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Kurds launch offensive in Iraq, Turks consider ground operation in Syria

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US-led anti-IS coalition airstrikes in support of the Kurdish offensive operation in Iraq have killed from 60 to 70 Islamists, the US military reports.

American military personnel aren't taking part in the siege of the city of Sinjar, but military advisers are stationed near Sinjar Mountain, staying in contact with Kurdish commanders, US military representatives in Iraq report.

Through all of the time that Islamic State (IS, former ISIS/ISIL) has controlled Sinjar, since early August 2014, the onslaught on the Yazidi population of the city continues with people, including women and children, being killed and enslaved.

After the capture of Sinjar, tens of thousands of Yazidis fled the city into the mountains, where the militants trapped many of them, exposing fugitive civilians to extreme conditions of blazing heat and lack of water. These developments became the official reason for the beginning of the US-led military campaign against Islamic State on August 8, 2014.

President Barzani who personally commands Sinjar liberation is now among Peshmarge in the frontline. [#kurds](#) [#Sinjar](#)



That is why liberating Sinjar is viewed as a matter of great humanitarian and symbolic importance. Also, the city is situated astride a strategic highway linking the northern Iraqi city of Mosul and Raqqa, the Syrian city Islamic State proclaimed its capital.

The Kurdish Regional Security Council announced on Thursday that some 7,500 fighters of the Kurdish Peshmerga armed militia are attacking the city from three fronts. Reportedly, the number of Islamic State militants in Sinjar is about 600.

Operation Free Sinjar is designed to besiege the city and cut off all IS supply routes to the region. The Kurds also intend to cordon off the city with a secure buffer zone to make sure that IS cannot inflict artillery strikes on residential areas in Sinjar.

The Sinjar offensive operation is being conducted with air support from the US-led anti-IS coalition.

The forces attacking the city consist of several factions, among them the Turkey-based Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), the Syria-based People's Protection Units (YPG), Yazidi-led forces dubbed the Sinjar Resistance and Peshmerga fighters from Iraq, AP reports.

Once the Kurdish forces cut off Highway 47, *"it's going take hours, maybe days longer to get across"* the desert for Islamic State fighters, Associated Press cited Captain Chance McCraw, a military intelligence officer with the US coalition.

The city of Sinjar, situated at the foot of Sinjar Mountain some 50 kilometers from the Syrian border, has become a real IS stronghold. The militants have been building hardened positions

in the location ever since the last Kurdish offensive to capture the city stalled in December 2014.

It must be noted that Kurds have never completely left the Sinjar region. They have staged attacks on IS fighters in the city's suburbs over the past few months.

Sinjar is also a hard target because Islamic State has been accumulating manpower in the city. *"This [Kurdish] operation has been building for a while,"* Major Michael Filanowski, operations officer for the US-led coalition, said on Wednesday.

The Turkish government has announced plans to send some 10,700 military personnel to Syria in mid-December to fight Islamic State, the pro-government Yeni Safak daily reported.

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According to the newspaper, a simultaneous intervention from seven Turkish regions will see troops advancing up to 46 kilometers inside the Syrian territory to create a safe zone for up to 5 million displaced people, thus solving the refugee crisis Turkey and the EU are suffering at the moment.

The plan provides for the establishment of 17 security zones, 11 logistics bases and six refugee camps.

Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan have already openly spoken in favor of a ground operation in Syria.

*[A] ground forces [campaign] is something which we have to talk [about] together and share. As I told you in our last interview, there's a need [for] an integrated strategy, including an air campaign and ground troops,"* PM Ahmet Davuto?lu told CNN International's Christiane Amanpour on November 9.

Ankara is currently preparing an analysis of the current situation in Syria and is going to address the great powers at the G20 summit in Antalya over the weekend, asking for funds to finance the plan.

*"Turkey alone cannot take on this burden. If there's a coalition and a very well designed integrated strategy, Turkey is ready to take part in all senses,"* Davuto?lu told CNN, adding that the Syrian crisis has to be solved *"in a comprehensive manner."*

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