

**ISIS BOMB ATTACKS ON KOBANÊ  
CITY OF ROJAVA REGION ON 25 JUNE**

**FACT-FINDING  
MISSION REPORT**

**Human Rights Association  
(IHD)**

**08 July 2015**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Human Rights Association (İHD), in cooperation with International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), conducted a fact-finding mission to Kobane Canton, in Rojava Region, where ISIS bomb attacks killed numerous people including civilians on 25 June. This report is based on first-hand evidence, testimonies from the fact-finding mission conducted on 8 July 2015.

This report underlines that the 25 June massacre cannot be analysed without taking incidents, attacks before 25 June, which weakened ISIS power, into consideration.

ISIS, which is a terrorist organisation, launched its attacks on Kobane Canton in Rojava Region in 2013 and increased its level in September 2014. These dense attacks led to armed clashes, which continued for about 2 months, killed numerous people in this region and also people fled to Turkey to ask asylum. ISIS attacks, which killed thousands civilians without any differentiate between women and children, were to some extent prevented by YPG and YPG interference. Finally, these attacks were prevented by international community support and ISIS was removed from Kobane in January 2015.

ISIS was removed also from Tel Abyad, which is located opposite Akçakale border gate, after it was weakened in Haseke that the organisation uses a location to reach Iraq for its strategic location and economic situation. The more YPG and YPJ took over strategic and important locations of ISIS the more attacks were launched by ISIS that does not want to lose its power.

YPG and YPJ removed ISIS from Kobane and Tel Abyad, the longest border about 400 km between Syria and Turkey was started to control by Partiya Yekitiya Demokratik/Democratic Union Party (PYD).

## **INCIDENT**

There were bomb attacks by ISIS on Kobane Canton in Rojava on 25 June 2015. ISIS militants who infiltrated into the city and killed civilians.

## **COMPOSITION OF DELEGATION AND MISSION**

Human Rights Association (İHD), in cooperation with International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), decided to conduct a fact-finding mission to Kobane, where the attacks killed civilians. The delegation is composed of:

1. Öztürk Türkdoğan, İHD President
2. Yusuf Alataş, FIDH Vice-President
3. Osman İşçi, EMHRN Executive Committee Member
4. Raci Bilici, İHD Vice-President
5. Osman Süzen, İHD Vice-President
6. Abdusselam İnceören, İHD South East Region Representative

7. Gamze Yalçın, İHD Executive Committee Member
8. Vetha Aydın, İHD Executive Committee Member
9. Atilla Yazar, İHD Şanlıurfa Branch President.

The delegation arrived in Suruç district of Şanlıurfa on 8 July 2015 and held a meeting with Mr. Abdullah Çiftçi, Suruç District Governor, for about 1 hour at 12.00. Then, the delegation went to Kobane at around 13.00. They held meetings with PYD authorities and civil society organisations in Kobane. In addition, there were interviews with witnesses to attacks. The delegation visited cemetery where those who were killed in the massacre were buried. Before the delegation came back to Turkey at about 18.00, they had captured movies and took photographs of the city centre.

## **INTERVIEWS and OBSERVATIONS**

Our delegation held a meeting first with Mr. Abdullah Çiftçi, Suruç District Governor. In this meeting, he said:

*We deal with this issue from a humanitarian perspective which beyond political perceptions, positions. 26.000 people are staying in our tents in Suruc. There are 18-19 Armenian families among these 26.000 people. Some people, who had come from Kobane, left Suruc and went to other cities to work as seasonal workers and as a result these figures slightly decreased. On the other hand, these people will come back to Suruc again which means these figures might increase up to 30.000 or 40.000.*

*2000 trucks humanitarian aid were sent from Turkey to Kobane. According to official figures, so far, 71.000 people have returned to Kobane. Border gate is open on Monday and Thursday for people who have urgent and special needs. So far, 5200 fighters were treated in Turkey.*

*8500 Humanitarian daily rations packages, 50kg each, are distributed in Suruc every day.*

*After the ISIS attack on 25 June 2015, there is chaos in Kobane. In this regard, if Turkey opens its gates no one will stay in Kobane. This ISIS infiltrated into areas that it could not succeed last time. Therefore, there are sleeping ISIS cells in Kobane. 1500 people wanted to enter into Turkey yesterday [7 July 2015] but I did not allow them. PYD authorities agree that ISIS militants did not infiltrate into the city through Turkey.*

### **OUR DELEGATION'S OBSERVATIONS in KOBANE**

1. We crossed Mürşitpınar border gate and arrived in Kobane at around 13.00 on 08 July 2015. The first scene that we saw and investigated is a construction site, next to the border gate, resulted from car bomb attack. It was said this attack caused a serious harm and destruction.

2. We observed that many parts of the city are destroyed in this ISIS attack yet people continue their normal daily lives, shops are open and shopkeepers are working.
3. Officers were searching for landmines and drivers were not going straight to escape any landmines.
4. We held a meeting with PYD authorities including Co-chair Ms. Asya Abdullah, the President of Kobane Canton, Mr. Enver Müslim and authorities responsible for Women, Justice and Economy as well as TEV-DEM authorities. In addition, we talked to witnesses and received information from investigation commissions.
5. Mr. Enver Müslim, the President of Kobane Canton, makes the following statement: *“You are the first delegation to Kobane after this ISIS massacre and your support is important for us. It is important and need to inform the whole world about this massacre because the ISIS directly targeted civilians. In fact, the ISIS aimed to take over the whole city. In order to kill more civilians the ISIS militants used silencer in their attacks. We created commissions to investigate this massacre and to determine casualties, damage. These commissions will have their meeting at 17.00 today. If you want, you can talk to the members of these commissions before they start their meeting. They will give you more information about the casualties and damage. There was a big massacre in Kobane on 25 June 2015. 11 people from same family were killed. There is another family that lost 8 family members in these attacks. You can get information also from these families. Our activities to find out what happened continue. So far, 850 ISIS members were killed in Kobane. On the other hand, there are dead bodies of ISIS member under destroyed buildings. Some of the ISIS members, who attacked on Kobane, are people from Kobane and these people came here as immigrants by saying that they escaped from war. These people lived in Kobane for several months and became our neighbours. After this massacre, we learned that they were ISIS members. This fact indicates that this massacre was planned before and in a detailed way. Most of these ISIS groups came to Kobane through the south of Kobane and Turkey. There are also Turkish ISIS members among those who attacked. Condoning crossing border in Turkey leads that ISIS members, who are escaping from our resistance, go to Turkey and seek refuge there.”*
6. One of the TEV-DEM authorities, a woman named Ruken, gave the following information: *“The attack on Kobane on 25 June 2015 was very serious and planned in a detailed way. We created a committee to investigate this attack. We prepared a report on casualties. There are some families, whose all members were killed in this attack. For example, there is a family that lost 11 members and another family lost 8 members in this attack. We determined that 23 people were killed in the area called Berxbotan.”*
7. After this meeting with PYD authorities, our delegation went to city centre to observe what happened to a medical centre that doctors without borders worked. It was observed the medical centre was so destroyed that could not be used for treatment anymore.
8. Our delegation asked questions about the infrastructure of the city. The authorities answer that water is provided from wells and electricity is mostly by means of generators.

9. After visiting the medical centre used by doctors without borders, our delegation went to some houses to talk to witnesses. The first family was HASAN family.

Berivan, a witness, said: *“I came home to have my breakfast [this breakfast was for fasting since it was Ramadan, a special period for Muslims] at about 04.00 in the morning. When I came home, my mother was praying. There was a big noise and my family members went out to see what was happening. I thought it was part of armed clashes since war was continuing in Kobane. Right after my family members went out, they were shot down one by one. They [ISIS militants] entered into our house and shot in our rooms. My father, mother, brother and uncles were shot by ISIS militants when they went out to see what was happening. When they killed the mother and father of my niece Amed, she was sleeping in her cradle. They did not harm my niece Amed most probably they thought she was dead. They did not see me because I was hiding. When I realised that they were killing people, I took my niece and hid. Then, I contacted YPG members who told me that I should leave home. ISIS militants disguised themselves in YPG and YPJ clothes. In addition, attackers cut their shaves so as not to be recognised and some even disguised themselves as women and YPJ members [women units of Kurdish forces]. They cut their hair, eyebrows, eyelash that means they had a very detailed plan. They killed men, women and children without any hesitation. I think they attacked first our house because we had heard no other noise before they attack us. They used silencers otherwise if YPG and YPJ members had heard guns and they would have come to help us. We learned that they used silencers in many of these attacks on houses. My niece, who survived, got hepatitis. Children scared too much and they still ask where they parents are. My niece Amed lost her father and mother. I would like to indicate that ISIS left one or two family members alive on purpose. By this way, these family members will tell their brutality and their narration of this brutality will crease fear among people. It means ISIS left some people alive so that these people will teach a lesson to others. Most of children have no father and mother now. It is a massacre and it is against humanity because they killed people without any hesitation.”*

10. Our delegation visited another family whose 8 members were killed in this attack. The family told us that ISIS militants disguised in YPG and YPJ uniforms, they cut their hair so that they can look like YPG members. They changed their appearance so that they could look like women. They changed their hair, eyebrows and eyelash. Then, they infiltrated into city like YPJ members. Moreover, 7 vehicles entered into the city from Aleppo side. They had at least 1 Kurdish speaker in their vehicle so as to avoid any problem at check points. After people heard fires, they went to these vehicles to get information because they thought these people were YPG members. However, ISIS militants shot these people one by one even before they reached vehicles. When one of these people contacted YPG members to ask this incident and get information, YPG members told they were not their members. Then, they realised that they were ISIS militants.
11. After talking to witnesses, our delegation went back to the PYD building to get information and figures related to the attack from the investigation commission. Mr. Öztürk Türkdoğan, the İHD President, made the following statement on behalf of the delegation: *“This last ISIS attack in Kobane is a crime against humanist. We are here today to show our solidarity with you and to observe what happened here from human*

*rights perspective. First of all, we offer our sincere condolences to those who lost their relatives. We wish that those who are injured will get well soon. It is IHD's third visit to Kobane and our aim in these visits is to observe situation from human rights perspective. We share our findings with public opinion in Turkey and with international community. In order to use in our report, we would like to know particularly number of dead civilians, where ISIS militants entered into the city, how the security of city was managed and current situation about reconstruction of Kobane. Killing civilians indicate that there is a crime against humanity. International mechanisms and human rights organisations need to be sensitive to the situation in Kobane. Therefore, we will write our report and share with public opinion."*

Ms. Asya ABDULLAH, PYD Co-President, made the following statement:

*'Many delegations want to come here and conduct fact-finding mission. You are the first delegation and we attribute importance to your visit. After the massacre we had some extra-ordinary days because there was danger of another attack on civilians. Therefore, we tried to take measures to defend and protect whole region. We collected the dead bodies of our people and took care of injured people. Then, we discussed this attack and created several commissions to investigate this issue. We created a commission to investigate this ISIS attack on civilians on 25 June 2015 in Kobane. This commission continues to work yet casualties were almost determined. Our friends here will give you information about the casualties. However, we would like to underline one point: it is really important for us that the whole world understands the seriousness and details of this ISIS attack. In this regard, your visit as a human rights delegation is very important for us. Our friends will give you information now.'*

One of the commission members, named Şilan, made the following statement:

*'Our commission has been working to determine casualties of this massacre and savagery. Our commission determined that:*

***251 civilians were killed. 151 of these people were men, 64 of them were women and 35 of them were children (23 girls and 12 boys) under 15 years old. 93 children lost their both father and mother. 3 pregnant women were killed.*** *In addition, 23 civilians were killed in Berxbotan. This fact indicates that ISIS aimed to kill all civilians in Kobane. We have not finalised our report yet and continue to work on it. When we finish it, we will share it with public opinion.*

## **THE MAIN FINDINGS OF OUR DELEGATION**

### **THE MAIN FINDINGS OF OUR DELEGATION**

After holding several meetings with PYD authorities and investigation commission members, talking to witnesses and observations, investigation, our delegation found that:

1. ISIS attack on civilians on 25 June 2015 aimed to kill everyone without any difference, men, women, children, elderly people, young people and pregnant women, so that it is for revenge and a crime against humanity,

2. ISIS massacre in Kobane on 25 June 2015 happened after Tel Abyad and other regions, where ISIS had control, were taken over by YPG,
3. ISIS used various weapons and particularly silencers to delay YPG and YPJ intervention,
4. ISIS militants disguised in YPG and YPJ uniforms and especially disguised as women and had YPG flags in their vehicles to avoid any problem while infiltrating into the city and at check points. They had also one Kurdish speaker in their vehicles in this regard,
5. Some ISIS militants were sent to Kobane as immigrants several months ago and these militants joined this attack to make it a more organised one,
6. A medical centre, which was used by doctors without borders, were destroyed by ISIS so that it would not be used for medical treatment or right to life would be prevented,
7. Most of the ISIS militants in this attack were killed and those who were not killed escaped into Turkey since there was no strict control on border,
8. 251 civilians were killed in this attack on 25 June 2015: 151 of them were men, 64 of them were women and 35 of them were children under 15. 23 of these children were girls and 12 of them were boys. 93 children lost their both father and mother. 137 families were attacked in total. 267 were people injured,
9. Almost all people from one village were killed, 23 civilians were killed in Berxbotan.

#### **CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS:**

International community and international human rights movement need to be sensitive to this attack in Kobane so as not to let this massacre or crime against humanity go unpunished.

In this regard, we call on;

- a) to conduct an independent international fact-finding mission to get more concrete and first-hand information about the massacre in Kobane,
- b) to provide necessary medical and psychological services to those who need in Kobane and for those who cannot be treated in Kobane must be hosted in other countries,
- c) to take necessary initiatives to find out perpetrators and those who are responsible for this massacre and to have an effective trial against them,
- d) to contribute to reconstruction of Kobane and help them to have normal daily life there,
- e) to take necessary actions to facilitate communication between people in Kobane and their relatives in other countries,
- f) to initiate all relevant international mechanisms so that ISIS leaders and militants, who joined the massacre and are still alive, as well as any country that provides weapons, logistical support for ISIS, will be brought to court and tried,

- g) to recognise Rojava Cantons in Syria at international level and actively support defence initiative by Rojava people within the framework of the right of self-determination that is under the guarantee of UN twin covenants,
- h) to pay attention to the attached report prepared by Kobane Canton Investigation Commission.

İHD HEADQUARTERS

Annex: Kobane Canton ISIS Attack Report