

DISEC Topic 1 **Operation Olive Branch**

Background:

During the Syrian civil war the Syrian army withdrew. After that Syria was haunted by many terror organizations such as PKK, PYD and YPG. All of these terror organizations planned thousands of attacks and bombings in Turkey. During this time Turkey had to fight with foreign policy problems and domestic problems. Because of that Turkey started the Operation Olive Branch together with the free Syrian army on 20.01.2018. It is an operation with the goal to end terrorism.

Why is it called “olive branch”?

The olive branch has been regarded as a symbol of peace for centuries. And olive and olive oil are the main source of livelihood in Afrin. Although there has not been an official announcement about the name of the operation yet, estimates are in this direction.

What happened in Syria before the Operation Olive Branch?

15-21 January 2018 Syria Field Report:

15 January 2018:

- With the counterattack of the opposition, the Atsan municipality in north Hama - which was controlled by the Assad regime - is now again under the control of the opposition.
- Because of the battle in Ebu Zuhur around 13-14 January 2018 8,000 people had to leave their home. Since the beginning of the conflicts 317,000 people fled from their homes.
- It was claimed that the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) made military shipment towards the Syrian border.
- A bombed car attack took place in the village of Dana in Northern Idlib.

16 January 2018:

- The Assad regime which was opposing the opposition in eastern Idlib lost the control of 22 villages to the terror organization ISIS.
- It was reported that 1 woman and 6 children who escaped from the conflicts in North Hama lost their lives in the sorties made to the south of Idlib.
- Because of the bombardment organized by the Assad regime in the east of Dara, four members of the free Syrian army lost their lives.

17 January 2018:

- It was claimed that the bombs dropped by the Assad regime in the Nava area in Dara had been dropped onto the market and three persons lost their lives.
- The YPG attacked the shire of Haseke and the towns which are affiliated to Haseke, arrested the youth and forced them into arms.
- Four people died after the regime forces opened fire in the North of the city Humus.
- The US International Coalition announced that it was targeting ISIS' positions on the Syria-Iraq border in Haseke province.

18 January 2018:

- In the village of Bahra in eastern Deyr Ez Zor, ISIS terrorists organized bombed vehicle attacks against YPG terrorists.
- TSK targeted YPG positions near Afrin.
- There was a conflict between opposition forces in Dara and Halit Bin Velit army, which is related to ISIS.
- It was alleged that Israel's planes targeted a weapon store near Damascus.

19 January 2018:

- YPG terrorists shot a hospital near Azez with mortar shells. Twelve patients were injured. One of the wounded lost his life.
- In East Guta, Cayş al-Islam announces the destruction of a tank belonging to the Assad regime.
- ISIS terrorists allegedly kidnapped three YPG terrorists near Abu Kemal.
- Most children and women who attempted to enter Lebanon by fugitive roads froze to death due to the cold weather.

20 January 2018:

- The Turkish Armed Forces announced that the Operation Olive Branch started at 17:00.
- While 72 combat planes participated in this operation, Turkish artillery hit terrorist positions.
- Syrian official sources announced that the Syrian army had taken over the military airport of Ebu Zuhur, located east of Idlib.
- Because of the air strike by the Assad regime in East Guta 4 civilians lost their lives.

21 January 2018:

- On the second day of the Operation Olive Branch, 45 targets of terrorists were destroyed, Sengel village, in the east of Afrin, was under control. It was reported that there were conflicts in the east of Cinderis (Cinderes), west of Afrin.
- Three PYD terrorists surrendered to the free Syrian army.

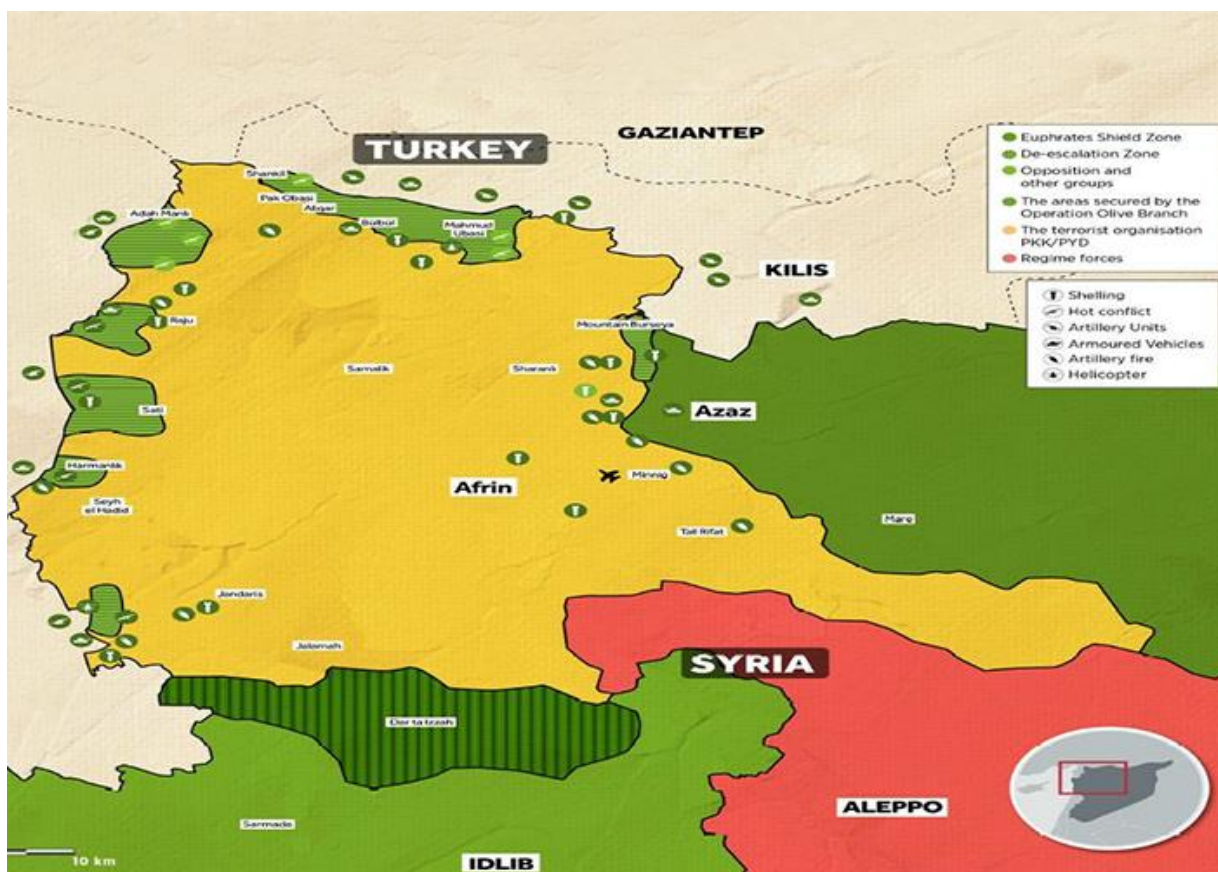
Is Afrin Operation legitimate in terms of international law?

Hulusi Akar, Chief of General Staff, who emphasized that the operation has said:

"The operation will be carried out as you know, subject to the rights of our country arising from international law, the specific decisions that the UN Security Council has taken to combat terrorism, and the right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Convention, but respecting the territorial integrity of Syria."

Akar used the following statements regarding the purpose and scope of the operation:

"In the operation plan and in the execution, only terrorists and their belongings, shelters, buildings, weapons, vehicles, equipment etc. will be targeted. All kinds of attention and sensitivity will be shown for the damage of civil and innocent people."

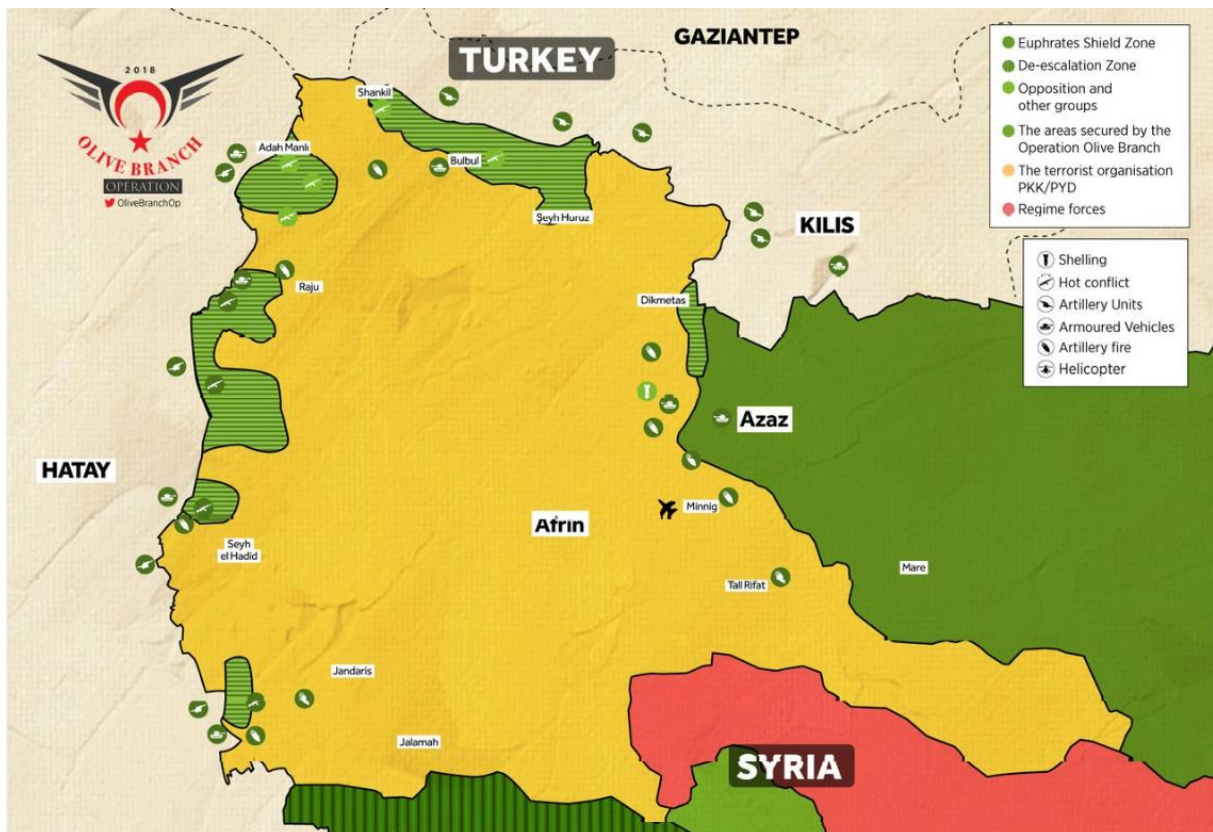


3 February 2018:

On the 15th day of the Operation Olive Branch, 74 terrorists who were members of PYD / PKK and DEASŞ terrorist organization were neutralized. In the air operation carried out by the Turkish Air Force, five points of terrorist organization shelter, ammunition depot and weapon position were destroyed. The region of the Racu Mountain was bombarded by tanks. Along with the developments experienced during the day, the number of terrorists disabled in the scope of the Olive Branch Operation reached 899 in total and the number of targets destroyed reached 533 in total.

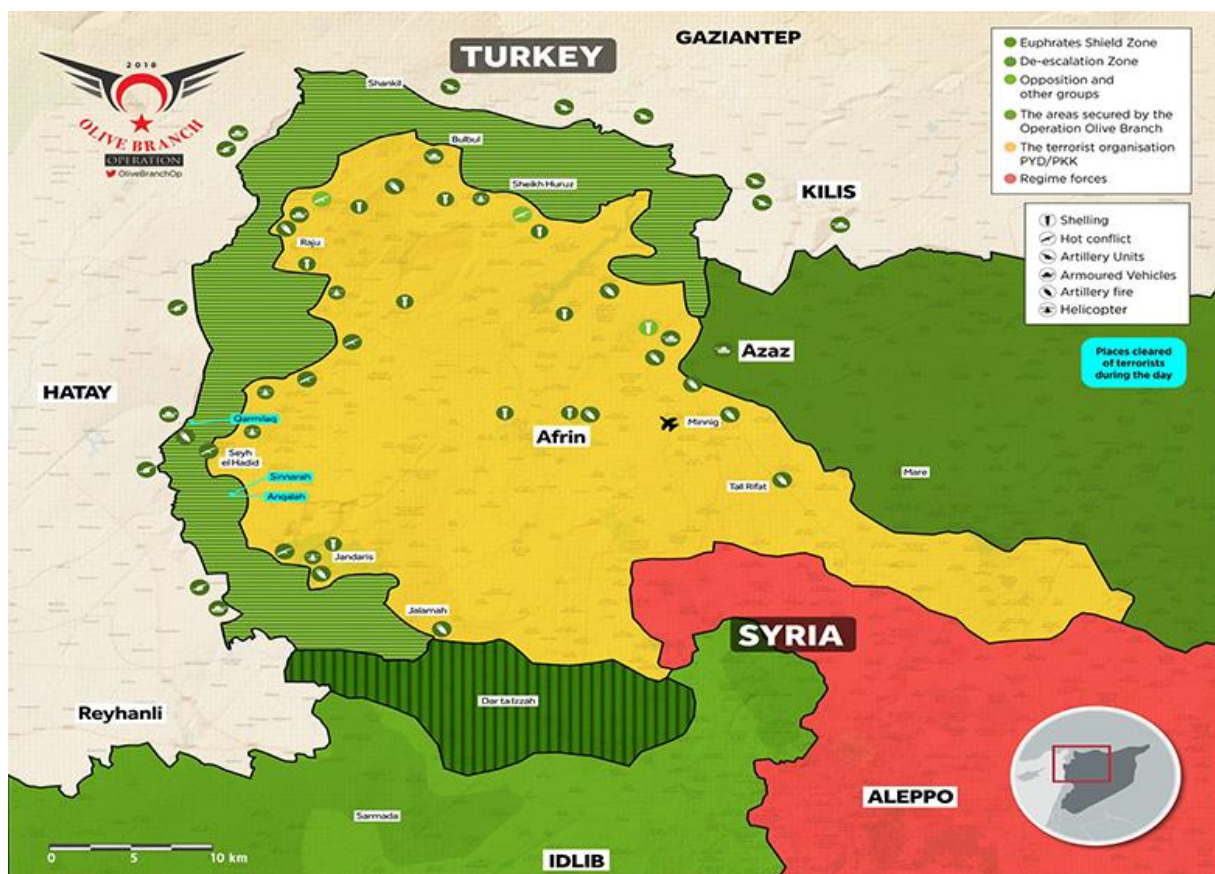
8 February 2018:

29 PYD / PKK / DEAS members were neutralized in the operation during the beginning until the 20th day of the Operation Olive Branch. Thus, since the Operation Olive Branch began, the number of terrorists who have been neutralized has risen to 1,028. In the regions of Reyhanlı, Kırıkhan and Hassa in the West Afrin countryside, the terrorist organization PYD / PKK's positions were bombarded by tanks. The Turkish Armed Forces and the Free Syrian Army cleaned 40 points from the beginning of the campaign, including 1 center town, 24 villages, 3 village settlements and 12 strategic mountains or hills in 5 villages of Afrin occupied by PYD / PKK.



26 February 2018:

According to the statement made by TSK on the 38th day of Operation Olive Branch, 41 PYD / PKK terrorists were neutralized. The number of terrorists who were neutralized since the beginning of the operation reached 2,059. 58 terrorists were seized alive. During the day, the gendarmerie and police special operation team in charge of the Operation Olive Branch came out of the Joint Task Center of the Ministry of the Interior, which was established in the province of Islahiye. In ongoing operations, Karmanluk was cleared from the PKK, the terrorist organization of Lower Sinai and Upper Sinara villagers. So it was entirely cut off contact with the terrorists in Afrin border from Turkey. The strategic crescent-shaped region in Afrin joined the İdlib and Fırat Kalkan regions. The operation has continued as planned.



14 March 2018:

The number of terrorists who have been neutralized since the beginning of the operation by the TSK on the 54th day of the Operation Olive Branch has reached 3,444. However, this number was updated by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to 3,486 in the later hours of the day. In the ongoing operations during the day, a total of 12 villages such as Kori Gul, Şadir, Çolağan, Göz, Marratah, Şatiyan, Upper Kaferdel,

Kuran, Gevrika, Gazaliye, Halilo and Deyr mışmiş were cleaned from terrorist organizations. In this way, a total of 226 points were cleaned from terror organization PYD / PKK, including 194 villages and 32 critical points in Afrin under the Operation Olive Branch. The Operation Olive Branch has continued successfully as planned.



April 9, 2018:

On the 80th day of the Operation Olive Branch, Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdağ announced that the number of terrorists neutralized within the scope of the Operation Olive Branch was 4,044. Bozdağ also expressed that Afrin is under full control.

What did the United States of America and Russia say?

"We are anxiously doing sobriety call for" said the Russian Defense Ministry, "Turkey has started the operation because of the uncontrolled weapon aid to YPG, which is supported by the USA." Pentagon spokesman Galloway stated that the USA understands Turkey's concerns about the PKK and does not want to intervene in Afrin. The USA also mentioned that the most important goal is to eliminate ISIS.

The USA`s support to YPG:

The USA`s plans for supporting YPG:

Total financial support in 2018	500 Million \$
Budget for weapons and equipment	393 Million \$
Budget for educating 30,000 terrorists	107 Million \$

Total financial support in 2019	550 Million \$
Budget for weapons and equipment	250 Million \$
Budget for educating 30,000 terrorists	300 Million \$

Planned weapon aid in 2018:

Kalashnikov Infantry Rifle	12,000
Machine Gun	6,000
Heavy Machine Gun	3,500
RPG_7 Ammunition	3,000
Mortar	235
AT-4 Anti-tank Fuselage (Made in USA)	1,000
SPG-9 Anti-tank Fuselage (Russian Production)	1,000
Sniper Rifle	100
PV-7 Night Vision Binoculars	450
Infrared Laser Illuminator Binocular	150

Benefits of the Operation Olive Branch:

With this operation, Turkey managed to make peace in many parts of Syria. This could be the first step for the refugees to return home.

While Turkey wants to keep the Operation going to ensure the safety in Syria, many western countries and also the USA are against this operation. They state that this operation is against the Kurds. Now it is your task to research your country`s position on this operation.

Here are some sources for research:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_military_operation_in_Afrin
- <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/05/the-meaning-of-operation-olive-branch/>
- <http://edam.org.tr/en/turkeys-operation-olive-branch-enters-a-new-phase/>
- <https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/operation-olive-branch-to-reach-its-aim-with-tal-rifaat/1099773>