

# The civilians in Northern Syria blame US of a historic betrayal

by Azad Nebi - 29/12/2018 14:09



Following the U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement to withdraw his troops from Syria, the question of civilians' fate has become a main element overwhelming the minds of civilians regarding the repercussions of such a decision. This is particularly true with Turkish officials repeatedly threatening to launch an "imminent" military operation to drive out Kurdish forces known as People's Protection Units (YPG) due to their connection with the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), as Turkey claims.

*The Region* has interviewed some civilians who are still inside Syria, in cities in the border-strip with Turkey, in the eastern Euphrates River region known as Rojava. Ostensibly, U.S. boots on the ground in Syria have maintained relative peace and safety in the area for the last few years, during the course of the cooperation between the global coalition and its local Kurdish partners to defeat the Islamic State. But as of now, many think that the U.S. decision to leave those Kurds to their fate is a

kind of "betrayal." As Abu Ahmad, a 33-year-old man from Tel-Abyad told *The Region* "People are very scared and U.S. withdrawal will be a big dagger in the back since they are giving the green light to Turkey to destroy the peaceful people." Abu Ahmad, like any other civilian from Kurdish-held areas, has witnessed what happened to Kurds when Turkey overran Afrin last March, in addition to the silence of the international community over the human rights violations committed during the invasion. Consequently, Turkey's incursion is the worst-case scenario, and any other choice will likely be preferred. "We prefer Assad and Russia to Turkey since we have already seen what they are doing in Afrin despite the fact that Russia and Assad will not recognize our rights," he concluded.

On the other hand, some people were already in doubt about the United States presence, even though during their war against the Islamic State (ISIS) since it has experience in betraying the Kurds, but it is very dangerous and unexpected to pullout at this specific time. *The Region* spoke with Helin, a 23-year-old woman from Serekaniye, who expressed her opinion about the U.S. position toward Kurdish people, saying, "Though we know the U.S. will never support Kurdish people since it has its own goal, it wasn't predicted they would leave us now since we are fighting the same enemy together."

According to Helin, Kurds have been fighting with terrorist groups before U.S. support, increased their capacity, built and prepared themselves better for upcoming days, and probably they will continue their resistance even after Americans leave, adding "when we face the de-facto situations alone, we will not leave our city." Perhaps the experience of the battle of Serekaniya in 2012, when the Kurdish fighters kicked out the rebel groups known as the Free Syrian Army (FSA), is still in their minds. "It's well known that Washo Kani, using the historical name of the city, has encountered periods of heavy fighting before and has already experienced the situation of war; another conflict will not come as a surprise," she stressed.

There are several prospective groups to substitute into U.S. positions once they leave, and some are likely not satisfying for civilians due to their future impact. For Kurdish-held areas, apart from Russia and Assad, Turkey and its proxy militias, one controversial option is for the Roj-Peshmerge, a Syrian Kurdish group who has been trained and based in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, to occupy the region behind the U.S. troops, at least the borderline areas with Turkey, to de-escalate the situation and placate Turkey's concerns. However, from Helin's perspective, this scenario could bring harmful outcomes. It has been difficult for YPG and Roj-Peshmerge to agree on any action, though both groups share the same question. "Despite the fact that the unity of Kurdish groups would be a great thing, I don't think it's the right solution since

Roj-Peshmerge is very far from sharing the ideas of the YPG," Helin confirmed. During the past few years, it had been very critical for YPG to accept this group separately unless it works under its ranks. On some occasions, both armed groups were about to confront one another; the last time was roughly a year ago in the outskirts of the Iraqi city of Sinjar, when both groups clashed over an influential base.

Roj-Peshmerge is a group supported by Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) under the Kurdish leader Masud Barzani, who has good relationships with Turkey and stands opposed to the internal policy of YPG in Syria.

For this reason, it will be hazardous for the groups to intervene without prior consent, [who is giving this quote? It should say at the end] "Roj-peshmerge's intervention will inevitably lead to a Kurdish/Kurdish armed struggle, and that, of course, is another burden in Rojava."

Bengin Ahmad, a 28-year-old man, has also contacted with *The Region* from his place in Kobani, a city that has become internationally symbolic for combatting terrorism. Kobani city paid the heaviest toll in terms of devastation and scarification at the hands of the Islamic State in 2014/2015. From Bengin's point of view, the city is another target for stragglers due to its symbolism; "Kobani is vehemently threatened by Turkey because it had defeated these groups once before," he said. Wondering whether the U.S.' new sustainable attitude is comparable to when they have saved the city before, he added "People are very scared as a result of looting, killing, abducting and revenging, since the same happened in Afrin. The U.S. shouldn't betray Kobani as it did with Afrin."

When ISIS controlled two-thirds of Kobani city 4 years ago, a mass exodus, estimated tens of thousands, fled toward the Turkish border and crowded the nearby Akcakale border point; otherwise, they could have been easily trapped by the extremist organization. Nevertheless, for any current Turkish incursion, it seems likely that the people of Kobani will not choose Turkey as their safe haven as in times past, especially with Turkey's closure of the border and the reification of it with a border wall. "People are living in a panic and any Turkish attack will create a mass exodus toward regime-controlled areas or outside the borders to Iraqi Kurdistan," Bengin concluded.

It remains for many Kurds to contemplate why the United States has abandoned them without formatting a stable ground in a region that has long-suffered battling with terrorism and lost many of its gorgeous people in a withering war. It's not yet certain what will await those civilians in the upcoming days as they predestine for their anonymous fate. Nevertheless, what is undeniable is that the U.S. has once again thrown its most reliable partner under the bus. That may not leave long until

they realize their fatal mistake.