

# THE PKK'S BRANCH IN NORTHERN SYRIA **PYD-YPG**

CAN ACUN, BÜNYAMİN KESKİN



THE PKK'S BRANCH IN NORTHERN SYRIA  
PYD-YPG

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## Abbreviations

DAESH	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi l-Iraq wa-sh-Sham, in Arabic)
ENKS	The Kurdish National Council (Encûmena Nîştimanî ya Kurdîli Sûriyê, in Kurdish)
HNSB	Bethnahrin Women Protection Force (Haylawotho da Neshe Suryoye d Bethnahrin)
HPG	People's Defence Force (Hêzên Parastina Gel)
HPS	Defense Units of Shinjar (Hêza Parastina Şingal)
KRG	The Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq
KCK	The Union of Kurdish Communities (Koma Civakên Kurdistan)
KDP	The Kurdistan Democratic Party
KNC	The Kurdish National Council
PUK	The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
SMC	The Syriac Military Council (Mawtbo Fulhoyo Suryoyo)
FSA	The Free Syrian Army
PKK-S	The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Partiya Demokrata Kurdistan a Sûriye)
PKK	The Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê)
PYD	The Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat)
SDF	The Syrian Democratic Forces
TEV-DEM	The Movement for a Democratic Society (Tevgera Civaka Demokratîk)
YBS	Sinjar Resistance Units (Yekîneyên Berxwedana Şingal)
YJA-Star	Free Women's Units (Yekîneyên Jinên Azad ên Star)
YPG	The People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel)
YPJ	The Women's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Jin)
YPJ-Şengal	The Women's Defense Units of Sinjar (Yekîneyên Parastina Jin a Şengal)

# INTRODUCTION

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Popular uprisings erupted in Tunisia and propagated a domino effect in the Middle East. In a short span of five years, the uprisings have induced major break-ups in the century-old status quo of the region. Iraq and Syria have been the most affected by this process for they have been interacting in an environment created by the U.S. invasion. Under the remnants of the old order and the chaotic parameters of the new, the two countries entered a hybrid period where state authorities have been worn down and non-state actors have emerged. As the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) have gained legal status under the name of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRG), non-state actors, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (*Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi l-Iraq wa-sh-Sham*, in Arabic, DAESH), the People's Mobilization Forces (*al-Hashd al-Shaabi*, in Arabic) and Al Nusra Front, have managed to de facto establish their own authorities and remove the border between Syria and Iraq. Elsewhere, in Northern Syria, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) – People's Protection Units (YPG) has emerged as one of the leading actors in this new period. The PYD-YPG taking advantage of the chaos in Syria, rapidly subdued several regions owing to their engagement with the Assad regime and formed cantons where they declared autonomy.

When Turkey was faced with this new state of affairs, it initially tried to define the organization's connection with the Assad regime and the PKK-KCK.<sup>1</sup> Follow-

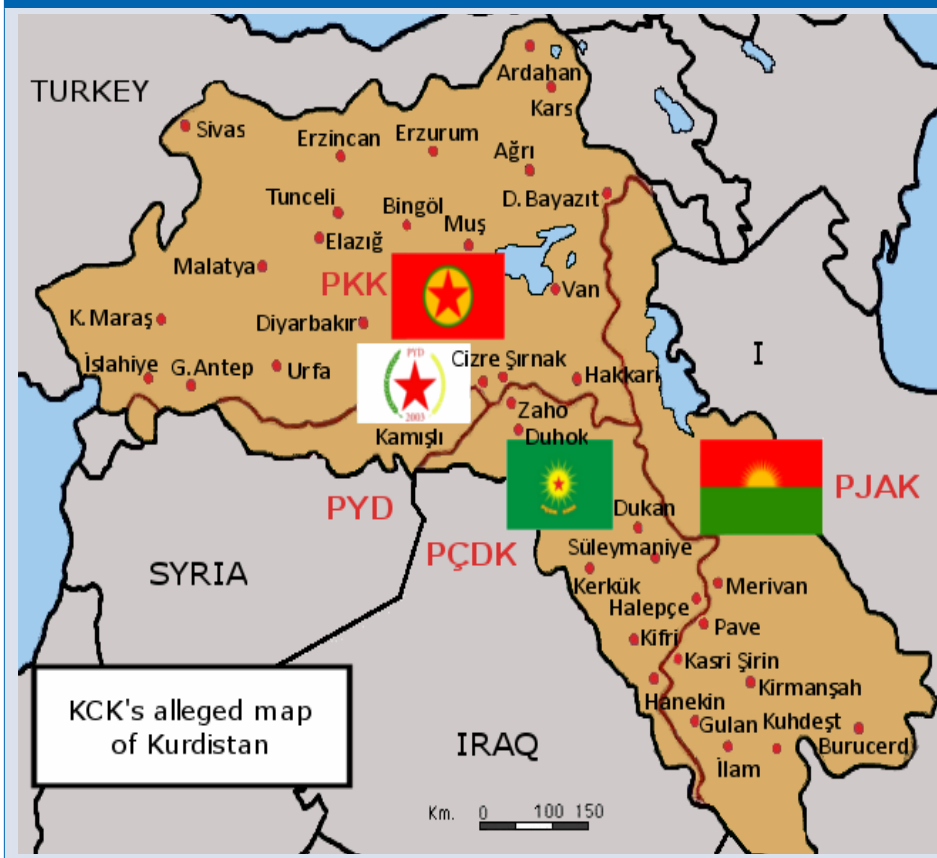
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1. The USA added the PKK to the list of "Foreign Terror Organizations" on October 8, 1997. <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>. The European Union (EU) designated the PKK as a terror organization on May 3, 2002. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32002D0334&from=EN>.



ing a process of evaluation, Turkey attempted to manage the situation by stipulating that if the PYD desires political relations with the country, it must avoid unilateral steps (i.e. declaration of autonomy), sever its ties with the PKK, and join the legitimate Syrian opposition. However, the PYD continued its illegitimate approaches. In this period, while the skirmishes between DAESH and the PYD-YPG paved the way for the establishment of a political link between the organization and the USA, the group insisted that the PYD-YPG is an organization independent of the PKK (a designated terror organization by Western countries) and that it only represents the Syrian Kurds.<sup>2</sup> The PYD, on the other side, argued for a long time that they had nothing to do with the PKK and had no connection with the Assad regime. Contrary to this argument, the PKK itself and its proxies in politics tied the resolution process (inside Turkey between the state of Turkey and the PKK) to the recognition of the PYD's gains in Northern Syria by Turkey. After the resolution process ended, Turkey

FIGURE 1: KCK'S ALLEGED MAP OF KURDISTAN



2. Among the rare reports published in the West on the PYD are the two reports entitled "Syria's Kurds: A Struggle Within a Struggle" by the International Group on January 22, 2013; and "Flight of Icarus? The PYD's Precarious Rise in Syria" by the same organization on May 8, 2014, where the group is clearly described as the Syrian branch of the PKK terror organization. Western countries, however, prefer to ignore this fact in order to engage politically and militarily with the PYD.

overtly designated the PYD as a PKK splinter in Syria, and deemed its activities and political-military engagements in Northern Syria as a threat to Turkey's national security and to the Syrian revolution. As Syria has been transformed first into a regional and then an international war arena of proxies, the clashes have started their fifth year. The PYD, on one hand, has not hesitated to introduce itself as a useful actor to non-regional big powers, such as the United States and Russia, and, on the other, has increased activities in the region by illegal and unconventional methods. The PYD, adorned with all the signs of a non-state actor,<sup>3</sup> took advantage of the absent or weak state authority and continued to conduct acts of terror in Northern Syria in order to achieve its goals. Turkey started Operation Euphrates Shield as a military intervention to the PYD's attempt to join the cantons. This attempt was a result of its engagement with the U.S. which was possible after the spread of chaos in Syria.

This report entitled "The PKK's Branch in Northern Syria: PYD-YPG" aims to answer basic questions about the PYD-YPG, and for this purpose examines the following:

- The dynamics which led to the emergence of the PKK (evolving into the PYD-YPG) in Northern Syria,
- The sporadic relations between the group and the Assad regime as the Turkey-Syria relations were normalized, and
- The connection between the regime and the PYD which has been re-established with the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in 2011.

The report also examines how the PYD-YPG is organized in Northern Syria and how it has formed administrative structures amid the chaos caused by the Syrian revolution; its own constitution is offered as proof of the organic bond between the group and the PKK-KCK. Furthermore, the report offers an in-depth analysis of the organization's military structure, its engagements, as well as information on the belt it has been trying to set up in Northern Syria. Activities of the PYD-YPG, which may constitute war crimes, such as the exploitation of child soldiers, ethnic cleansing and demographic engineering practices, are also discussed in the current report.

## THE FOUNDATION OF THE PYD

The north of Syria is of geopolitical significance as it constitutes the Turkey-Syria border and the Iraq-Syria border with the KRG-controlled regions on the Rabi-Sinjar track. Also, the region is heavily populated with Kurds and sits on criti-

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3. Phil Williams, "Violent Non-State Actors and National and International Security", International Relations and Security Network (ISN), November 25, 2008.

cal oil reserves, particularly in northeast Syria. In addition to the geopolitical significance of the region, Syrian Kurds, the habitants of the region, form the largest minority group in the country. So, due to right demands by the Kurds, Bashar al Assad's regime regarded the Syrian Kurds as a threat and monitored them closely. In this context, the regime and the PKK adopted a form of co-habitation and backed the PKK against Turkey in exchange for keeping Syrian Kurds on a tight leash in order not to pose any threat to the regime. The Syrian regime attempted to export its own Kurdish problem to Turkey as a deterrent and to take a counter position against Turkey's political and economic steps.<sup>4</sup>

As the Assad regime hosted PKK founder and leader Abdullah Öcalan, who was then a fugitive from Turkey, ironically, it continued with suppressive and discriminatory policies against Kurds living in the north of Syria. In this sense, the regime detained Öcalan as an advantage against Kurds in Syria.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the Assad regime worked with Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) to set up a PKK base in Northern Iraq. The Damascus administration exempted Kurds in the PKK ranks from military service.<sup>6</sup> In the 1990s, it should be noted, PKK militants of Syrian-origin constituted the largest group in the organization.<sup>7</sup>

After the Gulf War in 1991, the USA followed a strategy of using Iraqi Kurds against Saddam Hussein and made room for the PKK components based in this region. The organization's central power shifted to the area, and Iran and Western countries started to have a greater influence on the PKK.<sup>8</sup> In this period, upon Turkey's pressure the PKK closed down its camps in Lebanon's Beqaa Valley; however, Öcalan continued to live in Syria. Although Syria recognized the PKK as a terror organization, it continued to use it against Turkey. On October 1, 1998, the late President of Turkey, Süleyman Demirel, proclaimed in the Turkish Grand National Assembly that Turkey had the "right to retaliate against Syria"<sup>9</sup> following the remarks of Turkish Army Chief General Atilla Ateş who had sternly criticized Syria's actions during a visit in the southern Turkish province of Hatay in 1998.<sup>10</sup> With the mediation of Iran

4. Can Acun and Hüseyin Öner, "İŞİD-PYD Çatışmasının Sıcak Cephesi: Kobani", *SETA Perspektif*, (October 2014).

5. "The Kurdish Democratic Union Party", Carnegie Middle East Center, March 1, 2012.

6. Nihat Ali Özcan, *PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi)/Tarihi, İdeolojisi ve Yöntemi*, (ASAM Yayınları, Ankara: 1999).

7. Nihat Ali Özcan, "PKK Recruitment of Female Operatives", *The Jamestown Foundation*, Vol. 4, No.28, September 11, 2007. [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=4394#.VsQ7I\\_mLSM-](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4394#.VsQ7I_mLSM-)

8. "PKK Nasıl Kuruldu ve Güçlendi?", *Al Jazeera Türk*, December 26, 2013.

9. "Her Şey Atilla Paşa'nın Gözdağı ile Başladı", *Hürriyet*, November 14, 1998.

10. "In fact, Syria follows a policy of hostility towards Turkey and continues to provide active support to the PKK. Despite all of our warnings and peaceful overtures, Syria does not give up on animosity. I, once again, declare to the world that we have every right to reciprocate and that we are running out of patience". Presidential Speeches in Legislative Year Inaugurations -2, 2011.

and Egypt eventually, Turkey and Syria signed the Adana Protocol in October 1998. Immediately after, Öcalan was deported from Syria.<sup>11</sup> In parallel with these developments, PKK militants and off-shoots faced arrests and prosecutions in Syria.

After the death of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad on June 10, 2000, his son Bashar al-Assad took office. During the U.S. invasion of Iraq, a riot at a soccer game in the Syrian-Kurdish town of Qamishli led to protests and hostilities in 2004. Further events climaxed into an uprising in the towns of Amudah, Ras al-Ayn (Serê Kaniyê) and Deir az-Zor. According to some sources, at least 30 Kurds, or according to others over 100, were killed as the security services retook the city.<sup>12</sup>

The PKK, increasing its influence on Syrian Kurds, founded its Syrian branch entitled the Democratic Union Party (*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat*, PYD) in 2003, as a reprisal against the new conjuncture that emerged with the Adana Protocol and the normalization of the Turkey-Syria relations.<sup>13</sup> One of the most important factors here is that the formation of the PYD had in fact been previously designated. There is information that the leader of the PKK terrorist organization, Abdullah Öcalan, gave the order to his organization via his lawyers to establish this structure on February 16, 2002. After this order, during the PKK's 8th congress that took place on April 4-10, 2002, the aim was to reach more people in countries such as Iraq, Iran and Syria with the establishment of such organizations. After 2011, the PYD evolved into one of the leading actors in the north of Syria. Although it was established in 2003, the group's history dates back to the beginning of the PKK activities in Syria in the early 1980s. Fuad Omar led the PYD between 2003 and 2010. The organization, however, was not welcomed and the PYD militants were arrested by the Assad regime. Hundreds of PYD militants are believed to have been detained in the process. Many of its leaders, including Saleh Muslim, had to flee to Northern Iraq and sought shelter in the Qandil Mountains. As a result of an internal conflict within the PKK, in 2004 the splinter party *Rêkeftina Demoqrat a Kurdî ya Sûrî* (Rekeftin) was founded<sup>14</sup> by Kemal Şahin. The latter was killed by the PKK in Northern Iraq in February 2005.<sup>15</sup>

11. Hasan Duran, "Adana Protokolü Sonrası Türkiye-Suriye İlişkileri", In the Middle East Yearbook 2011, comp. Kemal İnat et.al, (Açılım Yayınları, İstanbul: 2012).

12. James Brandon, "The PKK and Syria's Kurds", Terrorism Monitor, Volume: 5, Issue: 3, February 21, 2007.

13. "The Kurdish Democratic Union Party", Carnegie Middle East Center, March 1, 2012.

14. The Syrian-Kurdish Democratic Reconciliation Movement (*Rêkeftina Demoqrat a Kurdî ya Sûrî*, Rekeftin) trying to survive under the PKK's heavy pressure supported the Damascus Declaration against the Assad regime. Fawzi Shingali and Nezned Mohammed are the current chairmen of the group.

15. "Suriyede Kürt Hareketleri", Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM), Report No: 127, August 2012.

## THE SYRIAN REVOLUTION AND THE PYD

Under the influence of the Arab Spring, Kurdish groups backed the revolution movement that broke out in Syria in 2011. Mishaal al-Tammo, the leader of the Future Movement, and a few more prominent figures from the Kurdish Islamists joined the uprisings against the regime. Shortly after, al-Tammo was shot dead at his home by masked gunmen. His supporters accused the Assad regime of killing him.<sup>16</sup> It has been claimed in some sources that the PYD was involved in the Tammo murder.<sup>17</sup> Following this turn of events, the Kurds opposed to the regime lost ground and the PYD that remained on good terms with the Assad regime came into prominence. As the PYD leader Muslim said there appeared to be a de facto agreement between the party and the regime.<sup>18</sup> Headquartered in Qamishli, the PYD effectively organized itself over the course of 2011 in Afrin, Ayn al-Arab and al Hasakah. In the chaos that followed the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in 2011, the PKK-KCK rapidly organized under the name of PYD in the north of the country, recruited more armed men, and with the regime's support formed administrative structures. The Assad regime, at first, invited Saleh Muslim to Syria and freed the PYD militants in prisons.<sup>19</sup> Muslim had previously been arrested by the regime, but was released shortly afterwards and banned from entry to the country. Muslim's negotiations with the regime resulted in the regime's support of the presence of the PKK-KCK in Syria, and the acceptance of the political and armed actions of the organization (in the frame of PYD structure) in the country.

Contrary to other Kurdish political entities in Northern Syria, the PYD developed an attitude in favor of the Assad regime in this period, and acted together with the Syrian intelligence agency, *al Mukhabarat*, and *Shabbiha* forces.<sup>20</sup> The regime forces withdrew from Kurdish regions, leaving the territory to the PYD and its armed-wing the YPG.

As a result, the YPG took Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) and other regions under control on July 19, 2012.<sup>21</sup> The YPG, in the areas under its control, challenged other Kurdish parties and movements, the Future Movement in particular, and tried to

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16. "Syria Security Forces 'Open Fire at Kurd's Funeral'", BBC, October 8, 2011.

17. "PYD", Carnegie Middle East Center, March 1, 2012.

18. Eric Bruneau, November 13, 2011; Rudaw, January 20, 2012.

19. Various sources reported that 600 PYD members were released by the Assad regime in a short span of time.

20. "Syria Kurdish Parties Trade Blames", KurdPress, May 23, 2013.

21. The second indictment prepared by the 16th High Criminal Court in Istanbul in 2012 revealed that Öcalan, via his lawyers, sent Bashar al Assad a letter of collaboration in April 2011, and that the letter read that the PKK would support the regime in exchange for administrative authorities to be granted to the PYD in the north of the country. For the full text of the second KCK Indictment, see: "İşte Savcı'nın KCK Şeması", *Habertürk*, April 4, 2012.

disable them.<sup>22</sup> The YPG-opponent Kurds came together in the Northern Iraqi city of Arbil on October 26-27, 2011 and founded the Kurdish National Council (KNC). As part of the Syrian opposition, the Council refused to engage in dialogue with the regime and contested the PYD. However, the PYD took advantage of the weaknesses of the Kurdish parties under the KNC and its armed-wing and to a great extent succeeded in warding off the Council.<sup>23</sup>

Although the political organizations closely aligned with the President of KRGI Massoud Barzani and the PYD reached an agreement in Arbil in June of 2012, the agreement was a failure.<sup>24</sup> The PYD components liquidated political organizations aligned with the KDP. In a visit to the southeastern Turkish province of Diyarbakır in 2013, Barzani targeted the PYD in his speech and implied that the Syrian regime left some territory to the PYD following a secret agreement with the group.<sup>25</sup> Again, Barzani termed the PYD's declaration to establish a transitional administration [in the Kurdish-majority areas] as a cooperation with Assad to implicate Syrian Kurds in the ongoing war.<sup>26</sup> The Berlin-based independent European Kurdish Research Center's internet portal KurdWatch released an in-depth report on multiple human rights violations by the PYD against the Kurdish population of Syria, such as opening fire on protesters and killing civilians in Amudah, torturing activists in detention, oppressing opponent groups, and cooperating with the regime militia and intelligence.<sup>27</sup>

The PYD-YPG maintained good relations with the Assad regime and ruled the city of Hasakah with the regime forces. After Ayn al-Arab was besieged by DAESH, the PYD-YPG was involved in a military engagement, this time, with U.S. aerial support and armament. The YPG strived to unite cantons under its control by relying on its alliance with the U.S.A. and the Syrian regime, captured the Syrian border town of Tal Abyad, and formed a line from Jazira to Ayn al-Arab by forcing out some of the Arabs

22. The Kurdish National Council (KNC) is the umbrella organization for Kurdish political parties in Syria, founded during a meeting in Qamishli on October 26-27, 2011.

23. Kurdish political parties and entities convened in Erbil on October 26-27, 2011 and founded the KNC. As part of the Syrian opposition, the KNC rejects direct dialogue with the Syrian regime. Under the auspices of Barzani, a second meeting was held in Erbil on December 17-18, 2011 and the Council reached the decision to side with the Syrian opposition. However, the Council lost influence when the PYD's military wing, the YPG, used force, a majority of the KNC leaders and supporters took refuge in Turkey and the KRGI, and several opponent figures, such as the leader of the Future Movement, Mishaal al Tammo, were killed.

24. "The Kurdish National Council in Syria", Carnegie, 2015.

25. "PYD Has Authority Only on Regions 'Given by the al-Assad Regime': Iraqi Kurdish Leader Barzani", *Hürriyet Daily News*, November 14, 2013.

26. "Barzani Says PYD is Linked to Assad", *Etilaf*, November 16, 2013.

27. "Forcible Recruitments and the Deployment of Child Soldiers by the Democratic Union Party in Syria", KurdWatch, May 2015.

and Turkmens from the region. The YPG aims to connect Afrin, another YPG-controlled canton, with others. In search of a united front against DAESH and the Syrian opposition, the PYD-YPG increased contacts with Russia by taking advantage of Russia's intervention in the Syrian civil war as of September 30, 2015.

## THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE PYD

The PYD, with its headquarter in Qamishli, has effectively organized its presence in and control of Afrin, Ayn al-Arab and Hasakah. The PYD's co-chairs are Saleh Muslim and Asya Abdallah. The group follows the ideology of "Apoism" (after Abdullah Öcalan, aka Apo) in Northern Syria -which they refer to as Rojava- and describe the Kongra-Gel in their constitution as the "supreme legislative body of the Kurdish people".

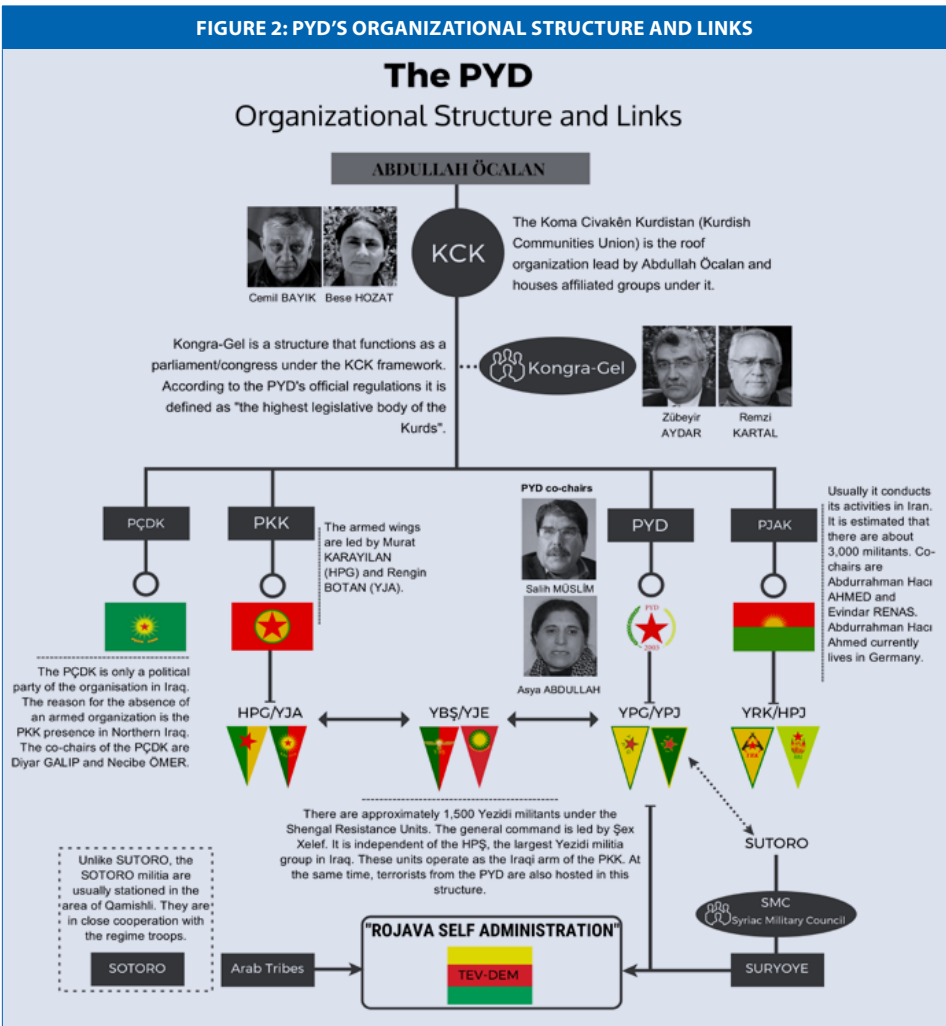




FIGURE 3



The inclusion of such clauses in the rules of procedure, the PYD's acting in subordination to the PKK's executive council, its organizational structure and remarks, and the acceptance of Öcalan as the leader of all Kurdish peoples prove beyond all doubt that the PKK and the PYD, beyond their similarities, are subdivisions of the Kurdistan People's Community (*Koma Civakên Kurdistan, KCK*).<sup>28</sup> In fact, the statements in the PYD bylaws state that "Abdullah Öcalan is the leader of the PYD, the KCK, the people of Kurdistan, Kongra-Gel and the Kurdish community in Rojava (northern Syria)". The PYD's acknowledgment along these lines further proves the existence of such an affiliation. It has also been established that the main decisions that form the structure of the PYD were formed between 2003 and 2015. The congresses organized between those years took place in camps that are connected with the PKK/KCK and are managed entirely by the organization. The decisions made during these congresses have included determining the PYD's headquarters and the organization of different activities. It has also been established that the PKK's Martyr Ayhan camp located in Kandil has been the PYD's main headquarters, where its members have been educated and then sent off to Syria. Later, KCK executive council member Sahin Cilo Kobani and Mustafa Abdi

28. The PYD Official Rules of Procedure. The PYD's official bylaws were published in Arabic on [www.pydrojava.org](http://www.pydrojava.org), but were removed at a later date. The full text of the bylaws, in English, is shared at the end of this document.



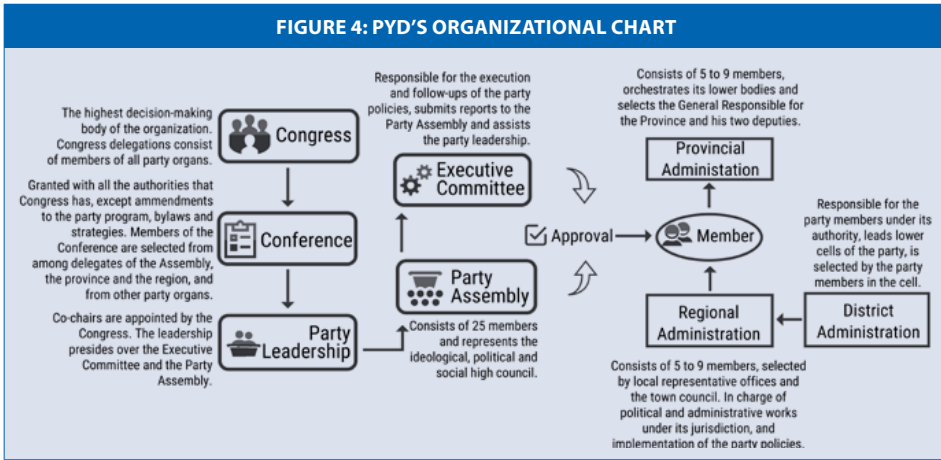
Bin Halil (code name Mazlum) were appointed by the PKK to carry out the PYD's activities. Halil is also known as Ferhat Abdi Sahin. Apart from this, the KCK has also nominated Salih Muslim, (code name Ebu Velat) as the head of the PYD in the place of its first leader Barazani Muhammed. Another important heading in the rules of procedure is the required qualifications for PYD membership. Pledging allegiance to Öcalan is clearly stated under this heading. The "adoption of the leader Öcalan's method of democratic civilization" is set as a condition for party membership and the duty of all party members is stated as follows: "Party members must be proud of the values of leader Abdullah Öcalan and of the Kurdish people, must remain loyal to Abdullah Öcalan and strive for his freedom."<sup>29</sup> Conditions are also set in the PYD bylaws for the formation and protection of a democratic confederation, in addition to the statement of a "paradigm of moral society and democratic politics," gender equality, and freedom of faith.

The PYD's organizational structure is composed of five main bodies: the Congress, the Conference, Party Leadership, Party Assembly, and the Executive Committee. The supreme decision-making body, the Congress, convenes every three years based on the majority rule and the majority vote. Two-thirds of the Party Assembly members and the approval of the chairman, or two-thirds of the Party members are required for extraordinary conventions of the Congress. If necessary, the ordinary congressional meeting may be postponed only once, and for one year at most, by the decision of the party chairman or two-thirds of the assembly members. All bodies of the organization select their own delegates and send them to the Congress. The participation ratio of the regional administrations is determined by the number of members and according to the level of effort and success, the meanings of which are not described. The Party Leadership and the Assembly members are allowed to participate in the Congress as ordinary members. The authority for the approval of the party program and the bylaws as well as amendments, change of strategy and laying out temporary policies rests with the Congress. The Congress also selects the Party Leadership, the Assembly, and candidate members to the Assembly.

The Conference, which is second in the hierarchy, convenes when necessary by the decision of the Party Assembly, and the Executive Committee, and with the voting of the Party Leadership. The number of the participants of the Conference is determined by the Party Assembly. The participants of the Conference are selected by members and candidate members of the Assembly and representatives of the provincial and regional delegates. The Conference is granted equal authority with the Congress excluding the authority to change the Party bylaws,

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29. The PYD Official Rules of Procedure, Party Membership, Article 1, clauses a, b, c.



program and strategy. At provincial and regional level, conferences are held prior to the convention of the Congress.

The Party Leadership stands out among the other bodies of the PYD. The co-chairmanship consists of a man and a woman who are selected by two-thirds of the majority at the Congress and for, at most, two consecutive terms. Absolute majority is sufficient for the third round of voting if the preceding two rounds fail. In the period between two congressional conventions, co-chairs preside over the Party Assembly and the Executive Committee. The co-chairmanship is authorized with the decisions and activities of the organization, the formation of special committees for assistance and the presentation of activity reports to the Congress and the Party Assembly.

The Party Assembly is composed of 25 members in general, and is an ideological, political and structural council that functions between two consecutive conventions of the Congress. The Assembly selected by the Congress is obliged to present an end-of-term report to the Congress. For the purpose of supervision and regulation, the Party Leadership is responsible to the Assembly and vice versa. Members of the Executive Committee are selected by the Assembly and from among the Assembly members. The Executive Committee members must be approved by the Party Leadership. Majority of vote is required for decisions in the Assembly which convenes once every three months. The Party Assembly is authorized with the coordination of the formation and operational audits of the organization's lower bodies. Among the tasks of the Assembly are to determine the party's external policies, organize and direct media, the training of members and raising of public awareness, with a vision to form finance committees, and support institutions and parties aligned with the PYD in neighboring states and in the regions called Kurdistan.

As the third most powerful body of the organization after the Leadership and the Assembly, the Executive Committee submits reports to the Assembly, deter-

mines the organization's ideological, political and diplomatic tactics, and follows their progress. It also provides assistance to the co-chairmanship and performs the tasks of the co-chairmanship as needed. Activities of the Executive Committee are determined and directed by the chairman. The Committee also presents its own activity reports to the Assembly.

There also exist three nested bodies at local level. The first of these bodies is the Provincial Administration which consists of five to nine members, and convenes bimonthly. The Provincial Administration acts as a council responsible for regional governances under its authority. Members of the Provincial Administrations are selected by the Regional Administrations, but must be approved by the Assembly and Executive Committee. A general responsible and two deputies are selected for activity follow-ups.

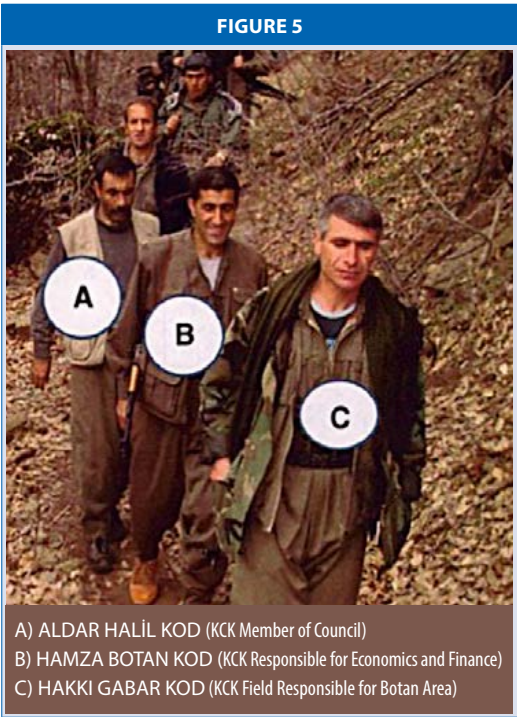
The second local body is the Regional Administration. It consists of five to nine members which are selected by local representatives and county administrations. A regional administration is in charge of political and organization activities under its jurisdiction, and the implementation of the organization's decisions.

The third local body is the District Administration, whose members are selected by the members of the lowest-level cells of the organization. A district administration has authority over the members under its jurisdiction.




## PKK TERRORISTS WITHIN THE PYD

Fundamentally, all of this information is considered sufficient to reveal the relationship between the PKK and PYD. However, the PKK/KCK has continued its full control of the PYD under different names. According to several researches, many PKK/KCK members have either been appointed by the KCK to the PYD or have been assigned to carry out the PYD's armed activities especially after the start of the Syria crisis.






As seen from the image above, Aldar Halil, who is a member of the TEV-DEM (an organi-




zation which will be explained further on), is photographed with two KCK members (code names Hamza Botan and Hakkı Gabar). Halil was nominated to the KCK’s executive council in July 2013 during the PKK/KCK’s 9th congress, and during the 11th congress, which took place in September of the same year, he was appointed to the PKK assembly. Hakkı Gabar (Iskan Akyuz), who is responsible for the area referred to as Bostan by the organization, which includes Sirnak, Siirt and Hakkari, is in the same frame. Abdullah Sen (code name Hamza Botan), lives in Holland and is responsible for the European finance and economy. In March 2015, he was sentenced to six years in prison by a German court for “being a member of an internationally active terrorist organization.”<sup>30</sup>

FIGURE 6: PKK/KCK MEMBERS WORKING FOR THE PYD/YPG		
Name	Nom de Guerre	Photograph
Fahman Muhammed Tahir Husain	Bahoz Erdal/Doktor/Serdem	
Husain, a permanent member of the KCK Syria's high decision board, between 2003 and 2009 was the main person responsible for HPG activities. He also served as the person responsible for activities in Turkey, which during the period 2011-2013 was called the "North Field." Husain was appointed to the People's Defense Center headquarters in 2013. Finally in 2015, Husain crossed over to Syria to coordinate the terrorist activities of the YPG.		
Name	Nom de Guerre	Photograph
Mustafa Abdi Bin Halil/Ferhat Abdi Shahin	Shahin Cilo Kobani/Mazlum	
Shahin, who is permanent member of KCK Syria's high decision board, joined the organization in 1990. He conducted terrorist activities in rural areas of Şemdinli in 1996. In the years 1997-2003, Shahin hid in Europe. Between 2003 and 2004, he was located in Makhmur/Iraq. In 2005, he served as a member of the PKK's high executive board. Later, in the years 2009-2012, Shahin was appointed to the position responsible for the HPG's special operations forces. Since 2012, he is involved in the organization's Syrian administration and is responsible for military, special operation and intelligence activities.		
Name	Nom de Guerre	Photograph
Cemil Amed	Fuat	
Amed, who joined the organization in 1992, is a permanent member of KCK Syria's high decision board. After being active in the area of Latakia and Amanus, he served on the side of Abdullah Öcalan for a long, unspecified time. In 2013, he became a member of the KCK executive board and was appointed as the representative of political activities of the KCK Syria headquarters administration.		

30. [http://www.olg-duesseldorf.nrw.de/behoerde/presse/archiv/Pressemitteilungen\\_aus\\_2015/20150306\\_PM\\_Urteil-Sen/index.php](http://www.olg-duesseldorf.nrw.de/behoerde/presse/archiv/Pressemitteilungen_aus_2015/20150306_PM_Urteil-Sen/index.php)

Name	Nom de Guerre	Photograph
<b>Hanife Husain</b>	<b>Halide</b>	
<p>Husain, who joined the organization in 1998, is a permanent member of KCK Syria high decision board and was appointed to the PYD's women's coordination branch in 2012. In August 2013, she was appointed at the KCK Syria headquarter as the person responsible for the YPG's women cadres. Since May 2015, Husain is coordinating women's terrorist activities under the umbrella of KCK Syria.</p>		
Name	Nom de Guerre	Photograph
<b>Nureddin al-Muhammad</b>	<b>Sofi Nureddin</b>	
<p>Al-Muhammad, who joined the organization in 1990, has been a permanent member of KCK Syria's high decision board and since 2013 is responsible for the political activities of the KCK in the regions. At the fourth HPG conference in February 2007, he was appointed to the council of command; in 2019, he took over the HPG representative task from Fahman Husain. Al-Muhammad is currently also responsible for the declared cantons in Syria.</p>		
Name	Nom de Guerre	Photograph
<b>Asya Abdallah Reyhan Muhammad</b>	<b>Dilan Riham Muhammed</b>	
<p>Abdallah, who is a member of the organization for about 25 years, is currently also a permanent member of KCK Syria's high decision board. Before joining terrorist activities in Syria, she was located in the Gara and Qandil regions of Iraq. At the PYD's fifth congress, which was held on June 16, 2012 in Hasakah, she was appointed co-chair of the PYD. She also holds a representative position under the KCK for the cantons in Northern Syria.</p>		
Name	Nom de Guerre	Photograph
<b>unidentified</b>	<b>Ferhat Derik</b>	
<p>Born in 1980 in Syria, Ferhat Derik is a member of KCK Syria's administrative body and a member of the TEV-DEM. In the 2000s, he was in Aleppo; in 2004, he was responsible for terrorist activities there. Like Asya Abdallah, he was also located in the Gara and Qandil regions of Iraq for a while. Currently, his main responsibility is the city of Tell Abyad.</p>		
Name	Nom de Guerre	Photograph
<b>unidentified</b>	<b>Çiya Kobani</b>	
<p>Çiya Kobani joined the organization in 1992 in the Syrian city of Ayn al-Arab. He is also a member of the KCK Syria administration board. After many years of terrorist activities in the Zagros area, he became the main person responsible for Hakkari in 2011. Today, he is in charge of "Mobile Units-Special Forces" in Syria.</p>		

Name	Nom de Guerre	Photograph
Ahmet ŞEKER	Fazıl Gite/Şınaki/Botan/Kerim	
During the HPG conference held on October 10-19, 2013, Şeker became a member of HPG's military council. Since then, he is a senior leader inside KCK Syria. At the eleventh congress of the PKK, which was held in 2013, he was elected to the central committee of the organization. Şeker, who was responsible for the Qandil field before moving to Syria in May 2014, was seriously injured in March 2015. It was confirmed that on May 26, 2015, Şeker was transported to France via Erbil Airport by a military aircraft belonging to the French Air Force.		

## PYD'S INTERNATIONAL/FOREIGN STRUCTURE

The terrorist organization PYD does not only carry out activities in Syria. Unlike the PKK, it has opened or tried to open offices and establish representatives in Europe using its names and generally adding “Rojava” instead of using a dummy organization. Accordingly, the PYD does not have a general European representative; instead it carries out activities in Europe under names such as “Rojava Democratic Decentralisation/Autonomous Management” and “Rojava Public Assembly.” The following names are presented within the framework of the research:

<b>Europe:</b>	Zuhat Kobane
<b>Germany/Berlin:</b>	Sipan İbrahim (Rojava Democratic Self Administration)
<b>Germany/Bremen:</b>	Ayhan Efrînî
<b>Belgium:</b>	Koçer Heseke
<b>Benelux Union:</b> <sup>31</sup>	Şervan Hasan (Rojava Representation, HQ in Netherlands/The Hague)
<b>United Kingdom:</b>	Ahmed Şemo (PYD) Ciwan Afrin (Rojava People's Parliament)
<b>Czech Republic:</b> <sup>32</sup>	İman Derviş (YPJ)
<b>Denmark:</b>	Bave Hüseyin
<b>France:</b>	Halit İsa
<b>Sweden:</b> <sup>33</sup>	Şiyar Ali
<b>Norway:</b>	Serbest Welad
<b>Russia:</b>	Abdusalam Ali

31. The PYD aims to conduct diplomatic activities in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg through its office in The Hague. The existence of a separate office in Belgium can be associated with a massive presence of PKK supporters in the country.

32. YPJ commander Nesrin Abdullah made her first visit to a foreign country to the Czech Republic. Abdullah, who met with officials of the Czech Republic's Defense Ministry, also attended the opening ceremonies of the Prague's office.

33. Nesrin Abdullah also attended the opening of the PYD office in Sweden's capital Stockholm.



With its office and representatives in Europe, the PYD continues its terror diplomacy which serves its aims. Although European countries approach the PYD differently, they do not take serious actions against the activities carried out by the terrorist organization in their countries. It also seems that some state ministers give special attention to the PYD/YPG. For example, the French Minister Elysee invited the co-head of the PYD Asya Abdullah and YPJ commander Nesrin Abdullah for a meeting. In the case of Italy, PYD/YPG members have managed to make connections, but they have not succeeded in opening an office. The most important fact is the PYD's constant communication with the European Parliament. It is a known fact that their latest contact was in September 2016, when the co-head of the PYD Salih Muslim requested support for the organization mainly against the Operation Euphrates Shield.<sup>34</sup>

## THE GOVERNANCE OF NORTHERN SYRIA

The PYD declared autonomy in some parts of Northern Syria on January 30, 2014.<sup>35</sup> The three geographically disconnected regions of Jazira, Ayn el-Arab and Afrin along the Turkish border are self-declared cantons. The PYD-controlled cantons are ruled by a “social contract,” in the nature of a constitution. Although Arabs and Syriacs/Asyrians are in the administrative bodies of the self-proclaimed cantons, the main elements are PYD figures. The PYD's majority power is a direct result of its armed wing, the YPG, rather than of demographic reasons.

The type of governance in the cantons is referred to as a “democratic self-administration system” and the cantons are ruled by TEV-DEM, the Movement for a Democratic Society (*Tevgera Civaka Demokratik*). PYD Co-chair Saleh Muslim is also the coordinator of TEV-DEM. Each of the Afrin, Kobani and Jazira cantons is ruled by different leaders. The current Premier of Afrin Canton is Hevi İbrahim and of Kobani Canton Muslim's son Anwar Muslim. Qamishli is the administrative center of Jazira Canton under Premier Ekrem Hesô. However, Jazira is currently controlled from Amudah due to security threats.

The legal foundation in Northern Syria is built on a “social contract,” which contains main provisions on how cantons shall be governed. This contract was ratified, with the participation of different parties, in Amudah on October 6, 2014. One of the critical points emphasized in the preamble of the contract is the article stating that the self-proclaimed regions and cantons will continue to form an in-

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34. “Avrupa'nın teröristi”, *Yeni Şafak*, September 1, 2016.

“PYD leader to European Parliament: Turkey still supporting ISIS”, *ARA News*, September 3, 2016.

35. On March 17, 2016, the PYD declared a federal system of governance in northern Syria.

tegral part of Syria. Similar to the KCK system, the contract includes elements of a council and separation of powers.

Although a democratic pluralism in form is projected, the PYD, leaning on its armed-wing the YPG, has absolute weight in majority of council positions which, indeed, should be determined by elections. TEV-DEM, an alliance of different parties, basically emphasizes pluralism. Beside the PYD, the other parties that comprise the TEV-DEM are small secular Kurdish entities with no grassroots and which are under the PYD's mandate.

On March 17, 2016, the PYD announced their request to include Afrin, Jazira and Kobani cantons in the Syrian Kurdistan Federation. While this stage was developing, there were also thoughts about wanting to include the area between Azaz and Jarablus in the federation. This federation, which was to be located at the Turkish-Syrian border, would have fuelled the terrorist activities in Turkey. It is important to emphasize that in the social contract, which is trying to be executed in the area referred to as "Rojava Oz Yonetim," it is stated that the armed side of the organization, the YPG, is responsible for defending the area. If the Turkish-Syrian border including the Azez-Jarablus line had fallen into the hands of the terrorist organization, namely the PYD/YPG, there probably would have been a geographical area of a terrorist nature in Northern Syria. As a result, the Operation Euphrates Shield, led by the Turkish Armed Forces, prevented the terrorist organization's plan for this area.

The PYD is continuing its opportunist methods to turn the crisis in Syria, which is yet to be resolved on a political and pragmatic level, to its advantage. According to statements made by the PYD, it seems that the proclamation of the federation will strengthen the claims of "self administration." However, reactions against the federation claims and its aims soon followed.

For example, while Russia supported the PYD's federation aims, Iran was seen to be against it. Iran's stance is understood to be a result of their concern against the Assad regime and the decrease of their effect in the area. In this sense, the Assad regime has stated that the federation announcement is not Assad on any lawful ground. Although the PYD emphasizes the unity of Syria, it can be observed that after the proclamation of the federation, the next step would be an autonomous region.

After the announcement of the federation, the PYD formed a committee called "Social Contract Committee of the Founding Parliament of the Democratic Federalism in Northern Syria" on March 23-24, 2016. This committee states that a new social contract will be established to replace the former social contract with the aim to include the federation areas. It has been established that the draft



**FIGURE 7: READING OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT IN DARBASIYAH**

Source: "Toplumsal sözleşme Dırbəsiyê'de değərləndirdi", Hawar Haber Ajansı, September 16, 2016.

**FIGURE 8: PARTICIPANTS IN AL-MALIKIYAH HOLDING ABDULLAH ÖCALAN'S POSTER DURING HOMAGE BEFORE A MEETING ON THE SOCIAL CONTRACT**

Source: "Toplumsal sözleşme halka aktarıldı", Hawar News Agency, September 15, 2016.

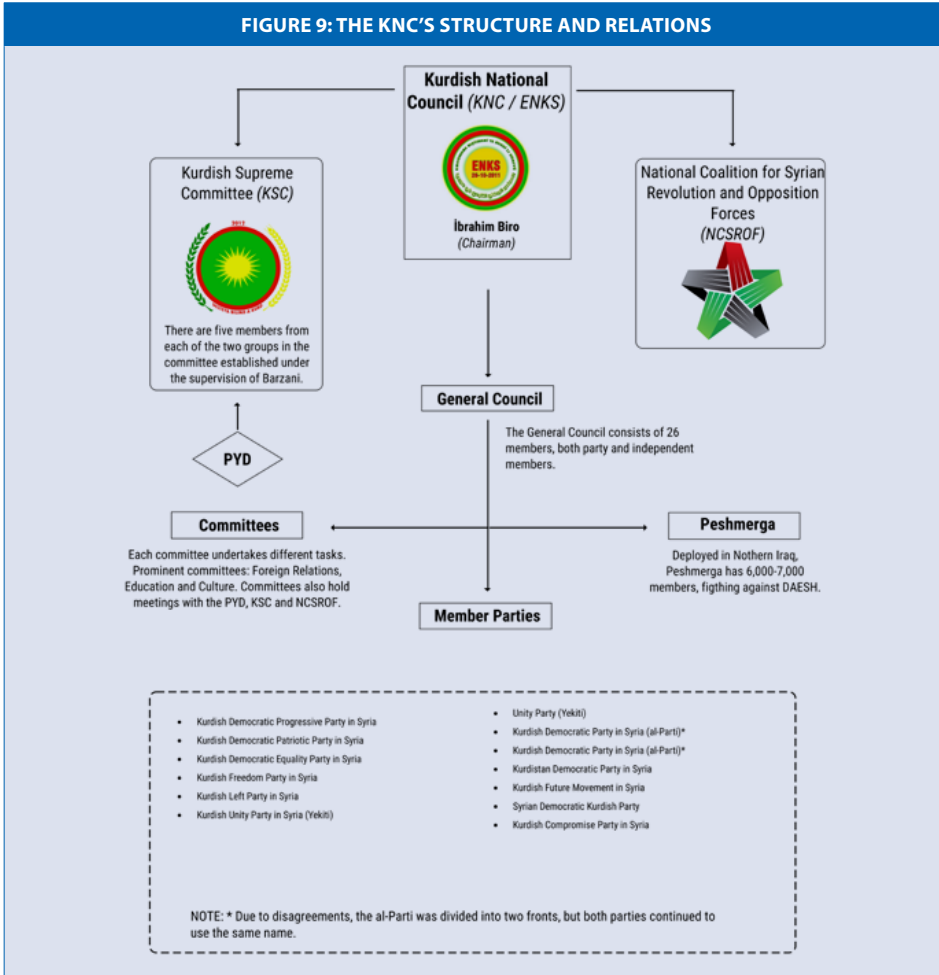
version of the contract, dated May 10, 2016, was presented to the other committees of the organization on June 25, 2016. After the organization's confirmation, the contract - which allegedly will be publicly consulted but in fact forcefully executed - was introduced to different areas/regions. According to this, it has been confirmed that introductory meetings have taken place on June 12-18, 2016 at al-Malikiyah, Dırbasiyah, Ras al-Ayn, al-Muabadda, and Tal Hamis. When observing the pictures taken at these meetings, the picture of the leader of the terrorist organization is clearly visible. Also, one

of the leading names in these meetings is "Co-president of the Founding Parliament of the Democratic Federalism in Northern Syria" Hediye Yusuf.

Hediye Yusuf gave an interview to Reuters on this subject where he targets Turkey.<sup>36</sup> In his interview, Yusuf mentions that they will announce the new constitution along with the new system in October 2016. He further states that they will continue with their plans despite Turkey's ongoing operation in the area. From the statements it can be assumed that there are plans to include Manbij in this federal system and that the PYD/YPG still plans to join with Afrin located in the west. Details regarding the "social contract" were also given during the interview. As such the contract will be confirmed by the 151 committee members led by Yusuf. Later, they will start on the election law that will first replace local and then regional elections. According to

36. Tom Perry, "Syrian Kurds, allies to approve federal plan despite Turkey", *Reuters*, September 8, 2016.

FIGURE 9: THE KNC'S STRUCTURE AND RELATIONS



this contract, Qamishli, which is called the capital of the Jazira canton, is expected to be the capital city of the federation. Apart from this, it is mentioned that a population count that will include Northern Syria will be made by the “Founding Parliament of the Democratic Federalism in Northern Syria” before the federation statement with the aim of using it for the organization’s benefit.<sup>37</sup> When studying the details of the count that will take place in Amuda City on September 23, it is understood that those living abroad of Amuda descent will also be included.<sup>38</sup> The count is expected to start at the Jazira canton first and continue to the Kobani canton.

Dissident Kurds are represented by the Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (PDK-S) and the KNC, an umbrella organization.<sup>39</sup> Founded by Syrian Kurds,

37. “Cizir’de nüfus sayımı başladı”, Hawar Haber Ajansı, September 19, 2016.

38. “Nüfussayımına 23 Eylül’de Amûdêden devam edilecek”, Hawar Haber Ajansı, September 20, 2016.

39. The abbreviation of the Kurdish National Council (KNC) in Kurdish is “ENKS” (*Encûmena Nîştimanî ya Kurdîli Sûriyî*).

who have an intellectual and structural alignment with the Iraqi Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani, the PDK-S is trying to remain active in all cantons despite the PYD's pressure. It is the oldest among all of the Kurdish political parties in Syria.

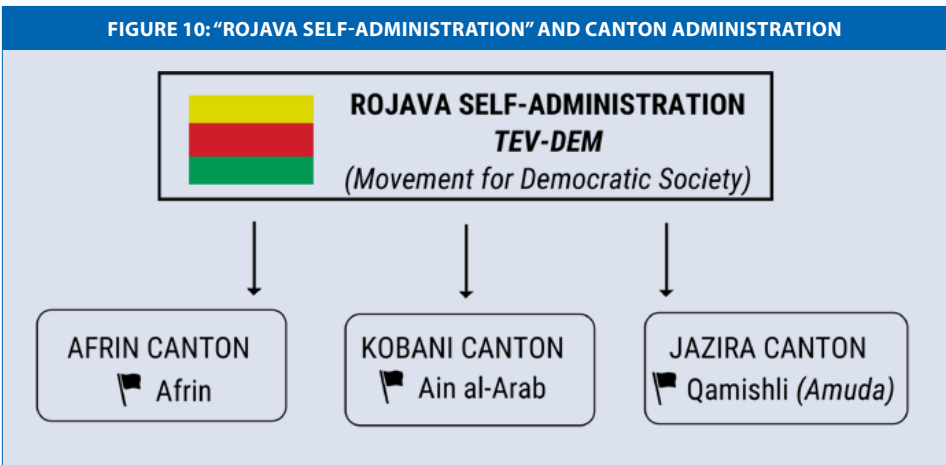
The PDK-S and the KNC side with the Syrian opposition and position themselves as part of the Syrian revolution. However, dissident Kurds are kept under pressure by the TEV-DEM and PYD, both of which have the regime's support, and their participation in the political arena is not tolerated. The majority of the Kurdish proponents of the PDK-S and the KNC were intimidated by the PYD and forced to emigrate to Turkey and KRG.

Following the talks between the two parties under the auspices of the Iraqi Kurdistan President Barzani, the TEV-DEM and KNC founded the Kurdish Supreme Committee in 2012. Nonetheless, the mechanism was not carried into effect due to PYD's oppressive politics. Many parties represented in the KNC either joined the PYD or had to cease their activities.

## THE ADMINISTRATION OF CANTONS

Prior to the declaration of autonomy in Northern Syria, three autonomous regions were declared on November 12, 2013. The Afrin, Jazira and Kobani Cantons have since constituted their own legislative, executive and judicial bodies and systems. The governance of these cantons is divided into the Legislative Council (Assembly), the Executive Council (Government) and the Judicial Council (Judiciary). In addition, a High Commission of Elections and a Supreme Constitutional Court also exist.

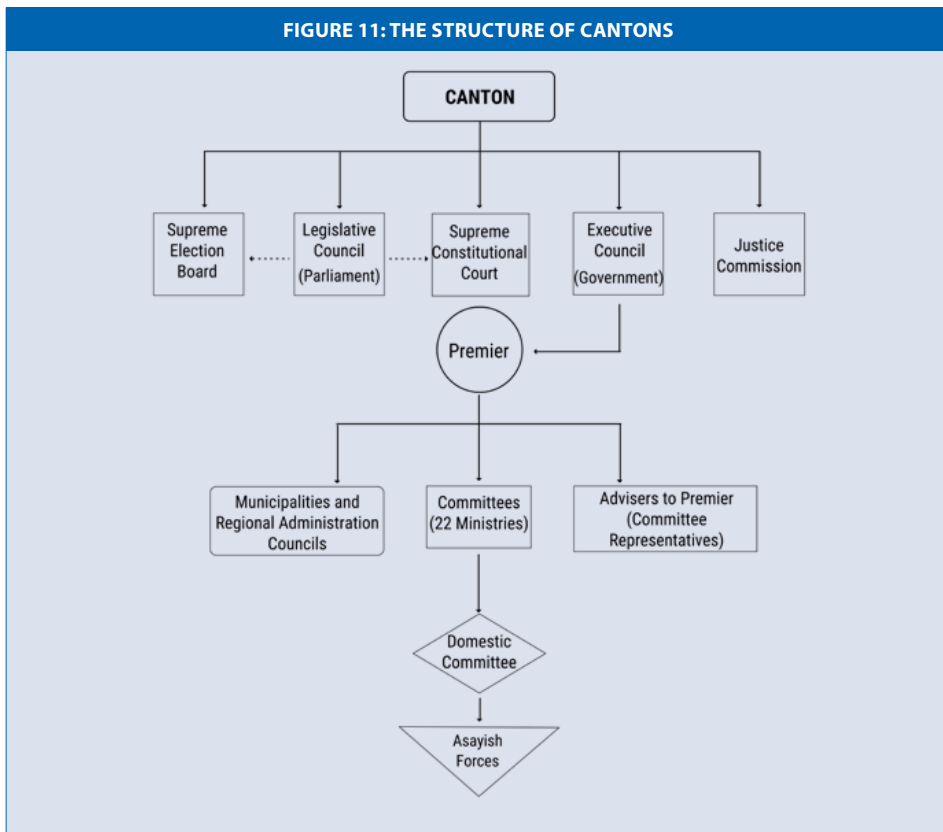
Among the functions of the Legislative Council is to exercise control over the executive bodies and the ratification of international treaties and agreements. The Council delegates its power to one of its members to form a government; ratifies the appointment of members of the aforementioned Supreme Constitutional



Court; declares a state of war and peace; adopts the general budget; approves and grants amnesty; and establishes general policy and development plans.

The Legislative Council also adopts laws for the common governance of the Provincial Councils of the Autonomous Regions. Through this function, Tal Ab-yad<sup>40</sup> declared itself a self-autonomous democratic region in October 2015 and is affiliated with the Kobani Canton.<sup>41</sup> The co-chairs of the autonomous region are Mansur Selum and Layla Mustafa.

The Executive Council is another body that runs the executive administration and governance of a canton under the supervision of the Legislative Council. It is responsible for the implementation of laws, and the resolutions and decrees as issued by the Legislative Council and the Judicial Council. The Executive Council is composed of a chairman, representatives and committees; the chairman of the Executive Council is, at the same time, the premier of the canton. The Municipalities and Regional Administrative Councils are directly controlled by the premier. There are a total of 20 committees under the Executive Council, each of which functions as a ministry.



40. Written as “Girê Spi” in Kurdish.

41. “Rojava’s Gire Spi Declares Autonomy”, Rudaw, October 21, 2015.

The representatives of committees, at the same time, serve as advisers to the chairman. The committees are listed as: Foreign Relations; Defense; Domestic Affairs; Justice; Regional/Cantonal (Municipality, Census, and Planning); Finance; Labor and Job Placement; Education; Agriculture; Electrical Industry and Underground Resources; Health; Trade and Economy; Martyrs and Veteran Affairs; Enlightenment and Communication; Transportation; Youth and Sports; Tourism and Archeology; Religion; Women and Family; and Human Rights. It should be noted here that local branches of the security militia in general, which are responsible to the “Rojava Self-Administration,” are affiliated with the Domestic Affairs Committee.

## THE YPG/YPJ AND ASAYISH MILITIA

Following the outbreak of the civil war and in addition to other armed groups active in the region, the People's Defense Units (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*, YPG), PYD's armed-wing, has emerged as a significant power. After Assad's forces pulled out, in a pre-arranged manner, from the areas heavily populated with Kurds, the YPG militia in Northern Syria captured Ayn al-Arab on July 19, and Amudah and Afrin on July 20 without any serious heated encounters.<sup>42</sup>

The YPG militants continued to advance around Qamishli, north of Hasakah, and seized Malikiye and Ras al-Ayn in Western Hasakah. Again, no heavy clashes took place with the Assad forces in these regions.<sup>43</sup>

Military bases and state institutions of the Assad regime remained active in Qamishli and Hasakah town centers as the YPG and the Assad regime were deployed together in the region. The YPG captured all of the above regions in a short period of time, which is an indication that the YPG was organized in advance.

Active since 2012, the YPG is organized in a fashion similar to the armed wing of the PKK, the People's Defense Forces (*Hêzên Parastina Gel*, HPG). The group, at the same time, incorporates the Women's Protection Units (*Yekîneyên Parastina Jin*, YPJ) similar to the PKK's Free Women's Units (*Yekîneyên Jinên Azad ên Star*, YJA-Star).

According to various sources, the YPG/YPJ has approximately a total of 30,000 militants in command; 10,000 of them are YPJ members.<sup>44</sup> According to the organization's constitution, the YPG is the sole military force of the three

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42. “After Quiet Revolt, Power Struggle Looms for Syria's Kurds”, Reuters, November 7, 2012.

43. “Ban: Syrian Regime ‘Failed to Protect Civilians’”, CNN, July 22, 2012.

44. The organization's sources claim to have over 40,000 militants, but independent sources report this number as closer to 20,000-25,000.

cantons, with the mandate to protect and defend the security of the autonomous regions declared in Northern Syria.

Along with the general command chain, the most critical YPG organ is the General Military Council which consists of 55 members and convenes monthly. It is responsible for all YPG activities and has subdivisions at local levels as well.

The number of members of local military councils varies according to the populations of their regions. Local military councils convene every three months. The commander in chief is Sipan Hemo. The organization's spokesman is Redur Xelil. The YPJ commander is Nesrin Abdullah. There are also regional military commanders in Ayn el-Arab, Jazira, Afrin, Ras al-Ayn, Tal Abyad, and Aleppo.

The YPG also has sub-command leaders in the self-declared cantons. The higher body of the YPG is the extended Military Council which meets once a year. In annual meetings, the work of the previous period is evaluated, and work plans for the following year are determined.

According to the bylaws,<sup>45</sup> the YPG consists of three basic divisions: professional forces, resistance units, and local forces. All three work in accordance with the general command through reports, orders and instructions.

Another point worth mentioning is that the code names of YPG/YPJ militants are given by the general command. The organization refers to the military branches for training YPG militia as "academies" and each is named after deceased terrorists.<sup>46</sup>

Apart from the aforementioned three main groups, there are also various units under the general command, such as the border units responsible for border security.

The Logistics Unit takes care of logistic infrastructure and equipment, makes equipment and munition planning, and meets the necessities of the military commanders and units. The Record and Archive Unit, called *Saziya Arşiva Sicîlan* in Kurdish, saves the information on each member's identity, on all organizational structures and activities, and archives all the acquired information.

Other important entities, established both in the General Command and Sub-Command headquarters, are the gear and ammunition centers. They are responsible for the storage, registration and protection of all equipment and ammunition, consider cases of emergency in war, and store weapons and ammunition on this basis. The Finance Unit is responsible for fiscal policy, auditing, and logistic infrastructure.

45. The bylaws on the YPG's official website were removed at a later date.

46. For instance; "Şehid Xebat (Hebat) Military Academy".

One last feature to consider are the couriers who are in charge of providing contacts and communication between the General Command and all local and sub-unit leaders. Contacts are made through the Units of Couriers. Each sub-command headquarter creates a Courier Unit to communicate with the headquarters.

**Members of the aforementioned three main military units give body to the following four distinct structures:**

- Group/Team which consists of three to five combatants
- Platoon which consists of two teams
- Company which consists of three platoons
- Battalion which consists of three companies

In addition, the Provincial Commandership (*Ayalat*) functions as the Leadership of Brigades. Secret Resistance Units, on the other hand, are affiliated with these brigades, keep record on regional and local activities, and report to command centers.

Along with the YPG/YPJ, another organization in charge of security/civil policing in the controlled cities is the *Asayish* forces. The co-chairs of *Asayish* are Jivan Ibrahim and Aitan Ferhat. *Asayish* groups are affiliated with domestic affairs committees in the cantons. Contrary to the YPG/YPJ, *Asayish* forces arose after the declaration of autonomy. Sutoro militias of the Syriac Military Council (*Mawtbo Fulhoyo Suryoyo*, MFS) of the Suryoye Party have joined the YPG/YPJ. In October 2015, the MFS, in an effort to mimic the YPG structure, founded Bethnahrin Women Protection Forces (*Haylawotho da Neshe Suryoye d Bethnahrin*, HNSB) in areas where they had been previously trained. The HNSB units consist of 30-40 female militants in total.<sup>47</sup>

During the incidents called the “Kobani Defense”, it is known that terrorists affiliated with the PKK’s HPG fought for the YPG.<sup>48</sup> In fact, depending on need, militants switch from one group to another, from the HPG under the PKK-KCK to PJAK and/or to YPG, for instance. A militant describes him/herself as a HPG member while fighting in Turkey, a PJAK fighter in Iran, and an YPG militant in Syria.<sup>49</sup> The YPG’s statements reveal that half of the militants who lost their lives in fights from 2013 to 2016 originated from Turkey.<sup>50</sup>

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47. “Bethnahrin Women Protection Forces Founded Against ISIS”, Bianet, September 2, 2015.

48. A total of about 1.400 HPG militants fight in the YPG ranks according to various intelligence sources.

49. The militant Zind Ruken in an interview to *The Wall Street Journal* gave detailed information about the PKK-YPG connection. “Sometimes I’m a PKK, sometimes I’m a PJAK, sometimes I’m a YPG. It doesn’t really matter. They are all members of the PKK”, she said. See, “America’s Marxist Allies Against ISIS”, *The Wall Street Journal*, July 24, 2015.

50. According to the Atlantic Council’s ongoing studies, 49,24 percent of the total YPG death-toll between January 2013 and January 2016 consist of Kurds living in Turkey. A YPG statement on the issue reads that since January 2013, 359 Turks, 323 Syrians, 32 Iranians, 2 Australians, 2 Azeris, 1 Brit, 1 German, 1 Greek, and 1 American have died in fights.



Another unit worth mentioning is the “Lions of Rojava” who exclusively consist of foreign fighters. Their exact number is unknown, and their contribution and affect are also a matter of debate. This unit, including U.S., German, Australian and British citizens, is, in general, a group of volunteers; however, it is also known that many foreign fighters on payroll have also joined the unit. The majority of foreign terrorists are U.S. citizens. Another interesting story on foreign terrorists who have been covered in the media, is that of the former female Israeli soldier who has joined YPJ forces.<sup>51</sup> There is also a Hassidic Jew who fights for YPG in the region; he has been spray-painting Hassidic slogans in places that are recaptured from DAESH.<sup>52</sup>

Official reports so far have revealed that only six foreign terrorists have been killed in combat up until January 2016. Kevin Jochim (code named Dilsoz Bahar), a German citizen, whose name has been frequently heard in the media, is among them. According to information obtained from German security sources, Jochim had connections with a marginal extremist leftist organization in Germany. Again from Germany, Ivana Hoffman, a member of a Marxist-Leninist organization and known as Avashin Tekoshin Güneş, fought for the YPJ. Other members of terrorist groups who were engaged and killed in heated encounters are Ashley Johnson and Reece Harding (Australia), Keith Broomfield (USA), and -of Greek origin- Konstandinos Scurfield (Britain).

According to a research, the majority of U.S. citizens who have joined the YPG were former U.S. soldiers.<sup>53</sup> Within this framework, it is stated that 68% of U.S. citizens fighting with the YPG worked for the U.S. army. This detail is important to analyze the military training of foreign terrorists. However, according to some news presented in the media, the foreign soldiers fighting with the YPG have been put on the field with no war experience.<sup>54</sup> The news in question is sourced by a German who formerly fought for the YPG. He also stated that the foreign soldiers only received two weeks of training; did not receive enough medical attention; and that most of the wounded foreigners died during the Manbij operation. Another U.S. citizen foreign terrorist reported that two U.S. terrorists died during the Manbij Operation.<sup>55</sup> The per-

51. “The Curious Case of Gill Rosenberg”, *The Jerusalem Post*, August 14, 2015.

52. “Brit Fighting ISIS Tells Jpost: My Hassidic Graffiti Brings Light to the Darkness”, *The Jerusalem Post*, August 31, 2015.

53. Nathan Patin, *The Other Foreign Fighters*, Bellingcat, August 26, 2015.

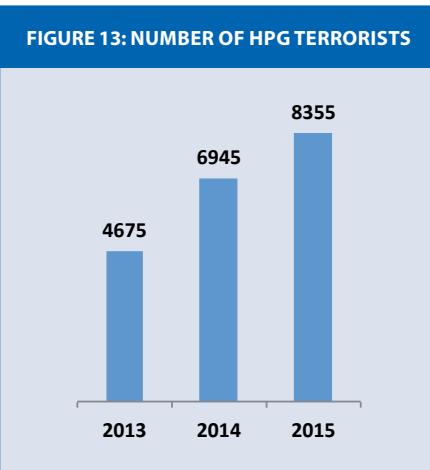
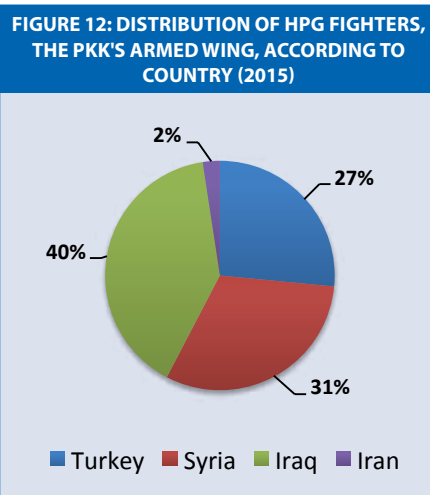
54. Mewan Dolamari, *German YPG fighter says foreign fighters leaving Rojava*, K24, August 7, 2016.

55. “ABD’li YPG savaşı: ABD Kürtler’e ihanetetti”, *ZerNews*, August 28, 2016.



son in question also referred to Operation Euphrates Shield, stating that the U.S. support was a “betrayal to the Kurds.” Thus, it is reported that there are unconfirmed numbers of foreign terrorists fighting for the YPG besides the confirmed dead and formerly known terrorists.

The criticisms regarding border security are important within this context. An important factor to emphasize is Turkey’s struggle against foreign terrorists. According to official data 37,000 people were denied entrance between 2011 and February 2016.<sup>56</sup> According to the same resource, 3,128 people have been deported. Thus, foreign states’ criticism of Turkey in this context loses its legitimacy. However, in the context of discussing DAESH, refraining from reacting against the foreign terrorists who have joined the YPG to carry out terrorist activities, proves the biased approach of the countries in question. In this case,



the foreign terrorists in the YPG are not limited to the activities in Syria. A video that spread across the Internet in sites that are affiliated with the terrorist organization in January 2016, shows that foreign terrorists in the PYD/YPG are jeopardising Turkey’s national security. In the video, a group of foreign terrorists, standing in front of the organization’s leader Abdullah Öcalan and YPG flags, openly call out to fight against Turkey.

At the same time, the YPG and YPJ are continuing their activities in Northern Iraq through the YBŞ, which is the PKK’s Iraq branch with a power of 1,500 militia. There is a women’s group led by general commander Şex Xelef called YPJ-Şengal (Sincar). In time, this structure began to use the name “YJE” (Yekîneyên Jinên Êzîdxan – Ezidi Women’s Units). The commander of the YBŞ is Mazlum Şengal

56. “Türkiye’nin Yabancı Terörist Savaşçılarla Mücadelesi”, MFA Turkey.

and the commander of the YJE is Raperin Engizek. Also, according to research, women terrorists also took part in the YJE during the SDF's Manbij operation led by an YJE member with the code name Koçber.<sup>57</sup> The most interesting characteristic of this group is that it consists of Yazidis, a critical ethnic minority in Sinjar. The YBŞ is different from the HPŞ (Sinjar Defense Units, *Hêza Parastina Şingal*) which is another Yazidi militia group in the region that remains distant to political parties and organizations. The HPS, the largest Yazidi armed group, has 2,500 fighters in the area.

The HPG and YPG act together in this region to arm Yazidis under their command and thus run the risk of confronting the Peshmerga of the KRG; they aim to establish a new canton in Sinjar. The group leans on its armed wing for its plans to control the Rabia-Sinjar line -a strategic location on the Iraq-Syria border. The Rabia-Sinjar line is a key line situated on the M5 strategic route connecting Iraqi Kurdistan with Northern Syria where Syrian Kurds live. In addition to the geographical peculiarities of the region, the Sinjar Mountain makes the territory a critical militarily spot for the HPG and YPG.

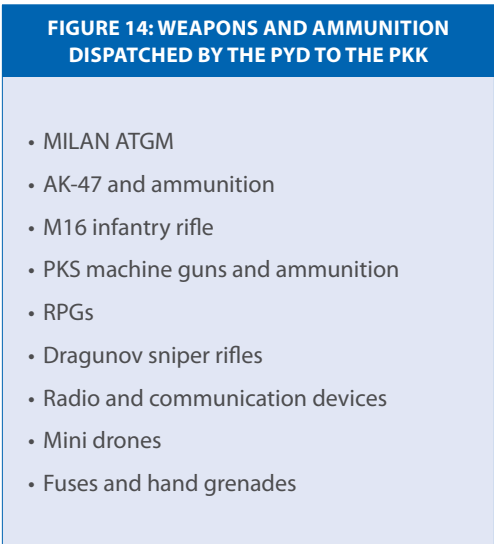
The relationship between the PYD and the PKK is clearly noticeable as mentioned in the description of the PYD's organizational structure. The HPG, which is known as the armed part of the PKK, is in fact the pioneer of all other armed organizations. When looking at the terrorist existence of the HPG in the region, this reality is proven once again. In fact, most of the PKK members are in Iraq where most of the organization's camps are located. The increase of PYD/YPG terrorists with the Syrian Revolution can only be explained as a result of PKK support. Meanwhile, a significant decrease in the number of terrorists in Turkey has been noted following the country's successful counterterrorism activities in 2015 and especially after the July 15 coup attempt.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, the general increase of HPG-member terrorists since 2013, can be explained through the communication and partnered terrorist activities among the armed structures grouped under the KCK.

The most significant details that shed light on the PKK-PYD relationship are visible in the figure below. The information proves that the HPG also exploits foreign states' weapon and ammunition support to the YPG. Thus, support towards the YPG is effective on the armed activities carried out by the organization in Turkey. According to an order given to the PYD/YPG active in Syria by the organiza-

57. "Manbij operation will continue until ISIS is completely expelled", ANF News, August 15, 2016.

58. "Başbakan Yıldırım Çukurca'da askerî birlikler iziyaret etti", Anadolu Ajansı, September 5, 2016.

tion leaders in September 2015, the terrorists were ordered to go to Turkey after the conflict in Ayn Al-Arab. Thus, it is evident that the PKK team in Turkey is reinforced from Syria. It has been determined that the PKK in Turkey was given weapons and ammunition aid, since the area held by the PYD/YPG includes a large part of the Turkey-Syrian border. Some of the ammunition aid provided by the PYD/YPG to the PKK through the Syrian border line in 2015 include antitank missiles, rocket warheads, hand grenades, M-16 and AK-47 rifles and ammunition, heavy machine guns, rifles, anti-aircraft weapons and tactical equipment. The reflection of this cooperation on the armed terror activities in Turkey can be clearly visible in the activities located in cities in the southeast. Within the framework of the ongoing terror operations in the last four months of 2015, resources have confirmed that the PKK members located in Şırnak have in fact requested weapons and ammunition from the PYD. The weapons and ammunition requested by the PKK in November, which they received by December, have been determined as follows:



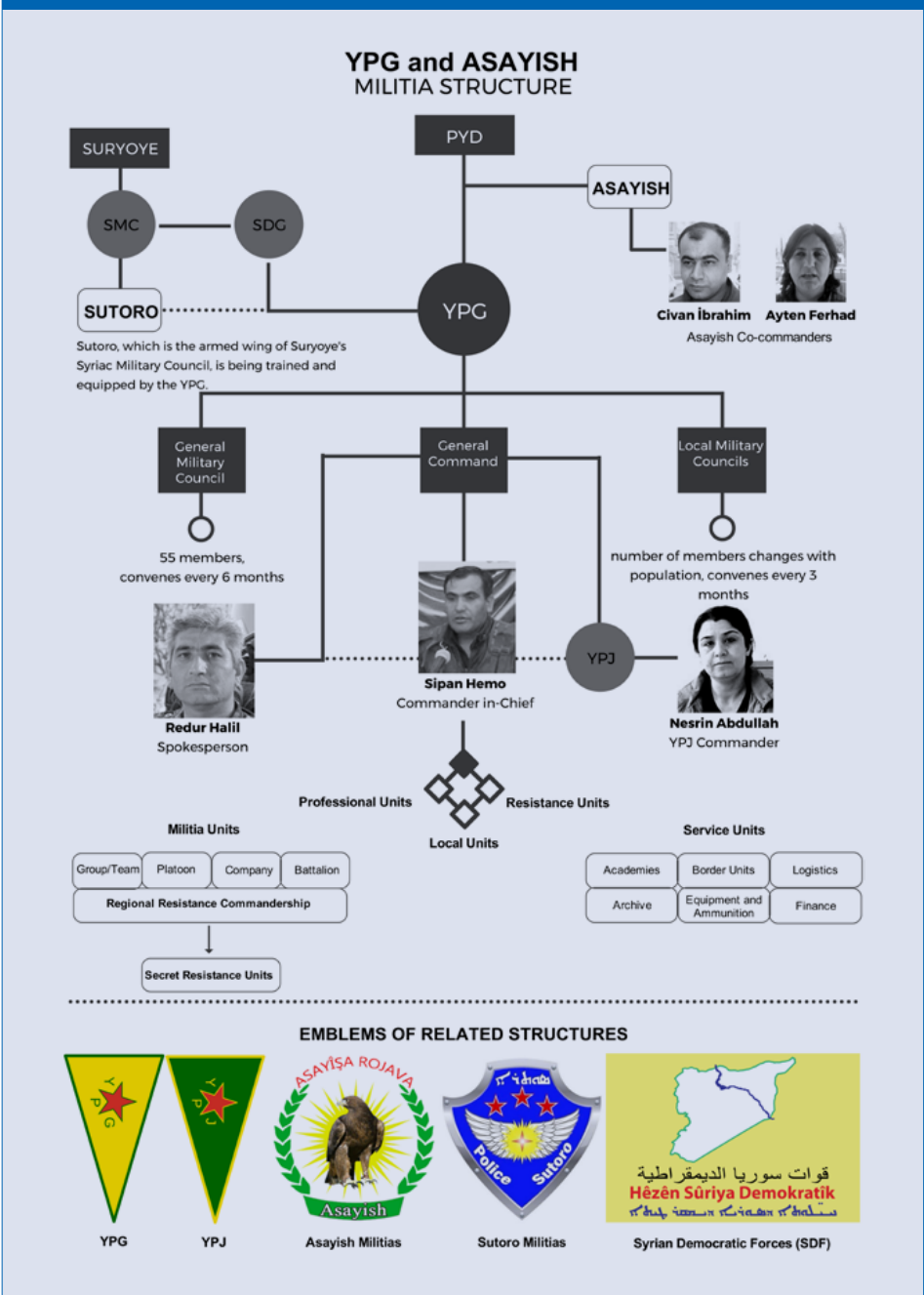
When looking at the number of weapons and ammunition ordered by the PKK for Idil, it is evident that the equipment is for use in the surrounding regions as well.

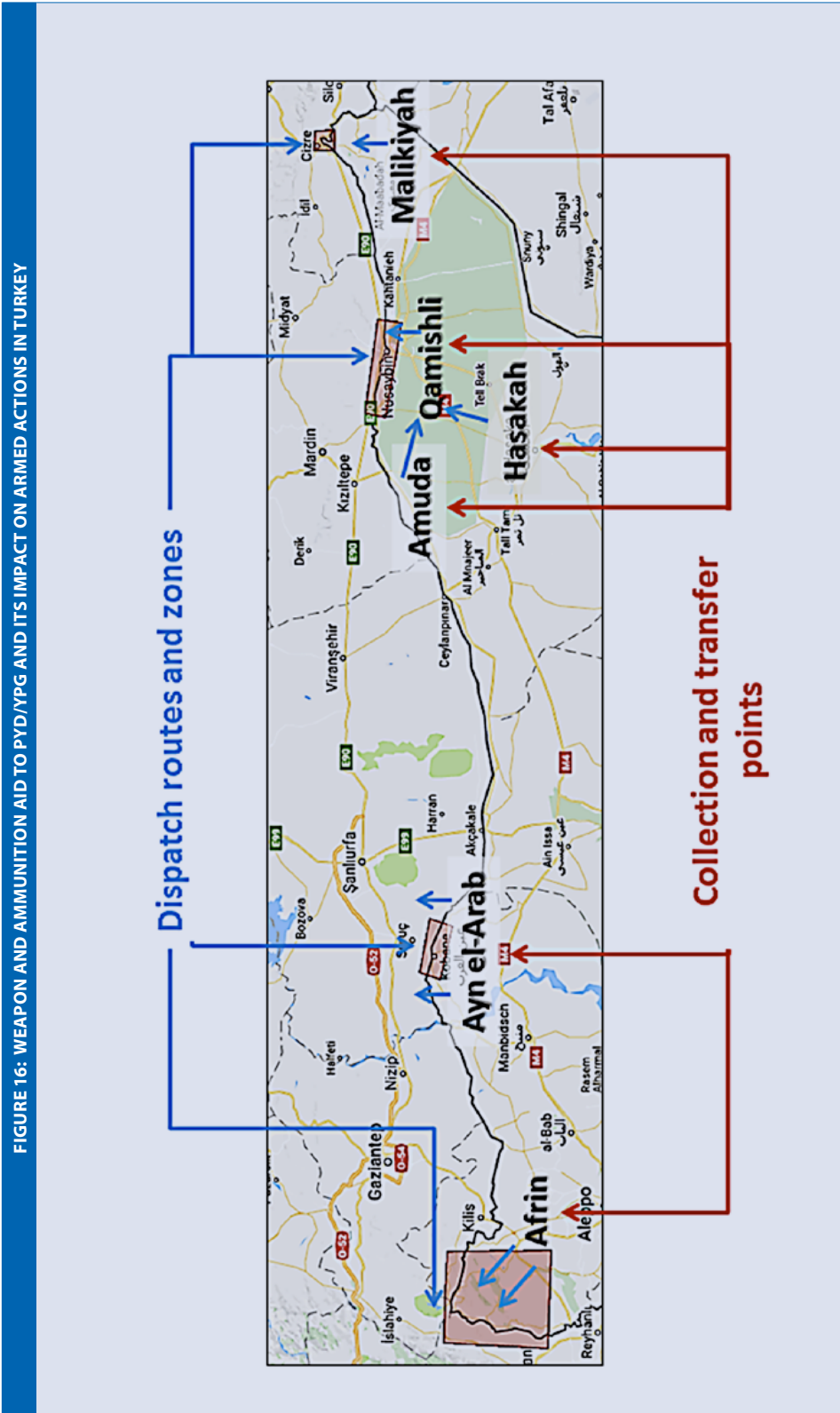
Lastly, the most common areas that are used for delivering the weapons and ammunition are the Şırnak/Cizre-Syrian border; Amuda-Qamishli and Mardin/Nusaybin; the Ayn al-Arab-Suruç area; and the Afrin-Amanos Mountains. The weapons and ammunition support to the YPG is believed to be dispatched from Amuda, Afrin, Hasakah, al-Malikiyah, and Ayn al-Arab and Qamishli.

KCK co-chair Cemil Bayık's statement that "Syria is a strategic issue for all forces of the organization, therefore the one who wins in Syria will be winning in the Middle East" leads certainly to the conclusion that the PYD's armed wing, the YPG, was built out of forces of the KCK/PKK's armed wing, the HPG. Before the PYD/YPG was founded in 2003, all the senior members were active terrorist members of the PKK. The PYD/YPG, which was seen as an alternative by the international powers in their fight against DAESH, had managed to win sympathy in the international arena and as a result succeeded in getting military support

in Northern Syria. The KCK/PKK that is aware of this international support for the PYD deny its relationship with the organization on purpose. Along with this aid, the number of weapons and ammunition dispatched to Turkey illegally has also increased. As a result, the weapons and ammunition support to the PYD has become a direct threat to Turkey’s national security.

FIGURE 15: THE STRUCTURE OF THE YPG AND ASAYISH MILITIA





## COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE AND CHILD SOLDIERS

The YPG needed more militants to maintain control over cantons and fight against DAESH in July 2014; therefore, it passed a law on compulsory military service entitled “Duty of Self-Defense”<sup>59</sup> and enforced it in the Jazira canton.

Although Qamishli is the capital of the Jazira canton, due to the war administrative affairs are handled in the city of Amudah. As a result, the law was ratified and announced in Amudah. The law violates fundamental human rights. It states that each family must send at least one person to compulsory military service. The first and second articles of the law were amended so as they now state that males between the ages of 18 and 30 must fulfill this so-called “social and moral” obligation.

Women, on the other hand, are not liable for compulsory military service, but may join the armed forces “voluntarily”. Following the enactment of the law, six months of military service is required and, as a rule, it must be completed in no more than one year. In the blueprint it is cited that individuals in the scope of this law will be sent to the Asayish forces (responsible for local security service), however, both YPG and YPJ use them as well. Individuals whose families are mourning a martyr from the ranks of YPG/YPJ, of the Asayish or individuals who are the only child of their families are normally exempt from military service. A committee appointed by the PYD, rather than any official institution, is responsible for the enforcement of this law.

By asserting the compulsory military legislation, the PYD detains many people from regions where they have military power. According to the statements of the ENKS, other groups and media outlets, these incidents have been increasing lately. During the summer of 2016, the YPG and other units kidnapped youths - whose numbers cannot be confirmed - from the Afrin region. Within this framework, the most astonishing news comes from this region. According to a news report first published by Rudaw, some villages have been blockaded and many homes have been raided.<sup>60</sup> It has been noted that many people have been under arrest during these terrorizing activities. ENKS member PDK-S part authorities are constantly condemning these activities carried out by the terrorist organization.

Contrary to how often the PKK and its political cohorts voice the conscientious objection in Turkey, this human right is not recognized in the aforementioned law. The law also states that anyone who does not fulfill his duty of self-defense will be brought to the nearest recruitment office. In the case of violations or offenses during service, the provisions of a “military criminal law” will be applied.

59. “Law on Compulsory Military Service”, KurdWatch, May 2015.

60. Rojava'da onlarca gözaltı”, Rudaw, August 29, 2016.

In fact, many young males have been recruited from their homes after the enactment of the law or kept in recruitment offices and forcibly delivered to the YPG.<sup>61</sup> Seemingly, thousands of young males who do not wish to be taken forcibly into the ranks of the YPG have left the Kurdish regions and fled to Europe, Turkey, and the KRG.

It is no secret that the PYD uses minors in combat.<sup>62</sup> The Human Rights Watch released a report accusing the YPG of recruiting child soldiers.<sup>63</sup> According to the reports, 12-year-old children are enrolled in YPG ranks. In funeral ceremonies for terrorists, which in general are held after the armed fights, the bodies of child soldiers are also confirmed among the dead. Although some children join YPG voluntarily, children, in some cases, are held by the group without their parents' consent.

In one of the incidents recorded, 14-year-old Hanan Farhan Hajj Yunis escaped from the ranks of the YPG/YPJ in April 2014. Her mother was subsequently taken hostage by the terrorists. After her release, the YPG kidnapped Hanan's father and brother, and demanded either Hanan's return or the recruitment of another family member.

In another incident, after a 13-year-old girl joined the group, her family members held a protest in the town of Darbasiyah; the Asayish forces dispersed the demonstrators by using brute force.

The most perilous example of child soldiers being used in combat by YPG/YPJ occurred in January 2014. The body of 15-year-old Dalil Riyad Qasim Khalil was laid to rest as part of a mass burial for YPG terrorists killed in clashes with DAESH. Families, whose children are held by the YPG/YPJ for combat, frequently organize demonstrations. There were even a few who have burned themselves in front of Asayish buildings.<sup>64</sup>

Geneva Call stated that they were given guarantees on certain subjects whilst in contact with PYD members during the Syrian crisis.<sup>65</sup> It was further stated that the points that were guaranteed in writing related to mines, child soldier issues, and gender freedom/equality. However, results are yet to be attained regarding human rights norms. On July 7, 2014, it was stated that the

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61. "PYD'den 'Zorunlu Askerlik'", Al Jazeera Turk, October 13, 2014.

62. "Forcible Recruitments and the Deployment of Child Soldiers by the Democratic Union Party in Syria", KurdWatch, (May 2015).

63. "Syria: Kurdish Forces Violating Child Soldier Ban", HRW, July 15, 2015.

64. "Kobani'de Protesto: Kendini Ateşe Verdi!", Rudaw, October 26, 2015.

65. Geneva Call, "Armed Non-State Actors", 2016.



YPG removed 149 child soldiers from engagement and armed units<sup>66</sup> in accordance to the guarantee signed between Geneva Call and the YPG/YPJ/Rojava authorities on July 5, 2014.<sup>67</sup> Although it was indicated that the aforementioned number of child soldiers were removed, the data and reports published by KurdWatch offered proof of the death of child soldiers during the conflicts.

**FIGURE 17, 18: THE YPG MAKE CHILDREN MILITANTS SWEAR ON ÖCALAN'S BOOK**



## YPG'S MILITARY ENGAGEMENTS

With the simultaneous withdrawal of the Assad forces from Jazira, Ayn el-Arab and Afrin in early 2012, the YPG established control over these regions. As it has gained military strength, the group has ruled Hasakah -the city of Qamishli in particular- together with Assad's army forces and Shebbiha.

After capturing the regions above, the group subdued opponent Kurdish entities and targeted the Syrian opposition. The sides confronted for the first time on July 16, 2013, when YPG attempted to take over Ras al-Ayn and tried to purge the city of the Syrian opposition groups.

The YPG first engaged in heated encounters with Jabhat al-Nusra, seized the city from the Nusra and expelled the opposition forces; it then dominated the border gate on the Turkish border.

Following the clashes, the opposition forces withdrew from Ras al-Ayn to Tal Khalaf, Asfar and Najar. Although the Syrian opposition tried to recapture Ras al-Ayn, the YPG forces managed to repel the attacks outside the territory.

With the arrival of August, the Syrian opposition forces announced that the YPG-controlled Ayn al-Arab was under siege, and dispatched some groups from Manbij and Jarablus to Ayn al-Arab. Shortly after, heavy clashes erupted at the Yarubiyah border gate near the Syria-Iraq border. The opposition captured the town and drove out YPG forces.

66. Geneva Call, "Syria: Kurdish armed forces demobilize 149 child soldiers", 2014.

67. The deed of commitment can be found in the Appendix.



The YPG captured Aluk, east of Ras al-Ayn during the clashes in the province of Hasakah. Skirmishes renewed near the town of Yarubiyah located on the Iraqi border. Meanwhile, YPG forces abruptly attacked the Atmeh refugee camp on the Turkish border province of Hatay and fired artillery shells at the camp from a hilltop under their control.

Shortly after, YPG forces were repelled and the YPG-controlled hills were recaptured. This time Cenderes was hit by artillery attacks in retaliation. Following this, the YPG asked for a cease-fire and ended clashes in the region.<sup>68</sup>

In October 2013, YPG forces recaptured Yarubiyah and the border gate to Iraq, and dominated DAESH-controlled, oil-rich territories such as Girhok, Yusu-fiyah, and Safa near Qamishli. Consequently, DAESH had to pull out of Tal Hamis and Tal Brak as the Syrian opposition left the region.

The Syrian opposition claimed that the Assad regime assisted the YPG with air bombardments while the group was trying to take the region under control. In November and December of 2013, the YPG seized about 40 settlements in Hasakah. Following major gains of territory, the PYD announced a plan for the declaration of autonomy in three cantons and the formation of an 82-member parliament. The announcement went on to announce that the Assyrians and Arabs in the region will also be included in this plan.<sup>69</sup>

In the early days of January 2014, clashes resumed between the Syrian opposition and DAESH. The latter captured primarily Raqqa and the territory stretching into the Kurdish regions such as Hasakah, east and north-east of Aleppo extending to the Turkish border; the clashes took a new turn and DAESH engaged in fights with YPG.

A final DAESH attack on Ayn al-Arab in September 2014 led to the dominance of the group in almost all villages surrounding the town. In Ayn al-Arab, DAESH and PYD engaged in street fights. About 200,000 people living in Ayn al-Arab sought shelter in Turkey. The PYD leadership, Saleh Muslim in particular, withstanding DAESH attacks, solicited international help and asked for the armament assistance of the U.S.-led coalition against DAESH.

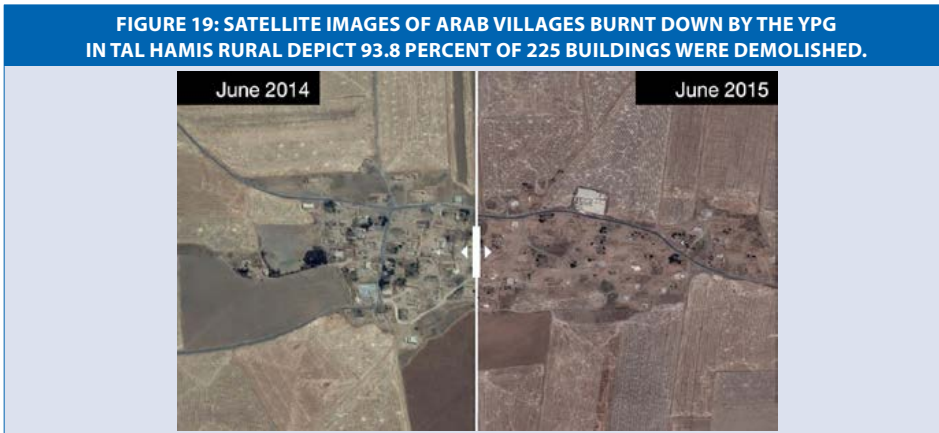
In fights with YPG, DAESH used heavy weaponry confiscated in Iraq and Syria and gained ground towards the city. The United States came to the rescue of the PYD while Ayn al-Arab was about to fall, and U.S. airstrikes heavily hit DAESH targets in the city.

Unsatisfied with the airstrikes, the USA also provided YPG airdrops of arms from cargo planes. In addition, Turkey opened a corridor within Turkey for the

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68. Acun and Öner, "İŞİD-PYD Çatışmasının Sıcak Cephesi: Kobani".

69. Acun and Öner, "İŞİD-PYD Çatışmasının Sıcak Cephesi: Kobani".



Peshmerga of the KRG to reach Ayn al-Arab at the Turkey-Syria border and ensured its armament.

With the assistance of the USA and the Peshmerga, DAESH gradually lost control on the ground and was almost totally driven out of Ayn al-Arab and its villages. The Kobani experience showcased how the USA can rely on the YPG as part of its land forces against DAESH in Syria and emphasized the importance of the U.S. Air Force's assistance to the YPG. The USA-YPG partnership continued in Tal Abyad as well.<sup>70</sup>

The PYD-YPG leaning on the military advantage it had gained through the military engagements with the United States and Assad regime, ventured to bring about a demographic change by the forced displacement of dissident Arabs and Turkmens living in the YPG-captured areas in Hasakah and Raqqah, including Tal Abyad.

In an attempt to change the demographic structure of the region, the PYD burned down villages, demolished homes, confiscated properties, committed mass punishment and summary executions; all amounting to war crimes. Amnesty International and the Syrian Network for Human Rights, using satellite images in a report, overtly criticized the USA for overlooking the war crimes committed by the YPG.<sup>71</sup>

Since the outset of the Syrian crisis, the United States has always had reservations about the Syrian opposition. Apart from providing military support to the opposition, the USA has actively prevented certain other actors from militarily supporting the opposition. Even though there have been multiple violations of the red lines that were announced by U.S. President Barack Obama, the United States has opted out of any military intervention in Syria. Upon capture of Ayn al-Arab

70. Can Acun, "Kuzey Suriye'de PYD Kuşağı", *SETA Perspektif*, (June 2015).

71. "Syria: US Ally's Razing of Villages Amounts to War Crimes", Amnesty International, October 13, 2015.

by DAESH, the USA formed an international coalition and hit DAESH -even the Syrian opposition at times- with airstrikes in Syria and Iraq.<sup>72</sup>

Until June of 2015, 1.200 out of a total 1.774 airstrikes by the U.S.-led coalition, which was formed to fight DAESH, battered the regions where DAESH-YPG clashes occurred in Syria. A total of 943 DAESH targets in Ayn al-Arab and 244 in Hasakah and Tal Abyad have been destroyed in these airstrikes.<sup>73</sup>

No efforts to strike the regions where DAESH has fought against the opposition forces and no attempt to cut logistic supply lines to DAESH indicate that the U.S.-led coalition bombardments selectively and deliberately directed DAESH against the opposition forces.<sup>74</sup>

In the fight against DAESH, the United States has used the PKK's Syrian branch, the PYD, as a tool and transformed it into a ground force. Hence, the United States plans to fight with the PYD's armed-wing, the YPG, against DAESH. The foundation of this military engagement has been previously laid in Ayn al-Arab. Apparently, the purpose of this engagement is to leave to the PYD and its armed-wing, the YPG, the control of a territory stretching from the town of Qamishli in the province of Hasakah on the Turkish border (neighboring Northern Iraq) to the town of Afrin (neighboring Turkey's Mediterranean province of Hatay).

With the capture of Tal Abyad by the U.S.-backed YPG forces, the Jazira and Kobani cantons have been connected and the YPG has taken over the control of a 400-km stretch in the border region. With these gains under its belt, the YPG's next priority is the 110-km long Jarablus-Azaz line between Afrin and Ayn al-Arab.

The USA, however, stepped back when Turkey firmly declared intolerance to any incursion to the west of the Euphrates River, and retaliated to the YPG attempts to this end with artillery fire. Even more so, the United States and Turkey have reached an agreement to cooperate in this region.<sup>75</sup>

Nonetheless, the United States appears reluctant to sufficiently support the Turkey-backed opposition forces in order to remove DAESH from the region, and takes steps to stall Turkey.

The YPG, on the other side, realizing that it would not be allowed to cross over Turkey's redline via Jarablus, changed its direction to further south on De-

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72. Ufuk Ulutaş, "5 Soru: Suriye'nin Kuzeyindeki Son Gelişmeler", SETA Yorum, June 22, 2015.

73. "ABD'nin Suriye'deki Önceliği PYD Güçlerine Destek", Anadolu News Agency, June 23, 2015.

74. "ABD'nin Suriye'deki Önceliği PYD Güçlerine Destek".

75. Acun, "Kuzey Suriye'de PYD Kuşağı".

cember 23, 2015 and announced the offensive to liberate the Tishrin Dam located on the line connecting the east of Aleppo with Raqqa.

The Tishrin Dam on the Euphrates is a critical energy source for DAESH and a corridor connecting the DAESH-controlled territories in East Aleppo to Raqqa.

Accompanied by intensive U.S. air bombardments, YPG-SDF (The Syrian Democratic Forces) forces have been observed dispatching large military convoys from Hasakah in the east to Ayn al-Arab in the west. The group has advanced towards the Tishrin Dam, capturing the region evacuated by DAESH in the south of Sarrin. As in Tal Abyad, DAESH has withdrawn without showing any notable resistance.

The Tishrin Dam on the Euphrates River is located on a critical passage between the east of Aleppo and Raqqa. Due to its proximity to Manbij, one of the most critical settlement areas in East Aleppo, the dam is also a critical energy center for the region.

It has been previously recorded that DAESH used energy supplied by the Tishrin Dam and sold energy via electricity lines running through the regime-controlled regions near Aleppo.<sup>76</sup> As far as the balances in Northern Syria are concerned, the Tishrin Dam gains strategic significance. Thus, the dam's capture by the YPG-SDF also becomes crucially important. The area is vital for the YPG's strategical plan to cross over to the west of the Euphrates and eventually unite Afrin with other cantons.<sup>77</sup>

Prior to this, the United States did not terminate the tactical partnership with YPG and the cooperation continued in different forms. Concordantly, the YPG-dominated armed groups founded the alliance of "The Syrian Democratic Forces," or SDF, on October 11, 2015.

The announcement of the SDF group followed only a two-hour meeting in Hasakah. Along with the YPG/YPJ group, the alliance consists of the Assyrian/Syriac Military Council (MFS); *Jaysh al Thuwar* (The Army of Revolutionaries); *Liwa Thuwar al Raqqa*; *Liwa al Tahrir* (Tahrir Brigade); and *al-Sanadid* Forces. Affiliated with the Free Syrian Army (FSA), *Jaysh al Thuwar* embodies the following sub-groups: *Jabhat al-Akrad* (Kurdish Front); the 99th Brigade; *Liwa al Salajiqah* (Seljuq Brigade); *Kata'ib Shams al-Shamal* (Sun of the North Battalions); *Liwa Shuhadah al-Atareb* (Martyrs of Atareb Brigade); and *Liwa al-Sultan Selim* (Sultan Selim Brigade). The YPG and YPJ dominate the SDF in terms of forces and distribution of power.

76. For the document proving the trade relations between the YPG representatives and the Assad regime, and the YPG-Regime partnership to run the oil wells and facilities under YPG control for common benefits, see Appendix 2.

77. "SDG-YPG'den Tişrin Barajı Operasyonu", Suriye Gündemi, December 26, 2015.

In the statements released, the alliance aims to fight against DAESH and establishes a democratic self-administration as the consequences of existing military and political conditions. The PYD is the Syrian branch of the PKK, and the YPG/YPJ is the armed-wing of the PYD. It is no secret that the YPG/YPJ has previously given military training to the Sutoro militia affiliated with the MFS, nested in SDF, and that the Sutoro militia subsequently joined YPG. In this case, the SDF resembles TEV-DEM in terms of its main purpose and objectives. The SDF is the new official version of the military activities of the former political bodies. Among the above PYD/YPG-dominated groups, a few Turkmen groups exist for sugar coating the pill, such as the Sultan Selim Brigade and the Seljuq Brigade.

Following the delivery of U.S. ammunition and weapons to some armed groups in Syria, PYD Co-chair Muslim announced that the PYD received the weapons and ammunition. However, the YPG Spokesperson Redur Xelil on October 15, 2015 claimed that Muslim's remarks reflect only his own viewpoint and his party's (PYD), and that he is not authorized to speak on behalf of the military forces.<sup>78</sup> The aforementioned groups that had already formed a political alliance under TEV-DEM, now form a military alliance under the SDF. This is a clear indication that there are no real differences between them.

Information on the weapons used by YPG in fights and terror activities has been divulged since the U.S. arm support became an issue. The group often uses the Russian-made AK-47 (Kalashnikov), the heavy machine gun Dashka (*Degtyaryova-Shpagina Krupnokaliberny*, DShK), the Russian Kalashnikov machine gun used by infantry, and the tripod-mounted version PKS (*Pulemyot Kalashnikova Stankoviy*). Besides, the YPG also possesses Russian anti-tank rocket propelled grenade launchers, RPG, in addition to innumerable numbers of handmade explosives.

It is a fact that the aforementioned weapons are used by the PKK as well. The PKK and YPG have a lot in common not only in terms of structure but also in terms of their tactics. The PKK takes advantage of YPG weapons and of its experience in combat during terror attacks in city centers in Turkey under the banner of "the revolutionary people's war."

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78. Redur Xelil criticizing Muslim for his remarks, has signaled that rifts emerge between the PYD and YPG. The incident is reminiscent of disagreements between the KCK-PKK and the HDP, their proxy in politics. The general impression lately signals that the YPG leadership is stronger than the PYD leadership and that Muslim is more of a symbolic figure.

FIGURE 20: SYRIAN DEMOCRATIC FORCES



There are several different models of tanks abandoned by the Syrian regime forces for the YPG militia in some regions. The most significant feature in terms of weapons is that YPG possesses small numbers of TOW<sup>79</sup> anti-tank guided missile systems. According to local sources, the USA has supplied the YPG with 120 tons of weapons and ammunition so far.<sup>80</sup> During the Ayn al-Arab clashes between the YPG and DAESH, 24 tons of small arms and ammunition were delivered by the USA.<sup>81</sup>

Although Turkey and the Syrian opposition have harshly criticized the U.S. arms support to YPG-SDF, Russia's active involvement in the Syrian civil

79. Abbreviation of "Tube Launched-Optically Tracked-Wire Command Link Guided".

80. "Turkey Slams U.S. Over Reported Weapons Supply to Syria Kurds", Military Times, October 14, 2015.

81. "US Drops Weapons and Ammunition to Help Kurdish Fighters in Kobani", *The Guardian*, October 20, 2015.



war as of September 30, 2015 has pushed the United States towards a policy shift in Syria.

In fact, President Obama has ordered the deployment of special operations troops to provide the YPG with advisory assistance for operations in the area. Up to 50 special operations troops are said to train, assist and advise the SDF militia.

The U.S. step has been viewed as a major policy shift following the bombardments of DAESH targets in Syria.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, President Obama's envoy to the U.S.-led coalition against DAESH, Brett McGurk, visited Ayn al-Arab and met with PYD and YPG officials.<sup>83</sup>

The U.S. has built two military bases on PYD-controlled areas during this period. While the base in Ayn al-Arab was completed in July 2016, the Rumailan base has begun near Hasakah. The base in Ayn al-Arab has been actively used since September 2016. The USA's weapon and ammunition aid has recently re-emerged on the agenda. According to an article published in The New York Times on this topic, the USA has made approximately 350 dispatches to the YPG/SDF.<sup>84</sup> Apart from this, there have been significant developments in Tal Abyad. In September 2016, YPG terrorists hung U.S. flags in areas under PYD/YPG control. This action seems to have occurred with the aim of being protected from a probable Turkish operation, however, there has yet to be a clear statement regarding its motivation. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan criticized the USA's weapon and ammunition aid to the military base near Ayn al-Arab during his visit to the country on the occasion of the UN General Assembly.<sup>85</sup>

The USA's support of terrorist organizations to defeat DAESH instead of using their ally Turkey and moderate rebel groups will effect Turkey-USA relations in the future.

As Russia launched airstrikes in Syria, the PYD took advantage of this development to make some political reforms. The PYD-Moscow talks, which had possibly been launched before the strikes, were in high gear, and the PYD clearly expressed its intention to open a mission in the Russian capital. As part of the talks about further steps toward the opening of a Russia Office, Salih Muslim met with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister for Russia-Middle East Relations Mikhail

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82. "In Policy Shift, Obama to Send U.S. Special Forces to Syria", Reuters, October 31, 2015.

83. "Obama'nın Özel Temsilcisi Kobani'de!", *Milliyet*, February 1, 2016.

84. Eric Schmitt, "Obama Administration Considers Arming Syrian Kurds Against ISIS", New York Times, September 21, 2016.

85. "Erdoğan: ABD uçakları Kobani'ye ikiuçaksilahlandırdı", BBC Türkçe, September 23, 2016.

Bogdanov in Paris on October 11, 2015. Bogdanov also met with Kobani Canton representatives led by Asya Abdullah in Moscow.<sup>86</sup>

Several other signs also hint towards the PYD-Russia cooperation. As a result of the Russian airborne attacks against the Syrian opposition in the east of Afrin, the PYD advanced in four villages. The claims that Russia provided about five tons of light weapons to the PYD-controlled regions should also be seen as factors strengthening such cooperation.<sup>87</sup>

Lastly, a HDP parliamentary deputy in Turkey, Feleknas Uca attended the inauguration of the PYD's Moscow office on February 10, 2016. Abdussalam Ali was appointed as the PYD representative to Russia.<sup>88</sup>

The YPG aims to capture the region stretching from Afrin (already controlled by YPG) to Bab, Manbij, Rai, Jarablus, and to the Euphrates River, which is under DAESH and opposition control, and thereby acquire a contiguous geographical belt along the entire Syria-Turkey border.

The YPG, acting together with the HPG, also plans to capture a region between the Yarubiyah-Rabia border line and Sinjar, and thus prevail in Iraq, as well. However, YPG's military capacity remains insufficient to achieve these plans. The group continues to share Jazira and a part of Hasakah with the Assad forces, Shabbihas, and Shiite militias.

This territory is heavily populated with Arabs, the *Shammar* tribe in particular. Again, there exists a serious movement represented by the Syrian Kurdish National Council consisting of dissident Kurds in Afrin, Kobani and Jazira. The PYD expelled hundreds of thousands of Kurds to Iraq and Turkey before Arabs and Turks. These Kurds fight against the PYD after being organized with the help of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

The PYD's military competence is also a matter of question. The vast majority of YPG forces consist of undertrained 16- to 20-year-old militants with no fighting experience. As the YPG-controlled territory expands in the north of Syria, the group suffers from lack of troops to deploy in this region, so it enforces compulsory military service.

As evidenced in the Ayn al-Arab siege, a YPG without the U.S. air support exhibits military limitations. In fact, during the latest attacks in Tal Abyad, DAESH easily advanced in the city center of Ayn al-Arab and caused heavy casualties to YPG militants. Once again, the military weakness of the YPG becomes clear.<sup>89</sup>

86. After negotiations with Moscow, the PYD opened an office in February 2016. This was also discussed between President Erdoğan and his counterpart Putin on August 9, 2016, in St. Petersburg.

87. "Rusya'dan PYD'ye 5 Ton Silah", NTV, December 2, 2015.

88. "Syrian Terror Group Opens Moscow Office", Anadolu News Agency, February 11, 2016.

89. "DAİŞ Ayn el-Arabî'yi İçerideki Uyuyan Hücreleriyle Vurdu", Anadolu News Agency, June 25, 2015.



## THE REGIME - YPG CONFLICT

The current relationship between the Syrian regime and the PYD is based on the formation of a military and political engagement as a result of the mutual interest that first started in 2011 with the Syrian Revolution. This relationship began to show signs of strain in 2016.

The PYD's struggle to win over more land by making use of the weakening relative regime as a result of their increasing relationship and support from the U.S. has brought the two parties face to face. Especially the PYD and its sponsor's declaration of a federation and the request to remove the regime's military armament located in Hasakah and Qamishli from the region turned the tension into close combat. Apart from small frictions that had occurred from time to time, the YPG and the regime powers have co-existed. However, in August 2016, for the first time the regime soldiers attacked PYD-controlled areas with air rifles and both sides used heavily armed weapons against each other.

### Former Tensions Between the Regime and YPG

In January and April of 2013, December 2014, and June 2015 there was isolated combat between the regime and the YPG in the Qamishli-Hasakah line. Each time the combat was limited, did not interfere with other regimes and did not interfere with the YPG's cooperation. In December 2015, there was a small scaled conflict between the YPG and Sootoro militias made up of Assyrians, who are close to the regime, around Qamishli. This conflict soon ended with a ceasefire. The combat between the regime and the YPG that resulted in the loss of 22 regime soldiers and 40 hostages along with 20 more deaths from the YPG side ended before it grew to a larger scale.<sup>90</sup> However, the scale of the combat that took place in August 2016 was to such an extent that it ended the military existence between the regime and the YPG. According to the resources close to the regime the tension soon turned into a combat after YPG-affiliated peacemakers arrested members of the Syrian army in Hasakah city center. The YPG and the regime sent reinforcement to the city. The combat became more intense at East Neşva, Tel Hajar and Guveyran. The planes affiliated with the regime began to attack cities under YPG control for the first time. While the regime planes attacked al-Qalasat and Tal Baidar base, resources close to the regime stated that the YPG had fled from the Tel Baidar base and peacemaker leaders Munir Muhammed and Levend were declared dead. However, with the U.S. targeting the regime after the airstrike against the YPG and stopping the regime planes, the balance tilted towards the YPG, which resulted in the regime

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90. "Kamışlı'da rejim-YPG çatışması", Al Jazeera Türk, April 20, 2016.

to fall back and the YPG taking control of the military base in Hasakah following an agreement. Ultimately, even though it may seem like the YPG succeeded locally with U.S. support, its conflict with the regime proves the conjectural and fragile military-political engagement of the organization. It also stands as proof of the fact that the YPG cannot establish a future with the regime in the long term.

### YPG/SDF'S MANBIJ OPERATION

While there was a large media campaign in May 2016 regarding an attack on Rakka by the YPG-SDF with U.S. support, a “north Raqqa operation” attack was announced. Although there was a partial progress during the first days of the attack, strong resistance was shown by DAESH-related powers through strong defence lines. At the same time, the preparations made showed that the logistics were insufficient to take over Rakka. During this time, as DAESH prepared a new attack on the Azaz-Marea line, many villages in the area were seized by the group and Marea was taken under siege. During these events, Turkey temporarily removed the YPG-SDF's transition to the western Euphrates reservoir within the framework of the U.S.'s covenants to Turkey during the U.S.-Turkey meeting. In this base, the northern Raqqa operation quickly transformed to the Manbij operation. All indications pointed to the fact that the U.S.-SDF/YPG coalition was, in fact, targeting Manbij rather than Raqqa.

The operation, which started on May 31 and targeted Manbij directly started from the Tişrin dam with YPG-SDF forces moving quickly towards the north and seizing DAESH-controlled villages and farms. At the same time, the YPG-SDF powers further north of Karakozak started to move to the west side of the Europahtes with portable amphibic bridges and took control of many sites from DAESH. It is assumed that 40,000 to 50,000 civilians fled Manbij, which was attacked by the U.S. and International Coalition planes.<sup>91</sup>

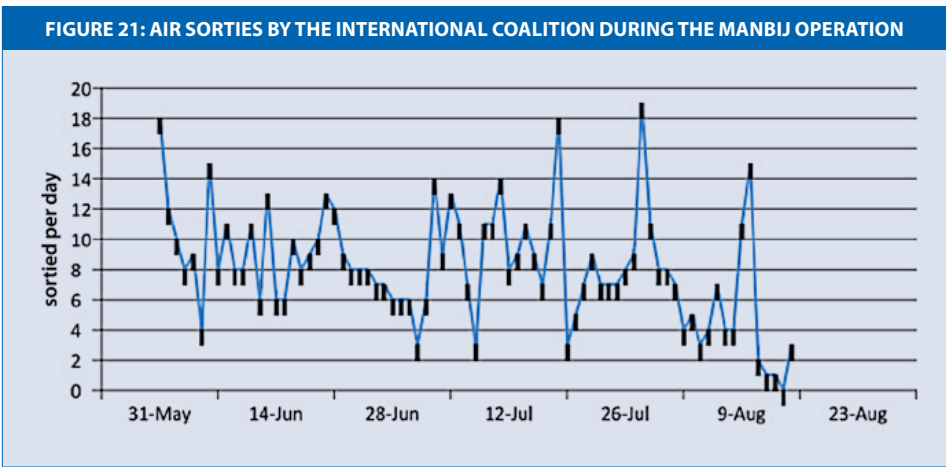
One hundred and five villages and farms along with nearly all of Manbij were captured in another attack that also took place on May 31. The YPG-SDF's invasion of Manbij, the most important center of DAESH in Aleppo, was an important progress which showed that the Syrian war was taken to a new level. The attack, which was supported with approximately 15-20 airstrikes a day by the coalition powers led by the U.S., resulted in DAESH despite their struggle losing the region after two months.

Along with weapons, ammunitions and intelligence, the American Special Forces also gave support to the SDF/YPG by fighting on the field. However, it was

91. “Koalisyon güçleri Münbiç'te sivilleri vurdu: 160 ölü”, Anadolu Ajansı, July 19, 2016.

the airstrikes that determined the YPG-SPG's victory and the capturing of Manbij from DAESH.

If we look at the data from both CENTOM and "Operation Inherent Resolve" it can be understood just how critical and effective the U.S.-led coalition support was for the YPG-SDF'S fight against DAESH. During the last week of May, the coalition powers led by the U.S. targeted Manbij and the surrounding DAESH regions. These attacks increased daily and after 77 days the operation ended on August 16 with the YPG-SDF taking control of Manbij. During this time, the coalition powers led by the U.S. carried out 634 sorties that targeted Manbij and the surrounding DAESH regions. These sorties targeted 552 DAESH logistic units, 537 frontlines, 110 vehicles, and 14 control and command centers/points.



## OPERATION EUPHRATES SHIELD

During a time when Jaysh al-Fatah moved towards Aleppo and managed to go ahead of the regime, the conflict between the YPG-SDF and DAESH intensified in the Syrian region near the Turkish border. After moving to west Euphrates and seizing control of Manbij with U.S. support, the YPG-SDF soon tried to move towards the west and north.

The YPG-SDF's existence in the Afrin area, and later the conquering of al-Bab city meant that they had the potential to provide territorial integrity over the cantons that they owned in Northern Syria. Along with this, the increasing number of terrorist attacks in Turkey by the PKK and DAESH brought about the Operation Euphrates Shield.<sup>92</sup>

92. Turkey officially describes Operation Euphrates Shield as "its right of self-defense codified under United Nations Charter Article 51. The operation's objectives are to eliminate terrorist organizations, contribute to the increase of border security and at the same time prioritize and support Syria's territorial integrity."

In the first stage, the operation was designed as a military movement made up of Syrian opposing groups led by TAF with the aim of eliminating DAESH from Jarablus.<sup>93</sup> In the Euphrates Shield Operation, the Joint Special Forces which consist of TAF's air and land forces, special military forces and units from the National Intelligence Organization (MİT), supported oppositional groups with close relations to Turkey.<sup>94</sup> The operation, which was executed in several planned stages, first eliminated DAESH and the SDF/YPG from Jarablus along the Sancır River.<sup>95</sup> Later, it focused on eliminating DAESH from the border line between Azez and Jarablus, and finally aimed for al-Bab and Manbij.

Turkey has been trying to eliminate DAESH from the 90-kilometer line between Azez and Jarablus and secure the border for a long time. Thus, the security of the line between Azez and Al-Rai was established after elimination of DAESH from the area. With the operation, DEASH was also eliminated in the area between Al-Rai and Jarablus, which provided border security. While the operation was swiftly developing within the first month, Turkey not only took control of Jarablus, but also eliminated DAESH from the borders and formed the al-Rai-Jarablus connection.

The strategy of letting DAESH seize a place from the opposition, then conducting U.S. air strikes to pave a free road for the SDF/YPG was neutralized by the Euphrates Shield. The movement that has captured approximately an area of 1,000 square km is continuing with a small loss.<sup>96</sup>

93. Operation Euphrates Shield started on the night of August 24 at 04.00 am. During the first stage of the operation, DAESH was attacked with howitzers and multiple rocket launchers. Following this, TAF and Coalition powers attacked DAESH regions, which resulted in the weakening of their power. This weakening allowed access to 16 main battle tanks and 13-14 armored combat vehicles that belong to the army forces to the corridors with the opposing powers. These units were backed with TAF's Special Forces and Turkish Intelligence Agency's Special Forces. Before the operation, Military Special Forces and MIT personnels had infiltrated the area and carried out small-scaled operations to study the area and provide secure access. Six teams with 30 people each from the Special Forces joined the operation and the total TAF personnel was 450. An E-7T that belongs to the air forces and command control, a KC-135R aircraft, and a search and rescue plane also provided back-up.

94. For Turkey's Operation Euphrates Shield, an opposition group made up of the Sultan Murad Brigade, Jabhat Shamiyah, Faylaq as-Sham, Jasyh al-Nasr, Jaysh al-Tahrir, Hamza Division, Liva el-Mutasim, Nour al-Din Zenki Brigade, 13th Division and Liva Suqur al-Jabal went through an intense train-and-equip program, and were later mobilized. Among these names, the Nour al-Din Zenki Brigade, 13th Division, Faylaq al-Sham, Jaysh al-Nasr did not take part in the former Havar Kilis Operation Room that aimed to fend off DAESH from al-Rai.

95. Jarablus is an important area for all the actors in the field. Since the city is located at the west of the Euphrates River it should be considered logistically important. Along with this, its border gate with Turkey will allow easy reinforcement to units supported by Turkey. Also, this will ease any probable operation in southwest Jarablus. Jarablus, which was under the Syrian opponents control since July 2012, was taken by DEASH by the end of 2013. Lastly, after losing control of Tell Abyad, DAESH was left with Jarablus, which was its only door to the outer world. As such, many people who tried to pass illegally through the Jarablus border gate were arrested in Turkey. In 2015, the PYD carried out an attack on Jarablus to take control of the area. It also aimed to join its cantons in northern Syria. For this reason, Jarablus is important in preventing the PYD's cantons from uniting and increasing the threat to Turkey's borders.

96. While nine soldiers from TAF have been declared dead, 20 have been injured. Seven tanks and 1 demining device were neutralized by DAESH. Twenty-three people have died from the ranks of the Turkish-backed opposition.

After the two stages, TAF and Syrian groups were left with the option of al-Bab and Manbij. However, the operation was allowed to be conducted first in al-Bad following the U.S. convincing Turkey not to conduct an operation on Manbij for the time being and the guaranteed withdrawal of the YPG from the regio. Aleppo's largest city, al-Bab, located at the north of Aleppo has a geographic and demographic importance; it is located between the PYD's Afrin and the Ayn al-Arab region. According to the population count in 2004, while there were 300,000 people living in the province, 64,000 lived in the center. Although the population changed from time to time during the Syrian Revolution, it is estimated that almost 66,000 people currently live in the city center. While the majority of the population are made up of Arab Sunnis, there are Turkmens living there as well. Taking al-Bab away from DAESH is an important step in preventing the SDF/YPG from uniting its cantons along this line. However, both al-Bab and Manbij must be taken under control to create a safe environment for the civilians and refugees in the 90 km long and 40 km wide area. To be able to completely remove DAESH from Northern Syria and prevent the PKK from uniting the cantons, Turkey aims to free approximately 4,000 square km including al-Bab and Manbij.

## YPG'S ATGM USAGE

Although the number of anti-tank missiles used by the YPG against its opponents is small, these missiles are Konkurs and Kornet missiles according to the regime inventory. It is also known that the YPG has several old-fashioned MILAN missiles as well.<sup>97</sup> During Jan van Aken's - a parliament member from the German leftist party Die Linke - visit to the YPG units in January 2014 in Qamishli, he was shown the old MILAN rockets. According to the information provided by the YPG, these old model MILAN missiles were attained during the war with its opponents. It is probable that their opponents had captured these missiles from the regime. It is known that in 1978 France provided 4,400 old model MILAN anti-tank missiles to the Syrian regime.<sup>98</sup>

During the war in Iraq, the German government decided to support the Peshmerge powers against DAESH and dispatch weapons. After this decision, the MILAN anti-tank missiles stood out among the intense weapon dispatch. The new model MILAN missiles were delivered to Peshmerge and a number of soldiers were trained in Iraq and Germany to use them. Although the German government stated that they will take maximum precautions to prevent the weapons

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97. "YPG ve Anti-Tank Saldırıları", SuriyeGündemi, September 6, 2016.

98. "YPG ve Anti-Tank Saldırıları", SuriyeGündemi, September 6, 2016.

being passed on to a third party, the new model MILAN missiles were reported to be in the hands of the YPG and the PKK. Although there are claims that Peshmerga sold the missiles to the YPG and the PKK, there are also claims that Germany gave them these missiles. The videos and pictures sent by the YPG from Syria show that they are using new model MILAN missiles. However, there is no information on how they received the training to use them. The large number of MILAN rocket cartridges found in a dump in Adana prove that the PKK has such anti-tank missiles and has managed to infiltrate them into Turkey.

In the former period, the PKK has aired a video attacking a Turkish military base. In this video, the use of an anti-tank rocket is seen. The result of the video analysis shows that the rocket is either a Konkurs or a Kornet. It is believed that the PKK has brought this anti-tank rocket from the Syrian city Al-Malikiyah. Although the main source of the anti-tank rocket is unknown, it is assumed that the regime has provided the YPG with anti-tank missiles. Other probabilities are the black market, foreign powers, or stolen war goods.

Also, a tank located in a base in Şırnak was hit by the PKK using a German made MILAN rocket. Explanations as to how the MILAN rocket fell into the hands of the PKK from the YPG have been offered above.

Lastly, the two Turkish tanks that were hit by the YPG within the framework of Turkey's Operation Euphrates Shield deserve attention. According to the information provided by the press one tank was hit by a Kornet, and the other may have been hit with a MILAN ATGM. Another video published by the YPG shows that the Turkish tank may have been hit by a Kornet missile. This information is in accordance with the information published by the press.



# CONCLUSION

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The PYD, conducting activities as the PKK's Syrian branch, contemplated the exploitation of the Syrian revolution which broke out in 2011, for its own ends and has since acted together with the Assad regime on the basis of their common interests. The PYD formed a military-wing owing to its military engagement with the regime and the support provided by the PKK. As a result, the PYD has managed to control the Kurds who previously sided with the Syrian opposition, has declared self-ruled cantons, and formed a sphere of influence as an “armed-non-state-actor” in the north of Syria. In fact, the PKK has started to implement its self-administration model in the cantons, a model it plans to implement in Turkey as well. The PKK has adopted a policy based on absolute authority over even dissident Kurds; it offers no alternatives to those who do not support its causes. The PYD has presented itself as a useful actor in the U.S. fight against DAESH by taking advantage of DAESH's presence in Syria and has exerted efforts to connect the cantons under its control. After the Russian involvement in the Syrian civil war, the PYD has taken Machiavellist steps to establish a relationship with Russia, similar to the one it enjoys with the United States.

To realize its aspirations in the region, the PYD has developed tactical relations with the Assad regime, the USA and Russia. It tries hard to capture the regions populated in majority by Arabs and Turkmens in Northern Syria, and plans to establish a contiguous geographic belt along the entire Turkish border reaching out to the Mediterranean Sea. The PYD pursues a policy of forced migration in



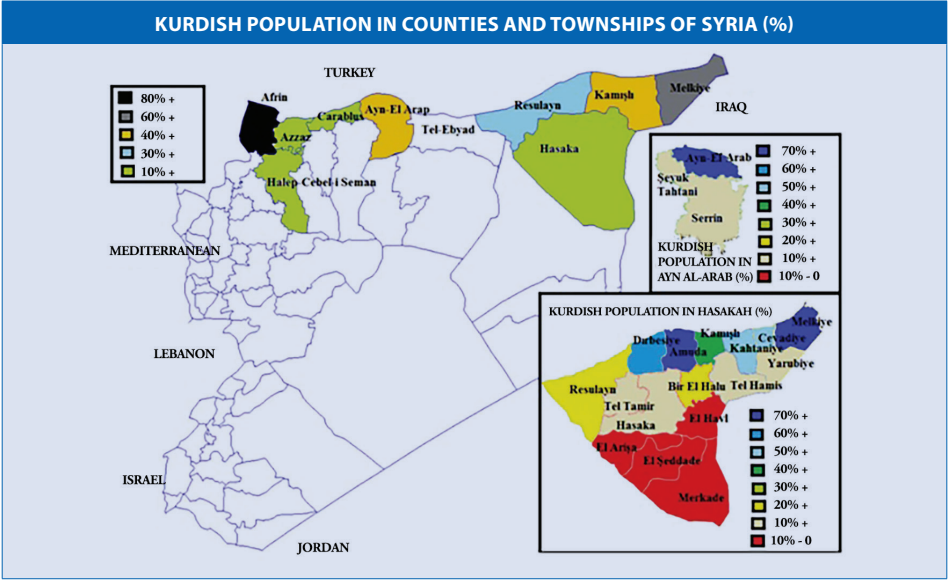
the regions under its control, and does not hesitate to commit war crimes to that end. As soon as the PKK resumed acts of terror in Turkey (in the summer of 2015), the PYD also adopted hostility towards Turkey and functioned as a base for the PKK and other related organizations.

The series of acts that are called the "Rojava Revolution" by the PYD have serious vulnerabilities that can jeopardize the group's aspirations in the region. The entire northern-line is under Turkey's control and the PYD shares a part of its epicenter, Jazira and Hasakah, with the Assad forces. The territory is heavily populated by Arabs, the Shammar tribe in particular. Again, there exists a serious movement represented by the Syrian Kurdish National Council consisting of dissident Kurds in Afrin, Ayn al-Arab and Jazira. In addition, there is a Peshmerga unit consisting of dissident Kurds who fight against the PYD. The dissident Kurds are backed by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

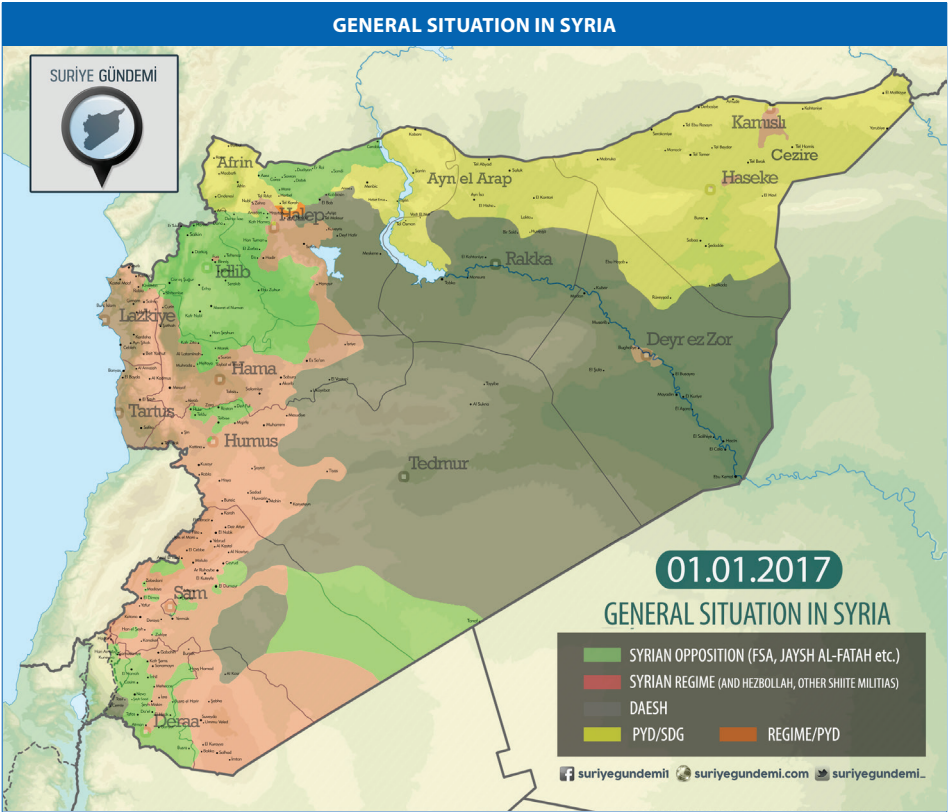
The PYD's military competence is also a matter of question. The vast majority of the YPG forces consist of inadequately trained 16- to 20-year-old militants with no real fighting experience. As the YPG-controlled territory expands in the north of Syria, the group, lacking heavy weapons, also suffers from lack of troops to deploy in this region; therefore it enforces compulsory military service. As witnessed in the Ayn al-Arab siege, a YPG minus U.S. air support faces serious military limitations.

Also, there are serious questions regarding how long the tactical relationship based on self-interest between the Assad regime, the U.S. and Russia will last. As such, the PYD with its federation declaration came face to face with the Assad regime resulting in large scale conflicts and the engagement established with the U.S. threatens the PYD's relationship with Russia. Turkey, on the other hand, has made use of this conjuncture by starting the Operation Euphrates Shield and blocking the PYD's effort to unite the cantons starting with Afrin in the west side of Euphrates. While Turkey's entrance to Northern Syria as a military player works against the PYD, it seems that the PYD may continue to use itself as a useful tool for the great powers during the chaos and war in Syria.

APPENDIX 1: MAPS



Source: Rasim Bozbuğa, "Suriye Kürtleri: Suriye'nin Kuzeyinde Etnik Yapı ve Kürt Nüfusu", 21. Yüzyıl Türkiye Enstitüsü, <http://www.21yyte.org.tr/arastirma/orta-dogu-ve-afrika-arastirmalari-merkezi/2015/01/05/7393/suriye-kurtleri-suriyeninkuzeyinde-etnik-yapi-ve-kurt-nufusu>.



Source: Suriye gündemi, <http://www.suriyegundemi.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/haziranbasi.png>

APPENDIX 2: OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS PROVING THE TRADE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ASSAD REGIME AND THE YPG



The above document (dated January 27, 2013) was written and signed by YPG representative Mohammed Ibrahim to the General Director of the Syrian Oil Company, and reads as follows: “Based on the Prime Ministry Decree (No: 1/19429, dated December 13, 2012), we, together with the YPG representatives, would like to request exemption from the letter of credit for the work package to protect the oil facilities (Keraçuk, Savadiyat, Saida, Zariya, Alyan, and Babasi) in the Kurdish-populated regions and under the possession of the Hasakah Oil Wells Directorate.”



Noted in this document is that the request in the first document was transmitted to the Syrian Oil Company General Directorate two days later. The oil wells referred to in the first document are located in the Rimeylan oil fields in northeast Syria. Prior to the civil war, 90,000 barrels/day of oil (25 percent of the total oil production in the country) were being produced from the above wells, which are known to be the richest oil reserves in Syria.

## APPENDIX 3: CONTRACT BETWEEN GENEVA CALL AND THE PYD/YPG ON CHILD SOLDIERS



### DEED OF COMMITMENT UNDER GENEVA CALL FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM THE EFFECTS OF ARMED CONFLICT

WE, the PEOPLE'S PROTECTION UNITS (YPG), the WOMEN'S PROTECTION UNITS (YPJ) and the DEMOCRATIC SELF-ADMINISTRATION IN ROJAVA, through our duly authorized representative(s),

*Concerned* with the harmful and widespread impact of armed conflict on the physical and mental development of children and the long-term consequences this has for human security, durable peace, and development;

*Affirming* our determination to protect the civilian population, in particular children, from the effects or dangers of military actions, and to respect their right to life, to human dignity, to education and to development, with the best interest of the child as a primary consideration;

*Recognizing* that children associated with armed forces are at particular risk of exposure to attacks by opposing forces;

*Taking due account* of the varying standards within international law instruments providing special protection for children affected by armed conflict, in particular the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and *determined* to clarify our responsibilities on the recruitment and use in hostilities of persons under 18 years of age;

*Mindful* that the Statute of the International Criminal Court criminalizes the act of conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups or using them to participate actively in hostilities;

*Rejecting* the notion that any cause, for whatever reason, may justify unlawful treatment of children in armed conflict;

*Accepting* that international humanitarian norms apply to and oblige all parties to armed conflict;

*Stressing* that the present Commitment protects all children, both girls and boys;

*And understanding that for the purposes of this Deed of Commitment:*

"children" are defined as persons under the age of 18, and where there is doubt as to whether a person has reached the age of 18, (s)/he will be treated as a child;

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HEREBY solemnly commit ourselves to the following terms:

1. TO ADHERE to a total ban on the use of children in hostilities.
2. TO ENSURE that children are not recruited into our armed forces, whether voluntarily or non-voluntarily. Children will not be allowed to join or remain in our armed forces.
3. TO NEVER COMPEL children to associate with, or remain associated with, our armed forces. By associate, we mean any type of direct or supporting activity whether combat related or otherwise. In the event that children have been compelled to do so, they will be released at the earliest possible opportunity in accordance with Article 6 of this *Deed of Commitment*.
4. TO ENSURE that children do not accompany our armed forces during our military operations and to take all feasible measures so that children in areas where we exercise control are not present during military operations.
5. TO TREAT humanely children who are detained or imprisoned for reasons related to the armed conflict, in accordance with their age and gender specific needs, recognizing that deprivation of liberty may be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time. The death penalty will not be pronounced or executed on a person for any offense committed while a child.
6. The release or disassociation of children from our armed forces must be done in safety and security, and whenever possible, in cooperation with specialized child protection actors.
7. TO FURTHER ENDEAVOUR TO PROVIDE children in areas where we exercise authority with the aid and care they require, in cooperation with humanitarian or development organizations where appropriate. Towards these ends, and among other things, we will:
  - i) take concrete measures towards ensuring that children have access to adequate food, health care (including psycho-social support), education, and where possible, leisure and cultural activities;
  - ii) protect children against sexual and other forms of violence;
  - iii) facilitate the provision of impartial humanitarian assistance to children in need;
  - iv) facilitate efforts by impartial humanitarian organizations to reunite children with their families;
  - v) avoid using for military purposes schools or premises primarily used by children.
8. TO ISSUE the necessary orders and directives to our political and military organs, commanders and fighters for the implementation and enforcement of our commitment, including measures for information dissemination and training. Commanders and superiors are responsible for their subordinates. In case of non-compliance, we will take all necessary measures to cease violations immediately, initiate appropriate investigations and impose sanctions in accordance with international standards.
9. TO ALLOW AND COOPERATE in the monitoring and verification of our present commitment by Geneva Call and other independent international and national organizations associated for this purpose with Geneva Call. Such monitoring and verification include visits and inspections in all areas where we operate, and the provision of the necessary information

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and reports, as may be required for such purposes in the spirit of transparency and accountability.

10. TO TREAT this commitment as one step or part of a broader commitment in principle to the ideal of humanitarian norms, particularly of international humanitarian law and human rights, and to contribute to their respect in field practice as well as to the further development of humanitarian norms for armed conflict.
11. This *Deed of Commitment* shall not affect our legal status, pursuant to the relevant clause in common article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949.
12. We understand that Geneva Call may publicize our compliance or non-compliance with this *Deed of Commitment*.
13. We see the desirability of attracting the adherence of other such armed actors to this *Deed of Commitment* and will do our part to promote it.
14. This *Deed of Commitment* complements, or supersedes, as the case may be, any existing unilateral declaration of ours on children and armed conflict.
15. Any reservation to this *Deed of Commitment* must be consistent with its object and purpose, international humanitarian law, and the minimum obligations of State parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It must be expressed in writing upon signature and will be periodically reviewed towards attaining the highest possible respect for the rights of children. Geneva Call will be the final arbiter on the permissibility of any reservation.
16. This *Deed of Commitment* shall take effect immediately upon its signing and receipt by the Government of the Republic and Canton of Geneva which receives it as the custodian of such deeds.

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Done this 5 July 2014,

For **THE PEOPLE'S  
PROTECTION UNITS  
(YPG)**



Redur XELIL  
Deputy General Commander  
Spokesperson

For **THE WOMEN'S  
PROTECTION UNITS (YPJ)**



Ghalia NAAMAT

For **THE DEMOCRATIC  
SELF-ADMINISTRATION  
IN ROJAVA**



Abdulkerim SARUXAN

For **GENEVA CALL**



Elisabeth DECREY WARNER  
President

For **THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND CANTON OF GENEVA**

  
  
Anja WYDEN GUERPA  
Chancery of the President



**RESERVATION**

Pursuant to Article 15, the People's Protection Units (YPG), the Women's Protection Units (YPJ), and the Democratic Self-Administration in Rojava, enter a reservation to Article 2, to the extent that persons who have reached their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday will be allowed to voluntarily join, or remain in, the YPG/YPJ forces, under a non-military active category of membership, meaning without the authorization to participate in hostilities – both directly and indirectly – until they are 18 years old.

Such persons will be located as far away as possible from combat areas and special measures will be applied to ensure that they are prevented from participating in hostilities.

Done this 5 July 2014

For THE PEOPLE'S  
PROTECTION UNITS  
(YPG)



Redur XELIL  
Deputy General Commander  
Spokesperson

For THE WOMEN'S  
PROTECTION UNITS (YPJ)




Ghalia NAAMAT

For THE DEMOCRATIC  
SELF-ADMINISTRATION  
IN ROJAVA



Abdulkarim SARUXAN

For GENEVA CALL



Elisabeth DECROY-WARNER  
President

For THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND CANTON OF GENEVA



A.O.  
Chancelière d'Etat

## APPENDIX 4: THE PYD BYLAW

### Part I: General Provisions

**Name of the Party:** The Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat)

**Abbreviation:** PYD

**Flag of the Party:** On a white background, a semicircular green olive branch on the left and a semicircular yellow wheat spike on the right and a red star in the center. At the top of the circle, the letters (PYD) and at the bottom, the year of establishment (2003) are written.

**Party Goals:**

- To work towards finding a democratic and just solution to the Kurdish issue in Syria and West Kurdistan.
- To strengthen the brotherhood among peoples and ethnic groups within the framework of free and voluntary union.
- To support the democratic liberation struggle in all parts of Kurdistan in order to achieve and consolidate Kurdish national unity based upon the principle of democratic communal confederalism without compromising political borders.
- To work towards a democratic confederate Middle Eastern union and to move forward towards building a political, moral and ecological community in pursuit of democratic socialism and progressive humanity.
- To achieve gender equality and to consolidate social justice.

### Part II: Party Principles

The Democratic Union Party (PYD) accepts Mr. Abdullah Öcalan as its leader and the leader of the Kurdish people, and it considers the Kurdistan People's Conference (Kongra-Gel) the supreme legislative body of Kurdistan's people. The PYD considers the Movement for a Democratic Society (TEV-DEM) as a democratic and communal organization for the Kurdish people in West Kurdistan.

The PYD adopts the paradigm of the moral society and the approach of democratic politics to its work and relies on the principle of equal sharing as its fundamental principle, and seeks 40 percent gender representation in all institutions, administrations and bodies. The PYD is a democratic and populist political party *en masse* that rejects all chauvinistic concepts and stances. The PYD takes openness, the legitimate democratic struggle and peaceful political dialogue as the basis for addressing issues and achieving goals as set out in the program. The Party builds its relations with all social groups, grassroots and Syrian civil society organizations on the basis of the free citizenship principle. Women and youth are the party's avant-garde.

### Part III: Party Membership

#### a. Party Membership

Any person who fulfils all of the following criteria is eligible to join the PYD:

They must be at least 18 years of age; believe in the democratic nation; believe and accept Leader Öcalan's method of democratic civilization, the Party's Rules of Procedure, and represent them in their daily lives; abide by Party rules; and pay their monthly membership fee.

**Party Supporter:** A party supporter is a person who accepts all the goals of the party, works towards achieving them according to his/her abilities, and supports the party both financially and morally.

#### b. Party Membership (Granting and Revocation):

The person who wants to apply for party membership should apply to one of the Party's committees near his/her place of residence. The candidate is subjected to a probationary or

trial/testing period - no less than one month and no more than three months.

The candidate becomes a full party member after receiving the approval of the local committee and approval by the Party's Provincial General Coordinating Committee. The Party's Provincial Administration inspects and makes decisions on requests by members to rejoin the Party if their membership has been revoked. Except in the case of members who, prior to their dismissal, had occupied senior leadership positions, their requests to rejoin the party are dealt with by the Party's General Council. Similarly, membership revocation is dealt with by the Party's Provincial Administration. However, members who occupy senior leadership positions must be referred to the Party's General Assembly.

### **c. Duties of Members:**

1. To take pride in and be associated with the values of Leader Abdullah Öcalan and the Kurdish people, and to struggle for the liberation from captivity of the former.
2. To work with a spirit of sacrifice, enthusiasm, determination and resistance in order to develop the Democratic Self-Administration system, implement the Party's approach, and achieve the Party's objectives as outlined in the program.
3. To be cognizant of and apply policies and tactics drawn by the leadership of the party, represented by the co-chairmanship and the General Council of the party.
4. To implement party instructions and directions without hesitation and act in accordance with the rules of procedure and the party's ethical standards.
5. To understand and absorb the party's ideological and political approaches and apply them in everyday life practices.
6. To commit to party discipline and the spirit of comradeship in all regards.
7. To protect the party's moral and material values, respect the democratic forces, and embody the values and sanctities of the people and defend their interests.
8. Not to use their position and power for personal gain.
9. To defend the Party's principles under all conditions, within or outside the Party, without making any concessions to any behavior, attitude, position, or life style.
10. To protect and develop the gains of the community and public property, without using them for their personal interests.
11. To participate in working towards achieving equality between men and women on the basis of belief in the right of women to be free.

### **d. Rights of Members**

1. Every member has the right to stand as an electoral candidate and vote for all party posts in accordance with party rules and regulations.
2. Every member has the right of criticism and self-criticism and the right to defend themselves against charges against them in accordance with party rules and regulations.
3. Every member has the right to express their opinions and ideas in all matters, and to participate in party discussions to reach the best decisions.
4. Every member is entitled to refine and develop their political and organizational talents and competencies.
5. Every member has the right to resign from the party or his duties. Good reasons should be provided, a resignation letter must be submitted to the superior party authority that deals with resignations. Members' resignations only come into force once approved by the Party Assembly.
6. Every member has the right to request access to the necessary information from the concerned authorities within the party in connection with an incident or an issue, in accordance with the party's rules and regulations.

7. A member is entitled to a position according to their competencies as long as it does not contradict the party's rules of procedure.
8. A member is entitled to request "restitution" when their rights have been violated.
9. A member is entitled to request training, both political and intellectual.
10. A member is entitled to write personal reports to the concerned authorities within the Party.

#### **e. Personal Qualities of the Party Member**

1. Strives to build and develop the Democratic Self-Administration and struggles to consolidate radical democracy.
2. A patriot who loves his/her people and is committed to their values.
3. A person who has scientific and analytical deep awareness of the history, geography and culture of their society, and is filled with love for humanity.
4. Represents the ethical communal culture and the politics of democracy, and internationalist citizenship.
5. A believer in the doctrine of democratic civilization and the ideology of women's freedom.
6. Full of love and respect for their comrades, and a sense of brotherhood towards them.
7. Committed to the principles of brotherhood and voluntary union in freedom among peoples.
8. An assiduous, well-organized and innovative person.
9. An ecological person, who aims to defend and protect the environment/nature.
10. Committed to the values of martyrs and their heritage, and who embodies their memory in practice/work.
11. Does not work to break the will of their colleagues and people, and does not influence negatively their spirituality in their lifestyle.
12. Modest in his life and transparent with his/her comrades and people.

### **Part IV: Structure of the Organization**

#### **1. Congress**

- The Congress is the supreme decision-making body. It convenes every three years based on simple majority and the majority vote. Two-thirds of the General Assembly members and the approval of the chairman, or two-thirds of the Party members are required for extraordinary conventions of the Congress. If necessary, an extraordinary congressional meeting may be postponed, for only once and one year at most, by the decision of the party chairman or of the two-thirds of the general assembly members.
- Under the supervision of the preparatory committee and with the approval of the Party Assembly and the Executive Council, all delegates selected from all bodies participate in the party convention. The participation ratio of each regional administrations is determined by the number of members and according to the individual level of progress-in-struggle.
- The Party Leadership and the Assembly members participate in the congress as ordinary members. The authority for the approval of the party program and the bylaws as well as amendments, change of strategy and laying out temporary policies rests with the Congress.
- The Congress also selects the Party Leadership, Assembly and candidate members to the Assembly.

#### **2. Conference**

- The Conference is held as needed with the decision of the Party Assembly and the Executive Council and with the voting of the Party Leadership. The delegates to attend the Conference are selected from among the representatives of other party organs, the delegates of provinces and regions, and from among the members and candidate members of the General Assembly. The Party Assembly determines the number of delegates to attend the Conference.

- The Conference has all the authority of the Congress (except the authority to change the party program, rules of procedure and the party strategy). The Congress, on the other hand, does not have the authority to change either the Party Assembly or the Party Leadership.
- Provinces and regions hold their conferences prior to the Party Conference.

### 3. Party Leadership

Co-chairmanship consists of a man and a woman who are selected by two-thirds of the majority at the Congress and for, at most, two consecutive terms. Absolute majority is sufficient for the third round of voting if the preceding two rounds fail to reach a decision. In the period between two congressional conventions, co-chairs preside over the Party Assembly and the Executive Committee. The Leadership acts as a self-regulatory leadership council. The co-chairmanship is authorized with decisions and activities of the organization, the formation of special committees for assistance and the presentation of activity reports to the Congress and the Party Assembly.

### 4. Party Assembly

- The Party Assembly is an ideological, political and structural council that functions between two consecutive conventions of the Congress. The Assembly is selected by the Congress and obliged to present an end-of-term report to the Congress.
- The Party Assembly consists of 25 members.
- For the purpose of common struggle and of reciprocal supervision and control, the Party Leadership is responsible to the Assembly and vice versa. Both the Party Assembly and the Party Leadership are responsible before the Congress and obliged to report to the Congress.
- The Party Leadership chairs the Party Assembly meetings and submits reports to the Assembly, and receives the report of the Assembly.
- Members of the Executive Committee are selected by the Assembly and from among the members of the Assembly. The Executive Committee members must be approved by the Party Leadership. If necessary, the Assembly has the authority to reselect the Committee and remove an Executive Committee member from office by a majority of votes. The Assembly and the Executive Committee share responsibility to determine alliance politics, tactics, and strategic and organizational policies. The Assembly conducts the organizational functions, implements the Party program and carries the decisions of the Congress into execution.
- The Party Assembly is authorized with the coordination of the formation and operational audits of the organization's lower bodies. The Assembly convenes every three months and decisions are taken by the majority of votes.
- The decision to postpone a meeting or reschedule a meeting to an earlier date rests with the Party Assembly, and requires two-thirds of votes in the Assembly. The Party Assembly determines Party policies towards other political powers, and decides for a coalition or an alliance with them.

#### **Duties of the Assembly:**

1. In the frame of the establishment of Democratic Self-Administration, the Assembly helps and supports democratic public institutions and syndicates.
2. Helps and mutually supports the democratic and social institutions and parties in neighboring states and in all other parts of Kurdistan.
3. Helps and supports democratic activities of women and the youth.

4. Determines external policies of the party.
5. Organizes and directs private media.
6. Is responsible for the training of members and raising of public awareness based on democratic national principles.
7. Creates a special financial system for the Party and forms necessary finance committees.

## 5. Executive Committee

After the Leadership and Assembly of the organization, the Executive Committee, as the third most powerful body of the organization, submits reports to the Assembly, determines ideological, political and diplomatic tactics of the organization and follows progress. It also provides assistance to the Co-chairmanship and performs the tasks of the Co-chairmanship as needed. Activities of the Executive Committee are determined and directed by the chairman. The Committee also presents its own activity reports to the Assembly.

- The Executive Committee follows the Party Leadership and the Party Assembly in the hierarchy, and submits reports to the Assembly.
- The Executive Committee determines ideological, political and diplomatic tactics of the organization and follows the progress. It also has the authority to form scientific and cultural institutions as needed.
- The Executive Committee is responsible for the execution and supervision of all activities of the organization, and directs central committees and structures to achieve the supreme goals. It also accepts reports of all party delegations, observes the Party Assembly members and guides their activities. The Committee approves the suggestions and the decisions of the Assembly, coordinates all Party organizations, and monitors the financial business and expenditures. The Committee evaluates the suggestions and complaints submitted.
- The Executive Committee works together with the Chairman of the Party and acts as an assistant to the Chairman. If the Co-chairmanship fails to fulfill duties, the Committee undertakes the duties in lieu of the Co-chairmanship.
- Activities of the Executive Committee are organized and directed by the Party Chairman.
- The Executive Committee submits activity reports to the Party Assembly. The Assembly is the authority to evaluate the reports. For report presentations, periodic meetings are held.

## 6. Provincial Administration

The Provincial Administration is a leadership council consisting of five to nine members and is responsible for an array of Regional Administrations and the councils under regional administrations. The Provincial Administrations convenes every two months. Its members are selected by the Regional Administration, and approved by the Party Assembly and the Executive Committee. The Provincial Administration selects the Province General Responsible and his/her two deputies to follow up activities between two consecutive meetings. It is held accountable for the local implementation of directives and decisions of the Party Assembly and of the Party's decisions. The Provincial Administration may form committees and subcommittees to implement the aforementioned directives and decisions, and responds to reports of subcommittees. The administration submits reports about political, financial and structural activities to the Executive Committee.

## 7. Regional Administration

The Regional Administration is a leadership council responsible for a series of local representative offices and district administrations. Members of the Regional Administration are selected by local represen-

tative offices and district administrations. The Administration has five to nine members. The Regional Administration is in charge of political and organizational activities of its own region and implements the Party's decisions locally. For the implementations, the Administration may form delegations and committees. It functions under the directives and decisions of the Provincial Administration, and convenes once a month. The Regional Administrations respond to reports submitted by the District Administration and submit financial and organizational activity reports to the Provincial Administration.

## **8. District Administration**

The District Administration is a leadership council in charge of ruling Party members in its area of conduct. Members of the Administration are selected by the members of sub-party cells. It plays an active role in the networking of Party members. In addition, the District Administration implements decisions and directives of the Regional Administration and the Party politics. It raises public awareness; trains Party members in political and inner-party aspects; collects donations from people; convenes once a month; responds to reports in meetings; and submits activity reports to the Regional Administration.

## **V: Pattern of Administration**

The Pattern of Administration is based on the principles of the organizational structure and democratic participation. Members are subordinates to the organization, sub-delegates to upper-delegates, the whole Party to the Executive Committee and the Party Assembly, and finally to the Party Co-chairs. All delegations are obliged to reach right decisions and give right directives in a top-to-bottom fashion. Reports, on the other hand, are submitted from bottom-to-top. All Party delegates are renewed and constituted by elections. Administrative delegates observe democratic standards in the affairs of the organization. Personal initiatives, in addition to maintaining the spirit of cooperation and the activities, are based on volunteerism and free will.

### **a. Reports, Directives and Guidance System**

Reports and directives must include criticism and self-criticism, suggestions and information on activities. The reporting system, regardless of the identity of the reporter, must exemplify the style and behavior of democratic participation in content in order to continue the struggle. The reports are submitted with a clear agenda and in an orderly fashion. Individuals who write reports are responsible before the Party. If upper bodies do not submit timely reports, they shall be held accountable. If lower bodies do not submit timely reports, this shall be considered a fault. Each body presents to upper bodies reports about their meetings. The purpose of reports is to contribute to the evaluation of general activities of the Party; suggestions, criticisms and self-criticisms are also included to this end. Bodies affiliated with the Party Assembly and the Assembly submit a report to the Executive Committee every six months. The Committee presents the report to the Party Chairmanship.

### **b. Meetings System**

As it is stated in the internal regulations, all party delegations must hold meetings. Thoughts and suggestions of the participants are put into official records. Majority is sought for a meeting. Not participating in three consecutive meetings is reason for revocation of membership.

### **c. Criticism and Self-Criticism**

Criticism and self-criticism is the right and duty of all members and bodies of the Party. Criticism and self-criticism are considered essential, at all levels, for the development of the Party and its



members. Criticism and self-criticism are the key for the solutions of internal problems. Both are instrumental to confirm and renew the way of the Party and its members. It is necessary for all Party members to make criticisms and self-criticisms in order to overcome obstacles. In addition, criticism and self-criticism must not be employed for personal interests and benefits, or for denigrating a Party member.

#### **d. Penalties System**

In the case of the violation of the Party discipline and internal regulations; of misconducts of the Party program or objectives; of the exposition of secrets; of not implementing directives and decisions; of taking advantage of the Party for personal or family interests; of misappropriation; of insulting Party members in public, and of the violation of the Party's officiality, a Party member is subjected to punishment depending on the degree of violation.

##### **Penalties are applied to the Party bodies and members as follows:**

All bodies of the Party are entitled to give warning to guilty members. However, punishments such as termination of membership, temporary dismissal from the Party, suspension, and voting a member out are contingent upon the decision of the Party Assembly. The accused is sent to the Assembly in this case.

In emergency and exceptional cases, a delegation may take necessary measures towards a guilty or a murdering member until the Party Assembly sends a report or a note to finalize a verdict.

The accused member has also the right to submit a report to the Party Assembly or the Party Leadership.

#### **e. Decision-Making Mechanism**

Decisions are taken by a majority vote in all bodies of the Party. Majority rules minority.

Two-thirds of votes in the Party Assembly and leadership councils are required to call for a congressional or an extraordinary meeting. If the two-thirds of votes are not found, half of the Party members and the majority of the Party Assembly shall be sufficient.

Fifty percent + one (50%+1) of the representatives of the Party organs is required for the quorum for the Congress or the Conference to convene.

### **Part VI. Financial System of the Party**

#### **1. Income sources of the Party are as follows:**

- a. Monthly and yearly fees from members and supporters. Each member decides for a fee according to his/her own budget.
  - b. Income from seasonal donation campaigns, voluntary works, publications, and investments projects.
2. The Party has a Finance Committee. Financial subcommittees are formed to take care of financial affairs. A subcommittee is responsible to the chairman (who is not a committee member) of the body for which it is established. A subcommittee keeps records of its own financial activities.
  3. A subcommittee periodically submits detailed financial reports to upper bodies. Incomes and expenditures are to be examined separately in these reports.
  4. The Party Assembly determines the general budget.
  5. All bodies and finance subcommittees are obliged to keep their own income-expenditure records.
  6. Lower bodies cannot have access to the Party sources with the permission of the Finance Committee.

## CAN ACUN

Can Acun is a researcher SETA Foreign Policy Department. He received a BA from the International Relations Department at Eastern Mediterranean University and an MA from the Department of Political Science and International Affairs at Yeditepe University. Acun has also received an education in Intercultural Dialogue in Canada, and has conducted research for SETA at the Center for Turkey Research in Cairo, Egypt. Acun currently works at SETA-Ankara on Egypt and the Middle East.

## BÜNYAMİN KESKİN

Bünyamin Keskin graduated with a degree in International Policy Management from Bremen, Germany. In 2011-2012, he studied at Istanbul Bilgi University's Political Science and International Relations Department as a visiting student. He received his Master's degree in International Relations and Middle Eastern Studies from Durham University. He is involved in the Germany-based NGO CARE-Centre of Arts, Research and Education and has held different positions in Turkish NGOs in Germany. For a short term he worked for the Bremen Senate Chancellery in the Press Advisors Office. Currently he is a research assistant in the Foreign Policy Research Department of SETA.



## THE PKK'S BRANCH IN NORTHERN SYRIA **PYD-YPG**

CAN ACUN, BÜNYAMİN KESKİN

The PYD, conducting activities as the PKK's Syrian branch, contemplated exploiting the Syrian revolution which broke out in 2011 for its own ends and has since acted together with the Assad regime on the basis of their common interests. The PYD formed a military-wing owing to its military engagement with the regime and the support provided by the PKK. Therefore, the PYD has managed to control the Kurds who previously sided with the Syrian opposition, has declared self-ruled cantons, and formed a sphere of influence as an "armed-non-state-actor" in the north of Syria. In fact, the PKK has started to implement its self-administration model in the cantons, a model it plans to implement in Turkey as well. The PKK has adopted a policy based on absolute authority over even dissident Kurds; it offers no alternatives to those who do not support its causes. The PYD has presented itself as a useful actor in the U.S. fight against DAESH by taking advantage of DAESH's presence in Syria; and has exerted efforts to connect the cantons under its control. After the Russian involvement in the Syrian civil war, the PYD has taken Machiavellist steps to establish a relationship with Russia similar to the one it enjoys with the United States.

To realize its aspirations over the region, the PYD has developed tactical relations with the Assad regime, the USA and Russia, and has been trying hard to capture the regions populated in majority by Arabs and Turkmens in Northern Syria. Furthermore, the PYD plans to establish a contiguous geographic belt along the entire Turkish border reaching out to the Mediterranean Sea. The PYD pursues a policy of forced migration in the regions under its control, and does not hesitate to commit war crimes to this end. As soon as the PKK resumed acts of terror in Turkey in the summer of 2015, the PYD also adopted hostility towards Turkey and functioned as a base for the PKK and other related organizations.

This report entitled "The PKK's Branch in Northern Syria: PYD-YPG" aims to answer basic questions about the PYD and is one of the leading reports originally penned in Turkish.