

The Situation in Rojava and Syria

Since an agreement was signed on 29 January 2026 between the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria and the jihadist Syrian transitional government, Syria and Rojava have been undergoing far-reaching political, military and social changes. Misleading media reports, as well as rapidly unfolding events, have led to confusion in the international understanding of the situation. In this document, we want to outline the fundamental changes currently taking place and their consequences.

What does the integration of the SDF into the Syrian army mean?

Narratives have been circulating in the media claiming that the SDF has been dissolved. However, in an official statement by the SDF on 20 August 2026, SDF commander Mazlum Abdi draws a subtle yet significant distinction: rather than speaking of a dissolution, Abdi describes the process as an integration of the SDF into the Syrian army. What does this mean? The fighters who were previously part of the SDF and organised themselves in local units will continue to serve as the local military defence force of Syria's Kurdish regions. So far, the integration includes four different divisions: Heseke, Qamishlo, Derik and Kobane. From now on, these divisions are no longer an independent military force, unlike the SDF previously was. In a broader sense, they are tied to the Syrian army. However, the local commanders are all former SDF commanders and retain local initiative. This means that the Kurdish and Arab fighters in these divisions can continue their organisation and the defence of their cities as before. The extent to which their connection to the Syrian army will affect local structures will depend above all on our political and social strength. What the Syrian army has so far refused to accept is the integration of the Women's Defence Units, the YPJ, which were previously part of the SDF.

Naturally, this integration reduces the initiative and mobility that the SDF previously possessed. On the other hand, it opens up the possibility of exerting serious influence on the Syrian army. In recent weeks, several radical Islamist commanders in the Syrian army have already been removed from their positions. The influence of the new Deputy Minister of Defence for Syria's Eastern Region, SDF commander Sipan Hemo, cannot be denied.

The military situation in Syria is generally extremely unstable. Even the Syrian army has no real control over all areas of Syria and their populations. Syrian society is multi-ethnic and educated. An army such as the HTS, supported by America, made up to a large extent of foreign jihadists, that committed devastating massacres against Druze, Alevis and Kurds in the country within a single year, will never gain the trust of the population. Therefore, it should never be forgotten that Syria is still in a period of transformation. The stronger the political and organisational power of democratic and socialist forces becomes, the greater the likelihood of transforming the military situation in the country.

What will become of the YPJ?

For more than a year, the integration of the SDF as an autonomous division into the Syrian army has been on the agenda of negotiations with Damascus. From the very beginning, the Syrian transitional government has sought to exclude the YPJ women's units from these discussions. From the outset, the transitional government attempted to ensure that YPJ members would only be integrated individually into the local security forces of the predominantly Kurdish regions, the so-called Asayish. In response, the campaign "We are all YPJ" was launched with the support of women from all over the world. During several diplomatic discussions with the transitional government, the continued existence of the YPJ has repeatedly been insisted upon.

In a press statement on 4 August 2026, YPJ commander Ruken Cemal declared that the YPJ would be prepared to integrate as an "autonomous anti-terror unit within the Ministry of the Interior". This

would mean that the YPJ units would remain intact but would not become part of the Syrian army. The Ministry of the Interior in Heseke is headed by former SDF commander Siamend Afrin and former YPJ commander Nesrin Abdullah. As an anti-terror unit, the YPJ would therefore retain a certain degree of independence and initiative.

One disadvantage of this proposal would be that active participation in higher military units would not be possible, and that only individual women could join the autonomous divisions of the Syrian army in the Kurdish regions. The advantage would be that, if the YPJ organised itself as a local anti-terror unit within the Ministry of the Interior, it would have greater autonomy in relation to the Syrian army and, as a local security force, would remain closer to society and to women. So far, however, it remains unclear whether this proposal will be accepted. The results of the most recent meeting between YPJ commander Newroz Ehmed and President Ahmed Shaara on 25 August have not yet been made public.

Kurdish language – accepted or banned?

The second issue that has repeatedly led to discussions during the implementation of the agreement of 29 January is the Kurdish language. For 15 years, Kurdish children have received education in their mother tongue from primary school through to university. This is a cultural revolution in itself and one of the greatest achievements of the Rojava Revolution.

However, in the name of the “unification of the country”, the Syrian transitional government is placing obstacles in the way of Kurdish education. Turkey plays a fundamental role in this, exerting immense political influence over Syria. Turkey is actively preventing the Kurdish language from being accepted as the main language of education in the Kurdish regions, as this would have enormous consequences for the struggle for the Kurdish language in Turkey and Northern Kurdistan.

Following lengthy discussions between representatives of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria and the Syrian transitional government, an agreement was signed on 27 August. The Kurdish language was recognised as an official language of education. In future, there will be three hours of Kurdish language lessons and one hour of cultural education each week in Kurdish regions. For a transitional year, beginning with the next school year in autumn, the subjects of social sciences, history, geography and philosophy will also be taught in Kurdish. Although representatives of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria insisted during the talks that Kurdish should be recognised as the main language of education, the transitional government exerted enormous pressure, and the agreement for four hours of Kurdish-language education per week was ultimately accepted.

However, dozens of civil organisations, including the women’s organisation KongraStar, the University of Rojava, as well as schools and teachers’ unions, called for protests. The aim is to build up civil pressure during the transitional year in order to expand the right to Kurdish language education in schools. The long-term goal is also to secure the right to Kurdish-language schools before Syria’s new constitution is adopted.

The critical situation in Heseke

Heseke is a multi-ethnic city on the edge of Rojava. In Heseke, the Arab population outnumbers the Kurdish population. Since the end of the war, the Syrian transitional government has been trying to gain significant influence over Heseke, particularly in order to win Arab society over to its side. Special warfare is being conducted to manipulate society.

This became evident, for example, when the displaced population of Serekaniye was attacked by jihadist militias upon returning to their home town, leading to protests throughout Rojava. Although these were civilian protests, they escalated in several cities, including Heseke. The Heseke

municipality, which continues to be administered by the local population, was attacked by young people. Publicly, it was claimed that the provocateurs belonged to the “Revolutionary Youth”, which is connected to the Kurdish Freedom Movement. However, investigations revealed that the attacks had been carried out by supporters of the Kurdish nationalist KDP party from Southern Kurdistan. Rather than campaigning for Kurdish rights, their main strategy is to spread propaganda against the Kurdish Freedom Movement and against the integration process, with the aim of taking control of the region. The KDP supports Israel’s project of establishing a small Kurdish state under Israeli control in Syria. This imperialist project, and the division caused by the KDP through its policies, is causing immense damage to the process.

Following these provocations, the Syrian transitional government accused the local security forces in Heseke of being unable to control the city. Using this as a pretext, the transitional government is now stationing its own security forces in Heseke. Within this framework, troop movements by the transitional government’s security forces are now repeatedly taking place in the Heseke area, most recently involving a force of 600 personnel.

This is just one example among many of the subtle special warfare tactics being used to weaken the Kurdish Freedom Movement. Whenever objections are raised, the transitional government threatens renewed war. Such a situation would be difficult for Rojava’s society to endure following the massacres and hostage-taking at the beginning of the year. In order to secure cultural and political freedoms in the long term, and with them the basis of its own self-defence, every effort is currently being made to prevent the continuation of the war. The only way to counter the provocations of the transitional government is through enormous social resistance based on the self-organisation of the population.

Democratic integration – what does it mean?

After the genocide in Gaza was begun by imperialist forces on 7 October 2023, Rêber Apo (Abdullah Öcalan) saw a great danger that a similar war of annihilation against other oppressed peoples in the Middle East was also taking shape. In order to prevent a “Gaza-fication” of Kurdistan, he proclaimed the phase of Peace and Democratic Society, with the strategy of democratic integration.

In this context, integration does not mean assimilation, but rather the struggle to expand social self-organisation on a political and legal level. According to Rêber Apo’s perspective, three lines are to be practised: Democratic Society, democratic politics and democratic integration. The fundamental pillar of this strategy is the democratic organisation of society outside the state. According to Rêber Apo, integration into the state makes up only 10% of the strategy. The remaining 90% must focus on organising society in order to prevent dependence on the state and avoid falling into a position of expectation. At the same time, this strategy is an attempt to overcome the permanent conflict with the state and to exert an active influence on state politics.

Broadly speaking, however, what is currently happening in Syria is not yet democratic integration. There is significant criticism within the Kurdish Movement of the aggressive policies of the transitional government. However, it is also clear that the situation cannot be resolved on a purely military level. In order to prevent massacres from being carried out against society again and again, the active transformation of the state is important.

Mazlum Abdi has now become an adviser to Ahmed Shaara, and Ilham Ahmed will take up her place in the diplomacy of the Syrian parliament. Of course, this is still far from meaning that the transitional government accepts the Kurds as a political existence. But it opens up the possibility of exerting significant influence over the whole of Syria in the long term.

From now on, diplomatic ties with the Alevis on the coast, the Druze in southern Syria, women’s organisations and Syria’s democratic forces are being strengthened. This is a major opportunity that has opened up as a result of the integration. If all the democratic forces in Syria organise and unite,

the radical jihadist groups will lose their influence. This is not a utopia, the struggle for it is a necessity. Until Syria's new constitution is adopted, the aim is to strengthen the influence of democratic forces within the structures of the transitional government in order to make the constitution as democratic as possible.

The role of internationalism

It is understandable that there are many doubts and much confusion. A great deal of misinformation and misinterpretation is circulating online in order to declare the Rojava Revolution finished. Criticism of the decisions being made is understandable. The Kurdish Movement itself is also dissatisfied with many of the decisions that are being taken. However, following the war, the political negotiating power of the democratic forces in Syria has been weakened. Therefore, concessions are currently being made in order to protect society from a continuation of the massacres.

Furthermore, a phase of analysis and self-criticism is being initiated in the name of the movement in order to further strengthen the democratic activity and self-defence of society in the future.

However, this does not mean that the revolution or the goal of a democratic-socialist Rojava and Syria has been abandoned. Especially at this stage, it is more important than ever to stand alongside the people of Rojava and defend the achievements of the revolution together. The revolution in Rojava has been internationalist from the very beginning and will continue to exist only if it remains connected to democratic and socialist struggles across the world.

This is therefore not the time to take steps backwards, but rather to believe even more strongly in our shared principles and stand by the people of Rojava. As Rêber Apo says: the struggle for genuine peace is more difficult than any military confrontation.

From Chiapas to Palestine to Kurdistan – together for peace and self-determination!

Internationalist Commune of Rojava

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