

Syrie : situation d'une femme yézidie seule à Afrin

Renseignement de l'analyse-pays OSAR

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Ce rapport repose sur des renseignements d'expert-e-s et sur les propres recherches de l'Organisation suisse d'aide aux réfugiés (OSAR). Conformément aux standards COI, l'OSAR fonde ses recherches sur des sources accessibles publiquement. Lorsque les informations obtenues dans le temps imparti sont insuffisantes, elle fait appel à des expert-e-s. L'OSAR documente ses sources de manière transparente et traçable, mais peut toutefois décider de les anonymiser, afin de garantir la protection de ses contacts.

1 Introduction

Le présent document a été rédigé par l'analyse-pays de l'Organisation suisse d'aide aux réfugiés (OSAR) à la suite d'une demande qui lui a été adressée. Il se penche sur les questions suivantes :

1. Quelle est la situation sécuritaire actuelle dans la région d'Afrin ? Quels groupes armés se disputent le contrôle de la région ?
2. Quelle est la situation humanitaire dans la région à la suite du tremblement de terre du 6 février 2023 ?
3. Quelles sont les risques de persécutions pour une femme seule, illettrée appartenant à la communauté Yézidie dans la région d'Afrin ?

L'analyse-pays de l'OSAR observe les développements en Syrie depuis plusieurs années.¹⁾ Sur la base de ses propres recherches ainsi que de renseignements transmis par des expert-e-s externes, elle apporte les réponses suivantes aux questions ci-dessus.

2 Situation sécuritaire à Afrin

Situation sécuritaire très volatile. Afrin est depuis 2018 sous le contrôle de milices islamistes soutenues par la Turquie. En octobre 2022, le groupe Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) a pris temporairement le contrôle de la ville. Selon *Christian Solidarity Worldwide* (CSW), depuis mars 2018, la ville d'Afrin est sous le contrôle de la Turquie et de milices islamistes de l'armée nationale syrienne (ANS) soutenues par elle. Pour capturer la ville d'Afrin, la Turquie et ses alliés ont combattu les forces armées du Parti de l'union démocratique (PYD). Depuis la conquête d'Afrin, les groupes islamistes y ont appliqué une interprétation stricte de la charia (CSW, février 2022). Selon *Rena Netjes*, une chercheuse indépendante spécialiste du nord de la Syrie, comme l'a démontré la prise temporaire de la ville d'Afrin par le groupe HTS en octobre 2022, la situation sécuritaire dans la région d'Afrin reste très volatile et les lignes de front sont très floues (*Rena Netjes*, 31 octobre 2022). Selon *Middle East Eye* (MEE), qui cite une source de sécurité turque de haut niveau, à la fin du mois d'octobre 2022, le groupe HTS a retiré la plupart de ses forces de la ville d'Afrin dont il avait pris le contrôle deux semaines auparavant après des combats particulièrement meurtriers contre l'ANS. Selon MEE, cette dernière, soutenue par la Turquie, est composée de 41 groupes militaires différents et compte entre 50 000 et 70 000 combattants. L'ANS est en proie à des luttes intestines régulières. A Afrin, les affrontements entre les différents groupes qui composent l'ANS sont fréquents et font souvent des victimes civiles (MEE, 25 octobre 2022).

Largement majoritaire avant 2018, les Kurdes ne représentent plus qu'entre 25 et 40 % de la population de la ville d'Afrin. Ils ont été déplacés ou expulsés de force par les milices islamistes soutenues par la Turquie et remplacés par des arabes syriens

¹ <https://www.osar.ch/publications/rapports-sur-les-pays-dorigine>.

déplacés et des familles de combattants. Selon l'Agence de l'Union européenne pour l'asile (EUAA), alors qu'avant la prise d'Afrin par la Turquie et ses alliés en 2018, les Kurdes constituaient entre 92 % et 96 % de la population, cette proportion était réduite à seulement un quart en mai 2021, avec le départ de près de la moitié de la population kurde. Les résident-e-s kurdes ont été contraint-e-s de quitter leurs maisons en raison de menaces, d'extorsions, de détentions et d'enlèvements attribués à des milices affiliées à l'armée nationale syrienne (ANS). Dans son rapport de février 2022, cité par l'EUAA, la Commission d'enquête internationale indépendante sur la République arabe syrienne (UNCOI) indique qu'il existe à Afrin « des schémas de pillage, d'occupation et de confiscation », au détriment des propriétaires déplacés. L'EUAA note qu'avec le soutien de la Turquie, des milliers d'Arabes syriens déplacés et des familles de combattants et de Turkmènes ont été relogés dans la région (EUAA, septembre 2022). Selon *Rena Netjes*, la ville d'Afrin ne compte plus que 40 % de Kurdes, selon le conseil kurde local. La population de la ville est composée à 60 % de personnes déplacées (*Rena Netjes*, 31 octobre 2022). Selon *Voice of America* (VOA), depuis la prise de contrôle d'Afrin par la Turquie, des groupes de défense des droits humains kurdes ont accusé le gouvernement turc et ses alliés de chercher à modifier la composition ethnique de la région en y installant des familles arabes et turkmènes. Début janvier 2023, des groupes soutenus par la Turquie ont annoncé l'ouverture d'une nouvelle colonie destinée aux personnes déplacées et qui comptera 200 unités résidentielles. Celle-ci sera construite sur des terres appartenant à une famille kurde. Lorsque le propriétaire de ces terres a demandé des explications aux milices islamistes qui dirigent Afrin, celles-ci ont affirmé que ces terres avaient été saisies car elles appartenaient aux forces kurdes (VOA, 12 janvier 2023). Dans un rapport publié en octobre 2022 sur la situation des Kurdes à Afrin, l'OSAR relevait que, selon des informations rapportées en 2021 et 2022 par des organisations de défense des droits humains et des médias kurdes, la Turquie allait construire de nouvelles colonies, des mosquées et des écoles islamiques pour y installer des familles de miliciens pro-turcs et des personnes déplacées. L'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme (SOHR), cité par l'OSAR, a documenté la construction de plus de 12 villages et unités d'habitation, y compris des mosquées, des cliniques, des écoles et des instituts coraniques, dans la région d'Afrin en 2021, afin d'y installer des personnes déplacées d'autres régions de Syrie et des groupes pro-turcs, notamment des Turkmènes. Le Syria Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC), également cité par l'OSAR, a signalé en mai 2021 que la construction de colonies avec des investissements étrangers empêchait le retour des habitant-e-s d'origine et contribuait au changement démographique (OSAR, 22 octobre 2022).

3 Situation humanitaire à la suite du tremblement de terre du 6 février 2023

Entre 4500 et 6000 morts dans le nord-ouest de la Syrie, une région déjà durement touchée par la guerre civile. Plus de 10 000 bâtiments partiellement ou complètement détruits. Le district d'Afrin, dans la province d'Alep, parmi les districts les plus affectés par le séisme. Des dizaines de milliers de personnes déplacées. Selon le site d'information *Antalya*, le tremblement de terre du 6 février 2023 aurait causé la mort d'au moins 6 000 personnes en Syrie. La zone la plus durement touchée a été celle du nord-ouest où plusieurs groupes islamistes opposés au régime syrien se disputent le contrôle. Cette région, qui échappe depuis 2011 au contrôle du régime de Bachar el-Assad, a durement souffert des bombardements du régime syrien et de son allié russe et, selon le Middle East Institute, cité

par *Antalya*, 60% des infrastructures, notamment médicales, avaient déjà été endommagées ou détruites avant le séisme de février 2023. Les habitant-e-s de la région sont également parmi les plus vulnérables, avec près de 4.5 millions de personnes déplacées qui ont fui la guerre, les persécutions du régime syrien et la conscription (*Antalya*, 16 février 2023). Selon le HCR, le séisme aurait fait plus de 4500 morts et 8500 blessés, principalement dans les districts de Harim, Afrin et Jebel Saman. Au moins 96 communautés et 35 sous-districts de la région du nord-ouest ont été touchés par le séisme et plus de 10 000 bâtiments ont été endommagés ou détruits, laissant plus de 11 000 personnes sans abri (HCR, 23 février 2023). Selon le *Bureau de coordination des affaires humanitaires* (UNOCHA), 1 700 bâtiments ont été complètement détruits et plus de 8 500 qui ont été partiellement détruits. Environ 60 % de ces bâtiments se trouvaient à Harim, dans la province d'Idleb, et à Afrin, dans la province d'Alep. Ces deux districts sont également ceux qui comptent le plus grand nombre de personnes décédées et blessées. UNOCHA rapporte également que, à la suite du séisme, d'importants mouvements de population, plus de 80 000, ont été enregistrés en direction de la frontière nord syrienne et de l'est de la Syrie. Quelque 40 000 ménages auraient également été déplacés à l'intérieur de leur propre communauté (UNOCHA, 25 février 2023).

Accès humanitaire entravée en raison de la guerre civile. Des moyens dérisoires pour les opérations de sauvetage et d'assistance. Selon *Antalya*, la région du nord-ouest n'a presque reçu aucune aide pour faire face aux conséquences du séisme. Cela est notamment dû au fait que la situation sécuritaire volatile rend l'accès à cette région difficile. Pour les opérations de sauvetage, les victimes du séisme n'ont pu compter que sur l'aide fournie par les volontaires des Casques blancs (*Antalya*, 16 février 2023). D'après *The New Yorker*, ces derniers ne disposaient d'aucun équipement avancé, comme ceux utilisés en Turquie, et ils sortent surtout des gens des décombres à l'aide de pelleteuses, de pelles et à mains nues. Selon des habitant-e-s interrogé-e-s sur place par *The New Yorker*, le régime syrien et son allié russe ont empêché l'aide humanitaire de parvenir dans les zones contrôlées par les rebelles (*The New Yorker*, 13 février 2023). D'après *Antalya*, avant le séisme, il n'existait qu'un seul corridor, le poste-frontière de Bab al-Hawa, contrôlé par le groupe HTS, pour envoyer de l'aide humanitaire dans la région depuis la Turquie. A la suite du séisme, le gouvernement syrien a autorisé l'ouverture de deux poste-frontière supplémentaires (*Antalya*, 16 février 2023).

4 Situation des Yézidis en Syrie

Environ 80 000 Yézidis vivaient en Syrie avant le début de la guerre civile. Pas d'estimation sur le nombre de Yézidis restants. Selon USDOS, avant le début de la guerre civile en Syrie, la population yézidie dans le pays était estimée à environ 80 000. Pour USDOS, il n'existe pas de chiffres sur le nombre de Yézidis qui restent actuellement dans le pays. Les Yézidis qui vivaient auparavant à Alep vivent désormais principalement dans les zones du nord-est de la Syrie sous contrôle de l'Administration autonome de la Syrie du Nord et de l'Est (AANES) (USDOS, 2 juin 2022).

Non reconnus comme un groupe religieux par le gouvernement syrien, les Yézidis sont considérés comme une secte au sein de l'islam. Selon la *Commission américaine pour la liberté religieuse internationale* (USCIRF), en février 2022, le gouvernement syrien a décidé de classer les Yézidis comme une secte au sein de l'islam, les forçant à se soumettre à la juridiction juridique et religieuse d'une religion à laquelle ils n'adhèrent pas (USCIRF, avril

2022). Selon *Christian Solidarity Worldwide* (CSW), le ministère de la justice syrien a rejeté la demande de la communauté yézidie d'être reconnue comme un groupe religieux et d'obtenir l'autorisation de créer des tribunaux chargés de régler les affaires civiles et personnelles conformément à leur foi. En conséquence, dans les régions contrôlées par le régime syrien, les Yézidis sont soumis à des lois qui ne sont pas très différentes des restrictions imposées par les milices islamistes soutenues par la Turquie à Afrin et dans le nord-ouest de la Syrie (CWS, février 2022).

4.1 Situation des Yézidis à Afrin

La majorité des Yézidis d'Afrin ont été forcée à partir ou ont été expulsée de force. Entre 25 000 et 35 000 Yézidis vivaient dans une vingtaine de villages à Afrin avant 2018. Seuls entre 1 500 et 5 000 Yézidis seraient restés. Selon CSW, les restrictions imposées par les groupes armés d'opposition islamistes alliés de la Turquie ont forcé la majorité des Yézidis d'Afrin à se déplacer, provoquant un changement démographique délibéré et systématique (CWS, février 2022). Selon *Ark News*, il existe plus de 38 villages habités par des Kurdes yézidis dans la région d'Afrin. Depuis 2018, de nombreux Yézidis ont été déplacés vers les camps d'al-Shahba dans une région sous le contrôle de l'AANES kurde ou ont migré vers l'Europe. Ceux qui sont restés ont été exposés à des abus et des violations des droits humains tels que des enlèvements, des arrestations, des privations de biens, la répression de la pratique des rituels religieux et la destruction des sanctuaires religieux (*ARK News*, 17 décembre 2022). Selon le site d'information kurde *Rudaw*, en 2014, environ 35 000 Yézidis vivaient à Afrin. Toutefois, depuis la prise d'Afrin par la Turquie en 2018 et les nombreuses violations des droits humains qui en ont découlées, de nombreux Yézidis ont été contraints de quitter la région. Citant l'actuelle co-présidente de l'Union des Yézidis d'Afrin, *Rudaw* indique que près de 90 % des Yézidis seraient partie, ou auraient été expulsés de force, et qu'il ne resterait aujourd'hui qu'environ 2000 Yézidis à Afrin. Des 19 sanctuaires yézidis de la région, 18 ont été entièrement ou partiellement profanés (*Rudaw*, 26 juillet 2022). Selon *Rena Netjes*, une chercheuse indépendante spécialiste du nord de la Syrie, qui a rencontré en octobre 2022 un représentant de la communauté yézidie d'Afrin à Burj Abdallah, située entre la ville d'Afrin et la province d'Idlib contrôlée par le HTS, il ne subsiste qu'environ 20 villages yézidis ou partiellement yézidis à Afrin. En tout, il ne resterait que 600 familles yézidies dans la région (*Rena Netjes*, 31 octobre 2022). Selon le site d'information *North Press Agency* (NPA), en décembre 2022, il n'existe pas de chiffre précis, mais on estime que seuls quelque 1 500 Yézidis, des personnes âgées pour la plupart, vivent encore à Afrin (NPA, 25 décembre 2022). Selon USDOS, qui se réfère à un blog publié en août 2021 par un journaliste de VOA, sur les 25 000 Yézidis qui vivaient dans 22 villages d'Afrin avant 2018, il n'en resterait actuellement qu'environ 5 000 (USDOS, 2 juin 2022).

5 Abus et violations des droits humains des Yézidis par différents groupes armés

5.1 Violations des droits humains par les milices islamistes soutenues par la Turquie

Violations des droits humains des Kurdes d'Afrin. Selon le rapport de la Commission internationale indépendante d'enquête sur la République arabe syrienne présenté devant le *Conseil des droits de l'homme* en août 2022, dans les régions contrôlées par les milices de l'ANS, la population civile kurde est doublement victime. D'abord enrôlée de force par les Unités de protection du peuple kurde (YPG) ou rattachée à l'administration autonome kurde, qui contrôlait la région jusqu'en 2018, elle est désormais maintenant arrêtée et détenue par l'ANS. Certaines personnes civiles ont été détenues en secret pendant des périodes allant d'un mois à trois ans, sans droit de visite des familles ou sans accès à une représentation légale. Des rapports crédibles font état de violences, y compris sexuelles, subies par les détenus, hommes, femmes et mineurs dans des centres de détention de fortune entre 2018 et 2021. Certaines personnes détenues auraient succombé aux mauvais traitements et tortures infligés par les membres de l'ANS (HRC, 17 août 2022). Citant *Amnesty International*, l'EUAA indique que la population civile à Afrin, principalement des Kurdes, ont fait l'objet d'abus tels que des détentions arbitraires, des enlèvements et des mauvais traitements, y compris des actes de torture, perpétrés par l'armée nationale syrienne (EUAA, septembre 2022).

Yézidis victimes de nettoyages ethniques, de graves violations des droits humains, y compris de meurtres, de viols, de tortures, d'enlèvements et de confiscations de biens. Selon l'USCIRF, les minorités ethniques et les minorités religieuses telles que les Yézidis, sont ciblées par les forces d'opposition armées et les groupes islamistes qui luttent contre le régime syrien. A Afrin, les milices de l'ANS ont terrorisé les Kurdes et les Yézidis par des bombardements dans le cadre d'actes de nettoyages ethniques et religieux (USCIRF, avril 2022). Selon USDOS, qui se réfère à des informations collectées par UNCOI, des milices de l'ANS sont responsables d'exactions, notamment des actes de torture, des viols, des pillages et des appropriations de biens privés, en particulier dans les zones kurdes, ainsi que des actes de vandalisme sur des sites religieux yézidis dans les zones qu'ils contrôlent. D'autres sources, citées par USDOS, font état de meurtres, de détentions arbitraires, de viols, de torture de civils, de pillages et de confiscation de biens à Afrin et dans ses environs. Les Yézidis sont particulièrement ciblés par ces groupes armés (USDOS, 2 juin 2022). Depuis la prise d'Afrin par la Turquie et ses alliés islamistes en mars 2018, CSW indique avoir reçu des rapports réguliers faisant état de graves violations des droits humains perpétrées contre la population locale, en particulier contre les Yézidis. Ces derniers ont été victimes de viols, d'assassinats, d'enlèvements contre rançon et de confiscations de biens. Pour CWS, ces exactions visent à terroriser les Yézidis pour les forcer à partir ou à se convertir à l'islam (CSW, février 2022). Selon CWS, rien qu'au cours du mois d'avril 2022, ce sont 30 personnes qui ont été enlevées ou arrêtées arbitrairement par des groupes islamistes (CWS, 29 juin 2022). Pour *Rudaw*, la situation des Yézidis restants est critique et continue d'être largement ignorée. Ces dernières années, les Yézidis ont été victimes d'enlèvement, d'extorsion, de détentions arbitraires et de torture (*Rudaw*, 26 juillet 2022). Selon l'*Observatoire syrien pour les droits de l'homme* (SOHR), en juillet 2022, des membres de la Légion Al-Sham, qui fait partie de l'ANS, ont arrêté six personnes civiles dans la région d'Afrin, notamment dans le village d'Al-Ghazawyah, au prétexte qu'ils avaient traité avec l'ancienne administration autonome (AANES). Le but de ces arrestations de personnes civiles serait de leur extorquer de l'argent (SOHR, 12 juillet 2022).

Restriction de la liberté religieuse. Profanation de cimetières et de lieux de culte yézidis. Conversions et mariages forcés. Mosquées construites dans des villages yézidis. Selon *Ark News*, un site d'information kurde, en décembre 2022, des milices de l'ANS ont

endommagé des pierres tombales de Kurdes yézidis dans le village de Basofan, dans la région de Sherawa. Selon cette source, des profanations de tombes ont eu lieu dans de nombreux villages de la région ces dernières années (*Ark News*, 17 décembre 2022). Pour *Rudaw*, les Yézidis sont victimes de conversions religieuses forcées. L'islam est imposé aux enfants yézidis et des mosquées ont été construites dans les villages yézidis (*Rudaw*, 26 juillet 2022). CWS indique également avoir reçu des rapports faisant état de profanation de cimetières et de lieux de culte yézidis, mais également des conversions et des mariages forcés. En octobre 2020, un groupe islamiste soutenu par la Turquie a également commencé à construire une mosquée sur un cimetière sacré yézidi dans le village de Basofan (CSW, février 2022). Selon UNCOI, cité par USDOS, les milices islamistes soutenues par la Turquie ont restreint la liberté religieuse des Yézidis, notamment en pillant et en détruisant des sites archéologiques ainsi que des sanctuaires et des tombes yézidis à Afrin (USDOS, 2 juin 2022).

Des femmes et des filles yézidies enlevées pour être soumises au trafic sexuel. Dans son rapport d'août 2020, cité par l'EUAA, la *Commission d'enquête internationale indépendante sur la République arabe syrienne* (UNCOI), a indiqué qu'elle enquêtait sur la détention d'au moins 49 femmes kurdes et yézidies par des factions de l'ANS à Afrin et Ras Al-Ayn entre novembre 2019 et juillet 2020. Certaines des femmes et des filles détenues auraient été victimes de viols et de violences sexuelles, alors que d'autres auraient été enlevées ou mariées de force, principalement par des membres de la division Sultan Murad (EUAA, septembre 2022). Selon l'USCIRF, les milices de l'ANS ont pris en cible les femmes et les filles yézidies, par des enlèvements pour les soumettre au trafic sexuel (USCIRF, avril 2022). Selon USDOS, qui se base sur des informations des ONG et des médias, à Afrin, les femmes yézidies qui auraient été enlevées par les groupes armés d'opposition soutenus par la Turquie sont restées portées disparues (USDOS, 2 juin 2022).

5.2 Violations des droits humains par l'EI/Daech

Le parlement allemand reconnaît le génocide subi par les Yézidis de la part du groupe EI/Daech. Selon *Al-Jazeera*, le 19 janvier 2023, la chambre basse du parlement allemand a reconnu comme « génocide » le massacre perpétré en 2014 par le groupe armé EI/Daech contre la minorité yézidie en Irak et en Syrie. Le groupe djihadiste aurait tué plus de 1200 Yézidis et causé le déplacement de la plupart des 550 000 membres de la communauté de leurs foyers dans le nord de l'Irak. Il aurait également réduit en esclavage 7000 femmes et filles yézidies. La résolution allemande se réfère au résultat d'une enquête des Nations-Unies qui a déclaré en mai 2021 avoir récolté des « preuves claires et convaincantes » indiquant que EI/Daesh avait commis un génocide contre les Yézidies (*Al-Jazeera*, 19 janvier 2023).

L'EI/Daech reste une menace. Sur les 6000 femmes et filles yézidies enlevées par l'EI/Daech en Irak et emmenées en Syrie, près de 2800 restent introuvables. Selon le dernier rapport du *département d'État américain* (USDOS) sur la traite des êtres humains en Syrie, bien que l'EI/Daech ne contrôle plus de territoire en Irak ou en Syrie, environ 2700 femmes et filles yézidies, enlevées par le groupe islamiste en Irak et emmenées en Syrie dès 2014 pour y être soumises à l'esclavage sexuelle et à d'autres formes de violences sexuelles, restent introuvables. Selon certains rapports, certaines d'entre elles sont toujours détenues par l'EI/Daech dans l'est de la Syrie ou dans le camp d'Al-Hol (USDOS, 29 juillet 2022). Dans son dernier rapport sur la situation des droits humains en Syrie, USDOS, qui cite des informations de UNCOI, indique que l'EI/Daech reste une menace sérieuse et que ses attaques

violentes sont en augmentation. Parmi les cibles de ces attaques, on trouve également des civils, y compris ceux soupçonnés de collaborer avec les forces de sécurité, ainsi que des personnes considérées par le groupe islamiste comme des apostats. Sur les 6 000 femmes et enfants, principalement des Yézidis, enlevés par l'EI/Daesh en Irak depuis 2014 et transférés en Syrie pour y être vendus comme esclaves sexuels ou donnés en mariage à des combattants d'EI/Daesh, on estime que 2763 personnes sont toujours portées disparues (USDOS, 2 juin 2022).

Des femmes et filles yézidies, victimes de l'EI/Daesh, considérées comme des traîtres ou des terroristes. Selon le rapport du Secrétaire général des Nations unies sur les personnes disparues en Syrie, présenté devant l'Assemblée générale en août 2022, les inégalités entre les sexes et les injustices sociales existantes sont reproduites dans le traitement que les communautés réservent aux femmes, en particulier aux anciennes détenues. Les femmes issues de communautés extrêmement marginalisées, comme les Yézidis, et, plus largement, les femmes détenues par l'EI/Daesh ou contraintes d'épouser des combattants de Daesh sont souvent traitées comme des traîtres ou des terroristes (UNGA, 2 août 2022).

6 Sources

Al-Jazeera, 19 janvier 2023 :

« Germany's lower house has recognised as "genocide" the 2014 massacre by the armed group ISIL (ISIS) against the Yazidi minority group in Iraq and Syria.

The move by parliamentarians on Thursday condemned "indescribable atrocities" and "tyrannical injustice" carried out by ISIL fighters "with the intention of completely wiping out the Yazidi community".

After seizing large parts of Iraq and Syria in 2014, ISIL killed more than 1,200 Yazidis, enslaved 7,000 Yazidi women and girls, and displaced most of the 550,000-strong community from their homes in northern Iraq.

Deputies in the Bundestag passed the motion by three parliamentary groups in Germany's governing coalition – including the Greens and Free Democrats, the Social Democrats, and the opposition conservative CDU/CSU bloc.

Greens lawmaker Max Lucks said Germany was home to what is believed to be the world's largest Yazidi diaspora of about 150,000 people, meaning the country had a particular responsibility to the community.

"Their pain will never go away," he told the Bundestag. "We owe this to the Yazidis because we did not take action [in 2014] when we were needed. Our silence cost lives."

'Abducted, enslaved, raped'

The resolution said the chamber "recognises the crimes against the Yazidi community as genocide, following the legal evaluations of investigators from the United Nations".

Thursday's recognition came after a German court in 2021 jailed a former ISIL soldier for crimes against humanity against Yazidis in Iraq and Syria, including the murder of a five-year-old girl.

The motion to recognise the crimes also urged the German judicial system to pursue other cases of perpetrators in the country and boost funding to help build Yazidi communities.

Foreign minister Annalena Baerbock tweeted about the ruling: "Three years ago, I met Yazidi women in northern Iraq. They were abducted, enslaved, raped. I cannot let go of their pain."

The Yazidi community

Mirza Dinnayi, head of Air Bridge Iraq, an NGO helping victims who live in Germany, said the motion was "pioneering" to address "the consequences of the genocide".

Dinnayi welcomed the inclusion of "practical steps the German government can take to support the Yazidi community in Iraq as well as the diaspora".

The Yazidis are an ancient religious minority in eastern Syria and northwest Iraq that ISIL viewed as supposed devil worshippers for their faith that combines Zoroastrian, Christian, Manichean, Jewish and Muslim beliefs.

A special UN investigation team said in May 2021 it collected "clear and convincing evidence" that the armed group committed genocide against the Yazidis.

An offshoot of al-Qaeda, ISIL was overthrown by US-backed counteroffensives, losing its last territorial redoubt in 2019. Germany is one of the few countries to have taken legal action against ISIL. » Source: Al-Jazeera, Germany recognises Yazidi massacre by ISIL as 'genocide', 19 janvier 2023: <https://kurdistan-au-feminin.fr/2023/01/19/le-parlement-allemand-reconnait-le-genocide-yezidi/>.

Antalyar, 16 février 2023 :

« L'effort de sauvetage angoissant entre dans sa dernière ligne droite en Turquie et en Syrie. Le bilan s'élève à 41 000 morts, mais les équipes de secours ne baissent pas les bras dans les villes turques de Malatya, Kahramanmaras ou Antioche, réduites à l'état de décombres. Ni dans les enclaves syriennes de Jindires, Afrin ou Alep, où la tragédie est le dernier clou du cercueil d'un pays déchiré par les blessures de la guerre civile. **Près de 6 000 personnes ont perdu la vie jusqu'à présent en Syrie, la plupart sans même recevoir d'aide.**

D'autres villes syriennes, comme Lattaquié et Hama, ont été gravement touchées par le séisme. Mais **la zone la plus durement touchée a été le nord-ouest du pays, où une myriade de groupes opposés au régime de Bachar el-Assad se battent pour le contrôle. Cette zone a échappé aux tentacules du gouvernement syrien affaibli depuis le début de la guerre civile en 2011, et a souffert pendant toute cette période des bombardements des forces de Damas avec le soutien aérien de la Russie, son principal allié. A tel point que 60% des infrastructures avaient déjà été endommagées ou détruites avant le séisme, notamment les centres médicaux, selon le Middle East Institute.**

La capacité à faire face à la catastrophe est minime. Le nord de la Syrie a dû faire face aux conséquences des tremblements de terre presque tout seul en raison de l'isolement dont il a fait l'objet de la part du gouvernement syrien et de son voisin turc. Les opérations de sauvetage reposent sur les volontaires des Casques blancs, qui se sont rendus célèbres pendant la guerre après avoir aidé les civils soumis à de violents bombardements par le régime d'Al-Assad. Mais, par rapport aux équipes internationales déployées en Turquie, peu d'entre elles ont apporté leur soutien à une région où vivent quelque 4,5 millions de personnes déplacées par la guerre, fuyant les bombardements, la conscription, les combats ou les persécutions systématiques.

Les crises se chevauchent dans le nord de la Syrie. La guerre n'est pas terminée, bien qu'elle soit entrée dans une impasse. En effet, une semaine à peine avant les tremblements de terre, les forces de Damas ont bombardé à l'artillerie lourde la périphérie du gouvernorat d'Idlib. Et à peine deux jours plus tôt, le Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), un réseau de milices salafistes affiliées à Al-Qaïda qui contrôle une grande partie de la région, a affronté les troupes d'Al-Assad. Les combats ont été aggravés par des températures glaciales et une épidémie de choléra sans précédent qui a débuté en août.

La guerre civile a fragmenté la Syrie en trois parties : la zone majoritairement contrôlée par le régime, le nord-est dirigé par les Kurdes de l'Administration autonome du nord-est et de l'est de la Syrie (AANES), plus connue sous le nom de Rojava ou Kurdistan syrien, et le nord-ouest, où opèrent plusieurs groupes opposés à el-Assad qui s'affrontent pour asseoir leur pouvoir, tels que l'Armée nationale syrienne (ANS) et Hayat Tahrir al-Cham, déjà mentionné. Dans ce scénario, la Turquie cherche à empêcher tout prix les Kurdes de créer un État autonome.

"La Turquie a intérêt à stabiliser le nord pour empêcher un éventuel afflux de réfugiés syriens sur son territoire et pour renvoyer ceux qui se trouvent déjà en Turquie. Cependant, ce désir a souvent été entravé par la **détérioration constante de la situation sécuritaire, résultant principalement, mais pas exclusivement, des luttes intestines entre les factions de l'Armée nationale syrienne**", explique l'analyste Orwa Ajjoub du Middle East Institute. Ankara soutient cet acteur, mais a dans une certaine mesure permis aux salafistes de HTS de progresser.

Hayat Tahrir al-Cham, désignée en 2013 comme une "organisation terroriste" par les États-Unis, gère le poste-frontière de Bab al-Hawa, qui était le seul corridor opérationnel pour l'aide humanitaire dans le nord de la Syrie jusqu'à ce que le régime d'el-Assad autorise l'ouverture de deux nouveaux postes lundi. Bab al-Hawa est crucial pour l'aide aux victimes de tremblements de terre sur le sol syrien, mais les tremblements de terre successifs et leurs répliques ont endommagé la route et elle n'a pas pu être traversée pendant trois jours. Maintenant que la route est praticable, son fonctionnement est à nouveau vital pour les opérations de sauvetage et de secours.

Le chef de l'organisation, Abou Mohammad al-Jolani, qui dirigeait autrefois le Front al-Nusra, tente aujourd'hui de présenter son côté plus pragmatique et modéré pour obtenir un soutien plus explicite de la Turquie et l'acceptation des pays occidentaux. Cela ne l'a pas empêché de bloquer l'accès au convoi humanitaire de l'ONU quelques jours après les tremblements de terre, accusant l'agence d'essayer d'accéder à partir d'une zone contrôlée par Damas. Dans une interview accordée au quotidien londonien *The Guardian*, al-Jolani a toutefois assuré que

les postes frontières étaient ouverts et a dénoncé l'inaction de l'ONU. Il s'en prend également à el-Assad et à ses alliés russes : "Ils ont transformé cet endroit en un tremblement de terre au cours des 12 dernières années. Pourtant, nous avons construit un gouvernement qui répond aux besoins de notre peuple. Nous devons être capables de mettre en place une gouvernance et de soutenir le peuple. Mais cet endroit a encore besoin de beaucoup plus". » Source: Anta-lyar, Les tremblements de terre aggravent la crise chronique dans le nord-ouest de la Syrie, 16 février 2023: <https://atalayar.com/fr/content/les-tremblements-de-terre-aggravent-la-crise-chronique-dans-le-nord-ouest-de-la-syrie>.

ARK News, 17 décembre 2022 :

« ARK News... Friday, December 16, 2022, coincided with the feast of fasting for the Yezidi Kurds, as the remaining Kurds in the Afrin region of Syrian Kurdistan celebrated the feast by visiting graves and practicing some religious rituals related to the Yezidi Kurds.

A private source said that the village of Burj Abdalo, Basofan, and other villages witnessed the revival of the holiday, by visiting the graves and exchanging blessings and visits, but this was met with racism in the village of Basofan in the Sherawa area.

The source confirmed that the National Army factions broke the tombstones of the Yezidi Kurds in the village after the visitors finished practicing the rituals.

ARK received a video clip from the village showing a flagrant violation of the right to graves, knowing that this is not the first time, as the region has witnessed similar violations in many villages and towns in the past years.

The Afrin region includes more than 38 villages inhabited by Yezidi Kurds, except for the city center and its towns, and after the war on the region in 2018, many people migrated towards the camps of al-Shahba, Aleppo, the Kurdistan Region, and Europe, and some of them remained to cling to their land, but they were subjected to the most heinous violations and crimes, such as arrests and kidnappings, clampdowns on the practice of private rituals, the destruction of religious shrines, and the seizure of their private property. » Source: ARK News, A source to ARK: "Armed men break the tombstones of the Yezidi Kurds in Afrin", 17 décembre 2022: www.arknews.net/en/node/40565

CSW, 29 juin 2022 :

« The situation in Syria remains highly volatile, and there is an urgent need for a credible and effective ceasefire that protects civilians and combats enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions.

Particularly concerning is the situation in Afrin, where Islamist militias loyal to Turkey have implemented an Islamic system, enforcing Sharia law and education.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 30 individuals were kidnapped or arbitrarily arrested by Islamist groups in April 2022 alone.

The Yazidi community is particularly vulnerable, and continues to face egregious violations, including rape, assassination, kidnapping for ransom, confiscation of property

and desecration of cemeteries and places of worship. [...] » Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), HRC50: Oral statement during ID with the COI on Syria, 29 juin 2022: www.csw.org.uk/2022/06/29/report/5748/article.htm.

CWS, février 2022 :

« In March 2018 the Turkish army captured the city of Afrin in north-west Syria after a fierce battle with Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat (PYD) forces. Turkey justified the attacks on the PYD as a defensive measure; however, this is questionable, as the PYD and related groups have restricted their activities to Syria. Having now seized vast swathes of northern Syria, Turkish-backed Islamist militia have enforced a strict interpretation of Shari'a law.

Since then, CSW has received regular reports of grave human rights violations perpetrated against local people, and particularly against Yazidis, by Islamist militias loyal to Turkey. These violations include rape, assassination, kidnaping for ransom, confiscation of property and desecration of cemeteries and places of worship. Yazidi activists have also reported many cases of forced conversions and marriages. Alongside discrimination in law, targeted attacks against the Yazidi people have been allowed to continue unabated and with impunity.

On 4 December 2020, armed men belonging to the Islamist group Faylaq AlSham (Al-Sham Battalion), which is affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood, launched a series of arrests in several Yazidi villages near Afrin in northwest Syria. CSW sources report that five men were arrested in the village of Basofan and taken to a detention centre in a nearby village called Iskan. The men were named as Ali Kazem Ali, 22; Basel Hussein, 22; Samer Hussein, 35; Delbrin Aarbo and Ahmed Hindi, 32. They were accused of joining the Democratic Union Party (PYD), a Kurdish political party whose military wing has been fighting Turkey.

According to CSW sources, Mr Aarbo was particularly badly beaten and released a few hours after his arrest because he was bleeding profusely. Mr Aarbo had previously been the subject of an assassination attempt when armed men from Failaq Al-Sham shot him twice in the abdomen on 30 April 2020. He had reportedly refused to evacuate his home in Basofan when an Islamist commander had attempted to confiscate it.

The Al-Sham Battalion members also arrested a number of civilians in the nearby villages of Kabashin and Baaya. CSW sources suggest the arrests are part of an ongoing campaign to terrorise local Yazidis and force them either to leave or convert to Islam. On 5 December 2020 Baba Shawish, the custodian and Grand Priest of the Lalish Temple, the Yazidi's holiest site, pleaded with the international community to assist the Yazidis of the Afrin region to return to their homes. He said: "Everyone has been treated badly in Afrin, but it was worse for the Yazidis because of their religion."

CSW is also aware of provocations in the region by Turkish forces. On 6 October 2020, a jihadist group loyal to Turkey began to build a mosque on a sacred Yazidi cemetery in Basofan, a Yazidi village in the Afrin region. This ongoing incursion was further exacerbated by a Turkish military offensive in March 2020 which created a severe security,

humanitarian and refugee crisis and risks the reemergence of IS as well as creating an enabling environment in which crimes against humanity can occur once again.

In government controlled Syria, the Ministry of Justice has rejected a request from the Yazidi community to be recognised as a religious group and to be granted permission to establish courts mandated to resolve civil and personal matters in accordance with their faith. The Council for Syrian Yazidis issued a statement condemning this ruling and describing it as “a flagrant violation of basic human rights,” warning that such laws “threaten the Syrian heritage and social fabric to which the Yazidis are indigenous. **Such laws are not different from the restrictions imposed by the Islamist groups loyal to Turkey in Afrin and North-west Syria which forced the majority of Yazidis into displacement, causing a deliberate and systematic demographic change.**” The ruling also calls into question the regimes self-vaunted credentials with regard to protecting minority religious communities.[...] » Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CWS), Atrocities against Yazidis, février 2022: <https://docs-eu.livesiteadmin.com/dc3e323f-351c-4172-800e-4e02848abf80/yazidi-briefing-february-2022.pdf>

EUAA, septembre 2022 :

« **As of May 2021, Kurds reportedly constituted about 25 % of the population in Afrin, while before Turkey’s Olive Branch operation in 2018, 96 % (92 %, according to another report) of the population had been Kurds. Since 2018, thousands of internally displaced Syrian Arabs, fighters’ families and Turkmen were relocated to the area with Turkey’s support, while more than half of the Kurdish population had left.** Many of the IDPs relocated to Afrin reportedly originated from Ghouta as well as from Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Homs, Idlib and Hama governorates, while many of the Turkmen families relocated to Afrin had previously fled from Iraq, or were families of fighters from the Turkmen-majority Sultan Murad Division. Two local human rights organisations issued statements in September 2021 and February 2022 that Turkey was constructing new settlements with the financial support of organisations from Kuwait and of Israeli Palestinians, such as the Muslim Brotherhood charity ‘Living in Dignity’, to house families of pro-Turkish militia members. Similarly, the Kurdish Hawar News Agency reported on the construction of mosques and Islamic schools financed by Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated organisations. **ACAPS stated in March 2021 that at least 80 % of Afrin’s total population of 442 000 (including 154 682 residents, 285 550 IDPs, and 2 596 returnees) were in need of humanitarian assistance, with the Kurdish population reportedly being one of the most affected groups. Access to shelter was reportedly particularly problematic for Kurdish residents, as in many cases their property had been looted, occupied by IDPs from GoS-controlled areas or the families of SNA fighters. Other residents, predominantly of Kurdish origin, had reportedly been forced to leave their homes through threats, extortion, detention, and abduction by SNA-affiliated local militia groups.** Fighters of SNA factions had reportedly forced former residents to pay large sums of money to take some of their belongings from their houses, or to share their houses with families relocated by the militia groups. The UNCOI reported in August 2020 that it had received accounts by Kurdish civilians from Afrin and Ras Al-Ayn on the looting and appropriation of their property by members of SNA factions, including Division 14, Brigade 142 (Suleiman Shah Brigade) and Division 22 (Hamza Brigade). Al-Monitor reported in May 2020 on similar incidents in Tall Abyad. In Ras Al-Ayn, members of the Sultan Murad and Hamza Divisions reportedly confiscated about 800 houses belonging to Kurds and Arabs affiliated with AANES institutions.

Moreover, Kurdish neighbourhoods were reportedly discriminated when it came to the provision of services such as electricity supplies and road network maintenance. The UNCOI noted in its February 2022 report that in Afrin 'patterns of looting, pillage, occupation and confiscation' continued, in particular during the olive harvest season, to the detriment of displaced owners. Armed groups reportedly seized the harvest of thousands of olive trees, including under the pretext of 'taxes', ignoring the fact that the absent owners had formal or informal powers of attorneys for the management of their property. Some owners reportedly got their property back by paying bribes to SNA factions while some owners, who had filed official complaints to retrieve their property or receive compensation, reportedly had suffered threats, beatings, abductions and even killings by members of the armed groups. In Ma'batli and Bulbul, Aleppo governorate, members of the Levant Front and the Sultan Murad Division, reportedly sold the rights to harvest olives to third parties, although the displaced owners had objected. AI noted in its 2021 report on Syria that the SNA continued to commit abuses such as arbitrary detention, abduction, as well as torture and ill treatment against civilians – predominantly of Kurdish origin - in Afrin and Ras Al-Ayn. Similarly, the UNCOI noted in its August 2021 report that several SNA-affiliated armed groups including Division 22 (the Hamza Brigade), Division 14 (the 141st Brigade) and Division 13 (the Muhammad Al-Fatih Brigade), and Faylaq Al-Sham continued to unlawfully detain civilians, the majority of them Kurds. Former detainees reported that they were beaten and tortured by SNA members to coerce confessions and other information, which in some cases was later taken as the main source of evidence in criminal proceedings. The detainees were not told why they had been detained and were transferred to a centralized prison only after they had been forced to confess. Only then were they allowed to contact a lawyer and their families. STJ reported that in Afrin in 2021, 584 people were detained - in most cases for political reasons, including cases where people 'were arrested for the simple fact that they were Kurds'. USDOS reported on alleged extrajudicial killings, including of a Kurdish Yezidi civilian, by SNA-affiliated Faylaq al-Sham militia in August 2020, and noted that victims of abductions by Turkish-backed armed groups were often of Kurdish or Yezidi origin or activists who had been critical of these armed groups.

Syrian human rights groups noted in a joint submission to the UN Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review in November 2021 that **authorities in Afrin had ceased to issue official documents in the Kurdish language, publishing them in Arabic or Turkish instead. Moreover, also traffic signs and other institutional signs were changed into Arabic and Turkish. The Kurdish school curriculum was replaced with Turkish and Arabic and a focus on Islamic religious education.** ACAPS noted in its March 2021 report that the Kurdish population's access to education and health care was restricted due to language barriers. A Kurdish man interviewed by Al-Monitor in March 2022 spoke about restrictions by the local administration regarding the celebration of Nowruz in Afrin and surrounding districts when the area came under control of the Turkey-backed SNA. **The UNCOI noted in its August 2020 report that it was investigating reports on the detention of at least 49 Kurdish and Yazidi women by SNA factions in Ras Al-Ayn and Afrin in the period November 2019 to July 2020. It further noted that in these areas, Kurdish women faced intimidation by SNA faction members, creating a climate of fear which in effect made them unable to leave their homes. Detained women and girls were reportedly subjected to rape and sexual violence. Some women were reportedly abducted or forced into marriage, primarily by members of the Sultan Murad Division.** » Source: European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), Syria: Targeting of individuals, septembre 2022, p.91-93:

www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2078321/2022_09_EUAA_COI_Report_Syria_Targeting_of_individuals.pdf.

MEE, 25 octobre 2022 :

« Militant group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), al-Qaeda's former Syria affiliate, has largely withdrawn from Turkish-controlled Afrin, almost two weeks after seizing the northern city, several sources with knowledge on the matter told Middle East Eye.

HTS, designated a terrorist group by Turkey and Nato allies, has pulled most of its forces from the Syrian Kurdish-majority Afrin, according to a senior Turkish security source.

“They will soon be completely out as they have already left with the bulk of their fighters,” the source said.

Earlier this month, HTS, which controls most of northwestern Idlib province, brought convoys of militants into Afrin and the surrounding countryside, where battles between the group and the Syrian National Army's (SNA) Third Legion were among the deadliest in years.

The fighting was sparked by the assassination of a prominent Syrian opposition activist in the city of al-Bab in the Aleppo province early in October. The murder cracked open festering disagreements between rebel groups, leading to clashes between the al-Hamza Brigade, which was accused of being behind the killing, and al-Jabha al-Shamiya.

The clashes quickly spread to other areas and drew in other factions, including HTS.

The situation, which had worried Turkey's western allies, including the United States, simmered down over the weekend as the Turkish military deployed armoured vehicles in the area.

HTS and the Third Legion swapped prisoners last week, effectively putting an end to the fighting.

Turkey to disband SNA groups

“We would never leave these areas to a group like HTS,” a Turkish official with knowledge said. “All these speculations and conspiracy theories are utter nonsense.”

However Turkish sources say they may use the incident to finally reorganise the Syrian National Army, which is ridden with constant infighting and criminal incidents.

Formed out of 28 Free Syrian Army groups, the SNA gradually became an umbrella organisation composed of 41 different military groups, that receives Ankara's support and has fought alongside the Turkish Armed Forces in Turkey's operations in Syria.

The frequent clashes between the SNA groups, which operate in Turkish-controlled areas like Afrin, Jarabulus and Tal Abyad, have resulted in civilian casualties and are generally viewed negatively in the region.

Ankara has long aspired to unite all these groups to establish an effective command structure.

Turkish security sources say a single command and a single army will be forthcoming, although many attempts to create one previously have been futile. The reorganisation will exclude HTS as it is not part of the SNA.

The sources said all the groups and components under the SNA will be disbanded under the new plan.

"They would also withdraw from civilian areas and a regular army led by a central command will be established," one of the sources said.

Operating above the law

Speaking to MEE, a civilian administrator from Afrin said that the conflicts within the SNA have hindered the services of municipal assemblies, the police force and the law.

"The SNA is fighting with each other every day, everywhere. It doesn't matter whether here or anywhere else. A problem in al-Bab is suddenly reflected here. The people are fed up with the conflict between the groups," the administrator said.

Abid, an al-Bab resident who is engaged in trade in the city, said the rebel groups are constantly harassing each other.

"They don't obey orders from the local assemblies or the police. They also put our safety at risk. Civilians are constantly dying during their infighting," he said, asking for his last name to be omitted.

"We are fleeing from Assad, and life is getting harder here because of the conflicts inside the SNA."

A police officer, who spoke to MEE on condition of anonymity, said police forces cannot do their job because SNA groups do not give up their own if one of them is involved in a crime.

"It is extremely hard to prosecute, detain or arrest the SNA fighters," the police officer said. "There needs to be clarification whether they are soldiers or not."

In order to reduce civilian deaths caused by SNA infighting, many local assemblies and local police have tried to take measures to prevent groups from entering cities with automatic or heavy weapons. However, civilian areas are still heavily hit during clashes between the groups.

Nearly 20 regular and irregular camps, where 1700 families live in Aleppo's northwest, have been damaged by recent fighting. At least eight camp residents, including two women and two children, were killed and 47 were wounded, including 11 children, during the clashes.

*It is hard to estimate the total number of SNA fighters since the organisation lacks a central command and administration, but **military sources within the SNA say that the formation has a capacity of between 50,000 and 70,000 fighters.** » Source: Middle East Eye (MEE), Syria: Turkey to reorganise rebel groups as HTS withdraws from Afrin, 25 octobre 2022: www.middleeasteye.net/news/syria-turkey-reorganise-rebel-groups-hts-withdraws-afrin.*

North Press Agency, 25 décembre 2022 :

« [...] Jaafar, a Yazidi, said whatever pertains to Yazidism in Afrin has been destroyed. However, the current situation of Afrin Yazidis is a bleak one; with precise figures lacking, it is estimated that some 1.500 Yazidis – mostly elderly people – remain living in Afrin.

Amid this gloomy reality, both Maenza and Jaafar shared a similar idea that it should be brought to a halt and the international community must have a say.. » Source: North Press Agency, Syria's Afrin Yazidis Face Uproot From Mother Homeland, 25 décembre 2022: <https://npasyria.com/en/89591/>

OSAR, 22 octobre 2022 :

« Bau von neuen Siedlungen für pro-türkische Gruppen. Menschenrechtsorganisationen und kurdische Medien berichteten 2021 und 2022, dass die Türkei mit finanzieller Unterstützung von Organisationen aus Kuwait oder Palästina neue Siedlungen, Moscheen und islamische Schulen bauen würden, um Familien von pro-türkischen Milizionären und Binnenvertriebenen anzusiedeln. Die Syrische Beobachtungsstelle für Menschenrechte (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, SOHR) dokumentierte im Jahr 2021 in der Region Afrin den Bau von über 12 Dörfern und Wohneinheiten, inklusive Moscheen, Kliniken, Schulen und Koraninstitutionen, um Binnenvertriebene aus anderen Teilen Syriens und pro-türkische Gruppierungen, vor allem Turkmen*innen, anzusiedeln. Das Syria Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC) berichtete im Mai 2021, dass der Bau von Siedlungen mit ausländischen Investitionen die Rückkehr der ursprünglichen Bewohner*innen behindere und zum demografischen Wandel beitrage. » Source: Organisation suisse d'aide aux réfugiés (OSAR), *Syrien: Lage der Kurd*innen in Afrin*, 22 octobre 2022, p.9 : [www.osar.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Publikationen/Herkunftslanderberichte/Mittlerer Osten - Zentralasien/Syrien/221019_SYR_Kurd_innen_Afrin.pdf](http://www.osar.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Publikationen/Herkunftslanderberichte/Mittlerer_Osten_-_Zentralasien/Syrien/221019_SYR_Kurd_innen_Afrin.pdf).

Rena Netjes, 31 octobre 2022 :

« Just last week, I traveled around this region, visiting Afrin, Azaz, and Marea, and I interviewed Syrian Arab, Kurdish, and Yazidi leaders and residents about their lives in northwest Syria under the SNA, and the continuing challenges of displacement and violence that have characterized this area.

Northwestern Syria was written off years ago by some Western governments. For instance, Dutch Foreign Affairs halted all aid to civil society NGOs, including Local Development and Small Projects (LDSPS)—an NGO that originated from Razan Zaitouneh in Eastern Ghouta—and the rescue workers of the White Helmets. This decision was justified to parliament with a statement that the return of the Assad regime to the area was imminent, and therefore there was no use in continuing to support NGOs there.

Four years later, the opposition-held areas in the North remain outside of regime control. And despite its challenges, the number of Syrians from around the country who are seeking refuge there is increasing day by day. A conservative estimation of the area's current

IDPs is 4.7 million, but researchers suspect that this number is actually much higher, as new IDPs wait for new identity cards issued by the local councils.

This area is a patchwork of Arab, Kurdish, and Yazidi Syrian residents, but ongoing violence and competing authorities have displaced many in each group. The cities of Azaz and Marea are majority Arab, Tal Rifaat was once majority Arab—though next to none remain—and **Afrin city was once majority Kurdish—now approximately 40 percent Kurdish, according to the local Kurdish council.** All of these cities have huge numbers of IDPs: 80 percent of Azaz's 260,000 inhabitants are IDPs from throughout Syria, according to the Independent Doctors Association (IDA). **Local sources estimate Afrin City is currently about 60 percent IDPs.** Half of Marea's 40,000 inhabitants are likewise IDPs, according to the leadership of the local Mu'tasim brigade.

However, **as the HTS attack on Afrin so vividly demonstrates, violence in this region remains a part of life here. The conflict between SNA and the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK)-linked forces, known as the People's Defense Units (YPG), also continues to simmer, and the frontlines are blurry.** YPG-controlled Tal Rifaat is only three kilometers away from the SNA controlled Marea, and while the latter is located in a valley of sorts, Tal Rifaat is still visible. Locals in Marea reported that shelling on Marea comes from Tal Rifaat regularly, with the city now under what residents see as mixed SDF-regime-Iranian control. [...]

Yazidi Communities: On the Border of Idlib

In Burj Abdallah, roughly between Afrin City and the bordering Idlib province where HTS rules, I met the religious Sheikh of the Yazidi community in Afrin, Sheikh Kalo, together with other representatives. We spoke about religion and how the community here is managing.

The current community is much smaller than it once was. There are about 20 Yazidi or partly-Yazidi villages throughout Afrin, as well as in Katma, and Bafaloun near Azaz. Sheikh Kalo reported that 600 households remain in the area. When ISIS took Sinjar in Iraq, many young people left northwestern Syria for Turkey, where they sought to continue on to Europe. Families focused especially on sending their daughters and other female family members away, fearing their capture by ISIS after the horrors in Sinjar.

More young people fled in 2018, during the Turkish/SNA operation in Afrin. "There was one brigade leader of the [Turkish-backed] al-Hamzaat [division], who kidnapped people for ransom. Many of us filed complaints and now he is in prison in Turkey," the representatives tell me.[...] » Source: Rena Netjes, Shifting Lines and IDPs: Azaz, Afrin, and the HTS Incursion, 31 octobre 2022: www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/shifting-lines-and-idps-azaz-afrin-and-hts-incursion.

HRC, 17 août 2022 :

« 67. The Syrian National Army further centralized detention practices across areas under its control. The Commission was also informed that a number of members of the Syrian National Army were sentenced by Syrian National Army military courts or were being investigated on charges, including torture, murder, rape and property appropriation between 2018 and 2022, as part of the effort to ensure accountability for such violations.

68. **Military police and brigades of the Syrian National Army continued to arrest individuals with alleged ties to the Kurdish People's Protection Units, including those who had been forcibly conscripted by the Kurdish People's Protection Units, the self-administration, or with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic or Da'esh. Interviewees stated that such arrests have been increasing since 2021, following investigations by Syrian National Army military police into people's alleged role in support of the self-administration, either in a military or civilian capacity, authorized by military courts in Afrin.**

69. **Many Kurdish civilians in areas now controlled by the Syrian National Army are being doubly victimized. Having first been forcibly conscripted by the Kurdish People's Protection Units, including as children, or connected with the Kurdish self-administration without a choice when they controlled the area until 2018, they are now being arrested and detained by the Syrian National Army. In one such case, in early January, near Bab, the Hamza Division of the Syrian National Army (Division 23) arrested a former member of the Kurdish People's Protection Units who had been forcibly conscripted. The family was only able to locate the victim three months after his arrest, by paying bribes to secure his transfer to Maratah prison in Afrin, controlled by the Syrian National Army military police.**

70. **While the Syrian National Army has informed the Commission that the legal system in place fully protects civilians against violations of the prohibition against arbitrary arrest and the right to a fair trial (including access to legal counsel and family), interviewees reported that: people arrested by factions and individual members of the Syrian National Army were held incommunicado for periods ranging from one month to three years; that family members were denied information about the whereabouts of detainees, including detainees transferred to Türkiye;**

51. **that family members seeking information on the fate or whereabouts of loved one were also threatened or arrested; that detainees were not informed of the reasons for their arrest and not permitted access to legal representation; and that detainees were allowed to have contact with their relatives only after their relatives paid bribes or exerted pressure on members of the Syrian National Army, whereupon detainees were transferred to central prisons, such as Maratah prison. Only after such transfers did detainees finally appear before a court, including the military court in Afrin.**

71. **Family members who eventually succeeded in visiting their relatives in Maratah prison described seeing marks of severe beatings on their bodies.**

72. **New credible accounts were also gathered from both male and female survivors, including from minors, of beatings and other forms of torture by members of the Syrian National Army, including rape and other forms of sexual violence that took place in make-shift detention facilities between 2018–2021. One woman, a former detainee, described how she was subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence in 2018 during interrogations by individuals wearing Turkish uniforms and speaking in Turkish.**

73. **Severe torture and other forms of ill-treatment inflicted by members of the Syrian National Army also led to the death of a number of detainees. One interviewee described how, on 24 February, a member of an Arab tribe was arrested in Afrin by the Falaq al-Sham brigade, brought to a military outpost under its control and beaten to death. The group issued a statement acknowledging responsibility for his death as a result of the torture that he endured**

while in their custody and announcing the arrest of the alleged perpetrators, whom they handed over to the military judiciary.

74. In another case, a man who was briefly detained by a brigade of the Syrian National Army was released with signs of severe beatings on his entire body; he died shortly afterwards.

75. **The Commission has reasonable grounds to believe that elements of the Syrian National Army have arbitrarily deprived persons of their liberty. Some cases have been tantamount to enforced disappearances. Consistent with an established pattern, elements of the Syrian National Army may have committed torture, cruel treatment and outrages upon personal dignity, including through forms of sexual violence, which constitute war crimes. In some instances, the treatment inflicted led to the death of detainees, which may amount to murder, another war crime.** » Source: UN Human Rights Council (HRC): Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [A/HRC/51/45], 17 août 2022: www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2078691/G2246309.pdf.

Rudaw, 26 juillet 2022 :

« With no official consensus made by successive Syrian governments, there were 50 thousand to 60 thousand Yazidis in Afrin before 2011.

In 2014, about 35 thousand Yazidis were living in Afrin. However, the violent takeover of Afrin and the ensued human rights abuses led to the mass forcible displacement of the Yazidis of that area.

"There are now roughly 2000 Yazidis remaining in Afrin." Suad Hiso, the current co-chair of the Afrin Yazidi Union, said via WhatsApp. Nearly 90 percent of the Yazidi community has left - either fleeing the area ahead of the arrival of armed forces or were forcibly evicted after the forces arrived.

Historically, Afrin was inhabited by a tolerant Muslim population. Muslims, Alawites, Turkmen, Armenians, Christians, Kurds, Arabs, and Yazidis lived in peaceful communal coexistence.

"All peoples of Afrin lived on peaceful terms. There had never been communal prejudice against Yazidis in Afrin which was an oasis of religious freedom," Barakat maintained.

The Yazidi community of Afrin was not a strict or tightly closed one in the sense that marriages to non-Yazidis (Kurds) were allowed.

However, with all the 19 shrines falling under the control of radical Islamic armed factions, it is impossible for those remaining to practice their rituals openly and freely.

According to reports, almost 18 out of the 19 shrines and sanctuaries have been wholly or partially desecrated or destroyed.

Shreds of evidence of demographic engineering and forcible displacement and resettlement are overwhelming. With no aid received from abroad, the plight of the Afrin Yazidis continues to be largely ignored.

Turkey, however, has shown little interest to address such abuses or to protect the cultural and religious life of the people of Afrin.

Since Afrin was occupied, three Yazidi men - Omar Shamo Mamo, Nuri Jimo Omar Sheref, and Khaled Abdo Elo - and two women - Fatima Hamke and Nergis Daud - were killed on separate occasions. Three families lost their lives in a landmine explosion while seeking safety.

Sixty Yazidis were arbitrarily arrested, including 15 women. As some were released others are still held allegedly for ransom, according to Hiso.

In the current situation of unruliness, cases of abduction, extortion, arbitrary detention, torture, and forced religious conversions are very common occurrences. They are seen as methods of demographic change.

The center of the Yazidi Union was turned into a Muslim religious school.

Mosques were built in Yazidi villages. Hiso claimed that Islam is being imposed on Yazidi children.

“Settlements are built in Yazidi villages with the mere object of engineering a demographic change in Afrin”, she added.

While Yazidis of Afrin remain shattered as one of the most affected groups their disappearance from Afrin will however lead to an end to the religious diversity there. » Source: Rudaw, Yazidis in Afrin on the brink of disappearance, 26 juillet 2022: www.rudaw.net/english/opinion/26072022.

SOHR, 12 juillet 2022 :

« Aleppo province: **SOHR activists have reported that members of Al-Sham Legion patrol arrested two civilians from Ba'ya village in Shirawa district in Afrin countryside during the past few days, for “dealing with the former Autonomous Administration”, to collect ransoms.**

Yesterday, SOHR activists reported that members of Al-Sham Legion patrol arrested four civilians from Al-Ghazawyah and Ba'ya villages in Shirawa district in Afrin countryside this week, for “dealing with the former Autonomous Administration”, to collect ransoms.

» Source: Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), To collect ransoms - Al-Sham Legion arrests two civilians without charges, 12 juillet 2022: www.syriahr.com/en/259222/

The New Yorker, 13 février 2023 :

« **Jindires and Afrin were among the worst hit in Syria by the earthquake. Buildings in rebel-controlled parts of the country collapsed on sleeping families just as they had across the border in Turkey, but, in Syria, virtually no one from the outside world came to help. The White Helmets, a volunteer rescue service that has been pulling civilians out of the rubble of homes bombed by Russian and Syrian government air strikes for years, did their best to rescue survivors. But they had none of the advanced rescue equipment brought to**

Turkey, where teams from around the world flew in with sniffer dogs, sensitive microphones, and seismic sensors. Syrians mostly dug with backhoes, shovels, and bare hands. People told us that there were some buildings, filled with families, from which no survivors had emerged.

They said that the Assad regime and its ally, Russia, are preventing international aid from entering rebel-held areas. Several border crossings with Turkey are within a half hour's drive from Syria's disaster zone. So far, though, Assad has only permitted U.N.-distributed aid through one of them, and none of the assistance has included earthquake relief or rescue equipment. In response to criticism, Assad promised to open three border crossings on Monday. Meanwhile, those trapped under the rubble have slowly perished in places like Jindires, and their deaths are a microcosm of what has been happening in northwest Syria for years. Martin Griffiths, the U.N.'s head of emergency relief, tweeted on Sunday, "We have so far failed the people in north-west Syria. They rightly feel abandoned. Looking for international help that hasn't arrived." [...]

Hospital staffers have developed a grim expertise in treating blunt-force trauma and responding to mass-casualty events after more than a decade of war. They have become experts in keeping people alive. Few places in the world today have endured as much violence for as long a period as rebel-held Syria. Of its almost five million residents, 2.8 million fled there for safety from the Assad regime's forces. Dr. Yusuf Idris, a surgeon at the hospital in Afrin, told me that, despite years of putting people back together following bombings and artillery strikes, he struggled with the wounds inflicted by the quake. A tall man with a short beard, clad in scrubs, he described the decisions he faced. "Most of the wounded with broken bones can be saved, but smashed bones mean the leg or arm must be amputated, especially if there was a delay of twenty-four or forty-eight hours before they arrived with us," he said, looking exhausted as he sat in an office chair. "With the war injured, we can easily locate the wound, but with this kind of injury it's hard; we have to do a full body examination. . . . It could be kidneys or the abdomen." [...]

Afrin's main hospital is funded by the Turkish government and Qatari charity organizations. It is staffed by a mix of Turkish and Syrian medical professionals. "We are here to extend the compassionate hand of the State of Turkey to the local people," a hospital manager, Kenan Karcalar, told a group of reporters, as an official from Erdoğan's office stood nearby. **Residents and hospital patients find themselves caught between the various factions competing for influence in Syria, who fight over areas that millions of displaced children now call home. Afrin is currently controlled by a group of rebels that are backed by the Turkish government. Just a few miles to the south of the Afrin hospital is the province of Idlib, which is controlled by a Sunni rebel group called Hayat Tahrir al-Sham that was formerly allied with Al Qaeda.**» Source: The New Yorker, How Assad Blocked Aid to Syrian Earthquake Victims, 13 février 2023: www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/how-assad-blocked-aid-to-syrian-earthquake-victims.

UNGA, 2 août 2022 :

« [...] 85. At present, families undertake searches themselves, furthering their trauma and putting themselves at risk. As a family association representative said, "just imagine looking through leaked videos of massacres [on social media] to see if your loved one is among the decapitated, mutilated bodies over and over, desperately conducting your own search".

Women-led households in particular should not have to put themselves at risk to search for their missing relatives, nor impoverish themselves in an economic environment that is already dire and where survival is precarious, in order to claim basic rights. One written submission highlighted how “women paid most of their savings, including selling their wedding ring, to obtain information, and were subject to financial extortion and fraud”.

86. The impacts and urgent needs of marginalized groups are often invisible –former detainees have almost no support, children of missing parents experience extreme trauma, and existing gender inequalities and social injustices are replicated in the communities’ treatment of women, in particular female former detainees. Women from extremely marginalized communities, such as Yazidis, and, more broadly, women detained by Da’esh or forced to “marry” Da’esh fighters are often treated as traitors or terrorists.

» Source: UN General Assembly (UNGA), Missing people in the Syrian Arab Republic; Report of the Secretary-General [A/76/890], 2 août 2022: www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2078983/N2244769.pdf

UNHCR, 23 février 2023 :

« The earthquake that struck Türkiye and Syria on 6 February 2023 heavily impacted north-west Syria (NWS), a region where 4.1 million people depend on humanitarian assistance, the majority of whom are women and children. Over 4,500 deaths and 8,500 injuries have been reported according to the Health cluster, mainly in the districts of Harim, Afrin and Jebel Saman, with numbers expected to rise. The earthquakes have affected at least 96 communities and 35 sub-districts in NWS; more than 10,000 buildings have been partially or completely destroyed, leaving over 11,000 people homeless. [...]

On 22 February, artillery shelling affected Tuffahiyeh, Kansafra and Bara communities in Idleb; Kafr Amma and Tadaf communities in Aleppo; Kherbet Elnaqus community in western Hama; Lower Barzah community in northern Lattakia. Two men were reportedly killed as a result of the shelling on Lower Barzah community in northern Lattakia. » Source: UNHCR, North-west Syria flash update #3, Emergency Response to Earthquake, 23 février 2023: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/99106>.

UNOCHA, 25 février 2023 :

« [...] Impact

More than 4,500 deaths and more than 8,500 injuries have been reported in north-west Syria, as of 21 February, according to the Health cluster.

Almost 150 additional injuries have been reported in north-west Syria, following the 6.4 and 5.8 earthquakes that struck Türkiye on 20 February. Several buildings within the cities of Jandairis and Salqin, and the towns of Kherbet Eljoz, Hamziyeh, and Maland, collapsed in its aftermath.

As of 21 February, more than 1,700 buildings have been completely destroyed and more than 8,500 buildings have been partially destroyed. Some 60 per cent of partially destroyed buildings were reported in Harim in the Idleb governorate and Afrin in the Aleppo governorate.

The districts with the highest number of deaths and injuries as of 21 February remain Harim, followed by Afrin and Jisr-Ash-Shugur.[...]

Internal displacement updates:

Some 40,000 households were reportedly displaced within their own communities, according to the REACH rapid assessment. 13,000 of the households were in the Salqin sub-district.

Movements of the population are continuing to be registered in the direction of the northern Syrian border and east Syria.

More than 86,000 displacement movements were recorded as of 17 February, according to the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) cluster. » Source: Bureau de la coordination des affaires humanitaires (UNOCHA), NORTH-WEST SYRIA, 2023 Earthquake: Impact and Humanitarian Needs, 25 février 2023: <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/syria/card/5PquEDCs41/>.

USCIRF, avril 2022 :

« The government also continued to strip religious minorities of their autonomy; in February, it finalized its classification of Yazidis as a sect within Islam, forcing them under the legal and religious jurisdiction of a religion to which they do not subscribe. At the same time, armed opposition forces and militant Islamist groups targeted vulnerable religious and ethnic minorities in their attempts to wrest power from the Assad regime and one another. The al-Qaeda offshoot Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) remained the dominant governing and religious force in the northwestern region of Idlib. It continued to brutalize minority communities, restricting the worship of Idlib's indigenous Christians and displacing them by seizing their properties and churches—already rendered vulnerable from attacks by the Assad regime. Additionally, Turkish-supported Syrian armed opposition groups—collectively sometimes called “TSOs”—such as the Syrian National Army (SNA) and factions of its Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army (TFSA) leveraged their Turkish financing and military support to merge under the Syrian Liberation Front, further enabling their campaigns of destruction and harassment against minority communities. In acts of religious and ethnic cleansing, TSOs near Afrin terrorized Yazidis and Kurds with shelling and targeted them—especially women and girls—for kidnapping, sex trafficking, and lethal torture. Although the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) did not regain territory, it increased its presence in areas defended by the U.S.-allied Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), such as Deir al-Zor in eastern Syria, where the militant Islamist group waged almost daily attacks on SDF bases and checkpoints. » Source: US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2022 Annual Report, Syria, avril 2022: www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2071909/2022+Syria.pdf

USDOS, 29 juillet 2022 :

« Despite the territorial defeat of ISIS at the beginning of 2019, the group continued to force local Syrian girls and women in ISIS-controlled areas into marriages with its fighters, and it routinely subjected women and girls from minority groups into forced marriages, domestic servitude, systematic rape, sexual slavery, and other forms of sexual violence. Incidents of human trafficking increased, and trafficking victims were trapped in Syria in 2014 when ISIS

*consolidated its control of the eastern governorates of Raqqa and Deir al-Zour. ISIS publicly released guidelines on how to capture, forcibly hold, and sexually abuse women and girls as “slaves.” As reported by an international organization, ISIS militants’ system of organized sexual slavery and forced marriage is a central element of the terrorist group’s ideology and systemic means of oppression. **ISIS subjected girls as young as nine years old, including Yezidi girls abducted from Iraq and brought to Syria, to sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence. Although as of 2021, ISIS no longer controlled territory, according to an NGO, approximately 2,700 Yezidi women and girls remain unaccounted for; reports indicate some of these women and girls remain with ISIS in eastern Syria or in Al-Hol camp.** » Source: US Department of State (USDOS), 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Syria, 29 juillet 2022: www.ecoi.net/en/document/2077593.html.*

USDOS, 2 juin 2022 :

*« **The United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) again reported it had reasonable grounds to believe some Turkish-supported Syrian armed opposition groups (TSOs) committed abuses, including torture, rape, looting, and appropriating private property, particularly in Kurdish areas, as well as vandalizing Yezidi religious sites in areas under their control. The COI, human rights groups, and media organizations reported killings, arbitrary detentions, rape, and torture of civilians, and the looting and seizure of private properties in and around Afrin. Community representatives, human rights organizations such as the NGO Syrians for Truth and Justice, and documentation-gathering groups reported Yezidis were often victims of TSO abuses. The COI found that despite its territorial defeat, violent attacks by ISIS remnants had increased, while human rights organizations stated that ISIS often targeted civilians, persons suspected of collaborating with security forces, and groups ISIS deemed to be apostates. Many former victims of ISIS remained missing. [...]***

*Before the civil war, there were small Jewish populations in Aleppo and Damascus, but in 2020, the Jewish Chronicle reported that there were no known Jews still living in the country. **There was also a Yezidi population of approximately 80,000 before the civil war. There are no updated figures on the number of Yezidis currently living in the country. [...]***

Yezidis previously lived in Aleppo, but now live mainly in northeast Syria areas controlled by Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). [...]

According to the British-based NGO CSW, on February 14, the Ministry of Justice rejected the Yezidi community’s request to recognize it as a religious group, which would allow Yezidis to establish their own personal status courts. The Council for Syrian Yezidis issued a statement describing the decision as “a flagrant violation of basic human rights.” [...]

According to human rights organizations such as Syrians for Truth and Justice, and documentation gathering groups, TSOs in the northern part of the country committed human rights abuses against Yezidi residents and other residents, particularly in Kurdish areas, including arbitrary detentions of civilians, torture, sexual violence, evictions, looting and seizure of private property, recruitment of child soldiers, and the looting and desecration of religious shrines. TSOs also reportedly abused members of other religious minority groups.

In areas under Turkish influence, TSO groups operating under the Syrian National Army (SNA) restricted religious freedom of Yezidis through attacks against and intimidation of civilians. A January COI report noted that the commission had documented the looting and destruction of archeological sites and Yezidi shrines and graves by the SNA in Afrin. Speaking at the Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. on August 10, a Voice of America (VOA) correspondent stated that local human rights groups documented abuses and violations against residents of Afrin, mainly against Yezidis, including kidnappings for ransom; imprisonment; torture; the imposition of a “protection fee” on some villages; the destruction of Yezidi shrines and graves; and the looting and confiscation of land and property. [...]

Members of religious and ethnic minority groups, especially displaced Kurds, Yezidis, and Christians, in areas under Turkish influence, such as in the city of Afrin, reported experiencing human rights abuses and marginalization. In an August post on a Wilson Center blog, a VOA journalist stated that according to human rights groups, of 25,000 Yezidis who lived in 22 villages in Afrin before the 2018 Turkish incursion, just 5,000 remained. In September, VOA reported Christian leaders said Turkish shelling in northeast Syria during the year had driven Christians and other minorities from their homes in Tel Tamer and surrounding villages southeast of the Operation Peace Spring area. According to press reports and NGOs, in Afrin, Yezidi women reported to have been kidnapped by TSOs remained missing. [...]

Although ISIS no longer controlled territory, the fate of 8,648 individuals forcibly disappeared by ISIS since 2014 remained unknown, according to the SNHR. Among those abducted in northern Iraq were an estimated 6,000 women and children, mainly Yezidis, whom ISIS reportedly transferred to Syria and sold as sex slaves, forced into nominal marriage to ISIS fighters, or gave as “gifts” to ISIS commanders. In a September 14 letter to the UN General Assembly, the Yezidi advocacy organization Yazda and more than 80 other signatories stated that 2,763 individuals remained unaccounted for. Yazda reported that more than 3,000 Yezidi women and children had escaped, been liberated in SDF military operations, or been released from ISIS captivity since the start of the conflict, but that more than 2,700 remained unaccounted for at year’s end. » Source: US Department of State (USDOS), 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Syria, 2 juin 2022: www.ecoi.net/en/document/2073954.html.

VOA, 12 janvier 2023 :

« Since Turkey took control of Afrin, rights groups and Kurdish activists have accused the Turkish government and its allies of changing its demographics by settling Arab and Turkmen families in the predominately Kurdish region.

Last week, Turkish-backed groups in Afrin announced the opening of a new settlement that will ultimately have 200 residential units for displaced people, Syrian opposition news sites reported.

Manan said the 10 acres on which the so-called Ajnadeen village is built belongs to his family.

"This land has been owned by my family for generations," he told VOA, adding that "official Syrian government records prove that this is our land."

"When my cousin asked the groups that are currently ruling Afrin why they were building on a land that belonged to other people, their response was, 'We've seized this land because it belongs to the YPG.' " » Source: Voice of America (VOA), Settlement Construction in Syrian District Renews Accusations of Demographic Engineering, 12 janvier 2023: www.voanews.com/a/settlement-construction-in-syrian-district-renews-accusations-of-demographic-engineering-/6916667.html.

En tant que principale organisation d'aide aux personnes réfugiées en Suisse et faïtière des œuvres d'entraide et des organisations actives dans les domaines de l'exil et de l'asile, l'Organisation suisse d'aide aux réfugiés (OSAR) s'engage pour une Suisse qui accueille les personnes réfugiées, les protège efficacement, respecte leurs droits fondamentaux et humains, favorise leur participation dans la société et les traite avec respect et ouverture. Dans sa fonction, l'OSAR renforce et défend les intérêts et les droits des personnes bénéficiant d'une protection et favorise la compréhension de leurs conditions de vie. Grâce à son expertise avérée, elle marque le discours public et exerce une influence sur les conditions sociales et politiques.

D'autres publications de l'OSAR sont disponibles sur le site www.osar.ch/publications. La newsletter de l'OSAR, qui paraît régulièrement, vous informe des nouvelles publications. Inscription à l'adresse www.osar.ch/newsletter.