



By: TA | AP Brief

Damascus declares ceasefire after clashes with Kurdish fighters



Syria's minister of defense announced a ceasefire after overnight clashes between security forces and Kurdish fighters in neighborhoods of the northern Syrian city of Aleppo.

Murhaf Abu Qasra said in a statement that he had met with Mazloum Abdi, the commander of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, in Damascus and "agreed on a comprehensive ceasefire across all fronts and military positions in northern and northeastern Syria."

"The implementation of this agreement will begin immediately," he said.

The overnight violence came as **tensions** have grown between the central government in Damascus and Kurdish authorities in northeast Syria.

Syrian state-run news agency SANA reported the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces targeted checkpoints of the Internal Security Forces on Monday evening, killing one and wounding four.

SDF forces fired into residential areas in the Sheikh Maqsoud and Achrafieh neighborhoods of Aleppo "with mortar shells and heavy machine guns," SANA reported, adding there were civilian casualties, but didn't share figures.

Residents of the area told The Associated Press two security guards in a public park were killed Tuesday by shelling and a woman and a child were wounded.

The SDF denied attacking the checkpoints and said its forces withdrew from the area months ago. It blamed the outbreak of violence on aggression by government forces.

The SDF issued a statement Tuesday accusing government military factions of carrying out "repeated attacks" against civilians in the two Aleppo neighborhoods and imposing a siege on them.

Government forces then attempted "to advance with tanks and armored vehicles,

targeting residential areas with mortar shells and drone strikes, which has led to civilian casualties and significant damage to property," the SDF said, which "provoked the residents and pushed them to defend themselves, alongside the internal security forces in the neighborhoods."

Al-Sharaa met with U.S. envoy

Mohammed Hassan, a resident of the Bani Zeid neighborhood in Aleppo, was at home with his wife and three children when they started to hear sounds of gunfire and their house was shaken by shelling nearby. Once the fighting died down, they fled.

"Every now and then this happens, there are strikes from one side or the other, but the problems were worse than before yesterday," he told the AP. "People were ready to die of fear."

The new leadership in Damascus under interim **President** Ahmad al-Sharaa, the former leader of an Islamist insurgent group that helped overthrow former Syrian President Bashar Assad, inked a deal in March with the U.S.-backed SDF, which controls much of the country's northeast.

Under the agreement, the SDF was to **merge** its forces with the new Syrian army, but implementation has stalled.

Ahmad al-Sharaa had met with U.S. envoy Tom Barrack and discussed implementation of the agreement with the SDF

Also Tuesday, al-Sharaa's office said in a statement that the interim president had met with U.S. envoy Tom Barrack and discussed implementation of the agreement with the SDF "in a manner that safeguards Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity" and other "ways to support the political process" and to "enhance security and stability."

Damascus seeks to consolidate control over all of Syria, while the SDF wants to maintain the de facto autonomy of northeast Syria from the central state. Syria held a parliamentary **election** on Sunday in most areas of Syria, but voting was not held in SDF-controlled areas.

In April, scores of SDF fighters left the two predominantly Kurdish neighborhoods in Aleppo as part of the deal with Damascus.