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Actuele situatie in Noord-Afrika en het Midden-Oosten

Nr. 241

BRIEF VAN DE MINISTER VAN BUITENLANDSE ZAKEN

Aan de Voorzitter van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal

Den Haag, 11 oktober 2018

In het debat over *non-lethal assistance* op 2 oktober jl. vroeg het lid Omtzigt of de openbare bronnen over de betrokkenheid van groepen bij de beschieting van de wijk Sheikh Maqsood gedeeld konden worden (Handelingen II 2018/19, nr. 7, item 26).

Het betrof de volgende bronnen:

Human Rights Watch, 12 april 2016 (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/04/12/syria-indiscriminate-attacks-ongoing-despite-cessation-hostilities>):

- The Syrian National Coalition (SNC), a major opposition umbrella organization, issued a statement condemning the attacks on April 5. On April 7, the official spokesperson for Jaysh al-Islam, a militant group, issued a statement that «during confrontations [with the Kurdish militia], a local commander in Jaysh al-Islam used weapons that are not authorized to be used in these types of confrontations, which is considered a violation of the group's internal rules, and he was referred to the military judicial system of the army [Jaysh al-Islam].»

The Daily Beast, 15 april 2016 (<https://www.thedailybeast.com/one-kurdish-neighborhood-in-the-crossfire>):

- The chemical weapons allegations have gained traction after an April 7 statement by rebel faction Jaysh al-Islam saying it had disciplined one of its local commanders for using «weapons not authorized for use in these types of confrontations.» Jaysh al-Islam later clarified that it was referring to «modified Grad rockets,» not chemical weapons. The chemical weapons allegations and the mistaken claim that Jaysh al-Islam admitted to their use have been circulated widely in Kurdish media and were repeated to The Daily Beast by PYD officials. Rebels have strongly and uniformly denied that they have chemical weapons or used them in the neighborhood.

- Rebels who spoke to The Daily Beast strongly denied that they were indiscriminately bombing al-Sheikh Maqsoud. They argued instead that they were targeting YPG frontline positions in response to YPG attacks on civilians transiting the Castello Road.

Middle East Eye, 6 april 2016 (<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/women-children-killed-syrian-rebel-shells-kurdish-area-aleppo-monitor-584620462>):

- Kurdish military sources in Syria told ANA that Islamist militant rebels were behind the attacks but did not officially identify the group.
- Zara Salih, a member of the political committee of the Syrian Kurdish Yekiti Party told the agency that the «al-Nusra Front and Ahrar al-Sham want to retake this area to open and control the way towards Afrin city north of Aleppo.» Other Kurdish officials, however, seemed to indicate that Jaish al-Islam could be behind the attack.

Rudaw, 10 June 2016 (<http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/10062016>):

- «The mortar shelling of the Kurdish Sheikh Maqsoud neighbourhood in the northern part of Aleppo by Jabhat al-Nusra gunmen has not ended. Terrorists are opening fire on the streets of the district from an area of the Castello shopping center earlier held by the moderate opposition forces,» said a representative of the reconciliation center, based in Russia's Hmeymim airbase in Syria, cited by Russia's Tass news.
- Approximately 30,000 civilians live in Sheikh Maqsoud. They have been subjected to regular indiscriminate shelling by Islamist groups like Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham.

Rudaw, 13 mei 2016 (<http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/13052016/>):

- Islamist groups like Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam have been blamed for these attacks.

Telesur, 6 april 2016 (<https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Syrian-Rebels-Accused-of-Indiscriminate-Shelling-in-Aleppo-20160406-0013.html>):

- The Observatory said that rebels including Ahrar al-Sham, an Islamist rebel group, led the bombardment, seeking to use the territory being bombed "a launching pad for attacks" on government forces.
- On Tuesday, a video statement from the Army of Islam, an extremist rebel group, said it would «bomb all positions of the Kurdish militias in Sheikh Maqsoud» in retaliation against Kurdish forces and their allies, who are attempting to cut off a rebel supply route with Turkey and connect YPG-controlled territory in northern Syria.

De Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken,
S.A. Blok