

INSTITUT
KURDE
DE PARIS

Information and liaison bulletin

N°290

MAY 2009

The publication of this Bulletin enjoys a subsidy

from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGCID)

and the Fonds d'action et de soutien pour l'intégration et la lutte contre les discriminations

(The Fund for action and support of integration and the struggle against discrimination)

This bulletin is issued in French and English

Price per issue : France: 6 € — Abroad : 7,5 €

Annual subscription (12 issues) France : 60 € — Elsewhere : 75 €

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHES ITS REPORTS ON IRAN, IRAQ, SYRIA AND TURKEY

Amnesty International has published its reports on Human Rights and their violations throughout the world. The situation of the Kurds is also raised in the reports on Iran, Syria, Turkey and Iraq, with a special section devoted to Iraqi Kurdistan.

According to this organisation, Iraq continues to "marginalise its ethnic minorities, *"particularly the Azeris, the Baluchis and the Kurds"*, who attack the violations

of their *"economic, social and cultural rights as well as their civic and political rights"*. The use of Kurdish, like the other minority languages, is forbidden in schools and in the administration, and those Iranians who are active in favour of their economic, social and cultural rights are frequently arrested, threatened and jailed.

Amnesty International also highlights the irregularity of the trials that have sentenced to death Kurds accused of

membership of PJAK, the Iranian branch of the PKK. The international NGO particularly recalls the case of Farzad Kamangar, a Kurdish teacher who has always denied membership of PJAK who was severely tortured in detention. He faces a death sentence. From August to October 2008, over 50 prisoners went on hunger strike in protest against the execution of Kurds and to *"demand respect of the civil rights of a certain number of Kurds in detention"*. In general, attempts to promote

the Kurdish language and culture in Iran exposes activists to police persecution and iniquitous sentences. In detention since July 2007, Mohammad Sadiq Kubudvand, who founded and presides the Organisation for Human Rights in Kurdistan, was tried and sentenced to ten years imprisonment in May 2008 for acting *“against the security of the State by creating the Organisation for Human Rights in Kurdistan”* and for *“propaganda against the regime”*. The latter sentence was quashed on appeal, but the ten-year sentence was confirmed. Mohammad Sadiq Kabundvand has been detained in a secret and denied any visits from his lawyer or family for a long time. He has also been denied any medical attention for a long time.

The State has not undertaken any actions to protect women from domestic violence, although a large number of cases of self-immolation are due to family oppression. On the other hand active feminists are also exposed to State repression, even though their actions are peaceful, like Parvin Ardalan who faces a heavy prison sentence.

The majority of the Kurds are Sunni Moslems or members of religious minorities like the Ahl-e-Haqq. They are thus exposed to persecution from the Shiite powers that be or to various forms of discrimination. Thus, Amnesty reveals: *“The school directors must inform the local security services of the presence, in their schools, of any Baha’is or followers of other ‘subversive sects’ such as the Ali-Ilahi or Ahl-e-Haqq”*.

The report indicates that in Syria: *“members of the Kurdish minority suffer from discrimination.*

Many have been made stateless and do not enjoy economic and social rights”. Mashaal al-Tammo was arrested on 15 August 2008 for political activity in a Kurdish movement and faces a death sentence for *“an attempt to start a civil war or religious dissensions”* and *“conspiracy”*.

In general, Kurdish identity is repressed, particularly the use of the language and culture. Decree N°49 of 10 September 2008 strongly restricts the right to housing accommodation and property owning in the border regions — which affects most of the areas inhabited by Kurds.

The report is particularly severe about Turkey and the fact that the majority of the breaches of human rights restrictions on freedom are related to the Kurdish question. The DTP is still in danger of being banned by the Constitutional Court whereas the AKP, the party in office, has just escaped this.

The armed conflict with the PKK has caused civilian casualties in through bomb attacks *“often committed by isolated individuals or unidentified groups”*. Outside Turkish Kurdistan itself, Kurds have been subjected to acts of aggression because of their origins: *“some have been harassed or attacked and unknown people or unidentified groups have taken it out on their goods and property. In September, the county of Altinova, in Western Turkey, was the scene of aggressions of this kind for several days running”*.

The anti-terrorist laws continue to repress any display of Kurdish culture in accordance with the whims of the prosecutors. Thus: *“nine children all members of the municipal choir of Yenisehir, a Diyarbekir neighbourhood, were sued on the basis of Article 72 of the Anti-*

terrorist Act, for having sung an anthem in the Kurdish language, amongst other songs, during a cultural festival. They were acquitted at their first appearance in Court, but the warrant for the arrest of the choirmaster was upheld”. Several Newroz festivities were banned in towns in Kurdistan.

Young people have been subjected, as a general rule, to increasing violence and ill treatment by the police. In the cases of demonstrations, often banned without any valid reason and *“broken up using excessive force, often without any attempt to try non-violent methods”*, children and adolescents have been struck hard and jailed along with adults. Acts of violence by the police of the State generally go unpunished or very lightly reprimanded. Thus: *“police were filmed while they were beating up E.C., a 15-year-old boy who they had summoned on the fringes of a demonstration, in Hakkari. A Prosecutor dismissed a complaint made about the violence. On the other hand the young boy was taken to court for having taken part in the demonstration”*. Following the October demonstrations for the release of Abdullah Ocalan, *“over a hundred minors were charged with offences that can carry sentences of up to twenty years imprisonment”*. At Adana, the prefect threatened collective punishment to *“the families of children who had demonstrated”*.

The anti-terrorist laws also enable the sentencing of several people accused of membership of the PKK on the basis of doubtful or flimsy evidence. *“Murat Istkirik was sentenced to seven years jail for “membership of a terrorist organisation” solely on the basis of his attending the funeral of a member of the PKK and of having been photographed making the “V” sign. In September Selahattin Okten was sentenced to*

life imprisonment for having taken part in armed operations on behalf of the PKK. The proof his guilt was based on unreliable testimony said to have been obtained by torture”.

Prison conditions in Turkey are still very bad, with ill treatment and solitary confinement of detainees. Thus Amnesty International recalls the report of the European Commission for the Prevention of Torture that recommended that Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK leader, “*should undergo medical examination, that the material conditions of his detention should be improved and that the Turkish authorities should take measures to enable him to have more contact with the outside world”.*

In Iraq, Amnesty International observed a significant drop in violence but points out that “*all the parties involved have committed flagrant violations of human rights”.* The international NGO also notes that: “*as in previous years, Kurdistan was less affected by the conflict, nevertheless there is persistent news of human rights violations by security forces and of violence against women in this region”.*

Amongst the 34 executions of people sentenced to death, 3 took place in Kurdistan. Two of those condemned had taken part in a bomb attack that had caused 48 deaths in Irbil in 2005. The Kurdish Courts have sentenced a total of 9 people to death, which raises the number of prisoners facing execution to 84, 33 in Irbil and 47 in Suleimaniah. The 2006 Anti-terrorist Law, which increases the number of crimes that can incur capital punishment, has been extended for a further 2 years by the Parliament.

On the question of refugees, the report records nearly 13,000 Christians who have had to flee

from Mosul following attacks on their community. The report points out that “*the majority have found refuge in nearby villages or in Dohuk, Irbil or Kirkuk, but about 400 have left for Syria. According to information collected, about a third of the displaced people had returned to Mosul by the end of the year”.*

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq is the only one where organisation has noted “*advances”* on questions of Human Rights. Thus: “*several hundreds of political prisoners, including several who had been detained for several years without being brought to trial, had been freed”.* Amnesty also approved the repeal of the penalty of imprisonment for “*defamation”* in the course of the debate on the new press laws as well as the legal limitations imposed on polygamy.

The report criticises, in more detail, the “*breaches of human rights”* perpetrated by the region’s Security Service, the Asayish, that is virtually under no effective control and are said to resort to arbitrary arrests. It also notes that people have disappeared. Finally cases of torture and ill treatment are raised. Thus: “*Melka Abbas Mohammad and his sixty-year-old mother, Akhtar Ahmad Mostafa, were kept in isolation for nineteen days following their arrest in March, for their suspected involvement in a bomb attack. Melka Abbas Mohammad is said to have been tortured during his detention in the Asayish Gishti prison (the General Security Directorate) in Suleimaniyah. They are said to have been hung by their arms while their legs were beaten with cable and to have been subjected to electric shocks. In November, this man and his mother were acquitted of all charges by a court that ordered their release; they were, nevertheless maintained in detention by the Asayish”.*

Domestic violence has not disappeared, nor have “*honour crimes”*, and women have been burnt or killed by members of their family. A hostel was attacked by armed men to “*punish”* a woman member of their family, who had sought refuge there and who was seriously injured. Associations to defend women have had some of their members threatened by family members of women they were protecting. Amnesty mainly criticises the Kurdish Police of a certain laxity in identifying and arresting several murderers involved in “*honour crimes”*.

The report on the Asayish aroused official protests from the head of the security services in Irbil, who pointed out that several points were “*out of date”* on several points because of reforms already carried out. Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International’s officer for North Africa and the Middle East, discussed this report and the state of human rights in Iraqi Kurdistan as well as the protests from the Asayish during a televised interview on the KNN channel, just after meeting Prime Minister, Neçirvan Barzani, about the report.

Re-iterating certain of his criticisms, he nevertheless declared he was optimistic about the Kurdish Governments political determination to progress in observing human rights, recalling his meeting with the Prime Minister: “*I must say that it was a quite unusual sort of meeting with a Prime Minister. Because he said quite clearly that he accepted this report and realised that it was critical of certain aspects. He said he had read and examined the recommendations and had sent them to the Asayish and the police, telling them to read and take due note of them. Such a political line is important and I*

wholeheartedly approve it. Obviously time will show what effect this has. However, I came out very encouraged and felt a determination to get things moving and show an example”.

Asked why there was a section of the overall report on Iraq specially devoted to the

Kurdistan Region, Malcolm Smart replied: “The principal objective of our report was to say that you have succeeded to doing many good things in the Kurdistan Region, but that there were still some points, regarding Security, that needed to be corrected. The main concern is that the Asayish are not sufficiently answerable. This must

changed in the future. We also wanted more concrete measures to be carried out to resolve the issues of violence against women and human rights. This is most important for you, who live in the Kurdistan Region. It is also valuable that this send a message to the rest of Iraq, showing that a better way is possible”.

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN IRAQI KURDISTAN HAS STARTED

As the date of the Presidential and Parliamentary elections for the Iraqi Kurdistan Region have been set for 25 July, six candidates for the Presidency have come forward this month, announced the independent Iraqi Electoral High Commission on 25 May, the final date for filing candidacies. They include the outgoing President, Massud Barzani, Halo Ibrahim Ahmed, Jalal Talabani’s brother-in-law, dr. Kamal Mirawdeli, a writer and academic living in London, Hussein Gamiyani, a businessman, Ahmed Mohammed Rasul and Ahmed Kurda.

Halo Ibrahim Ahmad, who lives in Sweden and Great Britain, had resigned from the PUK last year to form his own party, Al-Taquadom (Progress).

Nearly two and a half million electors will be able to vote by direct suffrage both for the Presidency and to re-elect the Irbil Parliament, which at the moment is dominated by the KDP-PUK joint list, which won 80 of the 111 seats in the 2005 elections.

Regarding the parliamentary elections, two important lists are contenting breaking the two-party tradition that has dominated Iraqi Kurdistan since the 1992 elections. There is the

Kurdistani list, that includes Massud Barzani’s KDP and Jalal Talabani’s PUK, and the List for Change, led by Nawshirwan Mustafa, former senior leader of the PUK who broke away from it recently. “We want to change the political system”, explained the latter, whose campaign is principally hinged on attacks on corruption and on improving the quality of life in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Another contending list is that called “Service and Reform”, a coalition of four Islamic parties led by Ali Bapir. The Islamic parties are often presented as a threat to Kurdish political life should the electors’ discontent with the KDP and PUK lead them to switch their votes to the religious movements. However, none of these religious parties has succeeded in making an impact since 1992. They have even been unable to reach sufficient common agreement to allow them to form a list that includes them all. Thus Irfan Ahmed Kake, of the Islamic Movement, has attacked the refusal of the other religious parties, the Kurdistan Islamic Union and the Kurdistan Islamic Group, to respond to his call to unite for the elections. The newspaper *Awene* also states that all these little parties hoped to join the Kurdistani list but that neither the KDP nor the PUK had accepted to include them. Moreover, the secular parties

suspect the Kurdistan Islamic Union of being supported by the AKP, the party running the Turkish government, and by the Turkish Islamic Movement, led by Fetuhllah Gulen.

As in 2005, the Kurdistani list aims at maintaining the *status quo* in the power sharing between the KDP and the PUK, both in the government and in Parliament as was confirmed by Sa’di Ahmed Pira, a member of the PUK Political Committee, on the Rudaw internet site. He also recalled that since the present President of Kurdistan was Massud Barzani, head of the KDP, the post of Prime Minister (at present held by Neçirvan Barzani) should, by rights, be held by a member of the PUK. He did not mention any names, but it is probable that Dr. Barham Salih, at present Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, would replace Neçirvan Barzani at the head of the government.

Some people fear that this challenge to the existing two-party power sharing might revive the spectre of civil war if the KDP and PUK felt their ascendancy threatened. However President Jalal Talabani tried to be reassuring by hoping that “the elections will take place in a civilised manner in conformity with Kurdistan traditions”. On 9 May the Iraqi President visited Suleimaniah, Halabja and

Shahrazur for a meeting with leaders of his party. In what seemed like the beginning of the election campaign, Jalal Talabani also insisted on a policy of assisting the most disadvantaged social classes while stressing that living conditions had greatly improved, citing as evidence the figures given by the Minister of Planning. He also pointed out that Suleimaniah held first place in Iraq as far development data was concerned. Amongst his election promises was a programme for the reconstruction of Kurdish villages and drilling of wells, with a special budget allocated to this end, as well as the opening of cultural centres for women and young people.

Mustafa Nawshirwan, formerly the PUK's N° 2, is standing as candidate for change, as indicated by the name he has given to his list. *"The old politicians and traditional parties do not care about bringing change to Kurdistan. They want to keep things as they are. We want to change the political system"*. His programme also stresses improving the quality of life as

well as the struggle against corruption.

Indeed, other voices in civil society, especially among the young, hope for changes in the political leadership. Officially, the leaders of the PUK Political Committee say they are confident and are convinced that the electors will remain loyal to the two main Kurdish parties. *"The people of Kurdistan are very sensible and will never endanger their future by voting for new lists. The people trust their leaders and the parties that have already carried out many reforms in the last few years"*, insisted Sa'di Ahmad Pira, a member of the PUK leadership.

However, Mustafa Nawshirwan is fairly popular and value for his outspokenness. Some people consider that his list could win a number of seats in Parliament, which would result in new political alliances and the end of a frozen *status quo* inherited from the civil war. He could also benefit from the internal dissensions of the PUK and the confusion of its traditional electorate, which probably

would not go so far as to vote for the KDP but might find, in the List for Change, a third way of expressing a "protest vote".

Born at Suleimaniah in 1944, he studied political science at Baghdad University. On his return to Kurdistan, he ran a weekly, *Rizgari* (Liberation) while forming an underground party, Komala, with other Kurdish intellectuals. His political activity forced him to go into exile in Austria, where he continued his research. He returned to Kurdistan as soon as the 1975 "Kurdish revolution" began and became one of the most prominent leaders of the grouping that was to become the PUK. From 1976 on, his role was as much political as military. Thus he took part in the 1991 uprising. From 1992 on he returned to his intellectual activities, writing several books while holding senior posts in the PUK. However, because of his differences with his party's Political Committee, he gradually withdrew from the PUK and started up his own press group and then his own political movement.

TURKEY:

A BLOODY SETTLING UP OF OLD SCORES BETWEEN "VILLAGE GUARDIANS"

The attack on an engagement party in the village of Bilge, in Mardin province, by eight armed and masked men caused 44 deaths. Over and above the recurrent problems of honour crimes and clan rivalries, which Turkish public opinion readily ascribes to the Kurdish regions, this affair also re-opens the debate on the highly controversial issue of the "village guardians", since the assailants were all members of this rural militia.

According to the survivors, the

attack was launched from several different points just as the imam ended the religious part of the ceremony. The bride-to-be was the daughter of the former village headman (mokhtar). She was killed along with her fiancé and his younger sister, his parents and the imam's young sister.

Amongst the other victims were 6 children and 16 women, three of whom were pregnant. Forty-eight of the children in the village lost at least one of their parents, while 31 lost both, according to the local social

services, who indicated that the orphans would be looked after by close relatives. According to one young woman who survived, the deaths of the women and children were not just "collateral damage" — the attacker had herded them into a room together before gunning them down.

The murderers then fled, taking advantage of the darkness and a sandstorm. The army pursued them for several days before capturing them near the Syrian border.

"In this region, concepts of honour,

of dignity and reputation are carried to extremes that defy Western understanding", declared, for his part Mazhar Bagli, a sociological researcher at Diyarbekir's Dicle University. "In common parlance, a man is said to live for the sake of his honour, but this is the bloodiest tragedy linked to questions of honour I have ever heard of".

It seems, indeed, that the origin of this massacre lays the conflict between two families. However, the fact that the killers were all members of the government's "village guardian" militia reopens the controversy over the existence of these groups of armed Kurds, initially and officially created in 1985 to fight the PKK — especially as the arms used in this massacre were

those supplied by the State. There have already been many complaints of murder, rape and drug trafficking against members of this militia — who enjoy a certain degree of impunity against villagers who have refused to join them. There are said to be some 60,000 "village guardians" today, and breaking them up would also create a security problem. Disarming them would expose them to reprisals from Kurdish families that have suffered from their violent abuses of power. The endemic unemployment in the Kurdish regions also raises problems for their reconversion.

Faced with a storm of criticism, the Minister of the Interior nevertheless did not really

envisage dissolving them completely, only admitting that their status should be "reconsidered" and denying that this militia created a security problem. "Some village guardians are involved in this incident, but the village guardian system is not the direct cause", he declared, before recognising that the militia had certain "dimensions that should be criticised, discussed and revised" and that this had already been done, in part.

The DTP Member of Parliament, Emin Ayna, called for the immediate suppression of this militia in a press conference in Ankara, as did Sevkettin Soke, an M.P. of the opposition CHP party and the NGO Human Rights Watch.

IRBIL:

THE EXPORTING OF KURDISH OIL MAY BEGIN IN JUNE

On 8 May the Kurdish regional government announced that its crude oil exports would begin on 1 June via the pipeline that leaves the North of Iraq for the Turkish port of Ceyhan. Some days later, the Iraqi government announced that it approved this programme of exporting oil from the Kurdistan Region. This "authorisation" delivered by the Iraqi Oil Ministry was confirmed by the Kurdish authorities. Thus Ashti Hawrami, the Kurdistan Minister for Natural Resources, told the Reuters Agency that he had received an email from Hussein Sharistani, with whom, however, the Kurdish government has very poor relations.

In its official statement, the Kurdish Regional Government envisages exporting about 60,000 barrels a day. This oil will be sold by the Iraqi Trade Organisation and the revenue will go to the federal government for

redistribution among all the Iraqi provinces in accordance with their needs. The Kurdish Region should receive 17% of Iraq's total budget.

However, the legal disputes between the Kurdish government and Hussein Sharistani are still not settled regarding the KRG's signing contracts with foreign companies for exploiting Kurdish oil without going through Baghdad. Thus the Iraqi Minister has persisted in re-iterating his allegations of the "illegitimacy" of contracts signed between Irbil and foreign companies. "The Oil Ministry's position has not changed regarding contracts signed by the Kurdistan Regional Government with foreign oil companies. Authorising the Kurds to export does not mean approval of the contracts they have signed", declared its spokesman to Reuters.

"All we say is that these contracts are illegal and illegitimate. The Region has no more right than any

other province to sign contracts in the name of Iraq without authorisation", said Minister Sharistani, going one better. "All contracts must be submitted to the Ministry".

However, this will not prevent the Korean National Oil Company (KNOC) from starting to drill as from next October. Its share of the Bazian field is 50.4% while another Korean company, SK Energy, will have 15.2%. The Koreans say they are confident, now that that exports have been officially approved. "With this announcement, KNOC's projects for pumping crude oil in the Kurdish region will accelerate", the company declared, adding that exporting should begin very soon.

In total, KNOC has shares in five fields in Kurdistan, including the Sangaw field, where drilling should begin early next year and the Qush Tepe field, late 2010. These two Korean companies

had been excluded from the invitations to tender for operating fields in Southern Iraq because of the contracts signed with Irbil without Baghdad's approval.

Among other foreign companies involved in exploring Kurdish oilfields are the Norwegian DNO, the Turkish Gerel Enerji and the Canadian Addax Petroleum Corp.

Baghdad's lack of keenness for Kurdish oil activity has led some officials to doubt the truth of the news of Kurdish exports, which are due to start in June. However, the timetable has been confirmed by the President of the Kurdish Region, Massud Barzani, in a press declaration: *"This is a very important step which is taken in accordance with the Constitution and so is in the interest of all the Iraqi people. It is a success for all Iraqis — but this success was achieved by Kurds. It is like in football — one player scores a goal but the whole team benefits from it"*.

The Iraqi Oil Minister, on the other hand, is seriously criticised for having failed to increase the production of oil in the country, which remains stagnant at 3.3 or 2.4 million barrels a day — far below the production before the old regime fell in 2003. Questioned about the intransigent stand adopted by Hussein Sharistani, Massud Barzani limited himself to replying: "I do not think he even understands himself let alone what he does. And what he says is of no importance to us. The President to the Kurdish Region also brushed aside the idea that the dispute over the contracts his government had signed might be used for bargaining with Baghdad over the status of

Kirkuk.

A few days later, however, Hussein Sharistani indicated that the revenues the Kurds earned from their oil sales would be paid in full to the central government for redistribution to all parts of Iraq. Some people saw this as a sign of an easing up of this conflict, although the Minister repeated that any agreement reached with the Kurds should first be presented to his government.

This warning had little effect on the Kurds, as Massud Barzani had indicated. On 18 May, encouraged by this first success, the Regional Government publicly welcomed the announcement by several companies, including the United Arab Emirates Crescent Petroleum (UAS) in partnership with the Austrian OMV, the Hungarian MOL companies and Dana Gas to invest in the Region to accelerate the extraction of its natural gas reserves. It would be sold via the Nabucco pipeline, which is due to connect Turkey with Central Europe in 2014. The Kurdish Minister for Natural Resources himself presented these investments as a strengthening of *"the bonds between the Kurdistan Region and Turkey"* and a contribution to strengthening the strategic position of Turkey as Europe's partner in the field of energy.

The announcement of this second export project was not favourably received by Baghdad this time and Hussein Sharistani immediately rejected the project. His spokesman, Asim Jihad, repeated that Iraqi gas and oil should only be sold by the government, while the government's spokesman, Ali al-Dabbagh, pointed out that while Iraq was, indeed, planning to supply Europe with gas, these

plans did not include agreements, signed quite independently by the Kurdish Regional Government: *"The government rejects any agreement that does not include the Iraqi Oil Ministry"*.

However, the Central Government's support of the Oil Minister may not save him from being put on the spot by the Baghdad Parliament, exasperated by the disastrous oil production results especially when compared with the positive and rapid development in the Kurdish Region. Thus 140 Iraqi Members of Parliament have summoned Hussein Sharistani to the National Assembly to give an account of his management over the last three years. Should a vote of no confidence be passed, he could be relieved of his office by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, as pointed out to the AFP by the Kurdish M.P. Mahmud Othman. Ezzeddin al-Dawlah, a Sunni Arab M.P. and member of the National Concord Front, the largest Sunni Arab block, confirmed the summons but without mentioning the date.

This would not be the first time an Iraqi Minister was stripped of office after a no confidence vote in parliament — on the 14th of this month a similar action by the M.P.s resulted in the departure of Abded Falah al-Sudani, Minister for Trade, involved in cases of corruption and embezzlement of funds intended for the national food assistance programme.

There are also some suspicions of corruption regarding Hussein Sharistani, but his spokesman, Asim Jihad, it was only the management of oil production that was being questioned by parliament.

SYRIA: MASHAL TEMO HAS BEEN SENTENCED

Mashal Temo, a 52-year-old Kurdish dissident, was sentenced to three and a half years imprisonment by a Syrian Court that found him guilty of "weakening national morale". One of his lawyers, Mohammad al-Hassani, criticised the conditions of the trial: "We were not really allowed to defend him. The court rejected the seven witnesses we put forward in his favour". Another dissident was sentenced on the same grounds, although he was

already in prison serving a two and a half year sentence, which inspired al-Hassani to make the ironic comment: "How can anyone weaken national morale from behind the bars".

Mashal Temo is active in the defence of the rights of Kurds in Syria. He was arrested last year as he was driving between Kobani and Aleppo and some political leaflets were found in his car. He was detained by the political police on Damascus for 12 days in solitary confinement

before being transferred to the Adra prison in Damascus on 26 August 2008.

Amnesty International condemned this sentence, saying that Mashal Temo should be considered a prisoner of opinion, jailed for having expressed his opinions in a peaceful manner, and called for his immediate release. The organisation expressed its concern at the conduct of the trial and the court's refusal to hear the witnesses for the defence.

IRAN: QALA MERE HAS DIED

Qala Mere, alias Qadir Abdullah Zada, a great composer and virtuoso player of the shemshal (a kind of flute) died on 21 May. Thousands of people attended his funeral at the Nalashkena cemetery, where he lies near that other great Kurdish artist, Hassan Zirek.

Qala Mere was born on 23 October 1925 in the village of Kulija, in the Bokeran region of Iranian Kurdistan. A musician totally devoted to his instrument, he was also politically committed, ever since the Mahabad Republic, in which he served. He was an admirer and loyal supporter of Abdekrhman Ghassemlou, the General Secretary of the KDP-I who was assassinated in Vienna in 1989 by the Iranian secret services. He evoked his memory, with tears in his eyes, in a recent interview on Tishk TV, saying that he hoped that one day God would avenge the sufferings of

the Kurds and that the four parts of Kurdistan would be freed of their occupiers.

Qala Mere described in these terms the beginning of his present vocation: "It was in autumn. I was invited to a party in which my brother and two other people were playing the shemshal. I wanted to play with them but they chased me away. So I left crying and, still crying, hid in a mud hut. After crying still more I fell asleep. In my dream, someone came to me and said: "Wake up Adbel Qader ! You are annoying God with your tears. Stop crying and play the shemshal !" So I woke up and no one could equal my playing of the shemshal".

This shemshal, which he said was 140 years old, accompanied him throughout his life, he was never separated from it, day or night, slipping it in his clothes or under his pillow when he slept. He said that he had fallen in love with this instrument when it was still owned by its previous own,

a sayyid (descendant of Mohammed). He asked for it several times, but the other refused until his death. As soon as the musician heard the news of this death, he went to the dead man's son and exchanged the shemshal for a sheep. This instrument became, in his works, his only friend. "We have grown up together, we gossip together. Sometimes it is rude and insults me! We often have private discussions in that way". As he was already suffering from a longstanding illness, the doctors told him to stop playing but he refused to the end and finally died at the age of 84.

Qala Mere had also recorded for the Kurdsat television. He was famous in Iraqi Kurdistan and has been awarded a prize that is given each year to the most eminent artists. He had expressed the wish to bequeath his instrument to a museum in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, so his shemshal will go to the Irbil museum.

Kurdistan : la carte chance de l'Irak

Parfois bombardée par ses voisins turcs ou iraniens, la haute montagne protège en même temps une zone autonome en plein développement.

Béatrice Dillies

Toulouse-Dohuk via Amsterdam et Istanbul. Le Kurdistan irakien se mérite. Mais la récompense est à la hauteur pour les rares touristes qui osent braver les idées reçues pour en savoir plus sur un pays dont les médias nationaux ne parlent qu'au gré des attentats à Bagdad et Mossoul ou, comme hier, quand des hélicoptères iraniens bombardent des combattants du Pejak, un mouvement séparatiste kurde iranien qui opère depuis des bases dans les montagnes du Kurdistan irakien.

Première image, à la frontière turque : les longues files de camions pleins de voitures neuves, de sacs de ciment et de produits de consommation chargés d'alimenter le grand supermarché qu'est devenu le nord de l'Irak depuis que les Kurdes ont récupéré la manne pétrolière à la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein en 2003... et des ambitions pour cette terre qu'ils administrent de façon autonome.

Dohuk, dans la troisième ville du pays, début avril. Hassan Abdullah Mahy descend de son 4x4 et vérifie que ses hommes étalent le goudron convenablement dans les rues du quartier Badinan : 3 millions de \$ sont en jeu, l'équivalent du budget travaux que Saddam Hussein daignait accorder à l'ensemble du Kurdistan à sa grande époque. La fin des années noires a permis à Hassan de multiplier son chiffre d'affaire par dix en six ans. Et il n'est pas le seul. En 2008, 230 entreprises implantées à Dohuk ont réalisé plus de 10 millions de dollars de chiffre d'affaire. Le résultat est déjà visible sur la route qui descend de la montagne pour rejoindre Erbil à travers les vastes champs de blés bordés d'immenses silos. Un bitume impeccable que découpent à intervalles réguliers les contrôles de l'armée kurde qui gère seule la sécurité dans la zone autonome.

Les plaques minéralogiques de Dohuk permettent au chauffeur de se contenter d'un salut de la main en direction des militaires, même à l'approche de Mossoul (hors zone autonome) où ce sont des Kurdes... sous l'uniforme de l'armée irakienne qui contrôlent la ville où les derniers soutiens d'Al-Qaïda ont trouvé refuge. A ces barrages en revanche, l'attente est longue pour ceux que les Kurdes appellent les Arabes, y compris pour les Bagdadis qui, le vendredi, profitent du repos hebdomadaire pour oublier ici les tensions de la capitale. Et elle est plus longue encore pour ceux qui



Pour fuir le génocide, Zoubeyr a trouvé refuge à Albi (1), Mahfoz en Suède. Aujourd'hui, ils participent à la marche en avant du pays avec leurs amis européens. (Photo à Erbil, Béatrice Dillies)

veulent déménager au Kurdistan. Les Kurdes s'assurent d'abord qu'ils n'ont aucun lien avec le terrorisme, car le double attentat perpétré en 2004 à Erbil et Souleimaniyé doit rester une exception.

La population, qui signale la moindre voiture suspecte, y veille. Résultat, pas le moindre sentiment d'insécurité ne vient ternir les vacances des rares touristes européens, même lorsqu'un coup de vent emporte une liasse de billets posée sur le carton qui fait office de bureau de change improvisé, dans une rue passante de Dohuk. Étrange vision en effet que tous ces Kurdes se précipitant... pour ramener les billets à leur propriétaire, sous le regard de policiers indolents, de l'autre côté du carrefour.

Une vision de rêve pour les Irakiens qui sont de plus en plus nombreux à chercher au Kurdistan la paix, la démocratie et le développement économique qu'ils ont du mal à trouver dans le reste du pays.

« Chrétiens, musulmans ici on est tous égaux »

Mayé, à quelques kilomètres de la frontière turque, dans le nord du Kurdistan. Gurgis Adam, le directeur de l'école, salue Ashour, un chrétien de Durê (ici en photo avec une bible de 1798). Des kurdes musulmans se mêlent à la conversation et souhaitent de joyeuses Pâques à leurs voisins. Les poignées

de main sont franches devant l'église, la confiance totale. Et pour cause, le gouvernement autonome considère que « les chrétiens participent à la diversité culturelle du Kurdistan ». Une « richesse » qu'ils encouragent en favorisant la création d'écoles et de journaux pour les Assyriens qui parlent encore l'araméen, la langue du Christ, mais aussi en facilitant l'installation des chrétiens irakiens dans la zone sous protection de l'armée kurde.

Isam Gurgis a profité du sens de l'hospitalité kurde il y a quatre ans. L'ancien mécanicien de Bagdad avait peur pour ses cinq filles « trop belles » aux yeux des intégristes. Ils ont recommencé leur vie à Erbil en 2005.

Gilbert et Iptisam Mickaël ont quitté Mossoul pour Dohuk en juin 2006. « On avait reçu des menaces par téléphone, explique ce prof d'anglais à la retraite. Heureusement, pour les chrétiens, c'est très facile de venir au Kurdistan ». Isam confirme : « Au Kurdistan, il y a la démocratie, la paix, l'égalité. On se sent en Europe ici. Et surtout, on pratique notre religion sans aucun problème. »



IRAN: 18 POLICIERS ET 8 REBELLES TUÉS DANS UN ACCROCHAGE LA SEMAINE DERNIÈRE

TEHERAN, 2 mai 2009 (AFP)

Dix-huit policiers et huit rebelles ont été tués dans des affrontements survenus le 24 avril dans la province de Kermanshah, selon un nouveau bilan diffusé samedi par l'agence Isna.

"18 policiers ont été tués et 10 autres ont été blessés dans une attaque terroriste" contre le poste de police de Ravansar-Javanroud, non loin de la frontière irakienne, a déclaré Allahyar Malekshahi, chef de la justice de la province.

La télévision d'Etat avait annoncé au lendemain de cette attaque que 10 policiers avaient été tués.

Selon M. Malekshahi, les corps de 8 membres du groupe Pejak ont été trouvés

sur les lieux des affrontements alors que cinq suspects ont été arrêtés.

Kermanshah, capitale de la province éponyme, est située à la frontière avec le Kurdistan irakien et abrite une minorité kurde substantielle.

La région est le théâtre d'affrontements périodiques entre les forces armées iraniennes et le groupe séparatiste kurde Pejak, basé dans le nord-est de l'Irak.

Le Pejak, acronyme du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan, est lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui lutte depuis 1984 contre le gouvernement turc dans le sud-est anatolien.

L'Iran accuse les Etats-Unis de soutenir le Pejak, ainsi que d'autres organisations ethniques aux frontières de l'Iran, ce que Washington a toujours démenti.



DES HÉLICOPTÈRES IRANIENS BOMBARDENT LE KURDISTAN IRAKIEN

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 2 mai 2009 (AFP)

Des hélicoptères iraniens ont bombardé samedi pour la première fois trois villages kurdes du nord de l'Irak, visant des indépendantistes kurdes iraniens, a déclaré un responsable des gardes-frontières irakiens.

On ignore dans l'immédiat si ces bombardements ont fait des victimes.

"A 04H00 (01H00 GMT), les villages de Kani Saif, Jomarasi et Kara Sozi, dans le district de Penjwin, ont été la cible de tirs d'artillerie iraniens. Trois hélicoptères iraniens ont ensuite bombardé ces villages à 09H00 (06H00 GMT)", a-t-il dit à l'AFP sous couvert de l'anonymat.

Ces raids visaient des combattants du Pejak, un mouvement séparatiste kurde irakien qui opère depuis des bases dans les montagnes du Kurdistan irakien, selon la même source.

"C'est la première fois que les hélicoptères iraniens bombardent le Kurdistan irakien", a ajouté ce responsable.

Il a affirmé que le district de Penjwin n'était pas considéré comme un bastion du Pejak, acronyme du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan, et que les rebelles se concentrent plus au nord, dans le secteur de Qala Dizah.

Avant les bombardements de samedi, le district de Penjwin avait été deux fois la cible de tirs d'artillerie iraniens en un an, a-t-il ajouté.

Le Pejak est lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui lutte depuis

1984 contre le gouvernement turc dans le sud-est anatolien.

Ces raids interviennent une semaine après la mort de 26 personnes dans de violents combats entre policiers iraniens et rebelles kurdes près de la frontière irakienne, selon un nouveau bilan donné samedi par l'agence irakienne Isna.

Mais on ignore dans l'immédiat s'il y a un lien entre ces affrontements et les bombardements de samedi.

Dix-huit des personnes tuées le 24 avril étaient des policiers, a déclaré samedi Allahyar Malekshahi, chef de la justice de la province irakienne de Kermanshah, frontalière de l'Irak, cité par Isna. Il a ajouté que les corps de huit membres du Pejak ont été trouvés sur les lieux des affrontements alors que cinq suspects ont été arrêtés.

L'Iran accuse les Etats-Unis de soutenir le Pejak, ainsi que d'autres organisations ethniques aux frontières de l'Iran, ce que Washington a toujours démenti.

L'Irak, l'Iran, la Syrie et la Turquie ont tous d'importantes minorités kurdes.

L'armée turque a mené de nombreux raids aériens les bastions du PKK dans les montagnes du Kurdistan.

Les relations entre Bagdad et Téhéran se sont nettement améliorées depuis la chute de Saddam Hussein, en 2003. Sous son règne, l'Irak et l'Iran se sont livrés une guerre qui a fait environ un million de morts dans les années 1980.



IRAK: LE KURDISTAN CONDAMNE LE RAID AÉRIEN IRANIEN SUR SON SOL

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 3 mai 2009 (AFP) -

Le gouvernement de la région autonome du Kurdistan a condamné dimanche le raid aérien iranien mené la veille contre des séparatistes kurdes basés dans le nord de l'Irak, et exhorté ces derniers à ne plus effectuer d'attaques sur le sol irakien.

"Nous condamnons ces attaques (iraniennes) et demandons qu'elles cessent immédiatement", a déclaré le gouvernement régional dans un communiqué. "Elles ont fait fuir des habitants et endommagé les cultures des fermiers de ces régions."

Les autorités régionales ont appelé les rebelles kurdes à ne plus lancer d'attaques en Turquie ou en Iran à partir de leurs bases dans les montagnes du Kurdistan irakien, qui ont été ces derniers mois la cible de nombreux bombardements turcs ou iraniens.

"Nos relations (avec les pays voisins) se fondent sur le respect et les intérêts

communs, et aucun groupe n'a le droit d'attaquer les pays voisins du Kurdistan", peut-on lire dans le communiqué.

Des hélicoptères iraniens ont bombardé samedi trois villages kurdes du nord de l'Irak, selon un responsable des gardes-frontières irakiens.

Il s'agit du premier raid aérien iranien contre le Pejak --acronyme du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan-- un mouvement séparatiste kurde irakien.

On a fait état d'aucune victime dans ces bombardements.

L'armée irakienne avait par le passé effectué des tirs d'artillerie contre les rebelles.

Le Pejak est lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui lutte depuis 1984 contre le gouvernement turc dans le sud-est anatolien.

L'Iran accuse les Etats-Unis de soutenir le Pejak, ainsi que d'autres organisations ethniques aux frontières de l'Iran, ce que Washington a toujours démenti.

En équilibre instable à Bagdad, al-Maliki fait appel à la France

DIPLOMATIE

Le premier ministre irakien, en visite officielle à Paris, va jouer la carte de l'indépendance retrouvée de son pays pour séduire les investisseurs français.

C'EST un premier ministre, renforcé par les élections provinciales de janvier, mais au pouvoir toujours fragile, qui effectue aujourd'hui sa première visite officielle en France. Deux mois après avoir reçu Nicolas Sarkozy à Bagdad, Nouri al-Maliki s'entretient avec le chef de l'État à l'Élysée avant de rencontrer une délégation de patrons du Medef, auxquels il va demander de venir investir dans la reconstruction de l'Irak.

Depuis plus d'un an, le chef du gouvernement à majorité kurde et chiite est engagé dans un délicat exercice d'équilibre entre ses tuteurs américains et ses voisins iraniens, d'une part, et, de l'autre, les différentes communautés d'une mosaïque irakienne si difficile à gouverner.

« La victoire de ses partisans aux élections de janvier devait permettre à al-Maliki de consolider son pouvoir en élargissant sa base politique, note un diplomate occidental en poste à Bagdad. Mais depuis, on constate une confusion dans ses actions, comme s'il hésitait sur la stratégie à tenir. »

Soucieux de faire avancer la réconciliation nationale, l'ancien opposant à Saddam Hussein, leader du parti chiite al-Dawaa, a tendu la main à ses ennemis : les baassistes chassés du pouvoir à la chute de la dictature en 2003, les ex-miliciens sunnites qui ont aidé les Américains à combattre al-Qaïda et, enfin, ses rivaux chiites proches de Moqtada Sadr. Mais ses alliés chiites du Conseil suprême islamique restent opposés à une large intégration des ex-rebelles dans les forces de sécurité, ainsi qu'à un retour des baassistes dans la vie politique.

Sous les pressions, al-Maliki semble reculer et ses promesses non tenues font grandir le mécon-

tentement à travers le pays. La violence, qui avait significativement reculé depuis plus d'un an, repart. Bref, l'Irak est de nouveau entré dans une zone de turbulences, aiguës par le retrait militaire américain, qui doit commencer dans moins de deux mois.

« Al-Maliki reste un premier ministre de compromis sans réelle force institutionnelle », déplore Joost Hiltermann, spécialiste de l'Irak à International Crisis Group. Son pouvoir limité l'empêche de

neutraliser les bombes à retardement qui menacent la stabilité de l'Irak. À court terme, la plus dangereuse est la fracture qui se creuse entre Arabes et Kurdes. À Mossoul, Kirkouk et dans la province de Dyala, la tension monte. Le litige sur ces « zones disputées » reste pendant. Après avoir beaucoup cédé aux Kurdes, le premier ministre est finalement entré en conflit avec ses alliés du nord, pour freiner leurs aspirations indépendantistes. Mais il ne dispose pas d'une majorité alternative au Parlement pour entériner sa politique de renforcement du pouvoir central.

Devenu le porte-drapeau du nationalisme

L'homme, d'abord critiqué pour sa faiblesse à Washington comme à Paris, a fini pourtant par apparaître comme le possible leader, dont l'Irak avait besoin pour sortir du chaos. En mettant au pas l'an dernier les miliciens sadristes, il a montré qu'il n'était pas forcément un chef sectaire. Et en tenant tête aux Américains dans les négociations sur leur retrait, al-Maliki s'est fait le porte-drapeau du nationalisme irakien.

D'autant qu'il n'est pas une marionnette entre les mains du puissant voisin iranien, chiite comme lui. « N'oubliez pas qu'en fuyant l'Irak de Saddam en 1980, il avait refusé de travailler en Iran contre son pays. Il était allé se réfugier en Syrie », se souvient un diplomate français qui le fréquentait alors à Damas. Aux Iraniens comme aux



Avant son entretien aujourd'hui à Paris avec Nicolas Sarkozy, Nouri al-Maliki était en visite, jeudi et vendredi, à Londres, où il a notamment été reçu au 10 Downing Street. Lefteris Pitarakis/AFP

Américains, al-Maliki propose « une indépendance dans la coopération ». Il cherche à rassurer Téhéran tout en se montrant ferme à leur égard.

Sa ligne de conduite pourrait se résumer ainsi : « Arrêtez vos ingérences en matière d'insécurité et on vous fera une place de choix dans la reconstruction de l'Irak. » Tout aussi habilement, le chef du gouvernement parie sur la Turquie – inquiète elle aussi de l'influence iranienne en Irak – pour jouer l'apaisement face aux Kurdes.

Pour séduire ses interlocuteurs français et relancer la coopération avec Bagdad, al-Maliki va jouer la carte de « l'indépendance, de la sécurité retrouvée et du renforce-

ment de l'état de droit ». Des intentions qui ne peuvent que réjouir la France, désireuse de se positionner sur le juteux marché de la sécurisation de l'Irak. Même si dans ce domaine aussi, beaucoup reste à faire face à des milices qui n'ont toujours pas été démantelées.

GEORGES MALBRUNOT



TURQUIE: LE PRINCIPAL PARTI PRO-KURDE APPELLE À UN JEÛNE DE PROTESTATION

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 3 mai 2009 (AFP) -

LES RESPONSABLES du principal parti pro-kurde de Turquie ont appelé dimanche la population à entamer avec eux un jeûne de deux jours pour protester contre la multiplication des arrestations de membres de leur mouvement accusés d'être liés aux rebelles séparatistes kurdes.

Plusieurs députés et maires du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP) ont élu domicile jusqu'à la rupture de leur jeûne lundi soir dans une tente érigée dans un parc de Diyarbakir, la principale ville du sud-est anatolien, à la population en majorité kurde, a constaté un correspondant de l'AFP.

De là, le président du DTP, Ahmet Türk, a appelé la population à suivre leur exemple pour protester contre l'arrestation au cours des dernières semaines de plusieurs dizaines de personnes, dont de nombreux membres du parti, accusés

de liens avec les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

"Alors que même l'état-major de l'armée évoque un retour de ceux qui sont dans la montagne (la guérilla du PKK, ndr), ces opérations les empêchent d'en descendre. Au contraire, elles en encouragent d'autres à partir les rejoindre", a affirmé M. Türk.

Le général Ilker Basbug, chef d'état-major de l'armée turque, a exhorté en avril le gouvernement à réviser les lois pour faciliter la reddition des rebelles.

Le PKK, une organisation classée comme terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les États-Unis, a lancé en 1984 une campagne armée pour obtenir l'autonomie du Sud-Est. Le conflit a fait 45.000 morts, selon l'armée.

Le DTP, qui détient 21 des 550 sièges au parlement turc, pourrait être interdit par la Cour Constitutionnelle, qui examine actuellement ses liens éventuels avec le PKK.



IRAK: LA CAMPAGNE ÉLECTORALE AU KURDISTAN RISQUE D'ÊTRE VIOLENTE

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 4 mai 2009 (AFP) -

LE PAYSAGE politique au Kurdistan irakien pourrait être modifié cet été lors des élections pour le Parlement régional et, compte tenu des enjeux, la population redoute une campagne violente.

Les deux grands partis traditionnels kurdes, qui dominent la région depuis des décennies, vont affronter de nouveaux rivaux, certains issus de leurs rangs. Le scrutin s'annonce rude et même brutal, à l'inverse du scrutin provincial de janvier dans la partie arabe de l'Irak.

"Les Kurdes devraient en tirer les leçons et gérer leurs rivalités de manière civilisée et pacifique", estime Shaswar Karim, un boutiquier de 60 ans de Souleimaniyeh (nord-est).

"Mais je suis inquiet en constatant que les candidats ont déjà commencé à employer un langage blessant et à proférer des accusations, ce qui préfigure un climat violent", souligne-t-il.

En 2005, la liste commune de l'Union Patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) du chef de l'Etat Jalal Talabani et du Parti Démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) du président régional Massoud Barzani, avait raflé 80 des 111 sièges.

Dix sièges étaient réservés aux minorités turcomane, chrétienne et yazidie. L'Union islamique avait remporté neuf sièges, son rival plus radical le Groupe islamique du Kurdistan six, alors que trois petits partis de gauche se partageaient le reste.

Mais le monopole des deux grands partis pourrait être remis en cause lors du scrutin prévu la seconde quinzaine de juillet.

L'ancien chef du bureau politique du PDK qui fut aussi durant huit ans président du Parlement régional, Jawhar Nameq Salem, estime qu'il appartient au gouvernement régional autonome d'éviter que la campagne dégénère.

"Le recours à la violence peut venir des deux grands partis car ils risquent de

perdre beaucoup. Je m'attends à l'émergence de nouvelles têtes", dit-il.

La commission électorale indépendante a finalement agréé 41 listes, dont celle du "Changement" formée par des dissidents de l'UPK dirigés par l'ancien "numéro deux" du parti, Noushirwan Moustafa. Un sacré défi pour la "vieille maison" dirigée par Jalal Talabani.

"Si leur maître-mot est le changement, alors ils doivent le mettre en oeuvre au sein des deux principaux partis", estime le dirigeant de l'UPK Saadi Ahmed Bira, critiquant ces dissidents.

L'UPK tiendra son congrès en juin pour discuter des divergences internes mais elle a déjà décidé de faire liste commune avec le PDK.

L'UPK devrait reconduire Jalal Talabani, 76 ans, au poste de secrétaire général, en dépit de ses soucis de santé.

"La grande majorité des gens ont soutenu la liste d'union et continueront de la soutenir", a assuré Ali Babir, le chef du Groupe islamique, qui a renoncé à la violence en 2003.

Les deux formations islamiques espèrent améliorer leur score mais craignent les attaques des deux partis laïcs.

"Je suis convaincu que le PDK et l'UPK ne réussiront pas à atteindre leur score de 2005", assure Ali Babir, le chef du Groupe islamique, qui a renoncé à la violence en 2003.

"Les Kurdes doivent comprendre qu'une guerre intestine n'effacera pas nos différences. S'ils ne le comprennent pas, la violence s'imposera", souligne-t-il.

Hiwa Mirza Saber, chef de l'Union islamique (modérés) proche des Frères musulmans, partage cet avis: "La situation requiert prudence et vigilance de la part des deux principaux partis et j'appelle le président de la région (Barzani) à surveiller personnellement le déroulement du scrutin".



RAID AÉRIEN IRANIEN: L'IRAK REMET UNE LETTRE DE PROTESTATION À L'IRAN

BAGDAD, 5 mai 2009 (AFP)

L'Irak a convoqué mardi l'ambassadeur iranien pour protester contre le raid aérien iranien mené samedi contre des séparatistes kurdes basés dans la région autonome du Kurdistan, dans le nord de l'Irak, a annoncé le ministère irakien des Affaires étrangères.

"Le ministère des Affaires étrangères a présenté une lettre officielle de protestation à l'ambassadeur d'Iran à Bagdad au sujet du bombardement par les forces iraniennes de villages irakiens près de la frontière", a déclaré le ministère dans un communiqué.

Il demande "la fin immédiate de ce genre de violations qui continuent d'avoir des

répercussions négatives sur les relations entre les deux pays".

"Si l'Irak comprend que les autorités iraniennes ont besoin de sécuriser leurs frontières, cela ne peut être fait par des actions unilatérales mais par (...) un dialogue constructif", précise le communiqué.

Le gouvernement de la région autonome du Kurdistan avait condamné dimanche le bombardement, par des hélicoptères iraniens, de trois villages proches de la frontière.

Il s'agissait du premier raid aérien iranien contre le Pejak, un mouvement séparatiste kurde iranien, en territoire irakien. L'armée iranienne avait par le passé effectué des tirs d'artillerie contre les rebelles.

On a fait état d'aucune victime dans ces bombardements.

Le Pejak –acronyme du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan– est lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) qui lutte depuis 1984 contre le gouvernement turc dans le sud-est anatolien.

Les autorités du Kurdistan ont également exhorté dimanche les rebelles kurdes à cesser de mener des attaques en Turquie ou en Iran à partir de leurs bases

dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak.

L'Iran accuse les Etats-Unis de soutenir le Pejak, ainsi que d'autres organisations ethniques aux frontières de l'Iran, ce que Washington démentit.



IRAK: LES ÉLECTIONS PARLEMENTAIRES AU KURDISTAN AURONT LIEU LE 25 JUILLET

ERBIL (Irak), 5 mai 2009 (AFP) -

LE PRÉSIDENT du Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani, a annoncé mardi que les élections parlementaires auraient lieu le 25 juillet dans cette région autonome du nord de l'Irak, un scrutin qui pourrait remettre en cause le monopole des deux grands partis kurdes.

"La date du 25 juillet a été arrêtée pour les élections parlementaires au Kurdistan", a-t-il dit devant le Parlement régional.

"J'appelle le peuple du Kurdistan à participer à ces élections et à choisir en toute liberté leurs représentants, les listes qui les serviront le mieux", a-t-il ajouté.

Plus de 2,5 millions d'électeurs sont appelés aux urnes lors de ce scrutin, selon la Commission électorale du Kurdistan, qui a agréé 41 listes électorales. Le Parlement régional compte 111 sièges.

L'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) du chef de l'Etat Jalal Talabani et du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) de M. Barzani –qui dominent la vie politique du Kurdistan depuis des décennies– ont reconduit leur alliance pour ces élections.

Mais ils doivent affronter cette année de nouveaux rivaux, dont certains issus de leurs rangs, ce qui pourrait donner lieu à une campagne musclée.

En 2005, la liste commune de l'UPK et du PDK avait raflé 80 des 111 sièges. L'Union islamique avait remporté neuf sièges, son rival plus radical, le Groupe islamique du Kurdistan six, alors que trois petits partis de gauche se partageaient le reste. Dix sièges étaient réservés aux minorités turcomane, chré-

tienne et yazidie.

L'UPK et le PDK devront notamment composer avec l'opposition de la liste du "Changement", formée par des dissidents de l'UPK dirigés par l'ancien "numéro deux" du parti, Noushirwan Moustafa.

Mais M. Talabani a estimé dimanche que "la grande majorité" des électeurs qui avaient voté pour la liste d'union en 2005 feraient la même chose cette année.

M. Barzani a exhorté mardi les partis politiques de ne pas faire campagne dans les mosquées et autres lieux publics, dans un appel au calme à l'ensemble des candidats.

"Les formations politiques sont libres de faire leur campagne, mais elles ne doivent pas utiliser la campagne pour diaboliser les autres factions", a-t-il dit.

L'ancien chef du bureau politique du PDK qui fut aussi durant huit ans président du Parlement régional, Jawhar Nameq Salem, a récemment déclaré à l'AFP qu'il appartenait au gouvernement régional autonome d'éviter que la campagne ne dégénère.

"Le recours à la violence peut venir des deux grands partis car ils risquent de perdre beaucoup. Je m'attends à l'émergence de nouvelles têtes", a-t-il dit.

Aucune date n'a été en revanche fixée pour la tenue des élections provinciales au Kurdistan.

Des scrutins provinciaux ont eu lieu le 31 janvier dans 14 des 18 provinces irakiennes, à l'exception des trois provinces kurdes et de celle voisine de Kirkouk, où plusieurs communautés se disputent le pouvoir.



DIX REBELLES KURDES TUÉS LORS DES DERNIÈRES FRAPPES TURQUES EN IRAK

ANKARA, 6 mai 2009 (AFP) -

Dix rebelles kurdes de Turquie ont été tués lors de bombardements fin avril par l'aviation turque de leurs retranchements dans le nord de l'Irak, a rapporté mercredi l'agence semi-officielle Anatolie.

Les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont été tués lorsque l'aviation turque a anéanti les 29 et 30 avril plusieurs abris et dépôts d'armes dans les zones de Zap et d'Avasin-Basyan, dans le Kurdistan irakien, affirme l'agence.

Anatolie ne précise pas ses sources mais donne les noms de code et les âges de sept des rebelles tués.

L'armée n'a pas donné de bilan du raid, survenu en riposte à des attaques des séparatistes qui ont coûté la vie à dix soldats turcs le 29 avril dans le sud-est de la Turquie.

Interrogé par téléphone, Ahmed Denis, le porte-parole du PKK au Kurdistan irakien, a affirmé que "deux membres du PKK seulement ont été tués dans les attaques turques du 29 et du 30, dans la zone de Zap", près de Dohouk.

Les chasseurs-bombardiers turcs effectuent régulièrement des raids contre des cibles du PKK dans le Kurdistan irakien où quelque 2.000 rebelles sont retran-



CINQ MORTS DANS L'EXPLOSION D'UNE MINE DANS LE SUD-EST DE LA TURQUIE

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 9 mai 2009 (AFP) - 19h13 - Cinq personnes ont été tuées samedi par une explosion, due probablement à une mine, sur une route de campagne du sud-est de la Turquie, une région où les rebelles kurdes sont présents, a-t-on appris auprès des services de sécurité.

Un véhicule transportant les cinq victimes a sauté sur une route près du village de Cavizduzu, dans la province de Sirmak, probablement sur une mine posée par les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), selon la même

source.

Trois des personnes tuées faisaient partie des "gardiens de villages", une milice armée et payée par le gouvernement pour combattre les rebelles.

Le PKK, qui mène une lutte armée pour l'autonomie de cette région à majorité kurde, a souvent recours aux mines.

Il est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis.

TODAYS ZAMAN
May 1, 2009

Özal's wife, son meet with Barzani in Iraq

TODAY'S ZAMAN

The wife and son of Turkey's eighth president, Turgut Özal, have met with Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani in Arbil, news reports said yesterday.

According to Zagros TV, the official station of the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which Barzani leads, the Kurdish leader welcomed Semra Özal and Ahmet Özal at his residence and expressed his delight at having the opportunity to host them. The Özals said they came to meet with Barzani both to see recent developments in the region firsthand and because of their longtime friendship with the leader.

Turkey has a troubled relationship with Barzani due to suspicions that he tolerates

and even supports the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which attacks Turkish targets from bases in northern Iraq. Lately, Turkey has made rare official contact with Barzani as part of a rapprochement process.

The late President Özal was criticized for granting diplomatic passports to Barzani and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani during Saddam Hussein's reign, allowing them to travel abroad conveniently.

Turgut Özal died in office on April 17, 1993, after suffering a suspicious heart attack. As Turkey's first seven presidents all came from military backgrounds, Özal was the first civilian president of the country, and his presidency is seen as a landmark in attempts to further democratize Turkey's governance.



According to police records, 200,000 people, including a number of government ministers, gathered in Istanbul last month to commemorate Özal in a ceremony held on the anniversary of his death.



Voice of America

02 May 2009

Iranian Helicopters Attack Iraqi Kurdish Border

By Edward Yeranian

Kurdistan's Zagros TV announced the raids by Iranian helicopters in the border region and quoted Kurdish officials as saying that it was the first time that combat helicopters have been used during months of sporadic border clashes. A Kurdish military spokesman said the helicopters did not violate Iraqi airspace but attacked by flying parallel to the border.

Border officials said Iran's military shelled the PJAK positions before the helicopters struck. Iran has targeted the PJAK with artillery in the past but never followed with air assaults.

Iran has long complained about cross-border activities of the PJAK (Free Life Party of Kurdistan) which normally operates further to the north.

Turkey bombed positions of the terrorist PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party), along its border with Iraqi Kurdistan, several times, this past week. Nine Turkish soldiers were killed by a roadside bomb blast, for which the PKK claimed responsibility, Wednesday.

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and Turkish President Abdullah Gul agreed to a joint demand that the PKK throw down its arms, during a recent visit by President Gul to Baghdad. The PKK rejected that demand.

26 people were also killed during fierce cross-border gunbattles between Iranian police and Kurdish separatists along the Iraqi-Iranian border, just a week ago. 18 of the dead were Iranian policemen.

Joost Hiltermann of the International Crisis Group said that Iran has been trying to quash PJAK rebels along its border for quite some time:

"The Iranians have been taking action against PJAK, the Kurdish guerilla group from Iran that has worked in coopera-



tion with the PKK, the Turkish-Kurdish group, for some time, and the latest attack is consistent with that, and whether the Iranians shell the PJAK positions or they carry out helicopter attacks in the area where the PJAK is operating doesn't make a huge difference," he said. "Now, some Kurds in Iraq are obviously going to be affected by this. The people living in the border area have suffered a long time from these attacks and it's a big problem for them, but they also are not capable of getting rid of PJAK and the Kurdish regional government is equally incapable of ejecting PJAK from this area," he added.

Western Iran has a large Kurdish population, and Iranian security forces have clashed repeatedly with PJAK separatists, operating out of northern Iraq, in recent years.

Democracy for the trust of masses

Globe Editorial

By Azad Aslan

IT IS widely expected that a date in early July will be announced for the upcoming Parliamentary elections in Kurdistan.

According to Ali Wadir of The Independent High Electoral Commission, the number of political entities participating in the upcoming elections has reached 38. Minority groups in Kurdistan are allocated 11 seats from the total 111 available seats in parliament. One seat is reserved for Armenians, five seats for Turkmens, and five seats for various Christian communities that reside in Kurdistan. Minority rights and the assurance of their representation in the Kurdistan Parliament by law, is one of the best aspects of Kurdish democracy and this practice must be pursued and preserved conservatively.

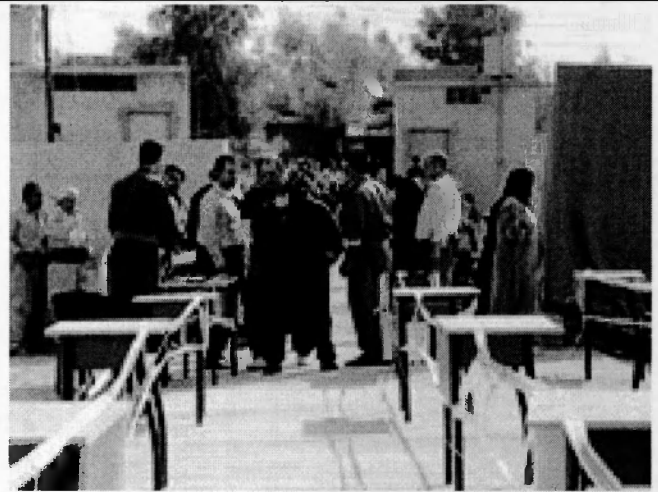
Elections and the way they are conducted is one of the fundamental pillars of a healthy democracy. In that sense, the last local elections for the 14 provincial councils in Iraq on January 31st 2009 were a useful showcase of a successful democracy, mainly due to the participation of a large number of political groups and individuals and the relatively peaceful environment surrounding the elections. The Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq stated that 14800 candidates representing 401 groups contested for 440 provisional seats. As one Kurdish critic, Salah Aziz, rightly argued, "the success of new elections in the rest of Iraq sets the bar higher for the Kurds, raising expectations and requiring a renewed commitment by the

Kurds to continue being the forefathers and frontrunners of democracy in the region."

The democratic experience in Kurdistan is much older and more profound than the rest of Iraq. While Iraq only initiated local and general elections in 2005, Kurdistan witnessed its first free election in 1992. At a crucial juncture in their history and finally free from the shackles of Baathist repression, millions of Kurds casted their votes to elect their representatives to the Kurdistan National Assembly. This comparatively early start in the election process and the democratic experience in Kurdistan from 1992 have from time to time become hindered thanks largely to internal and external factors that have prevented democracy from blossoming further in Kurdistan. Despite these setbacks and an interim civil war between the two main groups in Kurdistan, democracy is certainly not derailed and not evolved towards authoritarian tendencies.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and all other Kurdish agencies should pursue a clear and proper policy in the upcoming parliamentary elections in Kurdistan in order to conduct a fair and fitting election in order to maintain international respect and admiration for the democratic experience in Kurdistan. For this to be realized, the KRG and other agencies must work hard to encourage the general public in Kurdistan to participate in the elections and to simplify the registration procedures of political groups and individuals to participate and compete in the elections.

In the forthcoming elec-



The (KRG) and all other Kurdish agencies should pursue a clear and proper policy in the upcoming parliamentary elections. GLOBE PHOTO/Aiyob Mawloodi

tions, transparency and impartiality are two of the most crucial factors that the KRG must respect and ensure that procedures are implemented to maintain them. For this to happen, not only the KRG but all other national agencies have a responsibility and proper cooperation between the government and other agencies including civil societies, syndicates, unions, political parties, individuals and media is essential.

Having touched upon the importance of free and fair elections in Kurdistan, it is imperative to note that elections on its own are not the whole aspect of democracy. There are seven decisive features that can be ascribed to any properly functioning democracy, which include individual freedoms and civil liberties, the rule of the law, sovereignty resting upon the people, equality of all citizens before the law, vertical and horizontal accountability of government officials, transparency of the ruling systems to the demands of the citizens, and equal opportunities for citizens.

In Kurdistan, for democracy to flourish and deepen, the conditions of the above noted features must be upheld and implemented. Some aspects of the above conditions in Kurdistan are not fully implemented. For example, vertical and horizontal accountability of

government officials is one of the serious features that is lacking in Kurdistan.

The other crucial ingredient in a democracy is that the state apparatus must not facilitate surplus labor. In other words, the government or state should not be part of economic activities other than to be its regulator and arbiter. In those countries where the state has a direct stake and interest in economic affairs, the implementation and development of civil society either fail or lag behind. Since its establishment, Iraq has always been, at least up to the fall of the Baath regime, a state-led economy and thus strong authoritarian regime persisted for decades. Despite the fall of Saddam, the current economic activities in Iraq and Kurdistan are not completely free from the clench of the state, government or political parties.

The establishment of a strong democratic experience in Kurdistan, is not only necessary for international respect and the freedom of individuals, which are important reasons on their own, but at the same time it has another serious function, that is democracy is the only proper system that that can establish strong relations between the state and individuals, or in the case of Kurdistan between the government, political parties and individuals. Proper and healthy relations

between individuals and political agencies in Kurdistan are the safe belt for the masses to struggle for national and democratic rights.

In the crucial and challenging times ahead for Kurdistan and the world, the Kurdish political actors and Kurdish masses must be ready for dire situations and even for wars. A strong democracy and prosperous relations between the masses in Kurdistan and the KRG and all other political parties

will create an unbreakable resistance unit for any forces that may wish to disturb or to destroy or to diminish any political experience or entity that is established in Kurdistan.

Mass participation and mass mobilization are the two essential tools to deter any dark forces in Kurdistan. An accountable and transparent political entity which basis its relation with the masses on democratic unity rather than a ruler-ruled mentality can realize volun-

tary mass participation to protect their political entity and thus their national and political interests.

Since the collapse of Saddam's regime in 2003, the relations between the KRG and the masses in Kurdistan are steadily eroding and weakening. This is the greatest danger that awaits the Kurdish political actors in the near future. Once the trust of individuals towards the state apparatus is decomposed, the chances of political actors' initiating

political changes and policies and most importantly political struggle, will be an impossible task.

The KRG and Kurdish political actors have a historical responsibility to construct and rebuild the tarnished relations between the nation and their political representatives and this upcoming election provides a unique opportunity for the actors to assume a new platform for this.

KURDISHGLOBE

02 May 2009

KRG reaffirms commitment to human rights

On the back of crucial Amnesty International Report, KRG makes pledges

By The Kurdish Globe

The Prime Minister of Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani, expressed his strong commitment to human rights in a meeting with Amnesty International in the city of Erbil on Thursday.

Amnesty International's visit to the Kurdistan Region follows the recent publication of its report, Hope and Fear: Human rights in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The report had stated that security forces in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan Region operate outside the rule of law and regularly abuse their authority. It detailed many cases of people who were arbitrarily detained by Asayish (security) officials, tortured or forcibly disappeared.

At the meeting, Prime Minister Barzani said that a new law was being prepared to make the Asayish accountable to the Council of Ministers, though the timetable for this was still unclear.

The Prime Minister told Amnesty International that he had personally read the report and that he had instructed that its recommendations be circu-

lated to the detention authorities and the government ministries. He assured the organization of his determination to ensure that the Asayish and other security agencies are made fully accountable under the imminent law.

Amnesty International's report also outlined a number of recent improvements in the region, including the release of hundreds of long-term political detainees in 2008 and legal reforms affecting the status of women and media freedoms.

The Prime Minister assured Amnesty International that he along with his government are committed to stamping out so-called honour crimes and to ensuring that women are afforded effective protection against violence, including within the family.

«The Kurdistan Regional Government has taken positive human rights steps in recent years,» said Malcolm Smart, Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme and head of the organization's delegation in the Kurdistan Region.

«In particular, it has put in place concrete measures to combat violence against women, and we are heartened

by this. At the same time, we emphasized the need to ensure that women's human rights defenders are fully involved in all stages of developing and implementing policies to end violence, discrimination and to increase life opportunities for women and girls.»

Meanwhile, the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) UN coordinator, Dindar Zebari, denied the existence of secret prisons or political prisoners in the Kurdistan Region, adding that a senior committee has been set up to examine the Amnesty International report on human rights in the region.

"No one has been arrested without a court order. The doors of our prisons are always open to international organizations?" Zebari said in a press conference held in Erbil city, April 29th.

According to Zebari, Amnesty International did not adequately reflect the positive aspects in the region, including an improvement in the situation of women.

Kurdistan Region Presidency Chief of Staff, Fuad Hussein, stated that the senior committee, which has been set up to examine the Amnesty International report on human



KRG Coordinator to the UN Dr. Dindar Zebari comments on a recent Amnesty International report during a press conference on Erbil, April 29. GLOBE PHOTO/Safin Hamed

rights in the region, had started its works on Wednesday.

After publication of Amnesty International report, Massoud Barzani, President of Kurdistan Region, decided to form the committee in order to examine the report.

"Kurdistan Region presidency considers the reports as a very important report," said Hussein, "the presidency is keen to solve all the violations inside the security establishments."

AP Associated Press

New candidate emerges among Iraq's Kurds

May 2, 2009 / By YAHYA BARZANJI /
Associated Press Writer

SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq (AP) -- Time for "Change" for Iraq's Kurds? A new, independent candidate is taking up the slogan to woo Iraqi Kurds disenchanted over the two-party political divide in their oil-rich semi-autonomous region in northern Iraq.

Noshewan Mustafa, a former deputy leader and co-founder of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, says he plans to head a political group of independents called "Change" in the region's upcoming parliamentary elections.

Tired of the Kurdish two-party dominance and unable to push through reforms within the PUK, Mustafa told The Associated Press he wants to draw in those unhappy with the current political struggle.

"The old politicians and the dominating traditional parties are not interested in making change in Kurdistan," Mustafa said. "They want to keep things as they are."

"We want to change this political system," said Mustafa, adding he would campaign on promises to battle corruption and improve the lives of the region's population.

A date for the parliamentary elections has not been set, but the vote - the first in the territory since 2005 - is expected to be held by mid-July. There are about 2.5 million registered voters, according to the electoral commission.

Mustafa is among a wave of independent Iraqi politicians trying to break the hold of religious parties and other traditional power brokers in Iraq by tapping into frustration felt by Kurds and many Iraqis over perceived failures of the current administrations.

The trend was evident in the Jan. 31 provincial elections held in areas outside the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in the north. The hopefuls had mixed results.

Youssef al-Haboubi, who ran as a single candidate rather than on a party ticket with multiple candidates in Karbala, won the most votes but failed to gain the governorship.

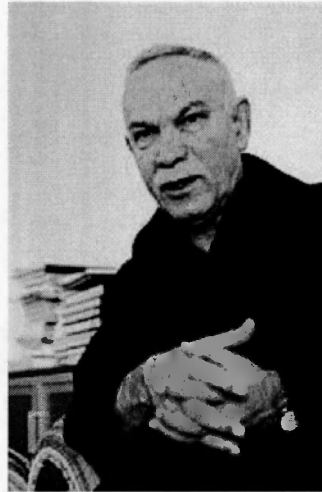
Instead, other parties formed an alliance and chose a member of the group loyal to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Al-Haboubi said he would work to improve services from his post as second deputy to the governor.

Salah al-Rekhyais, one of an estimated 2 million Iraqis with African roots, also ran in the southern province of Basra, calling himself the "Iraqi Obama."

He was so impressed with President Barack Obama's campaign and victory that he created a small party called the Movement of Free Iraqis and ran under its banner. He lost but his group has already created a list of potential black candidates to run in the next Iraqi elections.

The vote for a new 111-seat Kurdish National Assembly comes amid increased infighting among the ethnic minority as the political landscape shifts in Iraq ahead of the expected withdrawal of U.S. forces by the end of 2011.

Kurds did not go to the polls to choose provincial councils on Jan. 31 because of the need for a separate election



law for their semiautonomous region. For that, they need a new parliament.

The Kurds separated from the rest of Iraq after rising up against Saddam Hussein in 1991, aided by a U.S.-British no-fly zone that helped keep the dictator at bay.

PUK is one of the two main parties dominating the regional government, along with the Democratic Party of Kurdistan. The two parties are also thought to pull all the strings in the region's daily affairs, including businesses and commerce.

Mustafa broke away three years ago. Other senior PUK officials followed suit more recently, citing anger over corruption, a lack of financial transparency and private militias maintained by some

members.

Senior PUK member Saadi Ahmed Pera expressed confidence that Kurds would vote for the established parties.

"The people of Kurdistan are very smart and will never risk their future by voting for new lists. The people trust the Kurdish leaders and parties who have carried out many reforms over the past years," he said, calling on the groups to join forces against corruption.

But whether Mustafa - a 65-year-old who had stood by Talabani for 40 years - can draw enough votes to become a power-broker in the assembly remains to be seen.

"The two parties are controlling the police and media and we fear that this may affect the elections," Mustafa said. "But we think that the will of the people will prevail in the end."

Some Iraqi Kurds believe that Mustafa - who is popular both for his frankness and personal wealth - will add weight to the independents' bloc.

"There will be strong competition," said Reben Herdi, 43. "The region will witness a real election that will enable the voters to make a choice."

Others, such as 36-year-old attorney Othman Ahmed, believe the Kurds' "main problem is the absence of real opposition: both parties are partners in sharing the wealth and dividing the homeland."

"I will not vote for those who are part of the government," Ahmed said. "I will vote for new faces."

The Kurds have long been at odds with Iraq's central government over what the authorities in Baghdad see as their persistent attempts to project influence beyond the borders of their region and expand the boundaries of their authority.

The disputes have threatened to revive bitterness between Iraq's Arab majority and the long-oppressed Kurdish minority and could also stoke tension and hinder national reconciliation.

Mullen Warns Iraq About Arab-Kurd Hostilities

By Jim Garamone / Armed Forces Information Services

ERBIL, Iraq - Iraqi Kurds and Arabs must compromise to realize the full potential of the country, Navy Adm. Mike Mullen said during a visit here today.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff met with the president and prime minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government areas in Iraq. He also visited the U.S. Regional Reconstruction Team for the area.

Mullen said there have been tense times between Kurds and Arabs in Iraq, but that any disagreements must be worked out. Cool heads must prevail, the chairman said.

An outbreak of violence between the peshmerga (armed Kurdish fighters) and the Iraqi security forces would adversely impact the progress the country has made, and I told the Kurdish leaders that, Mullen said during the meeting with reconstruction team. They know this must not be allowed to happen.

The oil-rich city of Kirkuk is a flash point between the regional government and the national government. There have been confrontations between the peshmerga and Iraqi security forces " most recently in February " but they have no escalated to violence.

Mullen was struck by the willingness to discuss and compromise from President Massoud Barzani in his meeting. The president also told Mullen that

any solution to the PKK problem with Turkey, but be a political one. The PKK is a radical Kurdish group launching terrorist attacks inside neighboring Turkey.

Development is key to the region's future, Mullen said.

This is the civilian face of the Iraq surge, Lucy Tamlyn, the chief of the Regional Reconstruction Team, said to Mullen.

Tamlyn is an economic officer for the State Department. Her most recent assignment before taking the job was in the African nation of Chad. Now she is in charge of development for the three provinces that make up the Kurdistan Regional Government " Erbil, Dahuk and Sulamaniyah.

Unlike the more well-known provincial reconstruction teams in the rest of Iraq and in Afghanistan, there are no U.S. servicemembers on the team, although they work with American servicemembers based in the region.

The civilian workforce manages a large portfolio of projects aimed at improving life in the three provinces.

The Kurds like us and they don't want us to leave, Tamlyn said. We're working with the Kurds on goals they have set including essential services, rule of law issues and developing the private sector. The group also has a strong public diplomacy outreach effort.

The area is peaceful and has been a permissive environment " since the overthrow of Saddam



Hussein in 2003, she said. This means that team members are able to work closely with Kurdish officials on projects across the region. They are also able to train and mentor Kurdish Regional Government officials.

Erbil is a booming city in the traditional sense. There are many new buildings and ground has been cleared for even more. Shops are modern and clean and there are road construction projects throughout the city.

It gets more primitive out(side) of the cities, but that is part of the process as we move forward, Tamlyn said.

The U.S. team is helping the Kurds build the infrastructure which includes water projects, electricity and the oil and gas infrastructure.

REUTERS

Iraqi president says will not barter disputed city

SULAIMANIYA, Iraq, / May 3, 2009 / (Reuters) -

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said on Sunday the country's Kurdish minority would not give up their bid for control of the disputed oil region of Kirkuk.

Speaking alongside Massoud Barzani, president of the largely autonomous northern Kurdistan region, Talabani, a Kurd, was asked if Kurds would be willing to trade control of ethnically-mixed Kirkuk for anything else.

"Article 140 is a constitutional and lawful article. No one can violate the law or constitution ... I will never be ready to trade Kirkuk for anything. There will be no bargaining with Kirkuk," he said.

Article 140 of Iraq's 2005 constitution calls for several steps to address the dispute over Kirkuk, a volatile mix of Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen, including a referendum.

The United Nations handed the Iraqi government a report last month that it hopes will help end decades of deadlock over Kirkuk, which sits on as much as 4 percent of the world's oil.

The report contained four options to overcome disputes over control of Kirkuk and recommendations on 14 other contested areas in northern Iraq. The options, all of which treat the province as a single unit, were not made public.

Barzani said the Kurdish regional government, increasingly estranged from the Shi'ite Arab-led government in Baghdad, was studying the



report and could not yet comment on it.

Tensions are running high in Kirkuk, where Arabs and minority Turkmen and Kurds view one another suspiciously after decades of bloodshed, political manoeuvring and hardship.

Saddam Hussein, a Sunni Arab ousted by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, moved Arabs to the city en masse in order to dilute Kurdish influence. After Kurds gained control of the provincial government in 2003, Kurds have flooded back and Arabs now complain they have tipped the balance too far the other way.

As violence between once-dominant Sunni and majority Shi'ite Arabs subsides, many fear a major threat to Iraq's stability now lies along the line demarcating Kurdistan from the rest of Iraq.

HUIT INCULPATIONS À LA SUITE DU CARNAGE DANS UN VILLAGE KURDE DE TURQUIE

Par Burak AKINCI, (AFP)

MARDIN (Turquie) Huit personnes ont été inculpées après le massacre qui a fait 44 morts, dont des enfants et des femmes enceintes, pendant un mariage dans un village kurde du sud-est de la Turquie.

Les suspects ont été arrêtées peu après l'attaque du village de Bilge, lundi soir dans la province de Mardin, a précisé le gouverneur de la province, Hasan Duruer, cité par l'agence Anatolie.

Parmi les inculpés figure un adolescent de 14 ans, a ajouté M. Duruer qui n'a pas donné de précisions sur les charges retenues contre les prévenus mais a signalé que ceux-ci avaient choisi de garder le silence pendant les interrogatoires.

Deux autres personnes étaient toujours interrogées par les forces de sécurité, selon Anatolie.

Le massacre, selon des témoins, a eu lieu au cours d'une cérémonie de mariage dans le village. Les assaillants ont mitraillé à l'arme automatique les habitants de plusieurs maisons avant de prendre la fuite à la faveur de la nuit et d'une tempête de sable.

Parmi les victimes figurent la jeune mariée, son époux, les parents ainsi que la petite soeur de ce dernier, âgée de quatre ans, et l'imam du village.

Le ministre turc de l'Intérieur, Besir Atalay, a déclaré mercredi à la presse que plusieurs "gardiens de village", une milice kurde payée par le gouvernement pour lutter avec l'armée contre les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), figuraient parmi les prévenus.

"Il y a des gardiens de village aussi bien parmi les victimes que parmi les assaillants. Les armes utilisées sont celles qui ont été remises aux gardiens de vil-



Huit personnes ont été inculpées dans l'enquête sur le massacre de 44 personnes lundi soir lors d'un mariage dans un village kurde du sud-est de la Turquie, a annoncé mercredi l'agence de presse turque Anatolie, citant un responsable.

lage. C'est important. Nous sommes en train d'évaluer la question", a déclaré le ministre à Ankara.

Plus de 60.000 civils kurdes sont armés et payés par l'Etat depuis 1985 pour aider les forces de sécurité à combattre le PKK, en lutte contre le régime turc depuis 1984.

La dissolution de cette milice a été réclamée à plusieurs reprises d'autant que, de l'aveu même des autorités, les miliciens sont régulièrement impliqués dans des affaires de drogue ou de viols.

Selon Anatolie, citant un travailleur social, environ 70 enfants ont perdu au moins un de leurs parents dans le massacre.

Le Croissant-Rouge turc a annoncé dans un communiqué l'envoi de huit psychologues à Bilge pour soutenir les survivants.

Les forces de sécurité ont établi un cordon de sécurité autour des maisons des proches des prévenus pour empêcher d'éventuelles représailles, ce qui n'a pas empêché le départ de plusieurs familles, craignant pour leurs vies, a rapporté Anatolie.

"Bien que nous soyons innocents, ils (les villageois) nous accusent. Si les gendarmes ne sont pas là, ils vont nous tuer. Nous ne sommes plus en sécurité, nous devons émigrer", a déclaré un des fuyards, Ahmet Celebi, cité par l'agence.

M. Atalay a affirmé que les forces de sécurité avaient fait la lumière sur l'affaire, mais a refusé de donner des détails. "Il y a eu une succession d'événements au fil des ans, qui ont conduit à l'attaque. Il y a eu une raison importante qui a accéléré le processus", a-t-il déclaré.

Plus tôt dans la journée, relatant un entretien avec un des rescapés de la tuerie, M. Atalay avait signalé que l'homme avait fait état, comme mobile possible du massacre, de "jalousies qui s'accumulaient depuis longtemps" entre familles.

Le gouverneur de Mardin a pour sa part estimé que l'attaque n'était pas la conséquence d'une vendetta mais "d'inimitiés, de jalousies et de conflits d'intérêts".

Selon des témoignages recueillis par l'AFP, une dette entre familles serait à l'origine du drame.

TIRS IRANIENS DE MORTIER CONTRE L'IRAK: 5 TUÉS, DES OBUS TOMBENT EN TURQUIE (OFFICIEL)



DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 11 mai 2009 (AFP)

- Cinq rebelles Kurdes ont été tués lors de tirs de mortier iraniens dimanche soir contre le nord de l'Irak, ont affirmé lundi les autorités turques qui ont fait état de neuf obus tombés en territoire turc lors de cette attaque, sans faire de victimes.

"Un total de neuf obus de mortier sont tombés en territoire turc lors des tirs survenus dimanche soir depuis l'Iran dans une opération anti-terroriste contre des cibles dans le nord de l'Irak" indique un communiqué du gouvernorat de la province de Hakkari, dans l'extrême sud-est de la Turquie.

Les autorités frontalières iraniennes qui se sont entretenues lundi avec leurs homologues turques ont fait état de cinq morts dans les rangs du PJAK, organisation soeur du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, rebelles kurdes de Turquie) dans l'attaque irannienne, selon le texte.

Les obus ont atterri "par erreur" dans une région montagneuse déserte près de Yüksekova, à l'intersection des frontières turque, irannienne et irakienne, ajoute le communiqué.

Des milliers de militants du PKK, en lutte ouverte contre le gouvernement d'Ankara, et du PJAK sont réfugiés dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak.

Les artilleries irannienne et turque bombardent régulièrement cette zone.

L'aviation turque frappe aussi fréquemment la région avec l'aide de renseignements fournis par les Etats-Unis, alliés de la Turquie au sein de l'Otan.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a lancé en 1984 une campagne armée pour obtenir l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie, une région peuplée majoritairement de Kurdes. Le conflit a fait 44.000 morts.

44 Killed In Attack In Turkey; 8 Gunmen Arrested

Authorities Arrest 8 Gunmen Suspected In Attack On Engagement

Ceremony In Turkey's Southeast

AP Associated Press

BILGE, Turkey, May. 5, 2009 (AP)

Turkish security forces on Tuesday detained eight gunmen suspected of fatally shooting 44 people, many of whom were praying, at an engagement ceremony in the rural southeast of the country.

Masked assailants with automatic weapons attacked the celebration Monday night in the village of Bilge, near the city of Mardin, in the deadly outcome of a family feud, the government said. Vendettas occasionally simmer among families in the region, where tribal ties and rivalries can eclipse the power of the state.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said "the result of a feud between two families" had led to the deaths of six children, 17 women and 21 men. He said some suspects had the same family name as the victims.

"The people were killed at a happy event, during a ceremony, while praying," Erdogan said in his weekly address to ruling party lawmakers in parliament. "The fact that they pointed guns and massacred children, defenseless people, is atrocious."

Reports said the gunmen opened fire as men and women prayed in separate rooms in line with tradition in parts of Turkey.

The dead included the engaged couple, Sevgi Celebi and her fiance Habib Ari, as well as his mother, sister and the Islamic cleric who was presiding over the ceremony.

Six other people, including Celebi's father, were wounded in the 15-minute attack. Two girls survived after the bodies of slain friends fell on top of them.

One teenage girl said she lost six members of her family. "I heard the shooting and I hid in the barn because I was afraid. I was really afraid," the girl said on television footage released by Turkey's Dogan news agency.

On Tuesday morning, four large earth-movers were seen digging graves for victims in the village cemetery. Residents carried gravestones and two dozen seated women wept beside a tree, slapping their legs in grief.

Security forces backed by armored vehicles set up checkpoints on roads leading to the village. Authorities also cut telephone communication with Bilge.

Interior Minister Besir Atalay said eight suspects were in custody.

"They were caught with their weapons," he said. "The first indications are that it was the result of disputes, of animosity among relatives, within a family in the village."

Turkish media initially described the gathering as "dugun," a term for a wedding celebration. However, authorities and media outlets later used the term "nisan," which refers to an



AP Photo

engagement ceremony.

Anatolia news agency said the attackers had wanted Sevgi Celebi to marry one among their own group of friends or relatives but that her family would not allow it.

It cited unnamed villagers as saying there was a dispute between the attackers' family and the family of the would-be groom, and that Celebi's family had resisted pressure to cancel the marriage plans.

The attack focused attention on a feudal-style system that prevails in some impoverished parts of Turkey, where tribal lords and clansmen sometimes incite violence to safeguard the clans' honor.

"No customs and mores can be used as an excuse for this massacre," Erdogan said. "This is the painful price we are paying for such customs and mores."

Opposition lawmaker Canan Aritman urged the government to take steps toward eradicating the tribal system, though she did not specify how that should be done.

"It is something that doesn't exist even in the most primitive societies," said Aritman, member of a parliamentary panel investigating so-called "honor killings" within traditional families.

Mehmet Besir Ayanoglu, the mayor of Mardin, told Channel 24 that he spoke to two survivors, both girls, who said at least two masked men stormed a house where the ceremony took place.

"They raided the house, we were in two rooms, they opened fire on everyone, they were wearing masks," Ayanoglu quoted the girls as saying. The girls said they lay underneath the bodies of friends until the attack was over.

Seyhmus Balik, whose house is one kilometer (half a mile) from the village, told AP Television that he heard gunshots. After a short lull, he heard another round of gunshots, leading him to believe that the gunmen were firing on the injured.

NTV television, citing deputy Gov. Ferhat Ozen, had earlier said the motive for the attack could be a feud between rival groups of pro-government village guards, who fight alongside Turkish troops against Kurdish rebels. Like many other villages in the region, Bilge has a number of guards, and weapons are abundant in the region.

Balik said most village guards had left Bilge at the time of the attack to assist Turkish troops in an operation against Kurdish rebels in a nearby region.

The conflict between government forces and Kurdish guerrillas, whose strongholds are in the southeast as well as northern Iraq, has killed tens of thousands of people since 1984.



Not after a separate state, says PKK leader

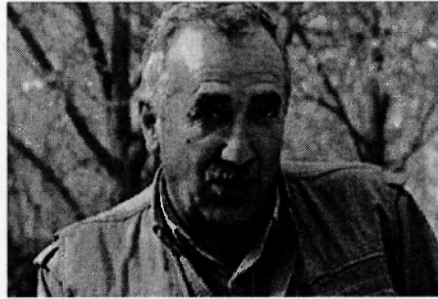
by Hasan Cemal - Milliyet

KANDIL, N. Iraq -The [outlawed] Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, is no longer seeking a separate state, but wants equal rights for Kurds in a united Turkey, its acting leader has said.

"The PKK is in a better position now. In the past, it wanted an independent Kurdish state, but that is not the case any longer," acting PKK leader Murat Karayılan said from the group's base in the Kandil mountain range in northern Iraq. "We want to live in the Republic of Turkey as equal and free citizens."

Added Karayılan: "We now say 'Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan.' By autonomous, we don't mean a federation. This leaves no need for redrawing borders and maintains or the unitary nature of the state. The local administrative law should be changed and local administrations empowered."

He said around 17,000 extra judicial murders have been committed against Kurds and there is an ongoing denial policy. He said the PKK has also engaged in some improper acts and that is why a community-outreach project is needed, in



which both sides have to forgive each other. He also called for a new constitution.

"Our desire is that Kurds should be able to live their culture freely," said Karayılan, who added that a Kurdish conference like one held recently in northern Iraq could help lay the groundwork for a future solution.

Lack of political will has left little resemblance between the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of today and the Erdogan of 2005, said Karayılan, referring to remarks the prime minister made during a speech that year in the southeastern city of Diyarbakır. "The Kurdish problem is our problem too," Erdogan said. "The state too has committed mistakes on this subject and they will be rectified."

Karayılan said no trace of that sentiment is left today.

"I can't be optimistic," he said. "There is no political will in regard to the Kurdish problem. This is a serious problem. Today even the generals are speaking differently, but where is the political will Where is the prime minister who said those words in 2005 Where is the Erdogan who, when he was Istanbul mayor in 1994, prepared a Kurdish report and presented it to the leader of his party" said Karayılan.

According to Karayılan, the PKK has changed and today uses armed conflict only for legitimate defensive purposes. "We are not the PKK of 10 years ago," he said. "We do not engage in armed conflict using the classic methods. We use armed conflict within the limits of legitimate defense. For the last four years we have been in a limited war."

The PKK took up arms in 1984 in a conflict that has claimed thousands of lives. Turkey, the United States and the European Union list the PKK as a terrorist organization.



May 6, 2009

U.S. fears violence ahead of Kurdistan regional elections

BY CORINNE REILLY AND LAITH HAMMOUDI
MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

BAGHDAD -- Iraq's semi-autonomous northern region of Kurdistan will hold parliamentary elections on July 25, officials said Tuesday.

Tensions between the Kurdish regional government and Iraq's central government in Baghdad have been rising, and U.S. officials have said they fear the disputes could escalate into armed conflict.

None of Iraq's three mostly Kurdish provinces held elections in January, when the rest of Iraq chose new provincial councils, and the July elections could help further the Kurds' efforts to control their northern territory and the revenues from Iraq's northern oil fields.

Roughly 2.5 million people are eligible to vote in the elections, though registration is ongoing, said Musab al-Mudaras, a spokesman for Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission.

Voters won't vote for individual candidates, al-Mudaras said. Instead, they will choose from the 42 political parties that have registered to run. Winning parties will decide whom to name to the regional parliament's 111 seats after the election results are announced.

For decades, two parties have dominated Kurdistan's politics: the Kurdistan Democratic Party, led by Kurdish President Massoud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, headed

by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani.

Recently, some Kurds have begun demanding a shift from the two-party system, and many expect new challengers to take seats this year.

"We're afraid this election will witness violence and clashes between those competing for power," said Sardashat Aziz, a 24-year-old schoolteacher from the Kurdish city of Sulaymaniyah. "The electoral map is different this time ... (The KDP and the PUK) aren't ready to give up their authority."

Local and international observers will be invited to ensure that the balloting is carried out fairly and without fraud, al-Mudaras said.

Regional parliament members serve four-year terms and are slated to choose a new Kurdish president soon after they take office.

The last time Kurdistan voters went to the polls was in 2005, and Kurdish parliamentary elections were initially scheduled for this month but were delayed after officials said they needed more time to prepare.

Kurdistan has remained fairly peaceful for the past six years, though separatist rebels in the region's northern mountains routinely fight with Turkey and Iran. In recent days, Iran has launched air strikes into northern Kurdish villages where rebels from the Kurdistan Workers' Party live and train.



UNDP to aid Kurdistan Region Government

Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan – UNDP-Iraq launched a three-year 4.5-million US dollar project in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, on Wednesday to support the budget planning and execution capacities of the Kurdistan Region Government (KRG).

"The KRG is at a cross road of its development process. Improvements in the political and security situation over the past few years have made it possible to step up its reconstruction efforts," said Mr. Elballa Hagona, Deputy Country Director and Head of Programmes with UNDP-Iraq, adding:

"However, this process is still fragile and subject to reversal. Like the rest of Iraq, KRG is not insulated from the spill-over effects of the global financial crisis and economic recession."

Mr. Hagona made the remarks at the launch ceremony for the project, which was attended by over 200 participants, including several KRG ministers and high-level officials from the central Iraqi government, as well as senior officials from the UN, World Bank and donor countries.

A key part of the new project is the implementation of the Action Plan for Regional Public Finance Management, which was adopted at the ceremony. The aim of the Action Plan is to strengthen the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of the regional ministries' budget execution and enhance the delivery of public services in the three northern Iraqi governorates. It is being implemented alongside a similar and wider effort across Iraq at the national level.

The Kurdistan Region Government receives 97 percent of its budget from the central government in Baghdad, which again derives 86 percent of its income from the petroleum sector. The recent sharp decline in global oil prices has forced steep budget cuts on both the central and KRG authorities.

"Instead of a threat, the current crisis should provide an opportunity

to accelerate much-needed structural reforms aimed at diversifying the economy and stimulating the growth of the non-oil private sector," Mr. Hagona pointed out.

"The crisis calls for more effective management of public resources to get better value for money and increase the development impact of public spending. The KRG Action Plan for Regional Public Finance Management provides the right tool to carry out these reforms at the right time," he stressed.

UNDP has worked in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region for several decades, currently implementing a portfolio of some 20 different development projects there. The many senior KRG officials present at the ceremony thanked the UN agency for its continued support of the region's development.

"I would like to thank UNDP for their good work. Iraq has great financial, natural and human resources. It is rich in oil and water. Most of the revenue comes from oil, but for Iraqis to be able to benefit from this, we need to prioritize the execution of our budget," Mr. Baez Saeed Mohammed, KRG Minister of Finance, noted in his speech.

Currently, the capacity-building project is only partially funded through a donation of some 850,000 US dollar from UNDP's own funds, a 500,000 US dollar contribution from KRG authorities, and about two million US dollars from the World Bank. UNDP and the KRG government hope to get additional support from the international donor community to meet the funding gap.

In 2008 UNDP delivered 88.7 million US dollars in aid to Iraq, bringing the total for the five-year 2004-08 period to over 451 million US dollars.

"The Kurdistan list" is the name of PUK & KDP joint list



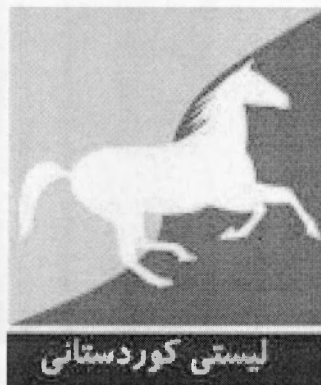
May 8, 2009

Erbil-Hewler, Kurdistan region 'Iraq', — The two main Kurdish parties announced officially on Thursday that they will run in the forthcoming parliamentary elections on one list, according to an official in charge of elections in Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union (PUK) of Kurdistan.

"The PUK and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) have registered their alliance on Thursday at the Independent Higher Electoral Commission (IHEC) in Erbil to participate in the parliamentary elections under one list called the Kurdistan List," Shorsh Ismail said in a press conference attended by Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

Iraqi Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani's KDP and Talabani's PUK had allied with several other Kurdish parties on one list during the 2005 legislative elections, where they gained majority in parliament.

The Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq, which supervised the country's provincial



"The Kurdistan list" is the name of PUK & KDP joint list.

council elections in January, will oversee the vote and has certified 41 political entities, with one final application pending.

Those registered include a breakaway faction from the PUK, the "Change" list led by Talabani's former deputy Nawshirwan Mustafa. His is a rare challenge to the decades-old poli-

tical powerhouse that has alarmed PUK leaders.

Nawshirwan Mustafa, a former deputy leader and co-founder of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's party, www.ekurd.net the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, says he plans to head a political group of independents called "Change" in the region's upcoming parliamentary elections.

"We want to change this political system," said Mustafa, adding he would campaign on promises to battle corruption and improve the lives of the region's population.



The Question of Kurdistan: Where Will It Lead?

By Judith Latham / Washington

The U.S. Secretary of Defense blames al-Qaida for a recent increase in violence in Iraq that has sparked sectarian strife. And as the United States reduces its military forces in Iraq, Robert Gates says it will be increasingly important to monitor the contentious relationship there between Arabs and Kurds.

Tensions between Arabs and Kurds in Iraq have been rising over a number of issues, including oil policy and the status of disputed territories such as the oil-rich city of Kirkuk.

A British Perspective

British journalist Ian Williams, who reports from the United Nations in New York, says Iraqi Kurds are functionally autonomous but have not given up their dream of eventual independence – something opposed by both the United States and Turkey. He explains the Iraqi Kurds are competing with the Sunni Arabs for control over the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul.

Speaking with host Judith Latham on VOA's International Press Club, Ian Williams says the problem goes back to the history of the formation of Iraq. One of the reasons the British abandoned their pledge to a Kurdish state at the end of World War I, he notes, was because of their concern about continued access to oil. "On the same premise," Williams says, "Saddam Hussein carried out ethnic cleansing and cleared the Kurds from Kirkuk and the surrounding region and tried to Arabize it." Even after the fall of Saddam, there has been little progress in resolving either the status of Kirkuk or the future apportionment of oil revenues between the central government in Baghdad and the various regions of Iraq, Williams observes.

According to Ian Williams, Ankara's strong opposition to a separate Kurdish state (as opposed to a Kurdish Regional

Government in Iraq) is the main reason for Washington's opposition to Kurdish independence. Were it not for that, he says, "The United States would have been very happy to see a friendly, independent Kurdistan in the north of Iraq." Nonetheless, several members of what Williams calls the "foreign policy elite" have suggested partitioning Iraq "between Arabs and Kurds – and amongst the Arabs between the Shi'a and Sunnis." He says "This dispute, which has been brewing for a century, was exacerbated by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and how the war was subsequently conducted."

Under the new Iraqi Constitution established in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion, the majority Shi'a, the minority Sunni Arabs, and the minority Iraqi Kurds were to share in the governance of Iraq. Ian Williams says even though Iraqi Kurds do not speak publicly about their ultimate political goal, "their desire for independence has not abated at all." According to Williams, it would be foolish for any Kurdish political leader to say the Kurds want independence "because that would be an invitation to Ankara to come riding onto them, not to mention giving the people in Baghdad an excuse for telling them that they are being disloyal."

Ian Williams says the whole idea of basing states on homogenous ethnic and religious groups is a West European idea that has "poisoned every area it has infected." He adds, "Just look at Bosnia. The old Balkan saying on this applies to Iraq as well, 'Why should I be a minority in your country when you can be a minority in mine?'"

An Arab Perspective

Arab journalist Nadia Bilbassy, senior correspondent for the Middle East Broadcasting Center, says she thinks the long-awaited referendum on the status of Kirkuk will be postponed indefinitely. She notes that the current population of the city is mixed – Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, Assyrian and Chaldean Christians.

Nadia Bilbassy says both the Sunni Arabs and the Iraqis want to keep it under their control. An interesting development, Bilbassy suggests, is that Iraqi President Jalal Talibani, who is Kurdish, has announced that he will not seek reelection. Bilbassy says, "That could further complicate the question as to whether the status of Kirkuk can be solved." And worse yet, she adds, it could turn into a major conflict between the Kurds and the central government.

The ethnic makeup has changed since the fall of Saddam Hussein, Bilbassy notes, and "some areas have been ethnically cleansed." She warns that we should



Iraqi President Jalal Talabani on a visit to the Kurdish city of Sulaymaniya last year

"not forget there are four million Iraqi refugees." And that means, as they return, "the situation on the ground will be fluid." Bilbassy says Iraq could descend into chaos, which could in turn provoke a civil war. "The problem with the Kurds is that, although they have all the ingredients to make them a nation and a state, their interest in being a state goes against the interests of neighboring countries and other Western powers, including the United States," she explains.

A Kurdish Perspective

Kurdish journalist Asos Ahmed Hardi is the director of Awena (Mirror) Company, which publishes a weekly newspaper in Sulaymaniya. He says just this week it was announced that parliamentary elections for the Kurdish Regional Government will be held on July 25th. He explains the Kurds did not participate in Iraq's provincial election in January because their local parliament has to draft its own laws for provincial elections.

According to Asos Ahmed Hardi, the most sensitive issue is Kirkuk. "The central government in Baghdad doesn't want final negotiations because they know that, if they apply Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution and hold a referendum, the majority will vote with the Kurds," he says.

Is Civil War a Possibility?

Looming over the competing factions in Iraq is the question of whether the promised withdrawal of American troops will plunge Iraq into a civil war. U.S. President Barack Obama answered that question during his surprise visit to Baghdad last month. He told Iraq's leaders the U.S. withdrawal will be done responsibly and without plunging the country into chaos. But knowing the history of Iraq's internal strife between Shi'a and Sunni Arabs and Kurds, fulfilling that promise will be a difficult challenge. ■



Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki (left) and Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani. Iraqi Kurds share in the governance of Iraq under the new Iraqi Constitution



Arab-Kurd Conflict Deepens In Mosul

By Quil Lawrence

All Things Considered, American troops are scheduled to withdraw from Iraqi cities by the end of June. But U.S. commanders have expressed concern about security in Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, where ethnic tensions between Arabs and Kurds run high. Shootings and bombings still occur almost daily.

Elections in Mosul in January did not calm the situation. The new Arab-dominated provincial government in Mosul declined to give Kurdish representatives seats on the cabinet, increasing rancor between the rival groups that threatens to spread across the north of Iraq.



Sheik Abdullah Ajil al-Yawar is one of the new power brokers in Mosul's provincial government. He is the leader of the largest faction in al-Hadba, the Arab nationalist coalition that won in January's provincial elections.



Kurdish teens in Shaykhan play soccer on a new field provided by the Kurdistan government. Their town is one of many that has decided to pull out of the new Arab-dominated provincial council in Mosul.

Arabs Assert Control

Many of Iraq's military commanders during Saddam Hussein's regime came from Mosul. After the American invasion, al-Qaida and Sunni Arab insurgents made Mosul their haven, and Sunni Arabs shunned elections there in 2005.

But in January, an Arab nationalist coalition called al-Hadba won elections in the province of 2.6 million people. The previous ruling coalition, dominated by Kurds, came in second. Despite the split, al-Hadba announced that it would not give the Kurds any cabinet positions in the new government.

Sheik Abdullah Ajil al-Yawar, leader of al-Hadba's largest faction, says the Kurds need to respect Iraqi law and respect that voters gave al-Hadba the majority. He lives outside Mosul in a palatial estate, guarded by tribal fighters in bulletproof cars.

The Kurdish party won only one-third of the votes, and al-Yawar defends the decision to shut Kurds out of the government.

"How many states in the United States did not vote for Obama?" he asks. Can people who voted for John McCain say, "We will not listen to Obama because we did not elect him?"

Kurds Pull Out Of Provincial Government

But winner-takes-all politics have not gone over well. The 12 elected members of the Kurdish coalition walked out of the 37-member council. When al-Hadba still didn't budge, they went further.

The mayors from several Kurdish-majority districts around Mosul gathered April 20 to announce that they will no longer participate in the provincial government — effectively, they seceded.

Anti-Kurdish violence also has prompted most of those mayors to stay away from Mosul. The mayors have a stronger relationship with the neighboring Kurdistan autonomous region in northern Iraq, which would like to annex their territory. The Iraqi constitution provides for a referendum on such disputed territories, but politics in the Mosul region would make such a referendum difficult, if not impossible.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki recently appealed for inclusion of Kurds alongside Arabs in the provincial government. The new al-Hadba governor says talks with the Kurds have been postponed indefinitely.

Kurds' Painful Memories Of Mosul

A group of Kurdish teenagers plays soccer every afternoon in Shaykhan, one of the towns north of Mosul whose leaders decided to withdraw from the provincial government.

The young men here say they feel free and safe in Kurdistan. They may have been swayed by the newly built, fenced-in soccer field with artificial turf, which, along with all the other services in town, came from the Kurdistan regional government.

For people in these towns, Mosul brings back painful memories of life in the Saddam era, says Khasro Goran, leader of the Kurdish parties in Mosul.

"We have very bad history with the former governors. They always excluded Kurds from everything. It was unable for Kurds to own a house in this city. They kicked out Kurds from a lot of districts and brought others, especially Arabs, to these areas. They don't want these things [to] be repeated again," he says.

Goran himself is not relaxed in Mosul; his own guards are visibly nervous as they move around the city, passing Arab-controlled police checkpoints. When Goran's Kurdish party list won the elections here last time, they put Arabs in top positions, he says, because they knew Arabs were the real majority.

Now, the Arab-led provincial government must include some Kurds, Goran says.

"When we are not there, who will solve the problem? By force? This is the only way that they can solve the problems," he says.

Kurd-Arab Conflict Continues

But Goran doubts the two sides will find peace in Mosul. He says tens of thousands of Kurds have already fled the city. Goran thinks the only solution is the referendum stipulated in the Iraqi constitution that will allow the disputed towns to join the Kurdish region.

Al-Yawar, al-Hadba's leader, disagrees. He says none of the people on the Kurdish list are fit for the government in Mosul. He says their true allegiance is to the Kurdish region.

"There is no future if they keep pushing, 'This land for me, this land for me.' It is not a piece of cake. All Iraq for all the Iraqis, not for the Arab or Shiite or Sunni or Kurd or Turkoman," he says, referring to Iraq's major ethnic and sectarian groups.

Kurds say will launch oil exports, Iraq denies

REUTERS

BAGHDAD, May 8, 2009 - (Reuters) -

By Waleed Ibrahim

** Exports from Tawke field to start June 1 - regional govt*

** Kurdish deputy PM: no export without Baghdad agreement*

** Baghdad says there is no deal with Kurds to export (Adds Kurdish deputy PM, lawmaker, edits)*

IRAQ'S largely autonomous Kurdish region said on Friday it would start exporting oil next month, but the Oil Ministry in Baghdad cast doubt on the plan, denying it had given them permission to use national pipelines.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) heralded the start on June 1 of oil exports from the Tawke field, saying they would start at an initial rate of 60,000 barrels per day (bpd).

Shares in DNO International (DNO.OL: Quote, Profile, Research, Stock Buzz), the Oslo-listed firm developing Tawke, surged on the news, up more than 18 percent on the day.

Natural Resources Minister Ashti Hawrami also said that 40,000 bpd of exports from another field, Taq Taq, would begin, travelling by truck and through an Iraq-Turkey export pipeline.

But the Iraqi Oil Ministry in Baghdad denied that the central government, which has long refused Kurdistan permission to export via the national pipeline, had agreed to this.

"So far no deal has been concluded between the two parties," ministry spokesman Asim Jihad told Reuters, but he declined to say whether such a deal could be reached by June.

Other officials in Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's ruling Shi'ite Arab-led government could not be reached for comment.

"The government of Kurdistan will not export the oil without the approval of the government of Iraq," Kurdistan Deputy Prime Minister Imad Ahmed told Reuters, casting doubt on the plan.

The long-running feud over oil is part of a larger dispute between Maliki's government and Iraq's Kurds, one that has held up national energy legislation and cast a shadow over a country struggling to emerge from six years of sectarian bloodshed.

LOOMING KURD-ARAB FEUD

Hawrami said Iraq's State Oil Marketing Organisation (SOMO), controlled by the Oil Ministry, would handle the oil sales.

"The exported crude oil from both fields will be marketed by (SOMO) and the revenue will be deposited to the federal Iraq account for the benefit of all Iraqi people," Hawrami said.

That was news to Falah Alamri, who heads SOMO.

"So far we are not aware of anything like this. Normally we receive instructions about such things from the oil minister, but we haven't gotten anything from him," he told Reuters.

Samuel Ciszuk, an analyst at IHS Global Insight in London, said the announcement could be an attempt to increase pressure on the Oil Ministry from its many critics in parliament, so that it moves more quickly to boost oil production.

Iraqi Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani is seeking long-term contracts with the world's largest oil firms, which he hopes will



help Iraq double daily output from around 2.3-2.4 million bpd now. But he has been criticised for not moving more quickly to raise production with shorter term deals.

"The Kurds ... are basically saying: 'there is crude to be exported if you allow us to do that,'" Ciszuk said. "The audience is Iraqi parliament and ... by making this fight overt they are trying to foment support in parliament and (from) all who are critical of Shahristani and his oil policies."

Iraq has the world's third largest oil reserves, but it desperately needs investment to boost output and repair infrastructure damaged by decades of sanctions, war and neglect.

The country, which relies on oil imports for more than 95 percent of its state revenues, needs exports more than ever as it faces a budget crisis due to the plunge in oil prices.

Baghdad's pipeline position has meant oil from Kurdistan, largely independent since 1991, has gone only to supply a small Kurdish market. Small amounts have been smuggled abroad.

Kurdish officials, who estimate reserves of at least 40-45 billion barrels in the area now recognised as Kurdistan, have also struck deals with other firms including Addax Petroleum.

Those contracts are deemed illegal by the Oil Ministry.

"Everything is in deadlock," said Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish lawmaker from Baghdad's parliament. "I blame both sides, but more the central government because the ball is in their court. They should take initiative. They don't seem to be in a hurry."

British oil explorer Heritage Oil said on Wednesday it had found up to 4.2 billion barrels of oil in Kurdistan. Ciszuk said that may have emboldened the KRG.

Growing Kurd-Arab tensions raise fears that the divide over energy resources could feed renewed conflict even as the violence unleashed by the 2003 invasion subsides.

Arabs reject Kurdish ambitions to absorb the oil-rich region of Kirkuk, home to Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen, into Kurdistan.



institute for war & peace reporting
May 11, 2009

Iraqi Kurds Yield to Rights Pressure

OFFICIALS pledge to rein in security forces following international scrutiny of abuse allegations.

By Frman Abdulrahman, Rebaz Mahmud and Roman Zagros in Sulaimaniyah
Prison had no place in Melko Abbas Mohammed's plans.

"Someone who becomes a terrorist will do so knowing their actions could put them in jail," he said. "I wanted to become a lawyer or a teacher."

The 22-year-old was taking evening classes at a high school when he was arrested in March 2008 in the Iraqi Kurdish city of Sulaimaniyah. He was released in February this year after being cleared of involvement in a deadly car-bomb attack on one of the city's upmarket hotels.

During his time in custody, Melko says he was beaten with cables, given electric shocks, suspended by his limbs and placed in solitary confinement.

Talking to IWPR more than two months after his release, he appears distracted, at times widening his eyes and gesturing helplessly, as if words alone cannot convey his message.

"I live in a country where the law questions only the weak. I am not happy, though I am free. I fear I will be arrested again," he said.

Melko's case is one of several listed by the London-based pressure group Amnesty International in a recent report accusing security services in Iraqi Kurdistan of abusing human rights.

While praising recent improvements in the region's rights record, Amnesty says people continue to be tortured and held for years without charge in its prisons.

The leadership of the Kurdistan Regional Government, KRG, has responded to the report with a pledge to make its security services, known as the Asayish, more accountable under a new law. Amnesty has given a guarded welcome to the pledge, saying it hopes the "positive" words will be backed up by action.

Some Kurdish officials attacked the report when it was released in mid-April, accusing it of malice and distortion. A statement by the Regional Security Directorate in the Kurdish capital, Erbil, said it rejected Amnesty's accusations as there had been "no human rights violations".

Omar Abdul-Rahman, a lawyer and member of the KRG parliament's human rights committee, said Amnesty had attempted to "defame" the region.

"This is an unjust and baseless report. Even if there are some shortcomings, they are not as serious as they claim," he said. He said the KRG was building new facilities to compensate for a lack of purpose-built prisons. Most prisoners are currently kept in converted schools or army barracks.

Abdul-Rahman said his committee had investigated allegations of torture and abuse but had found no evidence of it, "The detainees were satisfied. In many prisons, they have libraries and computers."



IWPR's inquiries into Melko's case indicate he has strong grounds to seek redress for his treatment by the security services.

Melko was arrested along with his 60-year-old mother nine days after a bombing at the Sulaimaniyah Palace Hotel that left two people dead and dozens injured. Their arrests coincided with the Kurdish festival of Newroz, celebrated annually with a ritual lighting of bonfires.

"My mother and I were good news for the security services - we were the wood for their bonfire," he said. Hours after the arrest, the Asayish presented photographs of Melko and his mother at a televised press conference about the bombing.

Melko's brother, Nahro Abbas Mohammed, learnt of the arrests from a Kurdish TV station in Switzerland, where he was living at the time. Alarmed to hear his family described as terrorists, he returned to Sulaimaniyah and began working for their release.

Melko says he too learnt only indirectly of the exact accusations against him. Several weeks into his incarceration, he was eating his meal from a newspaper on the floor of his prison cell, when he saw his photograph in an article about the hotel attack.

According to Amnesty, he was tortured repeatedly in prison. At one point, he reportedly required medical attention after a series of electric shocks prevented him from urinating for several days.

In November 2008, Melko and his mother were part of a group of eight suspects brought to trial for the attack. Both were acquitted. Another four individuals were sentenced to death, including a cousin of Melko's who is alleged to have been a member of an Islamist group allied to al-Qaeda.

Despite their acquittal, Melko and his mother spent another three months in prison and were only released in February this year.

Qadir Hama-Jan, the new head of security for Sulaimaniyah province, told IWPR, "Local security bodies cannot hold someone who has been acquitted by the court. Holding people in such cases is a breach of the law."

Hama-Jan was not in office at the time of Melko's case. Asked whether Melko could sue over his prolonged detention, he said, "Let him ask for his right through the court. Whatever the court decides, we will implement... No one and no apparatus is above the law."

Hama-Jan also said property confiscated from Mohammed's family during the investigation – including a house belonging to his brother – would be returned to them.

Said Boumedoha, an Amnesty researcher who worked on the report into Iraqi Kurdistan, says Hama-Jan's response is "very positive". He also praised the KRG's prime minister, Nechirvan Barzani, for a recent pledge to improve legal oversight of the security services.

However, Boumedoha said, "It remains to be seen whether these [words] will be followed by practical steps."

He says the Asayish interrogators urgently require human rights training and "overnight" improvements in their methods are unlikely. The "crucial" test, he says, will come if they are placed under pressure by another sudden attack.

Thanks partly to its security apparatus, the Iraqi Kurdistan region has avoided the daily terror attacks that have plagued Iraq for years. However, activists and experts say such stability need not come at the cost of human rights.

Nouri Talabani, an independent deputy and member of the KRG's parliament's legal committee, said there is no justification for human rights violations, despite "attempts by neighbouring countries to destabilise security".

Several experts say the failure to tackle violations by the security forces could ultimately harm Kurdish interests.

Dr Salar Basira, a professor of political sciences at Sulaimaniya University, warned that reports such as the one by Amnesty could lead to "a reduction in international support for the

Kurds".

Aland Mahwi, the director of local NGO Human Rights Information Bank, says the abuses carried out by Kurdish security forces "have largely ruined the Kurdish cause and image abroad".

For Melko's brother, Nahro, Iraqi Kurdistan has a long way to go before it cleans up its act. "If democracy is a school, then we are in first grade," he said.

He says he does not want anyone to be punished for what happened to his brother and his mother in prison.

Instead, he is campaigning for the authorities to publicly announce their innocence – a move that would restore their "honour". Right now, he says, the family is still suffering because of the stigma of terrorism.

News of Melko's arrest was broadcast widely across Iraqi Kurdistan. But since his release more than two months ago, his family says IWPR is the only media outlet to have interviewed him.

Frman Abdulrahman and Rebaz Mahmud are IWPR-trained reporters. Roman Zagros is an IWPR Iraq editor.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

MAY 11, 2009

Iraq Ends Ban, Allows Kurds to Export Oil

By HASSAN HAFIDH and
SPENCER SWARTZ

AMMAN -- The Iraqi federal oil ministry said Sunday it will allow the autonomous Kurdish government in northern Iraq to start exporting crude oil in June to world markets after blocking such shipments for the past two years.

The Kurds and the central government, which grants all oil-export licenses, have been at odds since 2007 over Iraq's draft hydrocarbons law and oil contracts that the Kurds signed with foreign companies.

Despite those issues being still unresolved, Baghdad -- under increased financial strain because of weak oil prices and falling revenue -- will allow the Kurds to begin exporting 60,000 barrels a day from June 1, oil ministry spokesman Assem Jihad said. "We are agreeing to the exports," he said. The Kurds said Friday they would start exports regardless of the ministry's approval.

Mr. Jihad didn't say why Baghdad had reversed itself, but it is likely that the central government's need for more revenue played a part in its decision. The government has slashed its 2009 budget three times because of falling oil prices.

Baghdad's acquiescence is also welcome news for the small foreign oil companies, including Norway's DNO International ASA, that have plowed hundreds of millions of dollars into finding and producing oil in Kurdish Iraq but haven't been able to export a single barrel.

It is unclear whether the start-up of Kurdish crude exports could help soften hard bargaining positions that Baghdad and Erbil, home to the Kurdish government, have adopted on the draft oil law and the Kurdish contracts. Iraqi Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani has said in recent days that Baghdad still won't recognize the roughly 25 contracts the Kurdish government has signed with foreign oil companies. In those deals, the Kurds allow companies to book some level of crude reserves they discover

as their assets, a concession Baghdad hates and thinks is against the national interest.

The Kurdish government on Sunday welcomed Baghdad's decision.

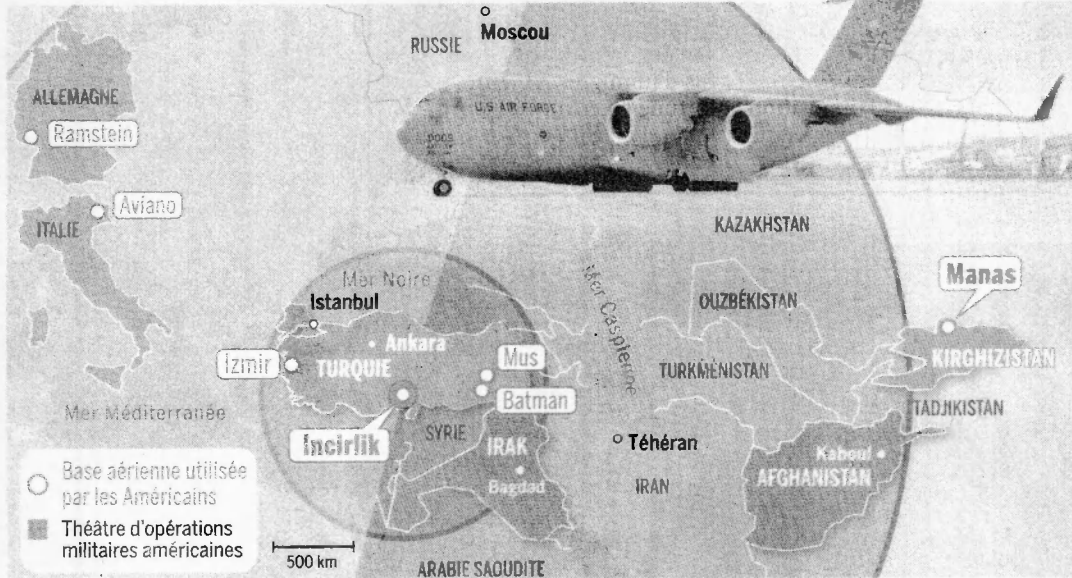
Mr. Jihad said the oil ministry's State Oil Marketing Organization will handle the sale and marketing of Kurdish exports, which will be shipped via a major pipeline that snakes to a big export terminal in Ceyhan, Turkey.

Le Monde
5 mai 2009

La base turque d'Incirlik, enjeu stratégique américain

Dans la politique régionale de M. Obama, le site militaire utilisé par Washington pourrait jouer un nouveau rôle

L'importance des bases pour l'Afghanistan et l'Irak



Un demi-siècle d'existence

1951 Construction de la base Incirlik. La Turquie entre dans l'OTAN.

1969 Accord de coopération et de défense signé entre Ankara et Washington.

1970 Les Américains passent de 35 000 à 16 000 hommes.

1980 Nouvel accord de coopération économique et de défense.

2007 Plus de 70 % des avions-cargos américains à destination de l'Irak passent par Incirlik.

2009 La base compte 4 500 Américains dont 1 500 soldats.

Reportage

Incirlik, Ankara (Turquie)

Envoiyé spécial

Plus qu'un avion de combat, plus qu'un seul transfert de troupes depuis des mois. Incirlik, la gigantesque base militaire turque utilisée en partie depuis plus d'un demi-siècle par l'armée de l'air américaine, apparaît bien calme, accolée à Adana, populeuse métropole du sud du pays.

A peine une demi-douzaine d'avions cargos de l'US Air Force attendent, la gueule ouverte, leur chargement. Même la piscine, le terrain de golf et l'aire de base-ball semblent abandonnés au soleil triomphant. A l'abri des hauts grillages, parmi les allées pavillonnaires bien entretenues, seuls un café Starbucks fraîchement installé et le bâtiment central de commandement renvoient l'image d'une certaine activité.

« Cela fait quelque temps que mon téléphone ne sonne plus », reconnaît Philip McDaniel, la cinquantenaire robuste et décontractée. Colonel en charge des opérations américaines de la base, il s'empresse d'ajouter dans un sourire qui en

dit long : « Mais je sais que l'on parle d'Incirlik en plus haut lieu. » Une façon d'évoquer à sa manière l'hypothèse d'un retour au premier plan de ce site hautement stratégique pour les Etats-Unis et utilisé, à maintes reprises, comme formidable moyen de pression diplomatique par les hommes forts d'Ankara.

La visite, début mars, de la secrétaire d'Etat, Hillary Clinton, dans la capitale turque, et la récente tournée de deux jours du président Barack Obama, qualifiée de succès par tous les commentateurs, ont mis en lumière le rôle central qu'Ankara peut jouer dans la nouvelle politique régionale américaine. Missions de bons offices avec l'Iran, Israël et la Syrie, la Géorgie ; rencontres tripartites avec les chefs d'Etat afghan et pakistanais : les Turcs, après les années de tensions liées à l'administration Bush, avancent sur la scène internationale munis d'un feu vert des Américains. Surtout, l'allié de l'OTAN pourrait être appelé à jouer une plus grande partition en Irak et en Afghanistan. « Des enjeux pour lesquels nous partageons des objectifs communs », assure-t-on à l'ambassade américaine à Ankara.

Le retrait programmé des troupes d'Irak a été unanimement salué par les dirigeants turcs. Et le

renforcement des unités américaines en Afghanistan pourrait s'accompagner prochainement d'une augmentation du nombre d'experts et de militaires turcs dans la région. Deux théâtres d'opération où « Incirlik continuera de jouer un rôle important », ajoute, d'une formule elliptique, la source américaine, avant de lâcher : « Rien que pour l'Irak, cette base reste vitale pour nos opérations. »

Construite par les Etats-Unis aux premières heures de la guerre froide en raison de son emplacement idéal pour ses bombardiers - une météo dégagée toute l'année, un rayon d'action couvrant tout le Moyen-Orient et plaçant Moscou à seulement 1 600 km -, Incirlik n'a cessé d'élargir son périmètre d'intervention. C'est d'ici qu'est venu le soutien aérien pour le déploiement militaire américain au Liban lors de la crise de l'été 1958. Ici que les fameux avions espions U-2 ont longtemps été camouflés. Ici encore que l'armée américaine stocke, selon différentes organisations, non gouvernementales (ONG), des ogives nucléaires - 90 bombes B 61, d'après les dernières estimations. « Sujet sur lequel je ne me prononcerai pas », coupe court, avec son sourire immuable, le colonel McDaniel.

Mais c'est à partir de la première guerre du Golfe (1990-1991) que la base gagne sa notoriété dans la région. Transformée en quartier général de l'armée américaine, Incirlik s'impose comme la rampe de lancement des principales offensives militaires et missions de bombardement. Capable de gérer deux opérations simultanément, le site sert aussi de point de rotation pour l'acheminement d'aide humanitaire aux Kurdes irakiens.

Après l'interdiction de survol du nord de l'Irak imposé en 1991 au régime de Bagdad, plus de 50 % des missions américaines dans le monde gravitent, selon la revue *Air Force Times*, par la Turquie. Un rôle-clé qui poussera Oussama Ben Laden à placer la base parmi les cibles de son organisation, Al-Qaïda.

L'invasion irakienne, lancée par l'administration Bush, ternira durablement les relations entre Washington et Ankara. En mars 2003, les députés turcs refusent aux soldats américains de fouler le sol du pays. Six mois d'après négociations sont nécessaires pour que le gouvernement contourné le vote du Parlement et autorise les Etats-Unis « en tant qu'alliés » à utiliser Incirlik pour faciliter l'approvisionnement des

troupes.

Il n'empêche, la base devient, selon l'expression de Frank Hyland, ancien agent de la CIA et aujourd'hui expert à la Jamestown Foundation, l'« otage » d'Ankara.

Tracasseries administratives, autorisations de survol du territoire

accordées au compte-gouttes... En 2007, les Turcs menacent de retirer leur soutien logistique si le Congrès américain adopte un texte qualifiant de génocide les massacres d'Arméniens perpétrés sous l'Empire ottoman, au début du XX^e siècle. Robert Gates, l'actuel secrétaire d'Etat à la défense, qui occupait ce poste durant cette période, s'oppose alors à la résolution, invoquant « *les implications considérables* » pour les opérations militaires américaines en cas de représailles.

Le vote est repoussé. La même année, suite à de nouvelles pressions, le président George Bush accepte de fournir des informations en temps réel sur la localisation des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) obtenue grâce aux vols de surveillance dans le nord de l'Irak.

« *Ce jeu-là est désormais terminé* », assurent les experts militaires américains rencontrés à Incirlik et Ankara. « *La lune de miel entre les Etats-Unis et la Turquie pourrait faire d'Incirlik un des symboles de ce renouveau*, poursuit dans la même veine Lale Sariibrahimoglu, spécialiste des questions de défense au quotidien *Taraf*.

« Les autres sites n'ont ni son potentiel ni sa fiabilité »

Selim Bölme
universitaire turque

Même si le transport d'armes et de soldats américains passe toujours aussi mal aux yeux de l'opinion publique turque, qui verra le chargement des avions en dehors des militaires turcs ? »

Pour Selin Bölme, doctorante sur Incirlik à l'université d'Ankara, l'importance de la base devrait également se vérifier dès le retrait du gros des troupes américaines d'Irak, en août 2010. « *En cas d'une dégradation de la situation ou d'un imprévu dans la région, elle offre la réponse la plus rapide et la moins coûteuse*, affirme-t-elle. *Les bases allemandes sont éloignées et chères. Les sites américains alternatifs comme ceux d'Irak ou du Caucase ne possèdent, eux, ni son potentiel ni sa fiabilité.* »

Le Monde

13 mai 2009

Le livre du jour Le Kurdistan après les Américains

LE KURDISTAN est-il sorti du XX^e siècle ? Hamit Bozarslan, spécialiste de la question kurde en France, en doute. D'après ce directeur d'études à l'Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), les Kurdes ne sortent pas de leur vieille contradiction : la question du Kurdistan, à cheval sur quatre Etats (Syrie, Turquie, Irak et Iran), reste une question périphérique au Moyen-Orient, tout en étant incontournable quant à l'adaptation de la région à la mondialisation.

Docteur en science politique, spécialiste de la violence politique, Hamit Bozarslan tente d'ouvrir avec pédagogie et conviction de nouvelles pistes pour trouver des

**Conflit kurde
Le brasler oublié
du Moyen-Orient
Hamit Bozarslan
Autrement, 172 p., 16,15 €.**

issues à cette cause si complexe et en pleine révolution depuis la guerre en Irak et l'ouverture des négociations entre la Turquie et l'Union européenne.

En effet, jamais le problème n'avait autant occupé le devant de la scène internationale que depuis l'irruption de ces deux dynamiques, l'une meurtrière, l'autre pacifique. Au point que l'accélération du développement politique kurde semble à l'ordre du jour, notamment dans sa sphère irakienne. Pour Hamit Bozarslan,

deux options se présentent pour le Kurdistan : soit le contingent américain se maintient durablement en Irak et risque de transformer le Kurdistan en « *second Israël* » ; soit le retrait américain est complet et compromet l'exception kurde irakienne contre les puissances turque et iranienne, contrariées par la proximité de ce « *presque Etat kurde* » en Irak. L'auteur croit en la complémentarité des imaginaires politiques, pour peu que les Etats dérangés par la question kurde optent en faveur d'une démocratisation des systèmes et des mentalités en échange d'une déradicalisation de l'espace kurde. Mais ce spécialiste n'en est pas moins réaliste : l'environnement géopolitique est dangereux, le modèle de l'Etat-nation reste hégémonique et le nationalisme kurde demeure incapable de surmonter le poids des traditions, son clanisme et la violence endémique.

Et pourtant, conclut Hamit Bozarslan, la question kurde, parent pauvre de la vieille question d'Orient, n'a pas d'autre choix que de s'ouvrir sur le monde et inviter ses « *Etats-surveillants* » à en faire autant, suffisamment pour secouer leurs mentalités, sans aller trop loin toutefois pour ne pas menacer leur intégrité. Un savant dosage à concocter dans cet espace à mi-chemin entre les civilisations arabe, turque, perse et... kurde. ■

Gaïdz Minassian

Pour l'heure, 50 % des avions cargos militaires destinés à l'Irak passent par Incirlik. Chaque jour, six à huit imposants C-17 décollent des longues pistes de la base. Deux d'entre eux partent pour l'Afghanistan, selon les chiffres avancés

par le colonel McDaniel. « *C'est un peu moins pour l'Irak qu'il y a quelque temps, glisse-t-il, et un peu plus pour le terrain afghan.* » Comme en écho d'une tendance qui s'annonce. ■

Nicolas Bourcier



MANIFESTATION À MOSSOUL DE CENTAINES D'IRAKIENS POUR LE DÉPART DES KURDES

MOSSOUL (Irak), 12 mai 2009 (AFP) -

PLUSIEURS centaines d'Irakiens ont manifesté mardi à Mossoul, dans le nord de l'Irak, pour demander le retrait des forces kurdes irakiennes déployées dans la province de Ninive depuis plusieurs années.

Les manifestants se sont rassemblés à l'initiative de dix grandes tribus arabes de la région devant le Conseil de la province pour montrer leur soutien au gouverneur, empêché récemment par les peshmergas (les soldats de l'armée kurde irakienne, ndr) de se rendre dans des villages de cette province du nord du pays.

"Cette manifestation vise à soutenir le gouverneur et à faire respecter la loi dans la ville", a déclaré Mohammed al-Joubouri, le porte-parole de la tribu Joubouri au conseil des tribus.

"Nous demandons aux forces (kurdes, ndr) de partir et de fermer tous les sites illégaux où elles sont déployées à Mossoul", a ajouté M. Joubouri.

Outre le départ des forces kurdes de sécurité, les manifestants demandaient la

libération des personnes détenues dans les prisons kurdes.

La province de Ninive, dont Mossoul est la capitale, est frontalière du Kurdistan irakien. Après l'invasion du pays en mars 2003 par une Coalition menée par les troupes américaines, les peshmergas ont été déployés en grand nombre dans cette province pour assurer la sécurité.

Kurdes, chrétiens, arabes sunnites et chiïtes y vivent et jusqu'aux élections provinciales du 31 janvier dernier, les partis kurdes dominaient le Conseil de cette province majoritairement sunnite, les partis arabes ayant boycotté le scrutin précédent.

La victoire de la liste d'Athil al-Nujeifi a marqué le retour des sunnites dans le jeu politique avec un mot d'ordre des plus sommaires: mettre fin à l'emprise kurde.

La "question kurde" à Mossoul cristallise un affrontement entre le gouvernement central du Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki et le président du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani.

Irak: un attentat suicide fait six morts Kirkouk

AP Associated Press

12 mai 2009 (AP)

UN ATTENTAT suicide a fait six morts mardi, dont cinq policiers et un civil, à Kirkouk, dans le nord de l'Irak, a annoncé la police.

L'attentat a eu lieu dans un quartier commerçant bondé du centre-ville de Kirkouk, où le kamikaze a foncé en voiture dans un camion de police.

L'explosion a fait six morts et onze blessés, dont des enfants et d'autres civils, a expliqué le porte-parole de la police, Sarhat Qadir.

La province de Kirkouk est très riche en pétrole et en gaz naturel. Les dirigeants kurdes irakiens cherchent à l'incorporer dans la région semi-autonome du nord du pays, ce qui rend la zone particulièrement sensible, avant le retrait des troupes américaines prévues d'ici la fin 2011

TURQUIE: UN SOLDAT TUÉ, UN BLESSÉ DANS L'EXPLOSION D'UNE MINE



DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 12 mai 2009 (AFP)

UN SOLDAT turc a été tué et un autre blessé mardi par une explosion, due à une mine posée par des rebelles kurdes, dans le sud-est de la Turquie, une région où les séparatistes sont présents, a-t-on indiqué de source de sécurité locale.

L'incident s'est produit à Cukurca, dans la province de Hakkari, juste à la frontière avec l'Irak, lors d'une mission de patrouille d'un groupe de soldats, a-t-on précisé de même source.

Selon les autorités, la mine avait été posée les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Le PKK, qui mène une lutte armée pour l'autonomie de cette région à majorité kurde, a souvent recours aux mines.

Il est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis.

IRAN: 8 MORTS DANS DES AFFRONTEMENTS AVEC DES REBELLES KURDES



TEHERAN, 13 mai 2009 (AFP)

Cinq rebelles et trois miliciens "bassidjis" ont été tués lors d'accrochages dans l'ouest de l'Iran, à proximité de la frontière avec la Turquie et l'Irak, a indiqué mercredi un quotidien iranien.

"Cinq rebelles et trois bassidjis ont été tués dans les derniers affrontements en date entre rebelles armés et forces bassidjes, dans la province d'Azerbaïdjan occidental", a rapporté le quotidien Kayhan, sans autre précision.

La milice islamiste Bassidj est un bras armé des Gardiens de la Révolution.

La région frontalière de la Turquie et de l'Iran est le théâtre d'affrontements périodiques entre les forces armées iraniennes et le groupe séparatiste kurde Pejak, basé dans le nord-est de l'Irak.

Le Pejak, acronyme du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan, est lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui lutte depuis 1984 contre le gouvernement turc dans le sud-est anatolien.

L'Iran accuse les Etats-Unis de soutenir le Pejak, ainsi que d'autres organisations ethniques aux frontières de l'Iran, ce que Washington a toujours démenti.

Le 24 avril, 18 policiers et huit membres du Pejak ont été tués dans la province de Kermanshah, à la suite de l'attaque d'un commissariat.

TURQUIE: 7 REBELLES KURDES TUÉS DANS DES COMBATS AVEC L'ARMÉE (OFFICIEL)



ANKARA, 16 mai 2009 (AFP) -

Sept rebelles séparatistes kurdes, dont deux femmes, ont été tués samedi au cours de combats avec l'armée dans l'est de la Turquie, a indiqué le gouvernorat local.

Les affrontements se sont produits dans une zone rurale d'Eruh, une localité de la province de Siirt, indique un communiqué du gouvernorat de cette province.

Deux soldats ont été blessés dans les accrochages, ajoute le document.

Un précédent bilan fourni également de source officielle faisait état de trois rebelles abattus.

L'armée a lancé une opération dans ce secteur après la mort d'un milicien kurde pro-gouvernemental, membre des "gardiens de village, tué dans l'explosion d'une mine activée à distance, selon le gouverneur.

Le PKK, qui mène une lutte armée pour l'autonomie de cette région à majorité kurde, a souvent recours aux mines et engins piégés. Il est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis.

M. Ahmadinejad se représente en Iran

Les listes pour l'élection présidentielle du 12 juin sont closes, la bataille électorale est lancée

A la surprise générale, celui qui n'était alors que le maire de Téhéran, le fondamentaliste Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, avait remporté l'élection présidentielle de 2005. Quatre ans après, à 52 ans, M. Ahmadinejad brigue un nouveau mandat.

Et plus encore que la situation économique préoccupante du pays, due à la mauvaise gestion de l'argent du pétrole et au poids de trois séries de sanctions du Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies, en réponse à la non-coopération de Téhéran sur son programme nucléaire controversé, c'est le bilan de ce président à la fois très critiqué et encore populaire qui domine les débats.

Le premier tour du scrutin présidentiel a lieu le 12 juin, mais, depuis samedi 9 mai, les inscriptions sont closes. Les listes comptent 475 candidats, qui seront « sélectionnés », d'ici le 21 mai, par le Conseil des Gardiens, rouage essentiel du pouvoir, aux mains des fondamentalistes.

Parmi ceux qui devraient rester en lice, figure, dans le camp réformateur, l'ex-président du Parlement Mehdi Karoubi, 72 ans, un religieux atypique, populiste à sa manière avec son franc-parler du

Le président iranien est désavoué par une assez grande partie des députés

Lorestan (sa province d'origine), qui s'est attiré la faveur des étudiants en signant avec le Prix Nobel Shirin Ebadi une pétition demandant la fin de l'exécution des délinquants mineurs au moment des faits.

Classé proche des réformateurs, mais plutôt candidat de « liaison » entre ces derniers et les fondamentalistes, se trouve l'ancien premier ministre Mir Hossein Moussavi. Un homme du sérail, ancien architecte amateur d'art. A 68 ans, ce traditionaliste modéré, qui a dirigé le pays (1980-1989) durant la guerre Iran-Irak et qui parle de « détente »

avec l'Occident, semble un sérieux adversaire pour M. Ahmadinejad.

Le dernier entré en lice, avec fracas, il y a quelques jours, est Mohsen Rezaie, 56 ans, le chef historique des pasdarans, ces gardiens de la révolution, devenus l'armée idéologique du régime avant, pour certains, de diriger des pans entiers de l'économie nationale. M. Rezaie, un conservateur bon teint, qui affiche une certaine « indépendance » et critique la présidence sortante, a déclaré : « *La voie suivie par Ahmadinejad mène à un précipice.* » Mettant aussi en cause l'« immobilisme diplomatique » du président, il a ajouté qu'il fallait répondre aux ouvertures des Américains, car « *l'Occident et les Etats-Unis ont besoin de nous. Il faut exploiter leurs besoins pour servir nos intérêts.* »

Paroles d'une rare dureté qui en fait, bien que la campagne ne commence que le 22 mai, s'inscrivent dans l'âpre bataille pour le pouvoir engagée depuis des semaines. Le coup d'envoi de cette lutte avait été donné il y a plus d'un mois, lorsque l'ex-président de la République islamique (1997-2005), le réformateur Mohammad Khatami, d'abord candidat, s'était brusquement retiré.

Dans un éditorial, le journal *Keyhan*, bastion tout-puissant de la pensée fondamentaliste proche du Guide suprême, l'ayatollah Khamenei, avait écrit que « *M. Khatami ferait bien de se souvenir de ce qui était arrivé à Benazir Bhutto [assassinée en campagne électorale en 2007] au Pakistan*... ». D'autres « mises en garde » avaient suivi. Et même si ce n'était pas cela la seule raison, M. Khatami s'était retiré officiellement pour ne pas « *dispenser l'électorat réformateur.* »

Depuis, selon les confidences d'un proche de M. Khatami, un « front » informel s'est constitué entre MM. Moussavi et Karoubi, à qui M. Khatami a prêté ses stratégies de campagne. Avec, dit-il, « *dans l'ombre, le soutien tacite de cet autre ancien président de la République, le pragmatique Alki Akbar Hachemi Rafsandjani.* » Un front pour quoi faire ? « *Pour rassembler, précisait-il, tous ceux qui*

veulent le changement et barrer la route dès le premier tour à M. Ahmadinejad. »

Dans cet exercice d'infinie incertitude que sont les élections iraniennes, certains se sont précipités pour noter les signes qui, selon eux, montrent que M. Ahmadinejad n'est plus si en cour auprès du Guide suprême. Ce dernier vient de le désavouer publiquement en refusant de fusionner deux organisations, celle qui s'occupe du hadj, le coûteux et rentable pèlerinage à La Mecque, et l'office du tourisme, que M. Ahmadinejad voulait chauffer.

De même, le président est désavoué par une assez grande partie des députés du Majlis (Parlement). Enfin, sa dernière sortie sur Israël à Genève, à la conférence de l'ONU sur le racisme, le 22 avril, lui a valu un regain de popularité dans la rue arabe mais de vives critiques à Téhéran, où de plus en plus de voix l'accusent d'isoler l'Iran.

Est-ce suffisant pour le donner battu ? Certainement pas. Il a à sa disposition la télévision nationale, le soutien des bassidjs, les milices islamiques qui quadrillent les quartiers, et celui des couches défavorisées en province, où ses tournées populistes assorties d'aides directes ont été appréciées. Aussi bien que l'image d'homme pieux, sobre et simple qu'il affiche. Et puis, en campagne, c'est une « bête de scène » qui sait travailler l'auditoire.

Le sobre et discret Moussavi, qui s'est retiré vingt ans de la vie publique, fera-t-il le poids ? « *Il a pour lui d'avoir géré au mieux le pays dans la tourmente et la pénurie de la guerre, au contraire de ceux qui ont gaspillé l'argent du pétrole à 150 dollars le baril* », commente le sociologue Essan Naraghi. Quant au Guide, il affecte de ne soutenir personne à ce stade. Mais, nous a confié par téléphone l'analyste Seyed Leylaz, « *depuis le retrait de M. Khatami, considéré comme le plus dangereux candidat pour l'équipe en place, le Guide ne s'inquiète pas. Il estime qu'aucun de ceux qui sont en lice ne représente un danger pour la pérennité du régime et des institutions.* » ■

Marie-Claude Decamps

United Press International

Turkey favors UNAMI report on Kurdistan

May 8, 2009 (UPI)

The latest report from the United Nations on the so-called disputed territories in Iraq falls in line with Turkish regional objectives, ministers said.

The U.N. Assistance Mission for Iraq submitted a report on the disputed northern territories to Iraqi officials in April.

The Kurdish government in Iraq claims administrative authority over the provinces of Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaimaniya, as well as portions of Diyala and Ninawa.

The issue has been the focal point of tensions between the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdish government, with possible spillover effects on Kurdish separatist activity in the

region.

Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman Burak Ozugergin said the 500-page UNAMI report, which has not been made public, would contribute to political reconciliation in the region, the Turkish Hurriyet news service reports.

"We believe the report could contribute to a solution to the problems on this issue," he said.

In its announcement of the report, UNAMI offered few specifics beyond calling for local measures to address issues in Erbil, Dahuk, Sulaimaniya, Diyala and Ninawa.

On Kirkuk province, UNAMI reviewed several options for administration there as a starting point for negotiations but noted all of those options consider Kirkuk as a single entity.

Suicide Bomber Kills Five Iraqi Policemen in Kirkuk

AP Associated Press

May 12, 2009 Associated Press

BAGHDAD -- A suicide bomber rammed his car into an Iraqi police truck Tuesday, killing five policemen and a civilian in Kirkuk, police said.

The attack, which took place in a crowded downtown commercial area packed with people preparing for work, also wounded at least 11 others, including children and other civilians, said Brig. Gen. Sarhat Qadir, the police spokesman in Kirkuk.

Gen. Qadir originally reported that three civilians had died in the blast, which left a scene of devastation around the market of burnt cars and smoldering shops.

Firefighters hosed down the street, and police carried off the charred bodies of their colleagues after the attack.

A roadside bomb exploded near an army patrol on the other side of the city at the same time as the suicide attack, but there were no casualties, said Gen. Qadir.

Kirkuk is the center of Iraq's oil production in the north and is contested between its Kurdish and Arab populations.

Kurdish leaders are seeking to incorporate it into their semiautonomous region in the north, making it one of the most sensitive areas for Iraqi leaders and U.S. military commanders preparing to withdraw their troops from the country by the end of 2011.



Iraqi police officers pull a body from the scene of a suicide bombing in Kirkuk.

REUTERS

Iran urges Iraqi action on Kurdish rebels

TEHRAN (Reuters) - May 11, 2009

Iran urged neighbouring Iraq on Monday to "pay special attention" to armed groups operating in its border areas, a week after Baghdad condemned Iranian shelling of villages in Iraq's northern Kurdistan region.

Iraq said last week it had summoned Iran's ambassador to Baghdad and warned of "negative consequences" if such attacks continued.

Iran, whose forces often clash with guerrillas in its own Kurdish-populated areas close to the Iraqi border, has neither confirmed nor denied reports its forces had shelled targets inside Iraqi territory.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hassan Qashqavi told a news conference that Iran respected and supported Iraq's territorial integrity.

Iran "expects that Iraqi officials pay special attention to movements of small groups which are officially known as terrorist groups even by Western governments," he said.

He appeared to be referring to the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), an offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) which took up arms in 1984 for an ethnic homeland in southeast Turkey.

Both PJAK and the PKK are present in Iraq in the remote mountainous area close to the borders with Turkey and Iran.

Like neighbouring Iraq and Turkey, Iran has a large Kurdish minority, mainly living in the country's northwest and west.

Iran sees PJAK, which seeks autonomy for Kurdish areas in Iran, as a terrorist group. The United States, Iran's arch foe, also branded PJAK as a terrorist organisation in February.

Iraqi border police last week said Iran shelled a Kurdish village in a remote area of Iraq's largely autonomous Kurdistan region on May 4, causing damage to buildings but no casualties.

That followed Iranian shelling two days earlier of Kurdish rebel positions in another part of Iraqi Kurdistan. Helicopters were also used to fire from the Iranian side of the border.

The Turkish military conducted a major incursion last year against PKK militants in northern Iraq and Turkish warplanes have since carried out regular cross-border bombing raids against targets in the mountainous region.

Iran and Iraq fought a war in the 1980s, but since the ouster of Sunni Arab Saddam Hussein in 2003, relations between majority Shi'ite Muslim Iraq and Iran have improved.

"During the government of Saddam, this border was not safe because of the nature of Saddam's government," Qashqavi said.

"Now we expect that this border will become safe ... on both sides," he said.

REUTERS INTERVIEW-Iraqi Kurds hoped for more from US, leader says

SALAHUDDIN, Iraq, May 13, 2009 (Reuters)

By Missy Ryan and Shamal Aqrawi

IRAQI KURDS, who had grand hopes to expand their northern enclave after the fall of Saddam Hussein, have been let down by insufficient support from long-time ally the United States, the Kurdish president said.

Masoud Barzani, who heads the largely autonomous Kurdistan region, said Washington had failed to give strong support to a Kurdish-backed plan in Iraq's 2005 constitution for settling the fate of Kirkuk, a disputed northern region with vast oil wealth. "We have had a historic and friendly relationship, but frankly speaking, we were expecting more," Barzani said in an interview on Wednesday.

"They could have played a much larger role in solving this problem than they did," he said, speaking from his palatial headquarters on a hilltop outside the Kurdish capital, Arbil.

Barzani's reproach is a striking shift for a minority that has seen itself as a close ally of the United States, which for more than a decade enforced a safe zone in northern Iraq which kept at bay an Arab leader who slaughtered Kurds en masse.

Kurds are increasingly estranged from the Shi'ite Arab-led government in Baghdad, a worrisome trend as Iraq seeks to put end to stubborn violence and to shore up a fragile democracy.

Against that backdrop is the struggle for control of ethnically mixed Kirkuk, a Gordian knot tied to ethnic passions, decades of conflict, and as much as 4 percent of world oil.

Arabs and Turkmen are dead-set against allowing Kurds, who were forced out of Kirkuk by Saddam but who have returned in droves since then, to absorb it into their northern enclave.

Kurds, who dream of their own homeland and fear the growing assertiveness of Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, see plans for a gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops by 2012 with alarm.

Yet some Western and Arab officials say Kurds, who occupy Iraq's presidency and are a powerful voice in parliament, have overreached as they angle for ever-greater land and influence.

Kurds demand implementation of Article 140, the clause in the constitution that lays out a plan for determining who will control Kirkuk. The plan includes a census and a referendum.

The deadline for such steps has long since passed, and Turkmen and Arabs, who accuse Arbil of sending hundreds of thousands of Kurds to Kirkuk to tip the ethnic scale, say that blueprint is now obsolete. Kurds deny those charges.



Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdish regional government, speaks during an interview with Reuters in Arbil, 310 km (190 miles) north of Baghdad May 13, 2009. REUTERS/Azad Lashkari (IRAQ POLITICS ENERGY)

CHEMICAL ATTACKS

Last month, the United Nations proposed four options, which are not yet public, for settling the Kirkuk impasse.

The United States, eager as it prepares to withdraw to avoid doing anything that might plunge Iraq back into all-out civil war, has strived to be seen as impartial on Kirkuk.

U.S. officials also know that Turkey, Syria and Iran are watching carefully for a shift for Iraq's Kurds, which they fear could lead to similar demands from their own Kurdish minorities.

For Kurds, another trouble point in ties with Washington relates to chemical attacks on Kurdish villages in the 1980s.

Thousands of Kurds were killed by gas attacks in the village of Halabja in March 1988, part of Saddam's 'Anfal,' or spoils of war, campaign against Kurds he accused of secretly aiding Iran.

The U.S. government, then aligned with Saddam against Iran, was aware western and U.S. firms may have been selling Iraq chemical weapons technology used against Iran and Kurds.

"Neither America nor Europe has moved very quickly or seriously to reveal and expose companies and people who had a role, or in compensating the people of Kurdistan," Barzani said.

THE ~~2009~~ TIMES May 12, 2009

Iraqi deal opens way for Kurdish oil to go on sale

Carl Mortished, World Business Editor

Oil from the Kurdish region of Iraq will begin to flow into world markets within a matter of weeks after a landmark agreement between Baghdad and the regional government.

The prospect yesterday of profits from new oil discoveries in Kurdish Iraq pushed up the share prices of independent oil

explorers active in the area, including Addax Petroleum, the London-quoted oil explorer, and DNO, the Norwegian company. Kurdish oil exports will increase the pressure on Baghdad to agree deals with multinationals such as BP, Shell and ExxonMobil that have been held up in disputes over the profit share between the Iraqi State and foreign investors.

After years of wrangling, the Iraqi Oil

Ministry issued licences yesterday for the export of oil from fields operated by two foreign companies. From June 1, oil from DNO's Tawke field will flow at a rate of 60,000 barrels per day into Iraq's northern export pipeline into Turkey. A further 40,000 barrels a day is expected to flow later in June from Taq Taq, operated by Addax. Kurdish oil export volumes will increase later to as much as 250,000 bar-

rels a day when a pipeline spur links the Taq Taq field to the main export line to Turkey.

Political feuding between Kurdish nationalists in Arbil and Iraqi Arabs in Baghdad have dogged efforts by foreign investors to bring the region's oil to the world market. Latterly, the dispute appears to have centred on the management of oil revenues.

The Kurdish regional government said yesterday that revenues would be held centrally and distributed throughout the

country, according to a formula agreed in the Iraqi Constitution.

While the big oil companies waited for Baghdad to agree rules for foreign investment, smaller independent companies flocked to the Kurdish region, attracted by the local authorities' willingness to do exploration deals on profit-sharing terms.

Yesterday's approval of oil exports by Baghdad will highlight the slow pace of development in southern Iraq, where foreign investors have been offered "service contracts" to extract oil.

Excitement over Kurdish exports was heightened last week when Heritage Oil, a Canadian company listed in London, said that a well drilled close to Kirkuk indicated a field with potential recoverable reserves of more than one billion barrels.

 Rudaw.Net May 13, 2009

Barzani is so far the only candidate for the presidential elections

Rudaw- Hawler

The parliamentary and the presidential elections are scheduled to be held on July 25 in Kurdistan. The president of the four joint parties told Rudaw that he will not candidate himself for the said position. Moreover, a source from Change List, said that Nawshirwan Mustafa also, is not going to candidate himself.

Massoud Barzani, President of Kurdistan, in a speech in Kurdistan Parliament on May 5 tied his candidacy for presidency to a direct election in which voters can elect the president.

The president will be directly elected.

Three major lists compete during the parliamentary elections. Kurdistan List consists of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. The Service and Reform List, a coalition of four parties; Kurdistan Islamic Union, The Islamic League, the Social Democratic Party, and Independent Tailors Party. The Change List, presided by Nawshirwan Mustafa.

So far only the Kurdistan List has a candidate for the presidency of Kurdistan.

The Iraqi High Electoral Commission (IHEC) has set five days timeframe for candidates to register for the Presidency post, starting from May 17. The law requires candidates to be at least 40 years old and citizen of the country.

As for the election of Kurdistan's Vice President, Sherwan Haydari, the head of Legal Committee in the parliament said, "The Vice President will not be elected by the elections but by the political factions."

This time PUK and KDP, unlike the 2005 elections in which the coalition was broader, will run for the election in a joint list in which they are the only allies. They have also agreed to have an equal share in parliament.

Sa'di Ahmad Pira, a member of PUK politburo, told Rudaw the equality of shares is based on the strategic agreement between PUK and KDP.

"Both parties will have an equal quota in parliament and government", said Pira.

Although Pira didn't say how PUK and KDP distributed the share of power in the next government, but he said, "Barzani is PUK and KDP's candidate for the Presidency of Kurdistan. KDP appointed the Prime Minister of the government for the last four years by the terms of the strategic agreement between both



parties. The PUK has the right to claim this post for the four coming years. This means that we both are committed to the agreement."

"Some believe the list should have a candidate for the Presidency of Kurdistan but some reject the idea. Those who advocate the idea believe that an impartial person be nominated, some prefer to candidate Mustafa, as he wins more votes", a close source to Wusha Company (Mustafa's Company) told Rudaw.

The same source said that it is likely that Mustafa's list might not have any nominees for the post.

In a former interview with Rudaw, Salar Aziz, a leader in Change List, said that Mustafa does not want to become the President of Kurdistan or the Prime Minister rather he wants for an active parliament.

Nevertheless, Muhammad Tufiq Rahim, a member of the management board of Wusha Company, in an interview told Rudaw "So far we have not decided on nominating a candidate for the post".

"I will not candidate myself for Presidency of Kurdistan Region", Salahaddin Muhammad Baha'addin, secretary general of the Kurdistan Islamic Union who also heads the Service and Reform List, told Rudaw, rejecting the rumor about his candidacy.

Abdulstar Majid, the spokesman of the Islamic League, said that the four joint parties have not discussed the subject.

"Neither the politburos of the four parties nor the Islamic League have discussed the possibility of nominating a candidate for the Presidency of Kurdistan Region", Majid said.

Violence Rises in Iraq's Tense North

By CAMPBELL ROBERTSON

BAGHDAD — Tensions flared in Iraq's volatile north on Tuesday with demonstrations in Mosul and a car bomb that killed 7 and wounded 18 in Kirkuk.

The bomber in Kirkuk rammed a car into a police patrol near the headquarters of the main Turkmen political party, said Lt. Col. Ghazi Mohammed Rasheed of the Iraqi police. The road where the attack occurred was the site of frequent attacks in 2006 and 2007.

"Lots of people remember this road bitterly," said Yusuf Mahmoud, who owns a small market nearby.

The attack occurred a day after a car bomb left three dead and eight wounded outside a Kirkuk mosque.

Kirkuk is the most contentious point on a tense ethnic fault line between Kurds and Arabs that stretches east from Syria and south along the Iranian border. Kurds stake a historical claim to a number of territories along the line where Saddam Hussein expelled Kurds and moved in Arabs. They say that the areas should belong to the semiautonomous province of Kurdistan, and they have been pressing for a constitutionally mandated referendum to decide their fate.

Kirkuk Province, which is home to Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen and Christians, contains substantial oil reserves. The United Nations recently released a report laying out several options for the province, including making it semiautonomous.

But conflict has threatened to boil over all across the north, particularly in Nineveh Province, where a Sunni Arab political bloc has recently come to power and frozen the once dominant Kurds out of political positions.

On Friday, Atheel al-Nujaifi, the newly installed Arab governor of Nineveh, was prevented by Kurdish security forces from attending a hot-air balloon festival in Bashiqa, a town in Nineveh that the Kurds claim as theirs.

The pesh merga, as the Kurdish forces are called, have been stationed in



An Iraqi police officer pulled a body from the scene of a car bombing in Kirkuk on Tuesday. The blast killed seven people.

towns around Nineveh ever since the Americans brought them in to pacify the north in 2003, a presence that enrages Nineveh's Arab population and its new government.

On Tuesday, more than a thousand people, most of them from Arab tribes in Nineveh, gathered in front of the provincial government building in Mosul and in downtown Bashiqa demanding that Kurdish forces leave the province.

Khasro Goran, the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party branch in Mosul, said that Bashiqa and other pro-Kurd towns did not recognize the authority of the current provincial government, and that the pesh merga had intervened to prevent the situation from turning violent.

"The pesh merga will not leave," he said. "They are in Kurdish areas to protect the citizens."

Also on Tuesday, the Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella group that includes Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, the home-grown group that American intelligence officials say is led by foreigners, released a recording said to be from Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, the group's top leader.

The Iraqi government said in April that it had arrested Mr. Baghdadi, though Americans have questioned

whether he exists at all. The insurgent group first released a statement that appeared on extremist Web sites denying the arrest, and then put out the recording, in which the man claiming to be Mr. Baghdadi condemned the Iraqi government.

Sam Dagher and Atheer Kakan contributed reporting from Baghdad, and Iraqi employees of The New York Times from Mosul and Kirkuk.

Kurdish crude bails out Baghdad

By Joost Hiltermann

When Iraqi Kurdistan's oil minister, Aslti Hawrami, buoyantly announced last week that the Kurds and the federal government in Baghdad had agreed to start pumping Kurdish crude through the Iraqi network for export to Turkey, the global oil industry cheered. Up to that point, a long-running tussle between Baghdad and the Kurdistan regional government (KRG) had all but dashed Kurdish export hopes. After years of stalemate over how to divide power, land, and resources, the oil deal looked like nothing short of a breakthrough.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Baghdad's response was more guarded. At first, the government denied that any such deal existed, only to reluctantly concede later that there was an agreement after all. Baghdad dampened expectations by refusing to say when the oil would start flowing and reiterating its longstanding position that the KRG's some 25 deals with foreign oil companies are illegal. The central government disputes both the principle and the design of the contracts. First, Kurdistan lacks the jurisdiction to sign away extraction rights, the government argues. Second, Kurdistan has signed production-sharing contracts (PSCs) by which companies are paid partly in oil, allowing them to book higher holdings and thus drive up the value of their shares. Paying in oil is seen as an abomination in Iraq, provoking a nationalist backlash against what many perceive as a sellout of the country's natural resources to foreigners.

The KRG has long been seeking to develop the Kurdish region's own resources, despite Baghdad's opposition. It argues that a history of neglect, discrimination and outright destruction at the hands of the central state has given the Kurds ample justification for autonomy in all things, including oil. The export-ready oil comes from exploration begun several years ago by companies working in two fields: Tawke on the Turkish border, developed by DNO, a small Norwegian company, and TaqTaq, a large field in central Kurdistan that is co-operated by Addax of Switzerland and Genel Enerji of Turkey. Jointly, the two fields could produce 250,000 barrels per day. This would boost Iraqi exports, which have lagged at 1.8 million bpd, far below potential and much less than what Iraq was producing before Saddam Hussein dragged the country into a series of disastrous wars.

As much as Baghdad might like to object, economy reality necessitates that it go along with the Kurds - for now. The government drafted its 2009 budget last year as oil was peaking at \$147 per barrel. It conservatively based revenue projections on a price of \$80 a barrel -- not conservative enough, it turns out. By year's end, the price had plummeted to \$40, and today it hovers around \$60. Despite budget amendments, Iraq is expecting an



Tough economic times are turning willful enemies into reluctant partners.

\$18 billion deficit this year that could grow further if oil exports don't pick up. And even if projected oil revenues of \$36.5 billion are realized, these won't cover even the government's day-to-day expenses, mostly salaries for the huge public sector.

Kurdish exports would be a boon for an ailing Iraq since the KRG and Baghdad long ago agreed to share revenues. The KRG gets 17 percent of the federal budget. However, in an important concession that was sure to make the deal more palatable to Baghdad, Kurdistan's Hawrami indicated that proceeds from the new sales would be deposited into the federally managed Development Fund for Iraq rather than an independent offshore escrow account from which both Baghdad and the KRG could draw.

The pragmatism that bred this unlikely compromise will prevail as long as the economic outlook remains dire. If the export deal could form the basis for a much bigger bargain on the division of powers between center and regions, the status of disputed territories such as oil-rich Kirkuk, and a federal hydrocarbons law, then we would truly be looking at a breakthrough. Such a task will require a proactive mediation effort from the Obama administration, which will surely want to leave behind a sustainably stable Iraq when its troops withdraw by the end of 2011. Economically speaking, the time couldn't be more fortuitous to give KRG-Baghdad talks a serious go.

Joost Hiltermann is deputy program director for the Middle East and North Africa at the International Crisis Group.

AP Associated Press

Iraq government to get revenue from Kurdish oil

May 15, 2009 JAMAL HALABY

The Associated Press

SOUTHERN SHUNEH, Jordan - Iraq's central government will get revenue from the deals struck by the country's semiautonomous Kurdish region even as it continues to reject those accords, the oil minister said Friday.

Iraqi Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani spoke to The Associated Press at the three-day World Economic Forum in Jordan, where business and political leaders were drafting the Mideast's response to the global recession.

"The Iraqi government has no relations whatsoever with the contracts which have already been signed between Iraqi Kurdistan and the companies working in those areas," al-Shahristani said.

However, the minister added that the Kurds have acceded to a central government request that the proceeds from these deals "go to the central treasury and be distributed to all the regions of Iraq."

The agreement could help resolve the long-standing dispute between the central government in Baghdad and the Iraqi Kurds, concentrated in the oil-rich north. The two sides have been at loggerheads over deals signed by the semiau-

onomous Kurdish authority and foreign companies, with the Baghdad government maintaining those deals were illegal since a national oil law had yet to be passed.

Still, Shahrastani added that any party involved in oil deals with the Kurds needed to present them officially to the Iraqi government to have them endorsed "if we find them to be in Iraq's interest."

On May 8, Kurdish Natural Resources Minister Ashti Hawrami said the region's first crude oil initial exports would start on June 1, with about 60,000 barrels a day from Tawke field and another 40,000 barrels per day to follow from the Taq Taq field later that month.

The Kurds hope to export 250,000 bpd from both fields by

the end of 2009.

Tawke is being developed by independent Norwegian oil company DNO, while Turkey's Genel Enerji and Canada's Addax Petroleum Corp. are jointly operating Taq Taq.

Iraq, which holds the world's third-largest known oil reserves of at least 115 billion barrels, is suffering a financial squeeze as crude prices fall on the back of a global recession-fueled erosion in demand.

The government is looking to increase revenues by signing new oil deals with international companies, but they have been hampered by the ongoing failure of parliament to pass an oil investment law.

IRAQI KURDISTAN TO EXPORT GAS TO EUROPE, TURKEY

REUTERS 

May 17, 2009 - By Simon Webb - Reuters)

DUBAI - A consortium of companies from the United Arab Emirates and Europe plan to export enough gas from the Kurdish region of northern Iraq to supply the first phase of the Nabucco pipeline to Europe.

The exports would help Europe in its quest to diversify energy supplies away from Russia.

Following are some of the potential consequences of the plan:

EUROPE, RUSSIA AND ENERGY SECURITY

* Iraqi Kurdistan gas would give Europe a source from Iraq through Turkey, away from Russia and its immediate sphere of influence. Europe relies on Russia for a quarter of its natural gas supplies. A cut-off in Russian supplies to Europe last winter due to a dispute with Ukraine left thousands without heating and added urgency to Europe's search for more sources.

* Russia opposes the Nabucco pipeline plan and is developing the rival South Stream project. It signed deals with partners on Friday to accelerate the scheme. Moscow has rebuked the United States and former Soviet satellite nations for backing the rival Nabucco plan.

* Russia is Turkey's largest trade partner. Turkey is Russia's third-largest gas consumer. A 26-year gas supply deal between the two expires in 2012 and both agreed to work on extending the deal on Saturday.

TURKEY, EUROPE AND IRAQ'S KURDISTAN REGION

* Turkey would gain bargaining power in its quest to become a member of the European Union as a transit country and facilitator of gas exports from Iraq. Due to its geographical position straddling the Middle East, Central Asia and Europe, Turkey sees its potential for being a strategic energy partner as one of its strongest arguments for accession to Europe.

* The pipeline would increase interdependence between the Iraqi Kurdistan region and Turkey. This may have implications for the 25-year Kurdish separatist conflict in the largely Kurdish area of southeastern Turkey, long a source of regional instability and a hindrance to Ankara's EU membership quest.

* As the transit country for gas supplies to Europe, Turkey would also gain leverage over Iraq's Kurdistan region.

* Gas exports from the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq to the Turkish market would make Turkey dependent on energy supplied by the Iraqi Kurds.

* Exports from Iraq's Kurdistan region could help meet Turkey's

gas needs and remove a potential obstacle to Nabucco. Around 1 billion cubic feet per day (cfd) could go to the Turkish market from the consortium project in Kurdistan. That is more than the 15 percent of Nabucco's 3 billion cfd that Turkey wanted for its own market.

IRAQ'S KURDISTAN REGION, NABUCCO

* Gas exports would thrust the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region of Iraq onto the international energy supply stage. The region plans to make its first foray into the world energy market with exports of crude through Iraq's northern oil export pipeline to Turkey in June.

* The project could pave the way to future, larger exports from northern Iraq to Europe, Turkey and other nearby states with gas needs.

* The region's oil and gas reserves were little explored under Saddam Hussein and are potentially larger than estimated. The UAE's Crescent Petroleum is confident it can pump over 3 billion cfd for many years. Around half of that would be available for the Nabucco project, enough to fill the first phase of the pipeline.

BAGHDAD, OIL FIRMS

* Baghdad's oil ministry declined to comment on the Kurdistan gas plan on Sunday. Iraq's oil ministry has clashed repeatedly with the Kurdish Regional Government over control of the country's oil and gas reserves and could oppose the deal, which has no federal approval. The oil ministry has criticized oil and gas contracts the KRG has signed with international oil companies, calling them illegal. The disagreement goes to the heart of political differences in Iraq over central versus regional control over the world's third largest oil reserves.

* Baghdad has blacklisted firms that have signed deals with the KRG. This has kept the world's biggest energy firms away from the Kurdistan region but left opportunities for those less concerned about Baghdad's opprobrium.

IRAN

* Iran has long expressed its desire to become a major player in the world gas export market and has said it wanted to be a supplier to the Nabucco project. The pipeline would still need more gas, so Iran could join the Kurdistan region in the future.

* But European buyers do not see Iran as a reliable potential source of gas. European companies have halted investment plans there due to political pressure and sanctions from the United States and the United Nations over Iran's nuclear programme.

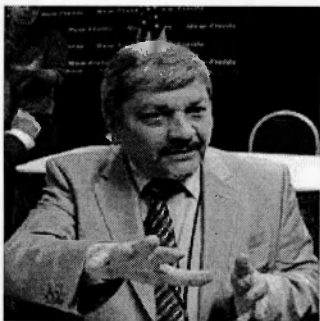


Former Iraqi Oil Minister Plays Down Dispute With Kurdistan Production

By Greg Flakus
Houston

IRAQ'S OIL Minister Hussain al-Shahristani says deals made by Kurdistan with foreign private oil companies to develop petroleum production in new fields for export starting next month are illegal. But a former Iraqi oil minister taking part in the Second Iraq Oil and Gas Summit in Houston on Wednesday expressed confidence that such disputes will be resolved and that the country's oil wealth will increase in the years ahead.

Former Iraqi Oil Minister Ibrahim al-Oloum says he is confident political differences in his country can be resolved so that its oil wealth can be fully exploited. He hailed the Kurdistan Regional Government's plan to sell oil from its new fields and downplayed the dispute over direct deals made by the regional government with two foreign companies.



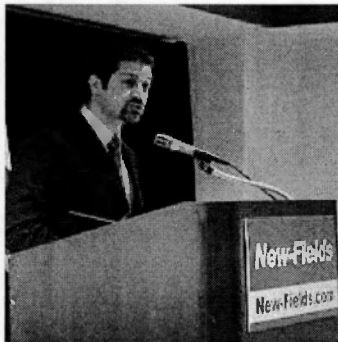
Ibrahim al-Oloum, former Iraqi Oil Minister

"These differences, these political differences, really deprive the Iraqi people of development. We need to resolve them," he said.

Dialogue necessary to resolve dispute

He said the Iraqi federal government and Kurdish regional leaders need to engage in dialogue over this issue.

"Both sides need that," he said. "Iraq needs the production at this moment



Qubad Talabany, Kurdistan representative

very badly and also Kurdistan, what are they going to do with the oil? They need to export it and there is no way except through the traditional pipeline. So both parties have to get together and talk about this."

Kurdistan confident about oil agreements

The Kurdistan Regional Government representative to the United States, Qubad Talabany spoke with confidence about the oil export agreements and what the new production means not only for his region, but for the country as a whole.

"At an initial rate of 60,000 barrels a day, this will be the first new oil to be exported from Iraq since Operation Iraqi Freedom," Talabany said. "It is also the first of Kurdistan's newly discovered oil fields to produce and begin flowing through the pipeline to Turkey and out on to the market while returning dollars to the federal treasury in Iraq."

This is the first time oil fields have been developed in Kurdistan and Talabany and other participants familiar with Iraq's energy sector say it is only the beginning. They note that 90 percent of the country's potential oil-producing areas remain unexplored. Iraq produces just under two million barrels of oil a day now, down from the three and a half million barrels a day it produced in the 1980's. Iraq's estimated reserves top 112 billion barrels, making it second

only to Saudi Arabia in terms of the oil it holds underground.

Oil bill may have to wait until after election

The former oil minister, Al-Oloum, says



Houston conference participants

Iraq's output could reach four million barrels a day by 2014 and seven million barrels a day by 2019 if lawmakers pass a hydrocarbon bill by sometime next year. The proposed bill has been stalled in the Iraqi parliament for three years and the former minister predicts it will not be approved until sometime after a new parliament is elected at the end of this year.

The conference in Houston brought together around 100 Iraqis and representatives of US and international energy companies. Some companies set up displays to show their services and expertise, while others relied on personal discussions with Iraqis attending the conference to develop contacts and business leads. The event continues through Thursday.

Le Kurdistan turc sous l'emprise des « gardiens de village »

TURQUIE

Ces miliciens payés par Ankara pour lutter contre la guérilla du PKK sont suspectés d'exactions et de crimes d'honneur.

De notre envoyée spéciale à Diyarbakir

UN DRAPEAU turc flotte sur une guérite à l'entrée d'Ahmetli. Dans une odeur âcre de sueur, enmitoufflés dans des couvertures à fleurs, la kalachnikov en bandoulière sur le treillis, trois hommes laissent passer l'orage. Ce sont des *korucu*, des « gardiens de village », miliciens kurdes payés par l'État turc pour lutter contre la guérilla du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

« Nous n'avons pas eu le choix, expliquent-ils. L'armée nous a dit : "soit vous devenez gardiens, soit

vous évacuez le village". Nous partons parfois avec les soldats en opération dans la montagne, en première ligne, car nous connaissons la région. » Pour ce travail, Sıraç et ses deux acolytes reçoivent une solde mensuelle de 630 livres (300 €), ont droit à la Carte verte pour les soins médicaux gratuits et à une retraite à 65 ans. Ce sont surtout ces avantages qui les motivent, car la région est sinistrée. Leur chef, qui arrive sur un tracteur rutilant, n'est pas de cet avis. « Nous n'avons fait et ne faisons que notre devoir », éructe-t-il, les mains crispées sur le volant avant de sortir une liasse de billets de son veston. « Je ne le fais pas pour l'argent, je suis riche. »

Voilà une semaine, un conflit entre deux clans a fait 44 morts dans le hameau de Bilge, à 50 km. Les suspects de ce massacre à la kalachnikov en pleine fête de fian-

çailles, ainsi qu'une partie des victimes, sont des *korucu*. « Tant qu'on leur donnera des armes comme celles-ci, ça pourra recommencer », dit Veysi Tekin, lui-même victime de gardiens de village il y a plusieurs années. Le récent massacre, dont les causes restent obscures, a relancé la polémique sur la présence de ces 70 000 miliciens dans le sud-est de la Turquie.

« Le bien-être du pays »

La mère de Veysi Tekin tanguait en marchant, comme si elle se trouvait sur le pont d'un bateau pris dans la houle. « Deux balles de kalachnikov sont restées dans ma hanche », explique cette paysanne kurde. Veysi, lui, n'a guère d'espoir de trouver un emploi plus rémunérateur que celui qu'il a décroché comme agent de sécurité. À cause de sa prothèse en métal dans le bras, il ne peut plus soulever de poids.

La famille Tekin porte toujours dans sa chair cette funeste journée de 2002 : le gouvernement turc venait d'autoriser le retour dans les villages des populations évacuées de force au milieu de la guerre civile avec les rebelles kurdes du PKK, dans les années 1990. Réfugiée dans la grande ville de Diyarbakir, elle avait donc décidé de rentrer à Urak. Mais des gardiens de village s'y étaient installés, accaparant les terres fertiles. « Ils nous ont attaqués », raconte Veysi Tekin. Mon père, un cousin et un neveu de 9 ans ont été tués. Sur les onze assaillants, deux seulement ont été condamnés. » L'opposition et les associa-

tions des droits de l'homme réclament le désarmement des milices.

Depuis sa mise en place en 1985, cette force paramilitaire, dirigée par des chefs de guerre kurdes, a été régulièrement accusée de commettre des exactions, profitant souvent de la bienveillance des autorités, au pire de leur complicité, comme aux heures les plus sombres du conflit. Mais l'état-major a réaffirmé son soutien à son bras armé dans la région kurde. Et le vice-premier ministre, Cemil Çiçek, sans écarter une éventuelle réforme, a exclu une dissolution de ceux qui « travaillent pour l'unité et le bien-être du pays », c'est-à-dire ceux qui combattent le PKK.

« Dans la région, c'est l'État qui donne le prestige : devenir gardien, c'est le moyen d'obtenir le pouvoir économique et social, les marchés pour la construction des hôpitaux ou des routes, de faire du trafic à la frontière », explique Inan Keser, sociologue à l'université de Diyarbakir. Selon lui, cet opportunisme n'est pas du tout incompatible avec un soutien au PKK : aux municipales, en mars, le parti du DTP, la vitrine politique des rebelles kurdes, l'a d'ailleurs emporté dans certains villages de *korucu*. Selon un rapport du ministère de l'Intérieur publié en 2006, près d'un supplétif sur dix avait fait l'objet d'une enquête pour crimes, trafics de drogue, spoliation de terrains... 853 avaient été arrêtés. « Des gardiens faisaient pousser du cannabis dans mes champs, avec la complicité de la caserne militaire voisine », raconte un réfugié, anonymement par peur de représailles.

Pour les habitants des 3 000 villages détruits ou évacués pendant la guerre, cette force paramilitaire reste synonyme de terreur. Birsen avait 14 ans quand Kocaköy a été pris d'assaut : « Il ne restait que les femmes et les enfants. J'ai vu la cervelle de mon petit frère exploser, ma mère a aussi été tuée. » Depuis, elle n'y est retournée qu'en cachette, pour se rendre au cimetière. « M'y réinstaller ? J'ai trop peur, les *korucu* sont toujours dans le coin », glisse-t-elle entre deux pleurs.

LAURE MARCHAND



Une femme turque près de la tombe d'un membre de sa famille assassiné pendant la tuerie qui avait fait 44 morts lors d'une cérémonie de fiançailles, le 6 mai à Bilge, dans l'est de la Turquie. Les suspects de ce massacre sont des gardiens de village appelés aussi *korucu*. Cem Oksuz/A.A./Sipa

Le Monde
16 mai 2009

Ghobadi : « En quittant l'Iran, je dis adieu aux dingues »

Le réalisateur des « Chats persans », présenté à Un certain regard, dénonce la censure

Rencontre

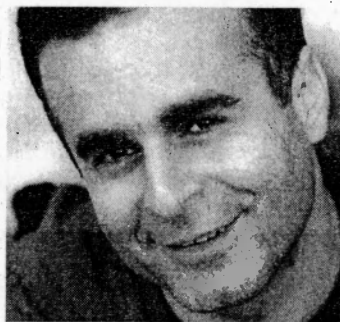
Là, à quelques heures de la présentation des *Chats persans* au Festival de Cannes, en ouverture de la section Un certain regard, jeudi 14 mai, Bahman Ghobadi ne souhaite qu'une chose : la « disparition » des officiels du gouvernement de la République islamique d'Iran venus découvrir son nouveau film. C'est-à-dire un éloignement entre lui, cinéaste, et ceux qui l'ont plongé dans une dépression de trois ans dont il cherche encore à sortir.

Le ton est violent, les mots sont assurés, fruit d'une réflexion engagée il y a longtemps et menée aujourd'hui à son terme. Bahman Ghobadi divorce avec son pays. Plus précisément, il se dissocie du régime qui le gouverne. Demain, il partira s'installer aux Etats-Unis, ou en Allemagne, à Berlin, où vit une importante communauté de Kurdes iraniens, comme lui. « *Le Moyen-Orient*, jure le cinéaste, est un asile de fous. En quittant l'Iran, je dis adieu aux dingues. »

L'événement n'est pas anodin. Bahman Ghobadi est le seul cinéaste iranien en vue – Caméra d'or à Cannes, en 2000, pour *Un temps pour l'ivresse des chevaux* – à dénoncer frontalement le régime. Les

« Je mesure les conséquences liées à la présentation de mon film. J'ai très peur, pour moi, pour les comédiens aussi, qui sont des musiciens à la base »

Bahman Ghobadi



DR

Chats persans a tout, en effet, pour être détesté par le pouvoir religieux.

Ce film, tiré d'une histoire vraie, est le portrait d'une jeunesse de Téhéran qui se terre dans des caves, monte sur les toits, ou se réfugie dans une ferme isolée pour jouer de la musique. La caméra suit en priorité deux musiciens, un garçon et une fille, qui mettent tout en œuvre pour se procurer un faux passeport et un visa afin de quitter ce pays devenu prison.

En Iran, celui qui écoute de la musique occidentale est passible d'une peine de prison accompagnée de plusieurs dizaines de coups de fouet. Celle qui est omniprésente dans *Les Chats persans* est jugée impure car procurant, selon les mollahs, joie et gaieté. On y découvre aussi les paroles d'un rappeur qui clament que « *Dieu se moque du monde* ».

Bahman Ghobadi prend-il des risques avec ce brûlot ? « *Je mesure les conséquences liées à la présentation de mon film*, estime le cinéaste. *J'ai très peur, pour moi, pour les comédiens aussi, qui sont des musiciens à la base. Avant ce film, j'ai passé deux ans sur un projet, 60 secondes à propos de nous, pour ne finale-*

La voix de la minorité kurde d'Iran

Bahman Ghobadi est né le 1^{er} février 1966 à Baneh, près de la frontière Iran-Irak, dans la province du Kurdistan iranien. *Un temps pour l'ivresse des chevaux* (2000) se déroule d'ailleurs au Kurdistan, dans cette région montagneuse qui sépare l'Iran de son voisin irakien, et suit le destin de cinq orphelins. Les dialogues du film sont en kurde et non en persan. Depuis, avec *Les Chants du pays de ma mère*

(2002), puis *Les Tortues volent aussi* (2004), Ghobadi est devenu le fer de lance d'un cinéma kurde qui restait à inventer. « *Etre kurde m'a mis à l'écart en Iran* », assure un réalisateur devenu la voix d'une minorité en difficulté dans cette république islamique. Le Kurdistan induit une notion de frontière très forte dans le cinéma de Ghobadi, expression d'un cinéaste à part dans son pays, car kurde, artiste et homme libre.

ment jamais obtenir l'autorisation de tourner. Je suis alors tombé dans une dépression profonde. Puis j'ai décidé de ne plus jamais dépendre de la censure pour réaliser mes films. Si le cinéma iranien est devenu répétitif, c'est parce que les cinéastes sont contraints à cette répétition, dans l'interdiction d'aborder des sujets plus audacieux. Je veux réaliser les films qui me plaisent, pas ceux que le gouvernement iranien souhaite que je fasse. Je ne retournerai donc plus jamais chez moi. »

Les Chats persans a été produit en contrebande, en dix-sept jours, pour éviter de se faire repérer par les autorités, sans autorisation, et après des repérages en moto. Quand la police est intervenue, à deux reprises, sur ce tournage impromptu, le réalisateur a réglé l'affaire en offrant des DVD de ses films, ou en mentant. Ce film sur une jeunesse éprise de musique et de liberté était alors présenté aux forces de l'ordre comme un documentaire sur la drogue.

Bahman Ghobadi a coécrit son film avec sa compagne, Roxana Saberi, la journaliste américano-iranienne libérée lundi 11 mai de la prison d'Evine, à Téhéran, après avoir été accusée d'espionnage au profit des Etats-Unis. Le réalisateur avait publié, le 21 avril, une lettre ouverte appelant à ce que soit reconsidéré le verdict touchant sa fiancée, qui a quitté l'Iran, jeudi 14 mai.

Le Festival de Cannes et l'écho probable rencontré par le film lors de sa présentation ont joué dans la libération de Roxana Saberi, à trois semaines de l'élection présidentiel-

le en Iran. « *Je ne sais pas ce qui s'est passé pour Roxana en prison, mais moi, j'ai évolué dans une prison mentale durant son incarcération*, explique Bahman Ghobadi. *J'ai vieilli de quatre ans en quelques semaines, mon regard sur le cinéma a changé, j'arrêterai peut-être de faire des films. Je voudrais vous dire que je suis fou de joie de présenter mon film à Cannes, mais là, je vois une chose : Roxana est la personne la plus équilibrée que je connaisse et ils sont arrivés à la rendre malade. »*

Demain, à New York, à Paris ou à Berlin, le cinéaste se lancera en quête d'un producteur pour son premier disque. « *Je chante pas mal* », assure-t-il – il chante dans son film. Il a déjà composé sept morceaux, dont les airs sont d'inspiration kurde, « *cette région où la musique est si présente* ». Et où il ne retournera peut-être jamais. ■

Samuel Blumenfeld

Les élections européennes

La Turquie mobilise ses partisans en Europe

Le premier ministre turc reproche à M. Sarkozy et à M^{me} Merkel de « changer les règles à la mi-temps du match »

Ankara, Bruxelles
Correspondants

La Turquie ne veut pas devenir l'otage des échéances électorales en Europe. Le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, est revenu, jeudi 14 mai, à Varsovie, sur les récentes déclarations de Nicolas Sarkozy et d'Angela Merkel. Des propos « très regrettables », a-t-il déclaré. « Ne changez pas les règles à la mi-temps du match », a-t-il ajouté.

Dans un meeting commun, dimanche soir à Berlin, les dirigeants français et allemand ont plaidé en faveur de l'ouverture « dès maintenant » de négociations en vue d'un « partenariat privilégié » avec la Turquie. Un peu plus tôt à Nîmes, M. Sarkozy avait répété que l'Europe devait avoir des « frontières », et que la Turquie n'avait pas « vocation » à rejoindre l'Union européenne (UE).

En Turquie, ces prises de position « malheureuses » selon M. Erdoğan, sont perçues comme dictées par des intérêts électoraux à court terme. Mardi, le président Abdullah Gül a vivement critiqué les propos de dirigeants « sans vision politique », après une rencontre avec son homologue portugais à Ankara. En pleine campagne pour les élections européennes, « la France et l'Allemagne s'accrochent à la bouée de sauvetage turque » pour détourner l'attention de la crise économique, estime Cengiz Aktar, directeur du département d'études européennes de l'université Bahçeşehir d'Istanbul.

« Coalition »

De quoi irriter un peu plus une opinion turque déjà passablement lassée par cette opposition systématique. « Au moment où il est question d'un redémarrage des affaires européennes, cela met le gouverne-

ment en difficulté vis-à-vis de l'opinion publique », estime M. Aktar. Au sein de l'UE et en Turquie, converge, selon lui, « une coalition des non-enthousiastes ».

Entamées en 2005, les négociations sont déjà sérieusement ralenties. Dix chapitres sur trente-cinq ont été ouverts, un seul refermé. Sous la présidence tchèque, aucun chapitre ne devrait être débloqué : les volets « fiscalité » et « politique sociale » risquent de ne pas être prêts d'ici à la fin juin. Ils pourraient l'être au second semestre, pendant la présidence suédoise, l'un des plus fidèles soutiens de la Turquie, qui veut ouvrir au moins deux nouveaux chapitres.

Les relations entre Paris, Berlin et Ankara se sont tendues dans la foulée du sommet de l'OTAN, début avril, à Strasbourg. M. Sarkozy et M^{me} Merkel n'ont pas apprécié que la Turquie résiste, avant de céder sous pression américaine, à la nomination du Danois Anders Fogh Rasmussen à la tête de l'organisation. Ils ont aussitôt répliqué à Barack Obama lorsque celui-ci a apporté son soutien à l'adhésion turque. « Le climat actuel ne favorise pas les réformes, et rogne notre influence sur la classe dirigeante turque, car la perspective d'adhésion est de moins en moins crédible », regrette un diplomate d'un pays favorable à l'intégration turque dans l'UE.

Stockholm espère que les négociations en cours en vue d'une réunification de Chypre, dont la Turquie occupe la partie nord, pourront détendre l'atmosphère, en particulier au moment d'évaluer, fin 2009, la mise en œuvre du « protocole d'Ankara ». Signé en juillet 2005, ce document prévoit l'extension de l'union douanière en vigueur entre l'UE et la Turquie, aux nouveaux membres, dont Chypre, que la Turquie ne reconnaît

toujours pas.

Pour contrebalancer l'opposition franco-allemande, le gouvernement turc multiplie les rencontres avec les dirigeants européens favorables à l'adhésion. Sur les 27, 22 sont plutôt en faveur de son entrée dans l'UE ou restent discrets, deux hésitent (le Danemark et les Pays-Bas). Deux sont ouvertement contre (France et Autriche), tandis que l'Allemagne est partagée. La chancelière et les chrétiens-démocrates plaident en faveur d'un partenariat privilégié, tandis que son rival pour les élections législatives de septembre, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, et les sociaux-démocrates, restent favorables à l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'UE.

La Pologne et le Portugal ont réaffirmé, ces derniers jours, leur soutien à « une adhésion pleine et entière de la Turquie ». Tout comme l'Espagne, où se trouvait cette semaine Egemen Bagis, le ministre chargé des affaires européennes et négociateur en chef. Le nouveau ministre turc des affaires étrangères, Ahmet Davutoglu, était, lui, en Suède. Il a rappelé jeudi l'objectif d'Ankara : « Devenir membre à part entière ou pas membre du tout. » A ses côtés, le chef de la diplomatie suédoise, Carl Bildt, a assuré que le projet européen de la Turquie restait « une priorité stratégique de l'Union ». Une manière de rejeter, à moins de deux mois du début de la présidence suédoise de l'Union, les appels franco-allemands en faveur d'« un partenariat privilégié ». ■

Guillaume Perrier
et Philippe Ricard



PARTENARIAT EURO-ÉMIRATI SUR UN PROJET GAZIER AU KURDISTAN IRAKIEN

DUBAI, 17 mai 2009 (AFP)

Deux firmes énergétiques des Emirats arabes unis ont annoncé dimanche avoir conclu un accord de partenariat avec les groupes autrichien OMV et hongrois MOL pour développer des gisements de gaz au Kurdistan irakien, qui pourraient alimenter plus tard le futur gazoduc Nabucco.

Dans un communiqué mis en ligne, Dana Gas et Crescent Petroleum, deux compagnies privées émiraties, précisent qu'en vertu de l'accord, OMV a acquis 10% de Pearl Petroleum Company, qui développe deux grands champs gaziers dans le Kurdistan irakien: Khor Mor et Chemchemal.

MOL va également acquérir 10% dans Pearl Petroleum, compagnie qui détient les intérêts de Dana Gas et Crescent Petroleum au Kurdistan irakien. En retour, les deux firmes émiraties doivent obtenir chacune 3% de parts dans la compagnie hongroise, ajoute le communiqué.

Les quatre partenaires devront investir dans les prochains années quelque 8 milliards de dollars pour développer leurs activités au Kurdistan irakien, répondre aux besoins en gaz et en électricité de cette région, et dégager un excédent gazier à exporter vers les pays voisins et l'Europe, selon le texte.

Les deux compagnies émiraties précisent encore avoir investi ces deux dernières années 605 millions de dollars dans le projet, y compris la construction d'un gazoduc alimentant des centrales électriques au Kurdistan.

A Vienne, OMV, le plus grand groupe pétrolier et gazier d'Europe centrale, a également rapporté la signature de l'accord.

"OMV a maintenant l'occasion rare de participer à l'évaluation, au développement et à la production de très grandes réserves de gaz à proximité du marché européen, dont le potentiel significatif peut servir de matières premières au gazoduc Nabucco", a indiqué Helmut Langanger, vice-président du groupe chargé de l'exploration et de la production dans un communiqué.

"Cette transaction va renforcer de manière significative la position d'OMV au Moyen-Orient, d'autant plus qu'OMV voit le Kurdistan irakien comme une importante zone de croissance", a-t-il ajouté.

La société autrichienne a jusqu'à présent investi 350 millions de dollars (259 millions d'euros).

OMV est, comme MOL, l'un des actionnaires du gazoduc Nabucco, dont l'objectif est de fournir du gaz en provenance de la mer Caspienne à l'Europe en contournant la Russie, dans le but de réduire la dépendance énergétique de l'Union européenne vis-à-vis du gaz russe.

Mais Nabucco a eu des difficultés pour trouver des fournisseurs afin d'approvisionner le gazoduc, trois pays clés riches en gaz de la Caspienne --le Kazakhstan, le Turkménistan et l'Ouzbékistan-- ayant refusé d'apporter leur soutien au projet Nabucco lors d'une réunion à Prague début mai.



IRAK: DES CENTAINES DE CORPS, PROBABLEMENT DE KURDES, DÉCOUVERTS DANS LE SUD

NAJAF (Irak), 16 mai 2009 (AFP)

DES CENTAINES de corps, vraisemblablement de Kurdes irakiens, ont été découverts dans un charnier près de Qadissiyah, dans le sud de l'Irak, a annoncé samedi un responsable local du ministère irakien des Droits de l'Homme.

La macabre découverte a été faite par des habitants de la localité de Qadissiyah, à environ 200 kilomètres au sud de Bagdad, dans la province de Najaf, a indiqué à l'AFP Fadel al-Garaoui.

"Nous avons trouvé trois fosses communes où il y a des centaines de victimes", a dit le responsable du Bureau des Droits de l'Homme de Najaf. "Il s'agit probablement de Kurdes exécutés par l'ancien régime."

"C'est le 49e charnier recensé dans la province de Najaf", a-t-il ajouté, sans préciser quand la découverte avait été faite.

La zone a été bouclée en attendant les experts du ministère des Droits de l'Homme, a-t-il indiqué.

Plus de 180.000 Kurdes ont été tués lors des campagnes militaires Anfal, au Kurdistan (nord), en 1987 et 1988, au cours desquelles des milliers de villages ont été détruits.

Les corps de milliers de victimes ont ensuite été enterrés par les autorités irakiennes loin du Kurdistan, dans le but de faire disparaître les preuves.



Un charnier contenant plusieurs dizaines de corps a été retrouvé jeudi près de Diwaniyah, dans la province éponyme située au sud de Bagdad.

Cinq anciens responsables du régime de Saddam Hussein ont été jugés à Bagdad pour leur responsabilité dans ces opérations, dont le cousin de l'ancien président irakien, Ali Hassan al-Majid, dit "Ali le chimique", accusé de génocide.

Le 23 juin 2007, trois d'entre eux, dont Ali Hassan al-Majid, avaient été reconnus coupables de génocide et condamnés à mort par pendaison. Deux autres avaient été condamnés à la prison à vie.



IRAN: KHAMENEI ACCUSE LES USA DE FORMER DES TERRORISTES AU KURDISTAN IRAKIEN

TEHERAN, 19 mai 2009 (AFP)

Le guide suprême iranien, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a accusé mardi les Etats-Unis de "former des terroristes" au Kurdistan irakien pour lutter contre la République islamique d'Iran, lors d'un discours à Saghez (Kurdistan) diffusé en direct par la télévision d'Etat.

"Au-delà de nos frontières occidentales, les Américains sont en train de former des terroristes", a déclaré la plus haute autorité de l'Etat devant une foule qui a répondu en criant "mort à l'Amérique".

"Ils distribuent de l'argent et des armes pour combattre le régime de la République islamique", a-t-il ajouté, en affirmant que "les Américains ont des plans dangereux pour le Kurdistan" et que "leur objectif n'est pas d'aider les Kurdes mais de les dominer".

M. Khamenei faisait allusion aux combattants du groupe séparatiste kurde PJAK, basés dans le nord-est de l'Irak, qui s'infiltrèrent régulièrement en Iran pour des opérations armées.

Le Trésor américain a pourtant désigné ce groupe comme étant "terroriste" le 4 février dernier, et annoncé le gel de ses avoirs. Cette décision avait été interprétée alors comme un geste de bonne volonté de Washington envers Téhéran.

"Nos amis kurdes de l'autre côté de la frontière nous ont informés que des officiers américains se rendent dans les hauteurs de Qandil pour distribuer de l'argent aux jeunes kurdes pour leur acheter des informations et en faire des mercenaires. Ce n'est pas digne des jeunes kurdes", a ajouté M. Khamenei.

Selon les estimations, près de 3.000 combattants kurdes, principalement du PKK mais aussi du PJAK, sont réfugiés dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, en particulier dans la région de Qandil aux confins du Kurdistan irakien à la fron-

tière avec l'Irak et la Turquie.

Le PJAK, acronyme du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan, est lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui lutte depuis 1984 contre le gouvernement turc dans le sud-est anatolien.

L'Irak accuse régulièrement les Etats-Unis de soutenir le PJAK, ainsi que d'autres organisations ethniques aux frontières de l'Irak, ce que Washington a toujours démenti.



16 mai 2009

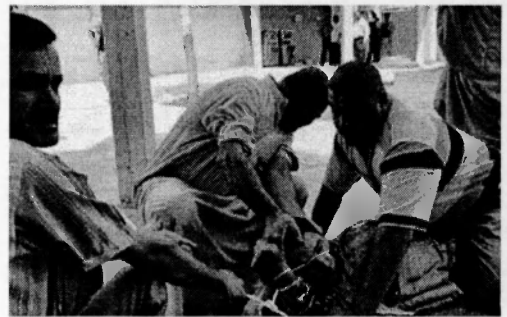
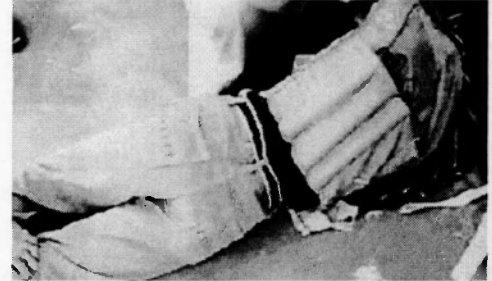
IRAK: Un kamikaze de 16 ans arrêté in extremis

LES GARDIENS de la mosquée chiïte Al-Zahra de Kirkouk, dans le nord de l'Irak, ont réussi à neutraliser in extremis un jeune homme qui s'apprêtait, le 1er mai dernier, à faire exploser sa ceinture piégée lors de la prière du vendredi. Les photos de leur intervention sont publiées sur Internet.

Le kamikaze, Ammar Afif Hamada, un Syrien âgé de 16 ans, aurait été missionné par Abou Omar al-Baghdadi, chef d'Al-Qaïda en Irak (Al-Qaïda est un réseau terroriste sunnite salafiste). Il a ouvert le feu en direction d'un gardien de la mosquée, le blessant à l'épaule, alors qu'il pénétrait dans la mosquée en criant "Allah est grand !" Les autres gardiens, des Turkmènes chiïtes, sont parvenus à le neutraliser et à le livrer à la police, qui a désamorcé sa ceinture d'explosifs. Aux policiers, le jeune kamikaze a avoué avoir reçu un entraînement militaire dans la ville syrienne de Homs.

La province de Kirkouk compte plusieurs communautés : une majorité de Kurdes, des Turkmènes, qui se considèrent comme les habitants historiques de la région, des Assyro-chaldéens (chrétiens) et des Arabes, souvent arrivés lors de la politique d'arabisation forcée décrétée par Saddam Hussein. Toutes ces communautés se disputent le pouvoir.

Des élections provinciales avaient eu lieu le 31 janvier dernier dans 14 provinces irakiennes, mais pas dans les trois provinces kurdes du nord du pays, ni dans celle, voisine, de Kirkouk. Les élections prévues le 25 juillet prochain dans ces provinces pourraient être précédées d'une vague de violences.



WASHINGTON DÉMENT FINANCER DES OPÉRATIONS DE DÉSTABILISATION CONTRE L'IRAN

WASHINGTON, 19 mai 2009 (AFP) -

Le Pentagone a démenti mardi financer des opérations visant à déstabiliser le régime de Téhéran, en réaction à des accusations en ce sens du guide suprême iranien, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"Je ne suis au courant d'aucune initiative de la sorte", a affirmé Geoff Morrell lors d'une conférence de presse.

L'ayatollah Ali Khamenei a accusé mardi les Etats-Unis de "former des terroristes" au Kurdistan irakien et d'y distribuer "de l'argent et des armes" pour lutter contre la République islamique d'Irak, lors d'un discours à Saghez (Kurdistan) diffusé en direct par la télévision d'Etat.

M. Khamenei faisait allusion aux combattants du groupe séparatiste kurde PJAK, basés dans le nord-est de l'Irak, qui s'infiltrèrent régulièrement en Iran pour des opérations armées.

L'Irak accuse régulièrement les Etats-Unis de soutenir le PJAK, ainsi que d'autres organisations ethniques aux frontières de l'Irak, ce que Washington a toujours démenti.

De son côté, Washington accuse Téhéran de financer et d'armer les insurgés combattus en Irak par les forces armées américaines.

"Je trouve ironique que les Iraniens nous accusent d'ingérence, alors que depuis six ou sept ans en Irak, ils cherchent constamment à miner les efforts de paix et de stabilité que nous avons entrepris", a réagi M. Morrell.

"Nous continuons de trouver, particulièrement en Irak, des caches d'armes fournies par les Iraniens. Des engins explosifs artisanaux EFP (de facture iranienne selon les Américains, ndr) de différentes tailles ont encore été découverts la semaine dernière en Irak, et en grand nombre, et nous continuons d'observer que des groupes terroristes en Irak ont été entraînés en Iran", a-t-il poursuivi.



ERBIL DÉMENT QUE LE PJAK SOIT ENTRAÎNÉ PAR L'ARMÉE AMÉRICAINE CONTRE L'IRAN

ERBIL (Irak), 20 mai 2009 (AFP) -

Les autorités kurdes irakiennes ont démenti mercredi que l'armée américaine entraînait sur leur territoire des séparatistes kurdes du PJAK pour des opérations d'infiltration en Iran, après les accusations de l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"Avec tout le respect que l'on doit à M. Khamenei, il semble qu'il ait reçu des informations erronées parce que les Etats-Unis n'ont pas de base militaire au Kurdistan pour entraîner le PJAK", a déclaré à l'AFP le porte-parole du ministère des peshmergas, l'équivalent kurde irakien du ministère de la Défense, Jabbar Yaor.

"Les Etats-Unis ont mis le PJAK et le PKK (parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, ndr) sur leur liste des groupes terroristes, donc comment pourraient-ils soutenir ces groupes qu'ils considèrent comme terroristes ?", a ajouté M. Yaor.

L'ayatollah Ali Khamenei a accusé mardi les Etats-Unis de "former des terroristes" au Kurdistan irakien et d'y distribuer "de l'argent et des armes" pour lutter contre la République islamique d'Irak.

Il faisait allusion aux combattants du groupe séparatiste kurde PJAK, basés dans le nord-est de l'Irak, qui s'infiltrèrent régulièrement en Iran pour des opérations armées.

Le Pentagone a immédiatement démenti financer des opérations.

L'Irak accuse régulièrement les Etats-Unis de soutenir le PJAK, ainsi que d'autres organisations ethniques aux frontières de l'Irak, ce que Washington a toujours démenti.

De son côté, Washington accuse Téhéran de financer et d'armer les "groupes spéciaux". Le terme désigne les extrémistes chiïtes entraînés, armés et financés par des groupes iraniens.

Arabs, Persians, Jews



Roger Cohen

GLOBALIST

RIYADH A story is doing the rounds in Washington about an Arab ambassador whose view of Barack Obama's overtures to Iran is: "We don't mind you seeking engagement, but please, no marriage!"

It's sometimes hard to know if the Arabs or Israelis are more alarmed — or alarmist — about Iran's nuclear program and regional ambitions.

A comment a few months back from an Iranian official to the effect that the small desert kingdom of Bahrain was historically a province of Iran sent fears of exportable Shia revolution into overdrive in Sunni Arab capitals. Iran apologized, but the damage was done.

After Iran's American-aided push into Iraq through the establishment of a Shia-dominated government there, the Bahrain talk set frayed Arab nerves on edge. Prince Saud al-Faisal, the Saudi foreign minister, called on Arab states to "deal with the Iranian challenge."

The mistrust has a long history. Arabs and Persians enjoy cordial enmity; the cultural rivalry between the Sunni and Shia universes dates back a mere 1.5 millennia or so, to the battle of Karbala in 680 and beyond.

But recent developments have venomous things to the point that Arab diplomats troop daily into the State Department to warn that the U.S. quest for détente with Tehran is dangerous.

That point will be made with vigor by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu when he meets with President Obama Monday. After all, when Israelis

and Arabs make common cause, surely the danger is real.

Obama should be skeptical, for reasons I will explain. But first those Arab fears.

The Saudis have been incensed by how U.S. policy has favored "the Persians" — as they refer to them — by removing Iran's Sunni Taliban enemy in Afghanistan and ending Sunni dominance of Iraq. Despite U.S. prodding, the Saudis have not named an ambassador to Iraq and view the prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, as an Iranian pawn. Their strategic goal remains an "Iraq that comes back to be a solid Arab country," as one Saudi official put it to me.

They also express frustration at the U.S. failure to rein in Israel, whose wars against Hezbollah in 2006 and Hamas in Gaza have stirred growing support for these Iran-backed movements. Anger on the Arab street is easily exploited by Iranian leaders using insurgent rhetoric.

With a significant Shia minority, Saudi Arabia — like Kuwait and Bahrain — believes Iran is inciting these communities to rebellion. It's not uncommon to see posters of Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Iran-backed Hezbollah, in Shia homes. Shiites, in turn, say Iran's rising influence is used to justify oppression.

When popular rage rises, the region's Arab autocrats look in the mirror and see the Shah. They don't want a rerun of Tehran 1979.

"The Arabs are very worried that, for expediency's sake in Iraq or Afghanistan, we'll cut some deal with Iran that will leave Tehran as the regional hegemon," one U.S. official told me.

It's not going to happen. Washington and Tehran are a long way from even starting bilateral talks. Differences are such that any deal would take time.

What's really at issue here is that neither Israel nor the Arabs want a change in a status quo that locks in Israeli regional military dominance and the cozy relationships — arms deals, aid and all — that U.S. allies from the Gulf to Cairo enjoy.

American interests are, however, another story. They are not served by

having no communication with Iran, the rising Mideast power; nor by the uncritical support of Israel that has allowed West Bank settlements to grow and peace to fade; nor by relationships with Arab states that comfort stasis.

The Arab arguments over Iran are weak. It is precisely U.S. non-engagement that has led to Tehran's rising power. So it makes sense to change policy. Only within an American "grand

Obama should tell Netanyahu the status quo is not in anyone's interest.

bargain" with Iran will a solution to the nuclear issue be possible.

Given that a Mideast peace is inconceivable without Iran because of its influence over Hamas and Hezbollah, it is in

the Arab interest that the United States attempt to bring Iran "inside the tent." Outside it will make trouble.

Moreover, the Arabs themselves have engaged. The Saudis have normal if strained diplomatic relations with Iran.

So here's what Obama should say to Netanyahu when he says Arab states have identical fears over Iran:

"We're aware of this, Mr. Prime Minister, which is why we sent Defense Secretary Robert Gates and others to reassure Arab allies. But the U.S. interest is not served by the Mideast status quo. Our interest lies in new region-wide security arrangements that promote a two-state peace, end 30 years of non-communication with Iran, and ultimately afford Israel a brighter future. You can't build settlements and expect Iran's influence to diminish."

When Netanyahu demurs, Obama should add: "And you know what the Arabs tell me in private? That Israeli use of force against Iran would be a disaster. And that it's impossible to tell Iran it can't have nukes when Israel has them. They say that's a double standard. And you know what? They may have a point."

COMMENT Readers are invited to comment at global.nytimes.com/opinion

The New York Times

May 18, 2009

Tensions Stoked Between Iraqi Kurds and Sunnis

By SAM DAGHER

BASHIQA, Iraq — Tensions between Sunni Arabs and Kurds are boiling over in Nineveh, the northern Iraqi province that includes Mosul, as Kurds fight the result of a provincial election in January that shifted power to Arabs.

Though strains between the groups are not new, in recent days Kurdish forces have blocked Arab officials from carrying out their duties, in a sign that the Kurds refuse to recognize the regional government's sovereignty over all of Nineveh. The Kurds have also pressured districts under their control to boycott the new Arab governor, and they said they might even resort to military force unless they were given several positions in the government.

American officials have long feared a military conflict in the north, where Arabs and Kurds have competing claims to territory and have legions of trained men under arms. The struggle for power has also fueled the insurgency in the north, giving groups like Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia an opening to appear to back an Arab cause. And it comes as American combat troops are scheduled to withdraw from Iraqi cities by the end of June.

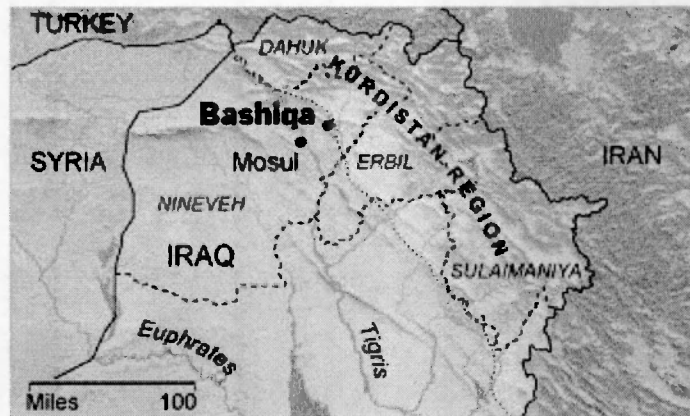
It is unclear whether the tensions will escalate, but several episodes in recent weeks have raised concerns.

On May 8, the newly elected Sunni Arab governor, Atheel al-Nujaifi, was prevented by Kurdish forces from entering Bashiqa, a Kurdish-controlled town northeast of Mosul. The governor said he received a call from an Iraqi officer in the joint Iraqi-American command center in Mosul informing him that the Kurds had issued a "shoot to kill" order against him if he went to Bashiqa. The episode ended when the governor turned back to Mosul.

The Kurds denied they had issued the order but said they were under instructions from the leadership in the semiautonomous Kurdistan region to halt Mr. Nujaifi's advance.

Last Wednesday, hundreds of armed Kurds stopped the Nineveh police chief, a Sunni Arab, from crossing a bridge into a disputed area of the province under Kurdish control. His convoy included Iraqi soldiers and police officers. A witness described the standoff, which lasted almost three hours before the police chief's retreat, as "frightening."

On Saturday, Kurdish military



forces fanned out on the road to Zumar, an area northwest of Mosul, following a rumor that the governor might visit, according to a local tribal leader. And on Sunday, a car bomb went off near the governor's residence in Mosul, killing a police officer, though it was unclear who was behind the bombing.

For almost five years, Kurds dominated the provincial government in Nineveh despite the fact that Arabs make up a majority of the population. The Kurds' grip on power was aided by the thousands of Kurdish forces that were sent to the province with American approval to shore up security in what remains one of the most violent spots in Iraq.

Last month Mr. Nujaifi, a wealthy businessman with ties to powerful Arab tribes, members of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party and possibly insurgents, was chosen as the new governor. His predominantly Sunni Arab coalition, Al Hadba, which won 19 of the 37 seats on the provincial council, froze out the second-place Kurdish coalition from all senior positions in the new government.

The Kurds responded by boycotting the government, and they are now threatening to escalate the conflict unless they are given the posts of deputy governor and provincial council chairman.

Mr. Nujaifi says there will be no talks with the Kurds unless they recognize Nineveh's administrative borders and pull their forces back to behind the so-called Green Line, Iraqi Kurdistan's boundary before the American-led invasion in 2003.

The Kurds reject that request and say they will not budge before the fate of disputed territories north of Mosul is settled. They say they trust neither Mr. Nujaifi nor the central government in Baghdad, led by Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, which has been seeking to assert its authority in northern Iraq at

the expense of the Kurds.

"We do not trust these people, we know their intentions," said Khasro Goran, the Nineveh leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the most powerful Kurdish force on the ground.

Mr. Nujaifi recently called for Sunni insurgents to curtail attacks against American soldiers as they pull out from joint Iraqi-American garrisons in Mosul to Marez, their big base on the outskirts of town. He said that the insurgents "seemed to have responded" to his call, but that controlling Sunni Arab anger against Kurds might be more difficult.

Joost Hiltermann, an analyst who is advising the United Nations on territorial disputes in northern Iraq, said the Kurds had more of an interest in escalating the conflict. "It could be of Kurdish interest to provoke confrontation in order to persuade the Americans that if they abandon the Kurds, the consequences would be dire," said Mr. Hiltermann, a senior Iraq analyst at the International Crisis Group.

The American military has played down the significance of the recent Kurdish actions.

Meanwhile, residents here on the Nineveh Plain, a mix of ethnic and religious groups, are bracing for the worst.

A checkpoint staffed by Kurdish military forces on the highway between Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan's capital, and Mosul was recently moved closer to Mosul. Kurdish observation posts along the plain's roads and hilltops have also been fortified. Near Bashiqa, dirt shields several roadside military outposts. Machine guns could be seen on the roofs of some buildings.

Mr. Goran said that no new forces were brought in, but that those "on vacation" inside Kurdistan were told to come back because of the heightened alert.

"We are a small sect, we do not want trouble," said Khodr Elias, 49, a resident of Bashiqa, which is dominated by Yazidis, an ancient Kurdish-speaking sect. "We are squeezed between Arabs and Kurds, and we cannot open our mouths."

Kurds also appear to be pressing people in Christian enclaves of the plain to not recognize the governor.

In the towns of Tal Keif and Qaraqosh, municipal officials who want to cooperate with the government in Mosul say they are impotent in the face of a heavy Kurdish security presence.

Comments by a senior Kurdish police officer in Qaraqosh illustrated the problem. "We have terrorists in power," said the officer, who spoke

anonymously because he was not authorized to speak with reporters. "God willing, there will be confrontation; otherwise there will be no solution."

Mohamed Hussein contributed reporting from Baghdad.

Guardian

Tuesday May 19, 2009

Iraq's cash needs may drive energy deal with Kurds

*** Baghdad desperate for income after oil price fall**
*** Cash need may drive deal on oil exports with Kurdistan**

By Ahmed Rasheed and Simon Webb

BAGHDAD/DUBAI, May 19 (Reuters) - Baghdad's desperation for more cash to rebuild after years of sanctions and war could provide a long-awaited catalyst for a deal with minority Kurds on oil and gas exports.

Iraq's Oil Ministry on Monday rejected an \$8 billion Kurdish plan to fill the Nabucco pipeline with gas for Europe, the latest spat in a long feud with the largely autonomous Kurdistan region over control of massive oil and gas reserves.

But it has made a concession on oil exports from the region, after two years of deadlock.

"Iraq is desperate for oil export money and hard currency, a potential driver for a deal with the Kurdish region that is much stronger than anything we've seen previously," said Samuel Ciszuk, analyst at IHS Global Insight in London.

Facing domestic pressure to boost income hit by the oil price slump and to increase sluggish output, Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani gave permission earlier this month for the Kurdish north to start modest oil exports of 60,000 barrels per day from June 1. The Kurdish region said the flow could quickly reach 100,000 bpd.

But the two sides have yet to agree the key issue of how revenues would be shared. How that is resolved has implications for the Kurdish region's plan to export gas to Europe, as well as for future oil and gas contracts throughout the country.

WHO GETS WHAT?

The exports stem from production sharing contracts the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has signed with foreign firms, which Baghdad maintains

are illegal. The oil ministry says only it has authority to validate contracts; the KRG says its deals are constitutional.

If Baghdad agreed to pay the companies from oil and gas revenues according to the contract terms, it would effectively validate the deals and concede ground to Kurdish and other regional claims to control over resources.

The oil ministry says income should go to a central pot and then be distributed as for the budget, of which the KRG gets 17 percent. The KRG, if it could, might use that to pay the firms.

"That would be the death of all other exploration agreements in the Kurdish region," Ciszuk said.

KRG contracts with oil firms call for them to be paid 18-20 percent of total revenues. It would be short if forced to pay with its share after the pot is divided.

"It's unfair to even suggest that Kurdistan repay the oil firms using its 17 percent share," Ali Hussain Balou, a Kurd who heads the Iraqi parliamentary oil and gas committee, told Reuters. "Any (Iraqi government) support for that idea would only complicate the problem and push things into a deadlock."

The committee's Arab deputy, Abdul-Hadi al-Hasani, said the firms involved, Norway's DNO International and Toronto-listed Addax Petroleum, should be paid their drilling costs rather than their contract entitlement. That would be a compromise until an oil law was passed, he added.

Iraq's cabinet approved an oil and gas law in 2007 that would help resolve deep disputes casting a shadow on the future of a country struggling to emerge from six years of violence.

But disagreement between Baghdad and the KRG has delayed the legislation's passage to parliament.

Once exports flow, the two sides were likely to come to some pragmatic

agreement on revenues, analysts said.

Both sides need to see more income as Baghdad has been forced to cut the federal budget for this year three times due to oil's slump to around \$60 a barrel from a peak over \$147 last year. Iraq relies on oil for about 95 percent of income.

SLUGGISH PRODUCTION

Shahristani is under pressure to compensate for a decline of around 250,000 bpd in output from a post-war peak hit last May. Kurdish output could plug the gap more quickly than any other source available to the minister.

Iraq has the world's third-largest oil and tenth-largest gas reserves, but needs billions to overhaul energy infrastructure.

Even a deal on revenues from these exports may be insufficient to point the way for future deals and for any gas supplies to Nabucco, analysts said.

The deals with DNO and Addax were signed before the draft oil legislation was agreed, so Baghdad may be more inclined to allow them to go ahead than those signed later, analysts said.

"I think that the oil ministry is quite careful not to set a precedent that will encourage firms to continue signing deals with the KRG," said Valerie Marcel, associate fellow at international affairs institute Chatham House.

Baghdad has its own plans to supply gas to Europe from other fields, another reason it would resist the Kurdistan plan.

The firms hoping to export gas to Europe may go ahead with plans to build a pipeline to Turkey under KRG auspices and with no federal approval. But buyers and especially transit country Turkey, itself combating Kurdish separatist aspirations, would be reluctant to purchase without Baghdad's nod.

"That would be encouraging Kurdish separatism," said Al Troner, Managing Director of Asia Pacific Energy Consulting. "That would be a very hard sell in Turkey."

(Additional reporting by Shamal Aqrabi in Arbil and Missy Ryan in Baghdad; Editing by Anthony Barker)

TURKEY'S REBELLIOUS KURDS

Stone-throwers in glass houses

ADANA / Turkish promises to improve the treatment of Kurds ring hollow

INSIDE a concrete shack in the predominantly Kurdish slum of Daglioglu, in south-east Turkey, 17-year-old "Mehmet" (he cannot give his real name) rolls up his trousers and points to a deep scar. "They beat me, kicked me repeatedly, called me a 'dirty Kurd', forced me to do push-ups and demanded I become an informant." In another neighbourhood a 16-year-old girl suffered worse horrors. "Confess or I'll fuck you and your mother," she was told as she was driven to police headquarters. She and other female detainees were, she says, clubbed and dragged by the hair. In jail they were stripped naked and forced to kneel as wardens "searched our crevices".

Both teenagers are among hundreds of Kurdish minors who face prosecution around the country for allegedly taking part in illegal street protests in support of the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). In Adana alone, some 155 children are facing trial, 67 have been convicted and five have begun to serve their sentences, says Ethem Acikalin, head of the local branch of Turkey's Human Rights Association. All were charged under article 220/6 of the penal code, which criminalises "acting on behalf of a terrorist organisation". The cases are tried in adult courts. Most of the crimes consist of no more than chanting pro-PKK slogans and throwing stones at police. But some have also been charged with damaging public property, resisting arrest, spreading terrorist propaganda or endangering public security.

Mr Acikalin reckons that, even after benefiting from reductions because of his age, "Mehmet" will spend at least four years in jail. "When it comes to children, the courts have frequently chosen to place them in pre-trial prison detention for many months," comments Emma Sinclair-Webb, of Human Rights Watch, a New York-based watchdog. "This flies in the face of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Turkey is

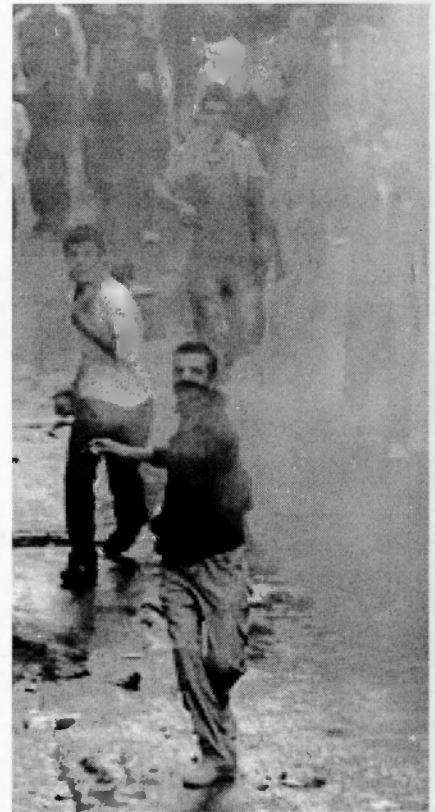
a party."

It also flies in the face of recent efforts by the ruling Justice and Development Party to improve the lot of Turkey's 14m Kurds. After launching the country's first state-run (and predictably tame) Kurdish-language television station in January, the government hinted that it might let thousands of Turkified villages revert to their original Kurdish names. The army chief, General Ilker Basbug, recently conceded that, even though 40,000 rebels had been killed since the PKK launched its insurgency in 1984, "social and economic measures" were required. Murat Karayilan, the PKK's commander in northern Iraq, says the PKK no longer demands independence and is happy to let third parties negotiate a deal on its behalf. All of this prompted Turkey's president, Abdullah Gul, to declare recently that there was now "an historic opportunity" to fix the Kurdish problem.

Perhaps so. In Adana Mr Acikalin is "still in shock" after an unprecedented meeting with security bigwigs. "They listened with patience, offered us tea and promised to stop the abuse," he says. Yet Mr Acikalin, who is himself facing eight separate charges under article 220/6 for a series of public statements that he has made, insists he will not be swayed unless and until the law is changed.

His scepticism is shared by Ali Kulter, who ekes out \$12 a day as a farmworker in Tuzluca, just south of Adana. Home is a reed shack without running water, the toilet is a hole dug in the ground that serves Mr Kulter and scores of Kurdish families. They migrated here in the early 1990s after being forced out of their villages in the south-eastern province of Sirnak for refusing to join a state-run Kurdish militia to fight the PKK. "Our village was an Eden, this is hell," Mr Kulter sighs. "If there were peace I wouldn't spend another second here." But, as the 55-year-old explains, "my stomach is full with unfulfilled promises [by the state]."

Some of his scorn ought to be



directed at the PKK. Despite Mr Karayilan's doveish talk, his men continue to blow up Turkish soldiers. The Danish-based, PKK-leaning channel, ROJ TV, "certainly plays a part in inciting teenagers," says Guven Boga, who represents Egitim Sen, a leftist teachers' union. One big worry, he adds, is ethnic tensions between Kurdish and non-Kurdish students that flare up with each PKK attack. The other is the lack of opportunity for many Kurdish youths. "They are angry and have no hope for the future," Mr Boga says. Their experience in jail only hardens them. And this makes them perfect recruits for the PKK. ■

David Romano: PDK and PUK alliance may strengthen the Islamic parties

Hawar Abdulrazaq

RUDAW EXCLUSIVE:

Dr. David Romano is an Assistant Professor of International Studies Rhodes College and has expertise in the fields of Nationalism, social movements, theories of peace and conflict, non-state actors (particularly movements employing guerrilla and terrorist tactics), politicized Islam, Middle-East and Mediterranean politics (with a special emphasis on Turkey, Iraq, the Kurds and other Middle Eastern minorities), forced migration (refugees, internally displaced persons), and globalization and development issues.

Rudaw: How the people of U.S and its institutes look at KRG?

David Romano: Many average people in the U.S. do not know much about the KRG. Last year, I invited Qubad Talabani to my university to speak about "the other Iraq," and many of the students and people from the community were very surprised to learn about the Kurdistan Regional Government, Kurdish autonomy, and the different points of view of Kurds in Iraq. He gave an excellent talk which affected many people's opinions.

Some institutes in the United States do not understand why the KRG must be careful in its relations with Baghdad, why it needs to keep the peshmarga and insist on much security and political guarantees vis-à-vis Baghdad. It is as if they have already forgotten Iraqi history, or they think the problems that Kurds in Iraq suffered were only because of Saddam rather than a deeper problem relating to the repression of Kurds in a majority Arab authoritarian state. They therefore make policy recommendations that Iraq's central government be given more power, full control over all military and police (even in Kurdistan), full control of oil revenues, inclusion of Kirkuk, etc... Those of us who have been to Kurdistan (my first visit was in the summer of 1994) work hard to explain why such recommendations are dangerous.

Rudaw: Why some U.S politicians and media think that kurds wants too much and believe their demands are crossed the line, when the kurds requests the reattachments of some cities and town to the KRG, which the Saddam regime



kicked out all the kurds and Turkmen from those region and replaced them the Arabs, and it's allowed by Iraqis constitution?

David Romano: The United States is a relatively centralized federal political system. Many Americans do not understand why in many multi-ethnic states, minorities need their own power base separate from the federal government. They also do not always understand that the current borders of the Kurdish Autonomous Region are just an accident of 1991 – where Saddam happened to withdraw his forces to after Operation Provide Comfort. At the same time, some Americans who do know this simply look at the issues from the U.S. point of view, which wants Iraq to be stable and peaceful as soon as possible so that the United States can withdraw its forces. Elites in Baghdad tell them that a referendum on Kirkuk and other disputed territories will cause problems and maybe violence, so they prefer to avoid this.

Also, some U.S. academics, whom we might call "Arabists" (they studied Arabic language and culture, and so speak more with Arabs and are more familiar and sympathetic with the "Arab" point of view), also internalize Arab nationalist ideologies or resent the Iraqi Kurds for cooperating with the American government. These academics, for instance, believe strongly in Palestinian rights and the return of Palestinian refugees and lands, but injustices suffered by the Kurds and Kurdish self-determination are of little interest to them.

Rudaw: In 25th of July this your, Kurdistan parliament will hold its election, how will global leaders and media look at this election?

David Romano: I'm not certain. The closed party list system is often criticized, as is the alliance of the KDP and PUK into one hegemonic electoral alliance – leaving less room for choice. Still, if the

elections are conducted well and the results respected, this will serve as one more indicator of Kurdish successful self-government.

Rudaw: the Kurdish Islamic party, i.e. Islamic union and Kurdistan Islamic Komal, and along with two other Kurdish party who are close to Iran, is participating in the next election on one list. The Islamic party didn't want to the Model of RAFA party in Turkey and the model of Algeria happens in Kurdistan and was afraid that the west will be against them. How do you see the Islamic parties' chances in Kurdistan region, if they respect west's view?

David Romano: If the KDP and PUK maintain an electoral alliance, even in Kurdistan parliamentary elections, this may have a tendency to strengthen the Islamic parties, who will claim that they represent the only real possibility for change or reform. However, Nawshirwan Mustafa's List of Change may help this situation, as another significant option for voters. Obviously, the KDP and PUK need to work hard to improve their image amongst the voters, and show that they are committed to fighting corruption and delivering services to the people. This is what elections are for – to make political leaders perform in the service of their people.

I myself would be concerned if the Islamic Kurdish parties close to Iran do well in the elections. Iran does not have Iraqi Kurdistan's interests at heart, of course. I also do not believe in paying poor women to wear the hijab, or condoning female circumcision, and these parties do these things. I am a liberal from the West, of course, so naturally I do not have the same values as Komal or Ali Bapir. The only thing I can probably agree with them about is that democracy means they be allowed to compete in elections for political power.

Rudaw: Duo to your knowledge and expiates about Kurdistan Islamic union, if in the future they take control of KRG, how they will administrate the region and what will their policy will be?

David Romano: I am pessimistic. When I met leaders of the KIU, they were very nice people of course, and I like them fine on an individual level. Their politics are not liberal, however, and I simply do not believe that mixing religion with politics is ever a good thing. Religion is a deeply personal, important

part of people's identity, while politics is often a dirty game of competition, power, and Machiavellian strategies. Why would we want to mix these two, especially when not everyone is of the same religion? Many people of the same religion do not even practice or see their religion in the same way.

Rudaw: The relation between Al-maliki government and KRG, which has many problems, in your view what's the future, holds for this relation?

David Romano: Al-Maliki will do what he feels he needs to do to strengthen his political power. This means avoiding concessions to the KRG, if he can, and strengthening the Prime Minister's power in Baghdad. Kurdish leaders need to play the Baghdadi political game in a way that forces people like al-Maliki to seek their support, and hence make deals with the KRG. I think they are doing this. The potential for difficult relations became clear last summer in Khanaqin, I think. KRG leaders face difficult challenges in the future. They will have to make compromises, and everyone in Kurdistan will be happy with these compromises or understand that they were necessary.

Rudaw: Last week in an interview with our paper, Tariq Hashmi the Iraqi Vice president said that after carefully rea-

ding all the opinions and feedbacks, I found out that there aren't any appropriate reason from Baghdad for not allowing the exploration of Kurdistan's oil. How do you see this problem?

David Romano: Luckily for the KRG, the rest of Iraq decided that it needed money more than control (over bankruptcy?), especially with oil prices low. The problem has been resolved for now, as Kurdish oil exports are permitted. Kurdistan will always need Baghdad's cooperation on oil issues, however, as the pipelines go through Arab Iraq, Turkey or Syria. Kurdistan is not an island.

Rudaw: Right now, the relation between KRG and Turkey is getting better, do you think there will be a string relation between this two in the future?

David Romano: A very good question. I hope so, as Turkey and the KRG very much need each other. When Turkey truly realizes that it can have good relations with Iraqi Kurds, this may also help Ankara have a more progressive policy towards Kurdish language and culture in Turkey. I'm not sure the Kemalist establishment in Ankara really believes that they can have good relations with Hawler, or fully understand how much economic and political benefit Turkey may derive from such good

relations. KRG leaders have wisely tried to reassure Ankara that they do not wish to get involved in conflicts inside Turkey, but they need to make sure groups like the PKK do not force Hawler into a conflict with Ankara.

Rudaw: until now, Turkey has rejected calls from PKK and its political wing DTP, to solve Kurdish problem peacefully, what has been U.S's reaction toward this stands from turkey?

David Romano: The United States supports Turkey in this. From the U.S. point of view, the PKK is Marxist and terrorist, so it understands Ankara's perspective. The DTP, however, has greater chances of getting U.S. sympathy, especially if it can show that the party is independent of the PKK.

Rudaw: despite this position, a few times turkey has send those journalist who are close to the state leaders, to the Qandil mountains to interview PKK leaders, how do you evaluate this matter?

David Romano: I can only guess. I think any government, any intelligence establishment, tries to keep lines of communication open even with its enemies. As Sun Tzu said, we need to know our enemy as well as ourselves...

TheNational

May 21, 2009 / UAE

Kurds are immune to Iranian influence

It was the first time a US senior official unequivocally declared that the substitution of the Iraqi regime led to Iran's empowerment, and the US invasion has given rise to even greater problems than those it had intended to solve, wrote Hassan Haidar in the opinion pages of the pan-Arab daily Al Hayat.

"The head of the US Senate foreign affairs committee, John Kerry, who is in favour of US-Iran dialogue, expressed in a recent interview with Al Hayat something like regret over the deposition of Saddam Hussein as it has paved the way for mounting Iranian influence," Haidar wrote.

Kerry's statement only reconfirms what Iraqis and the world already know: Iran has significant control over Iraq, especially after the accession of its Shiite allies to power.

"However, a crucial portion of the Iraqi social fabric resists Iranian influence – the Kurds."

They will never relinquish the federal status and rights they have gained and paid for in blood, so they keep a tight grip on oil-rich Kirkuk, in anticipation of Baghdad's moodiness.

Perhaps, this is why the spiritual guide of Iran, Ali Khamenei, has launched his gratuitous attack on the Kurds, claiming that the US trains and arms Kurdish groups to attack Iran.



Kurds in Ninawa threaten secession

May 25, 2009 United Press International

KURDISH LAWMAKERS in the northern Iraqi province of Ninawa threaten to join the Kurdistan Regional Government as conflicts with Sunni officials intensify.

The Sunni-led Hadbaa list won a surprising victory in Ninawa in the January provincial elections, trouncing their Kurdish counterparts by taking 19 of the 37 council seats and effective control over the government.

The Hadbaa victory provoked a Kurdish boycott of the provincial government when it refused to allow Kurds to take any of the

Cabinet positions.

The Kurdish Ninawa Brotherhood list, which came in second with 12 council seats, has threatened to annex parts of the province to the Kurdistan Regional Government unless Hadbaa allows Kurds into the government, the Iraqi analytical Web site Niqash reports.

"The Brotherhood list represents one million people in the province, but Hadbaa decided not to respect the voice of one million people," said Barzan Sa'eed Kaka, the mayor of the predominantly Kurdish district of Makhmour.

Many of the Kurds in Makhmour say they do not consider themselves citizens of Ninawa province, instead looking to the KRG as their government.

The sentiments follow skirmishes between Hadbaa leaders and members of the Kurdish paramilitary force, Asayish, prompting concerns over provincial stability.

Does Turkey have an answer to the Kurdish question?

President Gul has spoken of a 'historic opportunity' and a 'new consensus', but elsewhere in the country, scepticism remains



• Simon Tisdall

Speculation is rife in Turkey that a settlement of the Kurdish question may finally be within reach after 25 years of violence and confrontation that has claimed 40,000 lives. But while politicians and commentators in Ankara and Istanbul focus on a new beginning, Kurds in the south-east of the country complain old-style, dead-end repression is only getting worse.

President Abdullah Gul, a close associate of the prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is the cause of much of the excitement. Amid reports the government is working up a new peace plan, Gul declared tantalisingly last week that a "historic opportunity" to solve the Kurdish issue had arisen.

Speaking during a subsequent visit to Syria, Gul went further: "There is a common understanding among the state's agencies. I am very hopeful ... Whatever you call it, the south-eastern question, the Kurdish issue, or the terrorism problem, we have to find a solution... The best way to do this is to raise democratic standards in Turkey."

Gul's talk of a "new consensus" seemed to imply the secularist military, frequently at odds with Erdogan's Islamist-minded Justice and Development party (AKP), was on board. Little more than a year ago, amid a major cross-border offensive against Kurdish insurgents in northern Iraq and rumoured coup plots against the AKP, such a conclusion would have seemed implausible.

But after a remarkable speech last month by the army chief, General Ilker Basbug, perceptions have changed. Basbug recast the Kurdish problem as a matter of national security and equally as a test of Turkish modernisation and integration as it aspires to join the EU. He alluded to the need to address the social and economic roots of the violence espoused by the PKK, the Kurdistan Workers party. His empathetic statement that "even a terrorist is a human being" was seen as extraordinary given past enmities.

Basbug's broader theme – the fitness of Turkey to meet the challenges of the 21st century and how to balance secularism, security, democracy and faith – fitted neatly with Gul's talk of raising democratic standards and breaking with the past. Writing in Today's Zaman newspaper, columnist Ibrahim Kalin called the speech unprecedented. "If Basbug can change the 'militarist culture' within the Turkish army and anchor (it) firmly in democracy and the rule of law, then he will certainly be ushering in a new era."

Gul's idea of a "historic opportunity" has been reinforced by a conciliatory interview given to Milliyet newspaper by Murat Karayilan, a top PKK leader. "The PKK used to demand an independent Kurdish state but that's been left in the past now," he said. "We solely want Kurds

to live under the Republic of Turkey equally and freely ... This is not a tactic. Our direction has changed." This latter proposition will be tested when the PKK's current ceasefire expires on June 1.

Turkish opposition politicians are sceptical about the prospects of a breakthrough, possibly for partisan reasons, and are resisting Gul's call for all parties to work together. Deniz Baykal of the Republican People's party said the government, having failed to defeat the PKK, was bowing to European and US pressure following Barack Obama's recent visit. Other parties accused Erdogan and Gul of jeopardising the national interest.

Scepticism also extends to Kurdish groups in the south-east who complain of increasing repression and continuing curbs on cultural and linguistic expression. Speaking at the House of Lords in London last week, Muharrem Erbey, president of the Diyarbakir Human Rights Association, said over 300 people had been detained since Kurdish Democratic Society party (DTP) overcame a determined AKP campaign to make big gains in last March's municipal elections.

"We oppose violence. We don't want loss of life. We want the armed fighters to join the political process. But we support people's right to be outspoken in pursuit of their democratic rights ... Instead of having human rights and democracy in Turkey, it's completely the other way round," Erbey said.

Wherever it's made, such public criticism is hazardous as the leading Kurdish activist and former MP, Leyla Zana, can testify. On 2 June a court in Diyarbakir will rule on Zana's appeal against a 10-year jail sentence imposed for allegedly subversive comments made in public speeches, including one she delivered at the School of African and Oriental Studies in London. She was previously jailed for 10 years for the "crime" of speaking in Kurdish in the Turkish parliament.

The Zana case is being watched closely across Europe and the US. Its outcome will be an indicator of whether Gul's "historic opportunity" is anything more than steam-bath hot air.



Ranj Alaaldin

Kurdistan seizes initiative over oil

Baghdad's decision to allow Kurdish oil through the national pipeline and into international markets is a victory for Erbil

Last week the tug-of-war between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the federal government in Baghdad took a major twist when after years of heated tit-for-tat exchanges Baghdad finally agreed to allow Kurdish oil exports through the national pipeline and into international markets.

The dispute over Iraq's oil is of long standing and centres on disagreements over laws that provide for revenue sharing in the production and exploration of Iraq's oil. Failure to pass the hydrocarbons law has hindered foreign participation in the energy sector and therefore the development of Iraq's dilapidated oil infrastructure.

The stalled law is opposed by the KRG on the grounds that it gives too much control to Baghdad, contrary to the intentions of the Iraqi constitution. Kurdish concerns stem from more than 70 years of financial dependence on Baghdad, tainted by deprivation of both people and land. The KRG, during the two-year impasse over the proposed law, has enacted its own oil law, developed Kurdistan's resources (Kurdistan holds an estimated 45bn barrels of reserves) and independently signed more than 20 exploration and development deals. The federal government deems these illegal and void, arguing that all contracts must be submitted through Baghdad.

The tussle therefore becomes a legal and constitutional one. Looking at the constitution, Article 111 states that "oil and gas are owned by all the people of Iraq in all the regions and provinces". Oil and gas ownership, however, are not within the exclusive powers of Baghdad. Moreover, Articles 115 and 121(2) give regions like Kurdistan legal supremacy on matters outside the exclusive powers of Baghdad. In the absence of any provision explicitly suggesting otherwise, Article 111, or federal government control over oil, is therefore subject to the laws of the Kurdistan region. Baghdad's decision to allow the export of oil derived from exploration by Norwegian and Turkish firms that started in the Tawke and TaqTaq oilfields in 2004 means 60,000 barrels per day (bpd) will initially be exported from Tawke and 40,000 bpd from TaqTaq – a total that will bring a revenue stream of \$5m per day (at \$50 per barrel). Proceeds will be deposited into a federally managed account. The two fields jointly could produce 250,000 bpd.

The decision also constitutes an implicit validation of the KRG's production-sharing contracts with foreign oil companies, whereby these companies get a stake in the crude they produce. The oil ministry has previously rejected this, preferring instead to give a fee to companies. This ensures oil companies stay away since it gives no incentive to maximise output or compensation for the risks taken, hence the Iraqi parliament's dissatisfaction with what it considers an unproductive model.

Beneath the legal and constitutional surface, and harsh economic reality (Iraq has slashed its 2009 budget three times because of falling oil prices), the clash over resources comes from great distrust between Erbil and Baghdad. It is a question of how Iraq will be governed and who will govern – see prime minister Nouri al-Maliki here – a battle between the centrists and federalists. Observers might suggest Kurdish ambitions for greater autonomy over resources originate from a desire for complete independence, but the reality is far from this. Any revenue from currently exploited fields will be allocated across Iraq as a whole on a per capita basis, and irrespective of whe-

ther the recipients are Sunni or Shia. This gives the KRG 17% of revenues while the rest of Iraq gets 83%.

A haphazard oil ministry in Baghdad has not helped either. Contradictory oil policies, poor oil output, corruption and smuggling of Iraqi oil have marred Hussain al-Shahristani's tenure as oil minister. Nor is it only a Kurd-Arab affair: the Shahristani camp has come under fire from Baghdad's oil and gas committee for signing contracts never made available to competitors and devoid of transparency. Senior Shia officials including vice president Adil Mahdi have criticised Shahristani who, remarkably, has been summoned by parliament to explain his ministry's failings.

Iraqi civilians are the ones who ultimately bear the brunt of sub-standard decision-making. Iraq is producing only 1.8m bpd, far below potential and not enough to meet its reconstruction needs. Kurdish crude oil in the two aforementioned fields has been export-ready for two years now. Even with today's low oil prices at about \$50 per barrel, and without accounting for the \$150 peak in oil prices, the two fields, with a joint 250,000 bpd capacity, could have generated an extra \$9bn in revenue.

As ever, talk of oil and the Kurds cannot pass without reference to oil-rich Kirkuk – though this should not be the case. Those who oppose the annexation of Kirkuk to Kurdistan maintain the province's vast oil reserves will give the Kurds an economic engine for an independent state. But this misguided and confrontational hyperbole fails to take into account Article 112(1) of the constitution which stipulates that Kirkuk oil must be federally managed in conjunction with either the KRG or Kirkuk province, or both. There is, in other words, no room for a KRG monopoly over Kirkuk's oil.

On the unresolved status of Kirkuk, the UN only last month submitted a yet-to-be-made-public proposal to Baghdad and the KRG which outlined suggestions for remedying the problem. Some might look at this latest development on Kurdish oil exports as preparation for a compromise that ensures both sides do not lose face, a case of Baghdad offering the KRG oil in return for a deferral of their demands over Kirkuk or an acceptance of one of the UN-submitted solutions (including turning Kirkuk into a stand-alone regional entity like Kurdistan). Time will tell.

It may of course only be economic realities that have forced Baghdad's hand in this instance – a victory for pragmatism over ideology. Kurdish oil exports are unlikely at this stage to stimulate negotiations on Iraq's outstanding issues, including the oil law itself which stays silent on contentious issues such as how to deal with unexplored oil fields.

What Baghdad's retraction does constitute is a political and public relations victory for the KRG. Iraq's Kurdish leaders could maintain, particularly in the run-up to Kurdistan's parliamentary elections in July, that they went eyeball to eyeball but in the end it was Baghdad that blinked first.

Why is it the right time to solve the Kurdish question?



Columnists

IHSAN DAGI

IT HAS BECOME increasingly clear that the Kurdish question can neither be solved through the use of force by the Turkish state nor by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). This has been understood by all sides.

The current state of affairs does not benefit anyone. The only way out of this "lose-lose" situation is a solution that is a joint settlement by the fighting sides, the PKK and the Turkish state.

Many agree that domestic, regional and international developments are forcing the sides to contemplate new moves in addressing the question. I think the state and the PKK have exhausted all options apart from goodwill in order to achieve peace.

The PKK understands it cannot win a war with the Turkish state. There is no justification for using violence for political objectives in this age of a "global war on terror" in which no political end can justify the use of force as a strategy to get it. Besides, the domestic and international ground on which the PKK took root has changed. Turkey is not the country in which a guerrilla war was waged in 1985, when the Kurdish identity and even ethnicity was denied and speaking Kurdish in public was forbidden. Back then, the Southeast was under martial law, the State Security Court (DGM) was active, sentencing anyone who mentioned the existence of Kurds, and prisons were notorious.

It is still not completely satisfactory, but Turkey's official approach to the question is dramatically different now. The Kurdish ethnicity is recognized as a reality even by the chief of general staff, let alone the prime minister and the president. A pro-Kurdish party with very close links to the PKK is represented in Parliament. Political reforms introduced since 1999 have changed the way in which the Kurdish question is seen. The expression and representation of the Kurdish identity have never been this possible in Turkey. The state established a TV station broadcasting in Kurdish, a development that would have been regarded as inconceivable only some five years ago. Even killings committed by the "deep state" in southeastern Turkey in the 1990s are being investigated as part of the Ergenekon investigation.

Under these circumstances, it is impossible to justify the use of force in the name of "Kurdish rights." I think this is the sense shared by most Kurds in the region. Political means developed so far are capable of bringing about a peaceful solution. The rise of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) in the region and among Kurds in general also indicates that the Kurds demand not only a recognition of their identity but also welfare and peace. People are tired of the downward spiral of violence.

Moreover, international circumstances force Kurdish politics and the PKK to search for accommodation. The PKK has been listed as a terrorist organization by the European Union and the US, making its political and economic activities in these areas very dif-

ficult. Furthermore, these two powerful blocks are increasingly rediscovering Turkey's importance in the region as an ally. Without Turkey, it is hard to make and maintain peace in the Middle East and the Caucasus. Turkey's role as a democratic and secular state is extremely valuable for the West in efforts to avoid a clash of civilizations. Securing energy transfer from Eurasia to Europe in a diversified way requires Turkey's cooperation. Above all, the EU is conducting full membership negotiations with Turkey. Thus it looks for a stabilized Turkey that can develop peaceful relations with neighboring countries to the west, the east and the south.

The US also attributes great value to Turkish cooperation in light of its experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq. As Turkey's political weight increases, as has been the case in recent years, Turkey's ability to use it as leverage over the PKK increases as well. Thus Turkey's Western allies are evermore inclined to buy Turkey's arguments, which are accompanied by a series of reforms on the domestic front toward the Kurds.

What is also important is the attitude of the Iraqi Kurds. After establishing their position in northern Iraq, they began viewing the PKK as an irritant for the consolidation of their power there. The presence of PKK camps in northern Iraq turns this region into a target for Turkey. But Turkey's goodwill is necessary for the economic and political viability of the regional authority. The Kurds in Iraq also see the PKK as a source of tension for their working relationship with the US, without which they cannot survive in the region.

Take all these together, and it becomes clear that the use of violence is neither justifiable nor sustainable. These are thus the best days to find a solution. President Abdullah Gül, in coordination with some state institutions, is taking bold steps. They should be reciprocated before it becomes too late, as some have already moved to weaken President Gül's political power and legitimacy by opening up a legal way for his trial.

May 23, 2009

**REAL
CLEAR
POLITICS**

A Legacy of Stability in Northern Iraq?

By Tom Hardie-Forsyth

The narrative in western media and opinion-making circles about the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq is changing. The region is no longer depicted as a beacon of stability that is more democratically and institutionally developed than the rest of Iraq. Instead, the focus is on its allegedly limited political progress, lack of transparency and poor performance by its government.

This is a worrying sign as the new US Administration embarks on the detailed planning that will lead to the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq by the end of 2011. The progress of recent years in Kurdish northern Iraq and its importance for the rest of the country is being forgotten. As a result, there is a danger that in its haste to find an exit strategy, the new Administration could again sell the Kurds short - with disastrous effects for the project to stabilise Iraq.

US support since 2003 has been key to ensuring stability in the north of the country, allowing it to develop peacefully on the basis of a federal constitution that has ceded significant power to Iraq's regions. The central authorities in Baghdad have recently signalled that they wish to re-assert central authority in the Kurdish region. The prospect of Erbil again being on a collision course Baghdad in the absence of adequate US support is profoundly disturbing, particularly given the dispute over the status of Kirkuk, the centre of the oil industry in northern Iraq.

The Kurds are acutely sensitive to the fact that they have been let down on two previous occasions by the US; first in 1975 when the Nixon Administration tried to influence a border dispute between Iraq and Iran by secretly channeling military aid to Kurdish freedom fighters and then unceremoniously dumped them after an agreement was reached; and again in 1991 when the US

Administration called on Iraqis to oust Saddam and left the Kurds to their fate when they did.

The fear of being sold out for a third time is fully understandable and the Obama Administration will do well to review previous US treatment of Iraq's Kurds. US policy makers should also focus on the enormous progress made in northern Iraq since the dark days of 1991 after which the Western power set up two no-fly zones to protect the fleeing populations, both in the north and south of the country.

I first arrived in the 'northern no-fly zone' as a British army officer in the early spring of 1991. It was a moonscape of rubble and destroyed villages. I witnessed first-hand the effects of the full, terrifying and brutally efficient fury of Al-Anfal, Saddam's campaign against the Kurds. Communities ripped apart, an entire infrastructure in total ruin, the remaining villages populated almost entirely by traumatised 'Anfal widows' clutching photographs of missing husbands and sons.

For the next twelve years, under "no-fly zone" protection but with very little other assistance, the 'Kurdish entity' set about not only restoring its infrastructure, but planting the seeds of democracy and justice. By the time of the invasion by coalition forces in 2003, the political and security landscape in the region now controlled by the de-facto Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) had altered beyond recognition, and coalition forces were able to land safely and securely in the region, creating a vital bridgehead in the North, from where they were able to support the much more difficult operations in the South.

It is often wrongly believed that in the build up to the 2003 invasion, the Kurds seized US-backed autonomy with open arms. This is very far from the truth. The Kurdish leadership took a great deal of convincing. Nothing in their experience up until then had

given confidence in the integrity of the US, let alone its ability to deliver the secure and democratic Iraq that it promised.

In practical terms, the KRG is light years ahead of the rest of Iraq in many areas of development and governance- particularly in human rights, women's rights and the protection of ethnic and religious minorities. In partnership with a number of key governmental and non-governmental agencies, the KRG has single-mindedly embarked on an ambitious programme to promote democratisation and transparency, including working with foreign partners.

Having advised the KRG for the past five years on governance issues, I am convinced that provided the region is given the opportunity, it will continue to develop stable structures of government and promote security in Iraq and its neighbourhood beyond. It will also continue to act as an important laboratory of change for the rest of Iraq.

Yet if the US fails to take adequate precautions before withdrawing troops from Iraq, the KRG could again be left facing another centralised and potentially destructive and dictatorial regime in Baghdad that is a threat both to its own people as well as its neighbours.

It is time to look objectively at what Iraq's Kurds have achieved in recent years and what will happen in the KRG and beyond if the US fails to protect these gains.

The author is a retired British Cabinet Office official and NATO specialist in civil emergency planning. He was deployed as an army officer to northern Iraq in 1991 and was actively involved in reconstruction efforts in the region. For the past four years, he has been a senior adviser to the Prime Minister's office in Erbil. The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect an official KRG position.

Le Monde
Jeudi 21 mai 2009

Israël-Iran

Les risques et périls d'une attaque

Patrice Claude

Le bombardement par Israël des installations nucléaires iraniennes n'est pas à l'ordre du jour. En tout cas, certainement pas avec un feu vert américain. La première rencontre officielle, lundi 18 mai à Washington, entre le premier ministre israélien, Benyamin Nétanyahou, et le président américain, Barack Obama, aura permis d'établir avec certitude que les deux alliés, s'ils restent proches, ne sont plus tout à fait sur la même longueur d'onde. Ni à l'endroit des Palestiniens, que la droite israélienne au pouvoir entend maintenir aussi longtemps que possible sans Etat ni indépendance ; ni à l'égard de l'Iran, avec lequel Israël pourrait vouloir en découdre tandis qu'Obama veut le dialogue – au moins jusqu'en janvier...

Il y a au moins deux ans que, de diverses sources américaines et israéliennes, on sait que certains, à Jérusalem et Washington, plaident ouvertement pour « la destruction militaire préventive » des installations nucléaires que Téhéran présente comme « pacifiques ». En septembre 2008, dans les derniers mois de l'administration Bush, le premier ministre Ehud Olmert avait demandé à Washington la livraison de nouvelles bombes sophistiquées et d'avions ravitailleurs destinés à réapprovisionner en fuel ses bombardiers en vol. Au grand soulagement de beaucoup, George W. Bush, concentré sur « sa » guerre en Irak et refusant à son allié « l'ouverture d'un nouveau front », avait rejeté la demande.

Largement plus ouvert que son prédécesseur au dialogue avec Téhéran, Barack Obama, par ailleurs engagé dans la guerre d'Afghanistan, paraît encore moins disposé à se lancer dans un nouveau conflit. La nouvelle administration est tout aussi décidée que l'ancienne à empêcher l'armement nucléaire de l'Iran, mais elle veut donner sa chance à la diplomatie. « L'important, a dit M. Nétanyahou, qui réclamait une date limite pour ce dialogue américano-iranien, ce qu'il n'a pas obtenu, est que l'on s'engage à ce que l'Iran ne développe pas sa capacité nucléaire militaire. J'espère, a-t-il ajouté, que le plan du président [Obama] réussira. (...) Israël, en tout cas, se réserve le droit de se défendre. »

Dans le cas improbable où il déciderait « d'y aller » seul, l'Etat juif, première puissance nucléaire du Proche et Moyen-Orient, a-t-il aujourd'hui la capacité de mener, jusqu'en Iran, une opération de destruction d'envergure ? Dans une étude approfondie de 114 pages, publiée en mars par le prestigieux et très influent Centre d'études straté-

giques et internationales (CSIS) de Washington, deux des meilleurs experts mondiaux des questions stratégiques et de défense, Abdullah Toukan et Anthony Cordesman, estiment que oui, c'est techniquement « possible » (www.csis.org).

Mais, ajoutent les auteurs qui passent en revue tous les scénarios possibles d'une attaque sur les installations nucléaires iraniennes, « l'opération serait complexe, hautement risquée et rien n'en garantit le succès ». Correspondant militaire du quotidien israélien de centre gauche *Haaretz*, Reuven Pedatzur, ancien pilote de chasse, s'est livré, le 15 mai, dans son journal, à une analyse complète du rapport des deux experts. C'est ce texte que *Le Monde* a décidé de publier. Pedatzur s'y range sur la même ligne de « prudence » que les auteurs. Il va plus loin et souligne « l'erreur qu'a commise Israël en agitant la menace iranienne ».

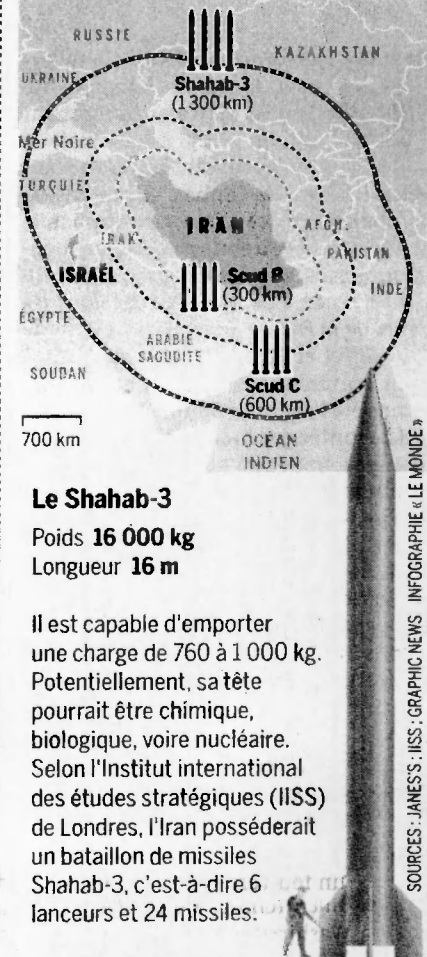
Contrairement à ce que répète M. Nétanyahou sur tous les tons, et avant lui M. Olmert, « le régime de Téhéran, selon lui, est certes un adversaire acharné et inflexible, mais il est loin de représenter une menace vitale pour Israël ». Et Pedatzur d'apostropher le leadership de son pays : « Cessons de brandir l'épouvantail d'une menace existentielle, écrit-il. Gardons-nous de toute déclaration belliqueuse susceptible d'enclencher une escalade fatale. » Quand on sait qu'être « correspondant défense » d'un grand journal en Israël implique un rapport de confiance avec l'establishment militaire et sécuritaire du pays, on prend la mesure de ces fortes paroles...

Pour le journaliste d'*Haaretz*, l'intérêt des 114 pages de Cordesman et Toukan reste cependant entier en ce qu'elles « exposent l'ensemble des informations disponibles sur les capacités militaires d'Israël et son programme nucléaire, ainsi que les développements nucléaires et les défenses aériennes de l'Iran ».

Pedatzur relève notamment la livraison par Washington, en 2008, à Israël, d'au moins « 600 bombes surnommées "bunkers busters" (briseuses de bunkers) » qui pourraient être utilisées avec succès contre les installations souterraines, à condition que les pilotes israéliens visent leurs cibles « avec une précision absolue et à un angle optimal ». Ce n'est là qu'un des

Les possibilités de ripostes de l'Iran

L'Iran a développé des missiles de type Scud avec l'assistance de la Corée du Nord. Ce sont les Shahab-1 et Shahab-2. Leur portée est respectivement de 300 et 500 kilomètres. Le Shahab-3 est un missile balistique à carburant liquide dérivé du missile nord-coréen Nodong. Sa portée est de 1 300 à 1 500 kilomètres. Il pourrait atteindre Ankara, Karachi, Riyad et Tel-Aviv.



aspects du problème.

Les services de renseignements américains et israéliens ne sont pas tout à fait sur la même ligne en ce qui concerne l'urgence d'une éventuelle intervention. L'Etat juif affirme que la bombe iranienne sera prête à l'emploi « entre 2009 et 2012 ». La CIA pense 2013.

Autre problème, « on ignore si l'Iran dispose d'installations secrètes d'enrichissement d'uranium », notent les experts américains. Si elles existent, le programme se poursuivrait alors même qu'Israël bombarderait les quatre sites nucléaires connus (Isfahan, Natanz, Arak et Bouchehr), au risque de tuer « des milliers, voire des centaines de milliers de civils en Iran et dans la région ». Pour Reuven Pedatzur, il est urgent d'attendre. ■

Au moins 66 morts en moins de 24 heures dans une vague d'attentats en Irak

L'Orient
LE JOUR

mai 22, 2009

À quelques semaines du début du retrait de l'armée US, la multiplication des attaques suscite l'inquiétude à Bagdad.

Au moins 66 personnes, dont trois soldats américains, ont été tuées en 24 heures dans une vague d'attentats en Irak, confirmant un regain de violences à quelques semaines du retrait de l'armée US des villes irakiennes.

Hier, trois attaques ont coûté la vie à 26 personnes, au lendemain d'un attentat qui a fait 40 morts dans un quartier majoritairement chiite de Bagdad, le plus meurtrier en Irak depuis un mois.

Au moins 12 personnes ont été tuées et 25 blessées dans un attentat-suicide visant une patrouille de l'armée US dans un marché chrétien très fréquenté de Dora, dans le sud de Bagdad, selon les services irakiens de sécurité. Le kamikaze qui a actionné sa ceinture d'explosifs visait une unité américaine patrouillant à pied. L'armée US a confirmé la mort de trois soldats dans le même quartier lors de l'explosion d'une mine artisanale, sans lier l'incident à l'attentat du marché. Un porte-parole militaire a également confirmé que l'explosion avait fait des blessés, sans préciser leur nombre. Depuis le début du mois de mai, 17 soldats améri-



cains ont péri en Irak. Au total, 4 299 soldats américains sont morts depuis l'invasion de mars 2003, d'après un bilan établi par l'AFP à partir du site indépendant icasualties.org. Également à Bagdad, une bombe placée par un éboueur dans une poubelle d'un poste de police a tué trois policiers et blessé 12 autres et huit civils. Enfin, à Kirkouk, un kamikaze a actionné sa ceinture d'explosifs au milieu d'un groupe de miliciens luttant contre el-Qaëda, tuant huit personnes et en blessant quatre autres.

Ces violences suscitent l'inquiétude à quelques semaines du désengagement des soldats américains des villes d'Irak et rappellent la difficulté pour les autorités irakiennes à contrôler une situation dont elles ont hérité le 1er janvier. Aux termes d'un accord de sécurité conclu en novembre entre les deux pays, les forces américaines doivent avoir quitté les villes - où

sont perpétrées la majorité des attaques - d'ici à fin juin, et l'Irak d'ici à fin 2011.

Après une baisse graduelle des violences amorcée fin 2007, l'Irak connaît depuis mars un regain d'attentats et d'assassinats, notamment contre la communauté chiite. Avril a ainsi été le mois le plus sanglant en Irak depuis septembre 2008, avec 355 personnes tuées, selon des chiffres officiels. Bagdad et les provinces de Ninive et Diyala sont les principaux foyers de violences. Le 29 avril, trois voitures piégées avaient explosé presque simultanément sur des marchés de Sadr City, bastion du chef radical chiite Moqtada Sadr, tuant au moins 51 personnes.

Ces attentats avaient rappelé les attaques coordonnées perpétrées dans des zones chiites en 2006, au plus fort des violences confessionnelles et auxquelles répondaient les miliciens chiites par l'enlèvement et le meurtre de sunnites. Ils font craindre une escalade des violences si les milices chiites, notamment l'Armée du mahdi, la puissante milice de Moqtada Sadr, sortaient de leur relative discrétion et répondaient aux attaques imputées aux groupes insurgés et à el-Qaëda.

Le mouvement sadriste a accusé les services de sécurité « d'avoir abandonné leurs efforts contre el-Qaëda pour se concentrer sur les fils de l'Armée du mahdi ».



TURQUIE: DEUX REBELLES KURDES TUÉS DANS UN AFFRONTEMENT

ANKARA, 24 mai 2009 (AFP)

Deux rebelles kurdes de Turquie ont été tués dans un affrontement dimanche avec les forces de sécurité turques dans l'est du pays, a annoncé le gouverneur de la province de Mus cité par l'agence Anatolie.

Les combats ont eu lieu au cours d'une opération des forces de sécurité contre les rebelles séparatistes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) près de la ville de Malazgirt située dans cette province, a déclaré à l'agence le gouverneur Erdogan Bektas.

Selon lui, les forces de sécurité cherchaient à savoir si l'un des militants tués était impliqué dans une attaque à la roquette commise l'année dernière contre un poste de police à Malazgirt. Un policier avait alors été tué et trois blessés.

Par ailleurs, un policier a été blessé dimanche dans une explosion à Yuksekova dans la province de Hakkari (sud-est), a indiqué l'agence.

Le PKK, une organisation classée comme terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis, a engagé en 1984 une campagne armée pour obtenir l'autonomie du sud-est turc. Le conflit a fait 45.000 morts, selon l'armée.



KURDISTAN IRAKIEN: SIX CANDIDATS POUR LA COURSE À LA PRÉSIDENTIE

ERBIL (Irak), 24 mai 2009 (AFP)

Six candidats ont déposé leur candidature pour la présidence de la région autonome du Kurdistan, dans le nord de l'Irak, qui sera disputée le 25 juillet, a annoncé mercredi la haute commission électorale indépendante de l'Irak.

"Il y aura finalement six candidats aux élections du Kurdistan. Leurs noms seront envoyés au ministère de l'Intérieur de la région autonome pour qu'il vérifie s'ils remplissent les conditions requises, puis à la commission électorale à Bagdad pour approbation", a déclaré à la presse Hamdiya al-Husseini, chargée pour la haute commission électorale irakienne de s'occuper du scrutin au Kurdistan.

Les candidats sont Massoud Barzani, le président sortant, Halo Ibrahim Ahmed, beau-frère du président irakien Jalal Talabani, Kamal Mirawdy, un universitaire basé à Londres, Hussein Karmiani, un homme d'affaires, Safin Cheikh Mohammad, un commerçant et Ahmad Kourdeh, un politicien indépendant.

La date limite pour la présentation des candidats avait été fixée à lundi.

Les élections législatives et présidentielle kurdes seront organisées le 25 juillet, sept mois après des élections provinciales qui ont eu lieu dans la majeure partie de l'Irak.

C'est la première fois que le président du Kurdistan est élu au suffrage universel. En 2005, Massoud Barzani avait été élu par les députés du Parlement local.

Selon la commission électorale du Kurdistan, environ 2,5 millions de personnes sont appelées à voter pour 41 listes électorales. Le Parlement régional kurde compte 111 sièges.

L'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) de Jalal Talabani et le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) de M. Barzani - qui dominent la vie politique du Kurdistan depuis des décennies - ont reconduit leur alliance pour ces élections.

Mais ils doivent affronter cette année de nouveaux rivaux, dont certains issus de leurs rangs, ce qui pourrait donner lieu à une campagne musclée.



L'enterrement, en présence de leaders du DTP, d'un jeune Kurde tué lors des affrontements d'Amara, en avril. JULIEN GOLDSTEIN/M.Y.O.P.

A Diyarbakir, l'armée turque accentue sa pression sur les militants kurdes

Dans cette ville proche de la frontière syrienne, les arrestations se multiplient contre les membres du principal parti politique kurde, le DTP, accusé de collusion avec la guérilla du PKK

Reportage

Diyarbakir

Envoyé spécial

Le bureau d'Ali Simsek, le dirigeant local du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), le parti kurde, dans son fief de Diyarbakir, porte encore les stigmates de l'attaque. Une bombe lacrymogène tirée par la police a traversé la vitre et a atterri sur les fauteuils. « C'est la nouvelle politique de l'AKP (le parti de la justice et du développement, au pouvoir à Ankara), soupire Ali Simsek, en haussant les épaules. Depuis les élections municipales, il y a une volonté de punir Diyarbakir. »

Le scrutin du 29 mars a vu la population de la région, majoritairement kurde, soutenir massivement le DTP et infliger une défaite cinglante aux candidats de l'AKP, provoquant la fureur du premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan. « Ils ont empêché nos militants de travailler pendant la campagne électorale

pour nous affaiblir, ajoute Ali Simsek. Mais leurs pressions n'ont pas fonctionné. Maintenant, le gouvernement et l'armée tentent de saper notre pouvoir local. »

Dès les premiers jours d'avril, le ton s'est durci avec une vague d'arrestations lancée dans les milieux réputés proches du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), la guérilla kurde qui sévit depuis 1984. Plus de 250 militants du DTP ont été pris dans ce coup de filet qui, officiellement, visait les réseaux de soutien civils à la rébellion armée.

Pour protester, les députés du parti kurde ont organisé un sit-in nocturne dans l'enceinte du Parlement à Ankara. Et, la semaine dernière, dans un parc de Diyarbakir, environ 10 000 personnes, réunies autour du maire de la ville, Osman Baydemir, ont suivi une grève de la faim symbolique de quarante-huit heures pour réclamer « une solution démocratique au problème kurde ». « C'est une réponse forte des Kurdes à l'AKP, tonne le maire de quartier Abdullah Demirbas qui y participait. Le gouvernement dit qu'il a mis l'accent sur la santé et l'éducation. Mais il a surtout construit des casernes, et des routes pour mener aux casernes. »

M. Demirbas est cerné par les procédures judiciaires. « Je vais devoir ouvrir un atelier de menuiserie », plaisante-t-il. Volontiers provocateur, il énumère fièrement les 23 procès qui l'ont visé depuis cinq ans. « La plupart pour des brochures municipales éditées en kurde et en arménien. » Un autre pour avoir fait ériger, devant sa mairie, une sta-

tue d'Ugur Kaymaz, un enfant tué de 12 balles par la police en 2005. Le dernier, le 7 mai, pour avoir donné une interview sur Roj TV, la chaîne proche du PKK, diffusée depuis le Danemark. Pour y avoir fait l'éloge du leader emprisonné Abdullah Öcalan, il risque deux ans de prison pour apologie du terrorisme. « M. Öcalan est dans mon cœur », surenchérit-il pourtant dans son bureau de maire.

DTP et le PKK, ce serait comme diviser une famille. »

Le gouvernement a lâché un peu de lest sur les droits culturels, en lançant, en janvier, une chaîne de télévision publique en langue kurde. Il étudierait aussi la possibilité d'ouvrir des instituts universitaires de kurdologie et de redonner aux villes de la région leurs noms kurdes, a déclaré récemment, le ministre de l'intérieur, Besir Atalay. Mais la répression, parfois brutale, des manifestations et les arrestations de centaines de jeunes contredisent ce discours fait pour convaincre la population de Diyarbakir.

Dans plusieurs villes, des mineurs ont été condamnés à de lourdes peines, coupables d'avoir participé à des rassemblements « interdits » et d'avoir lancé des pierres sur la police. Dijwar, 16 ans, vient d'écopier de six ans et onze mois de prison pour avoir caillassé les véhicules blindés aux abords du parc de Diyarbakir, en 2008, après une manifestation du DTP.

« Ici, personne n'aime la police, justifie Dijwar d'une voix fluette. Ils nous frappent, ils nous arrêtent, ils nous tuent... Dès l'âge de 6 ou 7 ans. C'est notre condition de Kurdes. » L'adolescent, qui a déjà purgé dix mois, assure que si sa peine est confirmée en cassation, il prendra le chemin de la « montagne » pour rejoindre le PKK. « Je préfère être libre que retourner en prison. » Son père est désespéré : « On ne peut plus tenir les enfants. Dès le ventre de leur mère, ils connaissent la difficulté d'être kurde. » ■

Guillaume Perrier

« Dès le ventre de leur mère, les enfants connaissent la difficulté d'être kurde »

Un père de famille

À Ankara, chacune de ces incartades crispe un peu plus les généraux. Depuis 2007, l'armée turque boycotte officiellement les réceptions au Parlement, où siègent 21 députés du DTP. Le parti demeure, depuis deux ans, sous la menace d'une dissolution par la Cour constitutionnelle. Et Recep Tayyip Erdogan, inflexible, refuse toujours de serrer la main du leader du parti, Ahmet Türk, pourtant reçu avec égards par M. Obama, en avril.

L'armée fait également la sourde oreille au cessez-le-feu décrété jusqu'au 1^{er} juin par le chef militaire du PKK, Murat Karayilan. « Le PKK est une réalité, mais l'Etat veut une solution sans le PKK, résume Ali Simsek. Ce ne sera pas une solution. Ils ne pourront pas séparer le



THE TIMES

May 26, 2009

PKK leader offers Turkey an olive branch to end war

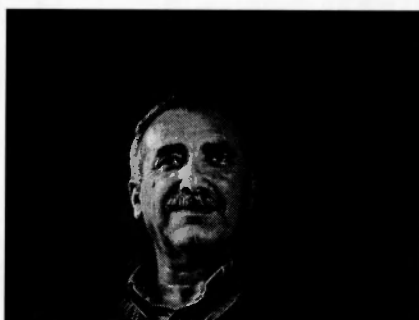
Anthony Loyd, Qandil Mountains

THE KURDISH leader proposing to end a 25-year-long conflict with Turkey that has cost 30,000 lives believes his peace offer is a once in a generation opportunity that must be grasped by both sides.

In a unilateral gesture that has prompted a re-examination of strategy in Ankara, Baghdad and Washington, the guerrilla leadership of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, has extended an olive branch, offering to drop its aim of an independent state in return for a negotiated settlement to end its war with Turkey.

"We are at a turning point," said Murad Karayilan, acting head of the PKK, in an interview with The Times at a secret location in the mountains of northern Iraq.

"Kurds do not want to continue the war. We believe we can solve the Kurdish question without spilling more blood. We are ready for a peaceful and



Murad Karayilan, leader of the PKK, at a secret location in the Qandil mountains. His organisation has announced that it is willing to enter peace negotiations with Turkey

democratic solution in Turkey — to be solved within Turkey's borders."

The potential breakthrough in the conflict came this month when Mr Karayilan, 52, deputy to the PKK's imprisoned supremo, Abdullah Ocalan, agreed to meet a Turkish journalist in northern Iraq. During the meeting he highlighted the PKK's willingness to drop its central demand for an independent state for Turkey's 12 million Kurds, and proposed key steps towards peace, including an immediate ceasefire and negotiations to end the war.



The PKK is popular among Kurdish women because of its views on equality



"Britain accepted the will of the Scots by giving them a parliament of their own, and that's what the Turks have to do with us," Mr Karayilan said at the meeting with The Times in a wooded valley near the Qandil mountains, an important PKK area. "I've studied Irish history and talked with people who participated in it. I know the development and stages of that struggle. Turkey needs to solve our problem in the way that the British solved that problem."

The PKK's overture comes at a key point in the region's history. President Obama knows that it will help to smooth the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq if Ankara's relations with Baghdad and Iraq's Kurdish regional government in Erbil are stabilised. The PKK, from its position on the Iraq-Turkey border, has awoken to the political opportunities afforded by the situation.

The PKK took up arms against Turkey in 1984 under the leadership of Ocalan, "Apo", who was captured in 1999 and is in prison on Inrali in the Sea of Marmara. Attacks by the PKK, originally a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist group, drew a savage reaction from the Turkish Army in the late 1980s, when more than 4,000 Kurdish villages were destroyed. The rebel group combined conventional guerrilla tactics with bombing campaigns, and was listed as a terrorist organisation by the US and European Union in 2004.

Mr Karayilan has ordered his 6,000 PKK fighters into a position of "passive defence" until June 1 to give Turkey time to consider his proposition.

He approached the issue of a Turkish amnesty for PKK fighters and the release of Ocalan with carefully chosen words. "There has been a war," he said. "Both Turkish and Kurdish societies

have been damaged. Both sides have to forgive one another. Everyone should participate in that, including Abdullah Ocalan. Forgiveness is necessary for peace. Kurds and Turks must open a new white page."

The deadline he has set for a response from Turkey is less than a week away. Nonetheless intense political debate is under way in Turkey over the unsolved Kurdish issue, which President Gül has called "Turkey's biggest problem".

Nationalist parties in Turkey have denounced the PKK offer and the Army has continued operations in southeastern Turkey. The political leadership, however, has described the overture as a "historic opportunity".

"We are at a fork in a pathway," said Mr Karayilan. "Turkey must choose one of them. If Turkey doesn't accept our overtures and continues to attack us then of course we will use all means to defend ourselves, and that includes retaliation. They can call us 'terrorists' for as long as they wish but Turkey has to accept that the PKK is part of the reality of the solution to its Kurdish problem."

First person: The woman soldier

Dilsha left her home in Syria at 17 and killed her first soldier in Turkey at 19.

"It was an ambush just after midnight," she said. "A column of Turkish soldiers left their base at the start of an operation. They were about 25 meters away when we hit them. I gave them some fire from my Kalashnikov and threw grenades among them. We killed about 30 in all. When it was over I scrambled forward and took a dead soldier's weapon. I can't say I was afraid. I was psychologically prepared and had

already received my ideological training. Kill them or they kill you — and that's what they come to do."

Now 31 and deputy commander of a platoon of women guerrillas, Dilsha has total dedication to the PKK, which includes an obligatory 40 per cent quota of women among its 6,000-strong ranks, and is typical of its members. Fanatically loyal to her imprisoned leader, Abdullah Ocalan, she claims nothing of her own. "My trainers, watch, uniform, whatever you see on me belongs to the Kurdish people, even

my body and soul."

She estimates that few of the 150 Kurdish people with whom she had crossed from Syria in 1995 are still alive. The assumption seems likely, given the 15,000 guerrillas killed during their 25-year campaign for an independent Kurdistan.

She has been wounded in action twice. On the first occasion she dug shrapnel from her leg using the cleaning rod of her assault rifle. The second time, hit in the back by fragments from a rocket, she was dragged by comrades.

They cut the metal from her back and tended her for 15 days until she could walk again.

An end to the war would allow her to contact her family. She has spoken to her parents once, during a phone call in 2005, since leaving home 14 years ago.

TheNational

May 26, 2009

UAE

Kurdish answers to Kurdish question

Thomas Seibert, Foreign Correspondent

ISTANBUL // Only a few years ago, Abdurrahman Yakut would have risked several years in a Turkish prison for supporting separatism after he demanded publicly that Turkish state television broadcast soccer matches with a Kurdish-language commentary. But today, Mr Yakut's call is just one in a flood of fresh ideas being discussed as Ankara looks for new ways to end the Kurdish conflict.

From sports to religion, from health care to the arts, politicians and the public have been discussing ways to broaden the rights of the country's 12 million Kurds in order to end a conflict that has plagued the country for decades.

"The process of solving it has started," Sezgin Tanrikulu, a prominent lawyer and former head of the bar association in Diyarbakir, the main city in the Kurdish region, said in an interview yesterday. "I am hopeful. The whole development will make it easier to solve [the conflict]."

Lowering restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language in public is the central idea in this new debate. For many years, Turkey tried to suppress the public use of Kurdish out of concern it would fan separatist tendencies.

But more recently, top politicians and military officers in Ankara have agreed that the right way to win over the Kurdish population and drain support for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) the largest rebel group, is to grant more freedom to the minority in the south-east.

"Prejudices against the Kurdish language have disappeared," Mr Tanrikulu said. "This is a positive development."

This month, Abdullah Gul, Turkey's president, opened the debate about what can and should be done to solve the Kurdish question 25 years after the PKK started its armed struggle for Kurdish

autonomy and triggered a war that has killed tens of thousands of people. Mr Gul called the Kurdish question Turkey's most pressing problem. He also was quoted as saying the current year offered a "historic chance" to solve the Kurdish question.

Since then, hardly a day has gone by without some politician, media outlet or non-governmental official like Mr Yakut coming forward with an idea.

Mr Yakut is the president of Diyarbakirspor, a football team from Diyarbakir that has just won promotion from the second league to the top group of professional football in Turkey, the Super Lig. Starting in late summer, Diyarbakirspor will compete with the country's biggest clubs for the national championship, and Mr Yakut said he thinks many Turkish Kurds who do not speak Turkish will want to cheer their home team on in front of their television sets.

"Diyarbakirspor is the team of the region," Mr Yakut told Turkish media. "Therefore, we want our mothers and sisters in their homes and people who do not speak Turkish to follow our matches as well." Although Turkish is the official language of Turkey, many people in the Kurdish region do not speak it, especially women, who often lack formal education.

Mr Yakut said broadcasting his team's matches in full, and with Kurdish commentary, would be a good way to improve ratings for TRT-6, which is competing with Roj-TV station, a satellite channel broadcasting from Denmark that is seen as a PKK mouthpiece.

"If you want to increase the number of viewers for TRT-6 in the region and to capture the potential audience in the area of sports, our suggestion should be considered."

There has been no statement from TRT on the subject yet, nor from the Radio and Television Supreme Council,

the state broadcast regulator.

Other ideas and plans being put forward involve the possible hiring of Kurdish-speaking healthcare workers to be sent to the Kurdish region. Last week, Recep Akdag, the health minister, was quoted as saying he was thinking about taking on Kurdish-speakers that could communicate with people who do not speak Turkish. Like Mr Yakut, Mr Akdag mentioned women in particular.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the prime minister, has suggested allowing Kurdish villages in the region to revert to their original names.

Meanwhile, Ertugrul Gunay, the minister for culture, said his ministry was researching if there were any legal restrictions that would prevent state theatres in the Kurdish region from staging plays in Kurdish, adding that he himself was in favour of that reform, the Sabah newspaper reported.

Sabah also reported that the religious affairs directorate, which runs Turkey's 80,000 mosques, was looking for Kurdish-speaking imams. According to the Hurriyet newspaper, many imams in Kurdish villages have already started to deliver their sermons in Kurdish.

Speculation that a comprehensive plan from Ankara may be in the offing was strengthened by a government decision to prolong the term of Emre Taner, the head of the National Intelligence Organisation, Turkey's main spy agency.

Mr Taner, a 67-year-old public servant born in Diyarbakir, is closely involved in contacts between Turkey and the Kurdish administration in northern Iraq and is said to have excellent contacts in the region.

Telegraph 26 May 2009

Kurdish rebels propose British-style devolution

Kurdish rebels that have waged a thirty year war on Turkey have offered to drop a demand for independence in return for British-style devolution.

By Damien McElroy
Foreign Affairs Correspondent

MURAD KARAYILAN, the head of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), issued a plea for a peace process, a concession that Turkey has spurned in the belief it has attained military deterrence against the group.

"We are at a turning point," Karayilan said. "Kurds do not want to continue the war. We believe we can solve the Kurdish question without spilling more blood. We are ready for a peaceful and democratic solution in Turkey – to be solved within Turkey's borders."

By dropping its demand for full independence, the PKK is making a significant explicit concession. Its new goal is formal talks about government structures in the Kurdish southern regions of Turkey.

"Britain accepted the will of the Scots by giving them a parliament of their own, and that's what the Turks have to do with us," Karayilan said. "I've studied Irish history and talked with people who participated in it. I know the development and stages of that struggle. Turkey needs to solve our



A PKK fighter Photo: AFP/GETTY

problem in the way that the British solved that problem."

But the 1970s-style revolutionary socialist movement, which is based in the mountains of northern Iraq, could not dominate any community-led negotiations. The AK party, which controls Turkey's government, vies with the DTP movement for majority support among Turkey's Kurds.

A western-backed diplomatic blueprint for solving the Kurdish issue calls for enhanced civil and political rights for Kurds within Turkey. It also recommends that a formal amnesty programme for PKK fighters is established. The group's leaders should be offered safe passage to exile, perhaps in

Norway.

Mr Karayilan is officially the PKK's acting leader while its figurehead Abdullah Ocalan serves life imprisonment in solitary confinement on a prison island in the Marmaris Sea.

Turkey has inflicted punishing losses on the group since gaining access to US intelligence on its bases in Iraq in recent years.

TODAYS ZAMAN

21 May 2009

MHP to introduce Kurdish initiative in upcoming

ERCAN YAVUZ / ANKARA

The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) has pondered announcing an initiative to win over the hearts of Kurdish citizens during its 9th Ordinary Congress, which is slated for next November.

MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli hopes to thaw the ice between his party and Kurdish voters with the initiative, which comes not long after the March 29 local elections, in which the MHP received less than 1 percent of the vote in the Southeast. This failure has prompted MHP officials to question their party's policies regarding the Kurdish question. The party has prepared an initiative to win over the hearts of Kurdish citizens; the initiative will most likely be announced by Bahçeli during his party's 9th Ordinary Congress next November.

As part of the initiative, the MHP calls the

issue the "Southeastern question" and suggests that it be handled within a historical perspective.

According to the MHP, the foundations of Turkey's Kurdish question were first laid by riots by Kurdish clans in the early years of the Republic of Turkey, when these groups were provoked by foreign countries that wished to use Kurds for their own interests. The party points to a striking finding, claiming that the deportation of Kurdish clans by the Turkish state to quash the riots contributed to the aggravation of the Kurdish question. "Though these deportations were prompted by the necessities of the time, they brought with them problems that are very difficult to compensate for," the MHP suggests.

According to analysts, it is an unusual development for the MHP to point to deportations of Kurdish clans as a factor contributing to the Kurdish problem. Analysts are hopeful that the MHP will contribute largely to the solution of this problem with its findings.

The MHP will also discuss several other topics during its approaching congress. Among these topics are global warming and the Alevi issue.

The MHP rolled up its sleeves in the past to resolve the long-standing animosity between Turkey's Alevi community and the party. Bahçeli made a concession to Alevis last November, saying Alevism in Turkey, just like other religious beliefs, should be rescued from being used as a political tool by certain groups. In the upcoming party congress, Bahçeli will express his party's readiness to reach a common understanding with the Alevis to find a solution to the problems faced by Turkey's Alevi community. Bahçeli will underline that Alevism is a part of the system of values that make up the Turkish nation.

REUTERS

Addax set to start Kurdistan crude exports Sunday

May 25, 2009 (Reuters) -By Luke Pachymuthu,

* *Addax to bring crude to Iraq-Turkey pipeline by truck*

* *Company has green light from ministry in Baghdad*

* *Kurdistan has allowed 40,000 bpd*

ABU DHABI, Oil and gas company Addax Petroleum (AXC.TO: Quote, Profile, Research, Stock Buzz) expects to start crude oil exports from its facility in Iraq's largely autonomous Kurdistan region on Sunday, a senior company executive said. The firm, listed in Toronto and London (AXC.L: Quote, Profile, Research, Stock Buzz), expects to get access to an Iraq-Turkey oil export pipeline which it would then supply with trucks carrying crude from the Taq Taq field, Leslie Blair, managing director of Addax Petroleum-Middle East, told Reuters on the sidelines of an industry conference.

He said Iraq's Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani had given his agreement.

"Sunday is the date we can access the pipeline...the minister has agreed and by Sunday we will be ready," Blair said on Monday.

The central government in Baghdad has long opposed the signing of contracts with foreign oil firms by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and withheld use of export pipelines.

The impasse has delayed for years the passing of crucial national oil and gas legislation, deterring foreign investment.

Earlier this month Baghdad said it would begin exporting oil from Kurdistan's Tawke and Taq Taq fields. But Iraq's oil ministry, out of principle, still opposes production sharing contracts that Kurds have clinched with firms like Addax and Norway's DNO International (DNO.OL: Quote, Profile, Research, Stock Buzz) that

are developing the fields.

Its refusal to recognize Kurdish deals, even as it backs Kurdish exports, brings uncertainty to the situation.

Blair said the volume of the exports would be limited partly by the need to use trucks.

"We will be doing this by truck...that is why you can't go to a very large number by truck, because just the sheer logistics of moving hundreds of trucks is untenable the higher number you go."

The Kurdish government has given Addax the green light to export 40,000 barrels per day, but the firm had the facilities in place to supply up to 60,000 bpd by truck.

"(The oil) will go to a pipeline connection which is close to the Kirkuk field, to be determined by the ministry, they will actually determine where we offload the oil."

Developments in the energy standoff between the Kurdistan region and Baghdad are keenly watched, not least because Kurdish officials have heralded a new \$8 billion plan from foreign energy firms that could supply natural gas from Kurdistan to Europe via the Nabucco pipeline [ID:nSP496384].

This pipeline project is a key element in the European Union's plans to free itself from reliance for gas on Russia.

But Shahristani has rejected the deal because it was done without participation from the oil ministry.

REUTERS

Candidates register for Iraqi Kurdistan vote

May 25, 2009 (Reuters) - By Shamal Aqrabi

* *July 25 vote seen unlikely to produce dramatic change*

* *Bitter rows with Baghdad over land, resources*

ARBIL, Iraq, Registration for a presidential poll in Iraq's largely autonomous Kurdistan region ended on Monday, with incumbent President Massoud Barzani and five others on the list, the region's electoral commission said.

The balance of power in Kurdistan, which sits on largely untapped oil and gas reserves, is closely watched given its bitter rows with the Baghdad government over land and resources that have threatened to trigger violence.

Iraqi Kurds will vote on July 25 in concurrent parliamentary and presidential polls that are not expected to bring dramatic changes to an enclave seen as frozen in the grip of two dominant parties and as drifting further from Baghdad.

The deadline for submissions expired at 6 pm (1500 GMT).

"In a few days, we'll draw up the list of nominees," Iraq's top electoral official Faraj al-Haidari told Reuters.

Halo Ibrahim, brother-in-law of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, is seen as the most serious challenger.

The vote is thought likely to return Barzani to power by a comfortable margin and entrench the powerful Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

The two are running together in a joint list along with other, smaller parties.

The region won de facto independence after the 1991 Gulf War. Allied powers protected the region from then Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein by imposing a no-fly zone over it.

Diplomats and the region's few small opposition parties, such as the Kurdistan Islamic Union, express concern over this lack of choice as a choke on Kurdistan's nascent democracy.

Although Kurds take pride in the relatively peaceful enclave, which remained stable even while the rest of Iraq descended into an orgy of sectarian bloodshed in 2006 and 2007, their frustration is growing at Kurdish officials they see as often corrupt and imperious to change.

The Kurdish Regional Government's feuds with Baghdad may yet turn violent. Barzani and Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki have exchanged harsh words and accusations in the past year, although both have softened their lines in recent months.



TURKEY'S DIRTY WAR AGAINST THE KURDS

'We Used to Murder People at Night When the Soldiers Weren't Around'

By Daniel Steinvorth in Istanbul

When members of the special Turkish police unit Jitem arrived at night, Kurdish inhabitants of southeast Turkey knew there would be another disappearance. Investigators are now looking into the activities of this allegedly disbanded secretive organization from the 1990s -- and the 'death wells' where its victims were hidden.

Things had been going well for Nimet Karaaslan and his new business. But when the Kurd opened up his little restaurant in the spring of 1993 in Cizre, a city right near Turkey's border with Syria, men wearing dark sunglasses and carrying submachine guns paid him a visit. "Give us your restaurant," they ordered him.

The men were part of Jitem, a special unit of the Turkish gendarmerie charged with "intelligence gathering and counterterrorism," and they made themselves at home in Karaaslan's restaurant. They practiced with their weapons, and they set up a center for interrogating and torturing people. The restaurant was in a good location. From the front, you could look out over the snow-covered peaks of the Cudi mountains on the Turkish-Iraqi border, where units of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a Kurdish separatist group, are still entrenched today. From the back, you could look out over the Tigris River, which separates Turkey from Syria.

The Ipek Yolu Highway, the Turkish name for the Silk Road, runs right past the front of the building heading toward Iraq. And behind it there is a sea of chest-high, green corn broken by the occasional well. The wells turned out to be great places for getting rid of the bodies of those who were executed.

For years, people in the surrounding villages kept quiet. And then, in 2002, the army lifted the region's state of emergency, and the men from Jitem disappeared. For a long time, people thought that speaking about Karaaslan's restaurant increased their own chances of disappearing.

But, since March, the area has been home to backhoes and salvaging equipment. What was once unheard of is now happening in southeastern Turkey -- in Cizre, in Silopi, in Kustepe and wherever else local lawyers have filled a petition to have the "death wells" opened. Turkish officials have now started to dig



This house once held the restaurant Sidan. In the 1990s, its Kurdish owner was forced to hand it over to Jitem, which allegedly used it as a place to carry out interrogations, torture and executions.

for the remains of Kurds who have disappeared. But the digging also means working through one of the darkest chapters in this country's history, when Turkish security forces waged a dirty war against supporters of the PKK and its suspected supporters.

Shot 'Like an Animal'

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, thousands of civil rights activists, politicians and businesspeople suspected of having ties with the PKK were kidnapped and murdered. No one knows their exact number, and it was only in rare cases that the victims were even identified. Many corpses were dumped into wells; others were doused in acid and thrown into fields. The horror of the sight was meant to serve as a deterrent. But the majority disappeared without a trace and are still listed as missing.

One of the missing is the Kurdish construction worker Ramazan Solmaz. His wife Piroze last saw him on January 15, 1993. "He was on his way to work when they caught him," she says. "That's all I know. There are no traces, no clues. I'd just like to know where his body is. I just want to bury him." Piroze and a friend have put their faith in Cizre's bar association. "My husband, Selahattin, was shot in broad daylight in 1998 right on the street," say her friend, who is wearing a pitch-black version of the traditional Kurdish gown. "Just like that. Like an animal."

At the time, the women didn't even think about filing a criminal complaint. In Cizre, confronting those in power had its consequences. The powerful included

not only the soldiers and the people from Jitem, but also members of the radical-Islamic Turkish Hezbollah, a militant Kurdish organization unrelated to the Lebanese Hezbollah. The war between the Turkish army and the PKK raged in the mountains surrounding Cizre. But in the city itself, it was this group that held power over life and death. A brutal leader of this clan named Kamil Atak once let himself be nominated to become mayor. As local politicians will tell you, the former shepherd used to take pleasure in "feeding" his captives to his Hezbollah fighters.

Spreading Fear and Anxiety

Even after the state of emergency was lifted in 2002, Atak remained under the protection of state security forces. Just over two months ago, on March 23, police arrested Atak as part of a nationwide operation after he garnered the attention of investigators working on the "Ergenekon" case. Soon after Atak's arrest, authorities also arrested Cemal Temizöz, a colonel in the military police, who also sowed fear and anxiety among the inhabitants of Cizre.

"Ergenekon" is the name of a place in popular Turkish mythology, but it is also the name given to a conspiracy of networked ultra-nationalists. Roughly 150 of its members are now standing trial in Turkey. The former soldiers, police officers, journalists, professors and everyday Mafiosi stand accused of having planned a coup against the government of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The trial has been going on for more than six months. It is the most explosive trial in recent Turkish history.

Among the accused is Veli Küçük, the retired general who allegedly founded Jitem. Küçük's arrest in January 2008 was the most sensational event of the year. As things have turned out, though, the kind-faced grandfather appears to be untouchable. It is still hard to tell whether the military used Küçük as a sacrificial pawn or whether the generals in Ankara believed he had become too powerful.

Jitem's Bestial Interrogation Methods

For the top brass in Turkey's military forces, the issue of Jitem remains

taboo. The government continues to deny its existence. According to the semiofficial version, at least, the organization served as something like a "counterguerrilla" force against the PKK that completed its mission long ago and has since been disbanded. The last fact seems to have been confirmed by former Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz, when he claimed in a television interview that Jitem "no longer" existed.

By far the most comprehensive reports of Jitem's activities can be found in the memoirs of the organization's former agents. One of them is Abdülkadir Aygan, who now lives in Sweden. Aygan tells a shocking tale of having first been a member of the PKK before being recruited to work for Jitem. "We used to murder people at night during the long hours when the soldiers weren't around," Aygan says, describing Jitem's activities. "Many of the people we captured had been indicted by a court or the gendarmes," he adds. "But many of them had also been denounced by their completely normal fellow citizens. No one survived an interrogation by Jitem people."

The Fate of Hasan Ergül

Other former henchmen of the state, such as Tuncay Güney and Yildirim Begler, are now talking about the war against the PKK. From the safety of exile in Canada, Sweden and Norway, men like these recount the names of the victims and the places where their mass graves can be found. They describe the bestial interrogation methods and the orders to kill that

always came "from the very top." They talk about how the gendarmes would bathe the dead in acid baths and make them disappear in wells. And they never fail to mention the type of cars the Jitem usually used: white models of the Renault 12-based "Toros" manufactured in Turkey between the 1970s and 1990s. When the angels of death appeared in their white cars, inhabitants knew that one of their friends or neighbors would be disappearing soon.

The case of the disappeared Kurd Hasan Ergül exemplifies the vividness of these Jitem veterans' revelations. On May 23, 1993, the farmer from the village of Cukurca got on his tractor with his three-year-old son to drive to the hospital in a nearby city. But they didn't get far. After stopping at a nearby gas station, Ergül was surrounded by three vehicles that blocked his path. The men who got out of the car weren't wearing uniforms. They dragged Ergül off his tractor and forced him into the back seat of one of the cars. They drove off, leaving the crying boy behind.

It would be years before Ergül's relatives finally became aware of his ultimate fate. They learned it when they heard the confession of former Jitem member Abdülkadir Aygan, who spoke about how Ergül was strangled to death, put in a sack and dumped into a remote lake.

Seeking Certainty and Closure

In the end, all the searching and inquiries of Ergül's brothers had been in vain. But after Aygan's confession, they did succeed in figuring out where Ergül

had been dumped, where fishermen later hid his body and where his unidentified corpse had been buried in an anonymous grave not far from the lake. "Now we're waiting for the results of a DNA test," says Ergül's brother Ata. "Then we will finally have some certainty."

This is a sign of progress -- but there are also contradictory signals coming out of Turkey. For the first time, the country seems prepared to come to terms with its recent past. But even though light is now being thrown on the dirty war waged during that period, the war between the Turkish military and the PKK continues to rage. In military terms, the separatist movement has been significantly weakened, and its leader, Abdullah Öcalan, has been in prison for years. But it is still capable of launching deadly bomb attacks, such as the one in late April, when a remotely denoted bomb threw a military vehicle into the air, killing nine Turkish soldiers.

The government avoids talks with the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society

Turkish air offensive on PKK after six soldiers killed

REUTERS

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey, May 28, 2009 (Reuters)

- A REMOTE-controlled mine killed six Turkish soldiers and wounded 11 more in the mainly Kurdish southeast, security sources said on Thursday.

The soldiers were on an operation when their vehicle struck the mine in Hakkari province near the Iraqi and Iranian borders late on Wednesday.

Turkish troops, backed by helicopters, launched an offensive near the Iraqi border against separatist Kurdish PKK guerrillas after the blast -- the heaviest toll suffered by Turkish soldiers since a bomb killed nine soldiers at the end of April.

In a separate operation, Turkish police on Thursday detained 35 people, including teachers and union members, for their suspected ties to separatist Kurdish guerrillas in raids across the country, state-run Anatolian news agency said.

The arrests took place in five provinces, including in the cities of Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir, Anatolian said. Suspects were also taken in Van, in the mainly Kurdish southeast.

Anatolian said they are suspected of backing the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) guerrilla, an armed group which has fought a 25-year campaign for autonomy in the southeast.

Some 40,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

In recent months, Turkish authorities have stepped up a crackdown on supporters of the PKK, which has been weakened by Turkish operations against guerrilla bases in northern Iraq.

Turkey's separatist conflict in the impoverished mainly Kurdish southeast has negatively weighed on the country's economic development and is a hindrance to Ankara's European Union membership aspirations. But signs are emerging that the conflict might be nearing an end.

The government of Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan has expanded cultural and political rights to minority Kurds, who have long complained of discrimination at the hands of the Turkish state.

While rejecting a general amnesty for PKK guerrillas, the conservative military has taken a more conciliatory tone and admits military might alone will not end violence.

In another break from the past, neighbours Iraq and Turkey conduct joint operations against the PKK with U.S. intelligence.

The PKK's senior commander, Murat Karayilan, has said in recent interviews the group no longer sought an independent Kurdish state, but recognition of Kurdish rights and ethnic identity.

The PKK, believed to number up to 4,000 fighters, is branded a terrorist organisation by Washington and the European Union.

En campagne pour sa réélection, M. Ahmadinejad joue la carte de l'« unité nationale »

Le président iranien, très contesté, y compris parmi ses alliés traditionnels, s'est lancé dans une « fuite en avant » verbale pour rassembler son électorat fondamentaliste

Avant même le début de la campagne présidentielle pour les élections du 12 juin, le guide suprême, l'ayatollah Khamenei, avait donné le ton. « *Ne votez pas pour tous ceux qui veulent abdiquer au profit de l'Occident !* », avait-il lancé, d'une voix étonnamment forte, lors d'un voyage en province.

Depuis, le guide est revenu à sa réserve naturelle d'arbitre entre les factions, mais celui qui, aujourd'hui encore, est considéré comme son « poulain », le fondamentaliste président sortant, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a repris et amplifié ce qui pouvait passer pour un mot d'ordre, se lançant dans une véritable campagne nationaliste.

Là où ses trois adversaires parlent, chacun à sa manière, de « détente » et d'un « dialogue renouvelé avec l'Occident », que ce soit le conservateur Mohsen Rezai, ex-chef des Gardiens de la révolution ; Mehdi Karubi, ex-président du Parlement, ou Mir Hossein Moussavi, ancien premier ministre, tous deux soutenus par les réformateurs, M. Ahmadinejad

lui, parle de « faiblesse ». A Semnan, son fief d'origine à l'est de Téhéran, il a prononcé en fin de semaine dernière un discours musclé fustigeant les accords de Saadabad, conclus en octobre 2003 entre le gouvernement réformateur de Mohammad Khatami et les Européens, qui avaient abouti à une suspension de l'enrichissement d'uranium. Des accords, a dit M. Ahmadinejad, qui étaient « *une trahison à la nation* ».

Concurrence féroce

Parlant, peu après dans un meeting à Téhéran, du « *courage de la grande nation iranienne* » qui « *n'accepte pas le déshonneur* », le président avait conclu sur une citation du fondateur de la République islamique, l'ayatollah Khomeiny : « *Les ennemis sont comme des chiens. Si vous les attaquez, ils reculent, mais si vous reculez, ils attaquent.* »

Pourquoi une telle « fuite » verbale en avant au moment où les centres de pouvoir iraniens, à l'exception d'un petit « noyau dur » qui craint les dérives possibles

pour le régime de toute éventuelle ouverture, sont persuadés qu'avec l'arrivée de M. Obama à la Maison Blanche il y a une opportunité de règlement à saisir ?

La réponse est en partie dans ces sondages officieux qui circulent et indiquent que, face à une concurrence féroce, la meilleure chance de M. Ahmadinejad est de passer en force au soir du 12 juin. Alors qu'un second tour, où son adversaire, quel qu'il soit, cristalliserait tout le mécontentement produit, entre autres, par sa politique économique « *populiste* » inflationniste, le mettrait en difficulté.

« *La meilleure carte d'Ahmadinejad, c'est la fibre nationaliste toujours vive en Iran, notamment sur le nucléaire où existe un consensus dans la population sur le droit inaliénable à un nucléaire civil* », nous a expliqué par téléphone un ancien haut fonctionnaire du ministère de l'intérieur. Et l'analyste Ahmad Salamatian de renchérir : « *S'il arrive à se poser en héros face aux pressions étrangères devant son électorat, il a gagné.* » Le guide lui-même, selon des indis-

crétions de son entourage, aurait indiqué la priorité : « *Gagner à tout prix au premier tour.* »

M. Ahmadinejad n'aura pas la tâche facile, son propre camp est divisé. Il a obtenu le soutien des Partisans de la ligne de l'imam, une coalition de quatorze partis conservateurs, mais n'a pu arracher celui des religieux de la puissante Association du clergé combattant, faute d'obtenir l'aval nécessaire des deux tiers de ses membres. Enfin, il y a deux jours, il a essuyé un camouflet auprès des Osulgarayans, le groupe fondamentaliste majoritaire au Parlement.

Conviées à une réunion amicale, les principales têtes d'affiche du mouvement ne se sont pas déplacées, notamment Ali Larijani, président du Parlement et ex-négociateur en chef sur le dossier nucléaire, « *écarté* » au profit d'un fidèle de M. Ahmadinejad.

Pour finir, sur les 170 parlementaires du groupe, seuls 155 étaient venus au rendez-vous et à peine 80 ont donné leur soutien au président sortant. ■

Marie-Claude Decamps

Nucléaire iranien : fin de non-recevoir aux Occidentaux

REJET définitif, posture électorale ? Les propos tenus lundi 25 mai par le président iranien Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, à des journalistes, ont mis en évidence la fragilité du processus multilatéral auquel les États-Unis ont accepté, en avril, de se joindre pour tenter de résoudre la crise du nucléaire iranien.

Interrogé sur la proposition de « *double gel* » mise en avant par les grandes puissances (gel de l'enrichissement d'uranium contre gel de nouvelles sanctions à l'ONU), le dirigeant radical iranien a balayé l'offre présentée par le groupe de pays « *5+1* » (États-Unis, Russie, Chine, Royaume-Uni, France, Allemagne). « *Nos discussions [avec les grandes puissances] ne se placeront que dans le cadre d'une coopération pour gérer les questions mondiales et rien d'autre* », a dit M. Ahmadinejad. « *La question nucléaire est pour nous terminée.*

A partir de maintenant nous poursuivons notre chemin dans le cadre de l'agence », a-t-il ajouté, en désignant l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA).

Ces commentaires semblaient constituer une fin de non-recevoir à la proposition de rencontre formulée le 8 avril par les « *5+1* », qui s'étaient dit prêts à relancer les discussions avec l'Iran.

« Gestion collective »

L'administration Obama avait alors affirmé son attachement au format « *5+1* », et annoncé que dorénavant les États-Unis y participeraient pleinement.

Les capitales occidentales sont restées silencieuses, lundi, après la sortie de M. Ahmadinejad, apparemment soucieuses d'en relativiser la portée dans le contexte électoral iranien. Mais selon un haut responsable français, cet épisode

va confirmer que la résolution du contentieux nucléaire « *n'avance pas beaucoup* ».

M. Obama a signifié ce mois-ci que les discussions avec l'Iran ne pourraient pas s'éterniser, soucieux de l'empêcher de jouer la montre en poursuivant ses travaux nucléaires. Après une rencontre à Washington avec le premier ministre israélien Benjamin Nétanyahou, il a fixé un calendrier : jusqu'à la fin de l'année.

Côté officiel français, où la préférence va à une politique de fermeté face à l'Iran, on indiquait lundi qu'« *il ne faut pas attendre trop de choses* » de cette échéance électorale, où s'affrontent différents courants, certains critiquant la gestion du dossier nucléaire par M. Ahmadinejad. « *Le régime iranien a une habitude de gestion collective. Il ne faut pas tomber dans un jeu désignant un gentil et un*

méchant », commente un haut responsable français, en allusion au rôle d'arbitre joué par le guide suprême iranien, Ali Khamenei, sur les questions stratégiques.

Les discussions se poursuivent pendant ce temps, entre les capitales occidentales, sur la politique de sanctions qui pourrait être déployée en cas d'échec des ouvertures américaines à l'Iran. Les dernières sanctions votées à l'ONU remontent à mars 2008. En dépit des propos de M. Ahmadinejad, le format « *5+1* » sera préservé par Washington, estime un haut responsable français. « *Pour une raison simple : la seule solution qui ne soit pas la guerre, c'est la négociation, et pour qu'il y ait négociation, il faut des pressions, donc des sanctions, qui doivent être universelles. On a besoin des Chinois et des Russes.* » ■

Natalie Nougayrède

Shirin Ebadi : « L'Iran a dépassé la Chine en nombre d'exécutions »

L'avocate iranienne et Prix Nobel de la paix dénonce les pressions dont elle est l'objet

Prix Nobel de la paix et animatrice du Centre des défenseurs des droits de l'homme à Téhéran, l'avocate iranienne Shirin Ebadi a vu ces derniers mois augmenter les pressions sur son centre et restreindre ses activités. Dans un entretien téléphonique au Monde, elle confie ses craintes sur le respect des libertés en Iran, à quelques jours de l'élection présidentielle du 12 juin.

Etes-vous toujours personnellement visée par la répression ?

C'est une réalité. Notre centre de défense des droits de l'homme a été fermé le 21 décembre 2008. Mon cabinet a été fouillé, mes archives emportées pêle-mêle dans des cartons et notre site Internet « filtré », sans justification formelle. Ensuite, la secrétaire du centre a été arrêtée [elle a passé deux mois en détention] et une campagne de diffamation orchestrée par le journal conservateur *Keyhan* nous a traités d'« agents de la CIA et du sionisme ». Ajoutez à cela une manifestation devant mon cabinet, des pressions sur mes deux assistantes pour qu'elles démissionnent et la fermeture de ma boîte e-mail. Je suis sans accès à Internet. Voilà pour les conditions de

travail. Quant au travail lui-même, jugez vous-même : la journaliste irano-américaine Roxana Saberi, finalement libérée, avait demandé notre assistance lorsqu'elle avait été condamnée à huit ans de prison pour espionnage, en avril. Nous n'avons pas eu accès au dossier. Depuis, deux membres du centre font l'objet de pressions, M^{me} Mohammadi n'a pu quitter le pays pour honorer un rendez-vous à l'étranger et M. Seyfzadeh a été convoqué devant les tribunaux révolutionnaires, sans explication. Ma conclusion, c'est que

cette campagne de harcèlement et de pressions n'a d'autre but que de nous amener à abandonner le combat, nous dont le centre était l'ultime recours pour bien des Iraniens. **Quel le bilan faites-vous du mandat présidentiel qui s'achève dans lequel les fondamentalistes avaient tous les pouvoirs ?**

Nous constatons une dégradation constante de la situation des droits de l'homme depuis 2005. En 2008, pour prendre un exemple, nous avons constaté qu'en trois ans il y avait eu 300 % d'exécutions en plus ! L'Iran, toutes proportions gardées, a dépassé même la Chine : il y a eu chez nous 355 exécutions pour 70 millions d'habitants et 2 200 exécutions en Chine qui compte 1,3 milliard d'habitants. Faites le calcul...

Le plus grave, c'est l'exécution des jeunes, mineurs au moment des faits reprochés. En trois ans, 32 ont été exécutés dans le monde entier dont 26 en Iran ! 138 attendent en ce moment dans le couloir de la mort en Iran dont cinq filles. Ces exécutions sont contraires à l'article 6 du pacte international du droit civil et politique ratifié par l'Iran en 1975, mais les autorités n'en ont cure, elles attendent que

les jeunes meurtriers aient 18 ans en prison pour les pendre. Devant cet état de fait, 20 personnalités iraniennes, dont moi-même, 5 religieux, dont Mehdi Karoubi, candidat à la présidentielle, et des artistes de renom comme les cinéastes Jafar Panahi ou Rakhshan Banietamad ont lancé une pétition demandant la fin de ces exécutions.

Je reste pessimiste, comment ne pas l'être ? On vient d'apprendre qu'un couple a été condamné à la lapidation la semaine dernière. De toute façon, lorsque le



18 décembre 2008, l'Assemblée générale de l'ONU a adopté une résolution demandant un moratoire sur la peine de mort, seuls 46 pays ont voté contre sur 192. Et parmi eux, il y avait l'Iran...

La société civile est touchée ?

Bien sûr. En deux ans, plus de 100 femmes qui ont participé à la campagne pour l'égalité des droits ont été traduites devant les tribunaux révolutionnaires et condamnées à des peines fermes de trois mois à quatre ans de prison pour « atteinte à la sécurité de l'Etat ». Pour les mêmes raisons, trois autres femmes, Alieh Eghdamdoust, Ronak Safarzadeh et Zeynab Bayazidi, purgent des peines de prison de trois ans pour la première, quatre ans pour les autres. La « sécurité de l'Etat », c'est le mot-clé. Celui qui justifie la

condamnation à respectivement dix ans et un an de prison de deux défenseurs des droits de l'homme kurdes, Mohammad Sadigh Kaboudvand et Massoud Kordpour. Pourquoi je cite tous ces noms ? Pour qu'ils existent, c'est la seule protection contre le silence... On pourrait y ajouter aussi ceux de ces neuf étudiants arrêtés en

« Nous constatons une dégradation constante de la situation des droits de l'homme depuis 2005 »

février ou de cette centaine de personnes interpellées le 1^{er} mai. Ou encore ceux de Kamyar et Arash Alai, ces deux frères médecins, condamnés à trois et six ans de pri-

son, en juin 2008.

Rien n'échappe à la répression : surtout ne pas être « différent ». Les minorités religieuses sont touchées en premier comme les bahais, dont sept responsables sont en prison depuis un an pour « espionnage ». Nous tentons de les défendre malgré les intimidations, mais la date du procès n'est même pas fixée. Les sunnites font aussi l'objet de tracasseries, et même cer-

tains groupes chiites qui prônent un dialogue des religions monothéistes sont accusés de « propos hérétiques ». Idem pour les minorités ethniques. Un journaliste, Yacoub Mehrneh, a été exécuté en 2008 au Sistan-Balouchistan et une dizaine d'activistes kurdes sont condamnés à mort.

Qu'attendre de l'élection de juin ?

Les droits de l'homme, c'est aussi pouvoir exercer ses droits de citoyen. Il y a deux semaines, nous avons publié un communiqué réclamant des élections « libres » et « transparentes » dans lesquelles le peuple peut s'exprimer sans contrainte. Malheureusement, en Iran, le Conseil des gardiens sélectionne les candidats au préalable. Sur plus de 300 qui se sont présentés à la présidentielle, seuls 4 ont été retenus. La légitimité d'un gouvernement n'émane pas seulement du suffrage universel, mais aussi du respect des citoyens sans distinction de leur opinion ou de leur religion. Or qu'avons-nous depuis quatre ans ? Une répression accrue et des libertés de plus en plus surveillées. Un bilan dans lequel la démocratie est bien malmenée. ■

Propos recueillis par
Marie-Claude Decamps

Iraq's Kurdish oil

Kurdistan goes glug glug

ERBIL / The federal government is letting Iraq's Kurds export from their new oilfields



ON JUNE 1st a man in a hard hat in the blazing sun will ritually turn a switch to let oil flow through a pipeline. In oil-rich Iraq that should not warrant comment. But this operation, at the Tawke oilfield near Iraq's northern frontier with Turkey, will be beamed live to a giant screen in a new conference centre in Erbil, capital of Iraq's self-ruling Kurdistan region. Hundreds of leading Kurds will cheer as they watch pictures of oil being offloaded from tankers at an export facility at Khurmala, south-west of Erbil, from which it will be pumped to Baiji and into the same northbound pipeline (see map).

The reason for the excitement is that the crude is being extracted from the first newly developed oilfield to have come on stream since the Americans invaded Iraq in 2003—indeed, the first to have come on stream anywhere in Iraq for 30-odd years. It is also the first instance of

exploration leading to extraction and export by private companies in Iraq since oil was nationalised in 1972. Iraq's Kurds, who have signed a string of controversial production-sharing agreements (PSAs) with private companies, are proud that the oil is flowing anew from fields that they control.

The oil ready for export comes from two fields. One is at Tawke, developed by DNO International, a small Norwegian firm. The other is at Taq-Taq, where Addax Petroleum, listed in London and Toronto, runs a joint venture with Turkey's Genel Enerji, which also has a stake in the Tawke show. Ashti Hawrami, the Iraqi Kurds' natural-resources minister, praises the Turkish companies involved. Relations between Turkey's government and the Iraqi Kurdish regional one are plainly improving.

The Tawke field will start by pumping 60,000 barrels a day (b/d). A new pipeline will carry the crude from the

wells east of Zakho to join the main northern pipeline on the Iraqi side of the Turkish border. Meanwhile 40,000 b/d will be trucked from the Taq-Taq site to Khurmala. The crude from both fields will flow through Turkey to the Mediterranean port of Ceyhan. Mr Hawrami says the new fields should produce 450,000 b/d by 2011 and 1m b/d by the end of 2012. That would represent 42% of Iraq's production, if output from the rest of the country stays the same.

The operations at Taq-Taq and Tawke are run under PSAs whereby private companies get 10-20% of the profit. The rest goes to the federal government in Baghdad before being distributed across the rest of Iraq. But Iraq's oil ministry and its trade unions dislike PSAs. A long row between the Kurds and the authorities in Baghdad over rules for the north has yet to be resolved. Baghdad wants to approve all oil deals. The Kurds say the federal constitution lets them run—and profit from—their own oil industry, though they accept that revenue should somehow be shared. The Kurds' parliament passed a hydrocarbons law in 2007. But a new national oil law has been stalled in the federal parliament in Baghdad for at least three years.

The Kurds say they have shown up the decrepitude of Iraq's oil establishment. Despite billions of dollars of investment since 2003, production is still just over 2m b/d, about what it was when Saddam Hussein was toppled. The federal oil minister, Hussein al-Shahristani, loathes the Kurds' success and has tried to stop them running their own oil industry, declaring all deals (now at least 20) signed by them to be illegal. He has also threatened to blacklist any oil company that does business up north from applying for licences down south.

But the global recession may be helping the Kurds. The fall in the oil price has played havoc with the central budget. Iraq needs cash quickly. That, presumably, is why the federal government was forced to let the Kurds export oil off their own bat. ■

The New York Times

May 28, 2009

Allotting of Iraqi Oil Rights May Stoke Hostility

By TIMOTHY WILLIAMS and
SUADAD AL-SALHY

KIRKUK, Iraq — Sheik Habib Shawqi Hamakan peered through his binoculars on a recent afternoon at a sight he considers, despite the rising columns of black smoke that blot out the sun, pure beauty.

As far as the eye can see are oil fields, among the most productive in Iraq. He turned, gesturing to his rambling two-story house with its garden of blossoming pink and yellow rosebushes. That, too, sits on an oil field.

The sheik is one of thousands of Kurds who have moved to Kirkuk, an unstable oil town in northern Iraq, since the 2003 United States-led invasion and claimed plots of land not theirs to build houses. Some of the homes, illegal facts on the ground aimed at furthering Kurdish claims to Kirkuk, sit a mere half mile from towering flames of natural gas among the oil fields.

Their presence is one of many pressure points converging at a critical time in Kirkuk, as rights to those fields are scheduled to be awarded to the highest bidding international oil company next month as part of Iraq's larger effort to bolster its slumping economy by nearly tripling oil production over the next six years.

Kirkuk Province, wedged between Kurdistan and the rest of Iraq, is smaller than Connecticut but produces as much oil as Alaska. It is believed to possess as much as one-sixth of Iraq's total petroleum reserves.

Both Kurds and the central government have long claimed Kirkuk as their own — and many residents and Western observers fear that the awarding of the contract, along with the bonanza of jobs and cash expected to follow, may decisively stoke hostility among the Kurds, Arabs and Turkmens who live here. Many worry this may tear at Iraqi unity and embroil the disputed territory in greater violence. At worst, it could bring the open ethnic warfare that many have predicted since security for the province was handed over to Kurdish forces after the 2003 invasion.

Any dispute over Kirkuk is of concern to Turkey, Syria and Iran, each with a minority Kurdish population, and could ignite simmering Arab-Kurdish tensions throughout northern Iraq, the country's most restive region.



Kurds have built rough homes in Kirkuk near oil fields on land the government says is not theirs.

Still, even though the status of Kirkuk remains unresolved and it is unclear how much oil actually lies beneath it, many of the world's largest oil corporations are competing for the contract here. It is one of eight large but underperforming oil and gas fields throughout Iraq for which the government is scheduled to award production rights at the end of June.

"By opening bids on fields in Kirkuk, Prime Minister Maliki is clearly poking the Kurds in the eye by asserting Iraqi sovereignty over oil in territories whose status is constitutionally in dispute," said Joost Hiltermann, an Iraq expert at the International Crisis Group.

In recent weeks, even after a summit meeting in Berlin among Kirkuk's Arabs, Kurds, Turkmens and Assyrians, violence in the province has increased. This spring, Kirkuk city has been rocked by car bombings, shootings and suicide attacks that have killed at least a dozen police officers, three Assyrian Christians, a high-ranking Arab police official and workers going to the oil fields.

Kirkuk's predominately Kurdish security forces say they need help controlling the violence, but not from the largely Arab Iraqi Army troops stationed on the city's outskirts. The American military held a series of meetings with Arab and Kurdish political leaders and security forces this month without reaching an accord to allow an Iraqi Army unit to operate in the city.

"We hope it is not going back again to very serious violence, but all signs are that it will," said Maj. Gen. Turhan Abdul Rahman Yasif, deputy chief of the province's police force.

A United Nations report last month offered several recommendations to reduce tensions, including making Kirkuk a region jointly administered by Iraq and Kurdistan. Residents would ultimately hold a referendum to decide their future.

Kirkuk's population of Kurds, Arabs, Turkmens and Assyrian Christians generally live apart from one another in mutual suspicion. The other groups accuse the Kurds of seeking to annex Kirkuk and its oil wealth into the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government, which could give Kurdistan the economic underpinning to become an independent state.

But there has been almost no oil exploration in Iraq for decades. The Oil Ministry says Kirkuk contains about 15 billion barrels of oil, or 16 percent of Iraq's total, and 2 percent of the world's proven oil reserves.

But most oil industry estimates put Kirkuk's reserves at between 5.5 billion barrels and 10 billion barrels.

Revenue Watch Institute, a New York-based nonprofit natural resources policy group, estimated in a 2006 report that 62 percent of Kirkuk's petroleum had already been extracted.

"That means this super giant field is at the final stages of its life," the report said.

But Mena'a Abdullah Alubaid, director general of Iraq's North Oil Company, a branch of the Oil Ministry that oversees Kirkuk's fields, insists that the fields will last until 2074.

Wayne Kelley, managing director of RSK Ltd., an independent oil engineering firm, said the petroleum company

that ultimately wins the Kirkuk field would face issues including the potential for violence and the likely contamination of part of the field with waste oil.

"Nowhere in the world has a field of anywhere near this size been so grossly mismanaged," he said.

Another significant impediment could be the growing population of Kurdish settlers, many of whom have built homes on land that the Oil Ministry says is not theirs.

The families say they were forced

out of Kirkuk by Saddam Hussein's government, which bulldozed their villages. They call the contested city their "Jerusalem," and some said they would take up arms to stay.

Sheik Hamakan, 60, said that after years of exile in Iran and elsewhere he had finally satisfied his longing to be home. He will not, he vowed, stand aside for government bulldozers to raze his family's house a second time.

"I won't leave," he said. "It would be up to them to demolish the village on my

head."

Reporting was contributed by Riyadh Mohammed, Abeer Mohammed, Sam Dagher and Mohamed Hussein from Baghdad, and Tareq Maher and an Iraqi employee of The New York Times from Kirkuk.

Is there end in sight for Turkey's Kurdish problem?

REUTERS 

ANKARA, May 28 ,2009 (Reuters) -

Turkey's decades-long conflict in the mainly Kurdish southeast is a major factor hampering the European Union candidate's economic development and has long been a source of regional instability.

The deaths of six Turkish soldiers in a mine blast in the southeast, which sparked an air strike by Turkish jets against Kurdish separatist PKK bases in northern Iraq, was a reminder of the conflict's destabilising potential. [ID:nLS377535]

However, recent developments have raised hopes that the Kurdish problem might be at a turning point and that an end to the violence could be in sight.

HERE ARE SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS ON THE KURDISH ISSUE:

FAREWELL TO ARMS?

* The commander of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which launched a military campaign in 1984 for Kurdish self-rule in southeast Turkey, has made recent peace offers to end the war. In media interviews, Murat Karayilan, has said the PKK has dropped its central demand for an independent Kurdish state and instead seeks the recognition of Kurdish rights and ethnic identity. Karayilan, who has proposed a British-style devolution for ethnic Kurds to end the violence, has not ruled out laying down arms if PKK fighters are granted an amnesty.

* The PKK, which has been weakened by Turkish military operations against its bases in northern Iraq, has held ceasefires in the past, but Karayilan's words are the closest the group has come to say it could renounce violence. The European Union, the United States and the Turkish government have called on the PKK to lay down its arms.

POLITICAL SETTLEMENT?

* Turkey's conservative establishment, historically hostile to pursuing dialogue in the southeast, has re-examined its strategy toward the Kurdish issue. The commander of the powerful armed forces, General Ilker Basbug, recently said that military might alone will not end the conflict and that social and

economic measures need to be implemented.

* While the military rejects a general amnesty for PKK guerrillas, it has also taken a more conciliatory tone and has said measures are needed to bring the rebels down from the mountains. President Abdullah Gul, a moderating voice in Turkish politics, said recently Turkey had "an historic opportunity" to fix the Kurdish problem.

* Deniz Baykal, leader of the secular CHP opposition, Turkey's oldest political party, said on Thursday an amnesty project would be possible if the PKK laid down its arms first.

* Under reforms aimed at winning membership of the EU, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party government has given Kurds more cultural and political rights. The government has sent signals it might consider further overtures to address decades-long grievances, including allowing thousands of Kurdish villages to be renamed in Kurdish.

* The country's only legal Kurdish party, the Democratic Society Party (DTP), long suspected of having ties with the PKK, has called on the military and the rebels to end violence. The DTP faces the threat of being banned by the Constitutional Court on charges of having links to the PKK.

REGIONAL MOMENTUM?

* Ankara and Baghdad have stepped up cooperation in the fight against PKK rebels, which in the past have been an irritant in relations. Diplomats say Turkey and Iran are also sharing intelligence over Kurdish rebels on their borders. In another break from the past, Turkey has opened diplomatic channels with the autonomous Kurdish government of northern Iraq.

* U.S. President Barack Obama, who is seeking a smooth withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, has encouraged contacts between Baghdad, Ankara and Arbil to promote regional stability. The U.S. military is providing intelligence to the Turkish military to carry out air strikes against PKK bases in northern Iraq.

May 28, 2009

Asharq Al-Awsat Exclusive

Inside the Kurdish Party for the Free Life

By Hewa Aziz

QANDIL, ASHARQ AL-AWSAT - Anyone reaching the strongholds of the anti-Iranian Kurdish Party for the Free Life (PJAK) in the mountain tops and slopes of the southeastern part of the lofty Qandil Mountain Range - that is part of the mountain frontier between Iraq and Iran - will not believe that this armed party is not a carbon copy of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) that is opposed to Turkey. Its fighters wear the same Kurdish uniform worn by the PKK fighters; it is even woven of the same cloth. Their chests sport a small photograph of their leader Abdullah Ocalan, who is under arrest in Turkey, whom they view as their leader, symbol, ideological and philosophical mentor, and the sole leader of the entire Kurdish nation. The Bijak warriors fight and practice politics with the same style and ideas of the PKK but on the eastern front of Kurdistan that is known as Iranian Kurdistan. In fact, they are a totally separate party from the PKK. Their leader is Haji Ahmadi, the well known Kurdish politician. Asharq Al-Awsat was the first Arab and world newspaper to reach the strongholds of PJAK and meet with one of its senior commanders. He said that Haji Ahmadi's goal is "to deter the Iranian aggression and assaults" on the Kurdish people in that part of Kurdistan and to exercise legitimate self-defense for their existence thus forcing the regime in Tehran to veer toward peace and dialogue to solve the Kurdish issue in the country.

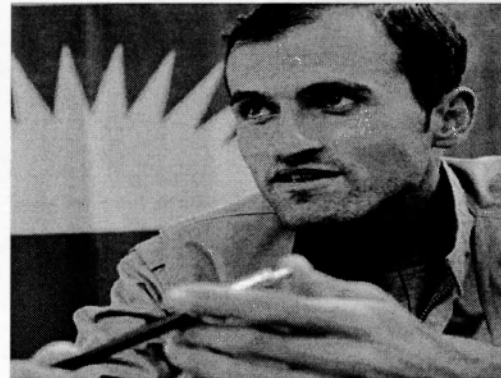
This time, our journey to the PJAK strongholds in Qandil was not fraught with dangers despite the hardships and the ambushes of the "Asayesh", the Kurdish police and security force that has been imposing a tight ban for years, especially on reporters. Despite the formidable natural obstacles, we eventually arrived there in the company of our village guide and our car driver who was from the region and knew best its twisting valleys and topography that the government forces cannot reach easily. The prearrangement we had reached with the party was for the Asharq Al-Awsat team to spend one night in the party's strongholds to wait for two commanding members of the party that were on a military mission in the Iranian hinterland. However, the intensive Iranian artillery bombardment of Qandil that preceded our arrival by a few hours prevented the two commanders from reaching us. Officials in the rear lines had contacted the two commanders by radio and asked them to come to Qandil to give an interview to us as soon as possible lest the Iranian bombardment would resume while we were there and it would thus be hard for the party to guarantee our safety. Three hours after we arrived, commander Azad Horaz [name as transliterated]- 30 years old, member of the Command Council, and leading political and field politician in the party - and Hofal Musa - 60 years old and member of the party's Command Council, an advance political body consisting of 21 members - arrived at the site. They were accompanied by several fighters that had marched on foot for six hours in order to reach the location of the meeting. The following two interviews were conducted and the first was with commander Horaz:

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic, said a few days ago that the United States is training your members in Qandil and preparing them to carry out military operations within Iran. What is your answer?

[Horaz] These are groundless allegations. Let me give you an example. When PJAK was formed, Iran claimed that it was its agent. However, after the armed struggle intensified between our fighters and the Iranian forces, Tehran claimed that PJAK was a US protégé and that it was supported by it. However, the US decision to freeze the party's assets in US banks and placing our party on the list of terrorist organizations rebuts Iran's claims again. The truth is that Iran and the United States have been engaged in secret dialogue. What Khamenei said during his recent visit to Iranian Kurdistan proves this. He stated that his regime is prepared to engage Washington in a direct dialogue if it gives up its pressures on Iran. In other words, the claim that PJAK is a US agent is false; its goal is to distort our party's image.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] It is said that Israel and the United States are scheming to hit the Iranian nuclear reactor. Do you expect such strikes?

[Horaz] The media war between Iran, the United States, and Israel has been raging for decades and these reports are part of this media war. We do not expect such strikes at all and we do not wager on such possibilities. We depend on our own policies and short-term, medium-term, and long-term plans of action. However, we will seize any opportunity that presents itself to push our movement forward. We affirm that the US decision placing our party on the list of terrorist organizations is a political one that primarily serves the Iranian regime. It was taken at Turkey's behest that plays the role of mediator between Washington and Tehran. Had PJAK been a US agent,



**PJAK
 commander
 Azad Horaz
 (Asharq
 Al-Awsat
 Photo)**

our command posts in Qandil would not have been subjected to violent raids by 53 Turkish fighter planes following the accurate intelligence information that US spy planes gathered and passed on to Ankara and from Ankara to Tehran that began to bomb the same regions with heavy artillery.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Do you expect the scenario of political change in Iraq to be repeated on the Iranian arena soon? If this scenario does take place, what would be your role in it?

[Horaz] The change that took place in Iraq had an effect on the democratic march throughout the Middle East. However, this democracy that was achieved was in the interest of the new regime, not the interest of the people. Had the liberation operation been genuine, the situation in Iraq would not have deteriorated the way it did although six years have elapsed since this operation. If the Iraqi scenario is repeated in Iran, PJAK would have a special role based on its forces, organizations, and deep ideological and philosophical ideas and would thus be able to bring change. At this point I wish to reiterate that we will not wait for external forces to play our role. We will not formulate our plans and action programs on the basis of external forces.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Do you have political organizations or armed cells in the towns of Iranian Kurdistan?

[Horaz] There are groups of our armed forces in most of the mountains of eastern Kurdistan.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Iran insists that you are US agents and says that your classification as a terrorist organization is an attempt to mislead public opinion. What is your comment?

[Horaz] The capitalist system that the United States leads devotes everything to serve its special interests. It is a selfish pragmatic regime to the very bones. In return, the Iranian regime - that pretends to be an Islamic regime contrary to the truth and that has distorted the image of Islam in the Middle East and the world - is also a selfish pragmatic regime. Thus, if the two regimes meet they would no doubt use all their means to safeguard their private interests. In other words, the allegations of both sides are false.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] If Iran were to offer you dialogue and negotiations in return for laying down your arms, would you agree?

[Horaz] We are always ready for dialogue for the Kurdish cause. The purpose of our struggle is to impose dialogue. However, the condition of throwing down our arms is unacceptable. If there should be any conditions the primary one should be determination to resolve the Kurdish problem. We bore arms only as a result of the continuous Iranian pressures on our people. In other words, we are exercising the legitimate right of self-defense and defense of our existence. We want to tell the Iranian regime that barring the Kurdish people from exercising a free political life will drive the Kurds to carry arms. In other words, we are not prepared to lay down our arms without a radical solution to our issue.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] What are the reasons for the estrangement between you and the other Iranian Kurdish parties?

[Horaz] The Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan and the Komalah Party think that PJAK was formed to replace them on the political arena in eastern Kurdistan. This is a totally wrong impression. Our party is an alternative only to solving the Kurdish issue. On this basis, these parties refuse to establish relations with us.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] But Iran is saying that the Kurds do not have a legitimate point

of reference with which to negotiate. What is your answer?

[Horaz] It seems that Iran refuses to consider the honorable Kurds and independent forces that are not subject to its will as being points of reference. This does not concern us at all; we consider our Kurdish people as our sole and basic point of reference and that recognize our identity. Witness the hundreds of young Kurds that join the ranks of our liberation movement every day that is continuously expanding. This is on top of the determination of our fighters to deter any aggression by the Iranian regime against our people. We are prepared to pay back Iran twofold in any part of eastern Kurdistan. In other words, we derive our legitimacy from our ongoing struggle, our generous sacrifices, and the blood of our eighty martyrs. We do not need to gain legitimacy from the Iranian regime.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] But these forces view you as a stand-in for the PKK on the eastern arena of Kurdistan.

[Horaz] This is totally false. It is true that we adhere to the ideas, vision, and philosophy of commander Abdullah Ocalan as our leader on the ideological, intellectual, and philosophical levels. However, the leader of our party is comrade Haji Ahmadi who is a well known figure in eastern Kurdistan. In other words, PJAK and PKK march along the teachings of leader Ocalan like other parties that adopt Marxist ideas in the world.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] What if Ocalan were to ask you to lay down your arms under Turkish pressures?

[Horaz] Turkey has nothing to do with our issue. Leader Ocalan is our mentor and he is the one that is persistently asking for a solution to the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Furthermore, PJAK has not carried out any military operation against Turkey for it to ask the party to lay down its arms.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Why do you not create a front to coordinate your actions with the other Kurdish forces in Iran similar to the former Kurdish front in Iraq?

[Horaz] We would like to do that; but the Kurdish forces in Iran have not yet taken a step in that direction despite our repeated calls to unify our ranks in a united front.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] The United States has been calling for changing the regime in Iran for a long time. Are these calls serious or are they mere slogans for media consumption?

[Horaz] If the United States is serious in its claims, let it take practical steps on the ground. Change is not accomplished with mere statements and a media war.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] If the United States were to do this, would you cooperate with it?

[Horaz] We have our own ideas and stands on the Iranian regime. We want future Iran to be a democratic state with a confederation nature in which Kurdistan would enjoy freedom. In other words, if there were common denominators and goals between us and the other Kurdish forces and sides that oppose the regime in Iran we may be able to take joint steps on condition of democratizing the Iranian society in a genuine rather than in a selfish democracy while giving the Iranian peoples the opportunity to decide on their own fate. As for the United States, it has not practiced genuine democracy so far and perhaps the current situation in the district of Kurdistan is the best proof. Had it not been for the Kurdish forces there, the United States would not have succeeded in overthrowing the former Iraqi regime. Nevertheless, the United States left many problems pending and without a solution in the district of Kurdistan, especially the issue of Kirkuk.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Are you capable of bringing change in Iran alone?

[Horaz] Yes, we are with constant ideological and political struggle, organization of action, unification of ranks, and calculated political maneuvering. Our party did not emanate as a result of the continued dangers on the Iranian regime that did not affect it at all contrary to our party's effect on this regime. Our sole motto has been victory and nothing but victory.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] What is the nature of your relations with the Kurdish parties in the district of Kurdistan and with the government there? Do you receive any aid from it?

[Horaz] We do not have an official or unofficial relationship with the Kurdish parties or with the government there and we do not receive any assistance from them. We are an independent party that is struggling in the eastern part of Kurdistan (Iranian Kurdistan). Our people in the eastern part of Kurdistan are the source of our financing in all the logistic, material, and armament fields. Our people supply us with fighters and supporters.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] How can one believe this, particularly since you are a revolutionary party that is waging an armed struggle and that needs huge financial support?

[Horaz] Everyone in Kurdistan has become accustomed to the assumption that every armed revolutionary movement that appears on the Kurdistan front must be connected to this or that country. But this impression is not always correct, particu-

larly regarding our party PJAK that did not emerge suddenly or in a short period. Our party began to be formed in 1999 by a group of university graduate Kurds that agreed on founding a political movement in eastern Kurdistan. They were influenced by the ideas of leader Abdullah Ocalan. Since the eruption of the party in 2004, we have been proclaiming and affirming through statements and communiqués that PJAK is an independent party in its economics and man power. All our people in eastern Kurdistan are aware of this glaring fact. But the Kurdish forces that are opposed to Iran and that always depended on this or that country in their struggle for liberation – that has come to what it is now – do not believe that it is possible to have a party or an armed movement of worldwide fame that is capable of waging a fierce armed struggle against a regime, like the Iranian regime, that is occupying Kurdistan without having to depend on external aid.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] You claim to care about the interests of the Kurdish people but your military operations against Iran have been the cause of destruction of Kurdish border villages. Does this not harm the experiment of the district of Iraqi Kurdistan?

[Horaz] Our military operations are not carried out on the border regions at all for Iran to use them as an excuse to bomb the border villages in Qandil. The government of the district of Kurdistan should understand this well. Moreover, our fighters are not deployed on the border but 50 kilometers inside Iranian territory and at a width of 2,000 kilometers in the eastern part of Kurdistan from the Elam Mountains in the southeast of Kurdistan to the Mako Mountains. In other words, most of our military operations are carried out in these regions. For example, our fighters recently carried out an operation near the town of Kermanshah, specifically in the township of Dawasir. But the Iranian forces began to bomb the regions close to Panjaveen in Al-Sulaymaniyah Province. This clearly exposes the wicked policies of the Iranian regime to foment a Kurdish-Kurdish dispute by using the government of the district as a tool to create and foment such a dispute. Our statements and communiqués issued by party leader Haji Ahmadi or the party's command council affirm PJAK's commitment to anything that may consolidate Kurdish national unity and avoid everything that may divide this unity. Therefore, we hope that the government in the district of Kurdistan would adopt this principle as well, particularly since by virtue of their long political experiment, the Kurdish people cannot be deceived anymore by the intrigues of the enemies and their vile schemes and machinations. At this point we should say that the stands of the government of the district of Kurdistan are not in harmony sometimes with the supreme national interests of the Kurds. At any rate, as a struggling party in eastern Kurdistan, PJAK will not be the cause of any political or diplomatic problems for the government of the district of Kurdistan.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Despite the conclusion of an agreement between the government of the district of Kurdistan and Tehran, the Iranian shelling of the border areas is still continuing. How do you explain this?

[Horaz] The Iranian artillery shelling has been going on since 2005 because Iran continues to abide by the agreement concluded with the defunct Saddam regime that allows Iranian forces to shell border areas at a depth of five kilometers under the pretext of pursuing the members of parties opposed to Iran, especially Kurdish parties and particularly the PJAK fighters. Most often, areas are shelled where our fighters are not deployed at all and the villagers confirm this fact. The recent shelling led to serious damage to the villagers and their property. It led to the killing of an 18-month infant. That is why our fighters decided to avenge the martyred infant and killed a large number of Iranian Revolutionary Guards in one of their operations proceeding from the legitimate right of self-defense. As for why we think the Iranian shelling is continuing, the reason is not the presence of PJAK in the mountains of Qandil. The reason is due to the recent disputes that surfaced recently between the government of the district of Kurdistan and the government of (Iraqi Prime Minister) Al-Maliki in Baghdad regarding the presence of Peshmerga fighters in Khanaqin and its suburbs. Moreover, the meetings between Ahamdinejad and Al-Maliki and the three-sided Iranian-Turkish-Iraqi dialogue are all reasons for the continuation of the shelling of the Qandil regions. But the positive stands of the Iraqi parliament and the parliament of the district of Kurdistan that condemned and denounced the Iranian shelling sent a message to Tehran that the government and parliament of the district of Kurdistan oppose the Iranian aggressions on our border villages.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Have you received an invitation to participate in the expected national Irbil conference? Will you attend?

[Horaz] No, we have not yet received an invitation although the issue of PJAK is a prominent issue in this conference. It is said that the aim of this conference is to solve the Kurdish problem in the four countries that occupy Kurdistan territory (Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran). No doubt. The solution of this thorny issue in the Middle East is not reached by PJAK or the Kurdish parties opposed to Turkey throwing down their guns. Such a solution can be reached through peaceful and diplomatic dialogue and the recognition by these four states of the legitimate rights of the Kurdish people. In other words, the conference should be a form of opposition to these countries occupying Kurdistan rather than an opposition of the revolutionary party of PJAK that is demanding the democratic rights of the Kurdish people. At any rate, if

we are sent an invitation and once we are certain of the security and organizational angles of the conference, our participation is likely on condition that it focuses on ways to solve the Kurdish issue.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] If the Kurdistan Regional Government were to ask you to freeze your military activities like the Democratic Party and Komeleh and live in tent camps and military camps in the [Iraqi] Kurdistan hinterland would you accept?

[Horaz] We would not accept such offers at all. History has shown that armed struggle is the primary factor that leads to victory. It has also shown that the enemies are not deterred when parties and fighters live in tent camps and become preoccupied with how to take care of their families. It also does not respond to the aspirations of the supporters and followers of these parties and the families of their martyrs. In my opinion, one of the most important reasons that led to despair and frustration in the eastern part of Kurdistan was the retreat of Iranian Kurdish forces to live in tent camps and military camps in the south.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Do you expect a major political change in the District of Kurdistan after the upcoming parliamentary elections?

[Horaz] No doubt, all the parties should abide by the results of the elections parallel to their commitment to the national concepts. We hope that these elections would be held in an atmosphere of calm and on democratic grounds so that the Kurdish people in that part of Kurdistan could elect their representatives. We do not wish at all for fragmentation in the Kurdish ranks there in light of the current conflict between the Patriotic Union [of Kurdistan-PUK] and the reformist current. In other words, we hope a positive change would take place on the social, political, and economic sectors and we hope that the elections would mark another step toward a solution of the whole Kurdish issue.

Asharq Al-Awsat also interviewed commander Hofal Musa, as follows:

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Is it not the duty of a commander - I mean your leader Haji Ahmadi who lives in Europe - to lead his followers in the struggle arena?

[Musa] There are different situations in the world of political struggle. Sometimes, it requires a leader to be among his fighters and sometimes that is not necessary. In other words, there are strategic leaders and tactical leaders. Unlike the tactical leader, a strategic leader can reside abroad because his presence in the military arena is not necessary.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Is your political leadership separate from the military command as is the case with the PKK? Are your stands also defensive like those of the PKK as well?

[Musa] Yes, the two leaderships are separate and our stands are definitely in self-defense. It is not we that are fighting Iran; it is Iran that is fighting us and intends to destroy us in the 21st century, the century of liberation of peoples. Iran is preventing us from seeking to unify the ranks of our people in the Kurdish society. It refuses to recognize the legitimate rights of the Kurdish people contrary to all international charters and norms that recognize the right of nations to free self-determination. Iran does not want the Kurdish society to reach higher levels of maturity and awareness.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Are attacks on the military camps and barracks of the Iranian army defensive stands?

[Musa] We did not attack the Iranian forces in Tehran or on the Tabriz Mountains but in the Kurdish regions that are occupied by the Iranian army. All our military operations are in retaliation to ongoing attacks by the Iranian army.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Last year, the media cited your leader Haji Ahmadi on meetings between you and members of the US Congress here in Qandil. How true are these reports?

[Musa] They are mere statements attributed to Haji Ahmadi; they are groundless.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Do you have anything else you wish to say?

[Musa] I wish to tell the whole world that we are forced to carry arms in order to protect our people, homeland, and existence. The regime in Iran is not used to leaning toward dialogue, negotiations, and the logic of reason. That is why we are forced to put military pressure on this regime. We want it to turn to diplomatic dialogue hoping to resolve the Kurdish issue in eastern Kurdistan.

TODAYS ZAMAN May 30, 2009

Barzani insists Kirkuk part of Kurdish region

M. ALIHAN HASANOGLU

Iraq's disputed city of Kirkuk and its oil reserves belong to the Kurdish region, Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani said on Thursday when he met with Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht in Arbil, northern Iraq.

Asked at a joint press conference with De Gucht on Thursday whether the oil fields in Kirkuk belonged to the Kurdish region or the federal government of Iraq, Barzani said: "The Iraqi Constitution states that the oil reserves are the property of all Iraqis. But Kirkuk, together with its oil reserves, is part of Kurdistan," he said.

Iraqi Kurds run three provinces in northern Iraq and claim the ethnically mixed city of Kirkuk is also part of their semi-autonomous region. Kurdish claims on Kirkuk are a source of tension between the city's Kurds and non-Kurdish population, made up of Turkmens and Arabs. The Iraqi Constitution envisions a referendum on the status of Kirkuk, but the vote, although planned earlier, has never



taken place because pre-referendum requirements, such as a census, could never be carried out. Turkey, which shares close ethnic ties with Turkmens, calls for a compromise among Iraqi groups on the status of Kirkuk. The United States is also cautious about Kurdish claims over Kirkuk, fearing it could lead to clashes that could affect the entirety of Iraq.

Control of Kirkuk and the distribution of oil revenues in northern Iraq are among the key disputed issues between the

Kurdish administration and the Baghdad government. De Gucht backed Iraq's federal system and said problems between the Kurdish region and the central government should be resolved on the basis of principles of the Iraqi Constitution.

Before traveling to Arbil, De Gucht met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari and Human Rights Minister Wejdane Mikhail in Baghdad to discuss security and reconstruction six years after the US-led invasion of Iraq.

Asharq Al-Awsat Talks Kurdistan Regional Government PM Nechirvan

Interview by Ma'ad Fayad in Arbil

[Asharq Al-Awsat] What is the most significant thing that your government achieved over the past four years?

[Barzani] In my opinion, the most significant thing achieved during the past four years is the formation of a unity-government with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK] following the years of internal division and conflict. After all of this [division] we were able to establish a [joint] government that worked as one team, especially as we are well aware that the differences between the Kurdish Democratic Party [KDP] and the PUK were not new, but began in 1964. After all of the results and outcomes took place, we established a joint government, which in reality operates as one team. Nobody could imagine that after all that took place we [the KDP and PUK] would work together, and instead of a boycott there is understanding of the new situation. And so a Minister from one party will work with a team from the other party and so on. I gave the deputy Prime Minister all the power to appoint two Directors from these two parties without any interference from myself, and they are working together today after we created a joint operational framework and built links of trust [between the two parties]. Prior to this both parties were obstructing one another with regards to governmental work, but I can say without exaggeration that we were significantly able to reduce this, and we have come a long way in this direction. What was, and continues to be the major issue that concerns us is the provision of services to the people, in particular the provision of electricity and water services to the citizens. Electricity, for example, was a major problem for us, and I can say that we were able to solve a large part of this problem, and it is not such a problem today although there are still concerns with regards to this. As for the issue of water, we have taken a number of practical steps to provide water in the regions that need it, and we have worked hard to provide these services. With regards to evaluating the work of the government that I head, I leave this to others and their conscience.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] You began to use political quotas with regards to the formation of your government at an early stage, how did you find this experience?

[Barzani] Our goal was to bring together all the parties in one government, we do not say that we have succeeded in doing this 100 percent, but we succeeded in implementing this in a large way. Dealing with Ministers always occurred in a professional manner, and never on a party-basis. The relationships that tie us together are [built] upon the basis of serving the people, rather than on the basis of party affiliation.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] What difficulties did you encounter in building good relations with Turkey?

[Barzani] In the beginning there was a big problem as there did not exist the same acceptance in Turkey with regards to building relations with Kurdistan, and we faced many difficulties. The Turkish army was deployed along the border with Iraq close to us and they were threatening to intervene and the predominant language coming out of Ankara was the language of threats. But we overcame these difficulties due to our determination to pursue joint dialogue, and as a result of economic and cultural cooperation with Turkey. [As a result of this] there has been significant progress on this issue and I personally was the first [Prime Minister] to pay constant attention to our relations with Turkey, not just because it is a neighboring country, but also because Turkey is an important neighbor to Iraq.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] What have you achieved with regards to the Arab file?

[Barzani] Currently, and over the past two years, relations are thawing with our brothers in the Arab countries. Some Arab countries had reservations, and I believe that these reservations were cleared up by the Arabs themselves. We see that there is a strong desire by some Arab countries to establish relations with the region of Kurdistan, as part of Iraq.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Will the region of Kurdistan begin to export oil at the beginning of next month as has been previously announced?



[Barzani] Yes, and I would like to explain why we have taken this step. Hussein al-Shahristani [Iraqi Minister of Oil] continuously accused the Kurdistan Region of not being able to export one barrel of oil, and he accused us of wanting to exploit this oil, wanting to secede from Iraq, and implement our own agenda. And so we wanted to send a clear message to our Iraqi people that al-Shahristani is not important to us, and that we are in a region that is ready to export oil, and that this oil – according to the Constitution – belongs to the people of Iraq, whether in Baghdad, Basra, Arbil, or Ramadi. Therefore the proceeds of the oil from the Kurdistan Region will go to the Treasury of the Central government [of Iraq]. This is a political message, a message of reassurance to the people of Iraq, it does not matter to us what al-Shahristani says about whether what we have done [contracts signed with oil companies] is legal or illegal; we are not concerned with his remarks.

Yes, we will undertake the exportation of oil, and the proceeds from this will go the Iraqi government, and we [the Kurdistan Region] will get our share of what has been allocated to us, this is the first stage. As for the next stage, we will search for operational mechanisms with oil companies, so that we can go back to how things were before. We believe that the oil policies in the Kurdistan Region were successful [before], and today there are 35 important oil companies operation in the Kurdistan Region, this includes American, European, Indian, and Korean companies. Al-Shahristani's statements that these companies are not important are incorrect; have these important companies come to operate in the region with illegal documents, and without the permission of the Constitution? It is well known that such companies do not risk their reputation and money, and they are operating officially [in the Kurdistan Region].

I want my message to be clear, which is that exporting oil from the Kurdistan Region is a national achievement for the people of Iraq as a whole, and as Prime Minister of the Kurdish Regional Government I would like to congratulate all Iraqis on this. We, in the region, are very happy that we have been able to contribute to the construction of Iraq. After all of these years of deprivation and bad relations with the former governments, and even the current government, we have been able to lay strong foundations with our Iraqi people, and contribute through this project [of oil exportation] to the development of Iraq.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Iraqi Minister of Oil, Hussein al-Shahristani, has made a number of accusations against your oil policy. How do you respond to this?

[Barzani] Before he makes accusations against us, al-Shahristani should clarify to the public his own policies, for he is a failure as a Minister and unable to present anything to the people and nation of Iraq. All that he has done is repeat his statements that the contacts signed by the Kurdistan Region are not legal, and our response to this statement was to take actions, not reply with more statements. We have taken action for the sake of the Iraqi people.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Do you believe that your affiliation to Iraq may allow you to play an important political role in Baghdad in the future?

[Barzani] Why not? This country is our country. I am an Iraqi, and this is our Iraq, and Baghdad is our capital.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] The regional parliamentary elections are fast approaching, and depending upon the election's results you may have to step down from your position as Prime Minister to a candidate from the PUK, are you prepared for this?

[Barzani] We respect our agreement with our allies in the PUK, and they are entitled to this premiership. We are ready to leave this position, and there is no problem on this issue. When the day comes I will collect my things and leave in a normal way, handing over responsibility to the person who will be chosen as the new Prime Minister of the Kurdish Regional Government. I am sure that whoever fills this position [after me] will continue to work to gain achievements for the Kurdish people at the same pace that we did, and we will give the new Prime Minister all the support and assistance should he need it. We accept the peaceful transfer of power, and are awaiting the election results.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] What are your plans for the future after you leave your post as Prime Minister?

[Barzani] I am still busy fulfilling my duties as head of the government, but certainly I will stay within the political process, in the region, and in Iraq. I will work in any position from which I can provide services to the people of Iraq, whether they are Kurds or Arabs.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Will you accept a position as a Minister in the next Kurdistan Regional government?

[Barzani] If there is need for my service, then why not? What is important to me is not the position, but working to help the people. I had the honor of being Prime Minister of the Regional government and serving my country and people.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Will you play a role in choosing the next Prime Minister of the Kurdish Regional government?

[Barzani] Certainly, I will express my opinion on who will be the next Prime Minister through the political process.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Reports from the PUK leadership indicate that Dr. Barham Salih is the strongest candidate for the position, how do you view his nomination?

[Barzani] We have yet to be officially informed as to who the PUK's nominee will be, and we are awaiting the [results of the] regional parliamentary elections. As for Barham Salih, personally, we are close friends, and he is a person who can play his role in any position.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Are you expecting any surprises to change the political landscape of the Kurdistan Region?

[Barzani] There are many surprises in Iraq, and we expect anything can happen.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] What are the most significant files that you have yet to address that will be taken over by the next government?

[Barzani] There are two important files that must be addressed by whoever comes into power, the first is related to the independence of the legal system and the judiciary; this is a very important issue. The second file regards administrative reform which is something that our administration began, and it is up to the next administration to focus on this issue.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] What about the files that your government began working on but remain outstanding?

[Barzani] There is the issue of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, this deals with the disputed areas, and the definition of the borders of the Kurdistan Region. There is also the file with regards to the laws on oil and gas [production in the region]. These are both files that relate to our relationship with the Iraqi government in Baghdad, and we believe that these files will be resolved if there is a genuine desire [to do so] by the central government. It is up to the new government to work to complete these files, however if the central government believes that [resolving] these files should be left for the time being, things will be more complicated, and will not be resolved easily. If the idea is built upon who has the power and is able to control these files, then things will not be resolved. All parties must reach a consensus that these files must be resolved and finalized in order to reach a state of stability, otherwise this will impede the march of progress and development [in Iraq].

These files will only be resolved by political will [to do so], and we do not believe that Baghdad is showing this political will. We are not convinced that the central government is serious about resolving the outstanding problems between Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional government. I imagine that

those in Baghdad are thinking of dealing with these outstanding issues at another time, or they are waiting to be in a stronger position to in order to deal with the Kurdistan Region from a position of strength. However this would be a grave mistake, because no matter how strong they are they will never be as strong as Saddam Hussein, in that this problem will not be solved militarily, but by sitting around the negotiating table and working as one to solve all problems. And so for the sake of the future of this country we must resolve all outstanding problems [between Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional government].

[Asharq Al-Awsat] You have a lot of experience with the central government, and now Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is talking about his intention of opening dialogue with the Kurdistan region, do you believe he is sincere in this or that this is merely part of his election campaign?

[Barzani] Unfortunately we have yet to see any strong desire from al-Maliki to resolve the outstanding issues between his government and ourselves. In our experience with him we have discovered, unfortunately, that al-Maliki's policies rely upon the principle of postponing problems, rather than solving them. We have read in the media his intention to talk with the region's leadership to resolve the outstanding problems, but we have not witnessed anything in practice, and with this lack of desire to resolve these problems Iraq will remain away from achieving a state of stability and prosperity.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Will you repeat the experience of allying with Islamic parties such as the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, the Islamic Dawa Party, and others?

[Barzani] It is not necessary for us to ally with Islamic parties only, from the outset we wished to ally with other national parties. For the sake of the success of the political process in Iraq we are working with an expanded national list [of parties], both Arab and Kurdish, and various other political parties. We are serious about achieving such a broad coalition.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] What about the issue of confronting administrative corruption in the region; is this one of the files that must be taken up by the next government?

[Barzani] I believe that this issue has been exaggerated, our government has taken steps to fight corruption, and we have worked from two directions [to address this]; firstly we signed a contract with a well-known international company concerned with the issue of transparency and fighting corruption, and this company has been operating in the Kurdistan Region for months in order to study the situation and come up with a strategy for our government to eradicate corruption. I do not believe that corruption ends with the arrest of an individual and his imprisonment, a strategy must be put in place that comprises several points, such as how to deal with the laws, and how to achieve transparency, otherwise I can also set up a Commission on Integrity, such as the Commission on Public Integrity that is present in Baghdad. My goal is not for self-publicity or to address corruption in a superficial manner, I want to genuinely address this issue from its roots, and we have begun doing this and made substantial progress.

And so a part of the operation to root out corruption in the Kurdistan Region is to form a Commission on Integrity, while also working with the company that specializes in performing studies and making proposals to combat corruption. In a short time we will announce a strategy on administrative reform that will confront and eliminate corruption.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Local media presents the issue of corruption in a different light. Anybody following this media would believe that nobody in the region is innocent of corruption. Why is the media portraying the situation in this light?

[Barzani] The media situation in Kurdistan is irresponsible and chaotic. We have two problems with the local media, the first is that the majority of people working in the media are not professional in their work. I am not talking about everybody, but [certainly] the vast majority. Secondly is that we have put into place international standards with regards to human rights, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, the independence of the judiciary, as well as addressing the issue of violence against women. However these standards are a double-edged sword. In one way we are adhering to these standards and they are important and attractive to the West and present a rosy picture of our region, but in another way this has become a point of weakness for us in that the Kurdish experience in the Kurdistan Region is unique in the history of Kurds in Iraq and abroad. And so the Kurds in Iraq have their own territory, government, and a parliament of their own, and this causes problems to the governments of the neighboring countries in the region that also have Kurdish communities who are deprived of these privileges. And so they exploit the standards that we adhere to and pay the media to write about corruption, and

present a image that does not exist, then they say to the Kurds in their own country: Look at the experience of the Iraqi Kurds, it is corrupt, so that the Kurds [in their own country] do not demand their rights. There is an intelligence war taking place against us in our media, and relying upon the standards that I already mentioned... and so the media is not acting responsibly.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] What are your expectations on the outcome of the elections, especially with regards to the presence of opposition candidates?

[Barzani] I do not want to anticipate events, I will not comment on this until the time of the elections, but we are expecting to win with a majority of votes.

[Asharq Al-Awsat] What are the files that you hope to complete before you leave office?

[Barzani] The most important file that I hope to complete is to finally resolve the problem of electricity [in the Kurdish Region].

[Asharq Al-Awsat] Do you believe that the Iraqis are unconvinced that the Kurds do not wish to break away from Iraq?

[Barzani] If we are speaking about the Iraqi people then I say that the relationship between the Arabs and the Kurds was always and continued to be a good one. As a people [the Iraqis] have always supported our cause, and stood against the injustice that the Kurds suffered. A historic example of this is when General Mullah Mustafa Barzani returned to Iraq from Moscow in the 1950s tens of thousands of people from Basra came out to greet him, and till this day the people of Basra speak about this event. The Arab tribes and religious figures in Iraq have always been supportive of our cause, but this is with

regards to the people. As for the politicians they have acted in accordance to political circumstance.

As for ourselves, we have continually acted to assure our Iraqi identity and our belonging to Iraq, which our actions have emphasized. We do not want history to repeat itself, [nor do we want] a repeat of the tragedies, our wounds are too deep to be healed by flashy democratic slogans... we need evidence and proof. We need solutions in accordance with the Constitution and the rule of law, so that these tragedies will not be repeated again. Let us speak explicitly, what have we gained from living in Iraq? More than 182,000 Kurds have died as a result of genocide, 5,000 Kurdish villages have been destroyed, and we were attacked with chemical gas. Yes, these are the crimes of Saddam Hussein, and there has been regime change, but we are not reassured. We want concrete assurances for our people based upon the Constitution and what happened to us [before] will never happen again. We need our Arab brothers to understand this, and be ready to help us and gave us adequate assurances through cooperation and the law. What would the Iraqis do if they were in our place? Would they not demand the same things we are calling for; our problems should be their problems as well

★★★.

REUTERS

Iraq starts oil exports from Kurdistan

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - May 27, 2009 -By Ahmed Rasheed

- IRAQ STARTED exporting oil from its largely autonomous Kurdistan region for the first time on Wednesday, Iraq's Oil Ministry said, in an apparent breakthrough after years of deadlock over disputed Kurdish oil contracts.

Oil Ministry spokesman Assim Jihad said the ministry started shipping the crude from the Tawke field, in which Norway's DNO International <DNO.OL has a concession, to the Turkish port of Ceyhan at an initial test rate of 10,000 barrels per day (bpd).

"We finished linking the pipelines from the Tawke oilfield to the strategic Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline and have installed the meters. We started ... pumping 10,000 barrels per day to boost exports to ... Ceyhan," Oil Ministry spokesman Assim Jihad said.

News that exports had started, despite a row between Iraq's central government and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) over oil contracts the KRG signed with foreign firms, caused DNO's shares to surge 4 percent before settling up 2.8 percent.

Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani has said those contracts are illegal. Baghdad also insists oil deals with foreign firms should be fixed-service contracts, not production sharing contracts of the type signed by the KRG.

"The pumping will continue at (this) rate ... for some days to check the efficiency of the pipelines from Tawke to the network ... then we will gradually increase the quantities," Jihad said. He did not say by how much.

On Monday, oil and gas company Addax Petroleum said it expected to start crude exports from its facility, which lies in the Taq Taq oilfield in Kurdistan, on Sunday.

But an oil industry source, who declined to be named, told Reuters on Wednesday that this might be delayed because Baghdad disapproved of the KRG's plans to ship some of the oil out by truck, instead of waiting for a pipeline to be hooked up.

"DOUBLE STANDARDS"

Earlier this month the Oil Ministry had said it would begin exporting oil from Kurdistan's Tawke and Taq Taq fields, but said it still rejects Kurdish deals with firms like Addax and DNO, which are develo-

ping the fields.

It is not yet clear how the firms will receive their cut of the exports, agreed in the production sharing contracts, if Baghdad does not recognize them. The KRG receives 17 percent of Iraq's total state oil revenues from the national budget.

When asked whether Baghdad would pay the companies' their dues, Jihad said simply: "The Iraqi oil ministry is committed to exporting the crude from Kurdistan, as it does from (other) ... oilfields. All revenues will go to government coffers."

Analysts doubt the KRG would agree to stump up all of the cash for the companies' production share from its own budget.

"It seems like double standards," said John Hamilton, an analyst at UK-based Gulf States Newsletter. "If you take what Shahristani says at face value, the KRG are handing over oil to Baghdad which it basically gets free of charge and all costs are taken out of the (Kurds') 17 percent. That can't possibly work."

Hamilton said the Iraqi government would most likely pay the firms, but for political reasons could not admit that publicly.

Shahristani faces mounting pressure to act quickly to increase sluggish oil output, running at around 2.3-2.4 million bpd, and turn around an industry in dire need of investment after decades of sanctions, neglect and war.

Iraq, which relies on oil sales for more than 95 percent of its state revenues, needs exports more than ever as it tries to stretch a budget undercut by lower oil prices.

The Kurdish government had earlier put the expected starting rate from the Tawke field at 60,000 bpd from June 1 through the pipeline, with another 40,000 bpd from Taq Taq soon afterwards.

Kurdish officials estimate there are oil reserves of at least 40-45 billion barrels of crude in the area now recognized as largely autonomous Kurdistan.

Kurdistan last week heralded an \$8 billion plan to export natural gas to Europe via the Nabucco pipeline, but Shahristani rejected the deal because it was done without Baghdad's consent.

24heures

mai 27, 2009

«Personne ne peut faire les choses à la place du peuple kurde»

TÉMOIGNAGE | Le PKK demande l'aide de l'Europe pour négocier l'arrêt des combats avec l'armée turque. Entretien exclusif avec le No 2 de l'une des plus vieilles guérillas du monde.

.....
CLAUDE-OLIVIER VOLLUZ

QANDIL
.....

C'est l'un des hommes les plus recherchés par l'armée turque. Bozan Tekin, le No 2 du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), apparaît entouré d'une dizaine d'hommes en armes dans l'une des petites maisons en torchis donnant accès à Qandil, une région montagneuse du nord de l'Irak, à proximité des frontières turque et iranienne.

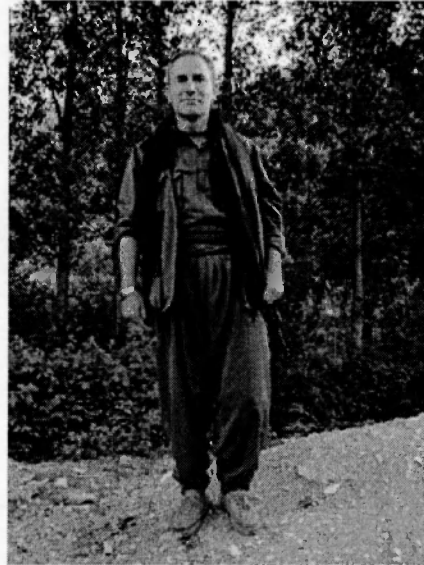
C'est là que sont venus se réfugier les combattants du PKK, au plus fort de la guerre contre l'armée turque dans les années 1990. Cette zone est désormais leur fief, leur réduit. Le visage creusé, Bozan Tekin a fière allure. Le charisme du guérillero sûr du bien-fondé de sa lutte.

«Vous êtes Suisse? De Lausanne? Nous connaissons bien cette ville», déclare-t-il, un rictus aux lèvres, en référence au Traité signé en 1923 dans la capitale vaudoise, dans le sillage du démembrement de l'Empire ottoman. Un texte constitutif de la Turquie moderne, qui allait contraindre les Kurdes à renoncer à un Etat indépendant dans le sud-est de la Turquie. Une injustice pour le PKK qui en a fait la base de sa lutte armée. Mais depuis, ses objectifs ont évolué.

– **Vous n'évoquez plus la création d'un Etat dans le sud-est de la Turquie. Cette revendication était pourtant à la base de la création de votre mouvement?**

– Nous avons renoncé à cet objectif. Nous ne sommes plus un mouvement nationaliste. Nous nous battons désormais pour que les Kurdes puissent bénéficier d'une autonomie démocratique à l'intérieur des Etats déjà existants, en Turquie mais aussi en Syrie et en Iran. En Irak, cela existe déjà. Nous voulons que les autorités locales dans les régions kurdes disposent de plus de pouvoir. Nous réclamons aussi la reconnaissance de notre identité kurde à l'intérieur de ces Etats.

– **Le président turc Abdullah Gul a appelé les intellectuels et les partis d'opposition de Turquie à faire des propositions constructives pour résoudre**



© CLAUDE-OLIVIER VOLLUZ | Le No 2 du PKK dit avoir renoncé à créer un Etat kurde indépendant en Turquie.

L'autonomie démocratique au sein de l'Etat existant lui suffirait aujourd'hui. «Nous ne sommes plus un mouvement nationaliste.»

dre la question kurde. Qu'en pensez-vous?

– Nous sommes aussi de cet avis. Les élections municipales de mars dernier en Turquie nous ont prouvé que la question kurde peut être réglée politiquement. Le parti DTP (prokurde, 21 sièges au parlement) a réalisé de très bons scores dans les provinces du sud-est et cela démontre que le peuple kurde attend un règlement pacifique et démocratique de cette question. C'est pour cela que nous avons déclaré unilatéralement un cessez-le-feu au lendemain de ces élections. Pour laisser une porte ouverte aux négociations.

– **Selon vous, l'Europe doit jouer un rôle dans la résolution de cette question. Pourquoi?**

– L'Europe porte une grande part de responsabilité dans ce qui nous est arrivé. Toutes les attaques dont nous avons été victimes ont été réalisées avec son soutien. L'Europe doit maintenant changer d'attitude, prendre ses responsabilités et encourager la Turquie à négocier.

– **Vous êtes toutefois considéré en**

ennemi en Turquie, mais aussi en Europe et aux Etats-Unis où votre organisation est qualifiée de terroriste. Seriez-vous d'accord de vous mettre en retrait de ces discussions pour leur laisser plus de chances de démarrer?

– Si le gouvernement turc ne veut pas négocier avec notre leader, Abdullah Öcalan (ndlr: arrêté en 1999, condamné à la prison à vie et maintenu en détention sur l'île d'Imrali), il peut le faire par l'entremise du parti DTP, qui est légal et représenté au parlement turc. Et nous sommes prêts à aller encore plus loin. Nous proposons désormais de créer un comité d'intellectuels et de diplomates indépendants pour faire l'intermédiaire. Nous sommes même prêts à ce que des Turcs y soient intégrés.

– **Le gouvernement turc envisagerait d'ouvrir de nouvelles heures d'antennes pour les émissions en kurde et de créer des instituts de kurdologie. S'agit-il de signaux positifs?**

– Croyez-vous vraiment que cela peut signifier quelque chose pour le peuple kurde? Les Turcs ont créé TRT6, une télévision en kurde, mais les Kurdes ne lui donnent aucune valeur. Personne ne la regarde. L'Etat turc dit aussi vouloir redonner des noms kurdes aux villages du sud-est. Mais personne n'acceptera les noms que les Turcs vont donner à ces communes. Personne ne peut faire les choses à la place du peuple kurde.

Six soldats tués dans l'explosion d'une mine en Turquie

Six soldats turcs ont été tués et onze autres blessés dans l'explosion d'une mine dans le sud-est du pays, à majorité kurde, annoncent des responsables.

Il s'agit de l'attaque la plus meurtrière pour l'armée depuis l'explosion d'une bombe fatale à neuf soldats, fin avril.

Des responsables locaux ont imputé à la guérilla séparatiste kurde du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) cette attaque déclenchée mercredi soir au passage d'un véhicule militaire dans la province de Hakkari, frontalière de l'Irak et de l'Iran.

Après l'incident, les troupes turques, appuyées par des hélicoptères, ont lancé une offensive contre le PKK, et l'armée a ensuite annoncé qu'elle menait un raid aérien contre des positions de la guérilla dans le nord de l'Irak.

"Un important groupe terroriste du PKK a été localisé sur un site proche de notre fron-

tière dans la région Avasin-Baysan, dans le nord de l'Irak. Il a été bombardé et atteint avec succès par les avions de combat de l'armée de l'air turque", a précisé l'état-major turc sur son site internet.

L'armée turque procède fréquemment à des opérations contre les bases du PKK au Kurdistan irakien, où les rebelles trouvent refuge et d'où ils lancent leurs attaques dans le sud-est de la Turquie.

Le PKK a pris les armes en 1984 pour obtenir un territoire autonome dans le sud-est de la Turquie. Le conflit a fait plus de 40.000 morts.

Dans une opération distincte, 35 personnes, dont des enseignants et des leaders syndicaux, ont été arrêtées et étaient détenues jeudi par la police qui les soupçonne d'être liées aux séparatistes.

Les interpellations ont eu lieu dans cinq

provinces et notamment dans les villes d'Ankara, Istanbul et Izmir, a rapporté l'agence anatolienne de presse.

Depuis quelques mois, les autorités ont multiplié les coups de filet et les opérations visant le PKK ou des alliés présumés du mouvement, affaibli par les offensives militaires menées par l'armée turque dans le nord de l'Irak, où les rebelles trouvent refuge.

Seule formation politique kurde autorisée, le Parti de la société démocratique (DTP), soupçonné par Ankara d'avoir des liens avec les séparatistes, s'est dit attristé par la mort des six soldats et a appelé à la cessation des violences.

"Nous le disons très clairement : ceux qui veulent une solution démocratique devraient retirer leur doigt de la gâchette", a déclaré le chef du DTP, Ahmet Turk, dans un communiqué. (Reuters)



IRAK: REPORT D'UNE SEMAINE DU RAPPORT PARLEMENTAIRE SUR LE SCRUTIN À KIRKOUK (DÉPUTÉ)

BAGDAD, 31 mai 2009 (AFP)

LE RAPPORT DÉFINITIF sur l'organisation d'élections provinciales dans la région de Kirkouk, où s'opposent Kurdes, arabes et Turcomans, a été une nouvelle fois reporté d'une semaine en raison des divergences au sein de la commission, a indiqué dimanche un député.

"La commission a informé dimanche le président du Parlement Iyad al-Samarrai qu'elle n'avait pas réussi à aboutir à un compromis sur la question de Kirkouk entre les trois blocs", kurdes, turcomans et arabes, a indiqué à l'AFP Mohammad Mahdi al-Bayati, membre turcoman de ce comité.

Selon lui, M. Samarrai a insisté auprès des membres de la commission "sur la nécessité de poursuivre leur mission une semaine". "Pour sa part, la présidence du Parlement présentera ses suggestions pour trouver une solution", a-t-il précisé, de même source.

Toujours d'après M. Bayati, les Arabes et Turcomans ne veulent pas d'autre

prolongation alors que les Kurdes n'y sont pas opposés.

Le rapport sur l'organisation des élections à Kirkouk, qui devait être remis à la mi-avril, avait été reporté jusqu'à la fin mai. Les Arabes et les Turcomans veulent que le conseil provincial soit divisé en trois alors que les Kurdes, s'estimant majoritaires, désirent une meilleure représentation.

Kirkouk, à 255 km au nord de Bagdad, est un concentré des défis et problèmes irakiens. Riche en pétrole, la province de quelque 900.000 habitants compte plusieurs communautés qui se disputent le pouvoir: des Kurdes, qui souhaitent son rattachement au Kurdistan irakien, des Turcomans, qui se considèrent comme ses habitants historiques, des Assyro-chaldéens (chrétiens) ou des arabes, souvent arrivés à l'occasion de la politique d'arabisation forcée de Saddam Hussein.

En raison des tensions, les élections provinciales n'avaient pu s'y tenir le 31 janvier comme dans le reste de l'Irak (hors les trois provinces du Kurdistan). Le Parlement avait décidé de créer une commission pour trouver une solution avec l'aide de l'ONU.

LE KURDISTAN IRAKIEN EXPORTE LUNDI POUR LA PREMIÈRE FOIS SON PÉTROLE

DOHOUK (Irak), 31 mai 2009 (AFP) -

LE KURDISTAN irakien exportera lundi pour la première fois son pétrole, avec l'entrée en exploitation de deux champs pétroliers du nord de l'Irak d'où seront acheminés vers l'étranger 90.000 barils par jour, ont indiqué dimanche des responsables des projets.

Le pétrole de Tak Tak et de Tawke, situés dans les provinces du Kurdistan irakien, sera acheminé vers l'oléoduc reliant Kirkouk, en Irak, jusqu'en Turquie.

"Sept des onze puits vont entrer en action. Au départ, la moyenne sera de 40.000 barils exportés par jour", a indiqué à l'AFP Mohammad Okotane, le directeur du projet Tak Tak pour la société turque Genel Enerji.

Un petit oléoduc de 9 km a été construit pour acheminer du pétrole du gisement vers une station de stockage. De là, des camions transporteront le pétrole sur 75 km jusqu'à l'oléoduc principal reliant Kirkouk-Ceyhan.

"Des efforts sont réalisés pour atteindre 60.000 barils exportés par jour d'ici la fin de l'année", a ajouté M. Okotane, soulignant que l'objectif à 3 ans était de

"120.000 barils".

Le gisement est opéré par les Turcs de Genel Enerji et les Canadiens d'Addax d'un côté, le gouvernement kurde irakien de l'autre.

Turcs et Canadiens se partageront 12% des revenus tirés de l'exportation du pétrole. Les 88% de revenus échoient au gouvernement fédéral à Bagdad après avoir transité par le gouvernement kurde irakien.

Le site, à 60 km au nord de la province de Kirkouk et 85 km au sud-est d'Erbil, a commencé en novembre 2008 à faire des essais, mais n'exportait pas jusque là de pétrole à l'étranger.

Le second gisement, celui de Tawke, près de Dohouk, au Kurdistan, va également commencer à exporter du pétrole lundi.

"50.000 barils seront exportés jusqu'à la frontière turque", a précisé Jon Sergeant, le directeur des opérations de l'entreprise norvégienne DNO.

"Le pétrole est de bonne qualité, pas excellente. Il contient de l'eau et des condensats de gaz. On vendra le gaz sur le marché intérieur", a précisé M. Sergeant.

"Nous commencerons par exporter 50.000 et on verra comment ça se passe et si on peut augmenter", a dit le responsable norvégien.

DNO a refusé de préciser le montage financier qui les lie au gouvernement irakien pour le partage des revenus.

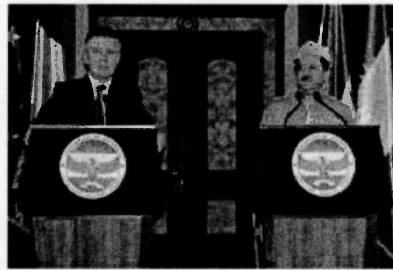
Première visite d'un ministre belge au Kurdistan

LE CHEF de la diplomatie belge, Karel De Gucht, a rendu jeudi une visite sans précédent au Kurdistan, la région autonome du nord de l'Irak en quête de reconnaissance internationale et jalouse de ses droits et de son identité au sein de l'Etat fédéral irakien.

Au second jour de sa visite en Irak, M. De Gucht a rencontré à Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan, le président kurde Massoud Barzani et le Premier ministre Nechirvan Barzani, qui ont souhaité le renforcement des relations avec la Belgique et encouragé les entreprises belges à investir dans leur région. Le Kurdistan et ses trois provinces jouissent depuis l'adoption de la nouvelle Constitution irakienne de l'après-Saddam Hussein, en 2005, d'un statut de région autonome. Elle est la seule dans le cas.

"L'Irak est un Etat fédéral depuis 2005 et compte deux grandes nations, l'arabe et la kurde. La région a toujours eu un grand sens d'individualité" vis-à-vis de Bagdad, a déclaré M. De Gucht pour expliquer son séjour de quelques heures à Erbil en provenance de la capitale irakienne.

Les Kurdes ont aussi souffert de 1991 (date de leur rébellion contre le régime de Saddam Hussein réprimée dans le sang après la guerre du Golfe) jusqu'à la chute du dictateur en 2003 lors de l'invasion de l'Irak par une coalition dirigée par les Etats-Unis, a-t-il ajouté, notant que la reconstruction était nettement plus avancée au Kurdistan que dans le reste de l'Irak, grâce à une sécurité bien meilleure.



M. De Gucht a évoqué lors d'une conférence de presse l'envoi possible d'une mission économique belge, associant les Régions, "pour contribuer à la reconstruction du Kurdistan".

Le président kurde a salué cette idée, appelant les entreprises belges à investir dans sa région, en plein boom économique à en juger par le nombre d'immeubles en construction dans la capitale kurde.

Sans que la question ne soit publiquement abordée par les dirigeants kurdes, une journaliste a

demandé au ministre belge s'il envisageait l'ouverture d'une représentation diplomatique à Erbil - à l'instar de pays comme l'Allemagne qui y dispose d'un consulat général. Il a expliqué que la Belgique ne disposait pas encore d'un ambassadeur à Bagdad - l'ambassade est fermée depuis août 1990 - et ne songeait pas à ouvrir de consulat général au Kurdistan.

Le président Barzani a profité du passage de M. De Gucht pour rappeler son exigence d'une application de la Constitution irakienne, qui prévoit notamment de régler le statut de "territoires disputés" entre Kurdes et Arabes, dont la ville multi-ethnique de Kirkouk, riche en pétrole. Cette question aurait dû être réglée pour le 31 décembre 2007, mais ni le recensement ni le référendum prévus par la Constitution n'ont encore eu lieu.

Le Kurdistan doit commencer la semaine prochaine à exporter du pétrole extrait de son sous-sol en direction de la Turquie voisine, mais la question de la répartition des recettes pétrolières n'a pas encore été réglée entre Erbil et Bagdad.

TURQUIE: Optimisme sur le dossier kurde

Jérôme Bastion

L'ESPOIR d'une solution est alimenté par un appel du leader du PKK à un dialogue quasi "sans pré-condition". Et Ankara a l'air, pour une fois, assez bien disposé.

Du mont Qandil, dans le nord de l'Irak près de la frontière iranienne, d'où il dirige le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) depuis l'arrestation en 1999 du chef historique Abdullah Öcalan (emprisonné à vie), Murat Karayilan affirme que "le PKK a changé", qu'il est désormais sur une "ligne plus raisonnable que par le passé", ne recherchant "plus la sécession et la création d'un Etat kurde indépendant" mais souhaitant "que les Kurdes vivent libres et égaux sur le territoire de la République turque". Dire que son interview par le journaliste Hasan Cemal (Milliyet, 5 mai) a fait sensation serait exagéré ; mais, relayées par des réactions favorables et volontaires de la part du chef de l'Etat, du Premier ministre et même de l'opposition, ces déclarations semblent marquer un tournant dans la politique kurde de la Turquie, ou plutôt son absence de politique en la matière

"Appelez-le comme vous voulez : pro-

blème de terrorisme, problème du Sud-Est, problème kurde ; c'est le problème n°1 de la Turquie, et il faut absolument s'en occuper", commentait le 10 mai le président Abdullah Gül. Et d'ajouter : "Les conditions sont favorables ; nous devons saisir cette opportunité, de bonnes choses peuvent arriver. Nous travaillons dans un esprit de bonne volonté ; j'espère que ces efforts vont se conclure de la meilleure manière." Jamais le pouvoir turc ne s'était montré aussi bien disposé Depuis Damas où il était en visite, M. Gül annonçait peu après des mesures telles que la restitution des noms des villages kurdes, la généralisation de l'apprentissage de la langue kurde et la levée des restrictions sur la diffusion et les publications en kurde. Des engagements plus qu'anodins, surtout proférés par le chef de l'Etat, illustrant une "nouvelle atmosphère".

Mais au-delà de cette conjoncture apparemment favorable, l'éditorialiste Murat Yetkin se demande si vraiment "Ankara a un plan pour une solution au problème kurde". Si tout le monde - y compris l'état-major turc, admettant qu'il ne parviendra jamais à déloger le PKK de sa forteresse du mont Qandil - s'accorde à reconnaître qu'il existe une "opportunité historique", c'est sans nul

doute parce que " la rébellion est plus isolée que jamais" dans ses anciens sanctuaires, estime Kadri Gürsel, auteur du livre "Ceux de la montagne" ("Dagdakiler"), racontant sa captivité parmi les troupes rebelles en 1995. "La Syrie et l'Irak ne laisse plus ses militants faire ce qu'ils veulent sur son territoire ; ils sont obligés de se faire discrets, de se cacher", rapporte-t-il.

D'autres opportunités "historiques" ont été manquées, rappelle Murat Karayilan, évoquant le cessez-le-feu unilatéral de 1993 balayé par la mort de 33 soldats turcs (à la responsabilité contestée), puis, en 1999, le procès d'Abdullah Öcalan, qui avait proclamé le dépôt des armes et le retrait du territoire turc - avant la reprise de la lutte armée en 2004. "Cette opportunité de (faire la) paix ne doit pas être manquée ; nous sommes à un seuil important", ajoute-t-il. "Que les armes cessent de parler et dialoguons" ; le dépôt ou l'abandon des armes pourra venir "après".

Pour la première fois, le cadre de cette discussion est laissé ouvert : "Le dialogue peut se faire avec Imrali (lieu de détention d'Öcalan, NdIR), avec nous (le PKK), avec les politiques élus (du Parti pour une société démocratique, DTP) ou au sein d'une commission conjointe constituée de sages." S'il n'est pas encore secrètement engagé, ce dialogue s'annonce en tout cas sous les meilleurs auspices.

Washington à nouveau mis en accusation par Téhéran

MOYEN-ORIENT

Après l'attentat meurtrier contre une mosquée dans le sud-est du pays, le pouvoir iranien accuse les États-Unis de chercher à semer la zizanie à ses frontières, qui abritent d'importantes minorités ethniques.

De notre envoyée spéciale au Moyen-Orient



À DEUX semaines des élections présidentielles iraniennes, la République islamique fait face à un regain de violence à Zahedan, dans le sud-est du pays, où le quartier général de campagne du président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a été attaqué, hier soir, d'après l'agence de presse Fars News. L'incident survient un lendemain d'un attentat contre une mosquée locale, revendiqué, selon la télévision al-Arabiya, par le groupe d'insurgés Jundallah. La chaîne en langue arabe, basée à Dubaï, dit avoir été contactée par un homme « expliquant qu'il s'agissait d'un attentat suicide visant la force iranienne du Basij, lors d'un meeting électoral qui se tenait dans la mosquée ».

Les autorités iraniennes avaient préalablement pointé du doigt l'Amérique et Israël, en les accusant de soutenir des éléments extrémistes. « Les mains de l'Amérique et d'Israël sont, sans aucun doute, impliquées dans cet incident », a déclaré, hier matin, l'ayatollah Ahmad Khatami, lors du grand sermon de la prière du vendredi.

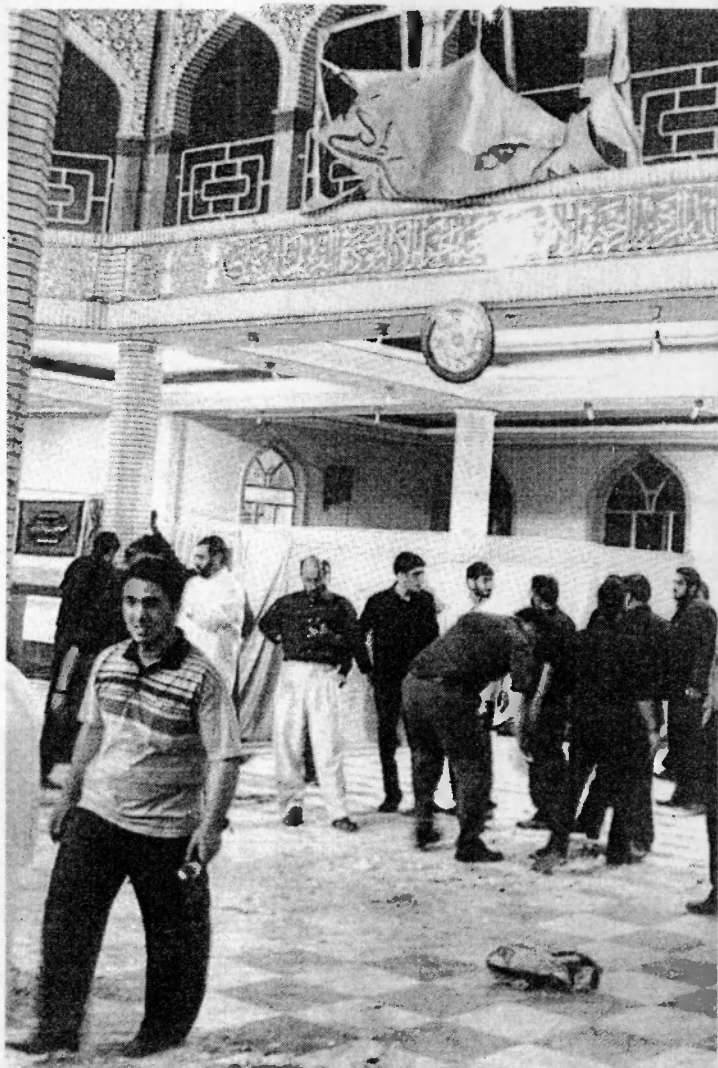
Zahedan, située près de la frontière avec le Pakistan, est le chef-lieu de la province iranienne du Sistan-Baloutchistan. Elle abrite une importante communauté sunnite, dans un pays à majorité chiite. L'attaque visant le bureau de campagne du président Ahmadinejad, candidat à sa réélection, aurait fait trois blessés. Le bilan de l'attentat contre la mosquée Amir al-Momenin est largement plus sévère : les agences de presse locales parlent de plus de 20 morts et d'au moins 80 blessés. L'explosion s'est produite jeudi soir, à 19 h 45 heure locale, dans cet important lieu de culte chiite de la ville, où les fidèles s'étaient rassemblés à l'occasion de la cérémonie religieuse marquant l'anniversaire de la mort de Fatima Zahra, fille du prophète Mahomet et épouse d'Ali, premier imam chiite.

Une région instable

Le gouverneur de la province, Ali Mohammad Azad, rapporte que le groupe qui a posé la bombe « comptait tirer profit de la situation trouble en Afghanistan et au Pakistan, au moment où notre pays s'achemine vers l'élection présidentielle ». Un représentant local de l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, cité par l'agence de presse Isna, dénonce, lui, directement « des terroristes criminels, ceux qui sont nourris par l'Arrogance mondiale ».

Ce n'est pas la première fois que Téhéran accuse « l'Arrogance mondiale » – un terme utilisé pour désigner l'Amérique et Israël – de chercher à semer la zizanie au niveau de ses frontières, qui abritent d'importantes minorités ethniques. Il y a deux semaines, le guide suprême a ouvertement reproché aux États-Unis de « former des terroristes » au Kurdistan irakien frontalier pour lutter contre l'Iran, en faisant allusion aux combattants du groupe séparatiste kurde Pejak.

Au-delà de ces déclarations officielles, qui pourraient remettre en cause le fragile processus de rapprochement entre Téhéran et Washington, les incidents de



Un attentat dans la mosquée Amir al-Momenin, second lieu chiite de la ville de Zahedan, a fait jeudi plus de 20 morts et 80 blessés.

Islamic Republic News Agency/AP

Zahedan mettent en lumière deux dangers qui menacent aujourd'hui l'Iran chiite : un renforcement des tensions régionales entre chiites et sunnites et un débordement de l'instabilité pakistanaise sur son territoire.

À cheval entre l'Iran, l'Afghanistan et le Pakistan, le Baloutchistan est connu pour être une région instable, où bandits et insurgés entendent profiter de la porosité des frontières pour imposer leur loi. En février 2007, un attentat revendiqué par Jundallah, une organisation d'insurgés qui dit lutter pour les droits de la minorité sunnite iranienne, avait causé, à Zahedan, la mort de 18 gardiens de la Révolution. De l'autre côté de la frontière, la province baloutche pakistanaise – où un touriste français a récemment été kidnappé – est également réputée comme étant une zone volatile où opèrent séparatistes baloutches et brigands locaux, et où se seraient infiltrés des combattants islamistes sunnites liés aux talibans.

Coïncidence ou signal donné par ces derniers, les nouveaux incidents de Zahedan surviennent une semaine après une rencontre, à Téhéran, entre les chefs d'État iraniens, pakistanais et afghan. Le sommet avait pour objectif principal, hormis la lutte contre le trafic de drogue, d'éradiquer la menace terroriste.

DELPHINE MINOUI

« Little Istanbul », symbole berlinois des ratés de l'intégration des immigrants turcs

LE FIGARO

31 mai 2009

Ils sont 200 000 dans la capitale et quelque 2,5 millions à vivre en Allemagne. Les diplômés sont de plus en plus tentés de retourner dans leur pays où les perspectives d'emploi sont meilleures.

De notre correspondant à Berlin

LES marchands de kebabs ont remplacé les stands à saucisses et à bretzels. Tous les commerces portent des inscriptions bilingues, en allemand et en turc. Les chaînes de supermarchés allemandes Lidl et Aldi vendent des produits importés de Turquie. Les femmes voilées n'attirent plus les regards curieux. Sur un plan, ce microquartier de Kreuzberg situé à Berlin-Ouest, à quelques pas de l'ancien mur, s'appelle « Kottbusser Tor ». Mais pour les Berlinoises c'est « Little Istanbul ». Ses habitants peuvent y mener une vie parallèle, sans parler un mot d'allemand.

Au-delà de ses attraits folkloriques et de sa légendaire tolérance « multiculturelle », « Little Istanbul » est aussi l'un des symboles des ratés de l'intégration des immigrants turcs

en Allemagne. La chancelière allemande et Nicolas Sarkozy, qui se sont tous deux prononcés contre l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE, y atteignent des sommets d'impopularité. Angela Merkel a réitéré sa proposition d'un partenariat privilégié avec la Turquie, sans que ce pays devienne membre à part entière de l'Union. Une telle position accentue le malentendu avec les immigrants d'origine turque, qui la considèrent comme une marque de mépris et le signe que l'Allemagne ne souhaite pas vraiment les intégrer.

« Travailleur invité d'Anatolie »

Atablés dans un café turc, deux retraités sirotent un thé noir en jouant aux cartes. Ils n'iront pas voter le 7 juin. « L'intégration, ça fait des années qu'on nous bassine avec ça. Si ça n'a jamais marché, c'est de la faute des politiques », s'empare Hüseyin Cakmak. Il a 63 ans et fait partie de la première vague de *Gastarbeiter*, les « travailleurs invités » turcs, conviés dès la fin des années 1950 à contribuer au miracle économique allemand. Pourtant, il ne parle toujours pas un mot d'allemand : « Je n'ai jamais essayé d'apprendre, pas le temps, trop de



Un marché situé dans le quartier de Kreuzberg, à Berlin-Ouest, où les Turcs luttent pour sauvegarder leurs mœurs et leur identité.

Franka Bruns/AP

travail... Et puis, je n'avais aucun contact avec les Allemands. Ils me considéraient comme un travailleur invité d'Anatolie et gardaient leurs distances. »

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Une fuite « inquiétante »

Seuls 35 % de Turcs s'estiment intégrés, alors que 13 % des Allemands jugent qu'ils le sont vraiment. Ils luttent pour sauvegarder leurs mœurs et leur identité. Ils se battent contre l'échec scolaire, contre les préjugés aussi lorsqu'ils cherchent un emploi. Les choses sont en train de changer avec la troi-

sième génération de Turcs, bilingue qui dit se sentir allemande. Pourtant, selon une étude récente, un tiers des diplômés d'origine turque seraient prêts à émigrer en Turquie. En raison de la difficulté à trouver un travail adapté à leurs compétences en Allemagne et de meilleures perspectives d'emplois en Turquie.

Spécialisé dans le débouchage des diplômés d'origine turque

pour des entreprises allemandes implantées en Turquie, Ediz Böklü estime à 3 000 le nombre de diplômés allemands d'origine turque qui ont émigré de l'autre côté du Bosphore depuis trois ans. « Ce n'est que le début, explique-t-il. Daimler, Lufthansa... 3 000 entreprises allemandes, au total, ont ouvert des antennes en Turquie depuis trois ans. Elles recherchent toutes du personnel diplômé, bilingue, ayant une double culture. Nos candidats rêvent d'Istanbul, Izmir, ou Ankara. Là-bas, on leur offre de très bons salaires, la qualité de vie, le beau temps. »

Pour l'Allemagne, qui souffre d'une natalité négative et qui aura besoin de recourir de plus en plus à l'immigration, cette fuite prend des proportions inquiétantes. « Si ceux qui réussissent partent, il va manquer un exemple à l'avenir », pour les enfants d'immigrés, avertit Armin Laschet, ministre de la Famille et de l'intégration de l'État régional de Rhénanie-du-Nord-Westphalie, aux racines turques. Selon lui, l'Allemagne doit intervenir au plus vite avant de voir fuir tous ces diplômés.

PATRICK SAINT-PAUL

« Little Istanbul », symbole berlinois des ratés de l'intégration des immigrants turcs

LE FIGARO

31 mai 2009

Ils sont 200 000 dans la capitale et quelque 2,5 millions à vivre en Allemagne. Les diplômés sont de plus en plus tentés de retourner dans leur pays où les perspectives d'emploi sont meilleures.

De notre correspondant à Berlin

LES marchands de kebabs ont remplacé les stands à saucisses et à bretzels. Tous les commerces portent des inscriptions bilingues, en allemand et en turc. Les chaînes de supermarchés allemandes Lidl et Aldi vendent des produits importés de Turquie. Les femmes voilées n'attirent plus les regards curieux. Sur un plan, ce microquartier de Kreuzberg situé à Berlin-Ouest, à quelques pas de l'ancien mur, s'appelle « Kottbusser Tor ». Mais pour les Berlinoises c'est « Little Istanbul ». Ses habitants peuvent y mener une vie parallèle, sans parler un mot d'allemand.

Au-delà de ses attraits folkloriques et de sa légendaire tolérance « multiculturelle », « Little Istanbul » est aussi l'un des symboles des ratés de l'intégration des immigrants turcs

en Allemagne. La chancelière allemande et Nicolas Sarkozy, qui se sont tous deux prononcés contre l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE, y atteignent des sommets d'impopularité. Angela Merkel a réitéré sa proposition d'un partenariat privilégié avec la Turquie, sans que ce pays devienne membre à part entière de l'Union. Une telle position accentue le malentendu avec les immigrants d'origine turque, qui la considèrent comme une marque de mépris et le signe que l'Allemagne ne souhaite pas vraiment les intégrer.

« Travailleur invité d'Anatolie »

Atablés dans un café turc, deux retraités sirotent un thé noir en jouant aux cartes. Ils n'iront pas voter le 7 juin. « L'intégration, ça fait des années qu'on nous bassine avec ça. Si ça n'a jamais marché, c'est de la faute des politiques », s'empare Hüseyin Cakmak. Il a 63 ans et fait partie de la première vague de *Gastarbeiter*, les « travailleurs invités » turcs, conviés dès la fin des années 1950 à contribuer au miracle économique allemand. Pourtant, il ne parle toujours pas un mot d'allemand : « Je n'ai jamais essayé d'apprendre, pas le temps, trop de



Un marché situé dans le quartier de Kreuzberg, à Berlin-Ouest, où les Turcs luttent pour sauvegarder leurs mœurs et leur identité.

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