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Turkey/Kurdistan/Syria

A call in support of Kobanê, against Turkish buffer zone

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The Women's Initiative for Peace (based in Turkey) is calling on everyone to take a stand against TurkeyÂ´s proposal of creating a buffer zone in Syria. The statement can be read in full below.

Urgent Call: Stand Against Demands for a Buffer/Security Zone Between Turkey and Syria

Kobanê, one of the three autonomous Kurdish enclaves in Northern Syria, on the border with Turkey, is once again under attack by the IS. The Islamic State (IS – formerly known as ISIS, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) has besieged Kobanê on three separate fronts and is at the moment shelling the city relentlessly.

The border between Syria and Turkey is a straight line that runs mainly through flat plains. A tank or armoured car can sail through these plains with no difficulty. The plain is inhabited by peoples of diverse ethnic or religious background: Arab tribes, Yezidis, Syriac Christians, Armenians and Kurds. Many of the Kurds are relatives of Kurds on the Turkish side of the border and have been in constant interaction in the past. Kurds had been living in Syria without any formal citizenship status. After the start of the uprising in Syria, they declared their autonomy in July, 2012. These autonomous zones are small enclaves where the majority population is Kurdish and which are separated from one another by zones inhabited by Arab tribesmen. Since 2012, the Kurds of Syria have tried to establish a democratic form of self-rule where everyone would be equal, regardless of ethnic or religious identity and of gender. They have called these enclaves of self-rule Rojava, or The West. Kobanê is one of these enclaves and, since September 15, the target of fierce attack by IS, armed by superior weapons.

Local observers ranging from international reporters to Kurdish inhabitants of the region and the Kurdish forces of Kobanê have regularly claimed that the Turkish-Syrian border is systematically transgressed by the IS. They obtain, it is said, personnel and ammunition from supply routes through Turkey. This has led them to conclude that Turkey is using the IS to clean the region of its Kurdish inhabitants.

The Turkish government has, since the inception of the Syrian civil war, made no effort to hide its opposition to the Assad government and has provided support to various Islamic groups fighting in the Free Syrian Army. It is now claiming that the best way to fight Assad and the IS, is to establish a buffer/security zone between Turkey and Syria. This zone can be in no other place than in Rojava.

We, the women from the Women's Initiative for Peace see this proposal as a disingenuous move to kill many birds with one stone. The Turkish state has initiated a peace process with the Kurdish guerrilla forces (the PKK – Kurdistan Workers' Party) with which it has been waging what it called a 'low intensity war' for over thirty years. In spite of talks between the Turkish state and the imprisoned leader of the guerrillas, the government of Turkey has been refusing to honour the agreements they have reached and does not take the steps necessary for the peace process to go forward, steps which the Kurdish side has been waiting for, for more than a year. It is in this atmosphere that we now see the state of Turkey at best allowing the IS to raze Kobanê to the ground and proposing a buffer zone which will allow the declaration of Rojava as an empty land. According to the Kurds, this is another way of fighting a dirty war against the Kurds, another way of not recognizing the will of the Kurdish people. They say talking to the Kurds in the north (Turkey) while fighting those in the West (Kobanê) means ending the peace process and the ceasefire that has lasted almost two years.

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We, women, want the Turkish state to honour its pledges. We do not want the peace process to end. As women, we know that war targets women and that women pay a very high price during war. Turning overnight into refugees, women have crossed the Rojava border and flocked into Turkey, a country that does not grant legal refugee status to persons arriving from its southern borders. Refugee camps, forced resettlement, the declaration of their homes as empty land is the bleak future that Rojava women now face.

This future need not come to be. Lobby your government, lobby the Turkish government, and lobby the UN. We are sending attached template emails/fax that you can send to the UN and the Turkish government. Do not let them establish a buffer zone in Rojava. Tell them:

Rojava is not empty.

Kurds have a government there.

Not having a state should not mean not having a home.

Stop the forced eviction of Kurds from yet another of their homelands.

Please send the attached letters to the Turkish government and to the United Nations.

Addresses for the United Nations:

Ban Ki Moon, fax: 1 (212) 963 4879; email: bkm@un.org

UNHCR, fax: (41) 22 739 7377; email: hunbu@unhcr.org, swest@unhcr.org, furley@unhcr.org

UNICEF, fax: 1 (212) 887 7465/7454

WHO, fax: (41) 22 791 0746

Adresses for the Turkish government:

E-mail:assembly@tbmm.gov.tr

The speaker of parliament Cemil Ç?ÇEK
website : baskanlik.tbmm.gov.tr
E-mail : cemil.cicek@tbmm.gov.tr
: facebook.com/mvcemilcicek
Secretary of the Board of Spokespersons Dr. ?rfan NEZ?RO?LU
website : www.irfanneziroglu.com
E-mail : neziroglu@tbmm.gov.tr

Signed

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Women’s Initiative for Peace

Use the letters below

Letter to the United Nations

To whom it may concern,

We have been watching the recent developments in Northern Syria with great concern. It has become clear to us that an atrocious massacre is imminent in the region. We have also heard that the government of Turkey is lobbying for the formation of a buffer/security zone at its borders with Syria and Iraq. We know that this is an area called Rojava, where Kurdish people live alongside Assyrian, Armenian, Arab, ÃŠzîdî peoples under their own autonomous government. In our opinion, this plan for a buffer zone is an attack upon this region. Carving out a buffer or security zone in this area, against the will of the peoples who inhabit it, is equal to mass displacement and invasion. Moreover, as long as the Turkish government does not prove that it is NOT providing ANY assistance to ISIS, in our eyes, it shall continue to be partly responsible for ISIS’s war crimes and massacres. Thus, we as women, demand that the United Nations IMMEDIATELY;

Stand against these plans for a buffer/security zone.
Take the necessary precautions against a massacre in Kobanê, so that what happened to ÃŠzîdîs in Sinjar does not repeat itself.
Increase its humanitarian aid for refugees from Sinjar and Rojava
Take the necessary measures to find the women who have been kidnapped by ISIS and sold into slavery.
[Date]

[Signature]

Letter to the Republic of Turkey

To whom it may concern,
We have been watching the recent developments in Northern Syria with great concern. It has become clear to us that an atrocious massacre is imminent in the region. We have also heard that your government is planning the formation of a buffer/security zone at its borders with Syria and Iraq. We know that this is an area called Rojava, where Kurdish people live alongside Assyrian, Armenian, Arab, ÃŠzîdî peoples under their own autonomous government. In our opinion, this plan for a buffer zone is an attack upon this region. Carving out a buffer or security zone in this area, against the will of the peoples who inhabit it, is equal to mass displacement and invasion. Moreover, as long as your government does not prove that it is NOT providing ANY assistance to ISIS, in our eyes, it shall continue to be partly responsible for ISIS’s war crimes and massacres. Thus, we as women, demand that the Republic of Turkey IMMEDIATELY;

Cancel all plans for a buffer/security zone and
Avoid any transgression of the borders of the autonomous government of Rojava by the Turkish military, against the will of the peoples of the region
End attacks upon civilians on the Syrian border
Close its borders definitively to ISIS and any logistical support to this organization
Increase its humanitarian aid for refugees from Sinjar and Rojava
[Date]

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[Signature]

Alliance for Kurdish Rights

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