



Turkey – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 24 January 2018

1. Information on how the Turkish Army & Police torture harassment, brutality of all civilians members and those of the Alevi religion living in the Kurdish villages in the Kani Mountains of Eastern Turkey in particular Maras , Paxarcik, Kizirli (Koyu) villages during early 1980's right up to 2018. Incidents of Turkish Army torturing civilians that they believed were helping the PKK.

2. Information on how PKK Soldiers harassed and pressurised civilians in the above Kurdish region of Turkey to give them food clothes and further put pressure on them to get their children to join the PKK.

Writing in a personal capacity, an article by Diarmuid Breatnach published on the Indymedia Ireland website states:

"In recent years mass graves are being discovered in Turkey's Kurdish region. Human rights activists believe most of these were killed and secretly buried during the 1980s and 1990s, a time when the Turkish state deployed its armed forces against the PKK, the Kurdish Left national liberation army. During this time more than 4,000 Kurdish villages were destroyed to punish villagers for allegedly harbouring the guerrillas and in order to drive the inhabitants into supervised townships (like the 'strategic hamlets' of the British war in Malaya and the USA's war in Viet Nam). Huge numbers of stock were killed and crops destroyed." (Breatnach, Diarmuid (10 March 2011) *Mass graves of thousands of Kurds discovered in Turkey's Kurdish region*)

A 1994 Associated Press report states:

"Agarti Koyu is one of an estimated 1,500 villages evacuated and razed across southeastern Turkey, where the government has escalated an offensive against Kurdish rebels. Human rights observers accuse the military of pursuing a systematic campaign to wipe out any village considered sympathetic to the rebels. Most residents straggle to nearby cities such as Diyarbakir, about 40 miles west of Agarti Koyu. Some villagers are detained and tortured, activists claim. The government insists there is no plan to destroy villages and says it only encourages people to move for safety. It blames the wholesale destruction of homes on the rebels. Either way, Agarti Koyu is one of the victims." (Associated Press (23 October 1994) *Ghost Town's Lingering Tale: Flames and Flight*)

A report published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, in a section titled "Conflict with the PKK" (section 2.4.1), states:

"The PKK's armed operations in south-eastern Turkey, starting in 1984 and peaking from 1990 to 1994, involved attacks on civilian (in many cases

Kurdish) and military targets, causing around 30 000 deaths. The PKK was guilty of human rights violations, including murders, especially in rural parts of the south-east but also in other areas. The victims were mainly jandarma officers, mayors, teachers, imams, village guards and their families, reluctant recruits, young villagers refusing to fight for the PKK and (former) PKK members acting as informers for the Turkish authorities. From the outset, the Turkish army took tough action against the PKK.

The PKK attempted to make the south-east ungovernable, by systematically destroying economic and social infrastructure, etc. and by deliberately polarising the local population. Many village schools were closed down, not least as a result of the PKK's policy, up until 1996, of killing schoolteachers .

In order to cut off the PKK's roots and hamper supplies to PKK guerrillas in the mountains, numerous villages in south-eastern Turkey were cleared of their inhabitants and burned down by the armed forces, compelling many (Kurdish) families to resettle elsewhere in Turkey . The combat against the PKK was often also accompanied by various other kinds of human rights violations." (Netherlands, The: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1 May 2001) *General Report on Turkey*, p.28)

A report from Al Jazeera states:

"The recent operation was focused largely on Kurdish-majority areas in southern Turkey.

The Turkish army claimed that more than 600 PKK fighters were killed in Cizre alone. Turkey also informed the United Nations that 205 members of the police, gendarmerie and military were killed between July 20 and December 28, 2015.

A Turkish police official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media, told Al Jazeera that the goal of the recent operation was 'to kill PKK terrorists and anyone who will support their ideology.' Turkish officials say the fighting was focused on neighbourhoods that housed barricades built by local fighters.

But Ali Ihsan Su, the governor of Sirnak province where Cizre is located, said the Turkish authorities did not distinguish between civilians and fighters. 'They destroyed houses by placing explosives from the kitchens to the bedrooms,' Su said. 'They attacked callously and mercilessly, without distinguishing between military, police, women, men, old or young.'" (Al Jazeera (13 March 2016) *Cizre in ruins as Turkey lifts curfew on Kurdish towns*)

The 2016 US Department of State country report for Turkey, in a section headed "Abuses in Internal Conflict", states:

"In addition to conducting deadly terror attacks throughout the year, the PKK and affiliates declared autonomy and dug trenches in some cities in the Southeast. The government responded with active security operations in the country's Southeast. The government issued curfews in dozens of urban neighborhoods throughout the Southeast, usually giving residents of these areas only hours to abandon their homes prior to the launch of counter-PKK security operations. Those who remained faced 24-hour curfews, sometimes

for weeks or even months at a time, as well as extremely difficult living conditions while government-PKK clashes took place, at times involving heavy artillery. Medical services were sometimes unable to reach persons in distress. Human rights groups reported that hundreds of civilians were killed, while thousands were rendered homeless. Multiple sources, including the government, asserted that the PKK forced noncombatants to act as human shields, exacerbating civilian casualties.” (US Department of State (3 March 2017) *2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Turkey*, p.21)

An article from the Los Angeles Times states:

“Most of the airstrikes have targeted PKK training camps and bases in neighboring Iraq, but Kurdish civilians in Turkey have become enmeshed in the fighting as the police and army seal off whole villages. Attack helicopters prowl the skies.

Violence has displaced thousands of Kurdish civilians, notably in towns of Siimdinli and Shapatan near the border with Iraq. Monitoring and aid groups say the displaced are camping out in fields and villages until they believe it is safe to return home.

‘We are seeing numerous rights violations by the authorities,’ said Tayyup Canan, an investigator with the Human Rights Assn., a group that tracks abuses by the government and armed groups. He said those included arbitrary arrests, forced evictions, torture, summary executions and humiliation.” (Los Angeles Times (23 August 2015) *Kurds' grief, rage mount in Turkish offensive: Hundreds of fighters have been killed in an assault that's shattered a 2-year truce*)

A report published by Human Rights Watch states:

“Kurdish civilians, including women, children and elderly residents, have been killed during security operations and armed clashes since July 2015 in southeastern Turkey. Local human rights groups have recorded well over 100 civilian deaths and multiple injuries. After unprecedented military deployments to the region in recent days, several cities are under curfew and some of their neighborhoods the scenes of shelling by the military and heavy clashes with armed Kurdish groups. The civilian death toll is likely to rise steeply in the coming days.” (Human Rights Watch (22 December 2015) *Turkey: Mounting Security Operation Deaths*)

An Agence France Presse report states:

“The blanket curfew in Silopi lasted 36 days as clashes raged between the Turkish army and Kurdish militants. Finally it was lifted, allowing residents to come to terms with the scale of the destruction in their hometown. The curfew in Silopi, a town of some 80,000 in the Kurdish-dominated Sirnak province of southeastern Turkey, was one of several imposed as the army wages a relentless campaign to crush Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants. The government says the measures are essential to oust militants who had gained control of key urban centres in southeastern Turkey. Kurdish groups, by contrast, accuse the army of killing dozens of civilians.” (Agence France Presse (20 January 2016) *'I hope no one suffers like us': Residents return to shattered Turkish town*)

A report from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in a section titled "Situation in south-east Turkey" (paragraph 20), states:

"Following the collapse of the peace talks in July 2015, violence escalated in south-east Turkey, leading to clashes between Turkish security and army forces, and the PKK. In order to conduct security operations and 'eradicate the PKK', the authorities have imposed, since August 2015, curfews in various districts which, as noted by Assembly's election observers, were predominantly voting for the HDP. In retaliation, ditches and trenches were built in these areas under curfew and barricades were erected by youngsters first, and then possibly PKK militants. This situation depicts a change in the strategy of the PKK, which is relocating its guerrilla type of action from rural to urban areas, that is to say in highly populated areas, thus causing human loss when clashes occur. The Ministry of the Interior provided us with the latest figures, according to which, since 20 July 2015, 458 security officers have been killed and 3 321 wounded, while – in official terminology – '1 682 terrorists were counteracted and 450 captured alive'. Almost 4 500 weapons and 50 tons of explosives have been seized.¹⁷ Today, Pýrnak-Central and Nusaybin remain under curfew. In Sur and Yüksekova security operations have ended but the curfews, full-time search and control are maintained. In Cizre, Silopi and Ýdil, operations have ended, but the curfews remain in place from 21:30 to 04:30. In Silvan, Varto, Derik, Dargeçit and Baðlar security operations have ended and the curfews have been lifted." (Council of Europe - Parliamentary Assembly (CoE-PACE) (6 June 2016) *The functioning of democratic institutions in Turkey*, p.12)

An article published by the Turkish Journal refers to alleged PKK coercion of villagers as follows:

"Perhaps if McNeill had done just a bit of research into the Kurdish terrorist organization, PKK, he would have better understood that the evacuations were not due to 'persecution of Kurds', but due to the constant terrorist attacks by the PKK in the region. The PKK would hide out in the mountains and coerce villagers to provide food, clothing, supplies, and shelter. Some Kurdish families have even been forced to give up their children to the PKK. Villages not succumbing to PKK demands were then torched as punishment." (Turkish Journal (23 January 2011) *Kurdish Asylum Seekers*)

An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada response to a request for information on the PKK, in a section headed "Recruitment of Children", states:

"According to the information provided by the terror expert in the Umut Foundation's article, 43.68 percent of mountain fighters of the PKK are under the age of 18, and with a minimum age of 9. Press TV indicated in December 2011 that the PKK reportedly kidnapped five children in the province of Hakkari; the children would be trained in camps, learning how to use weapons and explosives. Another media article by Today's Zaman, an English-language newspaper based in Istanbul, reports that many volunteer imams put pressure on families to make their children join the PKK and indicates that an incident had occurred at a village in Erzurum, where a volunteer imam was 'sent away' for asking a villager to make one of his sons join the PKK." (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (15 June 2012) *TUR104075.E – Turkey: The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), including areas*

of operation and targets, methods of recruitment and activities; state response)

An article from the Washington DC-based media website Al-Monitor, in a paragraph headed “PKK’s tactical problem”, states:

“Given this atmosphere, the debate on the PKK’s recruitment of minors and the mothers’ demonstrations have put strain on the PKK. The problem is actually an old one; children have always been a prominent feature in PKK history — sometimes as victims of terror, as in the Pinarcik massacre, and sometimes as “child soldiers” driven directly into the battlefield.

Many children were kidnapped by the PKK in the 1980s under the group’s so-called ‘military service law.’ The commander for Hakkari province, Halil Kaya, for instance, overdid the practice so much that PKK’s Abdullah Ocalan, who had first encouraged him, grew furious in time, charging that good-for-nothings were being recruited. In PKK jargon, the forcible recruitment of children is called ‘the blind Cemal practice,’ which means the indiscriminate recruitment of adults and minors alike.” (Al-Monitor (8 June 2014) *PKK’s recruitment of ‘child soldiers’ puts strain on party*)

An article published by the online news portal Middle East Eye states:

“Heavy fighting between the Turkish army and militants of the Kurdistan’s Workers Party (PKK), designated as a terrorist organisation by both the US and EU, continues in Nusaybin, a predominantly Kurdish town in southeast of Turkey.

What also appears to be continuing is the PKK’s use of child soldiers. Last Wednesday, 25 PKK militants surrendered to the Turkish army in Nusaybin. A day later, another 42 PKK militants surrendered. Some of the PKK militants that surrendered in Nusaybin were reportedly minors.

In Syria, the PKK’s Syrian affiliate, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its military wing, the People’s Protection Units (YPG), are also reported to be continuing to recruit child soldiers. Of course, this information cannot be easily found in international media, which often ignores negative stories on Kurdish militants and their abuse of children’s rights.” (Middle East Eye (1 June 2016) *The forgotten child soldiers recruited by Kurdish militants in Turkey and Syria*)

In a paragraph headed “A history of violence” this article states:

“In the past, the PKK even recruited children as young as 8-12 years. In 2010, a Danish national daily newspaper, Berlingske Tidende, published a story about the PKK’s child soldiers. According to that report, there were around 3,000 young militants in the PKK’s training camps. The youngest child at the PKK training camps was eight or nine years old. The children were taught the life story of the jailed PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, and how to use weapons and explosives. After that story was published, the PKK encountered strong reactions from human rights organizations around the world. The same year, UNICEF released a statement voicing its ‘profound concern’ about the PKK’s recruitment of child soldiers.” (ibid)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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