



The SDF's Meeting on Security Assessment and Future of Syria



Flag of the Syrian Democratic Forces.

Source: FugeeCamp via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Syrian_Democratic_Forces.svg#/media/File:Flag_of_Syrian_Democratic_Forces.svg, Public Domain.

OE Watch Commentary: The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF, or Hêzên Sûriya Demokratîk in Kurdish) played a significant role in ending the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)'s territorial control in Syria, including capturing ISIS's de-facto capital, the Syrian city of al-Raqqa. The SDF was established in 2015 and is a Kurdish-led group comprised of Kurdish and Arab forces under the command of Mazloun Abdi or Mazloun Kobanê. Despite the SDF's success in pushing back ISIS on the battlefield, remnants of ISIS still remain underground. As the accompanying article highlights, the SDF recently gathered its leadership to discuss the challenges it may face in Syria.

According to the article from Kurdish *Hawar News Agency*, an agency that closely monitors developments regarding Syrian Kurds, speaking at the meeting, Kobanê discussed several security related challenges. First, he stated that the meeting was held to "assess the military and political victories" of the SDF. Second, the meeting would lay the foundation for the establishment of a military force that will secure a free and united Syria. Third, while ISIS was defeated militarily, "ISIS remains strong" and

poses a threat to the region and to the SDF. The commander noted "it is widespread in the region" in the form of sleeper cells in especially populated areas, "so fighting ISIS is one of the most important topics of our meeting." He also called on the international community to keep supporting the SDF to ensure ISIS does not make a comeback. Fifth, he pointed out that Turkey's threats against the SDF negatively affect the SDF's ongoing campaign against ISIS. Sixth, he affirmed the SDF's willingness to find common ground with Turkey in establishing a security zone in northern Syria. Seventh, he called on Damascus to negotiate with the representatives of the self-proclaimed autonomous Kurdish region in northern Syria and the SDF to find a resolution that recognizes the rights of the Kurds within Syria. Finally, he announced the restructuring of the SDF "by forming a general council that will unite all of the councils under one command structure." **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

"This meeting will be the basis for building a military force that will guarantee a unified free Syria."

Source: "Mezlûm Ebdî: Cîvîna me bîngeha garantiya Sûriya yekgirtî ye (Mazloun Abdi: Our meeting is to guarantee a free [and] unified Syria)," *hawarnews.com*, 24 August 2019. <https://www.hawarnews.com/kr/haber/mezlm-ebd-civna-me-bingeha-garantiya-sriya-yekgirt-ye-h20733.html>

Mazloun Abdi indicated that they would assess the status of their forces and lay the foundations for their work during the next phase to build a military force that would guarantee a unified free Syria. He said that without Afrin there can be no peace in Syria, calling on Damascus to negotiate with the Autonomous Administration and SDF.

The meeting began with a speech by the Commander-in-Chief of the Syrian Democratic Forces Mazloun Abdi.

Mazloun Abdi said at the beginning of his speech, "We hold today the annual meeting of our military councils after we achieved victory over ISIS by supporting the International Coalition, and we are holding this meeting to assess the military and political victories we have achieved, assess what our weak and strong sides are, and lay the foundations for our military action to protect our areas in the next phase, that is, after ISIS and to spread security and stability in all our regions and Syria in general."

Our meeting is the basis for building a military force that will guarantee a free and united Syria

"This meeting will be the basis for building a military force that will guarantee a unified free Syria. We face great military challenges that threaten the future of our country, especially ISIS. ISIS remains strong and ISIS still insists on destroying this homeland," he said. "It is widespread in the region and among populated areas through its sleeper cells, so fighting ISIS is one of the most important topics of our meeting."

"At the same time, we encourage the International Coalition to join in supporting our forces to achieve the final victory against ISIS," said Mazloun Abdi.

Turkey's attacks have negatively affected our forces' campaigns against ISIS

"We have previously confirmed that the Turkish attack on Afrin has negatively affected the SDF's campaign against ISIS, and Turkish threats to our forces are hampering the efforts of our forces and the International Coalition Forces to defeat ISIS," said Mazloun Abdi.

"We announce that we will exert all efforts to achieve compatibility with the Turkish state in coordination with the United States and there are preliminary agreements to establish security in the region through border points and we will be a positive party to this process," he said.

Without Afrin's return to its people, there will be no lasting peace in Syria

"We affirm that Afrin is an important step for the success of the peace process between us and Turkey," Mazloun Abdi said in his speech.

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Through this platform, we ask Damascus to negotiate with representatives of the autonomous administration and the Syrian Democratic Forces, and to favor a political solution, on the principle of recognizing democratic self-administrations and recognizing the legitimate rights of the Kurdish people within Syria.

We have begun to restructure our troops

At the end of his speech, the commander of the SDF Mazloun Abdi touched on the restructuring of their forces. We have achieved great victories in this field and started to form military councils in all regions and formed specialized professional forces, "Through this meeting, we will begin the process of restructuring the SDF by forming a general council that will unite all the councils under our umbrella."