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## **Addressing Rojava and Northern Syria's Developing Crisis: A Blueprint for Stability**

*Turkey is taking advantage of chaos in Syria to occupy Kurdish regions, displace civilians, and empower extremist groups. Urgent action is needed to provide humanitarian assistance to tens of thousands of displaced Kurds, prevent Turkish and Turkey-backed advances on DAANES territories where Kurds, Yezidis, Christians, Arabs, and others live together in peace, and find a solution to the Syrian crisis that will end violence, prevent displacement, and ensure the rights of Kurds and all Syrian communities.*

### **Latest Developments**



On November 27<sup>th</sup>, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a hardline Islamist group that originated from the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda, launched attacks on Syrian government forces in Aleppo. Aleppo quickly fell under HTS control. As of December 6<sup>th</sup>, the group has taken control of Hama and is contesting the city of Homs. The Syrian government has put up minimal resistance.

Russia and Iran, both of which came to the rescue of the Syrian state early in the country's civil war and have been weakened by subsequent conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, respectively, have not meaningfully intervened.

Turkey-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) militias, which are under U.S. sanctions for targeting Kurds, religious minorities and women and harboring former members of ISIS, took advantage of HTS advances to attack Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)-held enclaves in Shahba and Tal Rifaat.

### Humanitarian Crisis: Nearly 100K IDPs In Need



Shahba and Tal Rifaat hosted tens of thousands of Kurdish and Yezidi IDPs who had been forced from their homes in neighboring Afrin when Turkey and the SNA invaded that region in 2018. These IDPs have once again been forced to flee to DAANES-held territory in eastern Syria. They were already suffering from sporadic attacks by Turkey-backed militias and a Syrian regime blockade that prevented fuel and medicine from entering the camps<sup>1</sup>.

Turkey-backed militias have killed, injured, and abducted Afrin IDPs attempting to flee to DAANES-held territory and blocked convoys from advancing<sup>2</sup>. These militias are responsible for grave human rights abuses in Afrin, including extrajudicial killings, rape, torture, and enforced disappearances. These crimes will be repeated if IDPs cannot evacuate.

DAANES authorities are already struggling to meet the needs of approximately 85,000 IDPs who have reached areas under their control<sup>3</sup>. The DAANES is under economic embargo and facing cuts to water and electricity after Turkish drone strikes devastated critical infrastructure<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://rojavainformationcenter.org/2023/05/overcoming-the-siege-shehba-region-beyond-the-refugee-camps/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://hevdesti.org/en/joint-statement-on-the-recent-military-escalation-in-northern-syria/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://rojavainformationcenter.org/2024/12/update-december-5/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c79zj7rz3l4o>



### **Fragile Stability in Kurdish Neighborhoods of Aleppo**

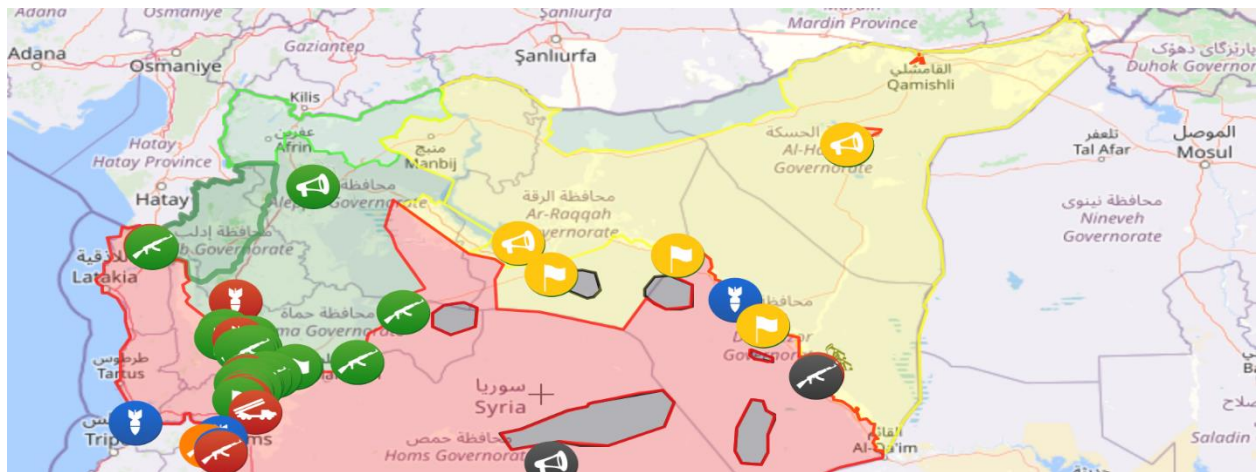


The two Kurdish-held neighborhoods in Aleppo, Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyah, have suffered from attacks both from regime forces and from radical Islamist opposition groups since the civil war began. Tens of thousands of people living there are now surrounded by HTS forces.

The SDF have announced that they have channels open to communicate with HTS to de-escalate tensions. In order to prevent a further humanitarian catastrophe, it is imperative that the populations of these neighborhoods be allowed to remain in their homes undisturbed and that some form of self-rule for Kurdish neighborhoods be preserved.



## Threats to Manbij



Turkey-backed SNA militias are now threatening to advance to Manbij, a diverse Arab-majority city with Kurdish, Turkmen, Circassian, and Christian communities. Manbij was liberated by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS in 2016. Turkey delayed the liberation of the city despite its status as a center for ISIS foreign operations. It has threatened the local DAANES-affiliated administration and local SDF forces there ever since.

According to the SDF, Turkey is preparing to attack Manbij. If Turkey or Turkey-backed militias intervene, it will displace hundreds of thousands more civilians and seriously damage prospects to find a peaceful solution to conflicts between Turkey and Kurdish groups in Syria and beyond.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The international community must act now to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe and promote a lasting political solution to the Syrian crisis. This is the only way to ensure that extremist groups like ISIS do not return and that the region does not once again become a source of instability for the Middle East and Europe.

- **End Turkish Aggression in Syria:** Turkey must be pressured to immediately rein in its proxy forces and adhere to existing ceasefires. Following that, it must be urged to take steps towards a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish issue both within and beyond its borders.
- **Prevent Displacement:** Europe should support the DAANES in providing humanitarian assistance to communities displaced by Turkey-backed militias and ensuring that, ultimately, they are able to return to their homes.
- **An Inclusive Political Solution:** The DAANES must be included in any political process intended to determine the future of Syria. Any political solution to the Syrian conflict must recognize the rights of the Kurds and others.