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## Statement 3 on Afrin district in northern Aleppo, Syria

### Stop Turkey's war crimes and crimes against humanity in Afrin

**Until Turkey stops committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in its occupation of Afrin in northern Syria, and withdraws its military and proxy forces from Afrin, Kurdish Lobby Australia calls on the Australian Government and others in the international community to:**

- Call for impartial investigations into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Turkish armed and proxy forces in Afrin since January 20;
- Discuss the evidence of these crimes with Turkish Ambassadors and leaders;
- Call for an immediate ban on all co-operation with Turkey's military and security personnel, including a ban on armament sales to Turkey, until Turkey withdraws its forces from Afrin;
- Use all means available at the United Nations and other international organisations to protect the rights and needs of the citizens of northern Syria living under Turkish occupation, and those displaced by the occupation;
- Contribute humanitarian aid for those displaced by Turkey's occupation;
- Use international forums to discuss the need for a no-fly zone and a multinational peacekeeping force along the Syrian – Turkish border.

Between January 20 and March 18, 2018 Turkey used its army and air force, and Syrian Islamist extremist militias, including [ex-ISIS fighters](#), to invade the Kurdish-majority district of Afrin in the province of Aleppo in northern Syria. Defending Afrin from this invasion were the People's Protection Units (YPG), Women's Protection Units (YPJ) and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). During this period of armed conflict, numerous media sources reported [war crimes](#) and crimes against humanity committed by Turkey's military and proxy forces, describing how they:

- [Killed civilians](#), using airstrikes, [artillery and other means](#);
- Tortured and [killed prisoners-of-war](#);
- [Mutilated the corpses of Syrian Democratic Force fighters](#);
- [Threatened to behead](#) Yezidis and Christians who did not convert to Islam;
- [Moved Arab and Turkmen families into deserted villages](#), after the Kurdish inhabitants were displaced by armed conflict or forced evacuations;
- Indiscriminately bombarded residential spaces, health centres and [schools](#). For instance, Turkey targeted Afrin hospital, killing between 15 and 37 civilians, on February 13 and [March 16](#);
- Used banned [cluster bombs](#) on villages around the town of Jinderes;
- Used [napalm](#) on [civilians](#) on 27 January;
- Used chlorine gas in artillery shells on February 6 and [February 16](#);
- [Cut Afrin city's water supply](#) from March 9, leaving the city without water until now.
- Destroyed archaeological sites, including a [3,000-year old temple](#) and [one of the oldest Christian churches](#) in the world.

3,000-year old Ain Dara temple before & after Turkey's airstrikes, 28 January, 2018.



On March 18, Turkey took control of Afrin city, after the Kurdish defence forces and [200,000 civilians](#) evacuated the city in the preceding four days. Between [50,000 and 70,000](#) civilians remained in the city. Turkey's army and Turkey-backed Islamist extremists now occupy the district. Turkey has [cut internet](#) services and banned outside journalists from entering Afrin. Recently, some international humanitarian representatives gained [limited access](#). Turkey's **ongoing** war crimes and crimes against humanity in Afrin include:

1. [Executing](#) civilians in the street;
2. Ethnic cleansing and forced demographic changes, with the [UN](#) and [US State Department](#) claiming at least 137,000 internally displaced civilians are being refused re-entry into Afrin. In addition, those in Afrin continue to be subject to [forced evacuations](#). Meanwhile, Islamic militants and their families, [Syrian refugees from Turkey](#) and IDPs from [eastern Ghouta](#) (including [Jaish al-Islam](#) and [Faylak al-Rahman](#) militants) are being settled in vacant houses and farms.
3. Establishing a [local police force](#) and Sharia court system using Islamist extremist militants in [Faylak al-Rahman](#);
4. Violation of [women's rights](#), including [abduction and rape](#), and women not being allowed out in public places;
5. Violation of children's rights, including abduction;
6. Violation (or fear of violation) of the rights of [Christians](#) and [Yezidis](#), including forced conversions and the destruction of churches and temples;
7. [Arbitrary detention](#) of at least [3,000 civilians by the Turkish army](#);
8. Detention, [torture](#) and murder of prisoners;
9. [Financing](#) of terror through [kidnap and ransom](#);
10. Theft and confiscation of civilian property, including homes and businesses, [unprecedented in extent](#), with militias intermittently [fighting between themselves](#) over the spoils of war;
11. Burning of books and documents and the destruction of [graveyards](#);

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12. Using [Turkish teachers](#) and a Turkey-designed curriculum in schools, including teaching the [Turkish language](#), and [forcing school children](#) to wave Turkish flags, and chant pro-Turkish and pro-Erdogan slogans (as has occurred in the Turkey-occupied Azaz-Jarablus-Al-Bab triangle).

Turkish [political leaders](#) vow that Turkey will never return the district of Afrin to the [Assad Government](#). In campaigning for Turkey's June 24 elections, which are being held under a state of emergency and on-going purges, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan repeated his promise to [expand Turkey's occupation of northern Syria](#).

**We call on the Australian Government and international community to use all means, including international law, to stop Turkey's human rights abuses in Afrin, and its aggressive occupation of Afrin and other Syrian territory.**