Tomorrow's Affairs
Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

By: TA | AP Insight

Turkey and Syria are looking for a solution to integrate Kurdish forces into the Syrian army

Turkey's top diplomat and military and intelligence chiefs visited Syria on Monday as a deadline to implement a deal between authorities in Damascus and Kurdish-led forces in the country's northeast looms.

Meanwhile, clashes broke out between security forces and Kurdish fighters in neighborhoods of the northern Syrian city of Aleppo that have seen previous outbreaks of violence.

It was not immediately clear how the new clashes in Aleppo's Sheikh Maqsoud and Achrafieh neighborhoods started.

Syria's Civil Defense agency said two of its emergency responders were wounded after fighters with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces opened fire on their vehicle.

There were no immediate reports of deaths. A spokesperson for the SDF in a statement accused government forces of opening fire on a Kurdish checkpoint.

In Damascus, appearing alongside his Syrian counterpart, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said his talks with Syrian officials focused on the integration of the SDF into the new Syrian army, as well as on Israel's military incursions in southern Syria and the fight against the Islamic State group.

"Syria's stability means Turkey's stability. This is extremely important for us," he said. He called on the SDF to "cease to be an obstacle to Syria achieving stability, unity and prosperity."

Fidan's delegation, which also included Turkish Defense Minister Yasar Guler and intelligence chief Ibrahim Kalin, met with Syrian interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa.

The integration deal faces obstacles

Under the March agreement signed between al-Sharaa's government and the SDF, the Kurdish-led force was to merge with the new Syrian army, but details were left vague and implementation has stalled.

A major sticking point had been whether the SDF would remain as a cohesive unit in the new army or whether it would be dissolved and its members individually absorbed into the new military.

Turkey has been opposed to the SDF joining as a single unit. Ankara considers the SDF as a terrorist organization because of its association with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has waged a long-running insurgency in Turkey, although a peace process is now underway.

The original deadline for implementation of the March deal was the end of the year, and there have been fears of a military confrontation if progress is not made by then

Kurdish officials have said that a preliminary agreement has been reached to allow three divisions affiliated with the SDF to integrate as units into the new army, but it's unclear how close the sides are to finalizing it.

The original deadline for implementation of the March deal was the end of the year, and there have been fears of a military confrontation if progress is not made by then.

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani, speaking alongside Fidan, said, "We have not seen an initiative or a serious will from the Syrian Democratic Forces to implement this agreement. There has been systematic procrastination."

He said Damascus had submitted a proposal to the SDF for moving forward with the military merger and received a response Sunday, without elaborating.

Turkey blasts Israel's presence in Syria

Fidan criticized Israel's "expansionist policies" in Syria and accused the SDF of coordinating with Israel, without giving evidence.

Israeli forces have moved to seize a U.N.-patrolled buffer zone in southern Syria and have launched hundreds of airstrikes on Syrian military sites

Israel has been wary of new authorities in Syria since the fall of former President Bashar Assad in December 2024.

Although al-Sharaa, the former leader of an Islamist insurgent group, has said he does not want a conflict with Israel, Israeli forces have moved to seize a U.N.-patrolled buffer zone in southern Syria and have launched hundreds of airstrikes on Syrian military sites.

While Turkey had a complicated relationship with al-Sharaa when he was the leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, an armed faction, that governed much of northwest Syria, Ankara has backed his government since he led a charge that overthrew Assad.

Turkey, along with Saudi Arabia and Qatar, intervened to persuade U.S. President Donald Trump to lift decades-old sanctions on Syria.

The Turkish military has also provided support to the new Syrian army, including training cadets and officers.