



## Fact Sheet: Til Temir - A District Under Constant Attack

Til Temir (also: Tal Tamr / Tel Tamr) is a town in Cizîrê canton in North and East Syria which, along with its surrounding villages, is of special ethnic and strategic significance. It has a population of around 25,000, of which Arabs and Kurds constitute the majority today, but it is also home to the largest Assyrian community remaining in Syria. Til Temir lies 30 km away from the Turkish border.

To this day, the region is part of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, has driven out ISIS after a very short-lived occupation attempt in 2015 and is defying several attacks by Turkey. Til Temir is situated exactly at the south-eastern corner of the zone between Serêkaniyê (Ras al-Ayn) and Girê Spî (Tall Abyad), that has been occupied by Turkey since 2019. Since then, the region was subjected to regular shelling despite a declared ceasefire, thus it was in constant state of low-intensity warfare.

### Recent Attacks On Til Temir's Civilian Infrastructure

In the last 2 weeks, the villages of Til Temir and Zirgan have been bombed with at least 524 heavy artillery shells. However, already for almost three years the region is facing constant shelling and the destruction of civilian homes, schools, and municipalities, with the aim of scaring people and make them leave the area (maps in appendix). Some recent examples of attacks:

- In May 2022, the Assyrian church in the village of Tawil was directly targeted and destroyed (images in the appendix).
- On September 30, 2022 shelling of the local high voltage lines causes the 29th power outage as a result of attacks in Til Temir and the countryside.
- On December 3, 2022 four children in the village of El-Mucibra were injured due to an explosion of an earlier Turkish shelling.
- On December 4, 2022 the municipality building of Zirgan was destroyed.
- On December 6, 2022 the only bakery in the region in the village of Rebiat was destroyed.



## Why Might Turkey Invade Til Temir?

- In 2019, Turkey announced its plan to annex a strip of territory reaching 30 km across the Syrian border to create a so-called 'security zone' which would leave most major cities of Rojava in Turkey's hands.
- Facing eastwards from the occupied strip between Serêkaniyê and Girê Spî, the Til Temir region is geographically immediately next on this agenda, thus the livelihood of the people in Til Temir under imminent threat.
- Til Temir is situated directly along the highway M4, which is a vital connection for transport connecting the Western canton of Cizîrê with the Eastern cantons and is regarded by Erdogan to serve as the guiding line for the 30km strip.

### **INFOBOX: Turkey's Plan Of A 30 km 'Insecurity Zone'**

Behind this is a project of 'demographic engineering' for Turkey's neo-Ottoman vision. On the one hand, in continuation of colonialist, imperial and genocidal policies, the Turkish state wants to kill or expel Kurds and other minorities. On the other hand Erdogan claims to 'resettle refugees' into the occupied areas, of which in fact until now about 65% have been the families of the Islamist gangs controlling the occupied areas.

### **Til Temir Is Home To The Largest Community of Assyrians Remaining In Syria**

- The largest community of Assyrians who are still in Syria is living in the district of Til Temir.
- Christian Assyrians are especially targeted by Turkey and ISIS, and churches and graveyards have been deliberately attacked and destroyed by Turkish mercenaries in the recent years.
- The Syriacs and Assyrians in the region have established their own political structures like the Syriac Union Party and self-defense forces like the Assyrian Xabur Guards, the Syriac Military Council, the Sutoro Police, and the women's only unit, the Bethnahrain Women's Protection Forces.



### Infobox: The Assyrians

The Christian Assyrians used to live in Hakkari (in present-day Turkey) until they were killed and driven out of that region during the 1915 genocide under the Ottoman Empire. They were resettled in Iraq, but in 1933 they became victims of the Simele massacre committed by the newly-formed Iraqi Army. About 30,000 survivors of this massacre fled to northern Syria, where they established the towns of Heseke and Tel Temir and around 35 villages along the Xabur Valley.

### What Does Turkish Occupation Look Like?

The Turkish occupation in the occupied strip between Serêkaniyê and Girê Spî or in Efrîn is characterized by barbarism and cultural genocide:

- Turkey is targeting the original culture, cutting down millions of trees, and destroying old archaeological sites of humanity.
- Various Islamist groups, direct offspring or successors of Al-Qaeda, united as 'Syrian National Army' hold the territory, alongside a vast net of Turkish military bases. For the Hamza Division and the Sultan Murad Division, which are controlling occupied Serêkaniyê and some of the areas north of Til Temir, rape, killings, kid-napping, torturing, and drug production and trafficking (mostly Captagon) are main activities.
- They target not only the Kurdish, Yezidi, and Christian population, but also Arab tribal leaders, and journalists.
- ISIS members use the occupied regions as a place of retreat and reorganization.

### Demands

- Members of the Global Coalition must ensure that Turkey stops its aggression against the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria. All attacks must be immediately halted.
- Turkey's plans to launch a new military occupation offensive must not be tolerated and authorised by the Global Coalition, especially US and Russia.
- The airspace of North and East Syria must be closed to Turkish war planes as well as armed or unarmed UAVs by the US and Russia.

## Appendix



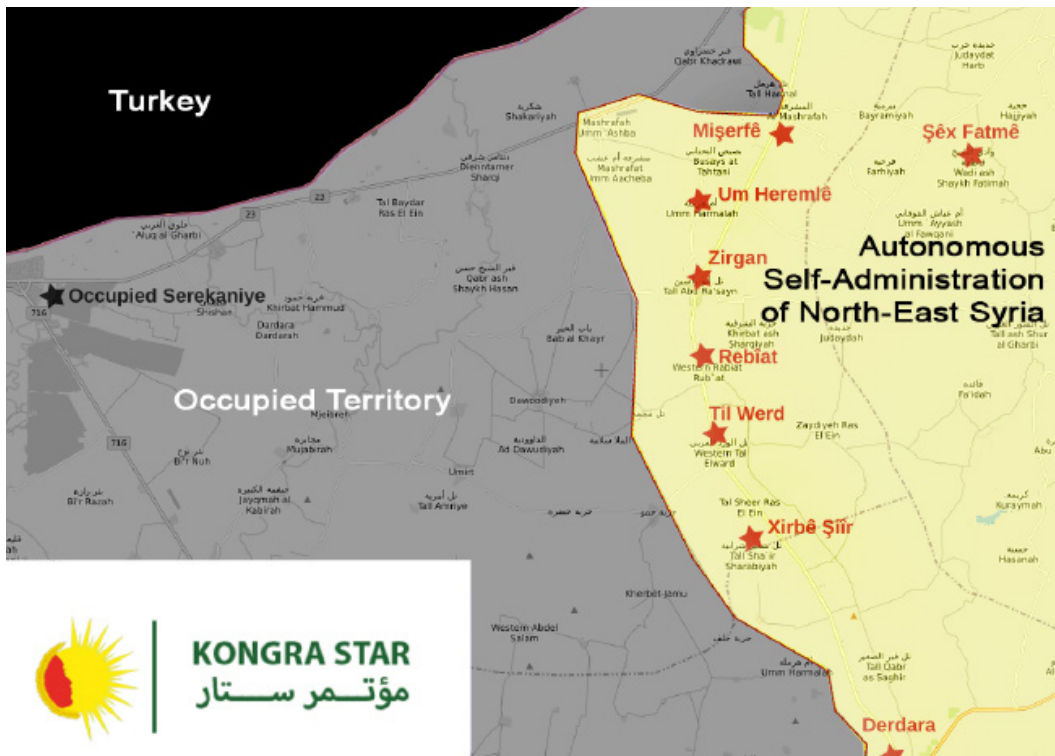
*The town of Til Temir*



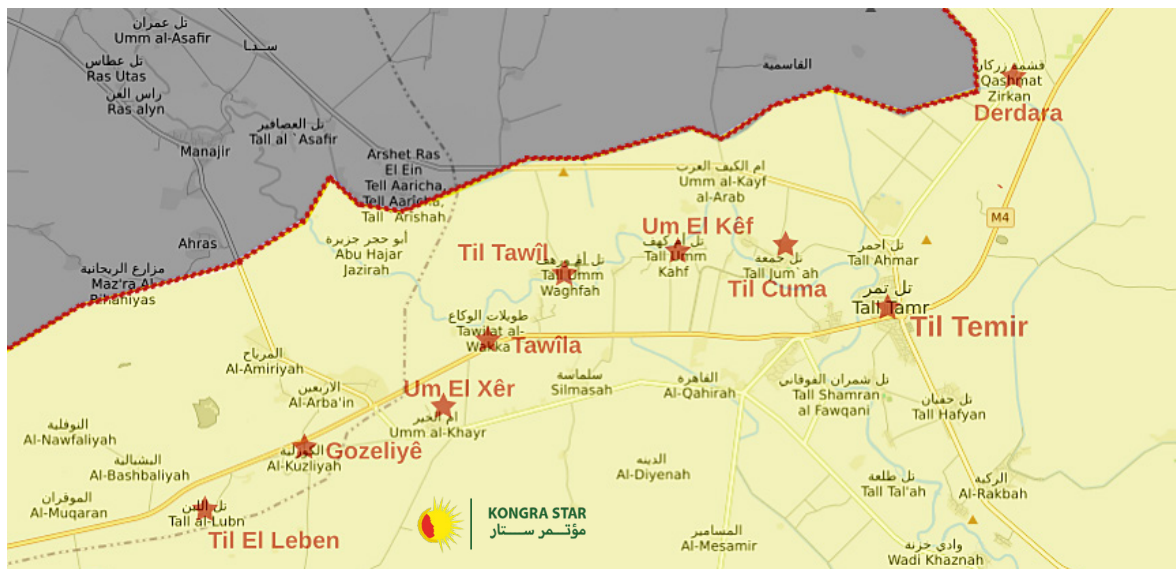
*Assyrian church in Tawil destroyed by shelling of Turkish mercenaries in May 2022.*



*Bakery of Rebiat, the only in the area, was destroyed by shelling on December 6, 2022.*



Map of the villages in the district of Zirgan, which are constantly under attack by Turkey.



Map of the villages in the west of Til Temir, which are constantly under attack by Turkey. Til Tawil, Um El Kef, and Til Cuma are Assyrian settlements.