

As Erdogan visits Pope amid Afrin attacks, Syriac Christian fight 'Turkish invasion'

by Wladimir van Wilgenburg - 04/02/2018 13:19



The leadership of the Syriac Military Council (MFS) on Sunday said they would send reinforcements to Afrin 'to defend people from the Turkish invasion' and attacks citing Turkey's track record of mistreating religious minorities.

The statement comes ahead of a two-day [visit](#) by the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to the Vatican today and tomorrow. Kurds are planning to protest the visit in Italy.

"Today, in the face of new front in Afrin, as a sign of friendships of peoples, MFS decided to send reinforcements to Afrin battle to defend Afrin people from Turkish invasion and attacks and its terrorist mercenaries, continuing to defend our democratic project of justice and equality for all the people of our homeland," the MFS leadership said.

"Turkey's colonial ambitions are more evident in the invasion of new areas of Syria in

order to control them, after occupying the towns of Jarablus and Al-Bab,” the MFS said.

Although the pro-Turkish government media claimed religious minorities in Turkey support the Turkish attacks, the MFS said the attacks on Afrin reveal Turkey’s hostility towards minorities.

“This is undoubtedly an extension of Turkey’s hostility towards minorities and other components that have been mistreated. Historically, massacres have been committed [by Turkey], namely Sayfo, the genocide committed in 1915 against the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrians, Armenians and Greek Pontics,” the MFS said.

“Finally, we appeal to the international community as Syriac Christian people and urge them to stop the barbaric Turkish attack and support us, by all means, to contribute to our survival in our historical land of Bethnahrin which contributed highly to the culture and civilization of humanity,” the group said.

The MFS said it ‘fought together against the forces of terrorism and darkness on various fronts, from the battles of Shingal to the battles of Khabur villages liberation and to Manbij, up to the time of the war to liberate Raqqa from the most fierce terrorist organization in the world’, in coordination with the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

“Turkey, with its daily bombardment of Afrin region, renews its Ottoman fascism and heritage through its criminal behaviour, attacking Syrian territory and violating the rights of the people in a secure, peaceful and stable life,” the group said.

“Afrin city was a safe haven from the bloody war with its historical Syriac Aramaic ancient churches and monasteries, which has been in the spirit of peace throughout history,” the MFS said.

According to the MFS the claims of the Turkish state that it wants to return refugees to Syria by bombing Afrin is not realistic.

“This peaceful city with its good people is being bombarded today by Turkey under the pretext of protecting Turkish national security and returning Syrian refugees from Turkey to their lands, which are both unrealistic.”

“The Syrian Democratic Forces, which have achieved great victories against terrorism, are able to confront Turkish army and its allies and made them regret their decision to destabilize international efforts for peace in Syria,” the MFS concluded.

Some Christian parties in Europe have also condemned the Turkish operations against Afrin.

Joël Voordewind, Dutch MP and member of the Christian Union Party, [called](#) on the Dutch government to stop the 'invasion' and 'occupation of Afrin citing the presence of many different ethnic and religious groups represented in the local administration.

"They are not only afraid of Turkish bombs that now target civilians, but also losing their freedom if Turkish troops and their allied militias would take over Afrin," he [wrote](#) in a co-authored op-ed.

"This fear is not unfounded. In September 2016, pro-Turkish militias invaded the region east of Afrin and also shouted to Americans that Christians are not welcome. These mostly extremist militias do not respect religious or ethnic minorities," he said.

Last Friday, Turkish-backed Islamist rebels filmed themselves destroying a liquor store in the Afrin region while shouting Islamist slogans.

Alan Semo, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) representative in London called on the Pope not to meet with the Turkish president.

"Erdogan is a dictator and supporter of ISIS and his army is invading and killing civilians in Afrin - Rojava- northern Syria," he said.