants were displaced now live in the camps of Washokani and Tal Al-Samn, which contain more than / 10,000/ people.

A demographic change was carried out due to the attacks of the Turkish regime and its mercenaries on the regions of Afrin, in 2018, and on Gire Spi and Serekaniye on 9/10/2019 under the Olive Branch and Peace Spring operations, where weapons, violence and siege were used to forcibly displace the native inhabitants until today. These acts constitute a direct and forced displacement that cannot be legitimized by any military action against the civilians. The aforementioned acts are practiced on all civilians including killing, raping and kidnapping women and children at a time when the United Nations and its officers should have played their role in protecting the victims. Despite the issuance of the United Nations Commission for Inquiry on Syria, dated 9/15/2020, consisting of / 25 / pages, which documented the possibility that the Turkish-supported Syrian National Army has committed war crimes of kidnapping hostages, cruel treatment, torture, rape, killing and maiming dozens of civilians with improvised explosive devices and during the bombing and missile attacks, we have not seen any serious action by the Security Council and the United Nations to stop these attacks and practices and violations, or to restore matters to normal, as is stated in the Charter of Nations of the United Nations of 1945 which is consistent with the purposes of the United Nations, as stipulated in first Article of the United Nations Charter, in its first and second paragraphs: 1) Keeping international peace and security of states, and to achieve this end, the Commission takes effective joint measures to prevent and eliminate causes that threaten the peace, and to suppress acts of aggression and

any other aspects of disturbing peace under the cover of peaceful means. This is done in accordance with the principles of Justice and International Law to resolve international disputes that may lead to a breach of peace or settlement (2) Development of friendly relations between nations based on respect for the principle that stipulated equality of all nations to the right of self-determination, as well as taking measures to enhance public peace.

From the above, we ask the United Nations and the Security Council the following:

- For the formation of an international investigation committee on the crimes of forced displacement committed by Turkey in the occupied territories (Afrin, Serekaniye, and Gire Spi)
- The commitment of the Turkish regime and the Syrian National Army factions to stop the settlement operations and the occupation and demographic change carried out in regions, cities, towns, and villages which displace its inhabitants
- Guaranteeing the right of return for people in the occupied territories and the restoration of their property, their lands, and their homes
- Prosecution of the Turkish regime and the armed factions affiliated with it for the crimes it has committed against the Kurdish, Arab, Syriac, and other civilians in the Northern and Eastern regions of Syria with the crime of forced displacement, with the aim of demographic change, as is necessary in regard to warcrimes, and crimes against humanity, punishing those crimes and bringing them to justice.

Statistics of the numbers of displaced and refugees:

In the Kurdistan region of Iraq resulting from the Turkish occupation
(Operation Olive Branch and Spring of Peace)

Number of families: 79,778 families The total number of people: 252,451 people

Distribution and proportions - inside and outside the camps

94,387 live in the camps -37%

158,064 live outside the camps -63%

- Distribution of Syrian refugees in Iraq by governorates:

1- Erbil: 128,505 people (43,122 families) - equivalent to 50.90% of the total of Syrian refugees in Iraq - distributed as follows:

Erbil - outside the camps: 97,956 people (35,916 families) equivalent to 38.80% of total number of refugees

Darshakran camp: 11 770 people (2658 families) - equivalent to 4.66% of total number of refugees

Qushta camp: 8128 people (1994 families) - equivalent to 3.22% of total number of refugees

Korkosk camp: 7788 people (1917 families) - equivalent to 3.08% of total number of refugees

Basarmah camp: 2,863 people (627 families) - equivalent to 1.13% of total number of refugees

2- Dohuk Governorate: 884,477 people (24,478 families) - equivalent to 35.04% of the total number of Syrian refugees in Iraq - distributed as follows:

Dohuk outside the camps: 33,860 people (11,036 families) - equivalent to 13.41%

Camp Domiz 1: 33,977 people (8,574 families) - equivalent to 13.46% of the total refugees

Camp Domiz 2: 10574 people (2552 families) - equivalent to 4.19% of the total refugees

Koelan camp: 8,934 people (2,037 families) - equivalent to 3.54% of the total refugees

Akre camp: 1102 people (2037 families) - equivalent to 0.44% of the total refugees

3- Sulaymaniyah Governorate: 32,361 people (10943 families) - equivalent to 12.81% of Refugees group - distributed as follows:

Salmaniya outside the camps: 23,401 people (8705 families) - equivalent to 275.9 of the total refugees

Arbad camp: 8,940 people (2,238 families) - equivalent to 54.3% of the total refugees

4- Other sites: 3158 people (1245 families) - equivalent to 25.1% of the total refugees

A statistic of the number of displaced women and children in the camps of Northern and Eastern Syria:

Nowruz camp: total number (258) number of families (67) number of children (155) Number of women (88)

Washwakan Camp: total number (5636) number of families (1021) number of women (2198)

Tal al-Samen camp: total number (600) number of families (131) number of children (394)

Barkhdan camp: number of children (1216) number of women (1349)

Sardam camp: the number of children (1338) the number of women(1863)

Afrin camp: number of children (209) number of women (203)

Shahba camp: number of children (200) number of women (287)

Faker camp: number of children (157) number of women (121)

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