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## Contents:

- **IRAQ IS PROVIDED WITH A AN EXECUTIVE: JALAL TALABANI, PRESIDENT AND NURI AL-MALIKI PRIME MINISTER OF THE IRAQI FEDERAL REPUBLIC.**
- **SADDAM HUSSEIN AND HIS COUSIN "CHEMICAL ALI" WILL BE TRIED FOR GENOCIDE AGAINST THE KURDS.**
- **A MASSIVE DEPLOYMENT OF THE TURKISH ARMY ON ITS BORDERS WITH IRAQI KURDISTAN, WHICH IS ALSO BEING THREATENED BY IRANIAN ARMY MANOEUVRES, ON THE EXCUSE OF FIGHTING THE PKK.**
- **IRAQ: THE MONTHLY ASSESSMENT OF US LOSSES SHOWS A DROP, WHILE THE INTER-SECTARIAN TENSIONS ARE INCREASING.**
- **DIYARBEKIR: THE KURDS DENOUNCE THE EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE DURING THE RECENT KURDISH RIOTS WHILE THE TURKISH AUTHORITIES REFUSE ANY POLITICAL DISCUSSION.**
- **DAMASCUS: THE BAATHIST REGIME CONTINUES ITS POLICY OF REPRESSION AND TRIES TO STIFLE ANY POLITICAL ACTIVITY.**

AS WELL AS ...

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### **IRAQ IS PROVIDED WITH A AN EXECUTIVE: JALAL TLABANI, IS PRESIDENT AND NURI AL-MALIKI PRIME MINISTER OF THE IRAQI FEDERAL REPUBLIC**

**O**n 22 April, Jalal Talabani, first Kurdish President in modern Iraqi history, was re-elected President for a four-year term. His re-election was greeted with joyful celebrations in Kurdistan, and especially in his stronghold of Suleimaniyah. Mr. Talabani was elected President of the Republic in April 2005 after having devoted a considerable part of his life to struggling against Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime. In the course of his first term of office, he had tried to be

reassuring to all neighbouring States, including Syria and Iraq, which were treated with contempt by the United States, which accused them of sustaining terrorism in Iraq. But he also considered any premature departure of GIs from Iraq would be "catastrophic". This man, whose comrades affectionately call "Uncle Jalal" entered politics very young, inspired by admiration for the legendary figure of Kurdish national struggle, Mustafa Barzani. Brought up in Kirkuk, at 15 he had dreamed of becoming

a doctor, but finally opted to study law, so as to devote himself to politics. His participation in an anti-colonial demonstration in Baghdad in 1952 forced his to abandon his studies, only to resume them after the monarchy was overthrown in 1958. In between, he did his military service in the artillery and armoured corps, joining the Kurdistan Democratic Party (which had been founded in 1946), and later fought in the mountains during the major Kurdish revolt of 1961. Exiled in Iran in 1964, then in Syria in the 70s, where he formed his party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Jalal Talabani is the first non-Arab President of a country

the majority of whose population is Arab. He and Massud Barzani, who became President of the Kurdistan autonomous region in 2005, formed a joint list for the January and December elections in 2005. In the course of a Press Conference in Irbil on 23 April, attended by US Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad and rebroadcast over the national public TV, *Iraqiya*, the Iraqi President affirmed that the peshmergas were not members of a militia but of a "regular force". The peshmergas have ensured the security in all three provinces of Iraqi Kurdistan (Suleimaniyah, Dohuk and Irbil) ever since the establishment of the region's autonomy following on the first Gulf War in 1991.

The Iraqi Parliament, on the same day, elected a Presidential Council, led by Jalal Talabani with Adel Abdel Mehdi and Tariq al-Hashemi as Vice-Presidents. Jalal Talabani then gave Jawad al-Maliki, the N°2 man in the conservative Shiite Dawa Party hierarchy, the responsibility of forming the next government. This trio secured 198 votes (255 M.P.s expressed their choice out of the 266 present) – that is the two thirds majority required of the 275 members of parliament – according to the result announced by the new Speaker of the house, the Sunni Arab Mahmud Mashhadani. The last, who had been elected on 15 December, is a medical doctor with strong political Islamic

convictions and a former opponent of Saddam Hussein, by whom he was twice jailed. The only candidate for the position, in accordance with an arrangement negotiated between the different political groups, he had secured 159 votes, from the 266 present out of the 275 total. Elected on the Sunni Arab Concord Front, Mr. Mashhadani replaced another Sunni Arab, Hajim al-Hassani. After another vote to appoint two deputy Speakers, the Shiite Sheikh Khaled al-Attiyah and the Kurd Aref Tayfur were elected with 202 and 159 votes respectively.

Aref Tayfur was born in Suleimaniyah in 1945 and studied in Kirkuk, where he secured a degree in Law in 1970. Active in the KDP youth movement, he took part in the great Kurdish revolt against Saddam Hussein's troops. He found refuge in Iran in 1973, then in Austria in 1997, returning to Kurdistan in 2000.

Sheikh Khaled al-Attiyah is a leader of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) has an academic background. He has taught religion abroad for 25 years – in Egypt, the Lebanon, Iran and Great Britain. He received an Oxford degree in Islamic studies in 2003.

Thus, four months after the December general elections, the political situation in Iraq has started moving again, with the nomination of a Shiite, al-Maliki as Prime Minister, who has started negotiations with the

other political parties represented in Parliament. The designated Prime Minister has given himself two weeks to form a new Iraqi government. "The agreements reached with all the groups on the government's programme and a National Security Council have eased our task", stated Mr. al-Maliki. Described by US President Bush as "a firm-handed man", Jawad al-Maliki, who has replaced Ibrahim Jaafari, seriously challenged by the Kurds and Sunni Arabs, has 30 days in which to present his government to parliament.

In the opinion of President Bush, the agreement on a new government represents "a major development in the war against terrorism", "after months of patient negotiations". For his part, the Kurdish M.P. Osman Mahmud stated: "We are counting on a government of about 30 Ministers. In view of our Parliamentary representation, we are claiming 6 ministries, one of which should be connected with State sovereignty". "We are not interested in Ministries concerned with security, but we wish to keep the Foreign Ministry. Otherwise we hope for the Oil Ministry, or Finance Ministry", he added. As for Jawad al-Maliki, he announced on 26 April that he intended to give the Ministries of Defence and the Interior to Independents. The Sunni and Shiite coalitions include members of Parliament linked to parties, but also a number of independents.

## SADDAM HUSSEIN AND HIS COUSIN "CHEMICAL ALI" WILL BE TRIED FOR GENOCIDE AGAINST THE KURDS.

**O**n 4 April the Iraqi High Criminal Court announced that Saddam Hussein and his six co-defendants, including his cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid, known as "Chemical Ali", would be tried for genocide in the Anfal case. "The enquiries on the Anfal case are complete and the seven people accused of genocide have been brought before the Court" declared the chief of the examining magistrates, Raes al-Juhi, at a press conference, without giving a date for the beginning of the trial. Mr. al-Juhi made this statement on the eve of the resumption of the Fallen dictator's trial for the Du8jail case – the massacre of 148 Shiite villagers after an attack on Saddam Hussein's convoy of cars through the village, to the North of Baghdad, in 1982. In addition to Saddam Hussein and his cousin, Ali Hassan al-Majid, the other accused are Sultan Hashem Ahmed, former Defence Minister, Saber Abdel Aziz, a senior leader of the now dissolved Baath Party and former head of the Intelligent Service, Hussein Rachid Takriti, former member of the Baath military committee, Taher Mohammed al-Ani, former Baath leader and Minister for Industry and Farhan Mutlaq al-Juburi, a former Baath Party official.

The Iraqi President, Jalal Talabani, has stated that Saddam Hussein would be tried for "all his crimes" before the execution of the sentences passed against him, contrary to the remarks made by the Public Prosecutor, Jaafar Mussawi, that the dictator would be immediately executed

without waiting for any other trials, were he to be sentenced to death for the Dujail case.

"It was in May 1988, and we were preparing for the Fitr feast at the end of Ramadan, when Saddam Hussein's army invaded our village, in the Irbil region, destroying everything in its path and forcing the inhabitant to flee". Adalat Omer, of the Irbil Anfal Centre, a Kurdish NGO, collected this testimony from a survivor of the campaign of repression that caused 182,000 deaths in Iraqi Kurdistan. It is for this Anfal campaign that Saddam Hussein and his six co-defendants are being charged with "genocide" in a fresh trial. Anfal was a carefully planned and executed operation. It was systematic, which is what has earned those who carried it out the charge of genocide. The campaign consisted of eight operations of two weeks each, stretched over the period from February to September 1988, each following an identical scenario. "Each time the army surrounded a village, it herded up the families, separated fathers, mothers and children and evacuated them to big camps where they often died of cold or ill treatment" Adalat says. Once emptied of their inhabitants the "forbidden zones" were bombarded. Some villages were bombed and shelled with chemical weapons. Witnesses tell of large-scale pillaging, mass executions and of villages wiped off the map. The gassing of the town of Halabja, which caused 5,000 deaths on 16 March 1988, is considered a special case and not part of the Anfal campaign, covered by the report entitled

"Genocide in Iraq". A French version of this essential document on Anfal was published in 2003, by Karthala publishing, in collaboration with the Paris Kurdish Institute entitled "Genocide en Irak. La campagne d'Anfal contre les Kurdes" (Genocide in Iraq. The Anfal campaign against the Kurds), 405 pp.

Anfal, taken from a surah of the Quran, meaning "booty", was planned in 1987, two weeks after Saddam Hussein nominated his cousin, Ali Hassan al-Majid, nick-named Chemical Ali, as head of the Commission for Northern Affairs of the Revolution Command Council (RCC – the leading organ of the former regime). Ali Hassan al-Majid, instructed by Saddam Hussein to bring the region under control, then defined the "forbidden zones" in Kurdistan where all the inhabitants were to be considered insurgents.

Jamal Aziz, head of the co-operation and Administration Department of Suleimaniyah Province, bases himself on documents of Saddam Hussein's Intelligence Services regarding this campaign of repression, captured following the 1991 uprising. He thus put forward the figure of 182,000 Kurds who disappeared in it. "We have seized tons of documents which we have jealously hidden. They enable us today to trace the history of this cruel regime" he insists. These are the documents that were used by the US-based Human Rights defence organisation Human Rights Watch (HRW) to draw up its detailed report on the Anfal campaign in 1993.

Furthermore, on 6 April, the Press Office of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)

announced the discovery of eight mass graves containing the remains of about 1,000 corpses in Kirkuk. "We have found eight mass graves in the villages of al-Asri and Tubazawa, 25 Km West of the city of Kirkuk", the Press Office pointed out in a communiqué. "These mass graves contain the remains of about 1,000 corpses", it added. "The human rights committee of the PUK has contacted the US forces to ensure

the protection of these mass graves". According to the communiqué "the majority of the victims were Kurds, as well as some Christians and Turcomen who lived in these villages, which were mainly Kurdish". The communiqué, moreover, indicated that, amongst the victims might also be some Shiites, killed during the violent repressions in the South by the Saddam Hussein regime in 1991.

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#### A MASSIVE DEPLOYMENT OF THE TURKISH ARMY ON ITS BORDERS WITH IRAQI KURDISTAN, WHICH IS ALSO BEING THREATENED BY IRANIAN ARMY MANOEUVRES, ON THE EXCUSE OF FIGHTING THE PKK

**O**n 25 April, the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, on arriving in Turkey, urged Turkey not to engage in any unilateral military action against the PKK bases in Iraqi Kurdistan, calling rather for a triangular cooperation to fight this threat. "We are agreed that it is in our interest to ensure that the Iraqi borders be as secure as possible (...) to ensure that Iraqi territory be not used as a base for terrorism", she declared before the press at the end of a meeting with her Turkish opposite number Abdullah Gul. "We are sharing information and we will continue to be active about the PKK in the future but we evidently hope that everything we do will contribute to stability in Iraq and (...) not make the (present) situation still more difficult", she pointed out. Greeted by the Turkish President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer and the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Mrs. Rice had discussions with Turkish leaders on their demand for cooperation against the PKK and the nuclear crisis in Iran. "What is needed to

deal with the PKK problem is to ensure that security is stable in the North (Iraqi Kurdistan) and to get the new Iraqi government to work with the Turks and the United States", declared Mrs. Rice. After his discussions with US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, Abdullah Gul stated that Turkey did not foresee cross-border operations, while expressing Ankara's discomfort at Washington and Baghdad's lack of urgency about fighting the PKK.

On 24 April, however, the Turkish authorities had demanded "operational" support from the US against the PKK, considering that the sharing of information from their Intelligence Services were insufficient for fighting against "terrorism". "We have had sincere and fruitful cooperation [against the PKK] in the past. Today this cooperation needs to go further", had declared the Minister of Justice, Cemil Cicek, who is also the government spokesman, following a cabinet meeting. "An operational cooperation is necessary in the struggle against terrorism

and other forms of organised crime (...) Turkey wishes not only to share intelligence activity (with the US) but also a cooperation that goes further", had indicated Mr. Cicek. Turkey has recently sent military reinforcements to its borders with Iraqi Kurdistan, but the Turkish Foreign Ministry denied, on 26 April, news in the Turkish media, of incursions into Iraqi Kurdistan territory to conduct operations against the PKK. On 27 April some diplomats indicated that the Iraqi Ambassador in Ankara had sent a note asking for information on the Turkish Army reinforcement on the Iraqi borders while denying that it was a note of protest. The news channel NTV, for its part, reported that the Iraqi note included a protest against "small scale lightning raids" carried out by Turkish commandoes against the PKK on Iraqi soil. Turkey, for its part, affirmed that its Iraqi neighbour should rejoice to see the Turkish Army reinforce its forces on their common border, since the Iraqis were incapable of fighting against the Kurdish fighters from Turkey settled on its soil. "If they don't have adequate forces, if their forces do not have enough capacity to fight terrorism, they should be satisfied with the measures we are taking" declared Abdullah Gul at Edirne on 27 April. The Iraqis "have no reason to hesitate", on the contrary they "should even help us" since the Turkish Army's operations "have no other aim than that of preventing the infiltration into Turkey of a terrorist organisation", explained the minister, whose speech was broadcast on several TV channels.

On 23 April, the head of the Turkish Army, General Hilmi Ozkok, had confirmed sending

considerable military reinforcements deployed all along their borders with Iraq and Iran. *"The soldiers are going wherever they are needed. These are normal reinforcements, such as we regularly sent to the region"*, declared General Ozkok to journalist during an official reception in Ankara. With these recent reinforcements, the total number of troops deployed in the zones is said to have reached 50,000 according to some Turkish dailies – or even 250,000 according to others. General Ozkok refused to give any figures on the extent of the reinforcements and criticised the press for having done so. Turkey considers that some 5,000 PKK men sought refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1999, when the organisation decreed a unilateral ceasefire after the capture of their leader, Abdullah Ocalan. On 22 April the PKK warned Ankara against the dangers of an operation. *"We think that these preparations aim at an operation across the border, in North Iraq"*, stated Zubeyir Aydar, leader of the political wing of the PKK, the KONGRA-GEL, in an interview given to the Brussels office of AFP. *"The guerrilla has only a few thousands of men in South-East Turkey. There would be no sense moving so many troops into the region just for them"*, he added. Mr. Aydar stressed that the PKK was well prepared and would *"continue to fight on the basis of self defence"*, against any eventual operation outside Turkey.

Furthermore, Teheran and Ankara have made an agreement that calls on Iran to fight the PKK and Turkey to fight the People's Mujahiddin, an Iraq-based armed Iranian opposition

group. According to the Chief of Police for the Province of Western Azerbaijan, Hassan Karami, quoted in the Iranian daily *Khorasan* on 10 April, the Iranian police have arrested seven alleged members of the Kurdish group Pejak. According to it, some members of Pejak had killed a policeman and two members of the Bassidjis Islamist militia at the end of March in this Northwestern province of Iran. On 29 March, the student news agency *Isna* had reported, without citing its sources, the assassination, by Pejak of three members of the Iranian Guardians of the Revolution. In 2005, some local Western Azerbaijan leaders had reported that at least 120 police had been killed and dozens wounded, principally through Pejak attacks. Moreover Saad Pira, a leading member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) stated, on 21 April, that, to repel attacks, Iranian forces had shelled positions held by Iranian Kurdish fighters in the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan, killing at least four civilians. *"This morning, some Iranian Kurdish fighters crossed the Iranian border and the Iranian army shelled the zone and repelled them. The shelling struck Iraqi territory at Sadakan"*. (**Editors Note:** Sadakan is about a dozen Km inside the Iraqi borders and 80 Km from Irbil) declared Mr. Pira. According to the governor of Irbil province, Nawzad Hadi, four civilians were wounded in the course of this attack but there are no official figures on any casualties amongst the Iranian fighters of the Free Life for Kurdistan Party (PJAK – an offshoot of the PKK in Iran). The Internet site *Firat* reported that

six Iranian soldiers and five Kurdish fighters perished in the clash. On 29 April, some PKK members stated that their positions had been shelled by the Iranians on 20 April, causing 2 deaths and 10 wounded in its ranks. On 30 April, the Iraqi authorities again accused Iran of having bombarded PKK positions in Kurdistan, 5 Km inside Iraqi territory. According to a Defence Ministry communiqué *"in the course of the last 24 hours, Iranian forces have bombarded PKK positions near Haj Omran, in Irbil province"*. *"Over 180 heavy artillery shells have struck Iraqi soil"*, specified the Ministry of Defence. *"Iranian units penetrated 5 Km into Iraqi territory in the course of these attacks"*, it added. Four Iranian soldiers were killed in the Mahabad region, near the borders with Iraq and Turkey during clashes with *"counter-revolutionary forces"* reported the Iranian daily *Kayhan* on 30 April. In Turkish Kurdistan, clashes between the army and the PKK have multiplied in the last few months. This outbreak of violence has put an end to a period of relative calm in the region where, according to analysts, the PKK is trying to re-establish itself after decreeing the end of its 5 five-year unilateral cease-fire in June 2004. On 26 April, two Turkish soldiers were killed and one wounded during an attack by PKK fighters, according to the Diyarbekir local police. The attack was aimed at a gendarmerie station in the village of Kaqrsilar, in Tunceli province. Three Kurdish fighters and a soldier were killed in clashes on 23 April near Besta-Dereler, in Sirnak province, according to a communiqué, of

that provinces governorate. Local security sources had, on 11 April, announced the death of twelve Kurdish fighters and two Turkish soldiers in the same locality of Besta-Dereler in fighting at that time, while on the day before a Turkish soldier was killed, another wounded and six young boys wounded by the explosion of two mines. The first incident occurred on 10 April on the road between Silvan and Batman. In the second, it was six boys of 12 to 14 years of age who were wounded by stepping on a mine while walking near their homes just outside the town of Sirnak. Elsewhere, six Kurdish fighters involved in the death of Turkish soldiers were shot down on 7 April by a commando unit in Sirnak province. The Turkish commandoes, backed by helicopter gunships, attacked a group of eight PKK activists two kilometres from the locality where two soldiers had lost their lives on 4 April from a mine explosion and where three others had been killed by PKK members. A seventh Kurdish fighter was gunned down in Batman province during an

operation by security forces, which claimed that 25 Kg of explosives had been found there. Two gendarmes, including a lieutenant colonel were killed and two others wounded on 8 April by the explosion of a mine under their car in Elazig province. The colonel in command of the gendarmerie forces of the province was among the injured, according to the television news channel *CNN-Turk*.

In addition, on 25 April an armed group claimed responsibility for a bomb attack committed on 16 April in Istanbul, which exploded in a shopping street in the residential quarter of Bakirkoy and caused thirty injured. The group promised an intensification of its operations: "We are going to continue increasing the extent of violence without obeying any rules" stated the Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK) in a communiqué published on their Internet site. The Turkish authorities consider that the Kurdistan Freedom Hawks are an offshoot of the PKK which, for its part, denies any links with the TAK.

In Diyarbakir on 14 April, the German Green leader, Claudia Roth, appealed to the PKK to put an end to their confrontations with the Turkish security forces. "I call on the PKK to lay down its arms and stop the fighting in the first instance", declared Claudia Roth to the press after a meeting with local authorities. Mrs. Roth added that, in return, the Ankara government should contribute to establishing a "road map" and should invest in the region. "There is no military solution for the region", she stressed. "It is important to recognise the Kurdish identity and language and to reconstruct the Kurdish region, but this can only come through dialogue, when the weapons have been silenced". Mrs. Roth stressed that ending violence would strengthen Turkey's position in its negotiations for membership of the European Union, which began last October. Meanwhile, a Turkish soldier, wounded in fighting against the PKK in the course of an operation on the borders of Mardin and Sirnak provinces, died of his wounds, on 14 April, in a hospital in Diyarbakir

#### IRAQ: THE MONTHLY ASSESSMENT OF US LOSSES SHOWS A DROP, WHILE THE INTER-SECTARIAN TENSIONS ARE INCREASING

**O**n 27 April, Muffatak al-Rubai, a member of the Iraqi National Security Council, announced that Iraq had drawn up a draft of an agreement with the US Government that would allow "a considerable lowering" of the number of GIs by the end of this year. "We have drawn up a plan for an agreement between the Iraqi and US governments that aims at gradually giving

increased responsibility to the Iraqi security forces", he indicated during a seminar in Baghdad, which US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was present though he made no comment on these remarks. Since the intervention in Iraq in March 2003, 2,395 US soldiers have been killed according to a body count by AFP, itself based on the Pentagon's figures. However, on 1 April, the Pentagon announced

that army losses in Iraq had dropped in March for the fifth month in succession, even if experts partly attribute this drop to a change in the nature of the Iraqi conflict. Since the beginning of the war in March 2003, the monthly tally of US losses has been steadily dropping since October, which, with 96 deaths, was the fourth most bloody month for US forces in Iraq. According to the Army, American losses were at least 29 in March. This is the lowest figure in the whole war except for the figure of 20 dead

recorded in February 2004. For the US General Staff in Iraq, several factors explain this development, in particular the growing involvement of the Iraqi security forces – about 242,000 strong – in the stability of their country, but also the fact that the terrorists are now making their main targets Iraqi civilians, police and soldiers.

Sectarian tension has been sharpening in the country since the destruction of a Shiite mausoleum in Samara last February. By the beginning of April, over 450 Iraqis had been killed in the outbreak of violence that followed the mausoleum's destruction. Dozens of Sunni mosques have been attacked while the discovery of bodies of people who had been kidnapped and then executed by shooting has become a daily occurrence. On 13 April 15 people perished in an anti-Shiite attack near Baghdad. This attack came the day after an anti-Shiite car bomb attack to the North of Baghdad

that caused 26 deaths and 70 injured. On 7 April, a triple suicide bomb attack on a Shiite mosque in Baghdad cost the life of 90 people – the bloodiest attack this year on the Shiite community – which covers the majority of Iraq's population. The upsurge of sectarian violence has forced many Iraqi families to leave their homes. Adel Abdel Mahdi, one of the two Iraqi Vice presidents estimated, on 28 February, that 100,000 Iraqi families were living like refugees because of acts of violence between the Sunni and Shiite communities – probably about half a million people in all. He did not specify the source of his estimate, which is considerably higher than the figure of 11,000 families (about 60,000 persons) put forward two weeks ago by the Ministry of Migrations for people who had fled their homes since the end of February. According to the Ministry of Migrations, at least a quarter of the refugees went to predominately Sunni areas in

Kurdistan or in the West of the country.

On the other hand, on 13 April a Sunni Arab leader, Salah Motlaq, accused unspecified security services of having recently arrested 400 people in the South of Baghdad and of having killed 68 of them. The Iraqi Minister of the Interior, Bayan Jabr, had acknowledged, in a BBC interview on 11 April, that death squads were behind certain of the attacks that have shaken Iraq recently, but affirmed that the government security forces had not been infiltrated by them. According to him, these brigades were linked to some private security firms, charges with the guarding certain buildings, official or private. Bayan Jabr particularly pointed his finger at the Site Protection Forces, a unit set up by the American administration in 2003 to watch over official buildings and the offices of private companies. He repeated that this force, of some 150,000 men, was not under government orders.

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#### DIYARBEKIR: THE KURDS DENOUNCE THE EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE DURING THE RECENT KURDISH RIOTS WHILE THE TURKISH AUTHORITIES REFUSE ANY POLITICAL DISCUSSION

**A**fter a week of Kurdish rioting that began in Diyarbekir on 28 March during the funeral of some PKK fighters shot down by the Army, which then spread to other towns of the region, The Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, affirmed, on 4 April, that he would not give way to violence while also promising to continue pursuing the road to democracy. "No one should dispute the power of the State or of the nation", declared Mr. Erdogan in a speech to

members of his own Justice and Development party. "The government will not draw back from the democratic road of Laws and freedom of expression", he added. Recep Tayyip Erdogan promised that his government would treat the "Kurdish problem" by more democracy and more prosperity, refusing to let the PKK take advantage of the poverty of the Kurdish regions. "The masked gangs of terror and violence who have hiding behind our innocent children will have no more concessions. They know that if the

*regions of the South-East and Eastern Anatolia recover, unemployment will fall and they will say who can we take advantage of now?" "No democracy can be tolerance of violence", added Mr. Erdogan. "Let those who want to speak, speak up. But we will never recognise the legitimacy of terror". "We do don't envisage making distinctions on the basis of ethnic origin", added the Prime Minister, restating that he did not consider the Kurds as a specific minority.*

The Turkish Prime Minister, moreover, refused any dialogue with the principal pro-Kurdish party, the Party for a Democratic Society (DTP) so long as it failed to recognise the PKK as a



terrorist organisation. During his speech in Parliament Recep Tayyip Erdogan clearly let it be known that he would refuse to meet the leaders of the DTP failed to recognise the PKK as a terrorist organisation. *"First you must declare that the PKK is a terrorist organisation. After that we will talk"*, he rapped out. Ahmet Turk, co-President of the DTP said he was dismayed at this blunt refusal by the Prime Minister *"who invited Hamas (the radical Palestinian group) to Turkey but refuses to meet a legal party"*. *"In a State founded on a State of Law no weapons may be used against unarmed demonstrators"* declared, for his part the other co-President of DTP, Aysel Tugluk. *"It is the government and the Prime Minister who are responsible for what has happened"*, she added in the course of a Press conference in Ankara.

On 6 April, the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, firmly rejected the criticisms of an excessive use of force by the police during these riots, while the Army, at the same time, declared it was determined to eradicate the PKK's *"separatism"*. *"Our security forces have shown a tolerance never seen in other countries, at the risk of being killed or wounded"*, declared Mr. Erdogan. *"No one can accuse them in this way and we are every time obliged to rebut these accusations"*, he added. Mr. Erdogan had been invited by the journalists to comment on news that some members of the European Parliament had sent him a letter condemning the response of the police to these incidents, which were considered disproportionate. The letter, further, threatens Turkey with

suspension of negotiations, begun last October, for membership of the European Union in the event of it failing to observe the rights of its Kurdish community. The Commander in Chief of the Land Forces, Yasar Buyukanit, for his part, promised that the Army would continue to fight the PKK till the group was eradicated. *"We will continue to fight the PKK with determination (...) We will put an end to this suffering"*, declared the General. *"These traitors will find that an adequate punishment will be administered to them"*.

In Diyarbekir, with the death of two people in hospital on 3 April, the overall casualties in the riots have risen to 15 deaths, according to the Turkish authorities. According to the Diyarbekir governorate, amongst the demonstrators *"80% are children"* – that is under the age of 18. In all, 12 died in Diyarbekir and neighbouring provinces in the clashes between young rioters and the police and three died in Istanbul. The riots spread to Istanbul on 2 April with the death of three people in a fire on a bus resulting from a Molotov cocktail attack in a working class quarter. The situation had calmed down in Diyarbekir while sporadic incidents were reported at Kiziltepe and Nusaybin. These are the most serious clashes for over ten years in this region, where violence has been escalating since June 2004.

In Ankara, the Minister of the Interior, Abdulkadir Aksu, explained that 716 demonstrators had been taken in for questioning and 400 had been locked up. He considered that the rioters were aiming at *"the unity and prosperity"* of Turkey. The head of the opposition,

Deniz Baykal, for his part, accused the government of laxity and lack of any strategy against an *"attempt at a PKK uprising"*. The United States firmly condemned the riots and called for restraint by all parties, as did the European Commission on 4 April. The European Commissioner for the Enlargement, Olli Rehn, declared in Strasbourg, that the situation greatly worried the E.U. and that he hoped that the Turkish authorities would abstain from *"an excessive resort to force"*. Political and diplomatic observers consider that this violence expresses the frustrations of the Kurdish population at a high level of unemployment and poverty and Ankara's refusal to give greater autonomy to the Kurdish region. On 28 April Public Prosecutors at Diyarbekir charged 175 more people for their alleged participation in the riots. The number of those charged for these riots has thus risen to 265 people, including 80 minors (under 18) who risk sentences of between 9 and 24 years in prison. Proceedings are continuing against 171 other people, of whom 135 are already detained. Furthermore, on 28 April a Diyarbekir court sentenced three students to over six years in prison for collecting signatures in support of Abdullah Ocalan. The court rejected the arguments of the accused that they were just using their freedom of expression and found them *"guilty of membership of the Kurdistan Workers Party"*. The judges initially passed a sentence of seven and a half years before reducing the sentence because of their good behaviour during the trial. The students were arrested

in January as they were collecting signatures in the context of a campaign of petitions declaring that A. Ocalan represented the "political will" of the Kurdish people. The PKK chief was sentenced to death in 1999 by the Turkish courts. His sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 2002 after the abolition of the death sentence as part of the reform package aimed at aligning Turkey with European standards. On 5 April, Turkish prosecutors of an Assize Court rejected a demand that he be retried; stating that the law as it stood did not allow a retrial. In January, the PKK chief had asked to be retried in accordance with a ruling of the European Court for Human Rights but his lawyers

had found judicial obstacles. It was thus the court to which the two Public prosecutors were attached, which deals in particular with terrorist offences that had to decide on his case. The European Court had recommended a retrial for A. Ocalan, having judged that the 1999 trial was "inequitable". Turkey has indicated that it would observe the recommendations of the European Court, but it must first amend a law that allows retrial for detainees whose trial has been condemned by the European Human Rights Court but which specifically excludes A. Ocalan and about a hundred other people. No initiative is being taken at present to propose such an amendment.

indicated that, on 9 April, the Syrian State Security Court, an extra-legal emergency court, sentenced two Syrians, one of whom is a Kurd, to two and a half years imprisonment. Samir Masto, a member of the Democratic Union Party, a banned Kurdish organisation, was sentenced for "*membership of a secret organisation whose objective is the annexation of part of Syrian territory by a foreign country*". The same court sentenced Ali Karaman, an Aleppo taxi driver, for "*insulting and defaming the President*" (i.e Syrian President Bashar al-Assad) according to Mr. Bounni. Moreover, on 8 April the security services arrested the writer and Human Rights activist Abdallah Hallak in his home in the town of Salamieh, in Hama province (North-West Syria), according to Mr. Bounni and the Syrian Organisation for Human Rights. In a communiqué the Syrian Organisation for Human Rights expressed its "*profound anxiety at the multiplication of arrests of a political nature*" and considered that "*the release of all political detainees is the necessary prelude for reforms in Syria*". Mr. Bounni, the director of the Syrian Centre for Judicial Studies, for his part condemned "*the pursuit of repression, of threats and attempts at restraining all political activity*" and called on "*everyone not to submit to threats nor to the campaign of repression*". In addition, on 2 April the State Security Court condemned a Syrian, accused of being a member of the Moslem Brotherhood, a banned organisation, to a death then commuted it to 12 years imprisonment. Another Syrian, a Human Rights activist, has been sentenced to five years by the

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• **DAMASCUS: THE BAATHIST REGIME CONTINUES ITS POLICY OF REPRESSION AND TRIES TO STIFLE ANY POLITICAL ACTIVITY**

**O**n 10 April, nine Non Government Organisations in Syria, including some Kurdish organisations, expressed their "*extreme concern*" at the summoning of their members by the security services and have called for the release of all political detainees in Syria. "*We express our extreme concern at the continuing summoning of Human Rights activists and defenders by the security services, which have just summonsed members of recently created organisations*", pointed out these organisations in a communiqué. The statement cites the "*summonses*" against members of the National Organisation for Human Rights, including its president Ammar Qurabi, as well as members of the

Programme of Support for Victims of Violence, Ussama Nayssé and Elias Haliani. The communiqué calls on the Syrian government to "*observe the international agreements on Human Rights and immediately to take measures aimed at strengthening the principles of Human Rights in Syrian society*". It called on the government to "*free all political and conscientious detainees*". Amongst the signatories of this communiqué are the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Freedom and Human Rights in Syria, the Syrian Organisation for Human Rights, the Kurdish Organisation for Human Rights and Public Liberty in Syria and the Syrian Centre for Judicial Studies. For his part, the Human Rights lawyer, Anouar Bounni, has

same Court for "membership of a secret organisation". Abdel Sattar Qattan was sentenced to death under law 49 of July 1980, which makes membership of the Moslem Brotherhood punishable by death. His sentence was then commuted to 12 years jail. Riad Darrar, a Human Rights activist, was sentenced to five years for having "incited sectarianism, spread false news and membership of a secret organisation", stated Ammar Qurabi, a member of the National Organisation for human Rights in Syria. According to this report, Riad Derrar was arrested in June 2005 at Deir Ezzor (North-East Syria) after making a speech during a ceremony in memory of a Sheikh kidnapped in May and found assassinated soon after by "a criminal gang" according to the

Syrian authorities. (**Editor's Note:** the Kurdish Sheikh Maashuk Khaznawi was kidnapped, tortured and assassinated by the Syrian security services. Cf issue N° 242 of this Bulletin). "The use of law 49 is contrary to the principles of justice and shows that all the (official) declarations about (political) openness are lies", added Mr. Bounni.

Furthermore, a Syrian court martial has charged former Vice President Abdul-Halim Khaddam for having encouraged a foreign attack on Syria and for conspiring with the aim of seizing power declared a source close to this court on 9 April. Khaddam, who has been living in Paris with his family since he resigned from his post and left Syria last year, provoked an

uproar amongst the Syrian elite last December when he accused Syrian president Bashar al-Assad of having threatened former Lebanese Prime minister Rafic Hariri some months before he latter was assassinated in February 2005. Khaddam had also called for the overthrow of the Syrian regime, of which he had been a part for over 30 years. Amongst the seven charges filed against him, several are punishable by life imprisonment. The charges against Khaddam come less than a month after a civil court had issued a summons for corruption against the former vice President, ordering him to attend the Baniyas court (North Syria) on 23 April accompanied by his wife and 23 other members of his family.

#### AS WELL AS ...

• **LEYLA ZANA ON A VISIT TO IRAQI KURDISTAN.** On 24 April, Leyla Zana, the first Kurdish woman to be elected to the Turkish Parliament, visited Iraqi Kurdistan to consider, with other Kurdish leaders, means of securing a negotiated solution to the Kurdish question in Turkey. During her four-day visit, at the invitation of Jalal Talabani, President of Iraq, and Massud Barzani, President of Iraqi Kurdistan, the former Kurdish member of parliament discussed the upsurge of clashes in Turkish Kurdistan.

The Winner of the European Parliament's 1995 Sakharov Human Rights Prize, imprisoned from 1994 to 2004 together with three other Kurdish members of parliament for alleged "links" with the PKK, exchanged views with the Kurdish leaders about the possibility of a "new period of

stopping hostilities" – specifically a truce by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) pointed out the Turkish daily *Hurriyet*. The Kurdish authorities and civil society organisations gave Mrs Zana a warm welcome and praised her courageous struggle for democracy and recognition of the aspirations of the Kurdish people and women's rights.

• **ZAKHO : DISCOVERY OF THE FIRST OIL FIELD.** On 8 April, the Iraqi authorities announced the discovery of an oil field in the Zakho region – the first in the federated province of Iraqi Kurdistan. The Iraqi Deputy Minister for Oil, Moatassam Akram, announced, at a Press Conference in Irbil, "the discovery of the first oil field at Zakho", 470 Km North of Baghdad, adding that wells had been drilled by the Norwegian

company DNO. The Deputy Minister, who was speaking alongside Sarbaz Horami, senior executive of the Oil and Petrochemical Company of Iraqi Kurdistan and an executive of DNO, indicated that commercially viable quantities of oil had been discovered during the drilling campaign, adding that the real productive capacity of this field would only be known "soon".

The Iraqi Kurdish authorities had announced in march that negotiations were under way with a Canadian oil company, Western Oil Sands, to draw up an exploration contract in the Garmian region, 120 Km South of Suleimaniyah. The bulk of the known reserves of Iraqi oil are, at present in the Southern, Shiite, regions of Iraq and almost all the oil being exported passes through two terminals in the South. However, substantial oil fields also exist in Iraqi

Kurdistan, particularly the Kirkuk fields, which have been exploited since 1929. The Iraqi oil industry suffered a loss of earnings of \$6.25 billion in 2005 because of sabotage by Sunni Arab insurgents.

• **TURKISH FARCES: AN ELECTED OFFICIAL JAILED FOR HAVING CHEWED CHEWING GUM IN FRONT OF ATATURK'S MEMORIAL WHILE SOLDIERS SEEK MARTYRDOM IN A BURGER KING, ETC., ETC.**

On 24 April a leader of the Islamist party in office, the AKP, was arrested for having chewed gum while he was laying a wreath before a monument in honour of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk on 23 April, the Turkish national holiday. Veysel Dalci, head of the AKP branch at Fatsa, on the Black Sea, was jailed for *"insulting the father of modern secular Turkey"*, on the basis of a complaint filed by the commander of the Fatsa garrison who was shocked by the sight. The accused declared in his defence that he had taken the chewing gum to get rid of a persistent smell of garlic in his breath from his dinner the night before. He faces sentences of up to three years jail for this offence, under a law passed in 1951 to protect the image of the founder of the Turkish republic. People found guilty of insulting Ataturk, *"the father of the Turks"* are generally sentenced to pay a fine or serve a short sentence. They are generally Islamist.

Elsewhere, on 8 April, two armed men who had taken a member of the staff of a Burger King in the Taksim quarter of Istanbul, gave themselves up to the police. The two men, about 25 years of age, armed with compressed air pistols and

wearing identical T-shirts in the colours of the Turkish flag and bearing the word "Turkey", had shouted *"We are Turks"* before freeing their hostage and surrendering to the police, deployed all round the restaurant. They also shouted: *"They kill our soldiers"*.

According to the Istanbul police chief, Celalettin Cerrah, the two men were soldiers, absent without leave. They stated that they wanted to react in this way to the violent confrontations between the Kurds and the Turkish Army in Turkish Kurdistan. These have, in the last few days caused 33 deaths – 17 soldiers and 16 civilians. One of them had brandished a weapon (charged with blanks) and grabbing his T-shirt had shouted *"I want to be a martyr"*.

On the other hand, on 12 April, the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, rejoiced at the choice, announced the day before by seven European experts, of Essen (Germany) and Pecs (Hungary) as capital of European culture in 2010. *"I think that the proclamation of Istanbul as capital of European culture in 2010 will have important side effects on the promotion of our rich cultural heritage"*, he declared during a press conference in Istanbul. *"At the same time,"* he added, *"it will influence positively the process of negotiations for membership of the European Union"*, which began last October.

Erdogan has set as the objective for Istanbul in 2010 the reception of 10 million foreign tourists and has announced various projects to enhance the city's historic heritage. The decision of the committee of experts has yet to be discussed by the European Parliament and the European

Commission before being endorsed in November by the Ministers of Culture of the E.U. member countries meeting in council.

On 1 April, he semi-official news agency, Anatolia, announced that a court had blocked a circular limiting the sales of alcoholic drinks in Turkey, which had led to the government being accused of seeking to increase the role of Islam in the country. The principal Turkish legal administration ordered the suspension of this government document pending the reaching of a final decision in this matter. The court ruled that: *"The circular is not in conformity with the highest legal standards"* whereby *"the restrictions that it entails could have the result that the places where alcohol is served might be pushed out of urban life into a kind of isolation"*. The circular gives local authorities, many of which are run by the Justice and Development Party, the right to forbid the consumption of wine and other alcoholic drinks in bars and restaurants of entire quarters. Many AKP run municipalities have decided to ban alcohol permanently, officially to protect family values, but the generalisation of bans is arousing criticisms in a country that wishes to join the European Union.

On the other hand, a TV reality show in which eight men must dress up as women to be convincing at it to win a prize is provoking controversy in Moslem Turkey, according to the Turkish press of 27 April. The show, which is due to be broadcast on the private channel *Kanal 1* is inspired by the American show *He's a Lady*, the papers specify. Of the 13

candidates, aged between 19 and 39, who have applied to an Istanbul studio, made up and disguised as women, only eight have been selected and are due to spend three weeks in a flat in the metropolis loaded with cameras. Most of the time they will wear women's clothes and will be voted out, one by one, by the spectators, until the last one remaining will win the prize of the "best lady" – 50,000 Turkish lire (about \$38,000). The Turkish media control organisation, RTUK, had opposed the broadcasting of this show two years ago considering it to be "offensive".

To round up the farce, Mehmet Ali Agca, who had attempted to assassinate Pope John-Paul II in 1981, requested the Istanbul court to release him so that he could devote himself to literature, amongst other things. *"Even if I am not freed, give me at least six months or a year. The world needs me"*, declared Agca in court. He continued *"I ought rather to be writing books, directing television programmes or filming documentaries"*. The court, which was sitting in the context of a complex judicial procedure to decide how longer Agca should remain in prison declared it was not competent to rule on the

request from this former ultra-nationalist activist. On 12 January, Agca benefited from early release after spending 25 years behind bars in Italy and Turkey. However, he was put back in prison eight days later, the Court of Appeals considering that the reduction of sentences applied in his case had been badly calculated. According to the latest calculation made by the courts, Agca cannot come out of prison before 18 January 2010. However, other calculations push the date back to 2014, to take into account sentences he has yet to serve for armed robberies committed in the 70s.

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