

West silent as Turkey wrecks most peaceful part of Syria

Turkey: Get out of Syria! Australia: End the silence about Turkey's ethnic cleansing in Afrin!

Afrin is a small region in northwestern Syria, on the Turkish border. During the seven-year civil war Afrin was the most peaceful part of the country. Before the war it was mainly populated by Kurds. It took in hundreds of thousands of refugees (mainly Arab), giving them security and full rights.

Afrin was the geographically isolated, most western canton of the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria. The DFNS is organised on the principles of feminism, ecology, communal democracy, and ethnic and religious pluralism.

Turkey fears good example

All this was too much for the racist, anti-Kurd Turkish regime of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan which fears such a wonderful example could provide inspiration to Turkey's own large and downtrodden Kurdish minority. Using recycled Islamic State and Al-Qaeda gangs it invaded and occupied Afrin. The heroic defence forces could not withstand Turkey's massive advantage in airpower and heavy weaponry. But guerrilla resistance continues.

Ethnic cleansing & looting

There has since been widespread looting and destruction. Perhaps as many as 200,000 people, mostly Kurds, have become refugees. They will probably never get back. They will be replaced with Arab Syrian refugees in Turkey. Afrin's centuries-long connection with the Kurds will be ended. Already, settlers are being moved into abandoned houses. This is ethnic cleansing on a very large scale.

Refugees from Afrin are stranded across the border in a precarious existence without any international aid whatsoever.

Silence of the West

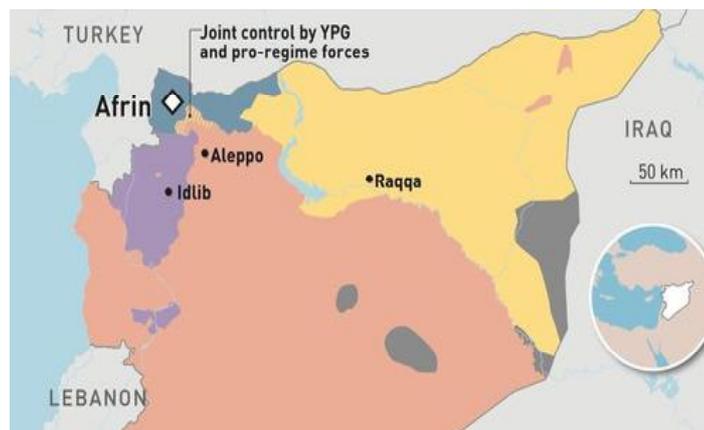
In the face of all this the Western powers have been silent. Germany's Angela Merkel issued a mild rebuke — after the invasion was over. Germany, Britain and the US are protecting lucrative arms contracts. They also pay Turkey to stop hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees from travelling on to Europe.

But perhaps even more importantly, the West does not want to see a real thoroughgoing people's revolution succeed in the Middle East (or anywhere else). For them the region is a zone of exploitation and control. Dictatorships are far more useful and dependable partners.

US refused to defend Afrin

For several years, the Syrian Democratic Forces, the defence militia of the DFNS, have been in a tactical alliance with the US in the war against the Islamic State. Almost the whole of Syria east of the Euphrates River has been cleared of the jihadist IS gangs. Thousands of SDF fighters have perished in the struggle against IS barbarism.

But when NATO member Turkey invaded Afrin Washington did



absolutely nothing. It didn't warn Turkey off; it didn't provide the SDF with the weapons to counter Turkey's airpower.

Australia's shameful stance

Malcolm Turnbull lectures Syrian dictator Assad on the bombing of Eastern Ghouta (a region outside Damascus previously controlled by jihadist rebels) and says the killing of civilians is never justified. But the Australian government has been completely silent on Turkey's invasion and ethnic cleansing of Afrin.

The truth is that both Coalition and Labor governments have long been in bed with the increasingly authoritarian Turkish regime. In 2006, following a visit by Erdogan, Canberra put the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) on the list of terrorist organisations. In reality the PKK is a legitimate resistance organisation of the Kurdish people, with millions of supporters across the Middle East. It advocates feminism, grassroots democracy and ethnic and religious tolerance.

Break Australian ties with Turkish regime

We call on the Australian government to stop supporting the Erdogan tyranny. Specifically, we demand that Australia:

- Immediately recall its ambassador from Ankara until such time as Turkey withdraws its own and all proxy forces from Afrin.
- Establish an immediate ban on all contact and cooperation between Australian and Turkish military and security personnel.
- Push at the United Nations to condemn Turkey's invasion and ethnic cleansing and to secure emergency aid for the refugees who have fled Afrin.

Solidarity is vital

Western Europe, especially Germany, is aflame with protests, spearheaded by the large diaspora Kurdish populations but also supported by left and progressive forces.

The Portuguese parliament passed a motion condemning Turkey's occupation of Afrin. Progressive British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has condemned the Turkish invasion. Questions have been raised in many European parliaments.

Solidarity organisations in Europe are raising the call for a boycott of Turkish goods and tourism to increase the pressure on the Erdogan regime.

We appeal to Australians contemplating holidaying in Turkey: Please don't go there! Say no to war and ethnic cleansing!

This leaflet has been produced by the Australians for Kurdistan solidarity group. For more information or to get involved in solidarity activities, please contact us.

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