

GfbV/STP: An appeal to NATO – Yazidis in northern Syria are in danger – NATO must put an end to Turkey’s war against the civilian population!

Göttingen, January 29, 2018 --- On Monday, the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) sent an appeal to Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, asking him to convene a meeting of the North Atlantic Council and to take immediate action to put an end to the war NATO partner Turkey is leading against the northern Syrian enclave Afrin. There, it is especially the members of the religious community of the Kurdish Yazidis who are in danger, as their villages are being attacked by IS and bombarded by the Turkish Air Force. “NATO must not just stand by and watch while one of its member states uses state-of-the-art weapons to attacks peaceful regions in a neighboring state! This is a violation of international law,” the human rights organization stated in its letter.

In recent days, it was mainly the Kurdish-Yazidi villages in the Afrin region near the border to Turkey that were under attack. According to the STP, the airstrikes are supposed to help radical Islamist militias to conquer the Yazidi villages. So far, the villages are still defended by the Kurdish “People’s Protection Units” (YPG).

“If the roughly 20,000 to 30,000 Yazidis living in Afrin were to fall into the hands of the radical Islamists, there would be horrific war crimes against civilians, as was the case in northern Iraq three and a half years ago. NATO must not allow this – in any case,” warned the STP’s Middle East Consultant Kamal Sido. “In August of 2014, IS had committed crimes of genocide against the Yazidis in the Sinjar region, the main settlement area of the Yazidis in Iraq. Thanks to the YPG, tens of thousands of Yazidis were saved from certain death.”

According to the STP, the Turkish Air Force has already attacked almost all Yazidi villages or villages with Yazidi population on the outer regions of Afrin along the mountain Lelun (Mount Simon) – such as Basufan, Baadi, Barad, Kimar, Iska, Shadere, Ghazzawiya, Burj Abdalo and Ain Dara. The peaceful Kurdish-Yazidi village Qestel Cindu was attacked more than once. The village had already been attacked by IS and other Islamist groups in 2013. Turkey had provided the militiamen with weapons and sent them to the neighboring country to break the resistance of the Kurds. They had destroyed many of the Yazidi people’s olive groves and fruit trees, and killed their cattle.

According to Sido, the attacks of the Turkish air force are to be seen as violations of international law, since they were neither approved by the Syrian government nor authorized by the United Nations Security Council – and the Turkish Government cannot justify its actions by the right to self-defense (Article 51 of the United Nations Charter) since Turkey was not attacked.

Kamal Sido is available for further questions: +49 (0)173 – 67 33 980

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Dr. Kamal Sido - Nahostreferat/ Middle East Desk

Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker / Society for Threatened Peoples

Tel: +49 (0) 551 49906-18 - Fax: +49 (0) 551 58028

P.O. Box 20 24 - D-37010 Göttingen/Germany

E-Mail: nahost@gfbv.de - www.gfbv.de

Besuchen Sie uns auf Facebook: www.facebook.com/bedrohteVoelker und

<https://www.facebook.com/KamalSiddo>

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