

Five Years after Türkiye's Operation Peace Spring in NES: 10 Facts and Recommendations

*The UN, EU, and US should recognize Türkiye's presence in Syria as occupation,
push it to fulfill due obligations, and end demographic change in Ras al-
Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tell Abyad/Girê Spî*

On 9 October 2019, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced the start of the military Operation Peace Spring in the areas of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tell Abyad/Girê Spî in northeastern Syria, after a green light from the then-United States' (U.S.) administration.¹ As a result of the operation, Türkiye gained control over the two cities after engaging in hostilities that involved violations amounting to war crimes.

In this fact sheet, the partner organizations [Syrians for Truth and Justice \(STJ\)](#), [Synergy Association for Victims](#), [PÊL- Civil Waves](#), [DAR Association for Victims of Forced Displacement](#), and [Rights Defense Initiative](#), publish ten facts about Operation Peace Spring and its aftermath, along with ten recommendations for stakeholders.

First: The Facts

1. On 4 October 2019, Türkiye's President Erdogan announced his country's plan to launch a major military operation in northeastern Syria,² called Operation Peace Spring. On 6 October, he [declared](#) that the Operation's goal is to "neutralize terror threats against Türkiye and lead to the establishment of a safe zone, facilitating the return of Syrian refugees to their homes." By "terror threats," Erdogan referred to the People's Protection Units (YPG), a prominent part of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which Türkiye sees as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Syria, which it considers a terrorist organization. On 6 October, then-U.S. President Donald Trump, following a conversation with Erdogan, announced the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the region to facilitate the Turkish operation.³ This announcement was seen as a green light for Erdogan to launch Operation Peace Spring on 9 October 2019, starting with the bombing of YPG positions across the length of the Syria-Türkiye border. This move was heavily criticized as an abandonment of a loyal ally,⁴ as the SDF, including the YPG, had been the leading local partner of the U.S.-backed Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh (Islamic State/IS) in Syria.⁵ On 23 March 2019, the coalition, with the SDF, achieved its most important goal of expelling the IS from its last stronghold in al-Baghuz Fawqani;⁶

¹ "Operation Peace Spring starts in N Syria: Erdogan", Anadolu Agency, 9 October 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/operation-peace-spring/operation-peace-spring-starts-in-n-syria-erdogan/1607147> (Last accessed: 29 September 2024).

² "Erdogan says Turkey to launch military operation in northeast Syria", Reuters, 6 October 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-security-turkey-usa/erdogan-says-turkey-to-launch-military-operation-in-northeast-syria-idUSKCN1WK053/> (Last accessed: 29 September 2024).

³ "Statement from the Press Secretary", The White House, 6 October 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/statement-press-secretary-85/> (Last accessed: 29 September 2024).

⁴ "Operation "Peace Spring" and U.S. Strategy in Syria", The Foreign Policy Research Institute, 11 October 2019, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2019/10/operation-peace-spring-and-u-s-strategy-in-syria/> (Last accessed: 29 September 2024).

⁵ "Preparing for Withdrawal From Syria: Building an Immigration Program for U.S. Partners of Operation Inherent Resolve", The New Lines Institute, 27 October 2023, <https://newlinesinstitute.org/state-resilience-fragility/preparing-for-withdrawal-from-syria-building-an-immigration-program-for-u-s-partners-of-operation-inherent-resolve/> (Last accessed: 29 September 2024).

⁶ "Analysis: Two years on from its territorial defeat, Daesh is degraded but still dangerous", The Global Coalition, 23 March 2021, <https://theglobalcoalition.org/en/two-years-daesh-territorial-defeat-al-baghuz/> (Last accessed: 29 September 2024).

2. Turkish forces, with the help of factions in the Syrian National Army (SNA) affiliated with the Syrian Interim Government (SIG), who are both loyal to Türkiye and supported by it,⁷ entered the areas of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tell Abyad/Girê Spî in northeastern Syria. The fighting lasted for about ten days and was brought to a halt by two agreements.⁸ The first agreement, called a “historic agreement,” Türkiye signed with the U.S. on 17 October.⁹ The second agreement was signed with Russia on 22 October.¹⁰ These agreements led to the withdrawal of the SDF forces 30 kilometers from a 120-kilometer-long strip along the border with Türkiye. This strip extends between the two cities and parts of their countryside, placing the area under the complete control of Turkish forces and allied SNA factions. This operation allowed Türkiye to achieve its goal of weakening the Kurdish presence along its borders.¹¹ Operation Peace Spring followed Türkiye’s 2018 incursion, labeled as Operation Olive Branch, which targeted the former Kurdish-majority region of Afrin in northwestern Syria. Afrin was then under the control of the YPG, a main military component of the SDF at the time;¹²

3. During Operation Peace Spring, the targeted area experienced war crimes and other serious violations. These included indiscriminate shelling by Turkish forces and allied SNA factions, resulting in civilian casualties.¹³ There were also extrajudicial killings,¹⁴

⁷ “SNA Convoy Moves to Support Operation Peace Spring”, Anadolu Agency, 12 October 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9/-%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%84%D8%A9-%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%83-%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%85-%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%86%D8%A8%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85/1611060> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

See also: “Which Syrian Groups Are Involved in Turkey's Syria Offensive?”, Von News, 9 October 2019, https://www.voanews.com/a/extremism-watch_which-syrian-groups-are-involved-turkeys-syria-offensive/6177353.html (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

⁸ Turkey’s Operation Peace Spring in northern Syria: One month on”, Al Jazeera, 8 November 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/8/turkeys-operation-peace-spring-in-northern-syria-one-month-on> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

⁹ “The United States and Turkey Agree to Ceasefire in Northeast Syria”, The White House, 17 October 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/united-states-turkey-agree-ceasefire-northeast-syria/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

¹⁰ “Memorandum of Understanding Between Turkey and the Russian Federation”, Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia, 22 October 2019, <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5452> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

¹¹ “Everything is by the Power of the Weapon”, HRW, 29 February 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/02/29/everything-power-weapon/abuses-and-impunity-turkish-occupied-northern-syria> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

¹² “Arbitrary Detention and Torture are a Systemic Oppression Policy in Northwestern Syria”, STJ, 1 February 2023, <https://stj-sy.org/en/arbitrary-detention-and-torture-are-a-systemic-oppression-policy-in-northwestern-syria/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

¹³ “Syria: Damning evidence of war crimes and other violations by Turkish forces and their allies”, Amnesty International, 18 October 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/10/syria-damning-evidence-of-war-crimes-and-other-violations-by-turkish-forces-and-their-allies/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

¹⁴ “New Evidence Pointing to Ahrar al-Sharqiya’s Responsibility for Field Executions in Suluk during Operation Peace Spring”, STJ, 27 January 2020, <https://stj-sy.org/en/new-evidence-pointing-to-ahrar-al-sharqiyas-responsibility-for-field-executions-in-suluk-during-operation-peace-spring/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

such as the execution of Kurdish politician Hevrin Khalaf,¹⁵ and widespread violations of the property rights of the original people;

4. Operation Peace Spring led to the displacement of over 200,000 residents from the region.¹⁶ These displaced individuals sought refuge in cities in northeastern Syria like Raqqqa, al-Hasakah, and Qamishli/Qamishlo, as well as in Iraqi Kurdistan and European countries.¹⁷ Many of the displaced persons ended up in four unofficial camps not recognized by the United Nations (UN). These camps' residents face various challenges, including inadequate services, limited access to clean water,¹⁸ insufficient healthcare, and neglect from local and international organizations. One of these camps, Washokani/Tuwaina, is home to 16,730 people (2,361 families), and the residents are worried about the deteriorating condition of the tents, which are not being replaced regularly and pose a risk of collapse.¹⁹ Another camp, Serê Kaniyê/al-Tala'i, located in the countryside of al-Hasakah city, is home to 15,583 people (2,576 families). Additionally, 5,366 people (1,020 families) reside in the Newroz camp on the outskirts of al-Malikiyah/Derik city, and 6,866 people (1,282 families) live in the Tell al-Samn camp in Raqqqa, according to information gathered by partner organizations;
5. Ever since Türkiye entered the region, it has exercised *de facto* control over Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tell Abyad/Girê Spî. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry confirmed this control on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI-Syria) in its report of September 2020.²⁰ Türkiye maintains its control through over 41 locations and military bases and through its SNA proxy,²¹ which it supports financially, militarily, and logistically.²² Turkish forces and allied factions have taken over the homes of displaced civilians, using them as military headquarters;²³

¹⁵ "New Evidence Supporting the National Army's Accusations in the Murder of the Kurdish Politician Hevrin Khalaf", STJ, 10 December 2019, <https://stj-sy.org/en/new-evidence-supporting-the-national-armys-accusations-in-the-murder-of-the-kurdish-politician-hevrin-khalaf/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

¹⁶ "Displacement and Despair: The Turkish Invasion of Northeast Syria", Refugees International, 12 November 2019, <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/displacement-and-despair-the-turkish-invasion-of-northeast-syria/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

¹⁷ "Syria: Role of International Agreements in Forced Displacement (3)", STJ, 19 October 2023, <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-role-of-international-agreements-in-forced-displacement-3/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

¹⁸ "Allegation Letter Addressed to United Nations Special Procedures Regarding the Water Crisis in Northeast Syria", STJ, 14 July 2023, <https://stj-sy.org/en/allegation-letter-addressed-to-united-nations-special-procedures-regarding-the-water-crisis-in-northeast-syria/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

¹⁹ "Washokani Camp in al-Hasakah Countryside.. Dilapidated Tents that have not been Replaced for Five Years", North Press Agency, 13 August 2024, <https://npasyria.com/191141/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

²⁰ Report of COI-Syria (A/HRC/45/31), 15 September 2020, para. 67.

²¹ "Turkish forces send reinforcements to Syria's Tel Abyad", North Press Agency, 4 October 2023, <https://npasyria.com/en/105525/> (Last accessed: 27 August 2024).

²² "Syrian National Army: Our salaries and weapons come from Turkey when necessary" (in Turkish), Euro News, 12 August 2018, <https://tr.euronews.com/2018/08/12/-suriye-milli-ordusu-maasimiz-ve-gerektiginde-silahimiz-turkiye-den> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

²³ "Housing, Land, and Property Rights Violations in Ras al-Ayn-Serê Kaniyê and Tal Abyad after 2019", PÊL- Civil Waves, 25 January 2024, <https://pel-cw.org/en/16584/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

Türkiye directly supervises service sectors such as education and health through the governor's office of its Şanlıurfa province located at the borders of the two cities,²⁴ and through two local councils in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tell Abyad/Girê Spî.²⁵ The region saw systematic Turkification operations,²⁶ starting with the raising of the Turkish flag in the two cities.²⁷ Afterwards, Turkish relief organizations such as the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH), and the Turkish Red Crescent entered the region. Türkiye has also imposed the use of the Turkish lira, changed school curricula, and renamed towns.²⁸ The IHH itself has violated property rights by turning two homes of a displaced Kurdish family into Quran teaching centers;²⁹

6. During the Turkish occupation,³⁰ the region experienced significant demographic changes that impacted its ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity.³¹ Only 20,000 displaced people have returned in recent years, according to partner organizations involved in this matter. Approximately 70% of the population of Tell Abyad/Girê Spî, estimated at 129,000 people, were displaced. Arabs comprised half of this population, while Kurds comprised around 30% to 40%, with small Turkmen and Armenian minorities also present. In Ras al-Ain/Sari Kaniye, 85% of the 160,000 inhabitants were displaced; the Kurds became a minority there after their number exceeded 75,000 people,³² leaving less than 50 Kurds and seven Christians in the city,³³ while a minimal number of Yazidis returned, with no presence of other ethnic and religious groups, as reported by partner organizations;

²⁴ "The Gangs of Northern Syria: Life Under Turkey's Proxies", New Lines Institute, 7 December 2022, <https://newlinesinstitute.org/state-resilience-fragility/civil-military-relations/the-gangs-of-northern-syria-life-under-turkeys-proxies/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

²⁵ "Syria's Ras al-Ayn: Establishing a Local Council to Manage the City's Affairs", Anadolu Agency, 7 November 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9/%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B3-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%8A-%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%B4%D8%A4%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A9/1638758> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

²⁶ "Sere Kaniye and Tel Abyad: 4 years of rights violations", North Press Agency, 11 October 2023, <https://npasyria.com/en/106072/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

²⁷ Ceremony of raising the flag of the blessed Syrian revolution and the Turkish flag in the city of #Ras al-Ayn, rural al-Hasakah, The Northern Hawks Brigade, 31 August 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4xr21OPgo0> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

²⁸ "Syria: Role of International Agreements in Forced Displacement (3)", STJ, 19 October 2023, <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-role-of-international-agreements-in-forced-displacement-3/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

²⁹ "Ras al-Ayn: IHH Turns two Seized Houses into Quran Institutes", STJ, 11 August 2020, <https://stj-sy.org/en/ras-al-ayn-ihh-turns-two-seized-houses-into-quran-institutes/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

³⁰ "Illegal Transfers of Syrians to Turkey", HRW, 3 February 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/03/illegal-transfers-syrians-turkey> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

³¹ "Syrian Arab Republic: Thematic Humanitarian Access Snapshot (Ras Al Ain-Tell Abiad Area) November 2022", Relief Web, 18 December 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-thematic-humanitarian-access-snapshot-ras-al-ain-tell-abiad-area-november-2022> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

³² "Operation Peace Spring: Its Impact on Displaced Persons and Civilians", The Syrian Women's Political Movement, 17 October 2023, <https://syrianwomenpm.org/statements/operation-peace-spring-its-impact-on-displaced-persons-and-civilians/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

³³ "Syria: Role of International Agreements in Forced Displacement (3)", STJ, 19 October 2023, <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-role-of-international-agreements-in-forced-displacement-3/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

7. The ongoing forced displacement due to security instability and hostilities, including internal fighting among SNA factions and resulting in civilian casualties and human rights violations amid the absence of the rule of law and impunity,³⁴ reinforced demographic changes. Turkish forces and allied SNA factions have been reported to commit grave violations against current residents and returnees. Partner organizations have documented numerous cases of arbitrary arrests and detentions involving SNA factions and Turkish intelligence, with individuals being released in exchange for large ransoms. These incidents have included torture, cruel treatment,³⁵ and sexual violations aimed at intimidating the population and forcing them to flee,³⁶ mainly targeting the Kurdish population. The COI-Syria's latest report of 12 August 2024 confirms these ongoing violations,³⁷ and its previous report from July 2023 documented cases of enforced disappearances,³⁸ which aligns with partner organizations' findings of at least 120 missing individuals from various ethnic and religious backgrounds following the Turkish military attack, whose whereabouts remain unknown,³⁹

8. The ongoing violations of housing, land, and property rights, involving both Turkish forces and SNA, are significantly altering the demographic makeup of the region and perpetuating forced displacement. This is happening without substantial and transparent efforts to restore rights to the rightful owners or protect them from retaliatory actions when they seek to reclaim their property. The COI-Syria confirmed these findings in its report released in September 2022;⁴⁰ Previous reports from partner organizations have documented widespread confiscation of agricultural lands, crops,⁴¹ commercial properties, and civilian residences in the regions addressed. These properties were used for military purposes, such as establishing headquarters or accommodating faction members, their families, and families displaced from other Syrian areas,⁴² including Iraqi families.

³⁴ "Peace Spring Strip Not as Safe as Turkey Publicizes", the Synergy/Hevdestî Association for Victims, 26 February 2023, <https://hevdesti.org/en/peace-spring-strip-not-as-safe-as-turkey-publicizes/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

³⁵ "Torture in the Peace Spring Strip: A Tool for Persecution and the Perpetuation of Forced Displacement," STJ, a joint report by STJ and Synergy/Hevdestî Association for Victims, 26 June 2023, <https://stj-sy.org/en/torture-in-the-peace-spring-strip-a-tool-for-persecution-and-the-perpetuation-of-forced-displacement/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

³⁶ "In the Absence of Accountability: Torture as a Systematic Policy in Northern Syria", a joint report by STJ and Synergy/Hevdestî Association for Victims, 26 June 2024, <https://stj-sy.org/en/in-the-absence-of-accountability-torture-as-a-systematic-policy-in-northern-syria/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

³⁷ Report of COI-Syria (A/HRC/57/86), 12 August 2024, paras. 81 and 82.

³⁸ "No End in Sight: Torture and ill-treatment in the Syrian Arab Republic 2020-2023"(A/HRC/53/CRP.5), COI-Syria, 10 July 2023, paras. 94-105.

³⁹ "Northeast Syria: More than 120 People Disappeared Following Operation Peace Spring", a joint report by STJ and Synergy/Hevdestî Association for Victims, 28 March 2022, <https://stj-sy.org/en/northeast-syria-more-than-120-people-disappeared-following-operation-peace-spring/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

⁴⁰ Report of COI-Syria (A/HRC/51/45), 14 September 2022, para. 76.

⁴¹ "Where is My Home: Property Rights Violations in Northern Syria Perpetuate Demographic Change", the Synergy/Hevdestî Association for Victims, 25 January 2023, <https://hevdesti.org/en/violations-of-property-rights-in-northern-syria/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

See also: "Syria: Crops Looted, Lands Seized in "Peace Spring" Territories", a joint report by STJ and the Synergy/Hevdestî Association for Victims, 11 March 2021, <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-crops-looted-lands-seized-in-peace-spring-territories/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

⁴² "Housing, Land, and Property Rights Violations in Ras al-Ayn-Serê Kaniyê and Tal Abyad after 2019", PÊL- Civil Waves, 25 January 2024, <https://pel-cw.org/en/16584/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

These actions were accompanied by looting and theft of home contents, which were then systematically sold. The COI-Syria's report from September 2020 documented the most extensive looting operations in the industrial area of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê, which housed over 220 shops and industrial workshops.⁴³ The original property owners estimated the value of the looted items to be millions of dollars.⁴⁴

Furthermore, some of the seizures and military utilization involved entire villages, such as Sherkrak in Tell Abyad/Girê Spî,⁴⁵ Bab al-Faraj,⁴⁶ and al-Dawudiya in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê, which were transformed into Turkish military zones.⁴⁷ The COI-Syria documented this conversion in al-Dawudiya in its report issued in September 2020,⁴⁸

9. In 2022, Suleiman Soyly, the former Turkish Minister of Interior, visited Tell Abyad/Girê Spî to inspect the housing unit construction project supervised by AFAD in the so-called "safe zone."⁴⁹ This project aimed to resettle Syrian refugees in Türkiye, which was one of the objectives of Operation Peace Spring.⁵⁰ In 2023, Türkiye designated Tell Abyad/Girê Spî as a primary destination for a larger number of Syrians forcibly deported from its lands under the heading of "voluntary return." STJ documented the deportation of 12,016 refugees to the region during the first seven months of 2024,⁵¹ with most of them coming from other regions in Syria;

10. The Turkish forces and allied SNA factions continue to commit violations that impact not only the remaining residents and displaced individuals in the area but also all residents of al-Hasakah province in Syria controlled by the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). They have been using water as a weapon by repeatedly cutting off the Aluk Water Pumping Station in Ras al-Ayn/Serê

⁴³ Report of COI-Syria (A/HRC/45/31), 15 September 2020, paras. 49-50.

⁴⁴ "Syria: Sultan Murad and Mu'tasim Divisions Pillage the Industrial Zone in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê", STJ, a joint report, STJ, PÊL- Civil Waves, the Synergy/Hevdestî Association for Victims, 6 October 2021, <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-sultan-murad-and-mutasim-divisions-pillage-the-industrial-zone-in-ras-al-ayn-sere-kaniye/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

⁴⁵ "Housing, Land, and Property Rights Violations in Ras al-Ayn-Serê Kaniyê and Tal Abyad after 2019", PÊL- Civil Waves, 25 January 2024, <https://pel-cw.org/en/16584/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

⁴⁶ "Sere Kaniye and Tel Abyad: 4 years of rights violations", North Press Agency, 11 October 2023, <https://npasyria.com/en/106072/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

⁴⁷ "Where is My Home: Property Rights Violations in Northern Syria Perpetuate Demographic Change", the Synergy/Hevdestî Association for Victims, 25 January 2023, <https://hevdesti.org/en/violations-of-property-rights-in-northern-syria/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

⁴⁸ Report of COI-Syria (A/HRC/45/31), 15 September 2020, para. 51.

⁴⁹ "Turkish Minister inspects housing construction project in Syria's Tell Abyad", Anadolu Agency, 19 June 2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9/%D9%88%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%81%D9%82%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B9-%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%83%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D9%84-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B6-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9/2616910> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

⁵⁰ "Syrians Face Dire Conditions in Turkish-Occupied 'Safe Zone'", HRW, 28 March 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/03/28/syrians-face-dire-conditions-turkish-occupied-safe-zone> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

⁵¹ "Türkiye: Misleading Statements by Foreign Minister Regarding Forced Return of Syrian Refugees", STJ, 22 August 2024, <https://stj-sy.org/en/turkiye-misleading-statements-by-foreign-minister-regarding-forced-return-of-syrian-refugees/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

Kaniyê.⁵² Since the two sides gained control of the area, they have cut off the station's water supply at least 36 times.⁵³ This station is the sole source of drinking water for approximately 800,000 people in al-Hasakah and its surrounding areas. It is also the primary water source for several camps housing tens of thousands of internally displaced persons from various Syrian regions. The station has experienced frequent shutdowns, some lasting for days or months, due to electrical and maintenance issues. Additionally, in 2021, the SNA constructed three dams on the Khabur River, causing water flow disruptions in northeastern Syria and significantly damaging agriculture and food security⁵⁴.

Based on the information provided, partner organizations recommend actions for stakeholders to take:

Second: Recommendations

1. **To the United Nations institutions and mechanisms, the European Union countries, and the United States of America:** We urge you to recognize the Turkish presence on Syrian territory as a clear case of occupation. We call on you to push Türkiye to fulfill its obligations as an occupying state according to the provisions of the Geneva Convention (IV), which relates to the protection of civilian persons in times of war. Additionally, we ask for your assistance in stopping the forced displacement of the population, which is aimed at perpetuating demographic change in the region. Furthermore, we request your support in providing a safe environment to ensure the voluntary and dignified return of the IDPs from the areas occupied by Türkiye to their original places of residence;
2. **To the United States of America:** It is time to press Türkiye to uphold its duties as an occupying power and honor the commitments in the agreement signed with you. This includes Türkiye's commitment to not harming civilians, ensuring the safety and well-being of residents, and protecting the religious and ethnic communities in areas under its control;
3. **To the international community, especially the United Nations:** It is crucial to focus on the camps of IDPs from areas under Turkish occupation. They need adequate support that matches the scale of the tragedy they are facing due to their forced displacement by factions supported by Türkiye. Collaboration with local relief

⁵² "Timeline of the Disruptions Series of Aluk Water Pumping Station, North East Syria", STJ, 31 August 2020, <https://stj-sy.org/en/timeline-of-the-disruptions-series-of-aluk-water-pumping-station-north-east-syria/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

⁵³ "Allegation Letter Addressed to United Nations Special Procedures Regarding the Water Crisis in Northeast Syria", STJ, 14 July 2023, <https://stj-sy.org/en/allegation-letter-addressed-to-united-nations-special-procedures-regarding-the-water-crisis-in-northeast-syria/> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

⁵⁴ "Killing the Khabur: How Turkish-backed armed groups blocked northeast Syria's water lifeline", PAX, 3 November 2021, <https://paxforpeace.nl/news/killing-the-khabur-how-turkish-backed-armed-groups-blocked-northeast-syrias-water-lifeline/?highlight=Khab> (Last accessed: 30 September 2024).

organizations is essential to assess the level of need and identify any gaps in the support offered. Also, it is important to acknowledge the “unofficial” camps and ensure they receive the necessary support similar to the other camps;

4. **To the Turkish government:** Urgent actions should be taken to fulfill your legal responsibilities and stop human rights violations and potential war crimes committed by your military forces, intelligence personnel, and affiliated SNA factions. It is crucial to ensure that all elements and factions under your control abide by international human rights and humanitarian law;
 - a. Transparent, comprehensive, and impartial investigations should be conducted promptly into the documented violations, particularly those documented by the COI-Syria, involving your military forces or intelligence officials in the occupied territories. This should encompass arbitrary detention, torture, and seizures of property. Those responsible should be held accountable through fair and transparent trials;
 - b. It is necessary to urge the SIG and the SNA to conduct transparent, comprehensive, and impartial investigations into documented violations in the occupied territories. This includes arbitrary detention, torture, seizures of property, and extrajudicial killings. Those responsible should be held accountable through fair and transparent trials;
 - c. It is incumbent to ensure that victims of violations, including property rights violations in the occupied territories, have access to effective legal remedies. This involves establishing mechanisms for victims to report violations without fear of reprisal, providing reparations, and ensuring that judicial processes meet international standard;
 - d. It is also essential to cease or refrain from actions that disrupt the provision of essential services indispensable to the survival of civilians inside and outside the occupied territories, such as water supplies.
5. **To the Turkish government and the European Union:** The Turkish authorities should immediately stop all forced deportations of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers to Syria. The EU must emphasize that Syria is unsafe for the return of refugees and pressure Türkiye to halt unlawful deportations. Additionally, Türkiye should allow the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to monitor the situation and engage directly with refugees to ensure they can stay in Türkiye or return to Syria voluntarily;
6. **To states exercising universal jurisdiction in conformity with their national laws:** It is time to open investigations, in accordance with international law, into crimes

committed in the area occupied by Türkiye, and hold accountable those involved, individuals and groups, whether from the Turkish side or the SNA.
