

# Are Kurds under threat amid civil war resurgence in Syria?

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Over the past several days, a group called Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) has carried out a lightning-fast offensive, pushing the [Syrian regime](#) out of Aleppo in northern Syria.



This surprise attack is a major setback for the Syrian regime. In many ways, it reflects the weakness of the regime, which doesn't have enough soldiers to replace its losses over the last 13 years of civil war in [Syria](#).

Syria is divided between the regime in western Syria, the Turkish-controlled parts of northern Syria, HTS in the Idlib area of northwest Syria, and the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in eastern Syria.

The SDF has many Kurdish members, and [Kurds are often threatened by developments in Syria](#) because their communities are near the front lines in Aleppo, Tal Rifaat, and areas in eastern Syria.

In a divided Syria, minorities have often faced potential persecution. The Kurds are a minority group that historically suffered under Bashar Assad's regime . . .

Kurds have been forced into this crucible. They went from

being a relatively small minority in Syria that was suppressed by the regime to taking control of their own areas as the regime melted away in 2012 and 2013. By 2014 they were on the front line against a rising ISIS.

Isolated in eastern Syria, the Kurdish towns and villages fought ISIS and helped save the Yazidis in Iraq when ISIS committed genocide. The YPG was the key faction that played this vital role.

The US military, seeking partners to work by, with and through to defeat ISIS, worked with the YPG. It partnered with an umbrella group called the SDF, which included the YPG.

This worked well throughout 2016 as the SDF defeated ISIS. But it brought the SDF into conflict with Turkish-backed rebel groups near Manbij.

Turkey was busy turning Syrian rebels into proxies after the fall of Aleppo in 2016. By 2018, Turkey had invaded the Kurdish area of Afrin and used the newly branded SNA, an umbrella of rebel groups, to ethnically cleanse Kurds from Afrin.

Kurds ended up in IDP (internally displaced person) camps near Tal Rifaat in the Aleppo area. In Aleppo, the Kurds also controlled their own areas, centered around the Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood.

In eastern Syria, the SDF controls a huge area east of the Euphrates River, and a few hundred US soldiers support them against the remnants of ISIS. The Syrian regime ostensibly controls areas where Kurds live, such as Kobani, near the border with Turkey.

With the HTS offensive, the Kurds are now again in the spotlight. This is because pro-Turkey propagandists are trying to create tensions in Syria by portraying the SDF or YPG as pro-Assad.

In addition, Turkey is pushing the SNA to attack the Kurds. HTS has turned south from Aleppo to fight the regime in and around Hama, taking the pressure of Kurds in Aleppo and Tal Rifaat.

Many wheels are in motion in Syria. It could leave Kurds and other minorities exposed. These groups have often been pushed to support the regime with claims that if they don't, then the opposition will persecute them. This creates a vicious cycle in which minorities are pressed to support the regime and then portrayed as pro-regime supporters and attacked because of it. This leads them to back the regime, and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The Kurds, who have a long history of oppression at the hands of the regime, are powerful enough to have a third way – an autonomy that leaves them outside the regime camp and outside the Syrian rebel camp.

This can also potentially make them seem to be opponents of both. That doesn't always work out well, but it's the "least bad" option so far for the Kurds in Syria.

*Read it [all here.](#)*