



# Turkey Escalates its Genocidal Attacks on Ezidi Kurds

*When Will the International Community Stop  
Erdogan`s War and Crimes Against Humanity?*



Democratic Autonomous Council of Sinjar (MXDŞ)



**The Democratic Autonomous Council of Sinjar (MXDŞ) was established in January 2015 by the population of Sinjar. Thus, the Ezidi population together with other communities of the region has built the foundation for governing and protecting itself. This was considered necessary due to the devastating experiences our population had made under the rule of both the Iraqi government until 2003 and the KDP from 2003 until 2014. Due to their refusal to protect our community, the population of Sinjar experienced yet another genocide in August 2014. Only due to the intervention of the Kurdish guerrilla and the self-defense forces of Rojava, our community was saved from total annihilation. Since its foundation in early 2015, the MXDŞ has established ten local people`s councils, schools, hospitals, cultural institutions, security forces, self-defense forces and many more institutions in all parts of Sinjar that successfully serve the needs of our people despite the little resources available. Today, all different ethic and religious communities of Sinjar are represented among the 111 delegates of the MXDŞ, its coordination and its different committees. Thus, we continue to strengthen the peaceful coexistence of all communities, peoples and religious groups in the region.**

39 bombs in just four hours: This is the result of Turkey's most recent brutal attacks on our home region Sinjar. Starting at 10 p.m. on February 1, dozens of Turkish war planes and armed drones heavily bombarded 21 places all over our homeland. As a result, 3 civilians were killed and one more civilian injured. Thus, Turkey and its fascist ruler Erdogan have once again proven that they won't stop killing our people until the international community stops them. Since April 2017, the Turkish state has carried out dozens of air strikes on our community which have killed many members of our Ezidi and Arab people living in Sinjar. Since international criticism and effective measures have been weak, Turkey now felt emboldened to carry out its most extensive attacks ever on Sinjar. This escalation clearly shows that Turkey will continue to breach international law and commit war crimes by attacking our people, if the international and regional powers don't take a clear stance against this and don't close the Iraqi airspace for Turkish warplanes and drones, i.e. declare a no-fly-zone for Turkish fighter jets. Therefore, as the Democratic Autonomous Council of Sinjar (MXDŞ) we once again urgently call on the international community, the UN, the USA, the EU and all democratically-minded people of the world: Stop Turkey from attacking our people in Sinjar!

The recent attacks on our people are a clear result of the dirty deal signed by KDP officials and the Iraqi central government on October 9, 2020. Sadly, the UNAMI (UN Assistance Mission for Iraq) and a number of international powers played a role in facilitating this deal that threatens the lives of our community members. Clearly, Turkey profits the most from this deal which it uses to legitimize its attacks on the Ezidi Kurds and pressure Erbil and Baghdad to take a hostile stance towards the people of Sinjar. Thus, the deal of October 9 has paved the way for the latest attacks on February 1. This deal, which was negotiated without the participation of representatives of our Ezidi people, does not only obstruct a democratic dialogue between our MXDŞ and the Iraqi government, but also seriously slows down the reconstruction of Sinjar's villages and cities and the return of the 300.000 Ezidi refugees who are still living in South-Kurdish camps or abroad. Therefore, the deal of October 9 needs to be canceled in order for Turkey's attacks to stop and our home region Sinjar to thrive again. As the MXDŞ we call on the Iraqi central government to start direct negotiations with us and thus secure not only a democratic and peaceful future of Sinjar, but of all of Iraq.

The aftermath of a Turkish airstrike carried out on February 1 in Sinjar



The attacks on our Ezidi homeland are part of a broader neo-Ottoman strategy of Turkey whose aim is to annex vast territories in North Syria and North Iraq. The occupation of Afrin, Serekaniye and Gire Spi in Rojava-Kurdistan (North Syria), the regular attacks on the Maxmur refugee camp located in North Iraq, huge military operations on Iraqi territory along the Turkish-Iraqi border and the bombardment of Sinjar are all part of this dangerous strategy of the Turkish state. Thus, Turkey hopes to gain control over a region that stretches all the way from Aleppo in the West to Kirkuk in the East, including the Mossul region. Erdogan does not hesitate to use radical-fascist Islamic proxy forces like the IS to destabilize this region and thus make it easier for the Turkish state to increase its political, military and economic influence there. The devastating results of Turkey's neo-Ottoman strategy could recently be witnessed during the attack on a prison with thousands of IS fighter in the city of al-Hasakah in the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, but our Ezidi Kurdish people and the other peoples of Sinjar also bear the brunt of Erdogan's inhumane and destructive policy.

We strongly believe that it is in the interest of Iraq, its regional neighbors and the international community to stop Turkey's attacks and thus allow our Ezidi Kurdish people and all other peoples of Sinjar to rebuild their homes based on the common human values freedom, democracy and equality. For this to happen, putting to court those responsible for the attacks on our community and officially recognizing the MXDŞ will be the most urgent steps to take. Without this, Erdogan will feel emboldened to continue his attacks on our people. This will have a huge destabilizing effect not only on Sinjar, but on Iraq and the region as a whole. Under such circumstances, radical groups like the Islamic State (IS) will regain strength and once again become a major threat to our Ezidi people and the whole international community.

### *What Happened on February 1?*

In the night of February 1 and 2, 2022, a series of heavy airstrikes carried out by the Turkish air force hit our home region Sinjar in northwestern Iraq. Three civilians were killed, another one injured. These attacks were part of a huge operation also targeting the city of Derik in

Civilians visit the site of an airstrike one day after Turkish warplanes bombarded 21 sites all over Sinjar during the night of Feb 1 and 2, 2022





Rojava-Kurdistan and the Maxmur refugee camp which is located in the immediate vicinity of the South Kurdish city Erbil. The majority of the attacks on our home region Sinjar targeted the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBŞ), our self-defense units linked to the MXDŞ. The MXDŞ and the YBŞ were founded seven years ago as a response to the genocide our Ezidi people suffered at the hands of IS.

The airstrikes on Sinjar region – home not only to our Ezidi Kurdish people, but also to Arabs and Turkmens, Sunnis and Shiites – started in the evening hours of February 1, 2022. Between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. at night, dozens of Turkish warplanes and armed drones launched 39 bomb raids on targets in 22 different locations. Most of the airstrikes hit the Sinjar mountain area around Çilmêra, Geliyê Kersê, Gundê Barê and Kora Simoqiya, but the city of Xanêsor was also bombarded. 21 of the locations that were attacked belong to the YBŞ who reported no casualties among its members. Yet, a place used by civilians was also targeted by the Turkish warplanes resulting in the death of three well diggers and causing injuries to one more civilian.

Some 60 aircraft took part in Turkey's extensive attacks throughout Iraq and Syria. The warplanes reportedly took off from six air bases in Turkey, accompanied by further aircrafts like tanker planes and drones.<sup>1</sup> This clearly shows the limitless brutality with which the Erdogan government targeted our people. It also underlines the urgent need for the international community to clearly show the Turkish state that such violent attacks will have clear and immediate consequences for those responsible.

The morning after the heavy attacks, the YBŞ issued an official statement saying: “The aim of this attack is to spread fear among our people. The Turkish occupation forces are pursuing a dirty policy regarding the displaced people from Sinjar. This policy and the attacks are directed against our people who have been living in camps [since the IS genocide of 2014]. The Turkish state wants to prevent them from returning to Sinjar.”<sup>2</sup> Representatives of the MXDŞ responded to the attacks on February 2 by saying that “our will is stronger than warplanes, tanks, and artillery. [...] These attacks on mount Sinjar are a continuation of the genocide of 2014. This time they wanted to empty mount Sinjar from the Ezidi people.” They also drew a clear connection between Turkey's attacks on Sinjar and the recent attack on an IS prison in al-Hasakah: “On Januar 20, they attacked al-Hasakah in order to once again spread their dirty ideas directed against humanity once around the world. Today, Erdogan supports these ideas.”<sup>3</sup>

### *Who is Responsible for the Recent Attacks on Sinjar?*

Following the IS attack on al-Hasakah in the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria which aimed at allowing thousands of IS fighters imprisoned there to flee, the Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kazimi traveled to the Iraqi-Syrian border and met with the Turkish Ambassador Ali Riza Guney when he returned to Baghdad. Shortly after this meeting the attacks on our home region Sinjar started. This clearly shows that the Iraqi central government had been informed in advance about the most recent attacks. This is also supported by recent reports that “Turkish officials privately say they believe Baghdad is firmly on their side in fighting the PKK”.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, only a day after the attacks, Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani went to Turkey's capital Ankara and held a meeting with the Turkish

1 <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkish-warplanes-hit-kurdish-militant-targets-iraq-syria-ministry-2022-02-02/>

2 <https://anfenglishmobile.com/kurdistan/ybs-21-locations-bombed-three-civilians-killed-in-turkish-attacks-57884>

3 <https://rojnews.news/ku/kurdistan/reveberiya-xweser-a-sengale-iradeya-me-ji-ceken-we-biheztir-e/>

4 <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkish-warplanes-hit-kurdish-militant-targets-iraq-syria-ministry-2022-02-02/>

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Some observers have even raised the concern that Nechirvan Barzani might have been in Ankara at the time of the attacks on February 1. This visit clearly shows that Turkey did not act alone when it attacked our Ezidi people and the other peoples of Sinjar. It is also obvious that the International anti-IS Coalition in Iraq, led by the USA, was aware of this attack in advance and did not try to stop the Turkish aggression. All actors directly involved in the deal of October 9, 2020 – Ankara, Erbil and Baghdad – were clearly involved with Turkey directly carrying out these brutal attacks. The KDP thus continues to play a destructive role in the region by providing Turkey with intelligence information on targets in Sinjar and thus directly provoking attacks on our community which have so far killed dozens of our community members. This was confirmed only recently by the YBŞ commander Çeko Şengalî when he declared in an interview: “It has recently become clear that the MIT [Turkish secret service] and the KDP have threatened Ezidi youth over the phone to obtain information about our forces. Those who become allies of the enemy must stop this corruption and not become allies of the Turkish state.”<sup>5</sup>

### *Immediate Protests by Kurdish Organizations*

Kurdish organizations around the world and their international friends were the first to react strongly to the latest Turkish attacks on Sinjar. On February 2, the Kurdistan National Congress (KNK) criticized the international silence and called for the official recognition of the MXDŞ: “What is disappointing, however, is the silence and complicity of the United Nations, the European Union, NATO and the Council of Europe, all of which are aware of this onslaught of Turkish state terrorism. The West has said ‘Never Again’ regarding the genocide, yet Turkey is allowed to continue its genocidal barbarism against millions of Kurds throughout Kurdistan. We therefore demand that the above-mentioned international bodies stop Erdoğan’s massacre by all available diplomatic means and, if necessary, impose economic sanctions against his regime. He should also be brought before the International Criminal Court and thus be put to justice for his numerous crimes against humanity. We also call for the legal recognition of the Autonomous Administration in northeastern Syria and the Ezidis in Sinjar, so that they can

<sup>5</sup> <https://rojnews.news/ku/kurdistan/fermandare-ybse-li-hemberi-hemu-erisan-em-amade-ne-2/>

In dozens of cities all over the world people took to the streets to protest against Turkey’s attacks on February 1 and 2.





fully guarantee their own security from Turkish attacks.” In a statement on February 3, the Kurdistan Democratic Communities Union (KCK) also called on the international powers to take a clear stance against Turkey’s attacks: “The forces of the International anti-IS Coalition, led by the United States, allow Turkey - the closest ally of the Islamic State (IS) - to attack the population and self-defense forces of Rojava, Sinjar, and Maxmur while the people living there are actively fighting IS. As a result, numerous massacres have taken place in Rojava, Sinjar, and Maxmur in the recent past. The silence of the US, Russia and all the other members of the International anti-IS Coalition and their refusal to take a clear stance makes them complicit in these murders. They all claim to be fighting against IS. Yet their silence in the face of the Turkish state’s attacks on the people of Rojava, Maxmur and Sinjar, all of whom are united in resisting against IS, will go down in history as one of the most striking examples of political immorality. All these forces will have to face the question of whether they are on the side of those fighting IS or supporting IS’s allies.” In the days right after the attack, protests took place in dozens of cities all over Europe, including France, Germany, Greece and the UK. On February 2, members of the Volksbühne Basel (People’s Theater Basel) also published a statement in which they called for a no-fly-zone to stop the Turkish attacks and drew attention to the importance of the political self-organization in Sinjar, Maxmur and Rojava-Kurdistan: “The same applies to the people in Sinjar and Rojava. They will not be driven out! Because what the population has built up together with the Freedom Movement in the last decades is a real and serious possibility of a life far away from exploitation, war and destruction. They need our concrete and manifold solidarity.” Feleknas Uca and Hişyar Özsoy, as foreign policy spokespersons for the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), issued a statement on February 3 in which they criticized that Turkey’s attacks provide help for the resurgence of IS: “These attacks by Turkey clearly complicate the fight against IS and give the organization the opportunity to regroup and continue fighting as an extremely dangerous force in the region. [...] The government uses the discourse of ‘anti-terrorism’ to attack the political opposition and especially the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq and Syria by criminalizing Kurdish claims and demands for rights, recognition or autonomy. Thus, it further militarizes the conflict, which should be resolved politically. [...] Turkey carries out such attacks as a member of NATO and the Council of Europe, using weapons often purchased from NATO countries. As we have noted in our previous statements on similar attacks, many civilians have been killed in such cross-border attacks on residential areas, and with complete impunity. The international community seems unable or unwilling to stand up to such destruction. It acts as if it knows nothing of its political and moral responsibility towards the Kurds, who continue to fight against IS under extremely difficult conditions.”

### *Weak Response by International and Regional Actors*

Following Turkey’s heaviest attacks ever on our people in Sinjar, the international community and regional actors were unfortunately slow and hesitant to take a clear stance against these war crimes. In a short note, the UNAMI failed to acknowledge that Turkey had carried out the attacks and did not even mention Sinjar as the main target of these brutal air strikes: “Following airstrikes in Ninewa with civilian casualties reported, we reiterate that Iraqi sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected at all times. Local populations must be protected, disputes should be addressed through dialogue and cooperation.”<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the UNAMI seems to imply that targeting the self-defense forces of our people, the YBŞ, would be a legitimate thing to do for Turkey. This attitude by a UN structure clearly constitutes a huge danger for the peoples of Iraq since it fails to identify Turkey’s attacks as a clear violation of international law

<sup>6</sup> [https://twitter.com/UNIraq/status/1488909441005199360?cxt=HHwWgIC53e\\_P1akpAAAA](https://twitter.com/UNIraq/status/1488909441005199360?cxt=HHwWgIC53e_P1akpAAAA)

thus emboldening Erdogan and his government to continue their attacks.

The MP of the South Kurdish parliament Ebdulnasir Ehmed condemned Turkey's attacks and warned that "assistance is being provided to the Turkish state from within the Kurdistan Region" thus indirectly confirming the involvement of the KDP in Turkey's recent attacks. He added that "if the Kurdistan Regional Government was not sympathetic to the Turkish state, it would condemn the Turkish state's attacks on Kurdistan territory."<sup>7</sup> Likewise, the South Kurdish MP Cemal Hewez criticized Turkey for its attacks: "The bombings that the Turkish state carries out on a daily basis are a betrayal, a violation of the honor and dignity of our people and our land. [...] Iraq has lost its sovereignty. As a result, its territorial integrity is being violated on a daily basis."<sup>8</sup>

The Security Media Cell (SMC), an Iraqi government organization, issued a statement in response to Turkey's recent attacks. In its statement, the SMC condemned the Turkish airstrikes which it called a violation of Iraqi airspace: "We call on the Turkish side to remain committed to good neighborly relations in accordance with international agreements, and to stop these violations out of respect and commitment to the common interests between the two countries."<sup>9</sup>

The fact that major international forces but also civil rights organizations and NGOs have so far remained silent on Turkey's massive attacks on our home region Sinjar causes great concern among our people and the MXDŞ. We can only understand this utter silence as either a sign of support or of disinterest. Both attitudes are extremely dangerous, since they encourage the Turkish state to violate international law again in the future and continue its war crimes. This will only cause more instability and hardships for our Ezidi people and the other peoples of Iraq. A strong and clear stance and the declaration of a no-fly-zone for Turkish warplanes in Iraq by international governments, institutions and organizations would immediately have a strong effect on the Turkish government and thus prevent more human losses and the deepening of the crisis in the region.

7 <https://rojnews.news/ku/kurdistan/ebdulnasir-ehmed-hikumeta-hereme-hevkariya-dewleta-tirk-dike/>

8 <https://rojnews.news/ku/kurdistan/parlementere-ynke-eris-bereziya-li-beramberi-xaka-kurdistane-ye/>

9 <https://ina.iq/eng/17263-unami-a-need-to-respect-iraqs-sovereignty-and-territorial-integrity.html>

Members of the MXDŞ give a statement on February 3, 2022 condemning Turkey's attacks





### *Turkish Attacks on Sinjar Escalate*

A look at the history of Turkish attacks on our home region Sinjar and our Ezidi Kurdish people clearly shows how great the danger is. The most recent attacks are part of a year-long history of cross-border attacks of the Turkish Army on the sovereignty of Iraq and its neighbors. In the night of April 24/25, 2017, Turkey targeted – among other places – Sinjar with a bombing campaign that resulted in the death of one civilian and one YBŞ member. Since 2017, Turkey's airstrikes on Sinjar have steadily intensified. Only until the end of 2019, these attacks caused the death of four YBŞ members as well as three civilians. Starting in 2020, the airstrikes became even more frequent. Beginning with the assassination of Zerdest Şengalî, a YBŞ commander known for his brave fight against IS, and three other YBŞ fighters, Turkey continued its drone strikes throughout the year, killing another YBŞ member and injuring two more. In 2021, seven Turkish airstrikes targeted Sinjar causing the death of eleven people, most of them civilians. This included the Ezidi diplomat Seîd Hesên and the co-chair of the MXDŞ, Merwan Bedel. The attack that caused the highest number of casualties destroyed a hospital in the village of Sikênîyê, that was also heavily frequented by civilians. Eight people, including nurses as well as YBŞ fighters, were killed and three additional people injured in a second bombardment when they rushed to the help of those trapped in the collapsed hospital compound. Later in 2021, a warplane bombarded the building of the people's council in the city of Xanêsor, thus targeting a civilian institution used by our people to hold meetings and conduct political work.

The Turkish government justifies its attacks with the fight against the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and the right of self-defense according to article 51 of the United Nations Charter. It does so, even though the PKK officially withdrew from Sinjar on April 4, 2018. Therefore, today, the PKK is not present in Sinjar anymore. Moreover, contrary to the official Turkish statements, the victims of Turkey's bombardments have not been PKK members but rather members of our Ezidi people who were involved in the work of the MXDŞ or the self-defense units which have played an active role in the fight against IS since 2014. In order to justify its attacks, Turkey has repeatedly invoked supposed links between the YBŞ and PKK. It is true that in 2014 PKK fighters rushed to the help of our Ezidi people and defended Mount Sinjar against the IS attacks when all other forces, such as the Iraqi army and the KDP Peshmerga, had left. Together with the YPG/YPJ, the PKK thus helped to open up a corridor that allowed tens of thousands of people to flee to Rojava-Kurdistan. Afterwards, members of the YPG and PKK helped to form our YBŞ self-defense units so that our Ezidi people would be able to defend themselves on their own in the future. The YBŞ has since then officially become part of the 80th regiment of the Iraqi Army.

The drone strikes and bombardments carried out by Turkish war planes have massively increased in the course of the last years. Turkish drones and fighter jets are hovering over Sinjar on a daily basis. This constitutes an ever-growing threat to the life of our community members and obstructs our people's efforts to return to their homes and rebuild them. The latest attacks on February 1 and 2, clearly mark a peak in the Turkish attacks that started in April 2017. Thus, Turkey intensifies its efforts to continue the genocide carried out by IS in 2014 against our Ezidi people.

### *The Fear for Consecutive Attacks on Sinjar*

Since 2017, Turkey has steadily increased its attacks on our Ezidi people and all peoples of the region. The most recent attacks constitute a peak of Turkey's warmongering policy for which both IS attacks on the ground and air strikes by the Turkish military are used. Yet, we fear

that Turkey will escalate this warmongering strategy even more in 2022, if the international community fails to take a clear stance.

The IS attack on the prison in al-Hasakah was one of the biggest operations of IS and Turkey in the last years. It resulted in more than a week of heavy fighting and the martyrdom of 121 Kurdish and Arab security forces. This clearly shows how urgent it is for the international community to deal with the remnants of IS once and for all. In official statements both the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have accused Turkey of standing behind the IS plan to attack the prison in al-Hasakah. Turkey's support for IS and other extremist groups like Al-Nusra has been an open secret for years. It is striking that IS attacks in North and East Syria but also in North Iraq often happen when Turkey simultaneously steps up its military and political pressure in the region.

The city of al-Hasakah is only 80 km away from our homeland Sinjar. The al-Hol camp which houses thousands of IS families is even closer. Our Ezidi people and the other peoples of Sinjar are afraid that IS will return once again, especially due to the increase of IS attacks in North Iraq. Our Ezidi community has been hit particularly heavy by IS attacks and the genocide it carried out against our people. Therefore, it is only natural that we have responded by organizing our own self-administration and self-defense forces in order to be able to protect ourselves against any future attacks.

Yet, instead of helping to stabilize and rebuild Sinjar and to establish a common strategy against IS together with the MXDŞ, the Iraqi government has signed the deal of October 9 and thus supports Turkey's aggression against our homeland. When they withdrew their troops in 2014, the Iraqi central government and the KDP clearly showed that they are incapable of protecting Sinjar and its people. Therefore, our Ezidi people and the other peoples of Sinjar have lost their faith in these authorities. Turkey's continued attacks despite the huge presence of Iraqi army forces increasingly raises questions about the true purpose of their deployment in Sinjar.

Turkey's attacks on Sinjar constitute a serious threat to the stability and democracy in all of Iraq.





In January 2022 alone, our home region Sinjar was bombed by the Turkish state on three different days. Seeing that Turkish drones and airplanes are still flying over the region and due to the threats that are constantly being made by Turkish state officials, we are seriously concerned about the real threat of both new Turkish attacks and the deliberate use of IS against the peoples of Sinjar.

*What can the international community do?*

Turkey's attacks and the threat of future IS attacks on our Ezidi people and all peoples of Sinjar need to be stopped. Here, the international community – the USA, the UN, the EU, civil rights organizations, NGOs and democratic forces – needs to live up to its responsibility for peace, democracy and equality in the Middle East. Many countries and international institutions, including Belgium, the Netherlands, Iraq and the UN, have officially recognized the genocide that was committed against our people in 2014. Now, it is time to act.

Only if Turkey's attacks are stopped and a no-fly-zone is declared, will our people be able to return to Sinjar, rebuild their homes and live a democratic and peaceful life. For this to happen, political and economic pressure needs to be put on the Turkish government so that it will refrain from any future attacks. Since the threat is real that Turkey will deliberately use IS to attack our community, the international community needs to actively shed light on the alliance of Turkey and IS and take effective measures to stop Turkey's support for IS. In order to support peace, democracy and stability in Sinjar and all of Iraq, it will be necessary to officially recognize the MXDŞ, its self-defense Forces YBŞ and YJŞ (Sinjar Women's Units) and its Asayish security forces. For this to happen, all powers involved need to refrain from enforcing the implementation of the deal of October 9. Instead, the international community should play a constructive role by encouraging the Iraqi central government to negotiate directly with our MXDŞ in order to establish a democratic framework for Sinjar. Recognizing the autonomy of Sinjar will be a huge contribution to peace, democracy and stability in all of Iraq.

We therefore call on the UN, the USA, the EU, international civil rights organizations, NGOs and the democratic forces of the world to act immediately and resolutely and thus bring an end to Turkey's attacks on our Ezidi people and all other peoples of Sinjar. Thus, they will live up to their promise to never again allow a genocide to happen against the Ezidi people.

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