

UN report details rights violations by occupying forces in Afrin

by Meghan Bodette - 13/09/2018 13:59



The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic submitted a report to the United Nations Human Rights Council that [recognized](#) crimes committed by occupying Free Syrian Army militias and Turkish forces in Afrin.

The report investigated violations committed between January and July of 2018 in several areas of Syria. It noted that in Afrin, "residents reported patterns of arrests, beatings and kidnappings by FSA-affiliated armed groups that, beginning with their takeover of certain areas, became notorious for their arbitrary arrests and detention," mentioning one incidence in which 29 individuals were "disappeared" from two villages within a day in March. Local sources have alleged that, since the city was captured in March, over a thousand individuals have been abducted. While some have been released after their families paid ransoms, the fate of many is still unknown.

The report gave credence to accounts of torture and mistreatment in FSA detention.

"Those detained by FSA-affiliated groups were never told where they were being held, and often could not recognize their captors," it said. "Others described inhumane conditions of detention, including overcrowded cells and minimal food. The Commission is investigating reports of deaths in detention by Al-A'mshat armed group."

Harrowing [accounts](#) of treatment of detainees in Turkey-backed FSA prisons have been reported for several months, and videos have circulated of militia members torturing civilians.

It also reported that individuals were targeted for various violations based on suspected support for the YPG or Syrian government, involvement with the previous Democratic Self-Administration of Afrin, journalism, activism, or having a family member who had participated in any suspicious activity. A graphic video posted to social media that showed a member of an unidentified militia threatening to execute a Kurdish man for supposed involvement in the Self-Administration's agricultural committee. While it mentioned the theft of homes and businesses from Kurdish civilians, the destruction of Yazidi religious sites, and the movement of people from other parts of Syria into the city, it did not make any mention of ethnic cleansing or demographic change— despite Turkish statements prior to the invasion that suggested that that was the operation's goal.

The conclusion of the report included the recommendation that states must "not recognize as valid any housing, land and/or property transaction, including any transfer that was made under duress, or which was otherwise coerced or forced, either directly or indirectly, or which was carried out contrary to international human rights standards." This is the closest international authorities have come to suggesting that the people of Afrin be able to regain their homes and businesses from occupying authorities.