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Amnesty: Almost half a million people forcibly displaced in Turkey

At least half a million people in southeast Turkey have been forcibly displaced by violence, large scale destruction and ongoing curfews. A new report has called on Turkish authorities to facilitate their return home.



Hundreds of thousands of people have been uprooted in the wake of the fight by Turkish authorities against the Kurdistan Worker's party (PKK), Amnesty International said on Tuesday in its 31-page report, "Displaced and Dispossessed."

The rights group focused on the forced displacement of residents in the southeastern town of Diyarbakir's Sur district, calling on Turkish authorities to take action to enable residents in the region to return to their homes.

'Less and less hope'

"It's now a year since the curfew was declared," Andrew Gardner, Amnesty International's Turkey expert, told DW. "The longer it goes on, the more families lose hope they will be able to return. And especially with the general situation in the region, with the closure of NGOs, with the replacement of the mayors with trustees, with the closure of media organizations, this environment, this crackdown gives people less and less hope of any positive developments."



Diyarbakir has seen heavy fighting between Turkish forces and the PKK

Gardner said they interviewed 26 families and extended families from the historic central district of Sur, who are keen to return to their homes and neighborhoods.

"Sur residents are among an estimated half-million people displaced in the southeast of the country in what appears to be a deliberate policy to displace residents and destroy and rebuild urban areas to ensure security through changes in infrastructure and population transfers," the report said.

It noted that an estimated 2,360 people have died during the curfew operations, including at least 368 people who were unarmed residents.

Amnesty called on Turkey to address "the lack of access to rights faced by displaced people," adding that it is the government's duty to facilitate internally displaced peoples' return to their homes.

Ongoing conflict

Turkey imposed round-the-clock curfews in its mainly Kurdish southeastern towns as the security forces tried to root out PKK militants.

Clashes between the security forces and the PKK intensified since a ceasefire collapsed last year, destroying a two-year peace process that was meant to end a three-decade conflict.

Authorities have also since sacked and replaced many Kurdish town mayors in the region.

Date 06.12.2016

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