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ISIS Free, Syrian north
New US sponsored Plan



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Plan for expelling ISIS from the north of Syria; Prospects and horizons:

A Corridor for FSA, and one more for QSD

Bulletins from several news agencies referred to an initial agreement between Ankara and Washington on a plan for cleansing the areas held by ISIS, near the Turkish borders^[1]. Such news surfaced in the aftermath of discussions held between The Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his American counterpart, president Barack Obama, along with other officials, such as Secretary of State, John Kerry and Vice president, Joe Biden; during the presence of the Turkish president for attending the Nuclear Safety Summit, whose activities were launched on 31 March, 2016. This was also followed by a visit made by an American military, diplomatic delegation to Ankara^[2], during 4-5, April, 2016, where they met a group of Turkish diplomats and military personnel. The disagreement, however, between Washington and Ankara – as it were- was regarding the body or entity that will replace ISIS in the area between Azaz and Jarablus, in case ISIS were pushed out, taking into consideration the well-known Turkish red line regarding the linkage between the Kurdish districts in Ayen al Arab and Ifreen.



[1] [Ece Göksedef, Türkiye sınırındaki IŞİD bölgesi için yeni formül, Al Jazeera Türk, 7 Nis 2016,](#)

[2] [U.S., Turkey discuss ways Syrian opposition can push Islamic State east, Reuters, Apr 7, 2016,](#)

The core of the plan

The plan is drawn by a variety of highly important points:

1. The existence of two separate corridors, dominated by the forces of FSA and QSD.
2. FSA is to control the corridor between Marea and Jarablus, with the length of about 98 Km, alongside the Turkish borders, with depth ranging between 20/25/30 Km, in accordance with the geographic locations of the Kurdish and Arabian villages.
3. Turkey shall not oppose the passage of QSD forces to the west of the Euphrates, where they will be controlling the other corridor to the south of the SFA's held corridor; that is supposed to extend from Minbij till Tall Refa'at, with various depths.



Turkish proposal:

This plan came in the aftermath of a Turkish proposal for the Americans suggesting the creation of a force-mainly Arabs and Turkmens- to fight ISIS, where the Turkish forces would be supporting that force under US-aerial cover. According to certain reports, Turkey has handed Washington a list of 2400 fighters of Arabs and Turkmens, willing to fight ISIS^[3]; where the US in return, would forfeit their support for the Democratic Union Party.

While the Americans kept assuring that they will never forfeit the support of the Democratic Union Party, it is worth pointing out -in this very regard- to a highly significant statement, preceding such atmospheres, for the Turkish Foreign Minister on February 11, 2016, when Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, said that his country "could have normalized relations with the Democratic Union Party had the latter chosen a stand defending the rights of the people there(Syria) instead of cooperating with the P.K.K terrorist organization"^[4].

Meanwhile, some media-sources, accompanying the Turkish president in his visit to the United States, stated that the Americans had viewed the Turkish proposal with no passivity; whereas, others assured the refusal of the Turkish proposal for a variety of reasons, the most important of which are:

1. Obama does not wish to change his policy towards Syria, especially before the presidential elections.
2. The United States does not want Turkey to have the upper-hand in the Syrian scene.
3. The United States can never forfeit the Democratic Union Party.
4. The engagement of the Turkish forces within the Syrian territories may bring them to the confrontation of the Russian forces^[5].



[3] [Yahya Bostan, PYD'yi safdışı bırakacak plan, 05 Nisan 2016](#)

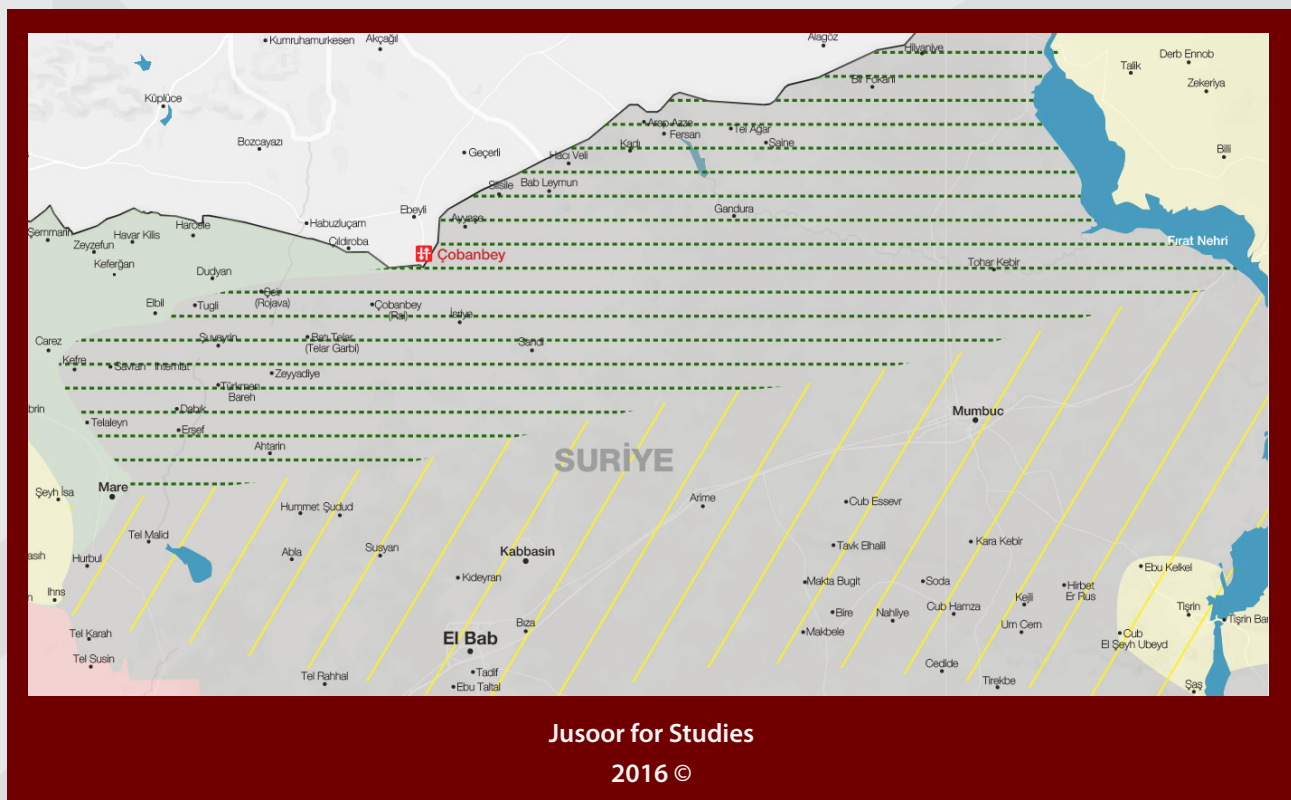
[4] "could have normalized relations with the Democratic Union Party had the latter chosen a stand defending the rights of the people there(Syria)", [Anadolu Agency, February 11th 2016](#).

[5] [Verda Özer, The Hidden Secrets of Erdogan's Visit to the US, April 16th 2016](#)

Remarks over the Plan

1. No official announcement has been made about the plan, yet; however, according to some reports, preparations are being underway for the plan^[6].
2. The plan seeks to grant guarantees for the Turkish and Kurdish sides, where the US still considers both of them as allies.
3. The US-Turkish meetings regarding the plan, along with the discussions for means of cooperation were held in the presence of and consultation with the Turkish military^[7].
4. The Turkish side have their own fears and speculations towards the plan.
5. The approval over the plan would mean that Turkey would have an implied, gradual acceptance for the Kurdish corridor and the US-armament for the Kurdish forces.
6. The announcement to the plan synchronized with the recapture of the Syrian opposition forces over al-Raey, along with other villages to the north of Syria from ISIS's hands, with Turkish support. Clashes are still continuing there between the two parties.
7. The announcement to the plan synchronized with an American endorsement that Washington shall not allow the Democratic Union Party to declare their own Kurdish state, along with an American implied accordant that the Democratic Union Party is an extension to the PKK.

The following map illustrates the FSA corridor, in green dotted lines, and the QSD corridor with yellow, sidelong lines.



[6] The declarations of the US ambassador in Ankara, April 7th 2016

[7] [Al Jazeera Turk, April 7th 2016](#)

Conclusion

Based on a close view over the a series of events shaping the Turkish stand over the Syrian situation, especially in the north of Syria, it's safe to say that the Turkish acceptance for such a plan was quite unlikely to happen before; because the very implementation of the plan would bring Turkey closer to a risky reality, more dangerous even than ISIS, relatively speaking. Moreover, the Kurdish side could confine the Syrian opposition from 3 directions, where it also can create a blocking-barrier between them and the Syrian regime forces.

Needless to say that the mere idea of approving a Kurdish control over a fully-lined sector –even if it was not on direct contact with the Turkish borders- would be quite dangerous for Turkey, simply because there are no guarantees that such forces will move on marching northwards in the future. According to this very scenario, Turkey would have just replaced the danger of ISIS with a bigger one, that is, the Kurdish groups in northern Syria which have direct ties with the PKK, whose possession of training and support was clearly proved in the locations of the Democratic Union Party, to the north of Syria. The variety in the supply-lines from al-Qamishly in Syria, to the front battle locations between the Turkish army and the PKK in the city of Nussaybeen, in Turkey is considered a good example for the cooperation between the two parties. In addition to that, the Kurdish advancements northwards in Syria does confirm the ideology of the separatist program for the Kurds in turkey, generally speaking.

On the other hand, Turkey would be quite obliged to accept the American stand which refuses stopping their support to the Kurdish forces at the pretext of the important role of the later of fighting and annihilating ISIS; perhaps Turkey's approval for one corridor held by the FSA alongside the Turkish borders and another one held by the QSD forces would be the best remaining choice for Turkey in the light of Washington's hint of another substitute which is one corridor held by Kurdish organizations, the issue that Turkey refuses entirely.

In fact, the most reasonable and acceptable choice for Turkey would be to move on supporting the FSA in the north and seek their empowerment to advance in the south so that they can block the probability of the Kurdish corridor from Menbij to Tal Rifaat, but this does not have feasible guarantees.

All in all, Turkey can still reject this plan which will eventually lead to the increase of the US support for the Kurds along with decrease of relying on Turks, or just to accept this plan being the best of the worst which means relying on the FSA to control a corridor with the length of 80 km with Turkish military support.

In conclusion, it seems that the Turkish stand is in favor of refusing the plan, yet it will still be suffering from lack of substitutes in the light of the US stubborn stand; where all the available suggestions regarding building up a coalition with Saudi Arabia would be extremely hard to achieve without agreement with the Americans. However, this does not mean that Turkey is getting along completely with the will of the American Administration.



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