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Al-Hasakah: Fact Sheet on Mabrouka IDP Camp after *Operation Peace Spring*

Al-Hasakah: Fact Sheet on Mabrouka IDP Camp after “Operation Peace Spring”

*A paper on the situation in Mabrouka camp after being taken over by
Turkey and allied Syrian National Army*

Seeking safety again, an estimated one thousand Syrian displaced families, fled Mabrouka camp, western al-Hasakah, towards Al-Areesha camp to the south of the province,¹ as a result of "Operation Peace Spring", a military offensive launched by Turkey in October 2019.²

Mabrouka camp is located in the city of Ras al-Ayn/Sari Kani, al-Hasakah, about 40 km. to the west from the center of al-Hasakah province. The camp was set up on January 28, 2016 by the Autonomous Administration which used to run it under the supervision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), before evacuating its residents to Al-Areesha camp in October 2019, following a military campaign launched by Turkey and allied Syrian opposition armed groups affiliated with the National Army in Ras al-Ayn/Sari Kani and Tell Abiad.

Operation Peace Spring which aimed at expelling the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), led Turkey and allies to take control of a large border area in northeastern Syria about (120 km.) between the cities of Ras al-Ayn/Sari Kani north of al-Hasakah and Tell Abiad, north of Raqqa, after displacing more than 175.000 people and killing at least 120 civilians.³

Before the launch of Turkey's military operation, Mabrouka camp, which is adjacent to the Syria-Turkey border, used to house 1030 families, estimated to include 5000 individuals, who are mainly from the city of Deir ez-Zur and its suburbs, and had fled the battles between the Russian-backed government forces and the Islamic State/ IS (also known as Daesh) on the one hand, and between SDF- backed by the International Coalition- and IS on the other hand.⁴ These battles led to the expulsion of Daesh from many areas it was controlling in the city of Deir ez-Zur and its suburbs in 2017, which led to a major movement of civilians into the camps in northeastern Syria, which are under the control of the Autonomous Administration.

¹ Al-Areesha camp (formerly known as al-Bahra camp), was set by SDF in July 2017, during its battles with Daesh as a checkpoint. It is located in the al-Bassel Dam's lake basin, 30 km. to the west of the city of al-Hasakah.

² On October 9, 2019, with a direct support from the opposition's Syrian National Army, the Turkish Armed Forces invaded an area in northeastern Syria that was under the control of the SDF, which made up primarily of Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). In the context of the incursion, Turkey and allied armed groups bombed civilians indiscriminately, and managed to control the area between Tell Abiad/Gire Spi and Ras al-Ayn/Sari Kani, as well as a part of the international highway (M4) running between southeastern Turkey and northeastern Syria. According to the UN, the incursion initially resulted in the displacement of at least 200,000 people.

³ "The prospect of a peacekeeping operation in Syria", STJ, November 20, 2019, (last visit: February 17, 2020) <https://stj-sy.org/en/the-prospect-of-a-peacekeeping-operation-in-syria/>

⁴ On September 9, 2017, the Deir ez-Zur Military Council, operates under the SDF announced the start of the "Island Storm" battle, with the support of the international coalition forces, in order to control the last IS strongholds in the Syrian island and the east of the Euphrates and eastern rural Deir ez-Zur. In June 2017, the Syrian regular forces announced the battle of Deir ez-Zur in order to expel IS militants from the western side of the Euphrates River, these battles were accompanied by very violent Russian and Syrian bombings in addition to the bombing of the international coalition, which led to a daily displacements from the province of Deir ez-Zur.



Image (1).



Images (1) and (2): satellite images illustrate the approximate location of Mabrouka camp.

Before Turkey and allied Syrian opposition groups took over it, specifically on October 11, 2019, the area, where the Mabrouka camp is set, was evacuated by the Autonomous Administration, for the sake of civilians' safety, as artillery shells had been fallen there. The Administration managed to transfer 1016 families to Al-Areesha camp, while 14 families trapped in Mabrouka camp as a result of stepping up hostilities, which led the camp to be captured by Turkey and allied Syrian armed groups. However, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) in coordination with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Syria, evacuated those families to Al-Areesha camp on October 26, 2019, as reported by an STJ field researcher.

I. The evacuation of Mabrouka camp due to the Turkish bombing:

All of the humanitarian organizations withdrew temporarily from southeastern Syria, due to the initiation of the Turkish-led military operation there and the shelling and bombardments it involved, on October 2019, for the safety of their staffs. Thus, international humanitarian organizations, as well as local charities, have withdrawn from Mabrouka camp, according to a member of Blumont (International Relief & Development),⁵ which used to supervise the camp together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), since the beginning of 2019. The Blumont member spoke to STJ in this regard, saying:

"Concurrent with the start of the Turkish aerial and artillery shelling in the city of Ras al-Ayn/Sari Kani and its suburbs, specifically at 4:00 pm. on October 9, 2019, staffs of most of the international humanitarian organizations withdrew from the camp by a decision from their management, among them our organization, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Save The Children organization, as well as local charitable organizations such as the Al-Ber & Al-Ihsan Charity Society and Guba organization, affiliated to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East. Only a number of camp administration employees of the Autonomous Administration, and members of the Asayish (internal security forces), who were responsible for guarding and securing the camp, remained."

The military operation launched by Turkey in northeastern Syria posed a threat to the lives of the displaced people in Mabrouka camp, which is only 12 km. south of the Syria-Turkey border, where several artillery shells landed in the context of hostilities. As a result, the Autonomous Administration decided to evacuate the camp and transfer its residents to Al-Areesha camp, south of the city of al-Hasakah, and said in a statement issued on October 11, 2019,⁶ that the evacuation was a response to the calls of the displaced, and that it made

⁵ The witness preferred not to reveal his name for security reasons and to not to lose his job in the organization.

⁶ For more info: <https://www.facebook.com/952306884959249/posts/1125222817667654>.

it for the sake of their safety. Fayez Ibrahim, the manager of Mabrouka camp, spoke to STJ in this regard, saying:

"After the fall of several shells near the camp, fear and panic spread among IDPs, especially children, whose number was over 2500; i.e. 50% of the camp's population. So, as a reaction to the appeals the IDPs, who are de facto victims of IS' terrorist acts, we transferred them with their belongings by large trucks to Al-Areesha camp, where we had installed enough tents for them."



الإدارة الذاتية لشمال وشرق سوريا

October 11, 2019 · 🌐

بيان إلى الرأي العام

أعلنت الحكومة التركية عن غزو مناطق شمال وشرق سوريا بتاريخ 09/10/2019 ضاربة بعرض الحائط كل القوانين والأعراف الدولية، ومعرضة حياة المدنيين للإنتهاك والخطر في خرق فاضح لكل حقوق الإنسان والقانون الإنساني الدولي.

ولم يكن النازحون في منأى عن مخاطر هذا العدوان إذ تعرض مخيم المبروكة الواقع جنوب الحدود السورية التركية بـ 12 كم لسقوط قذائف مدفعية مما شكل خطراً مباشراً على حياة أكثر من 7000 ألف نازح يقطنون في المخيم، وكذلك مخيم عين عيسى والذي يضم 13000 نازح منهم 785 شخص من عوائل مقاتلي داعش و479 لاجئ عراقي.

واستجابة لنداءات المدنيين داخل المخيم والذين هم أساساً ضحايا لإرهاب داعش وياتوا الآن ضحايا لإرهاب الدولة التركية، وحرصاً منها على القيام بواجبها الأخلاقي وإعتبارات تتعلق بأعداد النازحين ومستوى التهديد، ستبدأ الإدارة الذاتية وعلى الفور بعملية إخلاء مخيم المبروكة ونقل سكانه إلى مخيم العريشة جنوبي مدينة الحسكة.

أما بالنسبة لمخيم عين عيسى فالتقاش مستمر مع الجهات والمنظمات المعنية لإيجاد حل أو موقع بديل لنقل المخيم، والإدارة الذاتية ستتخذ كافة التدابير والإجراءات اللازمة لضمان سلامة قاطني المخيمات، علماً أن سلامة وأمن هؤلاء هي أساساً من مسؤولية الأمم المتحدة والتحالف الدولي لمكافحة إرهاب داعش التي في حال تأخرها عن القيام بواجبها اتجاه المخيمات وسكانها من النازحين فقد تعرضهم لخطر الإبادة والموت المحقق على يد آلة الحرب التركية.

لذلك نطالب المجتمع الدولي والأمم المتحدة ومنظمات حقوق الإنسان والمنظمات الإنسانية الدولية بتحمل مسؤولياتهم في حماية المدنيين والنازحين على الأخص، والضغط على الحكومة التركية لإلزامها بأحكام اتفاقية جنيف الرابعة لعام 1994، والبروتوكول الإضافيان لاتفاقيات جنيف لعام 1977، وقواعد القانون الإنساني العرفي والتي تلزم الأطراف المتنازعة باتخاذ كافة التدابير اللازمة من أجل تجنب الأوضاع التي قد تؤدي إلى تشريد الأشخاص المدنيين، وبالإضافة للحماية التي توفرها أحكام القانون الدولي الإنساني للأشخاص المشردين داخلياً.

الإدارة الذاتية لشمال وشرق سوريا

عين عيسى في 11/10/2019

Image (3): the statement issued by the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, in which it announced starting the evacuation of Mabrouka camp residents to al-Areesha camp. Credit: The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria's Facebook page.⁷

⁷ For more info: <https://www.facebook.com/952306884959249/posts/1125222817667654>



Image (4).



Images (4) and (5): evacuating IDPs from Mabrouka camp to al-Areesh camp, Oct. 11, 2019.

Credit: The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria’s Facebook page.⁸

⁸ For more info: [https://www.facebook.com/smensyria/?_tn_&_kC-R&eid=ARDUiqHNaAl3HCQheNHdvjZwzOBaAqRcW_qNW_VAYnHLMfpOZng3H5HjDBdUlj_kl2CXd1DwT7Ld3V3&hc_ref=ARRzA_klbceJHi_ggW6G3vNe8NVA6LqvLKPUiglpOl8hY3fRMleUKj_OTQT36rJJPE&fref=nf&_xts_\[0\]=68.ARAvRh6Ky37ZsujlY9HaRPuopuyShLLnPJSNM6KXZhCgAMmSkn3SNKZpKyqKuzVWVudPz6hIAU0Wb1AYuq4GSu9FQqaCoFUVt0gHOOvd_iLrHmbdzM1bkgZA4DPKYRJuPTTr_6yKPYqK7HvXlAgKwkn_9hs2aKqf4vhpJb0SUzB7Q1b4hUrGAgloGR1jU9LRrjC7Dk4sLT7IF6SzwREggpiAAO9NIqPvgRYKWGh9hyXmWRvxeCxqrJUnP02JhbDlxytQYdyFVxLCE0jv1TlIZJQ8y_Tm1sqXibdSfRBYJVxRry607UL2KtQWZA-3VpmD634xJiogs3QoD2duMrcsT5X4Q](https://www.facebook.com/smensyria/?_tn_&_kC-R&eid=ARDUiqHNaAl3HCQheNHdvjZwzOBaAqRcW_qNW_VAYnHLMfpOZng3H5HjDBdUlj_kl2CXd1DwT7Ld3V3&hc_ref=ARRzA_klbceJHi_ggW6G3vNe8NVA6LqvLKPUiglpOl8hY3fRMleUKj_OTQT36rJJPE&fref=nf&_xts_[0]=68.ARAvRh6Ky37ZsujlY9HaRPuopuyShLLnPJSNM6KXZhCgAMmSkn3SNKZpKyqKuzVWVudPz6hIAU0Wb1AYuq4GSu9FQqaCoFUVt0gHOOvd_iLrHmbdzM1bkgZA4DPKYRJuPTTr_6yKPYqK7HvXlAgKwkn_9hs2aKqf4vhpJb0SUzB7Q1b4hUrGAgloGR1jU9LRrjC7Dk4sLT7IF6SzwREggpiAAO9NIqPvgRYKWGh9hyXmWRvxeCxqrJUnP02JhbDlxytQYdyFVxLCE0jv1TlIZJQ8y_Tm1sqXibdSfRBYJVxRry607UL2KtQWZA-3VpmD634xJiogs3QoD2duMrcsT5X4Q)

The transfer of the IDPs took place on 11 and 12 October 2019. The Autonomous Administration managed to evacuate 1016 families to the al-Al-Areesha camp (al-Sad), but 14 displaced families remained trapped in the Mabrouka camp; the camp manager, Fayez Ibrahim, explained why, saying:

"The process of transferring IDPs was going well until a landmine, planted by Turkey and allies, exploded under a truck heading to Mabrouka to transfer the final batch of IDPs, injuring the driver. Besides, fighting between the SDF and the Turkish Army with allied militias heated in the area, where Mabrouka camp located, and resulted in the latter to win full control of it on October 13, 2019, which made 14 families stuck inside the camp."⁹

II. 14 Families trapped in Mabrouka camp due to hostilities:

As of October 20, 2019, with the support of the Syrian National Army, Turkey had taken control of a wide border area in northeastern Syria (about 120 km.) between the cities of Ras al-Ayn/Sari Kani and Tell Abiad, including the Mabrouka camp in which 14 families consisting of 84 IDPs were trapped as a result of the hostilities and the bombing that accompanied the military operation .

Zakia Alwan, 37, a displaced from the city of Deir ez-Zur, was one of those trapped in Mabrouka. She stayed with her husband and four children without adequate food or medicine for more than ten days, and she is now staying with her family in the Al-Areesha camp. Zakia spoke to STJ saying:

"We were not transferred to the Al-Areesha camp as planned, we remained in the Mabrouka camp without enough food, or medicine. Among the trapped there were children, women and sick elders. We couldn't leave the camp despite the withdrawal of the Asayish from its surroundings, due to the shelling and fighting outside. When the Turkish army and the Syrian opposition took control of the camp on October 13, 2019, they conducted a simple investigation about our identity, then provided us with bread and water after they confirmed that we were displaced. Several days later, we were transferred by international organizations to the Al-Areesha camp, after we suffered so much during the siege."

A news network published a footage, on October 19, 2019, shows a side of Mabrouka camp after being taken by Turkey and allied National Army.¹⁰

⁹ A footage shows the National Army in the area of Mabrouka after taking control over it, published on October 13, 2019, (last visit: February 17, 2020) <https://youtu.be/tPVVIEfskY4>.

¹⁰ A footage showing Mabrouka camp after being taken over by Turkey and the Syrian National Army, published by Al-Khabour Media Network, on October 19, 2019, https://youtu.be/WLIrs_ZWBUw.



Image (6) a screenshot from the [aforementioned footage](#), shows a side of Mabrouka camp after being taken over by Turkey and allies.

The 14 stranded families were evacuated from Mabrouka camp, on October 26, 2019 by the SARC teams in al-Hasakah, in the presence of representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and in coordination with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Syria. The families were transferred to the Areesha camp, south of the city of al-Hasakah, which is under the control of the Autonomous Administration.

A source in the SARC told STJ that among those evacuated from Mabrouka camp was a pregnant woman who had lost her fetus due to lack of health care and from starvation and thirst.¹¹ Also, there was a man with kidney disease who was suffering from Severe bleeding in the bladder due to lack of medication, in addition to many deteriorating health conditions, as they were transferred to the hospital for treatment.

According to STJ field researcher, the Areesha camp currently hosts more than 13.000 IDPs, most of whom had previously fled their villages and towns in the province of Deir ez-Zur, to escape the fighting, to find themselves again living in fear and anxiety in a dire situation and difficult conditions, due to lack of infrastructure and the absence of international support.

¹¹ The source preferred anonymity for security reasons and to not to lose his job.

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History

Syrians for Truth and Justice was conceived during the participation of its co-founder in the Middle-East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program, who was driven by a will to contribute to Syria's future. Starting as a humble project to tell the stories of Syrians experiencing enforced disappearances and torture, it grew into an established organisation committed to unveiling human rights violations of all sorts.

Convinced that the diversity that has historically defined Syria is a wealth, our team of researchers and volunteers works with dedication at uncovering human rights violations committed in Syria, in order to promote inclusiveness and ensure that all Syrians are represented, and their rights fulfilled.

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