



Turkey Carries Out Air Strikes on Kurdish Militant Bases in Northern Syria and Iraq in Retaliation for the Recent Istanbul Bomb Attack While Iran Also Targets Kurdish Positions in Northern Iraq

This week, Kurdish regions of northern Syria and Iraq were subjected to aerial attacks from both Turkey and Iran, as each launched their own air strike campaigns. Reports of exactly what the targets were and who was killed vary. According to Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, Turkey struck 89 key targets across Syria and Iraq, all of which were militant bases. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), however, claim that Turkish air strikes killed 14 people, 11 of which were civilians. They also contended that the air strikes destroyed a power plant and a hospital, among other civilian locales. In Iraq, where both Iran and Turkey struck, a total of 58 deaths were reported, all of which were non-civilian. Iraq's government, though, has denounced the attack as a violation of its sovereignty.

Whether the deaths were civilian or military, some analysts have argued that the justifications behind the air strikes were dubious in the cases of both Turkey and Iran. Turkey states that it is seeking justice for the 6 deaths and many injuries sustained when a bomb exploded on a busy street in Istanbul last week. Investigations concluded that the bombing was orchestrated by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and their Syrian Kurdish YPG militia counterpart. However, there are those who are skeptical of these allegations due to the identity and tact of Turkey's primary suspect. They have expressed that she did not place the bomb like someone of her supposed training as a PKK agent would allow, being that she took a taxi through a street lined with security cameras. The PKK has not taken credit for the attack. As for Iran, its leaders purport that Iranian Kurds in Iraq are inciting the protests that are sweeping the nation. Iran first attacked the semi-autonomous Kurdish region at the end of September, killing 18. It may well be that both Ankara and Tehran are fishing for scapegoats. Both countries have been at odds with Kurdistan for years.

Seemingly in response to these attacks, the Kurdish YPG militia fired a rocket into Turkey on Sunday – the same day of Turkey's attack – injuring eight. The SDF had promised retaliation, and it is unclear if more is to follow. President Erdogan promised on Tuesday that Turkey would be sending ground forces into Syria as well, which risks increasingly exacerbating tensions. The decision is not altogether shocking, as Turkey has sent troops into northern Syria three times since 2016. This time, though, Kurds face mounting tensions from two powerful entities. Between Turkey's air strikes on Sunday and Iran's the following day, there is a sense of palpable fear in Kurdish areas that is more than warranted, and it appears that the state of affairs will only unravel further from here. The juxtaposition of Turkey and Iran both carrying out attacks on Kurdish areas and positions in northern Syria and Iraq has prompted concern regarding the potential for further escalation, and it remains to be seen how things transpire in the coming days and weeks.