



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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**Human rights situations that require the Council's attention**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Partners For Transparency, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1 February 2021]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



## **Violations of the Turkish-backed armed factions in northeastern Syrian Arab Republic**

### **Preamble**

Personal safety of civilians in northeastern Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) has become very difficult to attain due to the daily threats resulting from human rights violations committed by the armed factions loyal to Turkey, as the local population lives under the fear of forced arrests and extrajudicial executions as well as confiscation of property and homes and the imposition of royalties. All this compounded with the continuing practices of forced displacement in light of ethnic cleansing and demographic engineering. The Turkish-backed armed factions prevent local residents who left their homes due to the outbreak of armed conflicts from returning to these homes, which they used to resettle other ideologically-affiliated people, such as the families of armed factions. Moreover, Turkey has raised its flag over Syrian government buildings and tries to teach the Turkish language and impose it on the local population.

As such, it is estimated that the Turkish-backed armed opposition factions have killed at least 3097 citizens since their entry into the Syrian territories until November 2020, they also have arrested 3044 people, of whom 43 were tortured to death until March 2020. In 2020, the Turkish-backed armed factions arrested about 884 citizens in Afrin region, and also seized 240 houses and shops for Afrin people who rejected evacuation and insisted on staying in their homes. In this context, Turkish-backed armed factions used water as a weapon against its political opposition especially the “Syrian Democratic Forces”, at the expense of the citizens' rights in northeastern Syria. As such, Partners for Transparency (Partners) presents this intervention to discuss the human rights violations committed by Turkish-backed armed factions in northeastern Syria, including extrajudicial killings, citizens' detention, forced displacement and property seizure policies.

### **Extrajudicial killings**

Extrajudicial killings are the main feature of the Turkish-backed armed factions in northern Syria in order to forcibly displace citizens, resettle others and create a demographic change. Moreover, the various evidences obtained by Partners indicates that the policy of impunity is prevalent in all these incidents; the armed factions pursue the method of physical liquidation and field execution, which is part of the militant behavior stemming from the backgrounds of the fighters. Therefore, Partners for Transparency holds the Turkish government, in its capacity as an occupying power, accountable for the violations committed by its allies.

In January 2020, a gunman of the Turkish-backed Ahrar al-Sharqiya movement killed a girl (J. A. M.) and her sister from Afrin. In addition, members of Faylaq al-Majd of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army militia have killed a civilian in the Tal Abyad area in Raqqa, while trying to rob him. These people have escaped punishment as they have not been fairly tried even after demonstrations erupted denouncing the crimes of these militias and demanding their exit from the city in the same month. Armed members of the Sultan Murad Division of the Turkish-backed Free Army, killed the citizen (E. Y.), a displaced from the countryside of Aleppo, in the city of Ras al-Ain, after they seized his own factory for the manufacture of household appliances, months after the theft of warehouses for storing and distributing goods owned by the victim.

### **A systematic and intense campaigns of arrests against civilians in northern Syria to accept the situation as a fait accompli**

Arbitrary detention is one of the most common violations practiced by the pro-Turkish factions in northeastern Syria against whoever opposes the Turkish intervention in northern Syria, such as opinion activists, peaceful opposition and even civilians, just for expressing

their views against the Turkish intervention or objecting the coercive practices of armed militias such as imposing royalties, looting shops and assaulting women. They are usually detained without any judicial orders or clear legal basis to arrest them upon, and without any specific reason. In addition, they are usually prevented from direct appearance before the judiciary, hiring lawyers to defend them, communicating with their families and knowing their whereabouts as well as getting no compensation for the periods of pretrial detention they spend.

During January 2021, the Turkish-backed armed factions arrested more than 23 people in the cities of Afrin and Tal Abyad, including 3 children and 4 women, and in December 2020, the arrests carried out by the armed factions exceeded about 34 operations, and among those operations, the Turkish military police arrested an artist and his wife is from the village of Korda, Jenderes district, and the Hamza faction has arrested 5 citizens from the village of Baikh Obasi in Bulbul town in the countryside of Afrin and 3 citizens from Maabatli area in the northwestern countryside of Afrin northwest of Aleppo. In addition, the Samarkand faction, in cooperation with the Turkish military police, has arrested 11 citizens from the village of Kafr Safra, in Jenderes, and the village of Anqla in Sheikh al-Hadid district.

### **Forced displacement of indigenous people**

The Turkish authorities and the Turkish-backed factions implement the Turkification policy, which means changing the social and cultural life in northeastern Syria according to the Turkish pattern consistent with the ideology of the ruling party in Turkey, and in this way the names of villages, squares and schools are changed, with the Turkish flag raised over them, and countering the Kurdish language and culture in the Kurdish regions.

### **Weaponizing water**

Turkish-backed armed factions are cutting off water from the Syrian city of Hasaka in northeastern Syria on an ongoing basis in the context of the armed conflict between it and the Syrian Democratic Forces in an attempt to gain a comparative advantage in the war at the expense of the other party. Therefore, water bills have dramatically surged in this region, and people have denied access to clean sufficient water, amid fears of the outbreak of the new Coronavirus among the residents of this region who suffer from poor personal hygiene as a result of the lack of basic drinking water. Water scarcity has also jeopardized citizens' food security due to the severe decline in the production of various food commodities.

Partners recommends the following:

- To investigate extrajudicial killings in northern Syria carried out by Turkish armed factions, with the necessity to stop them.
  - To release all forcibly detainees in the prisons of the Turkish-backed armed factions, and to stop targeting citizens.
  - To stop the practices of forced displacement practiced by the factions against the native citizens in the occupied territories.
  - To stop using water in political conflicts.
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