



## Elevated Tensions in Northern Syria Push Turkey and US Back to the Negotiating Table

**8 August, 2019**

On August 4<sup>th</sup>, Turkey announced a new plan to launch a military operation in Kurdish controlled northern Syria, east of the Euphrates. Immediate negative responses from the Kurdish forces in the region and the United States government have since resolved. On August 7<sup>th</sup>, the United States and Turkey reached a deal that would establish a “safe zone” in the region. Rather than Turkey sending in an estimated 14,000 troops to the north of Syria, to fight against the US-backed Kurdish forces, the two NATO allies have agreed to work together to establish the joint operations center. Prior to the three-day negotiations, Turkey asked for a zone 30-40km deep within the Syrian borders. The United States opposed this deal and hoped to limit the safe zone to only 10km.

The agreement that was reached does not outline any specifics of the new joint operation, but both sides agreed they will begin work on the safe-zone “as soon as possible”. The agreement hopes to address both sides individual concerns in the north of Syria, while also addressing the deteriorating security at the Turkish-Syrian border, as both sides hope to return the “displaced” Syrians to their homes. Many cities in Turkey have begun to crackdown on deporting undocumented Syrians in recent

weeks. However, no timeline was set during the negotiations to implement any of the outcomes of the talks.

Ultimately, the decision by both Turkey and the United States to establish a deescalated zone east of the Euphrates should be observed closely in the upcoming weeks. The two parties have been negotiating unsuccessfully on this topic for over a year now. Simply because an agreement with the United States was reached to establish the joint operation, only three days after Turkey threatened to launch a new military operation in Syria, does not mean that this agreement will be fulfilled. The specifications of these talks should be established in the near future to ensure the proper and safe implementation of a safe zone in northern Syria. The upcoming weeks are crucial, and Turkish military forces, US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and other local groups must be watched closely in hopes that escalation in fighting will not occur.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Elisa Cherry  
Middle East Research Assistant



Avenue Louise, 89 - 1050 Brussels - Belgium

Tel: +32 02 725 84 66

[www.bic-rhr.com](http://www.bic-rhr.com)

[info@bic-rhr.com](mailto:info@bic-rhr.com)

