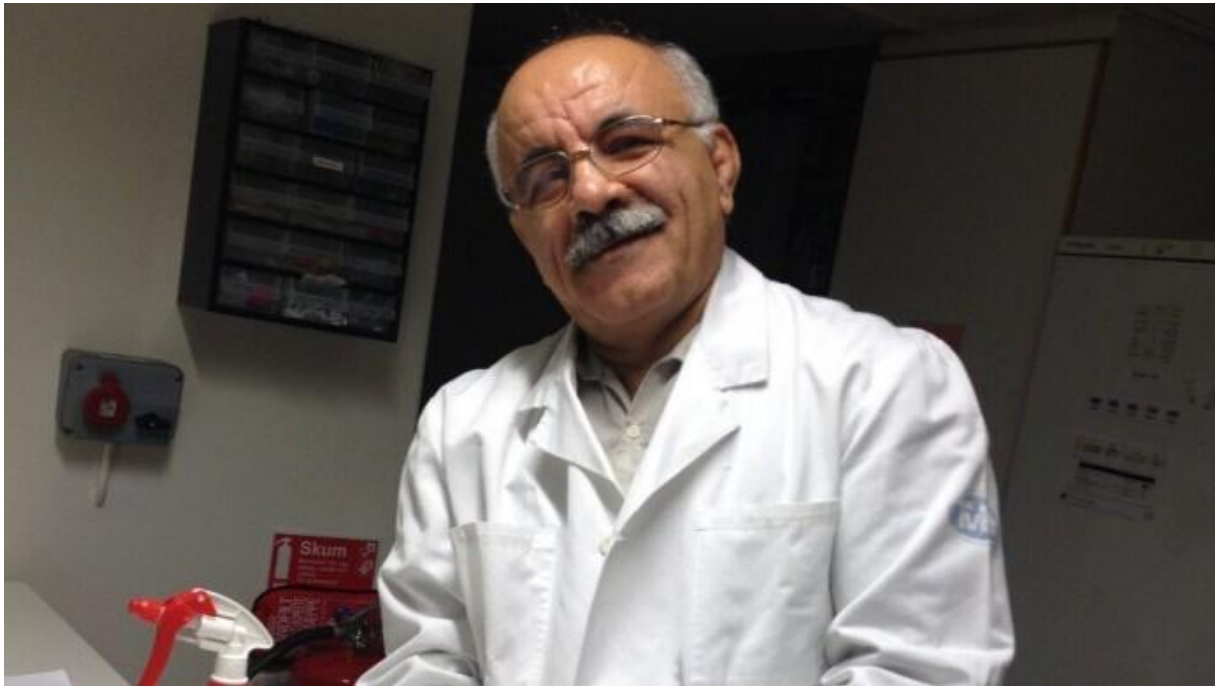


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Dr. Mansouran: War crimes happening in Kobanê

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ANKARA - Dr. Abbas Mansouran, who evaluated the attacks against Rojava, stated that a war crime has been committed in Kobanê (Kobani) and emphasized that the fact that Turkey and Syria are not parties to the International Criminal Court (ICC) does not eliminate accountability under international criminal law.

Dr. Abbas Mansouran, who has taken part in studies documenting the use of chemical weapons during Turkey's attacks on Efrîn (Afrin), shared his assessment of the siege and attacks that began in Aleppo on January 6 and were carried out by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), ISIS, and Turkey-backed groups, later spreading across all of Rojava. Dr. Mansouran stated that the attacks primarily target the social and political order in Rojava and said: "Rojava is under attack because it represents coexistence, dignity, and resistance to fascist and jihadist violence. Defending Rojava today is not a matter of opinion; it is a humanitarian necessity."

Mansouran emphasized that, from the perspective of international humanitarian law and international criminal law, the deliberate siege imposed on all of Rojava, particularly in Kobanê, must be regarded as one of the gravest prohibited practices against the civilian population. Recalling that the fact that Turkey and Syria are not parties to the International Criminal Court (ICC) does not prevent accountability, Mansouran stated that the provisions of the Rome Statute on genocide (Article 6) and war crimes (Article 8) are legally indispensable.

Referring to the statement by the Syrian Arab Army Operations Command classifying all Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) military positions in the neighborhoods of Şêxmeqsûd (Sheikh Maqsoud) and Eşrefiye (Ashrafiyeh) in Aleppo as “legitimate targets,” Mansouran said: “In the framework of international humanitarian law, this announcement cannot be understood as a neutral or abstract legal assessment. Rather, it functioned as a direct operational order authorizing immediate attack and territorial advance, explicitly subordinating civilian protection to an asserted claim of military necessity and advantage. By designating the entirety of these densely populated neighborhoods as lawful targets, the declaration effectively erased the distinction between military objectives and the surrounding civilian environment.”

ONGOING ATTACKS DESPITE DECLARED CEASEFIRE

Mansouran stated that these attacks are not isolated incidents but rather part of a military strategy aimed at intensifying assaults by targeting the population and local defense forces in Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyeh, saying: “This occurred despite the announcement of a four-day ceasefire, during which Tom Barrack publicly claimed that military operations would respect agreed safeguards. Contrary to these assurances, government forces resumed attacks against central targets within four hours of the ceasefire announcement. According to informed sources, the Syrian Democratic Forces withdrew from positions in Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor to prevent wider escalation, while pro-

government militias continued killings and repression in newly occupied areas and advanced toward Kobane and Hasakah, rendering the declared ceasefire a political cover for renewed military offensives.”

RESPONSIBILITY GOES BEYOND THOSE ON THE GROUND

Mansouran highlighted that children in Rojava have died due to harsh winter conditions and the deliberate obstruction of access to healthcare, stating that the situation has gone beyond a humanitarian crisis. He stressed that, in addition to child deaths, the risk of epidemic diseases has increased, the healthcare system has been systematically destroyed, and the region has been kept under siege for an extended period. Mansouran further noted that humanitarian aid corridors are being deliberately blocked, adding: “Responsibility does not rest solely with those enforcing the siege on the ground. Political and international actors who legitimize, enable, or normalize this situation bear indirect responsibility. Figures such as Tom Barrack, a wealthy businessman and political envoy with regional interests, have been involved in political arrangements whose foreseeable consequence is the transformation of Rojava into a landscape of bloodshed, where economic and geopolitical considerations are placed above civilian lives. In conclusion, what is unfolding in Kobane and other besieged areas is not an unfortunate by-product of armed conflict, but a crime in progress in the twenty-first century. It may simultaneously constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and, if the requisite intent is established, genocide. International law imposes an obligation not only to punish such crimes after the fact, but to act immediately to prevent them.”

WAR CRIMES

Mansouran drew a parallel between the ongoing siege in Kobanê and the internet blackouts implemented in Iran to conceal deaths during the protests, stating: “The same method, siege, isolation, information blackout, and mass harm, is now being applied in Kobane and other occupied areas. Reliable reports confirm that at least five children have

died due to cold, starvation, and lack of medical care. A newborn infant died during childbirth because oxygen and basic life-saving equipment were unavailable in the city hospital. Thousands of civilians, including children, the elderly, and the sick, are now at imminent risk. There is no possibility of fleeing to safe areas, no humanitarian corridor, and no access to surrounding villages, many of which have already been occupied. Under international law, the deliberate deprivation of civilians of essential means of survival, including food, water, electricity, heating, and medical care, constitutes a war crime, and when carried out as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population, may also amount to crimes against humanity, including extermination and other inhumane acts. The legal character of these crimes does not depend on the number of victims but on the intentional creation of life-threatening conditions. In this case, the lives of thousands are at risk from starvation, hypothermia, infectious diseases, and severe psychological trauma.”

‘INTERNATIONAL LAW LACKS COURAGE

Mansouran emphasized that remaining silent in the face of what is happening in Rojava represents both a political and moral failure, stating: “ These are not isolated incidents, misunderstandings, or the ‘fog of war.’ They are deliberate acts aimed at breaking a civilian population through siege, deprivation, terror, and humiliation. Silence, vague statements, or procedural evasions amount to active participation in the normalization of atrocity. International law does not lack norms; it lacks courage. When war crimes and crimes against humanity are met with inaction, the message to perpetrators is clear: continue.”

‘ROJAVA IS A MORAL LINE’

Mansouran stressed that when international mechanisms fail, all parts of society must take responsibility, saying: “Lawyers, doctors, journalists, workers, students, and women’s movements must act. International solidarity from below is not symbolic; it is often the only force capable of breaking impunity. Women, in particular, must raise their

voices globally against crimes committed against women defenders, in the spirit of Woman, Life, Freedom. Rojava is under attack because it represents coexistence, dignity, and resistance to fascist and jihadist violence. Defending Rojava today is not a matter of opinion; it is a legal duty, a humanitarian necessity, and a moral line that the world must not cross in silence.”

‘SPREADING DISINFORMATION DURING ARMED CONFLICT’

Drawing attention to the media’s role in the face of ongoing attacks, Mansouran said that outlets that legitimize violence bear significant responsibility. He noted that some media organizations, including Doha-based Al Jazeera, have failed to uphold impartiality and have fueled ethnic hostility through distorted reporting, stating: “Under international law, systematic incitement to hatred and violence, deliberate disinformation during armed conflict, and the justification or normalization of crimes against civilians may give rise to legal responsibility. Media actors who knowingly contribute to escalation, ethnic polarization, or the legitimization of war crimes are not mere observers; they become enablers of atrocity. This media warfare operates as a parallel front to the military assault, aiming to fracture social cohesion, delegitimize calls for ceasefire and coexistence, and sabotage prospects for reconciliation and collective security. By amplifying falsehoods with transnational reach and political backing, these outlets actively undermine peace and public safety. This is a grave warning. If such practices continue unchecked, responsibility will rest not only with armed perpetrators but also with media institutions that possessed the power to inform truthfully and instead chose to inflame hatred, obscure crimes, and pave the way for further violence.”

MA / Deniz Karabudak