

SUNDAY NATIONAL

29 October 2023

Sarah Glynn

<https://www.thenational.scot/news/23886297.rojava-suffering-hands-turkish-bombing>

Rojava is suffering at the hands of Turkish bombing

11 hrs ago

SYRIA

TURKEY

MILITARY

POLITICS



A child injured following Turkish attacks in Rojava (Image: AP)

By Sarah Glynn

Share



ROJAVA IS SUFFERING AT THE HANDS OF TURKISH BOMBING

Air attacks targeting vital infrastructure; eleven power stations hit affecting over two million people; 18 water stations out of service; 2 hospitals destroyed; 48 educational sites hit; no further escalation required for the situation to worsen from dire to catastrophic.

This is not news from Gaza, but points taken from the assessment of the impacts of Turkey's early October bombing of North and East Syria - the autonomous region that includes the predominantly Kurdish area known as Rojava, together with adjacent predominantly Arab areas liberated from ISIS by the region's Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). When the SDF was saving the world from ISIS – and losing 11,000 of their fighters – the television cameras couldn't get enough of them. Now, news from North and East Syria rarely makes the headlines, and three days after this bombing started all eyes were turned to Israel-Palestine.

Israel's blitzkrieg on Gaza has rightly generated worldwide outrage, but this should not be allowed to mask other genocides. In North and East Syria, as in Gaza, we are witnessing an attempt to destroy a society and effect mass ethnic cleansing. From the beginning of its 100-year existence, the Republic of Turkey has repressed expressions of Kurdishness and has clamped down hard on any resistance to this, whether that resistance be through peaceful parliamentary means or through guerrilla action. Turkey has also shown themselves unable to tolerate the emergence of an autonomous region in the Kurdish areas of Syria across their southern border, especially of an autonomy based around the ideas of the Kurdish leader, Abdullah Öcalan, who has spent nearly 25 years in a Turkish prison. Öcalan's ideas on radical democracy, women's liberation, ecology, and ethnic and religious coexistence have made North and East Syria into a beacon of hope, not only for the Middle East, but for people across the world.

North and East Syria has never attacked Turkey, and the Autonomous Administration has made it clear that they seek peaceful relations with their neighbour. The only threat they pose to Turkey is that of a good example. But the Turkish state is determined to crush them out of existence and to impose Turkish control.

Turkey has twice invaded the region – in 2018 and 2019. The areas they occupied and put under the control of their violent Islamist mercenaries have become a hell of brutalised oppression, and a safe haven for ISIS cells. Most of the local population has fled from the occupiers, to be replaced by the families of the Islamist militias and by Arabs brought in by Turkey to effect demographic change.

The US and Russia have refused to clear the way for a further invasion, but they have not prevented Turkey from keeping up a continuous war of attrition - shelling border areas, assassinating leading figures and random civilians, and holding back water supplies. Nor did these major powers stop Turkey's recent air attacks that deliberately targeted essential infrastructure in an attempt to make the region unliveable.

The cost of repairing the physical damage done by this month's bombing has been estimated at over a billion dollars. This is money that the autonomous administration does not have, and many replacement parts are anyway unobtainable as the region is under blockade. Turkey's attacks bring frequent deaths and injuries, and the social and psychological damage cannot be measured. A traumatised population faces the oncoming winter with limited power and fuel and with promises of more attacks to come. As I was writing this, news came in of the assassination of a senior SDF commander whose work involved coordinating with the Americans in the fight against ISIS. The drone that hit his family house also

injured his mother and two children. And a friend in Qamishlo messaged that the electricity grid is working just one to two hours a day.

Despite Turkish President Erdoğan's hypocritical professions of outrage at Israel's war crimes, and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's hollow pretence to be in support of the Kurds, these leaders are two sides of the same coin. Turkey and Israel have strong commercial and also military ties, and their shared aggressive politics even made them joint sponsors of Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing of the Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh.

In pursuit of their agendas of personal and national aggrandisement, both leaders play into the destructive vision of a 'war of civilisations'. This vision is reinforced by their supporters, and threatens to entrench and spread the violence. They pretend that ethnic and religious antagonism is inevitable. Proof that this is not the case can be found in every community, but nowhere more so than in North and East Syria, where peaceful coexistence and involvement of all peoples is a fundamental principle of the Autonomous Administration. It is a principle that the Administration has attempted to put forward as a model for the whole of Syria and beyond. Their living example of hope cannot be allowed to be extinguished, and their voice become only a lost cry in the wilderness.