



**Turkey's
Attempts to
Free ISIS
Fighters and
Families
from Camps
and Prisons**

AL-HOL CAMP



Introduction

Al-Hol camp is located in the town of Al-Khatuniya, Southeast of Hassakah in Northeastern Syria. The camp was established in 1991 during the Gulf War, as a haven for Iraqi refugees. It is 12 km from the Iraqi-Syrian border and 70 km from the regions occupied by the Turkish army.

The total number of ISIS families is more than 53.000 divided approximately as follows: 25.000 Iraqi refugees, 20.000 Syrian families, and 8.000 foreign families.

Turkey is trying to use ISIS members against North and East Syria (NES) by trying to smuggle them from the camps and prisons. There are more than 10 thousand ISIS fighters from 52 countries in the prisons.

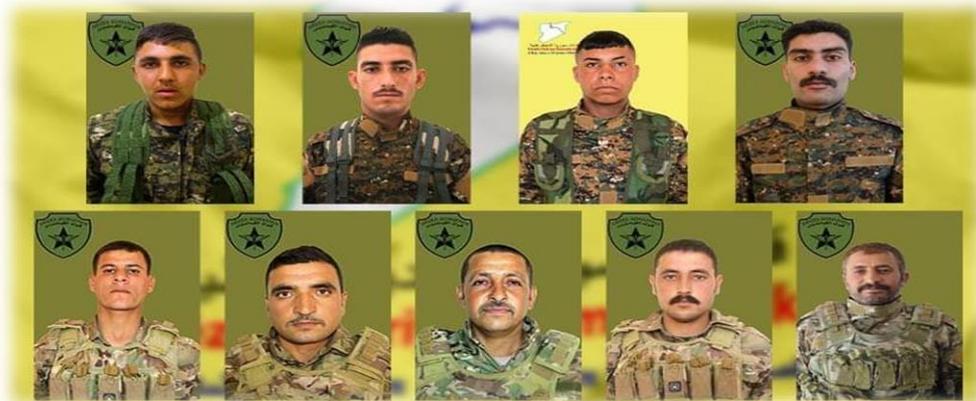
During the Turkish invasion on Sere Kaniye (Ras al-Ain) and Girê Spî (Tal Abyad) in 2019, Turkey bombed the vicinity of Ain Issa camp, which enabled some ISIS families to flee towards Turkey. The vicinity of Jerkin Prison in Qamishli was also targeted by Turkish airstrikes, which helped some ISIS fighters to flee to Turkey in 2019. It was later found that they joined the Turkish-led Syrian National Army.

On November 19,2022, Turkey launched attacks on different regions of NES, which created chaos in the Al-Hol camp.

Targeting Al-Hol Camp

After the announcement of the Turkish government to launch Operation Claw-Sword in NES followed by airstrikes, ISIS families have become more active. On November 20, 2022, Al-Hol camp witnessed the first escalation by ISIS families when they gathered and began threatening the security guards and other families in the camp.

The activity of ISIS families continued until November 23, 2022, when Turkey targeted the camp's surroundings with approximately 5 airstrikes using F-16 warplanes. As a result, 8 guards lost their lives and many more injured.



The security guards who lost their lives as a result of the Turkish airstrikes

Suspension of Humanitarian Work in the Al-Hol Camp

Due to the increased activity and the chaos created by ISIS families, and since November 23,2022, "IRC and HI" have suspended their work in Al-Hol camp due to the difficult access to their teams inside the camp. The attacks on NES have restricted the movement of relief and humanitarian organizations. On November 24,2022, GOPA, SCI, Save the Children, Al-Yamamah, Shams, and Al-Salam Center have completely suspended their work inside the Al-Hol camp due to the lack of security in the camp as a result of the increasing attacks on NES. In addition, NGOs staff received threats from ISIS families, which forced the NGOs to suspend their work.

Activity of ISIS Families in Roj Camp and their Attempts to Escape from Al-Hol

After the airstrikes on Al-Hol camp on November23,2022, twenty women tried to flee from the camp. The women took advantage of the chaos and attacked the camp guards, which led to the intervention of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to control the situation in the camp. The SDF, in cooperation with the ISF, arrested the women who fled from the camp after hours of their attempt to escape. Section five and six, which include foreign ISIS families mostly from Asia, gathered in large numbers and created chaos, allowing others to escape.

The escape attempts were repeated during the following two days. On November 25,2022, eight members of the so-called "Cubs of the Caliphate" attacked the camp guards with light weapons. Two of the attackers were injured and the others were arrested. During the clashes, some women and children of ISIS managed to escape from the camp. But the guards restored order and arrested the women. In Roj Camp, there were also some attempts to escape which coincided with the Turkish airstrikes.

Smuggling ISIS Families from the Camp

Turkish drones were flying over the Al-Hol camp to help ISIS families to escape from the camp, which is only 12 km away from the Syrian-Iraqi border, where the Turkish army and the Peshmarga Forces of Kurdistan Region have joint observation posts.

Turkish drones continued to fly for hours at low altitudes to provide an opportunity for ISIS families to escape from the camp.

Direct Communication with ISIS Families in the Camp

On 25 November 2022, a smuggling network in Idleb, a city occupied by Turkey and ruled by Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (an offshoot of Al-Qaeda), communicated by phone with some members from the so-called "Cubs of the Caliphate". This network provided instructions for ISIS members to coordinate with smugglers to move from Al-Hol camp to Hassakah city and then to Sere Kaniye (which is 70 km from Al-Hol camp and occupied by Turkey and its affiliated factions) and from there to Turkey.



A member of the Cubs of the Caliphate who was arrested while escaping from the camp

Conclusion

Turkey targets the camps and prisons that hold thousands of ISIS fighters and their families. The aim is to set them free and to revive ISIS again. The proof is that the Turkish drones targeted the vicinity of Jerkin prison (northwest Qamishli) and the vicinity of Al-Hol camp while ISIS families and the so-called "Cubs of the Caliphate" were fleeing the camp. It is worth mentioning that the same operation was carried out by turkey in 2019, when turkey targeted Ain Issa camp and Jerkin prison, which enabled some ISIS fighters and families to escape from the camp and the prison towards the areas under the control of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army.

Here is a link of the video which documents the last smuggling operation in Al-Hol camp:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1tuDu-30S9AGfadoF>

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