

# Turkey's Drone Campaign against US Allies in Syria

Turkey's proliferation and use of drones, particularly the Bayraktar TB2 and Bayraktar Akıncı UCAVs, has spread to multiple conflict zones in the world. This includes Syria, where Turkey has openly declared its intention to invade again and target the Syrian Democratic Forces who are trained and equipped by the DOD and continue to fight in the US-led anti-ISIS coalition. No nation including the US supports another Turkish invasion, but Turkey is using its fleet of drones to engage in warfare that is no less deadly against the most reliable and trustworthy ally of the United States in Syria, the SDF.

Turkey has conducted dozens of drone strikes against the autonomous region of Northeast Syria since the US-negotiated ceasefire that ended the last Turkish invasion, in October 2019. Since June 2020, there have been a total of 68 Turkish drone strikes. During that span, 69 people have been killed and at least 106 have been wounded, and public and private property has been damaged. 58 of these attacks have taken place in 2022 alone, killing 49 people and wounding 105, of which 14 and 57 were civilians respectively, and 26 were children.

The rate of Turkish drone strikes has increased in the past month. In July, 11 attacks were carried out in only 11 days, killing 12 people. Recently, an attack in the city of Qamishli on August 6 killed 4 people, 3 of whom were civilians, of which 2 were children.



*The aftermath of a Turkish drone strike in the Industrial Neighborhood of Qamishli, which killed 3 civilians and 1 SDF fighter. 2 of the civilians were children.*



*Ehmed Eli Hesin, 16, and Ahang Akram Sheibi, two children who lost their lives in the Turkish drone strike in Qamishli in Northeast Syria.*

The Turkish attacks have overwhelmingly targeted senior SDF commanders and civilian leaders of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). On July 22, 3 SDF women commanders were killed when a Turkish drone destroyed their vehicle. One of the women, Jiyan Afrin, was commemorated by CENTCOM on *Twitter* as a “critical SDF leader who led forces in combat vs ISIS since the height of the fight to defeat the vile ideology in NE Syria in 2017.” An *NBC News* report about Jiyan quoted an anonymous US military official as saying “There is no doubt she saved American lives on the battlefield.”

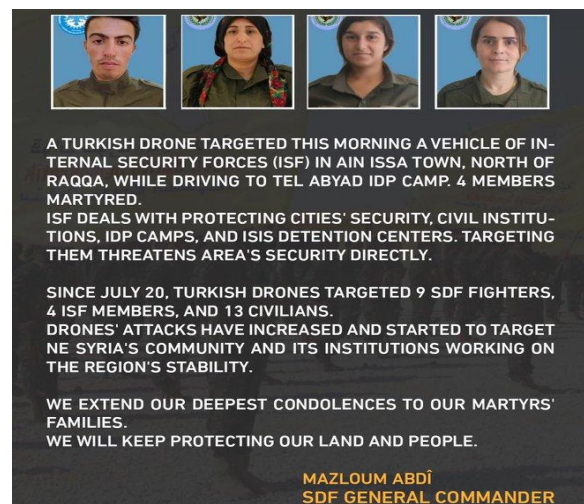


Photos of three SDF fighters killed by a Turkish drone on July 22. From left: Roj Khabur, Jiyan Afrin and Barin Botan.



SDF vehicle hit by Turkish drone near Qamishli, in Northeast Syria.

On July 28, a Turkish drone struck a vehicle carrying four members of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) or Asayish, near Tel-Samen IDP Camp. Their names were Bashar Muhammad Ali Buzan, Jihan Muhammad Mustafa, Sarah Muhammad al-Hussein and Salma Ali Mustafa. ISF forces serve in a domestic law enforcement capacity and are essential to maintain stability in areas liberated from ISIS, and the camps and detention facilities that house ISIS fighters and their families.



Official statement by SDF General Commander Mazloum Abdi, following a Turkish attack against Internal Security Forces near Tel-Samen IDP Camp.



Remains of Internal Security Forces vehicle struck by Turkish drone on July 28, near Tel-Samen IDP Camp, south of Ayn Issa, in Northeast Syria.