



Map of civilian casualties of Turkish military operation 'Claw-Lock' (June 2022).

Community Peacemaker Teams and its partners denounce the killing of children, wounding of farmers and targeting of villages by Turkish Forces in northern Iraq under the auspices of 'Claw-Lock' operation

Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) launched a new military campaign codenamed 'Claw-Lock' within Iraqi Kurdistan on 17 April 2022, with the aim of attaining total military control over the mountainous border region spanning roughly 180kms from east to west and up to 15kms south of the Iraq-Turkey borderline. Within the last month, 21 May to 21 June 2022, Turkish military operations have claimed the lives of 3 children and 2 adult civilians, as well as caused physical harm to 15 civilians in northern Iraq.

'Claw-Lock' aims to occupy the estimated 20% of the mountainous border regions currently uncontrolled by the Turkish Armed Forces. The campaign began with massive aerial bombardments and deployments of special forces troops up to 12-15km south of the Turkey-Iraq border in the areas of Zap and Avashin that have previously been cleared of the civilian population. While fighting against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) insurgents in those areas, the TAF began conducting targeted drone strikes against PKK members as far south as Kalar, 280 km from the Iraq-Turkey border.

Two drone strikes have resulted in civilian deaths, including one child.

The first civilians killed during '*Claw-Lock*' were 43-year-old Aram Haji Kaka Khan and his 50-year-old brother-in-law Ismaeel Ibraheem in the village of Tutaqal, 140km south of the Iraq-Turkey border. At 5:15am on 21 May, Aram Haji, Tutaqal's mukhtar (chieftain), heard a Turkish airstrike in the village. Several hours later, he and Ismaeel set out to investigate the site of the explosions. They discovered a number of badly wounded PKK members and attempted to transport them to a hospital. A TAF drone fired a missile into their car, killing Aram, Ismaeel and the combatants. By targeting a civilian vehicle that was carrying civilians and wounded combatants, the Turkish Armed Forces committed war crimes. The two brothers-in-law were survivors of Saddam Hussein's genocidal Anfal campaign in the 1980s, which was especially brutal in the area around Tutaqal. Following the 21 May incident, 8 out of 10 families have fled the village for fear of further bombings.

On 15 June, in Sinune sub-district in Sinjar (Shangal), a Turkish drone bombed the headquarters of Shangal Resistance Unit (YBŞ), an organization related to the PKK. The explosion destroyed and damaged nearby houses, including a bookstore. In the bookstore, a 12-year-old Yezidi boy, Salih Khdir was killed while helping his father take care of the books. Salih Khdir's grandfather and eight other civilians were injured in the strike. The Turkish bombardment of a built-up residential neighborhood constitutes a war crime. The area of the attack is predominately inhabited by the survivors of the 2014-2015 ISIS genocide against the Yezidi population.

Since 2018, Turkish forces have been building bases on mountain peaks and ranges from the Sidakan area on the Iraq-Iran border to Haftanin in Zakho. Between the beginning of '*Claw-Lock*' on 17 April and 25 April, the TAF constructed four new bases - two in Avashin and two in Zap. On 16 June, construction began on a new base on Kurazharo mountain above Shiladze.

The Turkish military has also developed a network of roads connecting the military bases and Turkish territory to facilitate resupply and reinforcement and strengthen their matrix of control over the occupied areas. From the mountain emplacements, Turkish artillery began firing on civilians living in and working on the agricultural lands in the valleys. On 15 and 17 June, in the border regions, Turkish soldiers wounded five civilians in two villages by firing at them from their bases.

The agricultural village of Parakhe sits in a valley 8km from the Iraq-Turkey border in the Darkar sub-district region. Thirty families permanently call the village home, with others returning to work their familial land seasonally. In the past two years, Turkish forces have constructed two bases in the mountains overlooking Parakhe. At 3:49pm on 15 June, 53-year-old farmer Nazir Omer and his son, 24-year-old Mohammad Nazir were irrigating their fig and pomegranate orchard when artillery fire from a nearby Turkish base crashed around, injuring both men. Nazir Omer told CPT that during the explosions, he fainted and woke up at a hospital in Zakho with two shrapnel wounds in his back. His relatives had rescued the unconscious men and rushed them to hospital in Zakho. Mohammed had suffered a shrapnel wound to the palm of his hand.



Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) visiting Nazir Omer in Zakho Emergency Hospital, 17 June 2022

From his hospital bed, Nazir Omer told CPT that in October 2021, around 150 Turkish soldiers descended on Parakhe from their newly constructed base above. The soldiers proceeded from house to house, warning residents that if they collaborated with PKK, the village would be fired upon.

While the residents of Parakhe state that the PKK members do not operate in the village, they have reported hearing artillery shells land twice around Parakhe in the months preceding the recent attack. The shelling on 15 June was the first bombardment to target the village directly, with Nazir Omer and Mohammed the first Parakhe residents to be wounded. In addition to committing a war crime by directly targeting civilians, CPT-IK fears that the Turkish military intends to pressure Parakhe villagers into abandoning their homes and lands creating a landscape 'cleansed' of the civilian population around Turkish military bases. This practice has been observed in areas adjacent to dozens of bases throughout the border regions. Such forced civilian displacements and restrictions on access to livelihood are breaches of international humanitarian law.

At 5:10pm on 17 June, Turkish soldiers fired multiple bursts of heavy machine gun fire at civilians on the lands of Kesta village. Located in Kani Masi sub-district, Amedi district, the Kesta is 9km south of the Turkey-Iraq border. The injured were three local women, 28-year old

Kazhin Taha Saeed, 49-year-old Nazira Abdulstar Ahmad and Nazira's 24-year-old daughter-in-law Fawzya Diyar Omer, who were enjoying a Friday picnic. The gunfire came from a Turkish base on Zneri Kesta mountain overlooking Kesta. After building the base in April 2021, the Turkish military began to repeatedly fire upon the village - forcing its entire population into displacement. In 2022, some families started to return to tend or visit their abandoned farms.

On 26 May, 1000 people, originating from Zewe Sery, met together in the town of Bamarne in the Amedi district. It was the first time in three years that the former residents, and their relatives, were able to hold their festival - an annual event to bring together the Zewe Sery's families who were forced into displacement in the 1990s due to the Turkey-PKK conflict.

In the late afternoon, three boys were playing football at the edge of the gathering. Without warning, at least three mortar shells exploded in rapid succession metres from the boys. 13-year-old Yousif Kovan and 11-year-old Avand Hishyar were killed. 8-year-old Sipan Farhad was severely wounded.



Kovan, Hishyar and Farhad, the fathers of killed and injured boys of the 26 May attack holding phones with pictures of Yousif and Avand on them, Shiladze, 16 June 2022.

According to the Kurdistan Region's Directorate General of Counter Terrorism's (CTD) narrative, which was widely shared by the political parties' media, the mortars were fired by the PKK. However, analysis of the attack location and of the evidence collected by CPT-İK instead points

to the Turkish Armed Forces as the probable responsible party. Relatives of the killed boys reported to CPT-IK that they heard drones hovering over the crowd during the day. The proximity of the gathering (800m) to the large Turkish military base in Bamarne, the ballistic precision of the munitions combined with the drone surveillance suggests that gathering was deliberately targeted as a warning or for lethal effect. Additionally, Metina mountain, the PKK alleged firing position, is under the control of the Turkish and the Kurdistan Regional Government military forces.

Since 2015, the Turkish Armed Forces have killed up to 129 civilians and wounded up to 180 civilians in northern Iraq. *'Claw-Lock'* is another in a succession of Turkish military operations which has visited death and displacement upon the people of this region.

Community Peacemaker Teams together with the partners of the international 'End Cross Border Bombings' campaign denounce each death and the harm that has been done to civilians by the Turkish Armed Forces.

Protect civilian lives! Bring life back to the border regions - Let civilians return to their villages!