

Syrian government will not return to Raqqa, top official says

by Wladimir van Wilgenburg - 15/08/2017 11:47



Ilham Ahmed, the co-president of the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), told Arab tribes in a meeting on Sunday that the Syrian government will not return to areas liberated by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) such as Raqqa.

At the invitation of one of the tribal leaders of Raqqa, Mohammed al Ghannam of the al-Fadan tribe, a meeting was held in the village of Zaidi in the Silouk district of Tal Abyad in the Euphrates Region. The meeting was attended by the leaders of the Syrian Democratic Forces and SDC Ahmed [reported](#) to the local Hawar News Agency (ANHA).

"The [Syrian] regime now has its own efforts and sends letters to our brothers in these areas. They say that they are coming back," Ahmed said.

The top official of the SDC said that Damascus is trying to convince the Arab tribes in Raqqa that the local administrations and councils formed in the liberated areas are temporary and will not remain. "They say they will come and impose their control over

the region as in the past. We say that the Syrian regime was unable to protect our people from armed groups and could not defend us in the face of terrorism.”

“On the contrary, the regime used tanks and planes against our [Syrian] people, bombed their homes and destroyed what they owned. We tell them that you are not fit to return and control our areas,” she added.

Ahmed added that government institutions will not return unless the Syrian government accepts and recognises the existing administrations that have governed northern Syria for several years and negotiates formally with the existing political institutions.

“If they do not recognise and just want to return to how it was at the beginning [of the conflict], this is unacceptable and we will not allow for them to shed their brother’s blood again,” she said. “We have not opened the way for internal fighting, whether in Raqqa or Tal Abyad, or other areas liberated by the Syrian Democratic Forces and the People’s and Women’s Protection Units,” she said.

In an earlier interview in June with The Region, Ahmed said that Manbij, which was liberated one year ago by the SDF, is the example for Raqqa.

“We can give the example of Manbij. We can compare Raqqa with the establishment of the Manbij Civil Council [that is governing Manbij]. We see what happened in Manbij, the same will happen also in Raqqa after it’s liberation, the rebuilding will start. Now the Raqqa Civil Council is on the job,” Ahmed said.

Ahmed denied the presence of Syrian government institutions in Manbij. “In Manbij there is no regime, it’s ruled by the people,” she concluded.

Last week SDF and SDC members held a meeting with officials of the US-led coalition and warned the coalition against regime attempts to undermine the Raqqa operation.

Moreover, Sharvan Darwish, the official spokesperson of the Manbij Military Council [denied](#) media reports that Manbij was handed over to the Syrian regime after some individuals in the city said they had reconciled with the Syrian regime.

“This is a game being played by the regime through its tools and agents to incite the people by mass media campaigns on the regime’s media and opposition media that Manbij will be handed over to the regime,” Darwish said.

“The regime in the last few years did nothing to liberate Manbij from ISIS,” he said. “The regime was watching on while Daesh [ISIS] was slaughtering the people in the streets.”