

## Human Rights Council

### Thirty-fourth session

27 February-24 March 2017

Agenda item 4

#### Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

### Human rights abuses and international humanitarian law violations in Syria, 21 July 2016- 28 February 2017\*

#### Conference room paper of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic



## Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG)

### A. Internal displacement

90. Since mid-2015, the Commission has noted the indiscriminate presence of anti-personnel landmines, improvised explosive devices and booby traps in civilian inhabited areas captured from ISIL by YPG or the Syrian Democratic Forces SDF, including in houses and vehicles.<sup>1</sup> Such concealed, improvised bombs continue to be laid by ISIL as part of its withdrawal strategy, with devastating effect. Shortly after the SDF launched operations to seize the Tishreen Dam from ISIL in late December, ISIL militants began laying landmines on roads leading to villages surrounding the dam, as well as in neighbouring areas leading to Minbij. Inhabitants recalled ISIL militants telling them that the plan was “to prevent Kurdish troops from advancing to Minbij, in case the Tishreen Dam fell.” Witnesses further detailed how ISIL used young boys as escorts to lay the mines, in an effort to camouflage their movements. Young boys were made to look like shepherds leading livestock, and at least one boy aged 12 years died as a result of a landmine detonation. The SDF began demining areas throughout Minbij shortly after capturing the town in mid-August.

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\* Reproduced as received.

<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/31/68, para. 97.

91. The presence of concealed bombs laid by ISIL justifies ordering the temporary displacement of civilians from the Tishreen Dam and Minbij areas, but only for such time required for SDF troops to take steps necessary to safeguard the security of civilians.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, SDF authorities bore the responsibility to ensure that any temporary displacements were carried out in satisfactory conditions of shelter, hygiene, health, safety and nutrition, and that members of the same family were not separated.<sup>3</sup> Displaced individuals did not receive adequate assistance from SDF or YPG authorities in this regard because of the lack of resources.

93. Though allegations of “ethnic cleansing” continued to be received during the period under review, the Commission found no evidence to substantiate claims that YPG or SDF forces ever targeted Arab communities on the basis of ethnicity, nor that YPG cantonal authorities systematically sought to change the demographic composition of territories under their control through the commission of violations directed against any particular ethnic group.

**SOURCE LINK: [UN Syria Commission](https://www.un.org/development/dp/dp20190901/8CqzqQ)**

<https://goo.gl/8CqzqQ>

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<sup>2</sup> ICRC Rule 129(b); see also Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, United Nations Economic and Social Council, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, 11 February 1998, at Principles 6(3), noting that “[d]isplacement shall last no longer than required by the circumstances.”

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. at Principles 17-19.