



Open Letter to Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

Dear President von der Leyen,

On behalf of the Kurdistan National Congress, we would like to express our grave concern regarding your recent visit to Damascus and discussions over continued EU involvement in Syria.

On the day of the meeting, while you were discussing future EU-Syria collaboration and “the goal of a new, peaceful, inclusive and safe Syria,” only a couple of hours north (less than 400km) fighters under the command of your interlocutor, the President of the Syrian Transitional Government, Ahmed al-Sharaa, were bombarding civilian areas; repeatedly targeting the Khalid Fajir Hospital; subjecting civilians to abduction, torture and murder; and delighting in throwing the body a Kurdish female fighter from the sixth floor of a building. More than 155,000 civilians have been displaced.

Although Mr Al Sharaa did not admit to the massacres of Alawites and Druze, he publicly legitimised the war crimes against Kurdish civilian by giving the orders to carry them out.

Statements made by the Syrian Ministry of Defence, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, and Turkish Defence Minister Yaşar Güler indicate that both countries played a role in the attacks on Kurdish neighbourhoods. The disproportionate nature of the attack is indicative of its brutality and the intent to carry out ethnic cleansing.

Kurds in Syria have time and time again demonstrated their commitment to building a peaceful, diverse, and decentralised democratic Syrian republic for all of the country’s extensive ethnic and religious diversity. The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, in which Kurds, Armenians, Assyrians, Arabs, and other peoples have lived together during a decade of democratic self-governance, bears witness to this commitment.

Turkish intervention, and a discriminatory approach towards ethnic and religious minorities—which on several instances has resulted in massacres—have acted to disrupt hopes of peaceful coexistence.

Attacks by the Syrian Transitional Government against civilian populations, such as we have just seen against the Kurdish neighbourhoods of Aleppo, should not be regarded simply as “worrying”. Interaction with any current or future government in Syria should be dependent on their adherence to human rights and democratic principles - principles such as freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, respect for human rights including those of minorities, which are at the core of the European Union project and outlined in Article 2 of the EU Treaty.

For these reasons we call on the European Commission to:

- Make the European Union’s financial support package for Syria conditional on the Syrian Transitional Government ceasing military or paramilitary attacks on civilians.
- Provide urgent humanitarian aid and assistance for IDPs from Aleppo through responsible EU institutions on site.
- Establish an EU commission to ensure accountability for all individuals implicated in the war against civilians, as well as those responsible for the shelling of hospitals and residential structures.

We thank you for your attention and hope that the European Commission will meet its moral, legal, and political obligations by taking active measures to stop the ethnic cleansing against the Kurdish people.