

US-backed Kurdish Militia Imposes Curfew in Eastern Syria, Following Clashes with Another US-backed Militia

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After weeks of clashes between the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Arab tribesman aligned with Deir Ezzor Military Council (DEMC), the SDF has [imposed a curfew](#) following a resumption of fighting on Monday. These ethnic tensions are boiling over in eastern Syria's Deir Ezzor province, illegally occupied by the US and its SDF partners, as the Arab majority resists Kurdish rule.

Syrian media and activists reported that the SDF imposed the indefinite measure across a handful of towns in Deir Ezzor including Ziban, located close to the border with Iraq. Arab gunmen took over several positions in Ziban on Monday, during which a number of SDF fighters were killed, according to the pan-Arab TV station *Al Mayadeen*.

The SDF issued a statement saying the gunmen entered Ziban while "under cover of random artillery shelling" coming from the province's government controlled town of Mayadeen. In Deir Ezzor, Damascus controls the area west of the Euphrates River, while Washington and their SDF proxy occupy Deir Ezzor east of the river. The Kurdish-led forces have accused the Syrian government of allowing the Arab militiamen to cross the Euphrates River.

The statement also claimed the SDF assisted in the evacuation of civilians to safe areas, namely nearby villages. Kurdish forces were also said to have fled the area in Ziban as the fighting exacerbated.

Though Washington has backed some Sunni Arab groups such as the DEMC in the region, the US mostly relies on the SDF to control about a third of Syria along with most of the

country's oil and wheat resources. There are roughly 900 US troops and an undisclosed number of contractors [embedded](#) with the SDF.

As a result of the [illegal occupation](#), the Kurds have [dominated](#) the area much to the disliking of the Arab population. The resisting tribesmen along with their supporters [complain](#) about the Kurdish authorities' corruption, drug smuggling, misallocation of resources, as well as the Arab population's impoverishment and political disenfranchisement.

Syrian journalist Ibrahim Muhammad has [explained](#) most people living in the province "categorically refuse to be ruled by the Kurds." The fighting started late last month when the SDF arrested the leader of the DEMC, Abu Khawla. Since then, more than 100 people have been killed.

Robert Ford, the former US ambassador to Syria, has said this current violence should not have surprised policymakers. "Anyone who was watching the deteriorating situation in Deir Ezzor wouldn't have been surprised by this," Ford told Middle East Eye.

"Arab grievances against the SDF go back years. Instead of the US addressing those concerns and moving Kurds out of Deir Ezzor and bringing in local Arab leaders, it sat on its hands," the erstwhile diplomat added.

The Islamic State took over large swathes of eastern Syria and western Iraq as a result of the Barack Obama administration's failed [regime change operation](#) which saw the [CIA](#) arming and funding rebel groups including al Qaeda affiliates. The proxy war [killed](#) hundreds of thousands of people but ultimately failed in its attempt to overthrow the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The terrorist group was all but destroyed by Damascus with help from its Russian and Iranian allies. Despite the claims of US officials that the occupation is meant to deter the re-emergence of the terrorist group, the American occupation is instead designedly depriving Syria of vital resources amid [Washington's economic war](#).

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