

1 September 2016

Hon. Member of Australian Parliament

We are writing this statement to inform you about Turkey's Intervention in Syria.

Turkish state enmity towards Kurds continues. The purpose of the Turkish state's intervention in Syria on the pretext of attacking ISIS is to destroy the gains made by Kurds and other secular groups and will further destabilize Syria.

On 24 August 2016, the Turkish state occupied the city of Jarablus, immediately south the Turkish Syrian border, under the pretence of fighting ISIS. The timing of the occupation is important. The move followed the liberation of the ISIS stronghold of Manbij, 38 kilometres south of Jarablus, on 12 August 2016, after 73 days of fighting by the Manbij Military Council and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

The Turkish army and Turkey-backed militias captured Jarablus and nearby villages without a fight, indicating a previous agreement with ISIS. ISIS fighters had already fled to Al-Bab or simply changed their 'uniforms' to join the Turkey-backed militias, including Ahrar al-Sham.

Instead of going after ISIS, between 25 and 30 August, the Turkish state employed airstrikes, artillery, tanks, soldiers and militias in an intense offensive on villages south of Jarablus, targeting the Jarablus Military Council made up of local Arab, Kurd and Turkmen fighters, SDF units and the Manbij Military Council. Some local sources have reported the use of chemical weapons by Turkey and affiliated groups against civilians in the villages of Al-Amarneh and Dendeniye.

These actions are being conducted under the cover story that Turkey is eliminating terrorists and that Kurdish Defense Forces (YPG) are still in Manbij. Their presence is officially denied by YPG Headquarters, who handed over the administration of Manbij to the Manbij Military Council on 15 August and complied with a US order to withdraw YPG forces east of the Euphrates River.

The invasion and occupation of Syria by the Turkish state is a violation of international law. States that approve or stay silent about this occupation are culpable for the human rights violations perpetuated by Turkey and its militias in Syria. They are also complicit in future ISIS attacks in Syria and Europe perpetuated by ISIS suicide bombers who freely move across the Syrian-Turkish border.

The SDF, which includes Kurd, Arab, Assyrian, Armenian and Turkmen fighters, were on the brink of defeating ISIS and shutting off the border between Azaz and Jarablus. The Turkish occupation has prevented the defeat of ISIS in this area and is allowing Salafi extremist militias to expand territory under their control. The Turkey-backed militias are already advancing on SDF-liberated Marea and a commander of the Turkmen Sultan Murad Brigade claims these militias will take al-Bab and Manbij.

To prevent further war and chaos, to defeat ISIS and save civilian lives in Syria it is essential for all international institutions and national leaders:

- To raise their voices against the occupation of northern Syria by Turkey;
- Cease their support for the actions of the Turkish state in Syria;
- Cease their support for extremist jihadi militia who want to establish an Islamic State in Syria; and
- Support local multi-ethnic secular administrations in Syria.

The Kurds and their allies also ask the international community to seriously consider supporting a Democratic Federation in Syria.

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This Statement is also endorsed by

Kurdish Democratic Community Centre of NSW

Western Australia Kurdish Cultural Centre

Kurdistan Women's' League of Victoria .



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