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CENTER

TURKISH AIRSTRIKES TARGET SUWAYDIYAH POWER STATION: DOCUMENTING THE DESTRUCTION

JANUARY 2024



INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

On the night of January 14th, Turkey conducted nine airstrikes on the Suwaydiyah gas and electricity station in North and East Syria (NES). Suwaydiyah was the largest of several power facilities systematically targeted by Turkey from the 12th to the 15th of January. Turkish warplanes and drones struck oil, gas and electricity infrastructure across NES, triggering widespread blackouts, cutting water pumps from the electricity they need to function and halting fuel production.

Turkey's strikes did not result in casualties amongst Suwaydiyah station workers, but the material damages were catastrophic, as documented by the photos contained herein. Turkish strikes destroyed key infrastructure within the station, rendering it completely inoperable. All the plant's operations are suspended. The station's 16 oil refineries are all out-of-service, station management told RIC: "The refineries filter oil, producing diesel, petrol, kerosene and liquid gas. Those which were not directly destroyed were hit by shrapnel causing them to malfunction. Formerly, Suwaydiyah's refineries produced 130,000-150,000 litres of liquid gas, 150,000-170,000 litres of petrol, 760,000-800,000 litres of diesel and 28,000-30,000 litres of kerosene per day."

Suwaydiyah directly serves over 920,000 people with electricity and produces bottled gas for several million more. It is NES' only domestic gas bottling plant. Households use bottled gas for most of their cooking, thus regional demand is high. Domestic gas production is now wiped out. Imported gas is over 10 times the cost. Even prior to Turkey's latest airstrikes, many families were struggling to procure enough gas to meet their needs. The gravity of this situation is exacerbated because most areas receive little-to-no electricity that could be used for electrical cooking.

Suwaydiyah was producing around half of the Jazira canton's electricity. It was also the sole feeder of electricity to the canton's essential services line. This line provided 24/7 electricity to crucial infrastructure like water stations, health facilities, public bakeries and more. Currently, at least 38 bakeries are non-operational. Bread is a staple food in NES and is heavily subsidized by the DAANES. Every year, the entire grain harvest is purchased at above market

rate and then provided at below market rate to mills. Bakeries in each city then use this flour to produce bread which is sold at a controlled price to the public. This is especially important for poorer families and has become a vital lifeline for many as the economic crisis has deepened.

Suwaydiyah's electricity supply was also vital for oil pumping and refining stations in the Jazira canton. The region's fuel production and distribution has now been suspended. This impacts farmers, who rely on fuel for irrigation as well as for harvesting and processing grains. With food security already fragile in NES, reductions in oil production due to Turkish airstrikes threaten to make farming practices prohibitively costly. Locally produced fuel oil is also crucial for household heating. In winter, rising fuel prices are a heavy burden on the population, particularly the 168,000 IDPs in NES, who rely on subsidized fuel prices. IDPs are especially at risk of no longer having affordable fuel due to the Turkish attacks. As fuel production has now plummeted – including that which is used for generators – safe methods of heating become a major challenge, particularly in the harsh winter weather. Currently, fuel delivery to IDP camps is suspended. With no access to fuel, many may resort to more hazardous practices, such as burning materials.

The main NGO coordination body operating in NES (NES NGO Forum) gave a stark warning: "With the imminent shortages of fuel projected, and inflation on basic commodities to ensue, communities are at serious risk of being unable to access fuel for cooking, heating, and access to water which could lead to preventable deaths in near-freezing conditions."¹

This is not the first time Turkey has targeted Suwaydiyah. On the 23rd of November 2022, Turkish airstrikes put two of the station's four gas turbines out of service. Ekram Suleyman, the co-chair of DAANES' Energy Office in the Jazira canton, stated that Turkey's strikes reduced daily production of clean gas – that feeds electricity turbines – by half, meaning electricity production fell from 40MW to 20MW. Following this, the DAANES introduced strict electricity rationing until repairs could be made, meaning most households experienced shortages. Even before Turkey's strikes, most households received at most four hours of electricity per day from the general network. For those households that could afford it, fuel-powered neighbourhood generators supplied a few extra daily hours of electricity. Then again, on October 5th and 6th 2023, Turkey targeted Suwaydiyah with airstrikes, severely

1 <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/escalation-hostilities-north-east-syria-january-16th-2024>

damaging the station. The transformers for two of the four turbines were put completely out of service and accessory parts were also damaged. The feeder cables for three of the four turbines were fully burned out. The NES NGO Forum estimated the cost of repairs at \$5 million. Turkey's most recent attacks on the station – on January 14th, 2024 – were even more intense than those before. The DAANES report that Turkey conducted nine airstrikes on the facility.

Turkey has established a systematic practice of targeting NES' power infrastructure in period airstrike campaigns, usually lasting several days. Suwaydiyah is amongst the key targets. After Turkey's November 2022 airstrikes, Ekram Suleyman commented that "the reality on the ground is extremely complicated as a result of the embargo imposed on this region from all sides, making it more difficult to obtain the necessary maintenance parts." This is even more true following four rounds of Turkey's targeted infrastructure strikes. Replacement parts are few and far between. Importing new parts is near-on impossible, as explained in RIC's October 2023 Turkish airstrikes dossier.²

There have been four major Turkish airstrike campaigns in just over one year, focussed on striking electricity and oil infrastructure in the region.

November 2022

A week of Turkish airstrikes shatter NES' oil, gas and electricity infrastructure, with key targets including the **Odeh oil station, Zarba oil station, Gir Dahol oil station, Suwaydiyah gas and electricity station** and the **Saida oil station**. Turkey kills 16 civilians, including a journalist, and injures 33. Several **Asayish (Internal Security Forces) checkpoints** and a joint U.S.-YAT (SDF Anti-Terror Units) base are also hit.

Ekrem Suleyman, who works in the Jazira' Canton's electricity department, tells RIC: "these places which have been attacked, they are very well-known spots, and have been precisely targeted. The oil fields and the power stations. Where all the power of the region is produced: the generation sites. By targeting and collapsing these spots, these buildings, these fields, Turkey knows how to make instability here. In the region in general, if the [oil] fields and power stations are gone, this is a massive problem. It will cause displacement and force migration. It is also a big economic problem."

2 <https://rojavainformationcenter.org/2023/12/turkeys-october-campaign-air-strikes-targeting-nes-essential-infrastructure/>

October 2023

Turkey again targets essential civilian infrastructure, cutting electricity and water supplies for 2 million people, killing 9 civilians and injuring 15. Again, **Odeh, Rimelan and Gir Dahol oil stations** are hit, plus **Suwaydiyah**. In addition, Turkey strikes the **electricity stations of Amude and Qamishlo cities**. Mass power outages cripple fuel production, triggering widespread shortages. Hospitals, bakeries and schools are left without electricity. Repair costs are estimated at upwards of \$50 million. Turkish warplanes bomb an **Asayish training academy**, killing 29 Asayish and injuring 28.

NES' leading NGO coordination body warns that repairing the damage quickly is the only way to avert a humanitarian catastrophe, stating that "the scale of damage far supersedes the capacity of the humanitarian community to sustain emergency life-saving service provision" and that "if significant civilian infrastructural damage is not addressed, no further escalation is required for the situation to worsen from dire to catastrophic."

December 2023

Over Christmas, Turkey re-strikes **Odeh and Saida oil stations**, and then proceeds to expand its strikes to target food packaging factories, warehouses, industrial sites, medical facilities and civilian homes. In addition, Turkey hits **a string of Asayish checkpoints** across NES. 11 civilians are killed and 25 injured.

Mamed Saydo, the co-chair of the Euphrates Canton's media office tells RIC: "Meshtanour clinic in Kobane was hit and destroyed. As part of the Euphrates Canton's health body, it sees thousands of cases and gives free medicines to the region's people. Turkey is committing war crimes, in front of the eyes of the whole world."

January 2024

Turkey begins a new round of airstrikes on NES' power infrastructure, damaging electricity and oil stations already battered from previous rounds of Turkish strikes, injuring 6 civilians. **Suwaydiyah gas and electricity station, Odeh, Zarba, Rimelan, and Gir Dahol oil stations, the electricity stations of Qamishlo, Amude, Kobane, Tirbespi and Ayn Issa** are the key targets. Turkey carries out 10 airstrikes on Suwaydiyah alone. Widespread water and electricity cuts are reported and the DAANES urges strict water rationing. Furthermore, Turkey bombs **numerous Asayish checkpoints** across the region. Grain storage warehouses, food production factories and civilian houses are also among the targets.

The SDF Media Center states that "these attacks have disrupted the delivery of essential services, including power, electricity, water, and other necessities, affecting hundreds of thousands of people" and claims that the attacks "constitute blatant and deliberate war crimes aimed at causing maximum harm to the lives of civilians, instilling fear, and inflicting suffering on their daily existence."

AUTHORS AND METHODOLOGY

The Rojava Information Center (RIC) is an independent media organization based in North and East Syria.

The RIC is made up of local staff as well as volunteers from many countries across Europe and North America. Some of us have experience in journalism and media activism and came here to share our skills, and others joined bringing other skills and experiences to the team. There is a lack of clear and objective reporting on Rojava, and journalists are often unable to make contact with ordinary civilians and people on the ground. We set up the RIC to fill this gap, aiming to provide journalists, researchers and the general public with accurate, well-sourced, transparent information. We work in partnership with civil and political institutions, journalists, and media activists across the region to connect them with the people and information they need.

Following Turkey's latest round of airstrikes, the RIC visited various sites that Turkey had struck, documented and photographed the damage, spoke to witnesses, and interviewed workers within the power and healthcare sectors, DAANES representatives, as well as civilians living under the bombardment and suffering its effects. On the 18th of January, RIC went to Suwaydiyah station to photograph the damage. The photos contained herein attest to the severity of the destruction inflicted on this station, which is a crucial humanitarian lifeline for North and East Syria's population due to the services it provides. The DAANES does not have the economic and logistical capacity to fully restore all infrastructure. What restoration investments it can make are overshadowed by the threat of future repeat Turkish airstrikes. The NES NGO Forum has called "on the international community to negotiate a political solution and end the repeated attacks on vital civilian infrastructure. Investments made into NES and the humanitarian response are being repeatedly undermined and the safety of both civilians and humanitarian actors is increasingly at risk."

PHOTO DOCUMENTATION



Transformers in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Transformers in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant

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Turbines control office in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Turbines control office in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Turbine infrastructure in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Turbine infrastructure in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Turbine infrastructure in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Turbine infrastructure in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Oil deposit infrastructure in the filtering area of Suwaydiah gas and electricity plant



Oil deposit infrastructure in the filtering area of Suwaydiah gas and electricity plant



Oil deposit infrastructure and the firefighters house in the filtering area of Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Firefighters' house in the filtering area of Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Main pre-filtering oil deposit in the filtering area of Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Some refineries and the refineries' control office building in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Oil refineries in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Oil refineries in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Oil refineries in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Oil refineries and crater from a Turkish missile in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Fuel deposit infrastructure in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Fuel deposit infrastructure in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Fuel deposit infrastructure in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Liquid gas deposit infrastructure in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Liquid gas production area in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant



Liquid gas production area in Suwaydiyah gas and electricity plant

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