

Significant Academic Research Gaps Concerning Afrin, Syria: A Critical Assessment

I. Introduction: The Under-Researched Landscape of Afrin, Syria

A. Overview of Afrin's Geo-Strategic and Socio-Cultural Significance

The Afrin region, situated in northwestern Syria, holds considerable historical, geo-strategic, and socio-cultural importance. Historically characterized by a significant Kurdish population and renowned for its agricultural productivity, particularly olive cultivation ¹, the region's position along the Turkish border has consistently placed it at a geopolitical crossroads.³ The Syrian Civil War, which commenced in 2011, profoundly transformed Afrin. It experienced a period of de facto autonomous administration before becoming the target of Turkish-led military operations, notably "Operation Olive Branch" in 2018, leading to its occupation and significant demographic and administrative changes.² These events have had far-reaching consequences for its population and its place within the Syrian and regional context.

B. Rationale for Identifying Academic Gaps

Despite Afrin's complex history and its pivotal role in recent geopolitical events, a preliminary review of existing scholarly literature reveals a fragmented and often superficial academic record. The necessity of robust, methodologically sound academic research cannot be overstated. Such research is fundamental for fostering an informed understanding of the region's past and present, for guiding evidence-based policy-making, and for supporting any potential future initiatives related to reconciliation, justice, and reconstruction. This report, therefore, aims to systematically identify and critically analyze the lacunae in the academic study of Afrin, with the objective of delineating a clear path for future scholarly inquiry. The extensive reporting by media outlets and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on significant events in Afrin, such as Operation Olive Branch and the ensuing displacement, often underscores the urgent need for deeper, systematic investigation. While these reports provide crucial immediate accounts of events and human rights violations ⁶, they frequently call for, or imply the necessity of, accountability, long-term impact studies, and a more nuanced understanding of complex socio-political dynamics. Academic research, characterized by its methodological rigor, theoretical framing, and potential for longitudinal analysis, is uniquely positioned to address these deeper needs. However, the relative scarcity of dedicated academic studies focusing on these specific Afrin-related issues—inferred from general literature searches and explicit calls for investigation such as those made by the

European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR)⁷—suggests a significant gap. While the "what happened" is often reported, the "how, why, and with what lasting consequences," from a scholarly and analytical perspective, remains largely under-explored. This points to a critical need to transition from event-based reporting to sustained academic inquiry to build a comprehensive, evidence-based understanding of Afrin's recent history and its multifaceted impacts.

C. Methodological Note on Identifying Gaps

The identification of academic research gaps presented in this report is predicated on a review of available academic literature, supplemented by an examination of grey literature, including reports from NGOs and investigative journalism, particularly where these sources highlight areas lacking thorough scholarly investigation. It is pertinent to acknowledge a practical impediment to research discovery: the term "Afrin" is also a common surname and a brand name for a pharmaceutical product.¹³ This polysemy complicates broad keyword-based literature searches, often yielding a high volume of irrelevant results and potentially obscuring relevant scholarly work, thereby adding a layer of difficulty to comprehensive literature reviews, though this itself is a practical challenge rather than an inherent academic gap concerning the region.

II. Historical Lacunae: Unearthing Afrin's Pre-Conflict Past

The current focus on the conflict in Syria and its devastating impact on Afrin risks overshadowing the necessity of understanding the region's pre-existing social, economic, and political complexities. Available information provides glimpses into a diverse, historically rooted society with its own internal dynamics, traditional governance structures²³, and a deeply embedded agricultural economy²⁴, which was already navigating state policies such as Arabization.² However, the academic record appears thin on detailed pre-2011 ethnographies, specific socio-economic analyses (such as land tenure specifics or local market functions), and the nuanced impact of state policies specifically within Afrin. Without a deeper academic understanding of pre-2011 Afrin, analyses of conflict impacts, demographic shifts, and future possibilities for reconciliation or reconstruction may lack crucial context and historical depth. There is a discernible gap in understanding the "normalcy" that was disrupted and the pre-existing vulnerabilities or resiliencies of Afrin's society.

A. Ancient, Medieval, Ottoman, and French Mandate Eras

While archaeological sites of significance, such as the Ain Dara temple, are noted in existing literature²⁵, and broad historical narratives outline the control of the region by various empires over millennia³, there is a demonstrable lack of detailed, synthesized academic historical works that focus *specifically* on the Afrin region's unique developmental trajectory. Studies exploring local power structures, societal evolution, and the specific experiences of its communities during these extensive historical periods are sparse.

The Ottoman era, in particular, warrants more in-depth academic research. Beyond general references to the area as "Kurd-Dagh" (Mountain of the Kurds) or the "Sancak of the Kurds" ³, detailed scholarly investigations into land tenure systems, local governance mechanisms, and the specific socio-economic conditions of Afrin's diverse communities during Ottoman rule are needed. Historical sources, such as Sharafkhan Bidlisi's *Sherefname*, which mentions a Mîr Mand governing the broader Antioch region (inclusive of Afrin) and the subsequent rule of the Canpolat family ²⁶, suggest that primary materials exist but may not have been fully integrated into modern academic analyses focusing specifically on Afrin's historical particularities. Furthermore, the profound impact of the demarcation of the Syria-Turkey border in 1923 and the subsequent French Mandate period on Afrin's local society, economy, and administrative structures represents another area requiring more focused scholarly attention.² The consequences of these geopolitical shifts for the region's development and its relationship with newly formed state entities are insufficiently explored in academic literature.

B. The Under-Documented Pre-2011 Socio-Economic and Inter-Communal Fabric

A significant gap exists in the comprehensive academic documentation of Afrin's socio-economic and inter-communal landscape prior to the 2011 uprising.

Demographics and Ethnic/Religious Groups:

Afrin was widely recognized for its Kurdish majority population before the recent conflicts.² However, detailed ethnographic and sociological studies on the specific social structures, cultural practices, and, crucially, the inter-communal relations of all constituent groups within Afrin before 2011 are notably scarce. This includes not only the Kurdish population but also Arab communities (such as the Al-Boubna, Al-Omayrat, and Al-Boubatoush clans mentioned in some sources ²⁷), Yazidis ²⁸, Christians, including Armenians ²⁹, Alevis ⁴, and Turkmen.⁴ Historical accounts note the presence of olive farming for over 4,000 years and Ottoman recognition of Afrin as "The Kurdish City".² Some sources describe the western parts of the region as "homogeneously Kurdish," with more mixed ethnicities in other areas.³ Pre-2011 population figures and the names of some Arab clans are available.²⁷ The settlement of Alevis fleeing the Dersim massacre and the historical presence of Turkmen are also recorded.⁴ Yazidis have long inhabited the Afrin valley ²⁸, and Christian communities, including Armenians, were part of Afrin's social fabric.²⁹ Pre-2018 estimates suggest a Yazidi population of 20,000-30,000 and 200-250 Christian families, alongside a significant Alevi community, particularly in the Maabatli area.²⁹

Despite these acknowledgments of presence, rich academic ethnographies that delve into the socio-cultural lives, internal dynamics, specific forms of interaction, co-existence, or indeed, any underlying tensions among these diverse communities within the pre-2011 Afrin context are largely absent from the scholarly record.

Table 1: Pre-2011 Demographics and Socio-Cultural Presence of Communities in Afrin: Documented vs. Under-Researched Aspects

Community	Documented Presence/Basic Information (Selected Sources)	Key Academic Gaps in Socio-Cultural/Ethnographic Detail (Pre-2011 Afrin Context)
Kurds	Historical majority, "Kurd-Dagh," olive cultivation, distinct cultural practices ²	In-depth studies on internal social stratification, specific kinship structures, variations in cultural practices across Afrin's sub-regions, nuanced interactions with other groups beyond general statements.
Arabs	Presence of clans like Al-Boubna, Al-Omayrat, Al-Boubatoush; Arabized Kurds also noted ³	Detailed ethnographies of Arab communities in Afrin, their history of settlement, socio-economic roles, specific cultural practices, and nature of relations with the Kurdish majority and other minorities.
Yazidis	Long-standing presence in Afrin valley; estimated 20,000-30,000 pre-2018 ²⁸	Comprehensive academic research on Yazidi religious and cultural life specific to Afrin, their social organization, historical land rights, economic activities, and inter-communal relations beyond persecution narratives.
Christians (incl. Armenians)	Presence of Christian families (approx. 200-250 pre-2018), including Armenians ²⁹	Studies on the history of Christian and Armenian settlement in Afrin, their specific denominational affiliations, socio-economic integration, cultural institutions (churches, schools pre-dating recent conflict), and interactions with other communities.
Alevis	Significant community, especially in Maabatli; Alevi political figures; distinct religious practices ⁴	In-depth academic exploration of Alevi history in Afrin, their unique syncretic beliefs and practices in the local context, social organization, role in local politics and culture, and

		relationship with Sunni Kurds and other groups.
Turkmen	Presence noted, particularly in certain villages ⁴	Scholarly research on the history of Turkmen settlement in Afrin, their linguistic and cultural characteristics, socio-economic roles, and specific patterns of interaction with other ethnic groups in the region.

Social Life and Traditional Structures:

The importance of traditional social institutions, such as "Maddafat" (guesthouses), in the village life of pre-2011 Afrin has been noted. These spaces reportedly played a crucial role in social gatherings, political discussions, and local dispute resolution, reflecting a simple, rurally-oriented lifestyle.²³ This points to the existence of traditional social mechanisms that have likely been under-researched from an academic perspective, particularly concerning their evolution, resilience, and impact on local governance and social cohesion. There is a clear gap in academic studies focusing on the evolution of these traditional social structures, kinship networks, and local leadership systems in Afrin in the period leading up to 2011.

Land Tenure and Agricultural Systems:

Afrin is renowned for its olive cultivation, a practice deeply embedded in its history and economy.² Historical agricultural practices in the region included the cultivation of grains and vegetables alongside olives, utilizing traditional processing methods such as local olive presses. The 20th century saw an expansion of agriculture facilitated by the introduction of mechanized farming, such as tractors.²⁴ Olive oil farming, in particular, has been a dominant factor in the local market for centuries.²

Despite this general knowledge, comprehensive academic studies on pre-2011 land ownership patterns are lacking. Beyond broad statements about Kurdish land ownership or the impact of state-led Arabization policies in other parts of Syria ², specific research into the intricacies of land tenure, the functioning of agricultural markets, the existence and role of agricultural cooperatives (while cooperative models were noted during the Autonomous Administration period ², information on their pre-2011 status is sparse), and the socio-economic stratification related to land and agriculture within Afrin is missing. While some sources note that Afrin was the "least Arabized" of Syria's Kurdish regions and mention the "Arab Belt" project primarily affecting areas like Hasaka ³², this implies a distinct historical trajectory for land ownership and agricultural policy in Afrin that warrants specific academic exploration.

C. Impact of Syrian State Policies Pre-2011

The Ba'ath Party's rise to power in Syria from 1963 onwards led to the implementation of Arabization policies across regions with significant non-Arab populations. These policies reportedly included bans on non-Arabic languages in public education and the closure of

Kurdish-run schools.² Several sources refer to "heavy-handed Arabization policies" affecting the Kurdish society of the region³, although Afrin is sometimes described as having been "least Arabized" compared to other Kurdish areas in Syria.³²

A significant academic gap exists in detailing the precise nature, extent, and the socio-cultural as well as economic impact of these Syrian state policies—ranging from Arabization measures to land registration laws and economic development initiatives (or their neglect)—on the diverse communities and local structures *specifically within the Afrin region* prior to 2011. Research needs to move beyond generalized statements about the Syrian Kurdish experience to provide nuanced, localized analyses for Afrin.

III. Education in Protracted Crisis: Beyond Status Quo Assessments

The educational landscape in Afrin, particularly since the onset of the Syrian conflict, presents a critical area where academic research has not kept pace with the rapidly evolving and complex realities on the ground. The shift in educational administration in Afrin post-2018, marked by the involvement of Turkish universities³⁴ and significant curriculum changes⁶, strongly suggests that education has become an arena for broader political and cultural influence. This transformation, and its implications for identity, social cohesion, and long-term development in Afrin, is a subject that lacks sufficient academic study. While general gaps in education research in Northwest Syria have been identified, including issues related to curriculum and governance³⁵, the specific case of Afrin warrants focused investigation. The establishment of an "Afrin Education Faculty" by Gaziantep University, a Turkish state institution³⁴, signals direct Turkish state involvement in shaping the educational trajectory of the region. Furthermore, reports of the replacement of Kurdish curricula with Arabic or Turkish ones, and the prohibition of Kurdish cultural celebrations like Newroz in educational settings⁶, point towards a deliberate effort to alter the educational environment. This may have profound effects on language use, the transmission of historical narratives, and the formation of cultural identity among Afrin's youth. The academic lacuna lies in critically examining the processes, content, and multifaceted impacts of this educational transformation. Such research must move beyond mere descriptions of administrative changes to analyze its deep socio-political and cultural consequences for the Afrin population, incorporating the perspectives of students, teachers, and parents.

A. Existing Research Focus

An important review of educational research in Northwest Syria, conducted by the Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) programme, indicates that existing studies have predominantly concentrated on assessing the "status quo of school infrastructure, teacher workforce and children's access to schooling".³⁵ This research has largely been designed to inform and aid humanitarian and development initiatives. While such assessments are valuable for immediate intervention planning, they often lack the depth and analytical rigor required to understand the systemic challenges and opportunities within the education

sector, especially in a region as contested and transformed as Afrin. It remains unclear to what extent this general assessment for Northwest Syria includes specific, disaggregated data for Afrin, both before and after the 2018 Turkish-led offensive.

B. Identified Gaps in Educational Research for Afrin

Drawing from the general gaps identified for Northwest Syria in the ERICC working paper³⁵ and applying them specifically to the context of Afrin, several critical areas for future academic inquiry emerge:

- **Improving Access, Quality, and Continuity:** The ERICC report explicitly states that existing studies "fall short in producing evidence on *how to improve* access to, quality and continuity of education".³⁵ This is a major research gap for Afrin, a region that has experienced multiple phases of conflict, displacement, and administrative upheaval, all of which profoundly affect the educational experiences of children.
- **Governance, Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment:** The domains of "governance, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment" are highlighted as major research gaps.³⁵ For Afrin, this translates into a need for:
 - Academic research on the nature, effectiveness, and challenges of educational governance during the period of de facto Autonomous Administration (roughly 2014-2018).
 - Critical analysis of the impact of the post-2018 Turkish influence and the administration by allied Syrian factions on curriculum content, the language(s) of instruction, and overall educational administration. The establishment of Gaziantep University's Afrin Education Faculty³⁴ and reports of changes to Kurdish curricula and the banning of cultural events like Newroz in schools⁶ are key areas for investigation. The opening of a "Harp Okulu" (War College) by the Syrian National Army in Afrin³⁶ also represents an educational development that warrants academic scrutiny regarding its purpose, curriculum, and impact.
 - Research into the development and evaluation of pedagogical approaches that are suitable for children affected by trauma, displacement, and exposure to conflict, catering to diverse learner populations within Afrin.
 - Studies on the development and implementation of robust, contextually relevant, and equitable assessment methods for student learning.
- **Data Systems:** There is a lack of research focused on "producing and using data systems" for education in Afrin.³⁵ Reliable data is essential for planning, monitoring, and evaluating educational interventions.
- **Vulnerabilities and Marginalization:** Insufficient academic research exists on effective strategies for "reducing vulnerabilities and marginalisation" within Afrin's education system.³⁵ This is particularly critical for displaced children, ethnic and religious minorities, girls, and children with disabilities.
- **Caregivers and School-Based Practitioners:** A noted "lack of focus on caregivers and school-based practitioners"³⁵ means that their roles, professional development needs, psychosocial well-being, and capacity to support students in the challenging Afrin

context are significantly under-researched.

- **Human Capacity Development:** The overarching need for research that explores "how to develop human capacities to strengthen education systems, develop pedagogical approaches, and train/support teachers and parents to enable more effective delivery of quality education to all children" ³⁵ is profoundly relevant to the situation in Afrin.

C. Specific Challenges in Afrin's Educational Landscape

Beyond the general gaps, Afrin's unique trajectory presents specific challenges that demand academic attention:

- The cumulative impact of multiple displacements on children's educational attainment, continuity, and psychosocial well-being.
- The linguistic and cultural challenges faced by students and educators in a rapidly changing demographic and administrative environment, where language policies and curriculum content may shift abruptly.
- The role of education in either fostering social cohesion and reconciliation or, conversely, exacerbating divisions and entrenching new narratives in post-conflict Afrin.

IV. The Unwritten Record of Conflict: Atrocities, Displacement, and Accountability

The period following the Turkish-led "Operation Olive Branch" in January 2018 has been marked by widespread allegations of serious human rights violations in Afrin. The sheer scale and systematic nature of these alleged violations, as documented by various human rights organizations ⁶, coupled with the explicit mention of an "enormous gap" in legal proceedings and accountability ⁷, suggests a situation of de facto impunity. This lack of accountability, potentially influenced by the involvement of state actors such as Turkey, as questioned by ECCHR ⁷, creates an environment where the mechanisms of impunity are not fully dissected. Impunity involves not just the commission of crimes, but the systemic failure to investigate, prosecute, and punish perpetrators, and to provide effective remedies and reparations to victims. While some academic work may touch upon the violations themselves, dedicated scholarly research analyzing the *structures and politics of impunity* specifically concerning Afrin—including the role of international actors, legal frameworks, and the international community's response (or lack thereof)—appears to be significantly underdeveloped. This academic silence or limited focus contributes to the normalization of impunity, as the complex factors enabling it are not adequately understood or critically examined in scholarly discourse, potentially weakening efforts towards future accountability and justice for the victims in Afrin.

A. Documented Allegations vs. Academic Investigation of Violations

Numerous sources, including human rights organizations and media reports, have documented extensive and severe allegations of human rights violations and potential war crimes and crimes against humanity in Afrin, particularly in the aftermath of the 2018 Turkish-led offensive and under the administration of Turkish-backed Syrian factions. These

allegations encompass a wide range of abuses, including extrajudicial killings, looting of property, forced displacement, arbitrary abductions and detentions, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and torture.²

The European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) has been particularly vocal, stating that these crimes "have received little attention outside Syria" and that "an enormous gap remains" concerning criminal legal proceedings, raising questions about whether Turkey's direct involvement is a contributing factor to this lack of accountability.⁷ In a joint criminal complaint filed with Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ), ECCHR detailed systematic atrocities, including the displacement of the Kurdish population, violations of property rights, violent repression of the civilian population (notably through detention and torture), targeted killings, and the destruction of cultural heritage, explicitly calling for comprehensive investigations.⁶ Journalistic accounts have described ongoing conflicts over housing seized from displaced persons, assassinations, and the pervasive control exerted by various armed factions.⁸ Other reports have noted practices such as the forcible alteration of identity cards and the imposition of dress codes like the hijab on women.¹²

Despite this wealth of documentation from rights groups and media outlets, a significant gap exists in terms of comprehensive, independent academic investigations. Scholarly work that systematically gathers and analyzes evidence, identifies patterns of abuse, investigates perpetrator networks and command structures, and rigorously assesses these alleged actions against established international human rights and humanitarian law frameworks is largely absent for the Afrin context.

B. Forced Displacement and Demographic Engineering

One of the most profound and consistently reported consequences of the conflict in Afrin since 2018 is the widespread forced displacement of the original Kurdish population and other minority groups, including Yazidis, Christians, and Alevis.² Concurrent with this exodus, there are numerous reports detailing the resettlement of Arab families into Afrin. These new populations include the families of fighters aligned with the Turkish-backed factions, as well as internally displaced persons (IDPs) from other parts of Syria, such as Eastern Ghouta, Homs, Hama, and Idlib, who were relocated to Afrin often under agreements brokered with Turkish involvement.⁴ Some analyses explicitly term these processes as "demographic engineering," noting Turkey's role in facilitating these changes.³²

The scale of this demographic transformation is stark. According to data from 2023, displaced persons constituted approximately 84% of Afrin's total population, with original residents accounting for only 16%. This represents a population increase of over 400% compared to 2009 figures.²⁷

A critical academic gap exists in the in-depth, longitudinal study of these demographic transformations. There is a pressing need for scholarly research that investigates the processes, precise scale, and the long-term socio-cultural, economic, and political consequences of these shifts. Such research should explore impacts on identity formation among different groups, the nature of inter-group relations in the new demographic landscape, competition over resources (land, housing, livelihoods), and the potential

implications for future conflict dynamics or possibilities for reconciliation and return.

C. Destruction of Cultural and Religious Heritage

Alongside human rights violations and displacement, reports indicate significant destruction and desecration of cultural and religious heritage sites in Afrin. This includes damage to Yazidi religious centers, Alevi graves and shrines, and broader attempts to alter the cultural landscape, such as changing Kurdish street names and modifying school curricula to erase Kurdish cultural content.⁶ A particularly egregious example is the significant damage inflicted upon the ancient Ain Dara temple, a Syro-Hittite archaeological site of immense historical value, which was reportedly struck by Turkish jets during the 2018 offensive. Subsequently, its emblematic basalt lion sculpture was looted by members of Syrian National Army factions.²⁵ There is a clear need for academic studies to systematically document the extent of this destruction of cultural and religious heritage. Such research should also analyze the intent behind these acts, their profound impact on community identity and historical memory, and explore their implications under international law, including their potential classification as war crimes.

D. Transitional Justice and Accountability Mechanisms

The persistent calls for investigations into alleged atrocities by organizations such as ECCHR⁶ underscore the prevailing lack of accountability for crimes committed in Afrin. While some academic literature touches upon the legality of "Operation Olive Branch" from the perspective of international law and the right to self-defense, often reflecting Turkish state perspectives⁴⁰, critical, victim-centered academic analyses focusing on accountability mechanisms for the violations perpetrated within Afrin appear scarce.

A significant gap exists in scholarly research concerning potential transitional justice mechanisms that could be applicable to the Afrin context. This includes studies exploring the needs and perspectives of victims regarding justice, truth, reparations, and guarantees of non-recurrence. Furthermore, academic investigation into the political, legal, and practical obstacles to achieving justice and accountability for the crimes committed in Afrin is minimal and urgently required.

V. Economic and Environmental Scars: The Unmeasured Toll of War

The conflict and subsequent occupation have inflicted deep wounds on Afrin's economy and environment, areas where rigorous academic assessment is notably deficient. The reported systematic exploitation of agricultural resources, particularly the ancient olive industry, alongside widespread deforestation, suggests that economic predation and environmental destruction may be intertwined, potentially serving as a deliberate strategy to dispossess the local population, alter the landscape, and generate profit for occupying forces and their allied groups.⁹ Afrin's economy has historically been intrinsically linked to its agricultural output, especially olives.² Post-2018, numerous reports detail how armed factions have seized

harvests, imposed crippling taxes, and extensively felled olive trees for timber or charcoal production.¹⁰ Simultaneously, deforestation for logging and new construction projects has been documented.⁹ These actions yield immediate economic benefits for the perpetrators through the sale of timber, charcoal, and controlled agricultural produce, while in the long term, they undermine the traditional livelihoods of the original inhabitants and may facilitate demographic change by fundamentally altering land use patterns. The academic gap lies in investigating this nexus: to what extent are these actions coordinated or symptomatic of a broader strategy of resource control and environmental transformation integral to the conflict and occupation? Understanding this linkage is crucial for assessing the full scope of damages in Afrin and for developing future policies related to restitution, environmental remediation, and sustainable economic recovery. Academic research is needed to move beyond anecdotal evidence to provide a systematic analysis of these interconnected phenomena.

A. Exploitation of Agricultural Resources (Especially Olives)

Afrin's olive industry, traditionally the cornerstone of its economy², has reportedly been subjected to systematic and widespread exploitation following the 2018 Turkish-led offensive and the subsequent control by allied Syrian factions. This exploitation has manifested in various forms, including the outright confiscation of olive harvests and agricultural land, the imposition of exorbitant taxes, royalties, and levies by different armed factions (such as the Al-Amshat faction, Hamzat Division, Ahrar al-Sharqiya, Sultan Murad Division, and Al-Muntasir Billah faction), manipulation of market prices, forced sales of produce at below-market rates, and direct theft of agricultural goods.¹⁰ Detailed accounts from journalistic and NGO sources specify the names of factions involved and the types and amounts of levies imposed on farmers.¹⁰ Furthermore, the invalidation of legal powers of attorney previously granted by absent landowners (many of whom were displaced) to local representatives has reportedly been used as a pretext for the seizure of their harvests and properties.¹¹

While these abuses are extensively documented in non-academic reports, a significant gap exists in rigorous academic economic analysis. There is a pressing need for scholarly research to quantify the scale of this agricultural exploitation, assess its comprehensive impact on local livelihoods and food security, analyze the distortion of traditional markets and supply chains, identify the primary beneficiaries of these exploitative practices, and evaluate the long-term consequences for the sustainability and future viability of Afrin's agricultural economy.

B. Broader Economic Impacts

The economic landscape of Afrin has undergone substantial transformations beyond the agricultural sector. Reports indicate the introduction of the Turkish lira as a common currency and the linking of postal and payment services to Turkish systems.⁶ These changes suggest a significant degree of economic integration with, and potentially dependency on, Turkey. However, comprehensive academic studies on the overall economic restructuring of Afrin post-2018 are lacking. There is a gap in research examining changes in trade patterns (both internal and cross-border), shifts in labor markets (including employment opportunities and wage structures), the emergence of new economic actors and war economies, and the impact

of these changes on different segments of the population, including original residents and newly settled IDPs.

C. Environmental Degradation

The conflict and subsequent occupation have also taken a severe toll on Afrin's natural environment. Illegal logging and large-scale deforestation, particularly in areas such as the Maydanki Lake region ⁹, and the felling of trees (including ancient olive groves) for charcoal production or to clear land for construction, have been widely reported as critical environmental issues.¹⁰ The documented impacts include biodiversity loss, reduced ecological and hydrological connectivity, soil erosion, and loss of livelihood for communities dependent on forest resources.⁹ While the broader environmental consequences of the Syrian conflict—such as air pollution from bombardments, soil contamination from damaged industrial sites, and the mismanagement of waste and water resources—have been generally acknowledged ⁴⁴, specific, localized academic studies focusing on the environmental situation in Afrin are not apparent in the existing literature.

There is, therefore, a significant need for academic environmental science research dedicated to Afrin. Such research should aim to systematically assess the extent of deforestation, soil degradation, impacts on water resources (quality and quantity), and biodiversity loss resulting directly and indirectly from the conflict and subsequent occupation policies. Furthermore, academic inquiry is needed to analyze the long-term ecological and socio-economic consequences of this environmental degradation for the region and its inhabitants.

VI. Governance, Political Dynamics, and the Autonomous Administration Period

The governance structures in Afrin have undergone radical shifts, from the period of de facto Autonomous Administration to the current Turkish-backed administration. Both phases appear to be significantly under-analyzed from a rigorous, empirical political science and public administration perspective. While descriptions of the formal structures of these governance systems exist, deep scholarly dives into their actual functionality, legitimacy in the eyes of the diverse local population, and tangible impact on the daily lives and rights of Afrin's residents are scarce. The Autonomous Administration in Afrin (roughly 2014-2018) represented a unique, albeit contested, experiment in local governance, promoting ideals of democratic confederalism, ethnic and religious inclusivity, and women's empowerment.² The post-2018 governance framework involves a complex and often opaque interplay of Turkish authorities and various Syrian armed factions, with reports of factionalism and human rights abuses.⁶ Academic understanding of governance requires more than descriptive accounts of institutional frameworks; it demands critical analysis of power dynamics, policy formulation and implementation, accountability mechanisms (or their absence), levels of public participation and trust, and the differential outcomes for various segments of the population. The existing academic record provides limited insight into these crucial aspects of governance in Afrin across these distinct phases of the conflict. This "governance deficit" in

academic scrutiny hinders a comprehensive understanding of how governance has shaped life in Afrin and limits the ability to draw informed lessons for future governance arrangements in post-conflict settings, both within Syria and beyond.

A. The Autonomous Administration in Afrin (2014-2018)

Afrin declared its autonomy as a canton in January 2014, subsequently becoming a constituent part of the broader Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) framework.² During this period, the region established its own governance structures, including a Legislative Assembly, an Executive Council, and various commissions, with elections reportedly open to citizens of all ethnicities. Kurdish, Arabic, and Syriac were recognized as official languages.² The Democratic Union Party (PYD) was the dominant political force during this era.² This model of "Democratic Autonomy" espoused principles of bottom-up participatory democracy, ethnic and religious inclusiveness, and a strong emphasis on women's liberation, including the establishment of women-only cooperatives and ensuring gender parity in decision-making bodies.³³ The election of Hevi Mustafa, an Alevi woman, as president of the autonomous government was seen by some as a symbol of peaceful coexistence among different religious and ethnic groups.²⁹

Despite the articulation of these structures and ideals, there is a notable gap in in-depth academic analyses of the actual governance practices within the Afrin canton during this period. Comprehensive scholarly investigations into the successes, failures, internal political dynamics, levels of genuine citizen participation, economic management strategies, and the myriad challenges faced by the Autonomous Administration in Afrin are limited. Much of the existing literature tends to be either descriptive of the formal structures or overtly laudatory or critical, often lacking the deep, empirical, and nuanced investigation characteristic of rigorous academic research.

B. Post-2018 Governance Structures

Following "Operation Olive Branch," Afrin came under the de facto control of Turkey and allied Syrian factions, collectively known as the Syrian National Army (SNA), in March 2018.³ The institutions of the AANES were promptly dissolved and replaced by new Syrian local councils. These councils were reportedly established and are largely controlled by Turkish authorities, with administrative links to Turkish governorates such as Hatay.⁶ Reports from the region describe a complex and often fragmented governance landscape, with different districts of Afrin being divided among various SNA factions, leading to ongoing power struggles and a lack of unified command.⁸ The Syrian National Army also established a "Harp Okulu" (War College) in Afrin, indicating efforts to formalize its military structures in the region.³⁶

A significant academic gap exists concerning the nature, effectiveness, legitimacy, and overall impact of these new governance structures. Rigorous scholarly research is needed to examine aspects such as the delivery of basic services (health, education, utilities), the establishment and functioning of the rule of law (or its absence), adherence to human rights standards by the governing bodies, the extent and nature of local population engagement or disenfranchisement, and the precise dynamics of influence and control exerted by Turkish

authorities versus the various local Syrian factions.

C. Geopolitical Dimensions

Turkey's military intervention in Afrin, "Operation Olive Branch" ², and its stated justifications—primarily self-defense against perceived threats from the YPG, which Ankara links to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)—are well-documented.⁴⁰ Some academic work has analyzed the operation from the perspective of international law, particularly regarding the right of self-defense ⁴⁰, and Turkish academic and state-affiliated sources have provided their own perspectives on the intervention.⁴¹ The role of other international actors, notably Russia—whose reported withdrawal of forces from the area immediately preceding the operation was seen by some as a tacit approval ²—and the broader international community's response (or lack thereof) are critical elements of Afrin's recent history.

While general geopolitical analyses of the Syrian conflict are abundant, specific academic studies focusing on the long-term geopolitical consequences of Afrin's occupation are less developed. There is a need for further scholarly inquiry into Afrin's evolving role in Turkish foreign policy, the impact of its changed status on Kurdish political aspirations both within Syria and regionally, and its broader implications for regional stability and international relations.

VII. Challenges in Scholarship: Navigating the Complexities of Researching Afrin

The dearth of comprehensive academic research on Afrin is not merely an oversight but is profoundly shaped by a confluence of practical, political, and epistemological challenges. The practical difficulties of conducting on-the-ground research in a volatile and heavily securitized environment like Afrin—encompassing issues of access, researcher and participant safety, and the pervasive climate of political sensitivity—are immense. These obstacles inherently limit the quantity, and potentially the quality, of empirical data that can be gathered firsthand. When primary empirical data is scarce or difficult to obtain, researchers may, by necessity, rely more heavily on secondary sources, official narratives propagated by involved state and non-state actors, or theoretical assumptions that may not fully capture the nuanced and often contradictory local complexities. This situation creates a vulnerability, where research might inadvertently reflect existing biases, such as Orientalist perspectives that stereotype or oversimplify Middle Eastern societies, or state-centric views that marginalize subaltern voices and experiences. The resulting academic record can thus remain incomplete, skewed, or fragmented, making it more challenging for subsequent researchers to build upon existing knowledge in a critical and comprehensive manner, thereby further entrenching the identified knowledge gaps. Overcoming these academic lacunae concerning Afrin requires not only a greater volume of research but also the development and application of innovative, ethically sound, and reflexive methodological approaches that consciously address these deeply embedded challenges. There is, in effect, an academic gap in the literature *about how to research* Afrin effectively and ethically.

A. General Scarcity of Dedicated Academic Literature

A foundational issue is the overall low volume of dedicated, peer-reviewed, and internationally accessible academic publications that specifically focus on Afrin, Syria, across a range of relevant disciplines. General searches on academic databases and platforms like Google Scholar for "Afrin" combined with terms such as "history," "sociology," "conflict studies," or "education" often yield a high proportion of irrelevant results. This is partly due to the aforementioned issue of "Afrin" being a common surname or product name¹³, but even when filtered, the number of directly relevant, in-depth peer-reviewed studies remains limited. Some non-English sources, particularly in Kurdish or Arabic, suggest that local or regional knowledge production may exist.⁴⁶ For instance, the establishment of Jineolojî (a feminist social science concept developed within the Kurdish movement) research initiatives in Afrin in 2017⁵¹ points to intellectual currents and knowledge-gathering efforts that are ripe for broader academic exploration and engagement. However, such local knowledge often remains inaccessible to the wider international academic community due to language barriers, lack of translation, or limited dissemination through international scholarly channels. This points to a critical gap: the overall paucity of dedicated, rigorously peer-reviewed, and internationally circulated academic publications specifically focused on the multifaceted aspects of Afrin, Syria.

B. Methodological and Ethical Challenges

Conducting research on a region as deeply affected by conflict and political contestation as Afrin presents profound methodological and ethical challenges, as highlighted in analyses of research in Kurdish-inhabited areas generally⁵⁴:

- **Political Sensitivity and Access Restrictions:** Researching Afrin, with the involvement of multiple state (Turkey, Syria) and non-state armed actors, is an inherently politically sensitive endeavor. Independent researchers may face severe restrictions on access to the region, or find it altogether impossible or prohibitively dangerous to enter and operate safely.
- **Security Risks for Researchers and Participants:** The physical safety of both researchers and local participants (interviewees, community members) is a paramount concern. In a militarized and factionalized environment, individuals may face risks for engaging with researchers or sharing information perceived as critical of authorities.
- **Trauma, Fear, and Reticence:** Populations that have experienced conflict, displacement, human rights abuses, and ongoing insecurity are often deeply traumatized. This trauma, combined with a legitimate fear of reprisal from controlling factions, can lead to reticence or an unwillingness to speak openly and honestly with researchers.
- **Researcher Bias and Positionality:** The researcher's own background, nationality, institutional affiliations, and perceived political leanings can significantly influence their access, the trust they can build with local communities, and the interpretation of the data they collect. The "insider/outsider" dynamic is particularly acute in such contexts,

requiring careful reflexive practice.

- **Language Barriers:** Effective and nuanced research necessitates communication in local languages, primarily Kurmanji Kurdish and various Arabic dialects spoken in Afrin. This can pose a significant challenge for international researchers who lack these linguistic skills, potentially leading to reliance on translators, which can introduce another layer of interpretation and potential bias.
- **Dominance of Orientalist Perspectives and State Narratives:** As warned in broader critiques of Middle Eastern and Kurdish studies ⁵⁴, research on Afrin is susceptible to being framed by "orientalist perspectives, policy-oriented pieces, or journalism" that may offer biased, superficial, or stereotypical accounts. Such narratives often neglect complex local realities or perpetuate pre-conceived notions. Furthermore, powerful state narratives propagated by the various actors involved in the conflict (e.g., Turkey, the Syrian government, or opposition factions) can seek to obscure inconvenient truths or distort the understanding of events and their impact.

These challenges collectively contribute to the existing academic gaps. There is a pressing need not only for more research *on* Afrin but also for more academic discussion and development of methodologies *for* ethically and effectively conducting research in such complex and constrained environments. This includes critical reflection on existing narratives and a commitment to amplifying marginalized voices.

VIII. Conclusion: Charting a Course for Future Academic Inquiry

The preceding analysis has underscored a multitude of significant gaps in the academic record concerning Afrin, Syria. These lacunae span its pre-conflict history and socio-cultural fabric, the profound impacts of the Syrian Civil War and subsequent Turkish-led occupation on its education system, human rights landscape, demographic composition, economy, and environment, as well as the nature of its governance structures across different phases. Compounding these thematic gaps are the inherent methodological and ethical challenges of conducting research in such a complex and volatile conflict zone.

A. Summary of Major Academic Gaps

The deficiencies in academic knowledge regarding Afrin are extensive. A consolidated view reveals critical under-research in the following key areas:

Table 2: Consolidated Matrix of Significant Academic Research Gaps Concerning Afrin, Syria

Thematic Area	Specific Academic Gaps Identified
Pre-2011 History & Society	- Detailed historical narratives of Afrin (ancient to French Mandate), focusing on local dynamics. - In-depth ethnographies of <i>all</i> pre-2011 communities (Kurds, Arabs, Yazidis, Christians/Armenians, Alevis, Turkmen)

	<p>detailing social structures, inter-communal relations, and cultural practices specific to Afrin.
 - Studies on traditional social structures (e.g., Maddafat), kinship, and local leadership evolution.
 - Comprehensive analyses of pre-2011 land tenure systems, agricultural markets, and socio-economic stratification related to agriculture.
 - Specific research on the impact of Syrian state policies (Arabization, economic development/neglect) <i>within</i> Afrin.</p>
Education System	<p>- Research on <i>how to improve</i> educational access, quality, and continuity in Afrin's conflict-affected context.
 - Studies on educational governance during the Autonomous Administration and post-2018.
 - Analysis of curriculum changes (post-2018), language of instruction policies, and their impact on identity and learning.
 - Development/evaluation of pedagogy for traumatized/diverse learners.
 - Research on educational data systems, reducing vulnerabilities/marginalization, and the role/needs of caregivers/practitioners.</p>
Conflict, Human Rights & Legal Accountability	<p>- Comprehensive, independent academic investigations of alleged war crimes/crimes against humanity (patterns, perpetrators, command structures) under international law.
 - In-depth, longitudinal academic research on the processes, scale, and socio-cultural, economic, and political consequences of forced displacement and demographic engineering.
 - Systematic documentation and analysis of the destruction of cultural/religious heritage (intent, impact, legal implications).
 - Scholarly research on potential transitional justice mechanisms for Afrin, victim perspectives, and obstacles to accountability.
 - Analysis of the structures and politics of impunity concerning Afrin.</p>
Economic & Environmental Impacts	<p>- Rigorous academic economic analysis of the</p>

	<p>exploitation of agricultural resources (especially olives): scale, impact on livelihoods, market distortion, beneficiaries.
 - Comprehensive studies on Afrin's overall economic transformation post-2018 (trade, labor, war economies).
 - Systematic academic assessment of environmental degradation (deforestation, soil/water impacts, biodiversity loss) and its long-term consequences.
 - Investigation into the nexus of economic exploitation and environmental destruction as a potential conflict strategy.</p>
Governance & Political Dynamics	<p>- In-depth academic analyses of the Autonomous Administration's (2014-2018) actual governance practices, successes, failures, and citizen participation in Afrin.
 - Rigorous research on post-2018 governance structures: effectiveness, legitimacy, service delivery, rule of law, human rights adherence, and the influence of Turkish vs. local factions.
 - Further academic studies on the long-term geopolitical consequences of Afrin's occupation and its role in Turkish foreign policy and regional stability.</p>
Methodological Challenges in Afrin Research	<p>- Low volume of dedicated, peer-reviewed, internationally accessible academic publications specifically on Afrin.
 - Lack of academic discussion on <i>how</i> to ethically and effectively conduct research on Afrin given political sensitivity, access restrictions, security risks, trauma, researcher bias, language barriers, and dominant narratives.
 - Need for critical reflection on existing narratives and development of methodologies to counter Orientalist or state-centric biases.</p>

B. Recommendations for a Future Research Agenda

Addressing the identified academic gaps concerning Afrin requires a concerted and strategic effort from the scholarly community. The following recommendations are proposed to guide a future research agenda:

1. **Prioritize Multi-Disciplinary and Inter-Disciplinary Approaches:** The complexities of

Afrin necessitate collaboration across history, sociology, anthropology, political science, international law, economics, environmental science, education studies, and gender studies.

2. **Center Local Voices and Perspectives:** Research methodologies should actively seek to include and prioritize the perspectives, experiences, and knowledge of Afrin's diverse local populations, including displaced communities and all ethnic and religious groups. Participatory research methods should be explored where feasible.
3. **Uphold Rigorous Ethical Standards:** All research must adhere to the highest ethical principles, ensuring the safety, informed consent, confidentiality, and dignity of participants. "Do no harm" must be the guiding precept.
4. **Engage with Multi-Lingual Sources and Foster Collaboration:** Researchers should endeavor to access and analyze sources in local languages (Kurmanji Kurdish, Arabic). Collaboration with local researchers, academics, and civil society actors, when possible and safe, can enrich research and enhance its relevance.
5. **Critically Interrogate Existing Narratives:** A conscious effort must be made to critically examine dominant narratives, including those from state actors and media, and to actively work against Orientalist, reductionist, or biased interpretations.
6. **Focus on Longitudinal Studies:** Understanding the long-term impacts of conflict, displacement, and occupation requires longitudinal research designs that can track changes and continuities over time.
7. **Develop Innovative Methodologies:** Given the access and security constraints, researchers should explore innovative and mixed-methods approaches, including remote sensing, digital ethnography, analysis of open-source intelligence, and creative methods for engaging with diaspora communities.
8. **Specific Thematic Priorities:** Based on the gaps identified, priority should be given to research on:
 - The detailed socio-economic and inter-communal history of Afrin before 2011.
 - The long-term impacts of demographic change on social cohesion and identity.
 - The nature and consequences of educational transformations post-2018.
 - Patterns of human rights violations and pathways towards accountability and transitional justice.
 - The economic exploitation of resources and its impact on livelihoods.
 - The extent and ecological consequences of environmental degradation.
 - The functionality and legitimacy of past and present governance structures.

C. Final Thought on the Importance of Filling These Gaps

Filling the significant academic research gaps concerning Afrin is not merely an academic exercise. Robust, nuanced, and ethically produced knowledge is essential for comprehending the region's traumatic past, for addressing ongoing injustices and human suffering, for challenging impunity, and for informing any future efforts towards sustainable peace, genuine reconciliation, and equitable development for all of Afrin's people. Without such knowledge, policy interventions risk being ill-informed, and the voices and experiences of those most affected may remain unheard or misrepresented. The academic community has a

responsibility to contribute to a more complete and just understanding of Afrin's plight and its potential futures.

IX. Works Cited

1. ³⁵ Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC). (n.d.). *ERICC Working Paper: Evidence Gap and Literature Review Findings: Northwest Syria*. INEE.
2. ⁷ European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR). (n.d.). *Justice for Afrin?* ECCHR.
3. ¹³ Ahmed, A., Afrin, K. H., Karmakar, A., & Chakroborty, T. (2023). Exploring the Nexus of Domestic Debt and Private Sector Credit in Developing Countries with a Focus on Bangladesh. *International Journal of Finance & Banking Studies*, 12(2). (Example of "Afrin" as a surname)
4. ¹⁴ Google Scholar. (n.d.). *Azrin Afrin*. (Profile of an academic with surname Afrin)
5. ¹⁵ Google Scholar. (n.d.). *Nusrat Afrin Nishu*. (Profile of an academic with surname Afrin)
6. ¹⁶ Google Scholar. (n.d.). *Sadia Afrin*. (Profile of an academic with surname Afrin)
7. ¹⁷ Google Scholar. (n.d.). *Sultana Afrin Nipa*. (Profile of an academic with surname Afrin)
8. ¹⁸ Google Scholar. (n.d.). *Rifath Afrin Anaholy Easha*. (Profile of an academic with surname Afrin)
9. ⁴⁰ Mashi, F., Hamdi, S., & Salman, M. (2022). 'Operation Olive Branch' in Syria's Afrin District: towards a new interpretation of the right of self-defence? *Journal on the Use of Force and International Law*, 9(2), 324-351.
10. ⁴⁶ SDF Press. (n.d.). أكاديمية الشهيد دلکش عفرین لقوات الكوماندوس تخرج دورة جديدة في دير الزور. YouTube. (Content unavailable, but indicates some form of local media/documentation)
11. ¹ ANF News. (2019, January 20). لمحة صغيرة عن عفرين قبل احتلالها من قبل تركيا. ANF Arabic.
12. ⁴⁷ International Historians Union. (n.d.). الدكتور جعفر نجم نصر / علم الاجتماع / العراق. (Profile of an Iraqi sociologist, not directly about Afrin sociology)
13. ⁸ Mukhtar, S. (2021, October 11). صراع على النفوذ واستيلاء على البيوت: مأساة مهجري عفرين مستمرة. Daraj Media.
14. ⁴⁵ CNN Arabic. (2018, January 29). تركيا: "تحييد" 597 "إرهابيا" بعملية "غصن الزيتون" في عفرين.
15. ³⁶ TRT Haber. (n.d.). Suriye Milli Ordusu'nun "Harp Okulu" Afrin'de açıldı.
16. ³⁴ Gaziantep Üniversitesi Afrin Eğitim Fakültesi. (n.d.). Homepage.
17. ¹⁹ Afrin®. (n.d.). *Afrin® Original Nasal Spray*. (Pharmaceutical product)
18. ²⁰ Afrin®. (n.d.). *Afrin® Home*. (Pharmaceutical product website)
19. ²¹ Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Oxymetazoline*. (Active ingredient in Afrin® nasal spray)
20. ⁵⁵ Öcalan, A. (2009). *The Sociology of Freedom: Manifesto of the Democratic Civilization, Volume III*. PM Press. (Mentions Afrin in the context of Rojava)
21. ²² Drugs.com. (n.d.). *Afrin Uses, Side Effects & Warnings*. (Pharmaceutical product information)
22. ⁵⁶ GetArchive. (n.d.). *HDP Afrin protesto engeli*. (Image of a protest)
23. ⁴¹ Kadioğlu, İ. A. (2020). ZEYTİN DALI HAREKÂTI: TÜRKİYE'NİN SÜRİYE'YE SINIR ÖTESİ

OPERASYONU VE MEŞRU MÜDAFAA HAKKI. *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, (41), 210-227.

24. ⁴² Jandarma ve Sahil Güvenlik Akademisi. (2020, July 21). *"İstikrar ve Yeniden Yapılandırma Faaliyetlerinde Türkiye Örneği: Fırat Kalkanı ve Zeytin Dalı Harekât Bölgeleri" Kitabı Yayınlanmıştır.*
25. ⁴⁸ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Sûrî*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia (Kurdish). (General article on Syria)
26. ⁴⁹ ANF Kurdî. (n.d.). *Rojava - Sûriye*. (News page with articles related to Rojava/Syria, some mentioning Afrin)
27. ²⁶ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Efrîn (herêm)*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia (Kurdish).
28. ⁵⁰ Welat TV. (n.d.). *Zekeriya Huserî behsa şûnwar û dîroka Efrînê dike*. YouTube. (Video discussing history of Afrin, content not fully analyzed)
29. ⁵¹ Nûda, R. (n.d.). *Jineolojî zanîn, zanebûn û zanyariya jinê ye-6*. Jineoloji.eu.
30. ⁵² Hawar News Agency. (2024, October 17). *Pevçûna li Efrînê gihîşt 3 gundên din*.
31. ⁵³ Hawar News Agency. (n.d.). *Li Efrînê pevçûn: 2 çete hatin kuştin*.
32. ² Brunaccioni, D. (n.d.). *Withering Branch: The Story of Afrin and its Peoples Pre & Post Operation Olive Branch*. Democratic Current (DCKurd).
33. ³ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Afrin Region*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.
34. ³⁷ Rudaw English. (2025, March 9). *Kurdish politician: Over 600 settler families left Afrin, 400 Kurdish families returned*.
35. ⁵⁴ Orhan, M. (2022). Research Methodology in Kurdish Studies: Interactions between Fieldwork, Epistemology and Theory. *Anthropology of the Middle East*, 15(1), 1-20.
36. ⁵⁷ Author. (Year). *Title of Article on Turkish Operations and Demographic Engineering*. De Europa. (Full citation details missing from snippet, but content on demographic engineering and methodology noted)
37. ⁹ EJAtlas. (2023, February 13). *The illegal logging of the Maydanki lake forest by the Turkish-backed forces in Afrin, Syria*.
38. ⁴⁴ Arab Reform Initiative. (n.d.). *The environmental impact of Syria's conflict: A preliminary survey of issues*.
39. ¹⁰ RDI. (2024, November 25). *Afrin's Olive Trees: From Blessing to Curse*.
40. ¹¹ Hamo, S. (2024, November 7). *Turkish-backed factions intensify royalties, restrictions on Afrin's olive harvest*. North Press Agency.
41. ²⁷ Al Jazeera Net. (2025, January 21). *كيف أثر النزوح على التركيبة السكانية لعفرين السورية؟*.
42. ⁵⁸ Afrin, R. (2022, March 19). *عفرين قبل الاحتلال: نهجٌ لمشروع الأمة الديمقراطية والعيش المشترك*. ANF Arabic.
43. ²⁴ LokmanAfrin.com. (n.d.). *الزراعة في عفرين*.
44. ⁴³ Kurd-Online. (n.d.). *الأملاك في عفرين: استيلاء واسع وسطوة فصائلية وإلغاء الوكالات تمهيدا لاستكمال تغيير ديموغرافيتها*.
45. ²³ TirejAfrin.com. (n.d.). *مضافات عفرين*.

- ## Works cited

1. ANF, accessed June 7, 2025, عفرين: مدينة السلام التي استباحها الاحتلال التركي
<https://anfarabic.com/%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86/%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%B5%D8%BA%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%B9%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%84-%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%AA%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84%D9>

https://dckurd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Withering-Branch_-The-Story-of-Afrin-and-its-Peoples-Pre-Post-Operation-Olive-Branch-_Dominic-Brunaccioni.docx-3.pdf

2. Withering Branch_ The Story of Afrin and its Peoples, Pre & Post Operation Olive Branch - Washington Kurdish Institute, accessed June 7, 2025, https://dckurd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Withering-Branch_-The-Story-of-Afrin-and-its-Peoples-Pre-Post-Operation-Olive-Branch-_Dominic-Brunaccioni.docx-3.pdf
3. Afrin Region - Wikipedia, accessed June 7, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrin_Region
4. Afrin District - Wikipedia, accessed June 7, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrin_District
5. Afrin, Syria - Wikipedia, accessed June 7, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrin,_Syria
6. Crimes in Syria: The neglected atrocities of Afrin - ECCHR, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.ecchr.eu/en/case/crimes-in-syria-the-neglected-atrocities-of-afrin/>
7. Justice for Afrin - Living Open Archive - ECCHR, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://loa.ecchr.eu/dossiers/justice-for-afrin/>
8. درج - Daraj - صراع نفوذ واستيلاء على البيوت ماذا تفعل المعارضة المسلحة في عفرين؟, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://daraj.media/%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%81%D9%88%D8%B0-%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%8A%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%88%D8%AA-%D9%85/>
9. The illegal logging of the Maydanki lake forest by the ... - Ej Atlas, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://ejatlas.org/conflict/the-illegal-logging-of-the-maydanki-lake-forest-by-the-turkish-backed-forces-in-afrin-syria>
10. "The Stolen Olive Land: How Afrin Farmers' Struggles Turned into a ...", accessed June 7, 2025, <https://r-d-i.org/en/?p=2986>
11. Syria's Afrin farmers face heavy levies amid intensified SNA ..., accessed June 7, 2025, <https://npasyria.com/en/118272/>
12. عفرين... «انتهاكات» ت طال البشر والشجر وتغيير في التركيبة, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://aawsat.com/home/article/1811741/%D8%B9%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86-%C2%AB%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%AA%C2%BB-%D8%AA%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B4%D8%B1-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%AC%D8%B1-%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%BA%D9%8A%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A8%D8%A9>
13. Dr. Kaniz Habiba Afrin - Google Scholar, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=IELv-T0AAAAJ&hl=en>
14. Azrin Afrin - Google Scholar, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=Fv-6-KwAAAAJ&hl=en>
15. Nishana Afrin Nishu - Google Scholar, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=gmwa8FAAAAAJ&hl=id>
16. Shaharia Afrin - Google Scholar, accessed June 7, 2025,

- <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=FnaRFKAAAAAJ&hl=en>
17. Sultana Afrin Nipa - Google Scholar, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=ToenhdyAAAAAJ&hl=en>
 18. Rifath Afrin Anaholy Easha - Google Scholar, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=BSIPoXYAAAAAJ&hl=en>
 19. Afrin® Original, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.afrin.com/products/nasal-sprays/original-nasal-spray>
 20. Afrin® Home | Afrin®, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.afrin.com/>
 21. Oxymetazoline - Wikipedia, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxymetazoline>
 22. Afrin Uses, Side Effects & Warnings - Drugs.com, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.drugs.com/mtm/afrin.html>
 23. المضافات في منطقة عفرين ودورها الاجتماعي - نيريج عفرين, accessed June 7, 2025, <http://www.tirejafrin.com/site/madaft%20afrin.htm>
 24. لمحة زراعية في منطقة عفرين - لقمان عفرين, accessed June 7, 2025, <http://www.lokmanaftrin.com/alzera.htm>
 25. Ain Dara (archaeological site) - Wikipedia, accessed June 7, 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ain_Dara_\(archaeological_site\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ain_Dara_(archaeological_site))
 26. Avarîn - Wîkîpediya, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://ku.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avar%C3%AEn>
 27. كيف أثر النزوح على التركيبة السكانية في عفرين السورية؟ | سياسة, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.net/politics/2025/1/21/%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%A3%D8%AB%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%AD-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A8%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9>
 28. 2.11.6. Yazidis | European Union Agency for Asylum - EUAA, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://euaa.europa.eu/country-guidance-syria/2116-yazidis>
 29. Syrian Arab Republic: Alevis and Yazidis in Afrin threatened ... - GfbV, accessed June 7, 2025, https://www.gfbv.de/fileadmin/redaktion/UN-statements/2020_2/Syrian_Arab_Republic_Alevis_and_Yazidis_in_Afrin_threatened_with_extinction.pdf
 30. Explainer: Christian Communities in North and East Syria - Rojava Information Center, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://rojavainformationcenter.org/2020/09/explainer-christian-communities-in-north-and-east-syria/>
 31. Maryamin, Afrin - Wikipedia, accessed June 7, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maryamin,_Afrin
 32. Turkey's Demographic Engineering in Syria's Afrin Region: A Closer Look, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.meforum.org/meq/turkeys-demographic-engineering-in-syrias-afrin-region-a-closer-look>
 33. Afrin invasion: Turkey attacks northern Syria's democratic revolution — with Russian and US approval | Green Left, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/afrin-invasion-turkey-attacks-northern-syri>

- [as-democratic-revolution-russian-and-us-approval](#)
34. AFRİN EĞİTİM FAKÜLTESİ (SURIYE), accessed June 7, 2025, <https://afrinegitim.gantep.edu.tr/>
 35. ERICC Working Paper _ Evidence Gap and Literature Review Findings: Northwest Syria.docx, accessed June 7, 2025, https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/FINAL%20_%20ERICC%20Working%20Paper%20_%20Evidence%20Gap%20and%20Literature%20Review%20Findings%20Northwest%20Syria.pdf
 36. Suriye Milli Ordusu'nun "Harp Okulu" Afrin'de açıldı - Son Dakika Haberleri - TRT Haber, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/suriye-milli-ordusunun-harp-okulu-afrin-de-acildi-861497.html>
 37. Hundreds of Kurdish families return to Afrin as settlers leave - Rudaw, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/09032025>
 38. Turkish occupation of northern Syria - Wikipedia, accessed June 7, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_occupation_of_northern_Syria
 39. Syrian government forces enter Afrin, signaling a change in control - FDD, accessed June 7, 2025, https://www.fdd.org/analysis/op_ed/2025/02/06/syrian-government-forces-enter-afrin-signaling-a-change-in-control/
 40. Mohammad Salman - Google Scholar, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=Hu1aYLYAAAAJ&hl=en>
 41. Makale » ZEYTİN DALI HAREKÂTI: TÜRKİYE'NİN SURİYE'YE SINIR ÖTESİ OPERASYONU VE MEŞRU MÜDAFAA HAKKI - DergiPark, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/pausbed/issue/57311/748134>
 42. "İstikrar ve Yeniden Yapılandırma Faaliyetlerinde Türkiye Örneği: Fırat Kalkanı ve Zeytin Dalı Harekat Bölgeleri" Kitabı Yayınlanmıştır - Jandarma ve Sahil Güvenlik Akademisi, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.jsga.edu.tr/istikrar-ve-yeniden-yapilandirma-faaliyetlerinde-turkiye-ornegi-firat-kalkani-ve-zeytin-dali-harekat-bolgeleri-kitabi-yayinlandi>
 43. | الأمل في عفرين: استيلاء واسع وسطوة فصائلية وإلغاء الوكالات تمهيدا لاستكمال تغيير ديموغرافيتها - Kurd Online |, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://kurd-online.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%83-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%8A%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B9-%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%A9-%D9%81%D8%B5/>
 44. The Environmental Impact of Syria's Conflict: A Preliminary Survey of Issues, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/the-environmental-impact-of-syrias-conflict-a-preliminary-survey-of-issues/>
 45. الجيش التركي: 597 إرهابيا "حيدوا" بعملية غصن الزيتون للآن 2025, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://arabic.cnn.com/middle-east/2018/01/29/turkey-olive-branch-operation>
 46. أكاديمية الشهيد دلکش عفرين لقوات الكوماندوس تخرج دورة جديدة في دير الزور - YouTube, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PF4BNV0luCM>

47. الدكتور جعفر نجم نصر/ علم الاجتماع/ العراق - الاتحاد الدولي للمؤرخين, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://int-historians.org/archives/6399>
48. Sûrî - Wîkîpediya, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://ku.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%BBr%C3%AE>
49. ROJAVA-SÛRIYE - ANF, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://anfkurdi.com/rojawa-sUriye?page=59&sort=Articles.published&direction=D ESC>
50. Zekerîya Huserî behsa şûnwar û dîroka Efrînê dike - YouTube, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4tugiCtoiuA>
51. Jineolojî zanîn, zanebûn û zanyariya jînê ye-6 - jineoloji, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://jineoloji.eu/jineoloji-zanin-zanebun-u-zanyariya-jine-ye-6/>
52. Pevçûna li Efrînê gihîşt 3 gundên din - ANHA, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://hawarnews.com/kr/pevcuna-li-efrine-gihist-3-gunden-din>
53. Li Efrînê pevçûn: 2 çete hatin kuştin - ANHA, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://hawarnews.com/kr/li-efrine-pevcun-2-cete-hatin-kustin>
54. Research Methodology in Kurdish Studies - Berghahn Journals, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.berghahnjournals.com/view/journals/ame/15/1/ame150102.pdf>
55. pm_the sociology of freedom - Libcom.org, accessed June 7, 2025, https://files.libcom.org/files/sociology_of_freedom_9781629637730.pdf
56. HDP Afrin protesto engeli - PICRYL - collections - GetArchive, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://timelessmoon.getarchive.net/amp/media/hdp-afrin-protesto-engeli-1a1fc3>
57. Ethnic or political cleansing? Identity, cultural heritage and ... - UniTo, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://ojs.unito.it/index.php/deeuropa/article/download/10572/9061/35628>
58. عفرين قبل الاحتلال: نهجٌ لمشروع الأمة الديمقراطية والعيش المشترك - ANF, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://anfarabic.com/%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86/fryn-qbl-alahtlal-nhju-lmshrw-alamt-aldymqratyt-walysh-almshtrk-77571>
59. Syrian president meets with Kurds in Afrin, promises to end violations: ENKS - Rudaw, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/16022025>
60. Syrian Turkmen Groups in Latakia: An Overview - bellingscat, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.bellingscat.com/news/mena/2019/02/07/syrian-turkmen-groups-in-latakia-an-overview/>
61. Persecution of Yazidis - Wikipedia, accessed June 7, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Yazidis