



Media Release

## US-Turkey Agreement over northeast Syria

After 11 days of Turkey conducting airstrikes and indiscriminate shelling, and eight days of Turkey's ground offensive in north east Syria, which has targeted critical water, electricity and medical infrastructure and displaced 300,000 civilians, with Turkey's ground forces spearheaded by unruly proxy Islamist militias executing civilians and allegedly using napalm and phosphorous, on October 17, the US and Turkey announced an 'agreement'. This 'agreement' stipulates a 120-hour halt to Turkey's offensive called Operation Peace Spring so that all Kurd-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) can withdraw from an unspecified zone that Turkey would then secure.

The agreement was a total capitulation to Turkey's demands, and features a glaring lack of detail. The area of the Turkey-controlled 'safe' zone is not specified. Later it was said to span 100 kilometres east – west between the border towns of Sari Kani (Ras Al-Ain) and Gire Spi (Tel Abyad) and 30 kilometres south to the M4 highway. It remains unclear whether the towns are included. The agreement did not stipulate any consequences for Turkey if it broke the agreement, which it has, within hours causing the deaths of [seven civilians](#). Nor did the agreement specify any halt to fighting outside the unspecified area. In the agreement the US cedes control of the safe zone to Turkey, but later James Jeffrey, US Special Envoy to Syria, claimed that if the Kurd-led SDF withdrew from the zone, the US understood that Turkey would cease '[all operations](#)' in north east Syria. Naturally Erdogan disputes this, fully intending to expand operations, with the intention of militarily and administratively controlling the buffer zone like it does Afrin and the Euphrates Shield triangle in the west.

Western leaders must realise that another bite out of Syria will not satisfy Turkey's hunger to kill or displace Syrian Kurds and occupy their homeland, and that Turkey intends to entrench its occupation with Turkey-backed Islamists, who could well become the next international security threat. We request the Australian government to strongly support:

- The European Council's call for Turkey to withdraw all ground forces from north east Syria, with particular attention paid to Turkey's proxy Islamist militias;
- A multilateral no-fly zone over northern Syria;
- A multilateral peacemaking force, possibly including forces from Russia, Syria, the US, UK, France and the official armed forces of Turkey already in the area;
- Red Lines that if crossed incur severe consequences;
- Humanitarian corridors and conditions so humanitarian organisations can return; &
- The Syrian Democratic Council's call for the UN, the UNSC, the Arab League and the US to send international observers to maintain the temporary ceasefire agreement and make it permanent, and to mediate negotiations between the Syrian Kurds and the Turkish government, and between the Syrian Kurds, the Syrian government and the Opposition to speed up political [solutions](#).

### 13 POINT STATEMENT

1. The US and Turkey reaffirm their relationship as fellow members of NATO. The US understands Turkey's legitimate security concerns on Turkey's southern border.
2. Turkey and the US agree that the conditions on the ground, northeast Syria in particular, necessitate closer coordination on the basis of common interests.
3. Turkey and the US remain committed to protecting NATO territories and NATO populations against all threats with the solid understanding of "one for all and all for one".
4. The two countries reiterate their pledge to uphold human life, human rights, and the protection of religious and ethnic communities.
5. Turkey and the US are committed to D-ISIS/DAESH activities in northeast Syria. This will include coordination on detention facilities and internally displaced persons from formerly ISIS/DAESH-controlled areas, as appropriate.
6. Turkey and the US agree that counter-terrorism operations must target only terrorists and their hideouts, shelters, emplacements, weapons, vehicles and equipment.
7. The Turkish side expressed its commitment to ensure safety and well-being of residents of all population centres in the safe zone controlled by the Turkish Forces (safe zone) and reiterated that maximum care will be exercised in order not to cause harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure.
8. Both countries reiterate their commitment to the political unity and territorial integrity of Syria and UN-led political process, which aims at ending the Syrian conflict in accordance with UNSCR 2254.
9. The two sides agreed on the continued importance and functionality of a safe zone in order to address the national security concerns of Turkey, to include the re-collection of YPG heavy weapons and the disablement of their fortifications and all other fighting positions.
10. The safe zone will be primarily enforced by the Turkish Armed Forces and the two sides will increase their cooperation in all dimensions of its implementation.
11. The Turkish side will pause Operation Peace Spring in order to allow the withdrawal of YPG from the safe zone within 120 hours. Operation Peace Spring will be halted upon completion of this withdrawal.
12. Once Operation Peace Spring is paused, the US agrees not to pursue further imposition of sanctions under the Executive Order of October 14, 2019, *Blocking Property and Suspending Entry of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Syria*, and will work and consult with Congress, as appropriate, to underline the progress being undertaken to achieve peace and security in Syria, in accordance with UNSCR 2254. Once Operation Peace Spring is halted as per paragraph 11 the current sanctions under the aforementioned Executive Order shall be lifted.

13. Both parties are committed to work together to implement all the goals outlined in this Statement.

**Date :** 17.10.2019