

Open Letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for immediate action on Turkey

H.E. Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York, NY 10017
USA

Re: Turkish invasion of the Kurdish canton of Afrin in Syria

Dear Secretary-General,

The armed forces of the Republic of Turkey are engaged in an illegal invasion of the Syrian Kurdish region of Afrin – violating the borders of a neighbouring country and pursuing a military strategy based upon war crimes.

While Turkey claims to have launched the operation to protect its borders and combat a so-called “enemy”, the enemy per the Turkish state’s narrative are none less than the internationally respected fighters of the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) and Women’s Protection Units (YPJ), who have played a key role in defeating the jihadist militants of the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist group in Syria. Despite Turkey’s use of various pretexts, including that of border security, this military aggression aims only to enforce Ankara’s geopolitical agenda on the region through unprovoked and deadly force.

While predominantly Kurdish, the canton of Afrin is home to many ethnic groups including Arabs, Assyrians, Arameans, Turkmens, Alawites, Yazidis, Armenians and Chechens – a reflection of the diversity of Syria as a whole. Throughout the years of brutal civil war in Syria, the canton of Afrin has remained an island of stability and security, and for this reason it has been able to provide refuge to almost 300,000 internally displaced Syrians of various ethnicities and religions from other parts of the country.

No attacks have been launched on Turkey from Afrin or any other of the predominantly Kurdish cantons in northern Syria – the only military exchanges that have occurred have been in response to provocation from the Turkish military or jihadist armed groups backed by Turkey, both of whom have repeatedly launched attacks on Afrin and the other cantons of northern Syria from across the Turkish border.

Dear Secretary-General,

Since the outbreak of the Syrian conflict, Turkey has supported numerous jihadist groups in Syria, including ISIS and al-Qaida. Turkey used these groups as proxy instruments to target the indigenous Kurdish people of Syria. Turkey organised ISIS’ attack against Kobani in 2014, and nonetheless it was in Kobani in March 2015 that ISIS, which was expanding throughout Syria and Iraq at an alarming pace, was dealt its first defeat through the resistance of the YPG and YPJ. The Kurds of Syria and their partners proved themselves to be the most dependable and effective local forces in the battle against the terrorist organisation, becoming a vital element of the International Coalition Against ISIS. Two and a half years after the Kurds’ victory in Kobani, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF, of which the YPG and YPJ are a major force), liberated Raqqa, formerly the de facto capital and terror planning centre of ISIS – used by the group to coordinate attacks throughout the region and the world. At present, the most secure, stable and democratic regions of Syria are those administered by the Kurds and their partners.

The liberation of Raqqa was a landmark in the battle against ISIS, and the terrorist organisation that once controlled large swathes of land throughout Syria and Iraq is now isolated to small, collapsing, disjointed pockets of territory. We are gravely concerned that Turkey's current military operation targeting the opponents of ISIS may give new life to ISIS, which has been pushed to the brink of defeat in northern Syria. We do not want to see ISIS return to northern Syria and spread once again. ISIS has demonstrated that it is not merely a threat to Iraq and Syria, but also a global threat.

The UNSC convened on 22 January 2018, but did not even manage to condemn the Turkish offensive. This stance ensures that the UN is a mere bystander in the face of this unprovoked aggression.

We urge you to take the following immediate actions:

- Take a clear stance against the Turkish state's attacks
- Hold Turkey accountable for actions of their armed forces against civilians
- Designate Turkey's cross-border operation an illegal act of invasion, an abuse of the UN Charter and violation of international law
- On the occasion of the 4th anniversary of the proclamation of Canton Afrin on January 29, we call the UN to recognise the democratic self-government of Northern Syria's people.

On behalf of the following non-governmental organisations:

Afghanistan:

- Solidarity Party of Afghanistan
- Revolutionary of the Women of Afghanistan;
- Social Association of Afghan Justice Seekers;
- Belquis Roshn- Afghan Senator;
- Malalai Joya- Former member of Afghan Parliament

Pakistan:

- Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee
- Progressive Labour Federation
- Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum

Bangladesh:

- Abdul Awal, President, SDG Watch Bangladesh
- Hasan Mehedi, Focal Point, Bangladesh Working Group on External Debt (BWGED), Bangladesh
- Gouranga Nandy, Convener, Sundarbans Watch Group, Bangladesh
- Nurul Alam Masud, Member Secretary, Equality Forum, Bangladesh
- HM Shahadat, Convener, Aila Durgata Sanghati Mancha, Bangladesh

India

- Indian Social Action Forum, New Delhi
- National Adivasi Alliance, Karnataka
- Lok Manch, Aurangabad, Bihar
- Nadi Ghati Morcha, Raipur, Chhattisgarh
- DARSHAN, Ahmedabad, Gujarat
- Lok Kala Manch, Ahmedabad, Gujarat
- Coorg Organisation for Rural development (CORD), Karnataka

- Budukuttu Krishikara Sangh, Karnataka
- Kisan Sangharsh Samiti, Madhya Pradesh
- Holistic Approach for People's Empowerment, Puducherry
- Puducherry Slum Dwellers Federation
- Matashya Mewat Siksha Avam Vikas Sangathan, Alwar, Rajasthan
- Mewat Shiksha Vikas Samiti, Alwar, Rajasthan
- Chetna Sansthan, Baldevgarh, Alwar, Rajasthan
- Mewat Kisan Panchyat, Alwar, Rajasthan
- Documentary Wala, Kolkata, West Bengal
- Nagpur Municipal Corporation Employees Union, Maharashtra
- Nagpur Mahanagar Palika Aiwajdar Kamgar Sanghatan, Maharashtra
- Nagpur Mahanagar Palika Thekedar Kamgar Sanghatan, Maharashtra
- Bhai Sudam Deshmukh Shikshan Sanstha, Nagpur, Maharashtra
- Maharashtra Rajya Suraksha Rakshak Kamgar Sanghatan, Maharashtra
- DIS Suraksha Rakshak Kamgaar Sanghatan, Maharashtra
- Jo Shahar Chalate Hai - Vo hi shahar banate hai : Nagrik Abhiyaan, Maharashtra

NGO's from Odisha in East India:

- Prachi Surakshya Samiti, Kakatpur
- Jyoti mahila samiti
- Swabhimani Pragatisila Mahila Manch
- Banabasi Surakshya Parisad, Kandhamal
- Niyamgiri Surakshya Samiti
- Chasi Adhikars-Sangram Manch, Ganjam
- SANJOG
- COPHEE
- Adibasi Adhikar Andolan, Odisha
- CSNR
- Janavikas
- IPTA
- Adima Adhibasi Ekata Manch, Boudh
- Pali, Jajpur
- Saveline
- A.V.S.S
- SARAUD
- Banabasi Vikash Parishad, Gajapati
- Vyasa Zuva Sangathan
- Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (PPSS)
- Rajadhani Basti Unnayan Parisada, Bhubaneswar
- Jatadhari Banchao Andolan
- Gramin Vikash Sramik Sangh
- Nyaya O Santi Pratistha Manch, Kandhamal
- APPU
- Atha Kosia Sangathan
- Anchalik Nari Mahasangha
- Campaign Against Fabricated Cases, Odisha
- Krusi Vikas Sanjog Samittee
- Sachetan Nagarik Mancha, Kalahandi
- Bistapita Mukti Bahini
- Samuka Prakalpa Pratirodha Sangram Samiti
- Chhai

- Civil Society Forum on Human Rights
- Orissa Forum for Social Action
- Zindabad Sangathan
- Phulbani Suchana Adhikar Manch
- Domestic Labour Organisation Trust
- Basumati Trust
- Matru Mangal Social Organisation
- Avirbhav
- Heart
- Lower Suktel Budi Anchal Sangram Parisad
- Campaign for Peace
- Sramajibi Ekata Abhijan, Gajapati
- Odisha Sramajibi Adhikar Manch
- Odisha Gana Sanskruti Manch
- Chetana Sramik Sangh
- Adivasi janajati adhikar manch
- Nanding nadi surakshya manch, gajapati
- Basti basinda Mahasangh, Bhubaneswar
- Odisha Ana-Sangathit Sramik Manch, Bbsr
- ANWESAN
- Sukinda Bihan Farm Sramik Sangh
- Dalit Adhikar Mancha, Bhuban, Dhenkanal
- Fight for Right
- Odisha Adibasi Adhikar Manch
- SITA
- Adivasi Mahasabha
- All Odisha Forestwood & Constructio Union
- Kui Samaj- Gajapati-Kandhamal
- Pragativadi Janasammukhya
- Manibhadra Banchao Andolan
- Anchalik Nishamukti Abhijan
- Ambedkar Dalit Vikas Parisad
- Campaign for Survival & Dignity, Odisha

CC:

- H.E. Mr. Donald Trump, President of the United States of America
- H.E. Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation
- H.E. Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany
- H.E. Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of France
- H.E. Mr. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China
- H.E. Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council
- H.E. Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission
- H.E. Mr. Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of NATO

