



PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BROTHERS & SISTERS

Pray for the Persecuted in Turkey

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the Body also.

(Hebrews 13:3)



Total Population: 84,339,067

Self-Proclaimed Christian Population: 0.2% – **Evangelical Witness: 0%**

Muslim: 97%

Assyrian church destroyed by Turkish shelling in northeastern Syria

The Mar Sawa al-Hakim church in Tel Tamr, which had already been targeted by the Islamic State in 2015, suffered serious damage. Houses and the local infrastructure were also hit. The local Orthodox Syriac bishop blames Turkey's expansionist ambitions, aimed at driving Christians out of the area.

Damascus (AsiaNews) - Turkish forces targeted Tel Tamr, an Assyrian Christian village in Hasakah governorate, in north-eastern Syria, an area with a Kurdish majority, destroying a local church (pictured).

In the past, Turkey carried out cross-border operations against the Kurds, at least this is the official motivation, causing death and destruction among Christian communities in Syria and Iraq.

The latest action, Operation Claw Lock, began in April, resulting in the destruction of houses and churches as well as the death of an Assyrian, a 26-year-old man named Zaya.

Many fear that the policies of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan could cause further damage and devastation.

On social media, activists on Monday posted images and videos of Turkey's latest attack against Christians in Syria, which was not covered by international media nor sparked any response from the international community.

According to some witnesses, Turkish forces and their Syrian proxy, the Syrian National Army (SNA), attacked the village of Tel Tamr, causing material damage to Mar Sawa al-Hakim church.

The Islamic State had targeted the church in 2015, and abducted 250 Christians from villages near the Khabur River.

Local sources report serious damage to roads, trees, homes and the electrical power system from indiscriminate Turkish shelling.

For Syriac Orthodox Archbishop of Jazira and Euphrates, Mar Maurice Amseeh, Turkey's operations reflect expansionist ambitions aimed at emptying the area of its Christian population.

To stop this, he issued an appeal, urging the parties to spare churches and all places of worship from the conflict.

Meanwhile, more and more Christians are leaving northeastern Syria, the area that borders both Turkey and Iraq, because of the violence of the Islamic State first and now that of the Turkish military.

The area around Tel Tamr, better known as the Khabur River basin, was home to more than 12,000 people in 32 villages. According to current estimates, the number has dropped to around a thousand.

In recent weeks, the Turks have continued to heavily shell the area, on a daily basis, spreading panic among residents.

Ankara's military escalation comes at a time of growing dissatisfaction among Turks over rising inflation and prices, especially for food and housing.

The Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) had expected a spring operation, which is nothing new, seen as an attempt by Erdogan, along with his international activism, to distract Turkish public opinion from the country's increasing domestic economic woes.

Others see it is a way to generate anger against the Kurds and Turkey's own pro-Kurdish democratic party, the HDP, which is currently fighting an attempt to ban it for alleged ties to the PKK.

In a statement, a party spokesman calls the offensive against civilians in Kurdistan hypocritical since Turkey is trying to act as an honest broker between Russia and Ukraine, to gain domestic and international credit.