



TURKISH WAR OF ANNEXATION IN SOUTHERN KURDISTAN

CURRENT SITUATION,
HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES,
AND INTERNATIONAL SILENCE

02

INDEX

- **A BRIEF OVERVIEW**
- **TURKEY'S REGIONAL AND GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS**
- **RESISTANCE TO THE OCCUPATION IS GROWING**
- **POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE KURDISH QUESTION**

03

OVERVIEW

- On June 15, 2024, the Turkish military launched a **new offensive** in the Southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq). This represents a further escalation level compared to previous operations.
- Since the beginning of the new wave of attacks, Turkey has carried out **381 bombardments**. More than **68,000 hectares** of farmland have been **burned** by the attacks (as of July 15, 2024).
- **Nine villages**, including seven with a Christian population, have since been depopulated and **184 families** driven from their homes (as of July 15, 2024).
- Numerous **troops, heavy equipment, tanks and artillery** are currently stationed around the strategically important town of **Amediye**.
- Ten new Turkish **military bases** have been established in the regions of **Amediye, Zaxo, and Soran**. They also include **checkpoints** for checking civilians, identity papers and vehicles.
- Turkey is receiving **support** for the offensive from the ruling **Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)**, which is politically and economically dependent on Ankara.
- The **Iraqi** central government has **not formulated a clear stance** on the invasion and violation of Iraq's sovereignty in and international law.
- The invasion by NATO member Turkey, which violates international law, is largely **ignored by European politicians and the Western media**, while the USA has given Turkey a de facto "green light".
- The deployment of **tanks** and the **construction of new military bases** point to a **long-term annexation** policy by Turkey, with over **110 military bases** up to **35 kilometers** inside Iraqi territory.
- The Kurdistan National Congress therefore calls for pressure to be put on Turkey to promote negotiations with the Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan on a political solution and to ensure stability in the region. The international community must act immediately to prevent further bloodshed.

04

A BRIEF OVERVIEW

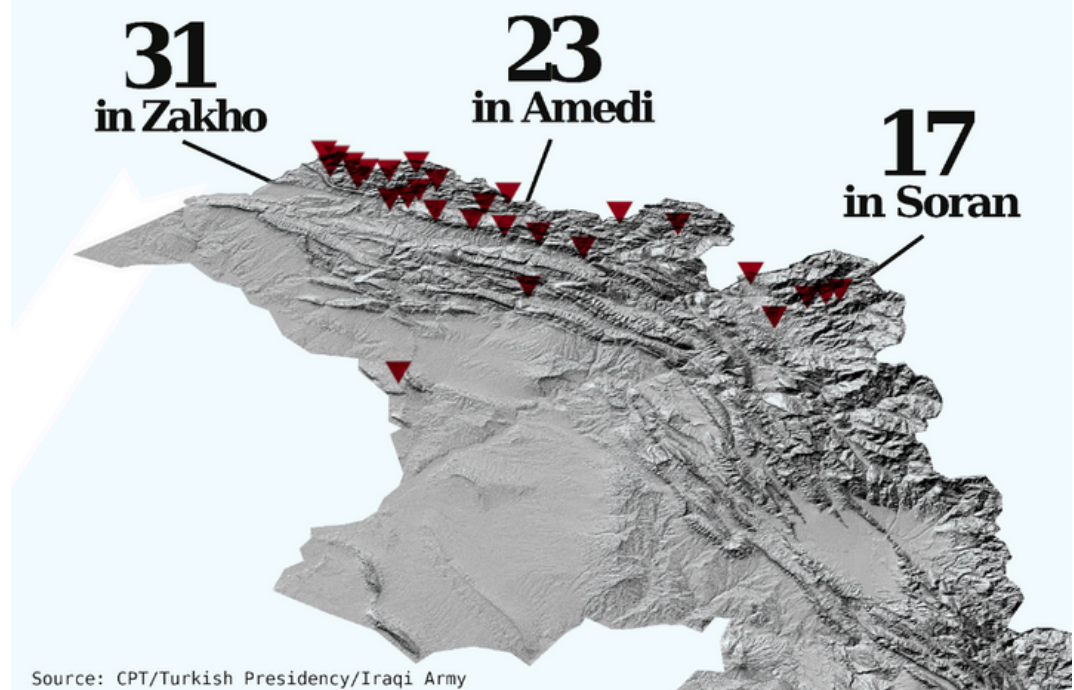
Since Turkey's Erdoğan unilaterally broke off peace talks (2013-2015) between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) led by Abdullah Öcalan, who has been held in isolation on Turkey's prison island of Imrali for 25 years, Ankara has been focusing on escalating their war in Kurdish areas, which are not limited to Turkey's national borders.

Turkey is repeatedly conducting large-scale military offensives in Southern Kurdistan in northern Iraq and in the self-governing areas of north and eastern Syria (Rojava). Even if Ankara justifies these acts of war with the alleged presence of the PKK and invokes the "right to self-defense", these offensives are aimed at the long-term annexation of further Kurdish settlement areas. The deployment of hundreds of tanks indicates that the war will focus on cities, as tanks cannot be deployed in mountainous terrain where the guerrillas are located.

Turkish soldiers and their jihadist mercenaries have controlled the Kurdish region of Efrîn (Afrin) since 2018 and the areas between Girê Spî (Tall Abyad) and Serê Kaniyê (Ras al-Ain) in northern Syria since 2019. In the occupied areas of northern Syria, from which human rights organizations regularly report on systematic expulsions of Kurds and countless other human rights violations, the Turkish state has now established its own administrative structures.

In Southern Kurdistan (also called Kurdistan Region in Iraq), too, the focus is on long-term annexation of the areas. The establishment of at least 71 (other sources speak of even 110) military bases extending up to 35 kilometers into Iraqi territory is seen by international observers as part of a long-term occupation policy by the Erdoğan regime in the region.

At least **71 Turkish bases** have been built in KRI, including **7 in 2024**



During the two operations Claw-Lightning (2021) and Claw-Lock (2022), there were repeated serious clashes with the guerrilla forces of the PKK. The Turkish army is accused of repeatedly using internationally banned weapons, such as chemical warfare agents, in these combat operations.

The Turkish war operations in Kurdistan include regular air strikes and deadly drone bombardments, which also hit civilians. These attacks cover northern and eastern Syria as well as northern Iraq, including the Mêxmûr refugee camp and the Şengal region.

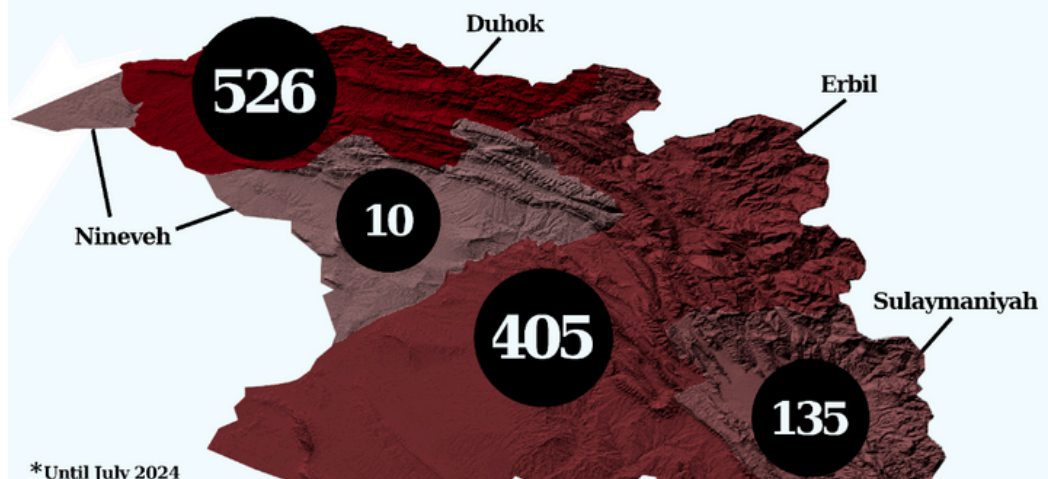
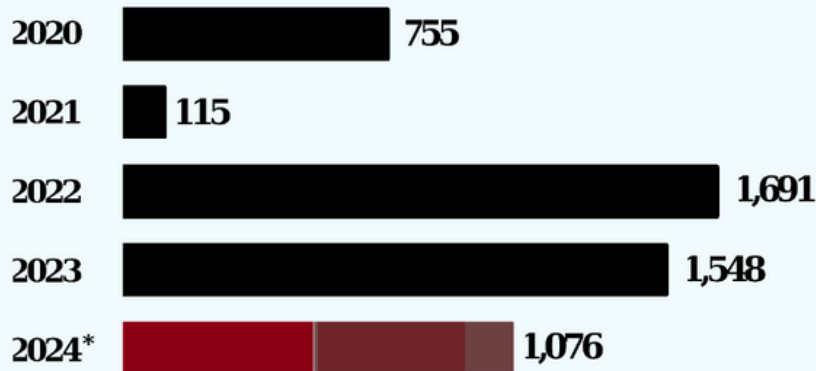
06

On June 15, the latest intervention in Southern Kurdistan was finally launched. The new strategy is already evident in its scope: the attack is being carried out by both ground and air forces, with an estimated 1,250 Turkish soldiers, 300 tanks and increased air strikes having been deployed so far.

Since the beginning, Turkey has carried out at least 381 bombardments, mainly by fighter jets, but also artillery fire and drones.

The impact on the civilian population is considerable, for example in the form of displacement, loss of livelihoods and agricultural land. This year, a total of 13 civilians were killed and at least 11 others injured by these attacks throughout Southern Kurdistan.

Turkish Attacks on KRI



*Until July 2024

07

According to international observers, the presence of tanks, new military posts, and road check points indicate that the Turkish army intends to initiate a long-term annexation of the area with this new offensive. Turkey is receiving support for the offensive from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which is politically and economically dependent on Ankara. The KDP, which is led by the Barzani clan, has been blocking the holding of the pending elections for the Kurdistan Regional Parliament for some time. This is because it fears that it will no longer receive sufficient support from the population. It is also reported that, in addition to the Turkish army, Islamist militias recruited in Syria in particular are being used to intimidate civilians.



08

WHAT GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS IS TURKEY PURSUING WITH THE WAR OPERATION?

The renewed escalation of the war in Kurdistan follows Erdoğan's first electoral defeat in the local elections on March 31 this year. In fact, the Turkish lira is in an unstable state due to an inflation rate of over 70%. The AKP regime is trying to gain support from various powers such as NATO and the BRICS countries through diplomatic maneuvers, especially from Foreign Minister Fidan and Economy Minister Simsek, in order to position itself politically and strengthen the fight against the Kurds. Erdoğan is also personally trying to force Western allies in NATO and the EU to help.

It is a well-known government strategy to use foreign policy maneuvers to divert attention from domestic political difficulties. In the past, the war in Kurdistan has proven to be an effective means of doing this. While its own army is risking its lives in the war “for the fatherland”, social criticism of the rulers' style of government generally falls silent. In addition, the AKP urgently needs success stories to polish up its tarnished image. Erdoğan not only wants to go down in history as the head of state who can announce a military victory in the fight against the PKK, which has been going on since 1984. With his annexation policy in Kurdistan, he also wants to be the one who makes the neo-Ottoman ambitions of his supporters a reality.

In the diplomatic arena, the Turkish state's annexation plans are presented as a “buffer zone” or “security zone”. According to Turkish Defence Minister Yaşar Güler, this will extend 30 to 40 kilometers from the Turkish border into Iraqi and Syrian territory.

09

Such a zone is supposedly intended to prevent “external threats” and stabilize the region. Turkey points out to its European partners that refugees could also be returned to the Syrian section.

For the Kurdish population, this means de facto large-scale ethnic cleansing, as in Efrîn in northern Syria, where hundreds of thousands have already been displaced since 2018.

While there were at least verbal protests from Baghdad against Ankara’s actions on Iraqi territory during previous Turkish military offensives in the Southern Kurdistan, this time at least parts of the state leadership appear to be in agreement with the Turkish army’s actions.

In the course of talks between the Foreign Minister and former intelligence chief Hakan Fidan and later Turkish President Erdoğan at the highest diplomatic level, the Turkish state’s fight against the Kurdistan Workers’ Party was linked to other important issues such as access to water, oil exports and the so-called Iraq Development Road Project. Several cooperation agreements were concluded, including one to remedy the acute water shortage in Iraq due to Turkish dam projects. In return, the Iraqi government promised to resume oil exports to Turkey after the pipeline was closed a year ago. During Erdoğan’s visit, a memorandum of understanding was also signed between Turkey, Iraq, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates on joint cooperation on the 17-billion-dollar Iraqi development road project. The project envisages the construction of a 1,200-kilometer road and rail link that would turn Iraq into a major transit hub between Asia and Europe and connect Turkey with the port under construction in the Iraqi city of Basra on the Persian Gulf. The planned new trade route would greatly enhance the geopolitical importance of both Turkey and Iraq.

10

RESISTANCE TO THE OCCUPATION IS GROWING

Although parts of the Iraqi government support Turkey's military plans in northern Iraq, criticism is also growing. In view of possible long-term occupation of Iraqi territory, more and more parties and public figures in the Southern Kurdistan, Iraq and beyond are calling for a stand to be taken against Ankara's annexation plans.

As Turkey's current invasion is hardly mentioned in the Turkish media, Erdoğan does not seem to want to experience another embarrassment like the failed operation in Gare in 2021. This is also intended to prevent any criticism. As a NATO member, Turkey's invasion in violation of international law is also being ignored in European politics and is not echoed in the media. The USA has called on Turkey to coordinate with the Iraqi government and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in order to protect the civilian population. However, the US State Department's statements can be interpreted as a "green light" for this very reason.

The Iraqi National Security Council has officially announced its rejection of the Turkish invasion and Foreign Minister Hussein has advocated a "broader regional dialog". In other statements, however, government agencies supported Turkey's attacks on Southern Kurdistan, referring to the activities of the PKK. A clear stance and concrete consequences against the Turkish occupation are not recognizable.

This is why the First Lady of Iraq, Shanaz Ibrahim Ahmed, from the other major Kurdish party in Iraq, the PUK, condemned the ongoing invasion in an urgent appeal to the West. She called on the international community to take appropriate measures and urged the Kurdish regional government to clearly reject the increasing Turkish occupation.

11

A group of sheikhs from Iraqi tribes also commented on the attacks, saying: “The Turkish state is occupying the Kurdistan Region and supporting IS [ISIS]”. In the capital Baghdad, hundreds protested against Turkish foreign policy and the silence of the Iraqi central government, describing the action as a “violation of Iraqi sovereignty” and calling on the government to “take a stand”.

The Kurdish umbrella organization Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) condemns Turkey's military invasion of Kurdistan and criticizes the Iraqi government for its agreement with Ankara. The KCK calls on Iraqi intellectuals and democratic forces to oppose these agreements. It accuses the KDP in Hewlêr of facilitating the use of important roads and controlled areas for Turkish forces and de facto leaving the administration to Turkey without resistance.

A delegation of the Kurdistan National Congress (KNK) is present in Southern Kurdistan to discuss a common national line with other parties/organizations. Besides the KDP, most Kurdish organizations belong to the congress. In an open letter, they expressed their concern about the lack of reaction to Turkey's military actions and human rights violations and called for an intervention by Arab and Western states to counteract annexation plans.

The permanent representative at the United Nations, Leonardo Rodriguez Perez, criticized Turkey's military actions in northern Syria and Iraq, which have led to enormous systematic human rights violations. He called for Turkey to be recognized as an occupying power so that it can be held accountable under international law. Perez emphasized that the solitary confinement of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan on the prison island of Imrali violates all human rights conventions and constitutes torture.

12

International observers assume that Erdoğan's military success is unlikely despite the massive deployment of troops and modern armaments technology, as the PKK is considered to be firmly anchored in the region, has improved its military capabilities and is successfully combating Turkish drones.

POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE KURDISH QUESTION

Turkey's foreign policy is increasingly geared towards profiting from the intensifying conflicts in the region and is a source of instability. The Erdoğan-Bahçeli regime wants to implement the Misak-ı Milli[1] strategy in Kurdistan at all costs. This will lead to a further annexation of Kurdish territories in Syria and Iraq, an intensification of the regional conflict situation and the displacement and migration of millions of people.

The war crimes and human rights violations in the Turkish-occupied Kurdish regions and extensive cooperation with jihadist forces such as ISIS are particularly alarming. The PKK has played an important role in the defense of regions such as Kerkuk, Hewlêr and Şengal against the Islamic State after 2014 and helped thousands of Yezidis to reach safety via a corridor to Syria. Their resistance to Turkey's attacks can be seen as a natural duty and right to self-defense in order to protect the Autonomous Kurdistan Region and preserve Iraq's sovereignty.

[1]Misak-ı Milli [Eng. National Pact; a plan drafted in the Ottoman parliament in the early 1920s that envisaged a Turkish state territory including Thrace, Rojava (northern Syria) and southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq)].

13

- As the Kurdistan National Congress, we demand an immediate end to Turkey's attacks, which violate international law.
- The international community therefore has a responsibility to put a stop to Erdoğan's expansionist ambitions and to ensure de-escalation.
- Kurds and other communities in the region deserve to be treated better now that they have defeated ISIS and become a source of peace and regional stability.
- The Turkish state has failed to resolve the Kurdish issue peacefully and sustainably, which has led Turkey into a deep economic, political and social impasse.
- Pressure should therefore be exerted on Turkey to enter into negotiations with Abdullah Öcalan, the representative of the Kurdish people.
- Öcalan mediated a dialog between the PKK and the Erdoğan regime between 2013 and 2015, which was welcomed internationally.
- A solution to the Kurdish question could contribute to the stabilization of Turkey and the Middle East.
- Instead of being complicit in Turkey's annexations, war crimes, and instability, the Iraqi government and the Arab League, as well as the United States, the European Union, the United Nations and the Council of Europe, must take immediate action to prevent further bloodshed.