



WAR CRIME OR CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY

TURKISH RECENT AGGRESSION ON

NORTH AND NORTHEAST SYRIA

Introduction

Turkey shows disregard for civilian lives in northeast Syria through its drones strikes and artillery shelling. It violates the rights of the population through its indiscriminate attacks, as documented by the Monitoring and Documentation Department of North Press from Nov. 20, 2022, to Sep. 30, 2023. Turkey's indiscriminate shelling has resulted in the killing of 49 civilians and the injury of 112 others, including 20 children and 16 women. These indiscriminate attacks violate international humanitarian law, also known as the laws of war, and amount to war crimes¹.

Even though Turkish authorities claim their attacks are guided, precise and target only military personnel, however the harm inflicted on civilians and the vital infrastructure relied upon by approximately three million people directly affects their lives and basic rights, such as access to water, food, and the right to live a dignified life and other rights, not to mention the physical and psychological damage caused by the bombings, as well as the lack of stability and security.

Turkey's actions are a violation of the international humanitarian law, human rights laws, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. They also contravene international treaties and laws concerning the protection of civilians in times of conflict, making them war crimes. The statistics released by the Monitoring and Documentation Department of North Press serve as evidence that Turkey has not only targeted military posts but has also deliberately attacked civilian objects such as hospitals, schools, and factories. Furthermore, Turkey deliberately and systematically destroyed critical infrastructure, including water and electricity stations, grain silos, oil facilities, and other facilities that ensured the population's right to live a dignified life.

Statistics

Based on the records of the Monitoring and Documentation Department, Turkish airstrikes on areas in northeast Syria from Oct. 5, to Oct. 8, targeted 146 sites, including 24 infrastructure facilities, 87 residential sites, 24 military sites, of which 14 belonged to the Syrian government

¹ [Turkish shelling](#) kills woman, injures husband in Syria's Ain Issa

forces, six agricultural lands, three industrial facilities, one school and a hospital.

These sites were targeted with a total of 209 strikes, of which 132 with artillery and heavy weapon, 21 airstrikes by warplanes, and 55 with drone strikes.

The number of casualties reached 28, 17 were killed, 11 of whom were civilians including a woman, and 11 were injured, of which nine were civilians including a child.

The number of strikes occurred as follows: 21 strikes hit Qamishli, 26 in Hasakah, 33 in the northern countryside of Aleppo, nine in Derik, 29 in Ain Issa, 17 in Kobani, seven in Manbij, and four in the countryside of Tel Abyad.

Repercussions of Turkish attacks on civilians

Turkey's attacks on northeast Syria over the course of two days created a catastrophe and a crisis that will have long-term repercussions. By targeting infrastructure, Turkey has deprived the population of access to essential elements of life, such as water, electricity, fuel, and natural gas by targeting the sources of these vital services, which will take months to be partially restored to operation.

Most cities in northeast Syria are experiencing power and water outages either due to the targeting of power plants that supply electricity to water stations or direct attacks on these facilities. Additionally, targeting the region's only gas facility will result in months of gas deprivation as the main turbines were directly targeted, not to mention oil wells, stations, and reservoirs, which are located in more than 10 sites. They were targeted more than once. This will create difficulties for the population to secure fuel for heating during the upcoming winter.

The airstrikes launched by warplanes on some locations in the countryside of Derik have caused a wave of displacement, in addition to the instability in the region. The people also face difficulties in traveling between cities due to the ongoing airstrikes. The consequences of these attacks will manifest in an economic crisis that will further complicate the lives of the residents and IDPs in northeast Syria.

Khorshid Alik, an economist, told North Press that these attacks will have long-term economic impacts on the development of life in the region.

Alik stated that the direct and indirect losses from the Turkish airstrikes can be estimated in hundreds of millions of dollars, which means that the per capita economic losses due to the airstrikes, the halt in investment, and the increase in unemployment rates will be "exorbitant."

The coming days will witness a shortage in water supply in the majority of targeted residential neighborhoods and a reduction in electricity hours to zero in most areas. There will be a gas, diesel, gasoline, and bread crisis. The market will stagnate, and prices of goods and services will continue to rise, directly impacting the increasing migration rates and the reduction of aid provided to camps, consequently leading to a rise in unemployment rates, according to the expert.

According to Alik, it is "extremely difficult for the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) to flexibly deal with the effects of all these continuous brutal attacks or to provide alternatives for them."

Legal framework

Targeting infrastructure and civilian objects can amount to the level of genocide, according to Article 6, section (c) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court states, " Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part." Additionally, Turkish actions fall under the category of acts of aggression, according to Article 5 of the 2010 Amendment to the Statute of the International, and United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3314 of Dec. 14, 1974, which states " Bombardment by the armed forces of a State against the territory of another State or the use of any weapons by a State against the territory of another State," qualify as an act of aggression.

Furthermore, international law states that indiscriminate shelling is "prohibited" if it treats a number of clearly separated and distinct military objectives located in a city, town, village or other area containing a similar concentration of civilians or civilian objects as a single military objective, according to Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions -

Article 51(5)(a). By comparison, the Turkish state violates international law by failing to adhere to the principle of distinction between military and civilian targets, and it targets neutral civilians solely based on their presence with someone whose political affiliation is established or for their non-military support to a certain party. In this context, the justifications for such actions are not valid since the proportionality between harm and benefit is not established, and it is not permissible to launch attacks and take the lives of innocent individuals or destroy critical public facilities based on malicious allegations or misleading intelligence information without verification and confirmation of their actual danger to the Turkish security, without notifying the Syria government and taking the necessary measures to arrest and handover the wanted individuals as a precautionary measure if their involvement in threatening Turkey's security is proven.

Intentionally targeting civilians, infrastructure, and vital facilities is considered a war crime according to the Fourth Geneva Convention 1949, specifically in Article 53 and Article 54, as well as the two Additional Protocols that prohibit targeting infrastructure.

It is beyond doubt that attacks carried out by any means that target civilians and civilian objects are prohibited, as stated in Article 51 of Protocol I and Article 13 of Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Furthermore, any attacks targeting objects indispensable for the survival of the civilian population are also prohibited according to Article 54 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, which is considered a reference and basis in international humanitarian law.

However, Turkey, by deliberately and continuously targeting northern Syria under the pretext of combating terrorism, clearly and explicitly violates these laws and causes instability in the region.

Recommendations

Turkey's targeting of infrastructure in northeast Syria constitutes a blatant violation of international humanitarian law and causes significant humanitarian suffering for civilian populations. Therefore, the United Nations and the international community should take the following actions:

- Call for an immediate cessation of all hostile acts in northeast Syria, including the targeting of infrastructure.
- Issue a condemning resolution by the United Nations General Assembly regarding the violations targeting civilians in Syria after presenting the draft for voting, discussion, and hearing from victims or their families and eyewitnesses.
- Establish an independent international investigation committee to collect evidence and investigate Turkey's violations of international humanitarian law in northeast Syria.
- Initiate an independent international investigation into any attack perpetrated by Turkey that resulted in the killing of civilians, damage to civilian objects, or harm to vital facilities, to subsequently refer the committed crimes to the International Court of Justice or the International Criminal Court.
- Create an international mechanism to monitor and investigate the security situation on the ground in northeast Syria, particularly in terms of documenting the violations committed by drones, which could potentially involve deploying an international force to maintain peace and security, similar to the mandate of UNIFIL in Lebanon.
- Call on the Human Rights Council to fulfill its responsibilities and send specialized committees to monitor the overall human rights situation in Syria, including the grave violations occurring in its north, affecting the rights to education, health, and work, in addition to provide support to local civil and human rights organizations.
- Impose economic sanctions on Turkey to stop it from continuing its ongoing violations against the population of northeast Syria for over six years.
- Support economic development efforts in northeast Syria to enhance stability in the region.
- Ensure that victims and their families have access to legal redress and receive appropriate compensation, and hold the Turkish state accountable through diplomatic, economic, and military sanctions.
- Call for the establishment of a safe zone in northeast Syria under UN auspices, where air operations are prohibited.

Documentation

The photos included in the file confirm that Turkey's attacks target infrastructure in northeast Syria. These attacks have caused damages

estimated in millions of dollars, in addition to the repercussions on the lives of the local population, who were already suffering from the impacts of previous airstrikes that also targeted infrastructure in November and December of 2022.

Here are the names of the targeted infrastructure sites:

- Chel Agha(al-Jawadiyah) Dam (Qamishli countryside)
- Oil tanks near the village of Gerdahol (Qamishli countryside)
- Alaqos Oil station (Qamishli countryside)
- Saeeda Oil station (Qamishli countryside)
- Power station supplying electricity to the city of Hasakah
- Water station in Hasakah
- Power station in the city of Qamishli
- Power station in the city of Amuda
- Awda Oil Field (Qamishli countryside)
- Oil wells in the village of Tel Khatoun (Qamishli countryside)
- Al-Zarabiyah Oil station (Qamishli countryside)
- Oil wells in Tirbe Spiyeh (al-Qahtaniya) (Qamishli countryside)
- Power station in Taqel Baqel (Derik countryside)
- COVID-19 Hospital in the city of Derik
- Only Gas facility in the city of Derik
- School in the village of Dad Abdal (Hasakah countryside)
- Ice factory in Demkhiya village (Qamishli countryside)
- Construction factory in Hasakah countryside
- Vicinity of Washokani camp in Sere Kaniye (Ras al-Ain)
- Power station in Ain Issa
- Water reservoir in the village of Fatsa in Ain Issa
- Grain silos in the village of Qazali in Ain Issa
- Khana Sere (Khan al-Jabal) water station in Derik
- Grain silos in Amuda
- Oil refinery near Sweidiya (Derik countryside)
- Tirbe Spiyeh (al-Qahtaniya) power station
- Paint factory in Kobani



Site 1: A [hospital in the city of Derik](#) was targeted by a Turkish drone strike, resulting in the complete destruction of the hospital



Site 2: The [Qamishli power station](#) was completely put out of service after being targeted by drone strikes for three consecutive times²

² For 2nd time, Turkish drone strikes [power station in Qamishli city](#)



Site 3: The Sweidiya gas facility, the only gas plant in northeast Syria was put out of service by Turkish drone strikes



Site 4: The electricity substation in the city of Amuda was put out of service by a Turkish drone strike



Site 5: The Sad Gharbi power station in the city of Hasakah was put out service due to a Turkish attack. It is located more than 45km far from the Syrian-Turkish border³

³ Turkish attacks cut off power to Alouk station [in Syria's Hasakah](#)



Site 6: The vicinity of Washokani camp, 50km far from the Syrian-Turkish border, where IDPs from Sere Kaniye (Ras al-Ain) reside. A Turkish drone strike hit near the camp, leading to the withdrawal of humanitarian organizations and spread of fear and instability among the camp's residents. The photo is taken from inside the camp's perimeter



Site 7: Chel Agha (al-Jawadiyah) Dam was targeted by a Turkish drone strike, causing only material damage



Site 8: Turkish warplanes shell the city of Kobani and a paint factory, causing material damages



Site 9: Awda Oil field in the countryside of Qamishli was targeted by a Turkish drone strike first then by a Turkish warplane the second time



Site 10: An oil tank in Awda oil field in the countryside of Qamishli attacked by a Turkish drone strike



Site 11: Oil wells in Tirbe Spiyeh (al-Qahtaniya) in the countryside of Qamishli were targeted by Turkish drone strikes for several times



Site 12: A vehicle carrying civilians was targeted by a Turkish drone strike, killing two of them and injuring another



Site 13: A Turkish drone strike targeted an oil refinery in the countryside of Derik



Site 14: A power station in Tirbe Spiyeh (al-Qahtaniya) in the countryside of Qamishli was put out of service



Site 15: An oil station in Awda oil field in Tirbe Spiyeh (al-Qahtaniya) in the countryside of Qamishli

It is worth mentioning that the attached photos show parts of the damages inflicted to the aforementioned sites. The scale of the damages and the number of site are far more.⁴

⁴ Turkish attacks put power plants in NE Syria [out of service](#)