

Turkey's military action in North Syria is contrary to international law

Statement of the Executive Committee of Justice and Peace Europe

Justice and Peace Europe calls for an immediate end to the Turkish invasion of Syria, which hits one of the last undamaged regions in the country. In Afrin, since Syrian civil war broke out in 2011, hundreds of thousands of inner Syrian refugees have been received without distinction between ethnicity and religion.

The attack by the Turkish military forces, with the support of some radical Muslim groups, was a violation of international law; it has had unforeseeable consequences for the entire region, in which various ethnic and religious minorities are now threatened. Many civilian casualties and dead as well as massive devastation are already to be lamented.

Pope Francis, who received a delegation of Yazidis in Rome two weeks ago, met the Turkish President Erdogan on 6 February. On the occasion of this audience the Pope gave President Erdogan a medal with a peace angel. "This is an angel of peace who defeats the demon of war, symbolizing a world based on peace and justice," Francis explained.

In the light of civilian casualties in Afrin, Justice and Peace Europe expresses its solidarity and supports the following demands of the threatened and affected inhabitants of Afrin . They call for:

- the immediate establishment of a no-fly zone
- an immediate ceasefire
- the establishment of humanitarian corridors for medicines and relief supplies
- diplomatic action level by the European Union and its Member States on Turkey for a negotiated solution to the conflict
- the access of international observers to the region

European policy requires a clear position on Turkey in this situation and a clear condemnation of this military invasion at the expense of the civilian population.

This statement was supported by the Secretaries General of 20 European Justice and Peace commissions who gathered over the weekend in the Drumalis retreat centre in Northern Ireland.

Drumalis, 11 February 2018

The Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions (Justice and Peace Europe) is a European network of 31 national Justice and Peace Commissions, working for the promotion of justice, peace, respect for human dignity and the care of creation. It contributes to raising awareness of the Catholic social doctrine in the European societies and the European institutions. The Executive Committee of Justice and Peace Europe is composed of 9 elected members and its President is H.E.. Jean-Claude Hollerich, Archbishop of Luxembourg.

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