

Response from the Chairperson of the High Committee to Evaluate and Respond to International Reports Regarding Alleged Abuses by the Peshmerga Forces in Tal Afar

September 14, 2017

Dear Belkis,

I would like to initially thank you for communicating your recent findings on the alleged abuses by the Peshmerga forces in Tal Afar and reaching out to us to provide you with a response.

Kindly find below information and response to your request in this regard:

Regarding the first allegation, government sources strongly reject the allegation that the Peshmerga forces have randomly shot and killed 10 men who were held in a school in Sahel Al-Malih village and provide the following information:

IS members who submit themselves to the Peshmerga forces are searched by the Peshmerga forces upon their submission and keep them in public places before they are transferred to Gayarah and Hamam Al-Alil IDPs camps. The Peshmerga provides them with basic needs before they are transferred to the camps. It is important to mention that their transfer is supervised by the UN which is conducted by picking them up in buses and transferring them to the above-mentioned IDP camps where Popular Mobilization Forces are in control of. Hence, if any IDPs are missing, PMF is to be held responsible.

The incident of the suicide bomb that was conducted by the female ISIS member outside the school who also had kids with her happened around 11:00 am on August 28, 2017. Prior to the suicide attack, the Peshmerga forces attempted to negotiate with the woman to regress from her decision and convince her to not blow herself up. When Peshmerga efforts in this regard were ineffective, they tried to distant the woman from the school in order to avoid IDP casualties who were kept inside the school. The suicide bomber, who had attached two suicide belts on her leg and on her stomach, eventually blew her up in front of the school killing 3 Peshmergas and injuring 2 more.

Immediately following the suicide bombing, the Peshmerga requested additional forces in order to protect the IDPs in the school and controlled the situation.

Upon entering the the Peshmerga controlled areas, the woman was not searched completing due to respecting and considering their customs and traditional values.

In terms of the second allegation, the Turkish man arrived in the frontline with a Yezidi woman captive. Upon their arrival to the Peshmerga lines, The Peshmerga followed its procedure of searching those who submit themselves, the Turkish man, who carried with him suicide belt and weapons, objected to their request of being searched and threatened the Peshmerga with several things. He threatened that he will kill the Yazidi woman and the Peshmerga if they do not assist

him to cross to Syria with the Yazidi woman. The Yazidi woman's family had submitted themselves several days before this incident and her father had informed the Peshmerga about his daughter's arrival with a Turkish man and asked them to protect his daughter. The Peshmerga forces had to decide whether they should allow him to blow himself up which would lead to the killing of the Yazidi woman and Peshmerga forces or to kill him to protect the Yazidi girl and themselves. Committed to protecting all civilians from ISIS including this Yazidi girl, the Peshmerga targeted the Turkish ISIS suspect.

The ISIS suspect families told Asayish that they have been instructed by their husbands to blow themselves if they were captured by PMF as they will be sexually assaulted by them, but to not explode them when they submit themselves to Peshmerga forces as the Peshmerga does not do such a thing.

It is worth mentioning that ISIS suspects in Hamam Al-Alil and Ayaziyah are the real, most radical and the most dangerous of the ISIS militants.

Despite the grave situation in the frontlines where the Peshmerga forces encounter many ISIS suicide bombers and suspects and they give many casualties as a result, the Peshmerga forces remain committed to protecting the civilians, IDPs and even ISIS suspect families as it is of their important values.