



Genocide Watch: Turkey's obstruction of aid to Kurds in Turkey and Syria

March 2023

Genocide Watch is declaring a Genocide Watch due to Turkey's campaign against the Kurds in northern Syria and Iraq, including Turkey's continuing bombing and its blockage of delivery and distribution of humanitarian aid for Kurdish earthquake victims in Turkey and northern Syria.

[The Red Cross](#) has estimated that 26 million people across Turkey and northern Syria have been impacted by the two earthquakes that struck the region on February 6, 2023. As of March 6, around 50,000 people have been confirmed dead, with another 100,000 seriously injured.

Turkey has committed acts of [persecution and genocide](#) against the Kurdish community since the 1920s through mass murders, deportations, and denial of Kurdish ethnic identity.

Within Turkey, [political oppression](#) of the Kurds has restricted the ability of the People's Democratic Party (HDP) to deliver aid in the municipalities it governs. Since the 2019 Turkish elections, dozens of HDP politicians have been removed from office and jailed, with mayors being replaced by "trustees" appointed by President Erdoğan's government. HDP co-leader [Pervin Buldan](#) has charged that these "trustees" have obstructed relief to Kurds in regions affected by the earthquake. "Our municipalities were usurped. If this had not happened, these wounds would have healed much faster."

President Tayyip Erdoğan announced a [three-month state of emergency](#) across ten Turkish provinces in response to the earthquakes. The state of emergency is due to end just before Turkey's May 14th elections. Such emergency powers have been [abused](#) by President Erdoğan in the past as a means to consolidate his political power. Turkey's last state of emergency in 2016 lasted for two years. States of emergency allow the [suspension of fundamental rights](#) under Turkey's constitution.

President Erdoğan's invasion of Afrin and northern Syria in 2019 left [hundreds of civilians dead](#) and over 100,000 displaced. [Chemical warfare](#) was inflicted on Kurdish civilians. The Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) perpetrated crimes against humanity, including forced displacement, looting, kidnapping, rape of Kurdish women and girls, and unlawful expropriation of property.

Testimony gathered by [Amnesty International](#) indicates that humanitarian aid has been obstructed and diverted by both President Bashar al-Assad's forces and the SNA. Rescue workers have been pressured into diverting aid to the SNA and other armed militias. This obstruction has prevented Kurdish-majority districts in Syria from receiving aid sent by Iraqi Kurdistan.

International reliance on Turkey to fairly distribute aid to Kurds in northern Syria has been betrayed.

Despite Turkey's earthquake, and a generous response by international donors, including rescue workers, medical personnel, and supplies from Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government, Turkey has resumed its [ongoing bombing campaign](#) against Iraqi Kurdistan.

This obstruction of aid indicates Turkey's continuing **Stage 8 Persecution** of Kurds in Turkey, northern Syria, and Iraqi Kurdistan.

Genocide Watch recommends:

- European and American assistance to Turkey for earthquake recovery should require that the aid be equally distributed to Kurds in Syria and Turkey.
- The EU, US, and NATO should demand that Turkey stop its bombing in Iraqi Kurdistan and northern Syria.