



Red Flag Alert for Genocide

TURKEY

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On November 20th, 2022, Turkey launched several airstrikes across northern Syria and Iraq targeting the Kurdish population and its historic land in reprisal for the terrorist attack in Istanbul for which Ankara blamed two Kurdish political factions: the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and the PYD (Syria's Democratic Union Party). **Considering this new apparent atrocity committed once again by Turkey against the Syrian and Iraqi Kurds, Assyrians, and Ezidis (Yazidis), along with Turkey's persisting genocidal rhetoric against the Armenians, the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention is issuing a Red Flag Alert for Genocide for Turkey.**

Although Turkey has claimed that the Istanbul bomber was identified as a Syrian woman named Ahlam Albashir, no organization has taken responsibility for the attack. The PKK denied involvement, stating that it does not target civilians. Turkey's most recent 'reprisal' attack on Kurdish regions in northern Iraq and Syria targeted a wide swath of villages and towns (such as Kobani, Tel Rifat, and Sinjar) where many refugees and persecuted groups dwell (including Kurds, Assyrians and Ezidis). Following the strikes, the Turkish Defense Ministry said that it was "payback time! The scoundrels are being held to account for their treacherous attacks," clearly demonstrating Turkey's objective to collectively punish Kurds.

Since ISIS was defeated in 2019, Turkey has purposely and repeatedly targeted areas in which Kurds live — mainly along its border with Iraq and Syria — killing civilians, including IDPs, and spreading terror among local communities.

These repeated and egregious military attacks launched by Recep Tayyip Erdogan's autocratic regime are part of a wider policy of annihilation of the Kurdish and Assyrian presence and people, which includes practices such as bombing, shelling, abduction, torture, and extrajudicial killings, among others. Turkey's long-standing genocidal policy towards the Kurds, who have been demanding greater autonomy within Turkey's borders and an independent state for decades, is part of its historical approach to difference as well as its recent embrace of Ottoman-era Pan-Turkish (Pan-Turanist) foreign policy goals. Turkey's Kurdish policy is directly influenced by its genocide of the Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks in 1915-1923 as well as its ongoing genocidal Armenophobia.

In addition to regular and deadly bombing campaigns against historic Kurdish, Ezidi, and Assyrian territory, Turkey is firmly supporting the Republic of Azerbaijan's genocidal practices against Armenians both in the Republic of Armenia and in the Republic of Artsakh. Aside from its persistent denial of the Armenian Genocide, Ankara is actively partnering with the regime in Baku to destroy Artsakhi Armenians' claims for independence and to eliminate all traces of Armenian existence in the South Caucasus.

In this regard, we refer to one of our Red Flag Alerts for Genocide for Azerbaijan (7 October 2022), where we stated that "Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey has contributed greatly to creating the impunity with which these two states now operate."

In the wake of the Istanbul terrorist attack, United States press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre announced that the US stood "shoulder-to-shoulder with [its] NATO Ally [Turkey]." While the Lemkin Institute condemns the Istanbul attack along with all attacks on civilians in any form, whether sponsored by state or non-state actors, we would like to call US attention to Turkey's increasingly destructive and terrorist policies and actions in the Middle East and South Caucasus regions as well as its very real threat of renewed genocide against many of the peoples who have historically called this region home.

Turkey, as a NATO member, has been able to operate with virtual impunity against Armenians, Kurds, Ezidis, and others, up to the present-day. The Atlantic Charter that founded NATO states that its members "reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments." In the absence of a provision in the Atlantic Charter for the removal of a NATO member, the Lemkin Institute calls on the North Atlantic allies to suspend Turkey's membership—as a demonstration of the rejection of genocide, as an act of genocide prevention, as a sign of support for the threatened Kurds, Armenians, Ezidis, and Assyrians, and as a signal to the Turkish dictatorship that its behavior will not go unpunished. National security and foreign policy goals should always include genocide prevention considerations, since genocide is permanently destabilizing and very costly in addition to being catastrophic for targeted groups and profoundly immoral for bystanders and enablers.

We urge the international community more broadly to sanction Turkey's genocidal actions and ideology targeting Kurds and Armenians. We further call on the international community to take concrete measures to protect both Armenian and Kurdish peoples and identities in order to prevent forthcoming genocides against these groups

History must not repeat itself. The world must stand up to genocidares. The continuing blind support for Turkey and Azerbaijan could amount to complicity in genocide.