

Invasion and occupation devastate agriculture and industry in Afrin

by Meghan Bodette - 17/09/2018 04:19



Turkey's Operation Olive Branch and the subsequent occupation of Afrin Canton have decimated the region's economy, according to the Center for Documenting Violations in Northern Syria, a local human rights monitor.

Before the invasion, Afrin was an agricultural and industrial center, producing olive products— such as Aleppo soap, which is made with olive oil— as well as nearly all of Northern Syria's textiles. Due to the canton's geographic location, it had to achieve a relatively high degree of economic self-sufficiency, as it could not trade with the rest of Northern Syria and was subject to a Turkish embargo. Local authorities worked to implement cooperatives in several different sectors, so that all people could benefit from economic development.

In 2016, Yeni Ozgur Politika [reported](#) that Afrin had 400 textile workshops, which together employed 17,000 people. According a [report](#) from the Center for Documenting Violations in Northern Syria, pre-invasion Afrin had as many as 18

million olive trees, and in 2017 produced more than 35 tons of Aleppo soap. Afrin's Agriculture Committee [placed](#) the number of trees at at least 14 million.

Kawa al-Yusuf, a member of the canton's Economic Committee, told the Center for Documenting Violations in Northern Syria that “thousands” of jobs were lost due to Turkish airstrikes on factories. Local news sources reported at the time that important civilian economic infrastructure was targeted throughout the invasion, including [an olive processing factory](#) and the [Meydanki Dam](#).

Al-Yusuf said that an estimated 60% of the canton's economic infrastructure had either been destroyed in the fighting or looted by Turkey-backed rebels.

Other reports have noted that occupation forces systematically destroy agricultural land and prevent villagers from harvesting their crops. In early September, the Center [documented](#) that thousands of trees had been burned in Rajo, including five thousand trees from the [same farm](#). In July, local sources told ANF News that members of the Hamza Division, a jihadist militia, had burned 41 acres of agricultural land in one village in Sherawa alone. Another jihadist militia, the Sultan Murad Brigade, had [cut down](#) dozens of olive trees in order to sell them to Turkey.

A recent report presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council claimed that systematic looting and destruction and appropriation of property by Olive Branch forces likely constituted a war crime.