

INSTITUT
KURDE
DE PARIS

Information and liaison bulletin

N° 414

SEPTEMBER 2019

*The publication of this Bulletin enjoys a subsidy
from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Ministry of Culture*

This bulletin is issued in French and English

Price per issue : France: 6 € — Abroad : 7,5 €
Annual subscription (12 issues) France : 60 € — Elsewhere : 75 €

Monthly review
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ISBN 0761 1285

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TURKEY: DESPITE SOME ACQUITTALS, STILL MASS CONVICTIONS....

The Turkish government is increasingly embarrassed by the economic situation. The *TurkStat* Statistical Institute reported on 2 September that production in the previous quarter fell by 1.5% compared to the same period in the previous year. Then a controversy developed around the inflation figures published by the institute, 0.86% for August and 15% over the last 12 months, described as “strange” by an

economist. The vice-president of the CHP, Aykut Erdoğan, recalled that the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce had estimated annual inflation at 22.55%. The figure of the trade union *Türk-İş* is almost identical. HDP MP Garo Paylan ironically said: “Mr. Son-in-law chooses *TurkStat*'s figures” (the president's son-in-law, Berat Albayrak, is a little convincing Minister of Economy). On the 4th, a *MetroPOLL* survey gave a President's approval rate of 44%,

ten points lower than the previous year, with the disagreement rate rising from 38 to 48%. On 16, *TurkStat* published unemployment figures for June: 13%, up 2.8%, or 4,253,000 unemployed. For young people aged 15 to 24, it is 24.8%, an increase of 5.4%. As shown by the loss of the country's largest cities in recent municipal elections, this situation has had a severe impact on the popularity of the government, which has begun to repress the comments of eco-

conomic journalists. Thus 38 people, including two *Bloomberg* reporters, were charged with “opposition to the Capital Market Law” following articles in August 2018 analysing Article 102 of this law and pointing to a 24% collapse of the Turkish lira in one day... *Bloomberg* reporter Kerim Karakaya described the trial, whose first hearing took place on the 20th, as “tragic-comic”... The next hearing is scheduled for January 9.

Whatever the events, the present power seems to know nothing but censorship and repressive response: after the 5.8 magnitude earthquake that struck Istanbul on the 26th, following a first on the 24th of 4.7 in the Marmara Sea, the director of the Kandilli Seismic Research Centre, Professor Halik Özener, reported that 200 earthquakes had been recorded in 24 hours and expressed concern that a very large earthquake could occur quickly. There were 43 minor injuries, 464 buildings were damaged, and many worried residents preferred to spend the night outside. On the 27th, the provincial governor threatened to prosecute the authors of alarmist messages on social networks...

On the 2nd, the opening ceremony of the legal year, held in the presidential complex of Ankara, was boycotted by forty-three bars of the country, including those of Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir and Diyarbakir. In his opening speech, the President Erdoğan accused them of “provocation”. On the 5th, the bars of Antalya, Istanbul and Ankara called for a general meeting of the Bars Union to “reassess” its president Metin Feyzioğlu, who delivered a speech during the ceremony (*Bianet*). At the same time, defecations are increasing within the AKP. On the 13th, former Prime

Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, anticipating his expulsion, announced his resignation, stating that the party could no longer, in his opinion, provide a solution to the country’s problems. He was quickly followed by other leaders: former President Abdullah Gül and former Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan...

Regarding the detention of former HDP co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş, who has been in prison for almost three years, an Ankara court ordered his provisional release on 2 September at a hearing at which neither he nor his lawyers were present. They had stated that they preferred to wait for the decision of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) concerning his pre-trial detention, scheduled for the 18th. The Turkish President has already refused to implement a decision of the ECHR of last 20 November ordering the early release of Demirtaş... The hearing was postponed to 7 January (*AFP*). On the 4th of September, the Party of European Socialists called for his release. On the 10th, the court unanimously dismissed the Ankara prosecutor’s appeal against Demirtaş’s release verdict, but he remains in prison because of another case... His lawyers have requested that the time already spent in detention be included in his sentence. If this request were accepted (which would be in accordance with Article 63/1 of the Turkish Penal Code), the Kurdish leader would be released. On 18 December, the ECHR indicated that its judgment would be delivered in the coming months. Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatovic spoke of a “situation where pre-trial detention, in effect, becomes an instrument of punishment”. On

the 19th, the French newspaper *l’Humanité* published an appeal for the liberation of Demirtaş (signature at freedemirtas.sj@gmail.com). On the 20th, a new investigation was launched against him by the Ankara prosecutor in a clear attempt to keep him in detention. Later that same day, a new arrest verdict was handed down against him and the former HDP Co-Chair Figen Yüksekdağ. One of the lawyers, Nuray Özdoğan, told *Bianet* that there was no new information in this “new” case... On the 23rd, Demirtaş’s lawyers announced that they would file a criminal complaint against those responsible for this procedure.

Requests to visit Abdullah Öcalan on 6 September by his brother and sister were rejected later that day, as were those submitted on 20 September (*TIHV*): once the municipal elections have passed, the government has abandoned all pretence to humanity.

For several weeks now, the Turkish media have been giving a lot of attention to the “Mothers of Diyarbakir”, who have gathered in front of the office of the “pro-Kurdish” HDP party in Diyarbakir to protest against “the kidnapping by the PKK of their children” which would have forced them to join the guerrillas. The police have shown unusual tolerance towards these protesters, whose actions have been welcomed by the authorities, who are quick to accuse the HDP of terrorism. The Minister of the Interior, Süleyman Soylu, even came to visit them. Turkey has accused of bias the Western media, reluctant to enter its propaganda system. But on the 17th, when the mothers tried to continue their *sit-in* outside the AKP office by displaying a banner with the

words: “Mothers for Peace”, the police suddenly regained their aggressiveness to deny access to them and the journalists, suddenly undesirable again (*Bianet*). Another example of two-tier justice in Turkey is the lack of progress in the investigation into the murder of Tahir Elçi, the President of Diyarbakir Bar, who was shot dead in the street in Turkey on 28 November 2015. The Tahir Elçi Foundation filed a criminal complaint on the 24th against the staff of the Forensic Institute for “spoliation of evidence”: according to the testimony of an employee of the institute, Mehtap Altuğ, a DNA sample was removed from the file on the order of an executive, without this leading to any investigation (*Bianet*).

Concerning the “Academics for Peace”, while the Constitutional Court decided on 26 July that the convictions for “propaganda for a terrorist organisation” violated their freedom of expression, the first acquittal verdict was handed down in favour of Özlem Şendeniz on 9 September after the prosecutor stated that he had “changed his mind”. The next day, five associations of psychologists (Europe, Italy, USA) called for the acquittal of Turkish academics, including Professor Serdar Değirmencioglu, the former president of the European Community Psychological Association (ECPA). On the 10th, twenty-two academics had been released in one week. On 11 November, when the number of acquitted academics reached 38, the CHP announced that it had introduced a bill in parliament calling for their reinstatement and compensation. On the 12th, when a prosecutor requested prison sentences against a teacher, the court did not follow him and pronounced the acquittal. By that date, 106 academics had

been acquitted. On the 16th, the HDP Kahramanmaraş MP, Mahmut Toğrul, submitted a bill calling for the reinstatement of academics dismissed by emergency decree, the restoration of their freedom to travel, and their removal from the lists of persons covered by these decrees. On 17 August, four other academics were acquitted in Istanbul and Kocaeli, and on 24 August, *Reporters Without Borders’* representative for Turkey, Erol Önderoğlu, was acquitted of “propaganda for a terrorist organisation”. However, he called for caution: “As long as the Turkish judiciary does not adhere to democratic values and cannot function independently of the government, it would be wrong to welcome the acquittals. Spring does not come with a single flower”. On the 30th, academics Esra Mungan, Meral Camcı, Muzaffer Kaya and Kıvanç Ersoy were acquitted; Camcı said: “We got what was ours...”. Despite the verdict of the Constitutional Court, the State of Emergency Commission can still issue reverse decisions. If this were to happen, the academics concerned could appeal to the Council of State. As a last resort, the question would then come back to the Constitutional Court...

Turkey continues to condemn its journalists. On the 10th, in the case of the Editors-in-Chief on Watch campaign of the newspaper *Özgür Gündem*, closed by emergency decree, the prosecutor appealed against the verdict of acquittal of Şebnem Korur-Fincancı, Erol Önderoğlu and Ahmet Nesin, delivered on the last 17 July. On the same day, the reporter of the website *Jin News* Melike Aydın received 15 months in prison for “propaganda for a terrorist organization” for her messages on social net-

works in... 2006. On the same day, the Constitutional Court announced its verdict in the case of the *Evrensel* journalist, Erdal İmrek, who was attacked with pepper spray and beaten by police officers on 31 May 2014 while covering the first anniversary of the demonstrations in Gezi Park. While the prosecutor decided not to prosecute the police officers concerned, the Court decided that İmrek’s freedom of expression had been violated (*Bianet*). On 11 November, Austrian journalist Max Zirngast, who has been living in Ankara for three years, was acquitted of the charge of “belonging to a terrorist organisation” and released after three months in prison, but he is still prohibited from leaving the country. Zirngast collaborates with the German newspapers *Junge Welt* and *re:volt*, and the American magazine *Jacobin*. On the same day in Diyarbakir, the trial of the two journalists Ayşegül Doğan (*İMC TV*, now closed) and Yusuf Karataş (*Evrensel*) was postponed to 25 December after a five-minute hearing. They each face 22 years in prison for “creating and leading an armed terrorist organization” for their participation in debates and conferences in the course of their professional activities.

On the 12th, the co-director of the Media Legal Studies Association (MLSA) Veysel Ok and the journalist Cihan Acar, of the daily *Özgür Düşünce*, were sentenced to five months in prison each for “slandering the judicial bodies of the state”. Veysel Ok had stated in an interview with *Özgür Düşünce*, which has since been closed by emergency decree, that “the judiciary is unicolor”. On the same day, the journalist Barış İnce was sentenced to eleven

months and twenty days of suspended imprisonment. Taken to court over an article in the *BirGün* newspaper entitled “They built a two-lane highway into their pockets” that was reporting suspicions of corruption against the Turkish president and his son Bilal and sentenced for “insulting the president”, he was charged again with the same charge after submitting to the court a written statement of defence, the first letters of which on each line acrostically formed the words *Hırsız Tayyip* (“Tayyip the Thief”)... On the same day, seven former *Cumhuriyet* journalists convicted of “assisting a terrorist organization” were released after a decision by the Supreme Court of Appeal. Among them was the investigative journalist and HDP deputy of Istanbul Ahmet Şık, whose book on Gülen, *The Imam’s Army (İmanın Ordusu)*, had been banned before publication. The prosecutor requested the prosecution of Şık for “terrorist propaganda” (*Bianet*).

Also on the 12th, editorialist Özlem Albayrak resigned from the pro-government newspaper *Yeni Şafak* after her article criticising the conviction of Istanbul Canan HPC leader Kaftancıoğlu was censored. She made public the rejected article, where she openly wondered whether Kaftancıoğlu’s conviction for, among other things, “insulting the president” and “propaganda for a terrorist organization” was not simply revenge for the loss of Istanbul...

On the 24th, Ziya Ataman, a journalist with the agency (closed by emergency decree) *DIHA*, was sentenced to 14 years and three months in prison for “membership in a terrorist organisation”. Seriously ill, the accused had requested his acquittal, remind-

ing the Court that the statements incriminating him had been obtained under torture and subsequently withdrawn. His lawyers will appeal. On the same day in Diyarbakir, the trial of reporter Kibriye Evren of the *JinNews* website, charged with “membership in a terrorist organization” and “propaganda for a terrorist organization”, was postponed to 12 November. Arrested along with 142 others in October 2018, Evren, who faces up to 20 years in prison, was kept in pre-trial detention. On 26 September, the editorial writer of *Bianet* Bülent Şık, also a food engineer, was sentenced to 15 months in prison for “revealing professional information”: at the time deputy director of the Food Security Research Centre at Akdeniz University, he had participated in research whose results were not published by the Ministry of Health. He was prosecuted after publishing a series of four articles in *Cumhuriyet* in April 2018 entitled: “The State has hidden carcinogen products, we make them public! Here is the poison list”...

Regarding Internet censorship, on the 27th, an article from the *Bianet* site reporting the blocking of a previous article from the same site was in turn blocked. Both referred to the death of musician Sevim Tanürek, who was hit by a car in 1998 while crossing a pedestrian crossing by a car driven by the Turkish President’s eldest son, Ahmet Burak Erdoğan...

On 29 September, the Turkish President, who came to New York to participate in the United Nations General Assembly, said in an interview with *Fox News*: “The figures [of arrested journalists] you mention are imaginary”. In contrast to these statements, eighteen human rights organizations sent a joint letter to the United Nations Human Rights

Council on 11 November urging it to stop “ignoring such flagrant violations of Turkey’s obligations and commitments under international human rights law” (<https://www.article19.org/resources/turkey-joint-letter-urges-un-human-rights-council-to-address-crackdown-against-journalists/>).

With the deaths of several detainees in prison this month, conditions of detention in Turkish prisons have once again been called into question. On the 4th, CHP Deputy Atila Sertel submitted a parliamentary question on the death of fourteen prisoners in eight months in Menemen prison. Designed for sick prisoners, it currently houses three times the number of prisoners for whom it was built, to the point that “prisoners are forced to sleep in toilets and corridors”. After the death on the 10th in hospital of an elderly prisoner from a prison in Maraş where he had fallen ill, the human rights association İHD published a count according to which, since the beginning of 2017, 73 people have died in prison, 39 of whom were suffering from a disease. According to the Department of Justice’s own figures, between 2011 and 2017, there were 280 deaths of prisoners attributed to suicides... (*Bianet*) On the 15th, former BDP co-president Mustafa Akyol, incarcerated since 2011, died in hospital from his heart disease (*Turkey Purge*). In addition to these poor conditions of incarceration and lack of care, there is the ill-treatment of prisoners, such as those 70 people, including 17 children arrested during curfews in Nusaybin in 2016, who were beaten by gendarmes for protesting against their heavy sentences in court... (*TIHV*)

On the 19th, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ordered Turkey to pay six thou-

sand euros in compensation to the two prisoners Abdülkerim Avşar and Abdülkerim Tekin, who had been transferred to Kırıkkale prison against their will, deciding that their right to respect for their family life had been violated. This judgment also applies to other HDP prisoners, such as Figen Yüksekdağ and Selahattin Demirtaş, but also former MPs Seben Tuncel, Selma Irmak, Çağlar Demirel, İdris Baluken and Abdullah Zeydan, who have all been transferred up to 1,500 km from their home region....

The violence of the security forces, almost always unpunished, is too ubiquitous to be fully reported here. While the investigation into the ill-treatment of persons held in police custody in Helfeti during an anti-PKK operation last May has still not been completed, Fatma Kılıçarslan has been prosecuted for sharing photos on social networks showing prisoners lying on the ground and handcuffed behind their backs. She is accused of “public provocation to enmity and hatred”. The first hearing of the case is scheduled for 9 October (*Bianet*). Finally, on the 13th, a six-year-old child was killed by a military vehicle in Diyarbakir. Unfortunately, it is only the last of a long series, since nineteen people have experienced this fate in Turkey’s Kurdistan over the past three years. According to the human rights association İHD, over the past ten years, these armoured vehicles have caused 63 accidents, killing 36 people, including six women and sixteen children (*Bianet*).

Bianet announced on the 18th that eighteen Turkish rappers who sang a politically critical song entitled “I can’t keep silent” (*Susamamam*, <https://youtu.be/L5K3IxINr7A>

), were prosecuted. In addition, the musician Tunç, currently abroad, did not attend the hearing of his trial for “insulting the president” and “provoking the public to enmity and hatred”. Accused because of his publications on social media, he faces up to fifteen years in prison. The trial has been postponed to 14 February 2020. Tunç said that the law and justice, put at the service of the “fascist alliance AKP-MHP”, had lost all meaning. It is true that convictions for “insulting the president” are taking on increasingly outrageous proportions. On the 23rd, a Van Kurd named Burhan Borak received 12 years and three months in prison for seven messages sent on social networks in 2014, i.e. a period of one year and nine months for each message incriminated (*Mezopotamya*).

In preparation for the October 2 anniversary of Osman Kavala, the only defendant imprisoned for more than two years following the Gazi Park protests, the businessman and philanthropist’s supporters organized a social media campaign with the hashtag #DearOsmanKavala. They remind on the *Free Osman Kavala website* that no evidence has ever been provided against him. Among the signatories are the HDP Siirt MP Danış Beştaş and the co-president of the association İHD Eren Keskin.

Military operations were particularly numerous in September, both inside Kurdistan of Iraq, with the continuation of the anti-PKK operation “Greenhouses”, but also in Kurdistan in Turkey. On the 4th, several villages near Nusaybin and Ömerli were placed under curfew before a military operation was launched that caused forest fires near Ömerli. On the 7th, Mardin’s special security operations manager was killed and a village

guard was wounded and died of his injuries on the 14th (*TIHV*). On the 9th, two Kurdish fighters were killed near Dicle (news from the 14th only) and two others on the 11th near Muş (news known on the 17th). But the most significant attack of the month occurred on the 12th near Kulp (Diyarbakir). The provincial governor reported that seven people, described as civilians, were killed in the afternoon when a bomb exploded. The Turkish President, calling the attack “atrocious”, promised to arrest the perpetrators. But on the 20th, the PKK claimed responsibility for the operation and indicated that the victims were not civilians but informants of the authorities (*ANF*). In fact, on the 25th, several village guards attacked HDP offices in Diyarbakir, claiming to have lost relatives in Kulp (*Diken*).

On the 14th, the Governor of Hakkari placed five areas of the province under special security until the 28th: the central area plus four others in the districts of Çukurca, Şemdinli, Yüksekova and Derecik (*TIHV*). On the 19th, the media reported the deaths on the 17th of two Kurdish fighters during clashes with security forces near Beytüşşebap (Şırnak), another near Bitlis, and two others earlier in the month, on the 3rd and 6th in Çukurca (Hakkari). On the same day, at least three Turkish soldiers were killed and their vehicles destroyed in a PKK attack on an oil facility in Silopi (*AMN*). On the 22nd, while one civilian was killed by a military vehicle in Göktepe (Tunceli), another was killed by a bomb at Dağıçi (Nusaybin), an operation attributed to the PKK, and security forces announced the “neutralisation” of seven Kurdish fighters in Siirt. As for the PKK, it claimed the death of two intelligence officers in Mardin and

fifteen Turkish soldiers on the 21st. On the 25th, five people, including one police officer, were killed at Yüreğir (Adana) in the explosion of a bomb distance-triggered against a passing riot police vehicle (*Bianet*). On the same day, five Kurdish activists were killed in a clash with security forces near Gevaş (Van). On the 27th, it was reported that another activist died on the 24th near Yüksekova (Hakkari) in an air strike that also damaged homes and crops. On the 30th, the *Anadolu* agency announced the “neutralisation” of three militants in the provinces of Diyarbakir and Mardin.

On the Iraqi side, three Turkish soldiers were killed on the 4th, while a Kurdish fighter died in

an air strike on Haftanin (*TIHV*). On the 10th, Turkish air force bombed a village near Amêdî, causing a fire (*RojNews*). On the evening of the 13th, according to local sources, two Kurdish fighters were killed near Qandil in strikes that also destroyed homes and set fire to fields. On the 15th, two others were killed in a strike on Haftanin, and on the 19th, the death of two others on the 4th near Xakurk was announced, while Ankara, acknowledging the loss of 28 soldiers, claimed having eliminated in three months nearly 400 Kurdish militants, an unverifiable figure... On the 22nd, in cross claims, Turkish security forces announced the “neutralisation” of 14 Kurdish fighters in Haftanin and the PKK the death of eight Turkish soldiers

(*Rûdaw*). On the 23rd, two soldiers of a Turkish supply convoy (*AFP*) were killed. On the evening of the 24th, an air strike killed a shopkeeper in Chamanke, near Dohuk. The chief of district indicated that these strikes were daily. The Turkish Ministry of Defence, for its part, claimed the neutralisation of three PKK fighters, without mentioning civilian casualties (*Rûdaw*). On the 25th, Turkish planes struck the foot of the Qandil Mountains, injuring two civilians in Zewka (Pishdar), according to local witnesses (*Kurdistan-24*). On the 29th, Turkish media reported the deaths of five Kurdish fighters in two strikes on the 25th and 26th in the Haftanin and Avashin areas (*Kurdistan-24*).

TURKEY:

MANY DEMONSTRATIONS AFTER FURTHER DISMISSALS OF HDP MAYORS

The HDP mayors of the three predominantly Kurdish cities of Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van, who won the 31 March municipal elections, were dismissed on 19 August on the grounds that they were under investigation for terrorism. These new dismissals provoked protests and demonstrations that continued throughout September.

At the same time, the record of AKP municipal teams in the cities won by the opposition has not been exactly brilliant. Whether they were cities that were actually won by the ballot box or those that were authoritatively awarded to unelected AKP “administrators” (*kayyım*) after dismissals, there have been a succession of corruption scandals. In the major cities of Istanbul, Ankara and Adana, won by the CHP, the new teams discovered a power system based on cronyism and corruption. In Istanbul, where the debt

left by the previous team is truly gigantic, TL 30 billion for an annual budget of TL 42.6 billion, TL 357 million had been transferred to foundations, and 2,500 people hired between the elections of 15 March and those held on 23 June after the cancellation of the former. 20 million had been paid to a TRT TV series, and 1,730 cars purchased for which the new municipality returned 1,250, worth TL 50 million... In Ankara, TL 1.5 million had been paid for works that had not been completed. In Adana, a company responsible for installing 35 wells received 5 million while only the well covers were made... In the Kurdish cities taken over by the AKP after 31 March, the HDP municipal councils succeeding the AKP administrators had made similar “discoveries”...

The government has cracked down with an iron fist on protests against these new HDP mayors’ destitutions. In Mardin, on the

2nd, the HDP organized a sit-in at the park Karayolları in which several HDP MPs participated. In Diyarbakir, during another sit-in, a banner was displayed with the words: “Hands off my voice!” In Van, the demonstrations took place in front of one of the HDP offices. In Mersin, a banner was unrolled vertically on the façade of the HDP building, with the slogan: “The appointment of directors is a coup against political will, the will of the people is the foundation”. By order of the Governor, it was withdrawn by the police on the 7th (*TIHV*). On the 3rd, an investigation was launched against Ahmet Türk, the mayor of Mardin dismissed on August 19, for “co-presidency” (*Mezopotamya*). On the 4th, the HDP staged sits-in in several cities, including Istanbul and Ankara, as well as in Izmir, Adana and Gaziantep. Police attacked several rallies and arrested many participants, including 42 people in Ankara, nine HDP

members at Ağrı, ten in Mersin, and two in Lice (*WKI*). In Izmir, it prevented a press conference from being held by HDP deputies, declaring it illegal and dispersing the rally (*Bianet*). On the 8th, the Batman and Izmir police forces were ordered by the prosecutor to seize leaflets and protest stickers at the HDP premises. In Diyarbakir, the documents were seized from the car of the HDP district co-chair of Kayapınar (*TIHV*). In addition to suppressing the protests, the government also continued with the dismissals: at Muş, seven HDP municipal councillors were dismissed and replaced by appointed administrators, and nine others previously dismissed in two districts of Van Province were replaced in the same way (*WKI*). On the 10th, the HDP reported that twenty of its municipal councillors had been dismissed (*Bianet*).

On the 13th, 46 MEPs from different European political parties sent an open letter to the Turkish President urging him to “stop the repression against members of the HDP and CHP and accept the results of the local elections”.

On the same day, an explosion at Ağaçkorur, in the Kulp district of Diyarbakir, killed seven passengers in a vehicle. Following this attack, since claimed by the PKK, the district HDP leader and the municipal public works official were taken into police custody, and the police launched a night raid on the home of the co-mayor of Kulp. The HDP official for Diyarbakir, Zeyyat Ceylan, like the HDP co-chairs, said that the authorities were seeking to take advantage of the incident to attack the HDP. The HDP co-chairs condemned the attack “in the strongest possible terms”. On the 16th, the former HDP candidate for Kulp, Mehmet Emin Ay,

whose candidature had been rejected by the Electoral Commission (YSK), was imprisoned. Then the two co-mayors of the Kulp district, Mehmet Fatih Taş and Fatma Ay, elected last March, were arrested and dismissed, and administrators appointed to replace them, including the district governor Mustafa Gözlet (*Bianet*). In Erzurum, HDP co-mayor of Karayazı, Melike Göksu, was imprisoned as well as several city councillors. Göksu has just had her sentence of seven years and six months’ imprisonment confirmed on appeal for “belonging to a terrorist organisation”.

On the 17th, the creation of a “Kurdish Friendship Group” in the European Parliament was announced in a press conference held in the presence of HDP Co-Chair Sezai Temelli. The fifteen members of the group, who hope to be joined by other MEPs, will meet in Brussels in October to formalise the existence of the group, which will focus in particular on the dismissal of HDP elected representatives, although Dutch MEP Kati Piri pointed out that the issue of dismissals goes beyond the HDP alone, since the Turkish Interior Minister threatened the CHP Mayor of Istanbul Ekrem Imamoğlu after he visited several demoted HDP mayors (*Ahval*). On 19 December, the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning the replacement of the mayors of Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van by administrators and calling for the annulment of the almost ten-year prison sentence imposed on the head of the Istanbul HPC Canan Kaftanoğlu. The latter, the text states, “is clearly punished for her key role in the victorious campaign of the CHP Mayor of Istanbul”. The resolution also calls on Turkey to respect the ver-

dicts of the European Court of Human Rights, in particular those concerning the release of Selahattin Demirtaş (*Bianet*).

On the 24th, the former mayor of Diyarbakir, Selçuk Mızraklı, dismissed and replaced by an administrator on the 20th of August, addressed a forum organized for the 42nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council by MRAP (*Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l’amitié entre les peuples*, Movement against racism and friendship between peoples). Deprived of the right to travel outside Turkey, Mızraklı had to intervene by teleconference. He outlined and denounced in his speech the “militaristic” methods by which the AKP, after it “came to power in 2002 with the promise of achieving democracy”, has “particularly since 2015”, tried to establish an authoritarian regime “without any respect for the law”. Mızraklı called on the Council “not to remain silent” in the face of these injustices.

The protests continued until the end of the month, particularly outside the town halls of the cities whose mayors were dismissed, Mardin, Diyarbakir and Van. On the 26th, police attacked the HDP’s “democracy watch” in Istanbul’s Esenyurt district using tear gas and rubber bullets. In Izmir, the watch, supported by the city bar, was blocked by the police. On the 29th, the Esenyurt watch was again attacked by the police and ten participants arrested. HDP MP Kemal Bülbül had to be hospitalized after losing consciousness. On the 30th, police attacked the protesters in Mardin and arrested eight HDP members. Two other HDP members were arrested in Diyarbakir. Finally, in Dersim, police arrested four HDP members in raids, including two municipal officials.

ROJAVA: TURKEY CONTINUES ITS THREATS

Turkey continues to threaten an invasion of Rojava, justifying its aggressiveness with the threat of an autonomous Kurdish entity on its southern border. In the *Washington Examiner*, a former Pentagon official, Michael Rubin, debunked the Turkish allegations on September 3. The 2019 database of border incidents put online by the *Rojava Information Centre* shows that, out of some 30 clashes, only one, contrary to Turkish claims, resulted from an attack launched from Rojava – and yet its perpetrator was subsequently arrested by the FDS. All other incidents resulted from attacks from Turkey, which resulted in 27 civilian casualties, including one child. Rubin assumes without hesitation the fact of relying on information of Syrian Kurdish origin: if Turkey or its American interlocutors contest this database, he writes, “it’s time they release their own record of Kurdish terrorism emanating from Syria. Their silence suggests, frankly, Turkish grievances are without merit [...]. Rather than Kurdish terrorism, it is Turkey’s proposed buffer zone, Turkey’s revanchism, and its use of fake grievances to justify its imperialism that poses the greatest threat to the region” (<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/the-emptiness-of-turkeys-complaints-against-syrian-kurds>).

However, the Turkish President continued his bellicose statements throughout the month. While it threatens Rojava with a Turkish military invasion, it threatens the European Union with an invasion of another kind, that of Syrian refugees: “Turkey has not received the necessary international support, in particular from the European Union, on the burden of

Syrian refugees [he said on the 5th]. We may have to let them enter Europe to get help”, he added (*Bianet*). In fact, Mr. Erdoğan, put in difficulty inside by the presence of three million Syrian refugees on Turkish soil, wants to kill two birds with one stone. By organizing the invasion of Rojava, it could simultaneously destroy the autonomous administration set up by the Kurds of Syria and permanently change the demography of the conquered areas by settling up to three million refugees from other parts of Syria, thus securing the votes of his ultranationalist partners in the MHP. He reiterated his threats on the 8th at Eskişehir in front of activists of his party, the AKP (*Le Monde*). Educated by the ethnic cleansing and abuses that took place in Afrîn after the Turkish invasion, the Autonomous Authorities of North-East Syria understood the danger quite clearly. After a meeting with the anti-ISIS coalition, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) declared on the 17th that only Syrians originally from the Syrian North-East could be accepted, and only those who had neither carried out terrorist activities nor committed crimes. They also specified that returns should be voluntary (*Rûdaw*). On the same day, Mr. Erdoğan, speaking just after the Russia-Iran-Turkey summit held in Ankara, said that Turkish military operations in Rojava could start in two weeks...

On the ground, the SDF played the game of the “security zone” requested by the Turks. As early as September 4, they conducted joint patrols with the American military to select the fortifications that should be dismantled in anticipation of its implementation. The previous week, they had reported that they had begun to

withdraw fighters from the border towns of Tell Abyad / Girê Spî and Serê Kaniyê / Ras el-Ain. On the 6th, Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar stated that joint Turkish-American patrols would begin on the 8th, adding that several helicopter flights over the area had taken place in preparation. On the 8th, the first Turkish-American patrol indeed took place, with six Turkish and six American vehicles. The Syrian government immediately denounced these patrols. The head of the SDF military council in Tell Abyad said they would implement the agreement without any problems, if this could prevent a war. However, the precise outline of the safety zone remains unclear, with SDF talking about 5 km deep, while Turkey refers to 32 km – or 20 miles. On the 15th, the anti-ISIS coalition announced in a statement that it would continue discussions with Turkey to clarify the details of the implementation of the security zone. On the 18th, the head of the Pentagon’s anti-ISIS working group, Chris Maier, said he was convinced that with the progress made, “the hypothesis of a Turkish incursion into Syria [was] much less likely”. Asked about the possible return of refugees to this area, as requested by Ankara, Mr. Maier stressed that the United States would not accept forced return (*AFP*).

Since its conquest in 2018 by the Turkish army and the jihadist mercenaries in its service, Afrin has experienced regular abuses. Earlier this month, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) published two reports taking stock of the human rights violations suffered by the Kurdish population in Afrin. In particular, an elderly couple died when jihadists attacked their house to steal their belongings. Thirteen

Kurds were arrested by jihadists in the vicinity of the city. On the 9th, clashes took place between the *Jaysh al-Islam* Jihadist faction and the Sultan Murad division (*Firqat Sultan Murad*, named after the Ottoman Sultan Murad II), an Islamist Turkmen group close to the Turkish government. They were fighting over the looted property of the inhabitants. On the 13th, the *Firat* agency reported that 61 Kurds had been kidnapped by jihadists since the beginning of the month. In particular, the SOHR reported that members of the Sham Legion (*Faylaq al-Sham*) kidnapped nine civilians from the village of Derbalut, near Afrin. Attacks also degrade security: on the same day, a vehicle bomb exploded in Afrin, and on the 15th, another car bomb exploded near a hospital in Al-Ray, a city controlled by the Turkish army, killing at least one pharmacist and two of his children. These attacks were not immediately claimed (SOHR).

Although under constant threat of a Turkish attack in the north, the SDF, which according to the Pentagon continues to receive American weapons, have continued their fight against ISIS. On the 5th, the Autonomous Administration handed over three orphans from the same family linked to ISIS (AFP) to a Nigerian delegation. On the 10th, the SDF General Commander

Mazloun Abdi described the Al-Hol camp as a “time bomb” due to the overcrowding of its 71,000 residents and insufficient resources. On the 17th, the SDF killed two jihadists and arrested ten others during operations in Shadadi, Tabqa and Raqqa; in Deir Ezzor, security forces disarmed a truck bomb containing nearly 500 kg of C4 explosive. The following week, the SDF announced the dismantling of a cell of 18 jihadists, including seven women. Finally, at the end of the month, serious unrest broke out in al-Hol camp when women tried to set up an Islamic court to try some of the detainees who they believed were responsible for violating Islamic law. Several murders of “traitors” to ISIS had already occurred in this camp... When guards intervened, the jihadist women opened fire with weapons introduced into the camp. One of them was killed and six others wounded, and about 50 women who had participated in the revolt were re-interned.

On the 25th of the month, the United Nations announced the formation of a “Constitutional Committee” to draft a new Syrian constitution. It will include 150 representatives, including 50 from the Damascus regime, 50 from the opposition and 50 chosen by the UN. But it does not include any representative of the Autonomous

Administration of the North-East of Syria, dominated by the PYD, which controls more than 30% of Syrian territory. The latter issued a statement denouncing its exclusion, as did the Syriac Union, made up of Christians from the North-East of Syria, represented in the autonomous administration (WKI).

Regarding the Autonomous Region’s internal policy, after France, it was the United Kingdom that tried to offer its mediation to bring the Kurdish political parties belonging to the Kurdish National Council (KNC), in opposition to the Autonomous Administration, closer to it. A delegation from the British Foreign Office visited the area in early September and met with several KNC officials, including leaders of the Yekiti party, as well as with the Administration. However, one source denied that the main purpose of the visit had been to attempt such a rapprochement (*Al-Monitor*).

On the 6th, the Administration announced that the Kurdish channel of Iraq *Kurdistan 24* was allowed to resume its news coverage on its territory. *Kurdistan 24*, which has been in Rojava since 2015, had had its licence suspended for about a month, prompting a reaction from *Reporters Without Borders*.

IRAQ:

A CONSTITUTION FOR THE KURDISTAN REGION?

The Iraqi political class continues to divide over the status of the Shia *Hashd-al-Shaabi* militias, theoretically integrated into the Iraqi army, but which seem to continue to form a genuine state within the state. After they were targeted by Israeli strikes, the vice-president of the “Popular Mobilization Committee”, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, announced that they

would acquire their own air force to defend themselves! This provoked the anger of Shiite leader Moqtada Sadr, who threatened on September 6 to turn against the government if it did not take steps to restore its authority. Besides, MPs from several blocs began collecting signatures on the 30th for a bill that would allow them and journalists to enter the Jurf al-Sakhar sub-district in Babylon province to ascertain the existence

of illegal detention centres in the area that are reported holding 3,000 prisoners in the hands of militia... (*ISHM*)

On the 15th, the Ministry of Migration announced the closure of the “Jadah-6” camp for displaced persons in Nineveh province. Despite persistent concerns about the safety of returnees, Iraqi IDP camps resulting from the conflict with ISIS are gradually

being closed. Haj-Ali's should be the next one, and Hamam-Ali's 1 and 2 should be regrouped together. An increase in financial assistance afforded to returnees could accelerate returns, particularly to Mosul and Sinjar. On the 23rd, the Ministry announced that the return of 1,326 displaced persons from Nineveh province had resulted in the closure of four camps (*ISHM*).

With regard to Arab displaced persons in the Kurdistan Region, the Human Rights organization *Human Rights Watch (HRW)* recently published a report entitled *Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Arabs Not Allowed Home, in which* it states that the GRK has prevented 4,200 Sunni Arabs displaced by the conflict with ISIS from returning to 12 villages east of Mosul. The KRG Coordinator in charge of responses to international reports, Dindar Zêbarî, replied that the main objective of the KRG was indeed "the voluntary return of displaced persons to their areas of origin, without discrimination of ethnic or religious origin".

Concerning the relations between the Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the usual points of disagreement concern the disputed territories as well as oil and its revenues. This last point is particularly important for the preparation of the 2020 budget, part of which must go to the Kurdistan Region. The two governments still differ on the unilateral oil exports by the KRG, whose revenues Baghdad asks for, while the Kurds reply that the KRG had to make these exports in order to meet its needs precisely because Baghdad had not sent any budget to their Region since 2014. But both interlocutors seem to have made the choice to solve this problem through discussion. On the 11th, KRG spokesman Jutyar Adil announced that a delegation

including members of the Ministries of Planning and Finance would quickly visit the Ministry of Finance in Baghdad to discuss the issue, and on the 16th, the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court indefinitely delayed the proceedings against the KRG regarding its unilateral oil exports. Senior Judge Midhat Mahmoud indicated that the court would not set a new hearing date if Prime Minister Abd el-Mahdi did not sign the court order, which he has so far refused to do.

Another topic of discussion between the two governments is the establishment of a joint committee to oversee preparations for the general census scheduled for 2020. According to Jutyar Adil, the committee will ensure that "the rights of the different ethnic and religious [communities] in Kurdistan are taken into consideration" (*Kurdistan 24*).

On 22 September, several Kurdish members of the Baghdad Parliament declared that the federal government should pay the \$3 billion due by the KRG to oil companies operating in the Kurdistan Region before the latter can start delivering to Baghdad the 250,000 barrels per day provided for in the budget... (*ISHM*) In this context, the Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament Mohamed al-Halbousi travelled to Kurdistan and met with the KRG leaders to continue discussions on the 2020 budget. At the end of the month, the Kurdistan Parliament announced the upcoming dispatch of Commissions to Baghdad to continue discussions...

With regard to the internal policy of the Kurdistan Region, the Erbil Parliament has begun consultations with the political parties to prepare the drafting of a Constitution. The Second Deputy Speaker of the Parliament, Mrs.

Muna Kahveci, stated on the 5th that a specific Committee representing all political entities in the Region would be set up. A draft Constitution of 122 articles, initiated in 2009, had not been adopted due to disagreements between political parties. A further attempt during the last parliament had resulted in a draft of 70 articles, which had not been completed either, for the same reasons. On 9 September, the Speaker of Parliament, Ms. Rewaz Fayiq, mentioned the subject again, confirming that parliamentary officials were seeking the agreement of political parties. Among the issues under discussion was the part of Islamic law as a source of the law used in the Region. After 28 years of operation and nine government offices, the Kurdistan Region still does not have a written constitution (*eKurd*).

Throughout the month, jihadist attacks continued, particularly in the disputed territories between Baghdad and Erbil, where security has collapsed since October 2017 with the withdrawal of the pechmergas. On 5 September, they repelled a jihadist attack on a village in Diyala. In the Makhmur area, some villages had to be evacuated. Jihadists, very active particularly in Diyala province, used improvised explosive devices (two Iraqi soldiers wounded on the 8th in Jalawla, one civilian killed on the 11th and nine others in different parts of Kirkuk, one Iraqi soldier on patrol killed and three wounded in northeast Baqubah) and mortar fire (one wounded on the 9th in northeast Baqubah, another shot on the 10th in a village near Muqdadiya). On the 11th, a sniper also killed an Iraqi soldier north-east of Baqubah. The anti-ISIS coalition responded with numerous air strikes: eight jihadists killed on the 8th on a Tiger island in Nineveh province, fifteen oth-

ers on the 9th on the limit between Diyala and Salahaddin, and ten southeast of Erbil. Some strikes in Makhmur were guided by the pechmergas. On the 10th, coalition aircraft bombed 37 ISIS targets on Qanus Island, on the Tiger (*ISHM*), dropping more than 36 tons of bombs.

On the 13th, an improvised explosive device killed one civilian and wounded another, both south of Mosul. On the 15th, another killed two police officers and wounded two others south of Kirkuk. On the 16th, four bombs wounded twelve civilians in Baghdad, and on the 18th, two tribal fighters were wounded, again in Mosul (*ISHM*). Jihadists also attacked a military post between Diyala and Salahaddin, killing one soldier and wounding two, and killed six civilians between the 15th and 19th in Baghdad, Wasit and Diyala.

On the 16th, the Iraqi army announced the launch of phase 5 of the anti-ISIS operation *Will of Victory*, but jihadist attacks continued until the end of the month. On the 19th, one police officer was killed and another wounded by an improvised explosive device in Hawija (west of Kirkuk), another wounded two farmers near Jalawla (Diyala) the next day, and on the 22nd, another wounded four people in Makhmur. On the 23rd, a mine-clearing expert was killed in Baqubah by a bomb he was trying to deactivate. On the 24th, a ISIS attack killed a *Hashd al-Shaabi* militiaman and wounded three others in Khanaqin. On the 26th, an improvised explosive device killed two civilians and wounded a third in Daquq (south of Kirkuk), another wounded two civilians in Hamam al-Alil (Nineveh) and two farmers in Jalawla (Diyala) on the 28th. On the 29th, an improvised explosive device wounded two Shia militia-

men in al-Shura (Nineveh) and two others on the 30th in Jurf al-Sakhar (Babylon). In the village of Makhasi, near Khanaqin, three Kurdish shepherds were mistakenly killed on the 27th by border guards who had been targeted by an attack by ISIS. On the 28th, twelve jihadists were killed by an air strike in the desert between Anbar and Salahaddin, and eight others west of Tikrit.

On the political level, the Kurdish parties in Kirkuk continued discussions with their non-Kurdish counterparts. Discussions have been felt necessary since 11 July, when the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) agreed on the name of Tayib Jabar as the candidate for the post of Governor of Kirkuk. This would put an end to the policy of the interim governor appointed by Baghdad, Rakan al-Jaburi, who is accused by many Kurds of having resumed the Ba'athist regime's Arabization policy. But this choice only between Kurdish parties met with opposition from non-Kurdish parties, who denounced a "takeover" of the province. The discussions will also have to concern the provincial elections, scheduled for April 2020, which the Kurdish parties in Kirkuk are opposed to, considering that the number of displaced Kurds in the province makes the voters' lists inaccurate and unfair to their community...

On 2 September, the KDP told *Voice of America* that the "Fraternity" list, bringing together all the Kurdish parties in Kirkuk, would meet with the Arab and Turkmen parties. On the 4th, "Fraternity" met the Turkmen Front. Among other things, security issues and land conflicts were discussed. The

Turkmen Front stated after the meeting that dialogue would continue to develop a consensual solution (*NRT*). On the 9th, the Kurdish parties in Kirkuk, meeting to discuss the issue of the 2020 provincial elections, issued hereafter a six-point statement. It specifies the list of parties to participate, calls for the normalisation of the situation in the province (i.e. a return to civilian management) and for further discussions with the other political entities in Kirkuk, with the mediation of the United Nations. On the 18th, the Iraqi Electoral Commission rejected the name chosen by the common list of Kurdish parties for the Kirkuk provincial elections, "Kirkuk is Kurdistan". The Commission explained its decision by fear that the use of this name could lead to new ethnic tensions in the province (*Rûdaw*).

Another source of tension is the intensification of Turkish incursions and airstrikes in Kurdistan, as part of the anti-PKK operation *Claws*, which affects the regions of Amadiya, Zakho, Bradost, Qandil and Haftanin. The situation has become so serious for the inhabitants of the villages in the Turkish area of operations that a local Dohuk official has called on them to leave their homes. Dozens of civilians have been killed since the operation was launched last May. On the afternoon of the 10th, an air strike on a village near Dohuk caused a fire in the area (*RojInfo*). On the evening of the 13th, another strike, which according to the Turkish military eliminated two Kurdish fighters near Qandil, also led to the destruction of homes and field, and forest fires, road closures, power cuts and other material damage, including the partial destruction of a mosque in the Choman district... (*Rûdaw*)

IRAN: HIGHLY CONTESTED, THE REGIME IS AGAIN STEPPING UP ITS REPRESSION

TIran is at the heart of growing international tensions with the continuation of US sanctions and especially the September 14 attack on Saudi oil installations. Although the operation was claimed by the Yemeni Houthi rebels, the Trump administration accused Iran of launching it from its territory with a dozen cruise missiles and more than 20 drones. And inside, sanctions continue to strangle the economy. On 24 September, the Iranian Statistical Centre announced that inflation had reached 42.7% in the twelve months following August 2018. For imported goods, it reached 150% due to the collapse of the *rial*, but the most serious is the rate on daily products, much higher than the average: 62.7% for food and beverages and up to 80% for tobacco, meat, fish and dairy products. Even these high figures may be underestimated, as the Centre is dependent on the government and remains the only source of statistics since the Central Bank was banned from publishing statistics... (*Radio Farda*). These increases are having a catastrophic impact on the lives of residents, particularly in the Kurdish region of Iran, which was already economically devastated before the United States imposed sanctions again: earlier this month, three residents of Sanandaj and Kamyaran ended their lives, and since early 2019, 64 Kurds from Iran have committed suicide due to their life difficulties (*WKI*).

Others find a way to survive only by turning to the low-paying and extremely dangerous job of cross-border carrier, or *kolbar*. Considered as smugglers by the repressive forces, they are regu-

larly shot dead in the mountains bordering the borders. Since the beginning of the year, at least 50 of them have been killed and more than 100 injured. On 6 September, border guards ambushed a carrier near Piranshahr, seriously wounding him. The next day, another had to be hospitalized in Sardasht for the same reason. On the 13th, another 25-year-old was injured when a group was caught under fire from border guards near Khoy. On the 15th, *Pasdaran* (Revolutionary Guards) killed a Kurdish shepherd in the same region (*WKI*). On the 19th, a driver suspected of smuggling in connection with *kolbars* was seriously injured in Sanandaj when his vehicle was targeted by soldiers, and on the same day, another porter was killed in Mako, near the Turkish border. Sometimes, Turkish security forces also intervene to repress Iranian *kolbars*. According to the Kurdistan Human Rights Committee (KMMK), they tortured a porter they had captured, who then died in hospital in Erzurum. Then another carrier died in a new attack in Piranshahr. On the 21st, another was wounded in Sardasht, and the next day, in two different incidents, another was wounded in Saqqez in an ambush for a group, and another was killed near Urmia. At the end of the month, the death toll was 64 *kolbars* and 114 wounded since at least January...

The appointment of Ebrahim Raissi as head of Iranian justice last March did not give hope of a reduction in sentences: this former Conservative candidate for the 2017 presidential elections was one of four members of the infamous "Death Commission", which ordered the illegal execu-

tion of thousands of political prisoners in 1988. Six months after his appointment, the results are unfortunately in line with the fears raised by his appointment: under his guidance, the system sanctioned activists with a total of 1,027 years in prison and 1,428 lashes! This is an increase in sanctions of 119% over the same period of time during the leadership of his predecessor Sadegh Larijani, during which massive demonstrations and riots yet took place in January 2017 and August 2018. Figures compiled by *Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRAI)* paradoxically show a decrease in the number of arrests, which means that it is the severity of convictions that has increased (*HRANA*). According to *Radio Farda*, in the first weeks of September, the judiciary handed down unusually harsh sentences – even for Iran – against trade union or human rights activists. Esmail Bakhshi, from the *Haft Tappeh* sugar factory, was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment and 74 lashes, and Sepideh Qolian, a civil rights activist, to over 19 years' imprisonment. Others were given eighteen years simply for protesting against unpaid wages or supporting those who were demonstrating... Why such severity? For *Radio Farda*, Ebrahim Raissi shows his strength to establish himself as the leader of the conservative camp.

The authorities also seem to have wanted to set an example by cracking down particularly hard on workers at the *Haft Tappeh* sugar factory, more than 500 of whom went on strike in the summer of 2018 to protest against its privatisation for the benefit of the *Pasdaran* body. Privatisation is often used in

Iran to ensure income for the regime's supporters, in a system of widespread patronage and corruption. The workers of the factory had stopped working on the one hand in protest for unpaid wages since 2017, and also to support their current leaders, dismissed by the authorities. The regime is clearly concerned about the risk of generalization of the challenge to the economic system. On the 9th, several independent journalists and workers' rights activists were sentenced to heavy prison terms of up to 18 years. These convictions are still linked to the strike at the *Haft Tappeh* sugar factory. They specifically target activists who, incarcerated by the *Etelaat* (intelligence service), have suffered acts of torture during their detention, and who, once released on parole, have dared to publicly denounce them. The journalists convicted at the same time were those who had covered the case and disseminated the information through the *Telegram* application... (*HRANA*)

In the Kurdish provinces of the country, tension was manifested earlier this month by a series of armed clashes between Iranian repressive forces and various Kurdish groups, resulting in at least two deaths and several injuries. On the 7th, a *Pasdar* (Revolutionary Guard) was killed and another wounded near Mariwan during an attempt to intercept a Kurdish group that had just crossed the border. The day before, another *Pasdar* had been killed near Saravband (Kurdistan province). Another incident occurred near Oshnavieh. These incidents, which have not been claimed, are sometimes due to civilians rebelling against the abuses of the repressive forces. The *Hengaw* association also reported fighting between the military

and Kurdish workers in Sardasht (Western Azerbaijan). Perhaps as a result of these difficulties, new appointments have taken place within the *Pasdaran* units stationed in Iranian Kurdistan. The new deputy commander, Gholamhossein Gheybparvar, is known for his radical positions both in the face of domestic opposition and in foreign policy. In addition, the number of small motorcycle units specializing in the suppression of demonstrations, first created in Tehran during the 2009 unrest, has since increased and they could be deployed in the provinces. All these elements indicate that the regime is worried and wants to step up the level of repression, the only response it knows.

The report on human rights violations in Iran for the month of August published by the *Iran Human Rights Monitor*

(<https://iran-hrm.com/index.php/2019/09/07/iran-human-rights-monitor-monthly-report-august-2019/>) is already frightening, however. At least 41 people were executed, including two in public. In reality, the number is probably higher, as executions often remain secret in Iran. Among the victims were political prisoners Abdullah Karmollah Chab, Ghassem Abdullah and Hamidreza Derakhshandeh. The torture of prisoners also continued, with several reports of beatings and floggings. Thus, Sufi prisoner of conscience Elham Ahmadi received 74 lashes before his release. Other prisoners, who are sick, are getting worse because they are denied care. According to the KMMK, since early 2019, the Iranian regime has imprisoned about 275 Kurds, mostly activists, in Iran's Kurdistan.

The pace and number of arrests

and convictions were equally frightening in September. Earlier this month, *Etelaat* arrested in Sanandaj the Kurdish activist Soran Azizi for "cooperation with a Kurdish opposition party" and the labour activist Aram Zindi, who had tried to defend the rights of workers previously arrested. At the end of August, two other Kurdish activists, Karo Kawa and Sina Jasat, had already been arrested in Marivan. In Oshnavieh, it was a Kurdish student, Mohammed Iqbal, who was arrested without a warrant by *Etelaat*. It was not until September 4 that it became known that on the morning of August 28, at least eight prisoners sentenced to death for murder or drug trafficking had been hanged in Karaj. Iran is the world's country with the most capital executions in proportion to its population, and the country also executes minors or people who were minors at the time of their crime (six in 2018). *Etelaat* also arrested four Kurdish activists in Urmia, including three members of the same family, Farhad, Safar and Parwez Noori, accusing them of "aiding an opposition Kurdish party", and held them incommunicado without trial. At the end of the month, their situation remained unknown (*WKI*). In Saqqez, security forces arrested Kurdish labour activist Kamaran Sakhtumangar during a raid on his home and confiscated his personal belongings. In Kamyaran, *Etelaat* arrested a 28-year-old Kurdish man, Aram Zafar, without making known what he was accused of (*WKI*). The same week, the revolutionary courts sentenced four Kurdish activists to prison terms. In Oshnavieh, Gafour Barham received eleven years, for "breach of national security" among others things; in Sanandaj, Wali Nasri received six years for "cooperation with a

Kurdish party against the Islamic Republic"; in Urmia, a resident of Mako received one year for "assistance to Kurdish parties", while the activist Eran Rahibikar received three years for "breach of national security".

The week of the 8th, arrests and convictions continued. In Sanandaj, Kurdish labour activist Nabzan Kianpour was arrested, and another Kurd named Afshar Fathi was sentenced to six years in prison for "belonging to a Kurdish opposition party". In Divandara, *Eteleat* detained a local council member, Amir Khani, and two residents of Bokan and Urmia, Naser Khadami and Naser Mohammed, were imprisoned and charged with "membership of an organization opposed to the state". In Sanandaj, the trial of Zara Mohammedi, who has been imprisoned for months for teaching Kurdish language, has begun. She is accused of belonging to a Kurdish political party, despite the fact that the cultural association that employs her denies the accusation. In Ilam, it was the Kurdish writer and poet Ali Mohammed Mohammadi who was sentenced to four years

in prison for "disrespecting imams" (*WKI*).

The regime also continued its repression of environmental activists. In Paweh, one of them, Irfan Rashidi, was sentenced to one year in prison and banned from activism for two years. In late September, activist Sirwan Rahimi was arrested in Dehgolan, and eight people were arrested in Sanandaj for posting messages on social networks and thus provoking a "national security breach". Also in Sanandaj, the head of the taxi union, Ibrahim Piri, was arrested for trying to organise a taxi strike in response to poor working conditions.

Iran also continues to detain several foreigners. These arbitrary imprisonments, most often targeting dual-nationality people, give the power a means of pressure as relations with Western countries continue to deteriorate. For example, on the 11th, the Australian government reported that three of its nationals had been arrested in Iran (*Le Monde*). It was reported that Australian academic Kylie Moore-Gilbert, who had been

detained for almost a year, had been kept in solitary confinement for months without any charges being revealed. Two other Australian nationals, travellers Jolie King and Mark Firkin, have been in Evin prison since July... Another academic, Chinese-American Xiyue Wang, a doctoral student in history at Princeton, is serving a 10-year prison sentence in Evin after being convicted of espionage in 2017 (*HRANA*). According to CHRI, at least 15 foreigners are currently detained in Iran. Moreover, the Iranian judiciary does not hesitate to attack the families of Iranian nationals living abroad if they are too critical. An example is Masih Alinejad, an Iranian woman living in New York. After she launched an Internet campaign from Brooklyn against mandatory veiling, her brother Ali Alinejad was arrested on 24 September. These intimidation practices have existed for a long time, and may also target Iranian journalists working for foreign media: in October 2017, the BBC had asked the UN to investigate Iran's freezing of the assets of 152 of its Iranian employees or former employees, in Iran and abroad (*HRANA*).

Syrie : 40 chefs djihadistes tués lors de frappes américaines dans la province d'Idleb

Moscou a alors accusé Washington de compromettre le cessez-le-feu négocié avec la Turquie.

Les Etats-Unis ont mené samedi une frappe en Syrie contre des chefs djihadistes près de la ville d'Idleb, dans le nord-ouest du pays en guerre, tuant au moins 40 d'entre eux, selon une ONG. La province d'Idleb faisait l'objet d'une trêve concernant uniquement l'armée syrienne et entrée en vigueur en matinée, mais celle-ci n'a pas duré puisqu'un civil a été tué lors de tirs du régime, d'après l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH).

Parallèlement, le Pentagone a indiqué dans un bref communiqué qu'une frappe américaine avait visé au nord d'Idleb "des leaders d'AQ-S responsables d'attaques menaçant des citoyens américains, nos partenaires, ainsi que des civils innocents", sans donner de précisions sur la façon dont l'opération avait été menée.

LIRE AUSSI >> Syrie : pourquoi Idleb est-elle pilonnée dans l'indifférence ?

Ce bilan est l'un des plus meurtriers infligés aux djihadistes dans une seule attaque en Syrie. Les groupes visés sont des alliés de Hayat Tahrir al-Cham (HTS), l'ex-branche syrienne d'Al-Qaïda, qui domine la province d'Idleb. Toutes ces factions ont déjà été la cible de raids aériens du régime syrien, de son allié russe, mais aussi de la coalition internationale antidjihadiste dirigée par les États-Unis, et des États-Unis eux-mêmes.

Pour Moscou, Washington compromet la trêve

Selon l'armée russe, les États-Unis ont frappé la région "sans en notifier à l'avance la Russie et la Turquie", qui disposent toutes deux de troupes au sol. Elle a qualifié la frappe d'"utilisation aveugle de l'aviation" militaire. "Dans les zones touchées par la frappe américaine, les pertes et les destructions sont nombreuses", a poursuivi le ministère russe de la Défense dans un communiqué, accusant Washington d'avoir "compromis le maintien du cessez-le-feu dans la zone de désescalade d'Idleb".

Toutefois, selon l'OSDH, la trêve avait déjà été rompue par des tirs du régime qui ont



De la fumée s'échappe du village de Maar Hattat dans la province d'Idleb en Syrie, après un bombardement, le 20 août 2019 (Photo d'illustration). [afp.com/Omar HAJ KADOUR](http://afp.com/Omar_HAJ_KADOUR)

tué un civil. Les tirs ont eu lieu sur la ville de Kafranbel, au sud de la ville d'Idleb, a précisé Rami Abdel Rahmane, le directeur de l'ONG.

LIRE AUSSI >> Michel Duclos : "Le conflit syrien a déclenché un cercle vicieux"

L'OSDH a aussi rapporté que deux membres des forces du régime ont été tués près de la frontière entre la province d'Idleb et celle de Hama, lorsque des combattants rebelles et djihadistes ont pris pour cible leur voiture. Et un drone russe a été abattu par les djihadistes de HTS, a ajouté l'OSDH.

La trêve avait débuté samedi matin après avoir été annoncée vendredi après quatre mois de bombardements dévastateurs par la Russie, alliée du président syrien Bachar al-Assad.

Elle était "temporaire", a affirmé samedi Bouthaina Chaabane, conseillère du président syrien lors d'un entretien avec la télévision Al-Mayadeen basée à Beyrouth. "La

trêve sert la grande stratégie de libération de chaque centimètre du territoire syrien", a-t-elle ajouté. Une précédente trêve décrétee début août dans cette même région avait volé en éclats au bout de quelques jours.

Les frappes américaines restent occasionnelles

Le 30 juin, les États-Unis avaient mené une frappe "contre la direction d'Al-Qaïda en Syrie dans une structure d'entraînement" dans la province d'Alep, voisine de celle d'Idleb. L'OSDH a alors affirmé que la frappe avait fait huit morts, dont six commandants du groupe Hourras al-Din.

En 2014, Washington a mis sur pied une coalition internationale pour lutter contre le groupe djihadiste État islamique (EI), dont le dernier réduit a été repris en mars dernier en Syrie avec l'aide de forces kurdes. Mais des soldats américains sont toujours en Syrie. Les frappes américaines contre les djihadistes avaient considérablement diminué depuis 2017.

Turkey: Court orders pro-Kurdish leader Demirtas released

A court in Ankara has ordered the conditional release of a top pro-Kurdish politician. However, Selahattin Demirtas will likely remain in jail after being convicted of spreading "terrorist propaganda."

A court in Turkey ruled on Monday that top pro-Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtas should be released from jail on terrorism-related charges. However, he will remain in prison, his lawyers said, because he is also serving a sentence for a separate crime.

Demirtas has been in pre-trial detention since November 2016, one of many opposition lawmakers, activists, academics and journalists who were arrested in the wake of a failed coup in July of that year.

The Ankara court "ruled unanimously" that the **Kurdish Peoples' Party (HDP)** co-chair "should be released immediately," since his defense had been completed. However, he will remain behind bars because he must also serve a four-year and eight month sentence for "terrorist propaganda."

Demirtas could face 142 years in prison if found guilty in the main trial, for which he had been in detention for nearly three years.



Pro-Kurdish leader Demirtas released. © Reuters / U. Bektas

Seen as major rival to Erdogan

In July, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that Demirtas' conviction on spreading terrorist propaganda should be vacated. The ECHR found that Demirtas had been calling for a peaceful solution to Turkey's "Kurdish problem," saying that his statements "could not be regarded as amounting to incitement to engage in violence, armed resistance or rebellion."

Ankara has long accused the HDP of having ties to the outlawed Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), which is listed as a terrorist group by Turkey and several of its major allies.

A charismatic politician sometimes called the Kurdish Obama, he was considered a major rival to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. In last year's presidential election, he came in third while running from his prison cell.

es/msh (AFP, dpa)

Turquie: un tribunal ordonne la libération de Selahattin Demirtas

Un tribunal turc a ordonné ce lundi la remise en liberté provisoire du leader kurde Selahattin Demirtas dans le cadre de son principal procès, mais celui-ci devrait rester en prison car il purge une peine pour une précédente condamnation, a indiqué à l'AFP l'un de ses avocats.

Le tribunal de Sincan, près d'Ankara, a ordonné lors d'une audience à laquelle ni Selahattin Demirtas, ni ses avocats ne participaient, la libération du leader politique kurde, accusé de diriger une «organisation terroriste», de «propagande terroriste» et d'«incitation à commettre des crimes». Il a été placé en détention provisoire dans le cadre de ce procès en novembre 2016 et risque jusqu'à 142 ans de prison s'il est reconnu coupable. Il n'était toutefois

«pas clair dans l'immédiat» quand Selahattin Demirtas serait libéré de la prison d'Edirne (nord-ouest), a précisé son avocat, Ramazan Demir. En effet, il a déjà été condamné en appel le 4 décembre 2018 à une peine de quatre ans et huit mois pour «propagande terroriste».

En revanche, il est possible pour Selahattin Demirtas, ancien co-président du Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP), dont il reste l'une des figures de proue, de faire une demande de remise en liberté conditionnelle dans le cadre de cette condamnation. «Nous nous entretiendrons avec lui aujourd'hui et agirons en fonction de cela», a précisé Me Ramazan Demir. Ses avocats avaient refusé lundi de participer à l'audience, déclarant vouloir attendre celle, le 18 septembre, de la

Grande Chambre de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (CEDH) portant sur la détention provisoire de leur client dans le cadre de ce procès.

Le 20 novembre dernier, la CEDH avait sommé la Turquie de mettre fin «dans les plus brefs délais» à la détention provisoire de Selahattin Demirtas, sans succès jusqu'à présent. Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui accuse régulièrement le HDP d'être la vitrine politique du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), classé «terroriste» par Ankara et ses alliés occidentaux, avait rapidement balayé la décision de la CEDH, assurant qu'elle n'était pas contraignante pour Ankara. Le procès de Selahattin Demirtas a été renvoyé au 7 janvier.

Le parti d'Erdogan va expulser l'ex-Premier ministre Davutoglu

Le comité exécutif du parti du président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan (AKP, au pouvoir) a décidé lundi à l'unanimité de renvoyer l'ancien Premier ministre Ahmet Davutoglu devant une commission disciplinaire en vue de son expulsion, ont rapporté plusieurs médias.

Cette décision a été prise à l'issue d'une réunion de cinq heures du comité exécutif central du Parti de la Justice et du Développement (AKP), présidée par M. Erdogan, a notamment indiqué le quotidien progouvernemental Hürriyet sur son site internet.

Figure importante du parti islamo-conservateur, Ahmet Davutoglu, qui avait aussi été ministre des Affaires étrangères, avait quitté son poste de

Premier ministre en 2016 au bout de deux ans. Il avait juré de ne jamais critiquer M. Erdogan en public, mais il a récemment montré qu'il n'entendait plus passer sous silence ce qu'il considère comme des dysfonctionnements au sein du parti. Il a notamment accusé l'AKP d'avoir dévié de ses objectifs, critiquant son parti pour avoir exigé un nouveau scrutin à Istanbul après avoir perdu de justesse la ville en mars au profit de l'opposition. Lors d'une nouvelle élection en juin, le candidat de M. Erdogan avait subi une lourde défaite.

Il a aussi dénoncé la destitution le 19 août de trois maires de villes de l'est de la Turquie - Diyarbakir, Mardin et Van, tous trois membres du parti prokurde HDP (Parti démocratique des peuples) et accusés d'entretenir des liens avec des militants kurdes.

Cette décision intervient alors que des personnalités de premier plan comme l'ancien président Abdullah Gül et l'ex-vice Premier ministre Ali Babacan, tous deux membres fondateurs de l'AKP, ont pris leurs distances avec M. Erdogan. Ancien vice-Premier ministre chargé de superviser l'économie turque, Ali Babacan a annoncé le 8 juillet sa démission du parti évoquant de « profondes divergences » et le besoin d'une « nouvelle vision ».

Selon la presse turque, M. Babacan, également ancien ministre de l'Economie et chef de la diplomatie, puis vice-Premier ministre jusqu'en 2015, se prépare à constituer à l'automne son propre parti avec Abdullah Gül.

Le Monde 02/09/2019

L'ONU dénonce le transfert de familles irakiennes vers l'ancien territoire de l'Etat islamique

D'après les Nations unies, ces transferts se font « sans organisation » alors que les familles concernées, soupçonnées d'avoir aidé l'Etat islamique, risquent des représailles.

Le Monde avec AFP

L'organisation Amnesty International avait déjà demandé aux autorités irakiennes de cesser ces retours « prématurés ». Lundi 2 septembre, l'ONU a dénoncé à son tour les conditions dans lesquelles Bagdad a transféré 1 600 déplacés en Irak. Les autorités cherchent à fermer au plus vite les camps, au grand dam des défenseurs des droits humains, qui estiment que leur renvoi les met en danger.

« Le manque d'organisation et de communication avec les communautés concernées et les partenaires humanitaires est inquiétant », estime dans un communiqué la coordinatrice



Des Irakiens du camp de Hammam Al-Alil sont renvoyés dans la province de Kirkuk le 27 août. ZAID AL-OBEIDI / AFP

des actions humanitaires de l'ONU en Irak, Marta Ruedas. Depuis une dizaine de jours, Bagdad a commencé le transfert d'« environ 300 familles », depuis différentes provinces d'Irak vers leur région d'origine, Ninive, dans le nord-ouest, où se trouve Mossoul, l'ancienne « capitale » autoproclamée du groupe Etat islamique (EI) en Irak.

Potentiels cibles de vengeance

Pour les défenseurs des droits humains, ces familles, accusées pour beaucoup d'entre elles par leur communauté d'origine d'avoir soutenu ou rejoint l'EI, risquent d'être vic-

times de vengeance. Leurs transferts « se sont souvent faits à la dernière minute et visiblement sans organisation », alors que certains « auraient reçu des appels téléphoniques menaçants d'habitants de leur région d'origine les mettant en garde contre leur retour », affirme l'ONU.

« Malgré ces faits inquiétants », des agents des forces de l'ordre leur « ont confisqué leurs papiers d'identité et leur ont dit qu'ils ne leur seraient rendus qu'une fois à bord des convois », poursuit l'ONU. Ces familles, soupçonnées pour beaucoup d'être des proches de djihadistes, vivent déjà sous la menace de représailles dans les camps, rappelle l'ONU. Dimanche, « trois grenades ont été lancées depuis l'extérieur sur le camp de Bassatine », au nord de Bagdad.

En outre, leurs enfants n'ont pour la plupart pas pu être enregistrés auprès de l'état civil et ne peuvent être scolarisés ou avoir accès aux soins. Mercredi, les forces de sécurité irakiennes ont escorté des femmes et des enfants déplacés vers une dizaine de bus pour quitter le camp de Hammam Al-Alil. Deux ans après que Bagdad a proclamé la victoire sur l'EI, l'Irak compte toujours plus de 1,6 million de déplacés.

Forty-three ethnic Kurds arrested in Iran in August: Hengaw

SULAIMANI — Forty-three ethnic Kurds were arrested by the Iranian security forces in August, according to a report by the Hengaw Organization released on Sunday (September 1).

Hengaw, which reports on human rights in Iranian Kurdistan, announced that 39 people were arrested for political activity. Additional arrests were made for civil advocacy, labor advocacy, and religious activities.

One Kolbar (porter) was arrested.

Among the detainees were two students, a teacher, and a child.

Fifty-five percent were arrested in Kurdistan province and 34 percent in West Azerbaijan province. Arrests were also made in Kermanshah, Ilam, and North Khorasan provinces.

In the first half of 2019, the Iranian security and intelligence [arrested a total of 231 people](#), according to Hengaw.

(NRT Digital Media)



Members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards march during a military parade to commemorate the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war in Tehran September 22, 2007. REUTERS/Morteza Nikoubazi/File Photo

Pro-Kurdish opposition discusses govt-appointed mayors with business association

The pro-Kurdish opposition Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) has met with Turkey's largest business association on Tuesday to discuss the government's suspension of mayors in three Kurdish-majority provinces, reported [Turkish news website Duvar](#).

Delegations led by Co-chair Sezai Temelli of the HDP and President Simone Kaslowski of the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD) met at TÜSİAD's headquarters as part of the party's efforts for a democratic constitution and legal reform in Turkey.

After the meeting, the [HDP announced](#) that they discussed the trustee appointments to HDP's municipalities and Turkey's economic issues. The party delegation also submitted to the TÜSİAD representatives documents outlining its stance on a democratic constitution



for Turkey, legal reform in the country and an alliance of democracy. "We exchanged views on issues and efforts on the economic and political agenda in our meeting," Duvar quoted a TÜSİAD statement as saying.

Turkey's interior ministry had removed the HDP mayors of Van, Mardin and Diyarbakır, three provinces in the country's predominantly Kurdish south-east, after accusing them of links to outlawed Kurdish militant groups.

Putin Plays Erdogan Like a Fiddle

In the increasingly close relationship between the Russian and Turkish presidents, there's one clear alpha.

In a [recent article](#) in *Foreign Policy*, my colleague Steven A. Cook argued that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was playing Washington like a fiddle. With a combination of bluffs, threats, and bluster, Erdogan managed to convince the United States to come up with an arrangement in northeastern Syria to prevent a Turkish invasion—an arrangement that comes at the expense of the Kurds, who have carried the brunt of the fighting against the Islamic State. Whatever one thinks of the Kurds, their determination and sacrifice should be treated as an international public good; they have stopped and destroyed one of the most dangerous and homicidal groups the modern world has known. The Turks by contrast have contributed nothing to this endeavor.

If Erdogan has succeeded in manipulating Washington, however, Russian President Vladimir Putin, in turn, has played him to the hilt. Erdogan has just completed a visit to Moscow, where a savvy Putin demonstrated to the much-impressed Turkish strongman the latest in Russian military hardware, including the SU-35 and the SU-57 air fighters, of which the latter is heralded as Russia's answer to the next-generation U.S.-NATO F-35 aircraft.

Erdogan's Moscow visit follows the delivery of Russian S-400 air defense batteries to Turkey. Ankara was repeatedly warned that these batteries would provide the Russians an opportunity to decipher the F-35's stealth technology, thus jeopardizing the security of the whole F-35 fighter aircraft program. Paradoxically, Turkey was not just a future recipient of 100-plus F-35s, but also a co-producer of the aircraft. Washington, in what was an important gesture, had offered the Turks a role in the manufacturing of many of the F-35's components, including parts of the fuselage. Ankara would have reaped billions of dollars in export sales and acquired valuable technological know-how in the armaments industry, a long-sought goal.

Not surprisingly, Turkey's insistence on acquiring the S-400s triggered a crisis in U.S.-Turkish relations. The United States had few options but to expel Turkey from the F-35 program. The cost to Turkey has been enormous: It will not be able to modernize its aging fighter fleet, but perhaps more importantly, it lost out on technology transfer and the opportunity to earn billions of dollars in export opportunities. Instead it is Putin who is pocketing billions of dollars while successfully lobbying a hand grenade into the relationship between two critical and long-standing NATO allies.

Erdogan may have believed that U.S. President Donald Trump would ride to his rescue or that the Americans would not carry through with their

threats. Still, this was an extraordinary decision, because in cozying up to Putin he wagered the future of his defense industries and Washington's goodwill. He is now reduced to hinting, under Putin's approving gaze, that Turkey would consider purchasing Russian fighters, thus further deepening the rift with the United States.

While Erdogan has shown his willingness to damage or jettison Turkey's most important relationship for Putin, the fact remains that the two leaders are completely at odds over Syria. Russia, together with Iran, saved Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's odious regime, whereas from the onset of the rebellion the Turks supported the opposition to Assad, including its determined jihadi components. The agreement Turkey negotiated with the Russians over the future of the last remaining opposition stronghold, in Idlib province, is coming apart as the Syrian regime begins a determined push to recuperate the area, exposing not just the civilian population to harm but also the numerous Turkish military observation posts established to monitor the area.

Ankara should not have been surprised that once the Assad regime consolidated its writ everywhere else, he would focus on Idlib. Only last month a Turkish military convoy in the area came under fire, [most likely from Russian-made aircraft](#) flown by the Syrian government with Putin's blessing. An accompanying van lodged in between Turkish armored vehicles was hit, killing its occupants, halting the Turkish advance and isolating one of the Turkish observation posts. Yet, there was only mild criticism of Russian actions by the Turkish government.

This is not the first time the Erdogan and Putin crossed swords; in 2015, Turkey shot down a Russian fighter that had strayed into its territory. Neither Erdogan nor then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu could stop gloating and competing to claim credit for the shutdown. They promised they



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan shakes hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin during a joint news conference following their talks on the sidelines of the MAKS 2019 International Aviation and Space Salon in Zhukovsky, outside Moscow on Aug. 27. MAXIM SHIPENKOV/AFP/Getty Images

would do it again. Putin's reaction was stern: He banned the importation of fresh produce from Turkey, reduced the number of Russian tourists visiting Turkey and put restrictions on Turks traveling to Russia and doing business there. Within a few months Erdogan and company not only reversed course, but, incredibly, they blamed the shutdown on pilots whose allegiance was not to Turkey but to Erdogan's nefarious enemy, the Gulen movement. Turkey was subsequently forced to apologize to Russia.

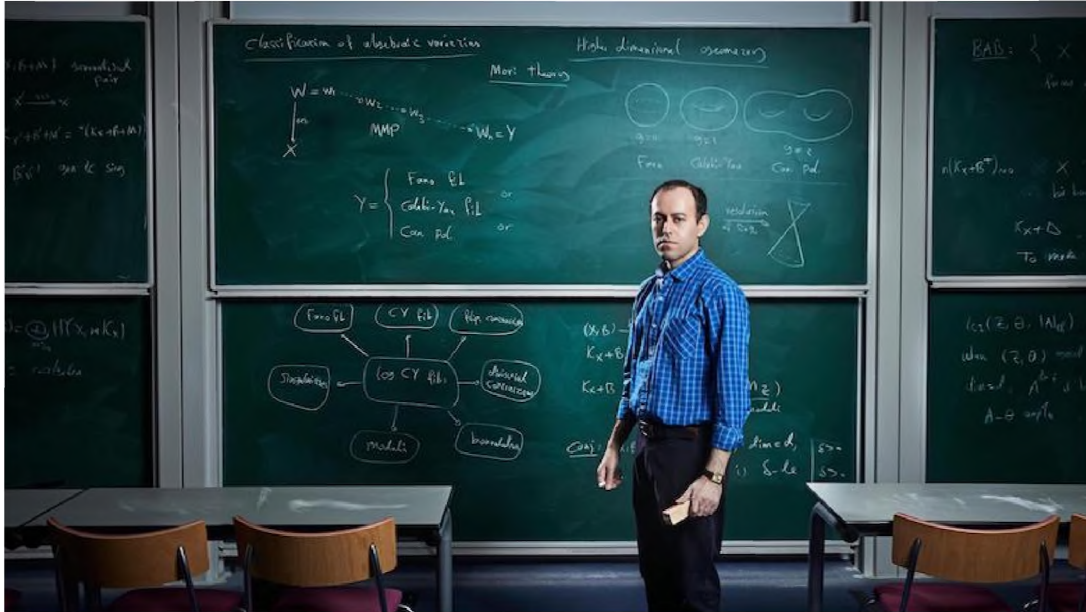
Turkey had hoped that Idlib province would remain a separate enclave buffering Turkey from another exodus of Syrian refugees until the Syrian conflict was resolved. All signs indicate that the Syrian military advance against Turkey's allies and their jihadi collaborators will be picking up steam. Almost immediately after Erdogan landed back in Ankara, while being feted by his sycophantic press over his "great accomplishments" in Moscow, the Syrian bombing runs against Idlib resumed. Putin clearly knows how to play and manipulate the Turkish president; he gave him a red-carpet treatment and got Erdogan to admire his military hardware only to squeeze him again in Syria.

Putin has Erdogan exactly where he wants him. He knows that Erdogan will not dare to criticize him and, having alienated many in Washington, Erdogan's options are limited. Instead, Erdogan and his minions in the government and his press will continue to denounce the United States as Turkey's primary enemy. Erdogan may play Washington, but it is Putin who is laughing all the way to the bank.



September 03-2019
Editing by Nadia Riva

Famed Kurdish mathematician tops world thinkers list



Caucher Birkar at Cambridge University. (Photo: Jude Edginton)

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Caucher Birkar, a 41-year old Kurd who rose to fame for winning the prestigious Fields Medal in 2018, has now gone on to top Prospect Magazine’s 50 world thinkers list this Tuesday, with more than half of the total vote.

Birkar was announced the winner in a special supplement containing extended profiles of the top ten on the list.

According to the publication, Birkar won by a landslide, getting more than half the total vote.

“Judging by the comments we received from his fans—many in Kurdish—it seems likely he tapped into support from that part of the world. No one ever said online polls were as rigorous as maths,” the magazine said.

Prospect’s Tom Clark wrote in an interview with Birkar that “the runaway winner was a thinker of a different sort”.

“It’s hugely satisfying to see work of pure thought honoured in this way—and doubly so because this is a Fields Medal winner with quite a backstory,” he said.

Birkar is a Kurd from Iran, Clark pointed out, “one of four states that plays home to the stateless Kurdish people, and one where the traditional answer to their national aspirations has been an iron fist.”

Birkar was born in Mariwan in Iranian Kurdistan (Rojhilat) in 1978. The mathematician sought asylum in the United Kingdom in 2000 and went on to become a professor at Cambridge University.

In 2018, Birkar was awarded the prestigious Fields Medal, also known as the Nobel Prize for Mathematics. The prize is presented every four years to candidates under 40 years old who are recognized for their significant contributions in the field of mathematics.

Earlier this year, Birkar was presented an honorary doctorate from Erbil’s Salahaddin University. He also received the People’s Award at a ceremony in London in June 2019.

Birkar told Prospect Magazine that “mathematics is part science, part art,” and often goes hand-in-hand with other interests.

He said that in his own case, these include “psychology, human history, natural history and music.” Birkar revealed he often does his “brain-stretching work while listening to western classical or Kurdish music.”

Birkar also said that some still think of an intellectual as “someone working in literature,” and “struggle to digest the idea that a mathematician can be a top thinker.”

In Kurdish, however, it transpires that “Birkar” doesn’t just mean “mathematician”—it also means “thinker.”

L'Iran se dit opposé « par principe » aux rencontres bilatérales avec les États-Unis

Le président iranien Hassan Rohani a exclu le 3 septembre l'idée de « discussions bilatérales » avec les États-Unis. Il a par ailleurs menacé de réduire ses engagements en matière nucléaire si les négociations n'aboutissaient à aucun résultat d'« ici à jeudi ».



Hassan Rohani a été réélu en 2017 avec la volonté de sortir son pays des sanctions économiques internationales. Abedin Taherkenareh/EPA

Quelques jours après les déclarations de Donald Trump et d'Emmanuel Macron lors du G7, le président iranien Hassan Rohani a durci le ton. Mardi 3 septembre, lors d'un discours au Parlement iranien, il a exclu l'idée de « discussions bilatérales » avec les États-Unis, affirmant que son pays y était opposé « par principe ». Il a estimé qu'il y avait « peut-être (...) eu un malentendu » sur la possibilité d'établir des négociations directes avec Washington.

« Nous l'avons dit plusieurs fois et nous le répétons : aucune décision [n'a été prise] de tenir des négociations bilatérales avec les États-Unis », a déclaré le président en exercice, selon le texte de son discours au Parlement publié par le gouvernement iranien. Il a ensuite enfoncé le clou en affirmant que « par principe, nous ne voulons pas de né-

gociations bilatérales avec les États-Unis ».

La pression sur les Européens

Lors de son allocution, Hassan Rohani a aussi mis la pression sur les trois pays européens (France, Allemagne et Royaume-Uni) avec qui il négocie actuellement. Il a déclaré que la République islamique d'Iran pourrait réduire encore davantage ses engagements en matière nucléaire « dans les prochains jours » si « d'ici à jeudi », les négociations sur le sujet « n'aboutissent à aucun résultat ».

En mai 2019, un an après le retrait des États-Unis, Téhéran a commencé à se désengager de certains de ses engagements en vue de forcer les autres parties à l'aider à contourner les sanctions américaines.

Des négociations multilatérales

Hassan Rohani, réélu en 2017, n'a pourtant pas fermé la porte à de nouvelles négociations avec les États-Unis mais dans le cadre d'un format « 5+1 ». Un cadre qui implique dans les pourparlers les cinq membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU (Chine, Grande-Bretagne, États-Unis, France et Russie) plus l'Allemagne, soit les six pays qui avaient négocié cet accord.

Il a néanmoins indiqué que des discussions avec Washington pourraient avoir lieu dans le cadre du format « 5+1 » si les États-Unis lèvent les sanctions qu'ils ont réimposées contre Téhéran après être sortis unilatéralement en mai 2018 de l'accord international sur le nucléaire iranien conclu à Vienne en 2015.

La France accélère sa médiation sur le nucléaire iranien

Alors qu'une délégation iranienne est à Paris, Emmanuel Macron négocie l'octroi d'une ligne de crédit de 15 milliards de dollars à Téhéran.

La médiation française entre Téhéran et Washington sur le dossier du nucléaire iranien se précise. Une délégation iranienne, composée en bonne part de hauts fonctionnaires de la banque centrale et des ministères économiques, et dirigée par le vice-ministre des affaires étrangères, Abbas Araghchi, est arrivée, lundi 2 septembre, à Paris – deux jours après un long entretien téléphonique entre Emmanuel Macron et son homologue iranien, Hassan Rohani.

Les discussions des prochains jours devraient porter notamment sur les moyens de suppléer aux effets des sanctions américaines, encore durcies en mai avec la suppression des exemptions dont bénéficiaient depuis un an les huit principaux acheteurs de pétrole brut iranien (dont la Chine, l'Inde et le Japon).

« C'est très fragile et il est encore bien trop tôt pour dire que cela marchera, mais notre médiation active commence à prendre forme », relève une source proche du dossier. A Paris, on souligne que l'entretien téléphonique entre les deux présidents visait à vérifier qu'après le débat au G7 sur l'Iran « les paramètres de la négociation restaient valables et que le président Rohani était toujours disposé à négocier ».

Mardi, ce dernier a toutefois fait monter les enchères, déclarant au Parlement exclure, « par principe », toute discussion bilatérale avec les Etats-Unis. De nouveau, le président iranien a laissé planer la menace d'une nouvelle réduction des engagements de la République islamique en matière nucléaire prévus par l'accord de Vienne de juillet 2015 (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA) entre les « 5 + 1 » (les cinq membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, plus l'Allemagne).

M. Rohani a aussi rappelé que ce durcissement pourrait intervenir d'ici à jeudi si les négociations en cours n'aboutissent pas. Leur enjeu, à Paris, est l'octroi d'une ligne de crédit de 15 milliards de dollars (13,6 milliards d'euros), en trois versements, dont les conditions sont encore floues, qui serait ouverte par les trois pays européens signataires de l'accord de Vienne.

Mettre la pression

L'Iran avait déjà commencé, le 8 mai – un an après le retrait américain –, un processus de désengagement, par étapes de soixante jours, de ses obliga-



Le président Hassan Rohani durant une session au Parlement, le 3 septembre, à Téhéran. OFFICIAL PRESIDENTIAL WEBSITE / VIA REUTERS

tions afin de pousser les signataires européens à tenir leurs promesses de compensation des sanctions américaines. En juillet, Téhéran avait repris l'enrichissement de l'uranium à 4,5 % juste au-delà du seuil maximum autorisé de 3,67 %. La prochaine échéance a été fixée au 6 septembre et Téhéran menace de porter à 20 % le processus d'enrichissement.

Les autorités iraniennes veulent mettre la pression alors que la diplomatie française tentait de créer les conditions pour une rencontre à New York fin septembre, en marge de l'assemblée générale des Nations unies, entre Donald Trump et Hassan Rohani. Paris souligne « l'importance de la dynamique en cours pour créer les conditions d'une désescalade par le dialogue ». Il y a deux ans, en septembre 2017, Emmanuel Macron, sur demande de Donald Trump, avait déjà tenté d'organiser une telle rencontre refusée alors par le président iranien.

En septembre 2018, Hassan Rohani était plutôt demandeur, mais ce fut au contraire le président américain qui refusa, estimant que la politique de « pression maximale » n'avait pas encore produit tous ses effets. Le président américain n'a pas écarté le principe d'une telle rencontre mais M. Rohani a jeté un froid en soulignant que Washington devait d'abord lever toutes les sanctions contre son pays.

« Le sommet du G7 a montré l'incontestable savoir-faire d'Emmanuel Macron dans le maniement des fortes personnalités dont, en premier lieu, Donald Trump, et cela a permis d'aller de l'avant dans cette médiation lancée depuis bientôt trois mois », relève Michel Duclos, ancien ambassadeur et conseiller

spécial à l'Institut Montaigne. Par deux fois, le chef de la cellule diplomatique, Emmanuel Bonne, s'est rendu à Téhéran, où il fut en poste au début des années 2000 quand les Européens lancèrent les premières discussions pour un accord sur le nucléaire avec Téhéran, avant d'être rejoints, dix ans plus tard, par l'administration Obama.

« De fortes résistances »

« Ces discussions sont très acrobatiques et il y a un réel risque d'échec, notamment en raison de fortes résistances au sein même de l'administration américaine, même si Donald Trump est prêt à une rencontre », analyse François Nicoulaud, ancien ambassadeur à Téhéran, relevant que « s'il y a aussi des résistances en Iran du côté des ultraconservateurs, celles-ci restent plus limitées en raison des bénéfices pour leur pays d'un éventuel accord ».

Au cours de la conversation téléphonique avec Emmanuel Macron, Hassan Rohani a rappelé que « l'application totale » de l'accord sur le nucléaire iranien et la « sécurité du transport maritime dans les voies navigables, y compris le golfe [arabo-persique] et le détroit d'Ormuz », étaient les deux objectifs de l'Iran dans les négociations actuelles.

A court terme, Téhéran espère des mesures d'allègement des sanctions comme le rétablissement des exemptions dont bénéficiaient les grands clients du brut iranien. « Depuis le G7, la partie américaine fait preuve d'une certaine souplesse dans l'attribution des licences », reconnaissait le vice-ministre des affaires étrangères, Abbas Araghchi, le 30 août, cité par l'agence officielle iranienne Irna.

Les autorités françaises espèrent pouvoir convaincre les Iraniens de revenir sur leurs accroc au JCPOA et en appliquer toutes les obligations. « Ce serait un signal fort qui crédibiliserait la médiation française, et cela créerait un contexte favorable pour la rencontre Trump-Rohani », note une source diplomatique française.

Si le processus s'enclenche, le plus dur restera à faire : négocier pour compléter l'accord de juillet 2015 dont plusieurs clauses arrivent à échéance en 2025. Il s'agira aussi de trouver un accord pour limiter le programme balistique iranien et de convaincre Téhéran de renoncer à sa politique de déstabilisation de la région, notamment en Irak, en Syrie, au Liban et au Yémen.

Turkish minister threatens Istanbul mayor over ousted Kurdish mayors

ANKARA (Reuters) - Turkey's interior minister on Tuesday threatened "to devastate" the mayor of Istanbul over his support for three Kurdish mayors who were replaced by state officials over alleged terror links less than five months after the trio were elected.

Last month, Turkey replaced pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) mayors in Diyarbakir, Van and Mardin with state officials, and detained more than 400 people over suspected militant links, in a move sharply criticized by the opposition.

Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu - who dealt President Tayyip Erdogan the biggest defeat of his career when he defeated the ruling AK Party (AKP) in June local elections - has slammed the move as illegal and undemocratic and called for it to be reversed.

At the weekend Imamoglu - of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), who was backed by HDP when he was elected in June - visited Kurdish town of Diyarbakir and met with two of the ousted mayors.

Erdogan and his government accuse the HDP of links to the PKK militant group that is designated a



Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu speaks during a news conference for foreign media correspondents in Istanbul, Turkey, August 21, 2019. Ahmet Bolat/Pool via REUTERS

terrorist group by Turkey, the European Union and the United States. The HDP denies such links.

Speaking in the northeastern province of Bursa on Tuesday, Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu said the dismissals of the three mayors, who were elected in late March, were in line with the law.

"Ignorant. Know your place and your limits," Soylu said of Imamoglu. "This country has been handling this terrorist organization for 40 years... If you meddle in things that are not your job, we will devastate you."

The minister added: "This is very clear... While there are people who have suffered from terror for years, such a support for men who mourn at terrorist funerals will hurt our hearts and those of our people."

The comments come a week after Imamoglu's announcement that the Istanbul municipality canceled the transfer of more than 350 million lira (\$61 million) to some pro-AKP foundations, in one of his first moves against Erdogan since being elected.

Erdogan has previously said that his government would also replace mayors in other parts of the country if they were found to be linked to militants. But Imamoglu has dismissed those comments as meaningless and saddening.

(\$1 = 5.7589 liras)

by Michael Rubin
September 03, 2019

 Washington Examiner

The emptiness of Turkey's complaints against Syrian Kurds

James Jeffrey, a former U.S. ambassador to Turkey, continues to seek to [appease](#) Turkish saber-rattling and appears ready to facilitate Turkish entrance into Kurdish-administered north-eastern Syria.

This would be a terrible idea for several reasons:

- The Kurdish zone in Syria is the [most stable and secure](#) region in the country.
- The Kurds almost single-handedly defeated al Qaeda and then the Islamic State at a time when both received support from the Turkish intelligence service [and members](#) of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's family, [if not Erdogan himself](#). Kurdish forces allied with the United States when Turkey sought to undermine the U.S. position.
- Turkish intelligence is [deeply flawed](#) and politicized.
- Turkey's previous incursion into northern Syria ended in [anti-Kurdish ethnic cleansing](#).

Before President Trump and Jeffrey make any more concessions to Erdoğan and his imperial ambitions, it might be useful for them to consider whether Turkey's stated grievances are real, or rather a tactic to extract concessions.

Turkish officials state repeatedly that Kurdish-controlled northern Syria poses a terror threat, and that the Kurdistan Workers Party uses the zone as a safe haven from which to stage attacks into Syria.

The Rojava Information Center, a Syrian Kurdish think tank, just [released a database](#) of all incidents, almost three dozen in all, across the Turkey-Syria border this year. They found that all but one of the attacks was staged from Turkey into Syria, rather than the other way around. These attacks included heavy weapons and rocket fire from Turkish positions into northeast Syria, killing 27, all of whom were civilian and one of whom was a child. In contrast, there was only one attack from northeast Syria into Turkey, with the perpetrator arrested by the Syrian Defense Forces, the Kurdish-dominated local militias.

Frankly, if Turkey's concern is the fight against terrorism, diplomats should base their policy on reality rather than what increasingly appears to be yet one more example of tendentious Turkish demands. If either Jeffrey or his Turkish interlocutors dispute the Rojava Information Center database, it's time they release their own record of Kurdish terrorism emanating from Syria. Their silence suggests, frankly, Turkish grievances are without merit and, therefore, U.S. efforts to appease Turkey at the expense of the Kurds to be both counterproductive and immoral. Rather than Kurdish terrorism, it is Turkey's proposed buffer zone, Turkey's revanchism, and its use of fake grievances to justify its imperialism that poses the greatest threat to the region.

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En Irak, dans tous les foyers, on attend un disparu.



Samia Khasro, une Kurde irakienne de 72 ans, montre à Bagdad des clichés des membres de sa famille disparus, le 28 août 2019 ((c) Afp)

Bagdad (AFP) - Sur la commode du salon, des clichés vieillis sont alignés: dessus, 26 membres de la famille Khasro, sourires figés et vêtements désuets, devant des bougies qui rappellent à leurs proches les disparus qui parsèment tous les arbres généalogiques d'Irak.

"Jusqu'à aujourd'hui, je passe ma vie à attendre. Le jour où on me montrera leurs restes, je pourrai enfin me dire qu'ils sont morts", affirme Samia Khasro, Kurde de 72 ans, qui reçoit l'AFP dans sa maison d'un quartier cossu de Bagdad.

En Irak, où les conflits se succèdent sans répit depuis 1980, les estimations officielles recensent jusqu'à 1,3 million de disparus. Autant de familles qui attendent des nouvelles d'un proche exécuté, mort en détention ou qui s'est tout simplement volatilisé un jour.

Rien que dans sa famille élargie, Mme Khasro en compte 100.

- Autorités dépassées -

Pour cette ancienne députée, qui a siégé au premier Parlement élu après le renversement du régime de Saddam Hussein lors de l'invasion américaine de 2003, le dictateur n'avait qu'une seule chose à leur reprocher: leur appartenance à la minorité faylie, des Kurdes chiites.

"Ce n'est pas moi qui ait dit à Dieu de me faire naître Kurde et chiite en Irak, alors pourquoi avons-nous été punis pour cela?", se lamente-t-elle. Son mari Saadouné, lui, est sans nouvelles de son frère depuis la fin des années 1980.

Le couple, vieillissant, s'inquiète de la transmission de la mémoire des disparus. "Nous allons mourir, mais nos descendants ressentiront-ils la même urgence?", s'interroge Mme Khasro.

La lenteur de la bureaucratie irakienne ne fait qu'aviver des plaies toujours béantes. Alors qu'un calme relatif est revenu, les familles de disparus espéraient enfin devenir la priorité des autorités. Las. Rien n'a été fait, selon Mme Khasro, qui assure que le budget alloué à l'Autorité pour les disparus est de "zéro dinar".

La tâche est pourtant titanesque. Encore aujourd'hui, des charniers sont régulièrement découverts. Certains renferment les dépouilles des victimes des jihadistes du groupe Etat islamique (EI), chassé de son territoire en Irak fin 2017.

D'autres contiennent les restes de victimes irakiennes ou étrangères des campagnes de Saddam Hussein. Actuellement, le Koweït voisin procède à l'identification de dépouilles retrouvées dans le sud, probablement un cinquantaine de ses ressortissants portés disparus après l'invasion de son territoire par l'Irak en 1990.

- "Une montre et une alliance" -

Pour le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge (CICR), le phénomène est tel que toutes les familles en Irak, sans exception, comptent un disparu ou connaissent quelqu'un qui a disparu.

"Ces familles méritent qu'on fasse plus d'efforts pour un jour peut-être refermer ce dossier, c'est

le message que nous envoyons aux autorités", explique à l'AFP Salma Awdah, porte-parole du CICR à Bagdad.

Ronak Mohammed a 63 ans, dont 37 passés à attendre son mari. Un jour, cet employé de la compagnie pétrolière nationale de Kirkouk est parti au travail, pour ne jamais revenir.

"Tout ce qui me reste de lui, c'est sa montre et son alliance", se lamente cette Irakienne, qui ressort volontiers les photos en noir et blanc de son mariage.

Depuis, elle a dû élever seule leurs trois enfants et composer chaque jour avec l'absence et les questions. Jusqu'ici, elle n'a jamais obtenu confirmation de la mort de son mari.

- Des photos et des rêves -

Mme Mohammed garde le maigre espoir de revoir son mari vivant. Et sa benjamine, elle, conserve un souvenir de plus en plus ténu de son père: elle était âgée de trois semaines ce jour funeste de 1982 où il a disparu.

"Elle ne connaît de son père que des photos et parfois elle rêve de lui", rapporte sa mère.

A quelques maisons de là, dans les quartiers des anciens prisonniers de guerre et des familles de disparus, où des proches ont été logés par les autorités après la chute de Saddam Hussein, Zineb Jassem ressasse souvenirs et questions.

En 2014, sa mère a été enlevée par l'EI. Elle allait livrer des vêtements dans une zone rurale et devait même en ramener de luxueux fruits et légumes. Mais le bus dans lequel elle était montée a été arrêté par des jihadistes.

"Ils nous ont même appelés pour nous demander si notre mère livrait des informations" sur l'EI aux forces de l'ordre, se rappelle cette Irakienne de 40 ans. "C'est comme ça qu'on a compris qu'elle avait été enlevée".

Au début, "on se disait, peut-être qu'elle reviendra demain", poursuit-elle. Cinq ans plus tard, elle n'est toujours pas là et sa fille a perdu le goût de tout.

Dans le petit atelier qu'elles avaient monté ensemble, tout est silencieux. Zined Jassem n'a plus jamais touché à la machine à coudre avec laquelle elles fabriquaient toutes les deux leurs vêtements colorés.

September 4, 2019

Iraq: Camps Expel Over 2,000 People Seen As ISIS-Linked

Some Forced Back to Home Regions Despite Safety Threats

Beirut – Local authorities have **forcibly expelled** more than 2,000 Iraqis from camps for displaced people in Nineveh governorate since August 23, 2019, Human Rights Watch said today.

Some were forced to return to their home regions, despite fears for their safety, including from former neighbors who perceive them as being linked to the Islamic State (ISIS). Some have come under attack since being forced home. Authorities in Nineveh have also blocked families who tried to leave the camps to avoid expulsion.

“Displaced people, like all other Iraqis, have the right to move freely in their country and decide where they feel safe to live,” said **Lama Fakih**, acting Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “Authorities can’t move people without first consulting them, especially not to places where they and their families face danger.”

Authorities in Salah al-Din have also announced plans to close camps for displaced people or are already forcing people to return to their governorates of origin.

In early July, the National Security Council, which coordinates Iraq’s national security, intelligence, and foreign policy strategy, passed “Resolution 16.” The resolution is not public, but officials have described its contents in letters to humanitarian organizations. It orders people from areas other than Nineveh – currently at least 38,040 people – to leave the Nineveh camps. It mandates security forces to develop a database of residents and **isolate families** who are perceived as ISIS-affiliated. The resolution also calls for increased security to keep people from entering or leaving camps without permission and assigning more police to the camps, to “control” people’s movement and to “assess and audit” the work of nongovernmental organizations who work in the camps.

In response, the authorities began **screenings** across the Nineveh camps. On August 21, Migration and Displacement Ministry officials informed aid workers at the two camps in Nineveh where screenings had been completed that they intended to expel everyone there from other governorates, starting with those from Anbar governorate, two aid workers said. Anbar is a former ISIS stronghold.

On August 23, security forces from the Nineveh Operations Command expelled 36 families from Anbar, most headed by women, totaling about 150 people, and transported them to their areas of origin in Anbar against their will and without letting them bring their belongings. They were told they were being taken to a camp in Anbar, three families told Human Rights Watch. The families called aid workers to express fears when they found they were actually being taken back home, and aid workers unsuccessfully tried to intervene.

An aid worker in Ramadi said that one of the fam-



Government buses waiting to move families from one camp in Anbar governorate to another during a previous wave of camp closures in December 2018. © 2018 Belkis Wille/Human Rights Watch

ilies fled to a camp for displaced people 25 kilometers away after local residents threatened to kill them because of their perceived ISIS affiliation. Since August 25, 16 families who security forces had taken back to the Haditha area have been living in a public school encircled by police about three kilometers away because they feel unsafe, two told Human Rights Watch. They said that on August 28, someone threw a hand grenade at the school. No one inside was injured.

Two aid workers said that elsewhere in Anbar, local security forces said they denied at least six families entry to their areas of origin because of perceived ISIS affiliation. They said several more families have contacted aid groups asking for help to relocate to nearby camps because they feel unsafe.

Camp management did not have time to issue the deported Anbar families departure letters to help them pass through checkpoints, obtain security clearances in areas they returned to, and to apply for funds available for people returning.

After the expulsions, other families who are not from Nineveh started leaving the camps to avoid expulsion but on August 25, the Iraqi Army’s 16th division ordered camp management in at least two of the camps to prevent families from leaving. The army forced some departing families to return to the camps under threat of arrest, three of the families and aid workers said.

On August 28, security forces forcibly expelled from the same camps 151 families – at least 610 people – originally from Hawija, an area in western Kirkuk that continues to experience **ISIS attacks** and military operations, to camps in the Kirkuk area, an aid worker there said, causing food shortages in the camps they were transferred to. But two aid workers have since told Human Rights Watch that the Kirkuk governor later agreed to allow the families to continue living in camps there, instead of forcing them to return home.

Security forces also expelled at least another 671 people from Nineveh camps to a camp in Salah al-Din on August 31. Two families said that the morning after they arrived, two grenades hit the camp fence. One man, 50, said that he and other families did not feel safe there after social media posts – some containing veiled execution threats – urged local people to protest the families’ presence. Aid workers present said security forces transferred the families to another Salah al-Din camp on September 2 because of increased security concerns for the families. Residents at the new camp location launched protests when they heard of the families’ arrival.

On September 2, authorities expelled another 481 people from Nineveh camps to Salah al-Din, after keeping them waiting on buses for over five hours without a bathroom, food, or water.

The deputy governor of Salah al-Din, which currently houses at least 105,390 displaced people, told aid workers in June that he aimed to close most displaced people’s camps and informal settlement sites by early September, with statements from local officials in late August and early September that at least two camps would be closed by early September. By August 24, security forces had expelled more than 500 families from an informal settlement in Salah al-Din, an aid worker said.

The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement ensure displaced people’s rights to free movement and freedom to choose their residence, as well as their right to move freely in and out of camps.

Authorities in Iraq should not force people to return to or remain in specific locations and respect their right to free movement. They should immediately facilitate the return of families who want to return to areas not affected by ongoing military operations. And if authorities cannot ensure families’ safety, they should allow families to remain in or relocate to camps that allow for free movement or other areas where authorities can properly protect them. In line with these standards, authorities should ensure that displaced people have at least seven days’ notice of their expulsions and provide a range of detailed options for safe assisted relocation. Authorities should ensure that camp management has time to issue departure letters needed to travel, resettle, and apply for assistance, and allow people to take their belongings with them.

“Over the last two weeks government has effectively transferred people into situations where they are being targeted with grenades and death threats,” Fakih said. “Before people board buses provided by the government transporting them from the camps, authorities should clarify where the buses are traveling so families can make an informed decision about how to keep themselves safe.”



4 september 2019

Editing by Karzan Sulaivany

KRG against forced expulsion of IDPs from camps, Kurdish official says

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Efforts to re-establish security and services in liberated areas should begin instead of the forced expulsion of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from displacement camps to their hometowns in ruins, a Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) official said on Wednesday.

Dindar Zebari, the KRG's Coordinator for International Advocacy, said in a statement that the autonomous Kurdish government supports the voluntary return of IDPs only after assistance is provided for them in their areas of origin.

"Security, instability, and explosives left over after the war [against the Islamic State] make it difficult for IDPs to return," Zebari said.

"Providing a haven, clean of explosives left behind by ISIS, and the provision of services such as water, basic health services, electricity, and education should be prioritized before the IDPs return to their homes," he added.

The KRG official also emphasized that "effective coordination is needed between the KRG, the governorate's of-

ices, and the federal government [of Iraq] to provide better services in the liberated areas."

Through a decision from the Ministry of Interior – which international agencies supported – the KRG will assist in "the vulnerable return of IDPs in the Kurdistan Region to their homes, regardless of religion or ethnicity," Zebari stated, adding the decision to return or not is up to the displaced persons.

Former Iraqi prime minister Haider al-Abadi declared a "final victory" over the so-called Islamic State in December 2017 when Iraqi forces drove its last remnants from the country, three years after the militant group overran about a third of Iraq's territory.

Following the military victory over the extremist group, hundreds of thousands of IDPs began to return to their



The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has provided shelter to over 1.4 million refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). (Photo: Archive)

homes. However, over the past two years, those same displaced persons have come back to camps in Kurdistan after unsuccessful attempts to return to their areas of origin.



September 04-2019

Masoud Barzani welcomes French initiative on Syria, expresses concern for future of Kurds

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) President Masoud Barzani has welcomed France's initiative to begin talks on Syria but called on Paris to consider the future of the Syrian Kurds.

Barzani made the comments during a meeting on Wednesday with Olivier Decottignies, the new French Consul General to Erbil.

A delegation of French Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) met with President Bashar al-Assad in Syria last week to discuss the ongoing conflict in the country as well as other regional developments. France has also met with Syrian Kurdish leaders as well.

"President Barzani expressed support for the initiative by [French] President Emmanuel Macron on Syria and conveyed his concerns and observations to [Decottignies and his accompanying delegation] about the situation and future of the Kurdish people in Syria," a statement on the KDP leader's website read.

Barzani also stressed that the factors which led to the emergence of the so-called Islamic State and its extremist ideology still exist and have not been addressed, the statement added.

For his part, Decottignies conveyed the greetings



President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Masoud Barzani. (Photo: Archive)

of the French president and foreign minister and "expressed his happiness about the stability prevailing in the Kurdistan Region and the start of the new government."

During their meeting, the senior Kurdish leader thanked Macron and France's foreign minister – whom he had met with in the past – for their "historical friendship" and said French-Kurdish relations would continue to grow.

The new Consul General met with Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Masrour Barzani on Sunday

where the two highlighted the positive relations between Erbil and Paris.

Decottignies replaces Dominique Mas as the new Consul General of France to the Kurdistan Region.

Related Article: [France's outgoing Consul General optimistic about KRG's reform campaign](#)

France played a pivotal role in easing tensions between Erbil and Baghdad following the Kurdistan Region's 2017 independence referendum – which included territories disputed between the two administrations – with a majority voting for secession.

France is also an essential member of the US-led coalition against the Islamic State. Since 2014, the French government has provided humanitarian, logistical, and military support to the Kurdish Peshmerga and Iraqi forces in the fight against the extremist group.

CORRECTION: A previous version of this report incorrectly stated that France had met with Syria's leadership. French MEPs met with Assad to discuss matters on Syria. France has also previously met with Syrian Kurdish leaders to discuss the future of the region.

L'Iran abandonne ses engagements sur le nucléaire pour la recherche et le développement

Rohani a donné à l'UE « soixante jours » pour répondre aux exigences de Téhéran, faute de quoi il se déliera encore un peu plus de l'accord de Vienne.

L'Iran monte le ton, asphyxié par les mesures des Etats-Unis. Mercredi 4 septembre au soir, le président iranien, Hassan Rohani, a annoncé à la télévision d'Etat avoir ordonné l'abandon de toute limite à la recherche et au développement en matière nucléaire de façon à doter le pays de tout ce dont il a « besoin pour l'enrichissement » de l'uranium.

Hassan Rohani a précisé enclencher la « troisième phase » du plan de réduction des engagements en matière nucléaire, car « nous ne sommes pas parvenus au résultat que nous désirions », dans le cadre de la récente tentative diplomatique emmenée par la France pour tenter d'éviter que l'accord sur le nucléaire, conclu en juillet 2015 à Vienne, ne vole en éclats. Peu avant, l'émissaire américain pour l'Iran, Brian Hook, a exclu toute « dérogation » aux sanctions des Etats-Unis contre l'Iran pour faciliter l'octroi d'une ligne de crédit à Téhéran dans le cadre de cette médiation française.

Relancer l'économie iranienne

L'accord de Vienne est menacé depuis que les Etats-Unis en sont sortis unilatéralement en mai 2018, avant de rétablir des sanctions économiques contre l'Iran, dont l'économie, entrée au deuxième semestre 2018 dans une violente récession, est asphyxiée par la politique américaine de « pression maximale ». Les nouvelles mesures sont prises « afin que nous puissions assister à une expansion dans [le domaine] des cen-

trifugeuses » et « nous savons que c'est un grand pas que fait la République islamique d'Iran ».

En représailles au retrait américain de l'accord, les autorités iraniennes ont commencé depuis mai à revenir sur certaines restrictions imposées à leur programme nucléaire (augmentation des stocks d'uranium enrichi au-delà de la limite fixée par l'accord de Vienne, enrichissement de ce minerai à un niveau prohibé par ce texte, soit plus de 3,67 %). Le 7 juillet, elles ont donné soixante jours, jusqu'à ce jeudi, aux parties restant à l'accord (Allemagne, Chine, France, Royaume-Uni et Russie) pour les aider à contourner les sanctions américaines, sous peine de les voir s'affranchir d'autres obligations.

Nouveau délai de soixante jours

M. Rohani a donné mercredi « à l'Europe » un « nouveau délai de soixante jours » pour répondre aux exigences de Téhéran, faute de quoi l'Iran se déliera encore un peu plus de ses engagements pris à Vienne. « A tout moment, si les Européens reviennent à leurs



Hassan Rohani lors de son discours, à Téhéran, le 4 septembre. IRANIAN PRESIDENCY / AFP

engagements, nous aussi reviendrons aux nôtres », a dit M. Rohani.

L'accord de Vienne a offert à l'Iran la levée d'une partie des sanctions internationales qui l'isolaient depuis des années en échange d'une limitation drastique de son programme nucléaire destinée à rendre impossible l'acquisition de l'arme atomique par Téhéran. Jugant ces garanties insuffisantes, le gouvernement de Donald Trump veut forcer l'Iran à négocier un accord plus contraignant.

NRT 2019-09-04

Brotherhood List, Turkmen Front meet in Baghdad ad about Kirkuk

SULAIMANI — The Brotherhood List met with the Iraqi Turkmen Front on Wednesday evening (September 4) for talks on the situation in Kirkuk governorate.

During a press conference after the meeting, a representative of Brotherhood List, which represents the Kurdish parties in the province, said that discussions focused on the security, administrative challenges, land disputes, and among other topics.

The Turkmen Front said that dialogue would continue with the Brotherhood List in order to work out an amicable solution.

On Monday, a Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) spokesperson told Voice of America (VOA) that the Brotherhood List would be hold-



The Kurdish Brotherhood List holds a press conference with the Turkmen Front in Baghdad to discuss the problems related to the Kirkuk governorate. Picture taken on Wednesday, September 4, 2019. (Photo Credit: NRT Digital Media)

ing meetings with officials representing Arab and Turkmen parties to discuss Kirkuk.

The most immediate issue to hash out is the governorship. It has been held in an acting capacity by Rakan al-Jubouri since he was appointed to the position by Baghdad in October 2017.

On July 11, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the KDP agreed to nominate Tayib Jabar for the governorship. The announcement has been met with some resistance from the other blocs in Kirkuk, who object to the automatic choice of an ethnic Kurd for the position.

The talks are also likely to touch on the provincial elections, currently scheduled for April 2020. Kurdish parties have objected to them taking place in Kirkuk, arguing that the displacement of Kurds in the province has rendered the voter rolls inaccurate.

Un tweet de l'opposant syrien Al-Zoubi met la communauté kurde en colère

L'ex-général dissident Assad Al-Zoubi pourrait être jugé à Paris pour un tweet vantant le génocide du peuple kurde perpétré en 1988 en Irak.

Une vingtaine de personnalités originaires du Kurdistan syrien, de nationalité française ou bénéficiant en France d'un titre de séjour ou du statut de réfugié, entendent traduire en justice l'ex-général dissident Assad Al-Zoubi, figure de proue de l'opposition au régime de Bachar el-Assad. Ils ont chargé leur avocat, Me Antonin Pêchard, de lancer à son encontre, devant les juridictions françaises, une procédure pénale pour « apologie de crimes de guerre et génocide », « provocation à la violence à l'égard d'une personnes ou d'un groupe de personnes à raison de leur origine ou de leur appartenance (...) à une nation », délits passibles de cinq et un an d'emprisonnement. Ils espèrent ainsi faire comparaître, par le biais d'une citation directe, l'ancien officier et opposant syrien devant la 17e chambre du TGI de Paris, spécialisée dans les délits de presse et le droit de la communication.

Ils reprochent à l'ancien aviateur de l'armée syrienne, l'un des chefs du Front du Sud, d'avoir dans un tweet daté du 16 août (aujourd'hui supprimé de son compte) non seulement légitimé mais vanté l'Anfal, le génocide kurde survenu entre février et septembre 1988 en Irak sous le régime de Saddam Hussein. Au terme d'une vaste offensive terrestre et aérienne mettant notamment en œuvre des armes chimiques et destinée à « éradiquer définitivement le problème kurde », plus de 2 000 villages, 1 700 écoles et 270 hôpitaux avaient été attaqués, causant la mort de plusieurs dizaines de milliers de civils kurdes, hommes, femmes et enfants.



En 2015, à Genève, Assad Al-Zoubi représentait le Haut Conseil des négociations (principale alliance de l'opposition syrienne). © UN/Pool / ANADOLU AGENCY / Anadolu Agency

« Insecticide et ménagerie »

« À chaque fois que nous sortons une vérité sur l'organisation terroriste kurde PYD (parti de l'union démocratique kurde, NDLR), on entend braire la ménagerie : ânes, chiens, grenouilles, cafards et vermines. Nul besoin d'insecticide pour s'en débarrasser, il suffit de prononcer le nom de Saddam. Quand toutes ces bestioles réapparaissent, on regrette Saddam. Paix à son âme ! » avait diffusé sur le réseau social Twitter Assad Al-Zoubi, dans un message en arabe de 376 caractères, traduit en français par un expert assermenté.

« Une allusion directe et sans ambiguïté aux crimes commis en 1988 en Irak, reconnus comme génocide devant le tribunal de La Haye », estime Me Pêchard, pour qui la constitution des délits de « provocation à la violence » et « d'apologie » ne fait « aucun doute ». « La ménagerie, c'est le peuple kurde. Saddam, c'est évidemment Saddam Hussein et l'insecticide, c'est le

poison de ses armes chimiques. Al-Zoubi n'en est d'ailleurs pas à son coup d'essai : en 2015 déjà, à Genève, alors qu'il représentait le Haut Conseil des négociations (principale alliance de l'opposition syrienne), il avait distillé son venin et sa haine à l'égard du peuple kurde », poursuit l'avocat au barreau de Paris.

« Alerter la communauté occidentale »

Les plaignants, qui entendent se constituer partie civile, craignent de se heurter à un obstacle juridique : celui de la compétence des juridictions françaises. Ils pourront s'appuyer sur une jurisprudence de la Cour de cassation qui donne compétence internationale au juge français, en matière de presse, dès lors que le message délictueux, bien que diffusé depuis l'étranger, peut ou a pu être reçu en France, en vertu du principe : « tout point de connexion est un point de compétence ». En tout état de cause, certains plaignants bénéficiant de la nationalité française, la justice a vocation à agir en leur faveur, même pour des infractions commises à l'étranger par des étrangers, selon les règles de la compétence personnelle passive.

« Par cette action judiciaire et symbolique, mes clients souhaitent alerter une nouvelle fois la communauté occidentale sur l'oppression dans laquelle est tenu le peuple kurde, et en même temps se substituer à elle ; les attaques visant les Kurdes ne sont généralement suivies d'aucune réaction en Europe, malgré leur participation déterminante dans la bataille menée contre Daech et l'islamisme radical », plaide Me Pêchard.



September 4, 2019

By Associated Press

Kurdish Official: Syria's «Safe Zone» Off to Good Start

DARBASIYAH, SYRIA - The creation of a so-called «safe zone» in northeastern Syria has gotten off to good start, with U.S.-backed Kurdish-led forces pulling back from a small, initial area along the Turkish border, a Syrian Kurdish official said — but calm can only prevail if Turkey also removes its troops.

Ilham Ahmed, co-chair of the executive committee of the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Council, said the understanding reached between Washington and Ankara last month, and in coordination with the Syrian Kurdish-led forces, constitutes a step toward starting a dialogue over mutual security concerns.

«We seek to find a way to dialogue, and starting to implement this plan expresses our readiness and seriousness,» Ahmed said in an interview Tuesday with The Associated Press.

«We want to tell the world and the coalition that we are ready to take serious steps to get to dialogue,» she added.

Turkey views the U.S.-backed Kurdish People's Protection Units, or YPG, in Syria as an extension of a Kurdish insurgency within Turkey.

Ankara has already carried out military offen-

sives inside Syria to push the group away from the western end of the border. Over the last weeks, Turkish officials threatened a similar offensive in northeastern Syria, where troops from the U.S.-led coalition are deployed to help the Syrian Kurdish-led forces in combatting remnants of the Islamic State group.

The Syrian Kurds have been America's only partners on the ground in Syria's chaotic civil war. With U.S. backing, they proved to be the most effective fighting force against the Islamic State group and announced its territorial defeat earlier this year. The Kurds now worry about

being abandoned by the U.S. amid Turkish threats to invade Syria, and are keen to work out an agreement with both parties that would safeguard their gains.

Ankara and Washington announced last month that they would begin measures to implement a border "safe zone" to address Turkish security concerns. The Kurdish-led forces are expected to pull out of the zone, but details must still be worked out – including who then would patrol and administer it.

FILE - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attends a news conference in Moscow, Russia, Aug. 27, 2019.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan over the weekend repeated threats of an offensive if Turkey's demands on the zone are not satisfied, including that its soldiers control the area.

Ahmed said more U.S. troops will probably be needed to implement the zone, though the Americans have not said whether they will deploy any.

«In the coming days, and because of the needs of the formation and implementation of the security mechanism, they may need more forces. It is not yet clear what the U.S. administration would decide,» she said.

There was no immediate comment from the U.S.-led coalition.

There are around 1,000 U.S. troops in Syria on a mission to combat IS militants. President Donald Trump had said he wants to bring the troops home, but military officials have advocated a phased approach.

Ahmed said initial steps have been positive but for calm to prevail Turkish troops must also retreat from the Syrian borders. She said while Turkey expresses concerns about the Kurdish-led forces, it is Ankara that has been a source of threat to Syria with the various military opera-



Ilham Ahmed, co-chair of the executive committee of the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Council, speaks during an interview in Darbasiyah, Syria, Sept. 3, 2019.

tions and its military posts in western Syria.

The Kurdish-led forces have begun removing fortifications along the border and have moved some troops away from the border. At least two U.S.-Turkish joint reconnaissance flights have flown over the area, and on Tuesday, joint patrols between U.S. troops and Kurdish-led forces also examined the area where fortifications have been removed.

The deal envisions an area five to 14 kilometers deep (three to eight miles) with no YPG presence, as well as removal of heavy weapons from a 20-kilometer-deep zone (12 miles), she said. Turkey wants a deeper zone. The length of the zone has not yet been agreed on, but will likely stretch hundreds of kilometers (miles).

Ahmed said discussions over other details of the security mechanism will open the way for Syrians who had been displaced from those areas,

many of them fled to Turkey, to return. Turkey is home to 3.6 million Syrian refugees and Ankara said it wants the safe zone to provide an opportunity for many to return home.

Ahmed said only those originally from eastern Syria would be allowed to return. Kurdish officials worry Turkey wants to bring back large numbers of Syrians to the areas, which were previously controlled by IS militants, changing the demographic balance in the area. Syria's Kurds are predominantly from the country's northeast, living in mixed or Kurdish-dominated villages and towns there. She said no residents will be displaced because of the implementation of the safe zone.

«Calm must bring with it sustainable dialogue. Calm alone is not enough,» Ahmed said. «If Turkish troops don't pull away from the borders, it will always be considered a threat.»

Another top Kurdish official, Aldar Khalil, said the Kurdish-led administration and forces would not accept Turkish forces or permanent bases in the so-called safe zone or a free hand for Turkish flights over the area.

He said while an understanding has been reached, a final deal would constitute an indirect Turkish recognition of the Kurdish-led administration in northeastern Syria. He said, however, a final deal is not imminent.



Another international player gets involved in Syrian Kurdish rapprochement

A delegation from the British Foreign Office recently visited northern and eastern Syria. It arrived in Syrian Kurdistan on Aug. 21 with the goal of removing obstacles to reconciliation between the Kurdish National Council (KNC) and the Democratic Union Party (PYD). According to news reports, the British move comes in coordination with the United States.

An informed Kurdish source told Al-Monitor on condition of anonymity that the British delegation consisted of Emily Maltman, head of the UK Syria office representing the British government to Syrians, and Carla Thomas, in charge of the department of development organizations at the UK Foreign Office.

The British delegation held three meetings of about two hours each. It met with officials in the KNC, the Yekiti Kurdistan Party-Syria and then the autonomous administration, formed and led by the PYD.

“The British delegation did not visit Syria with the intention of holding dialogue sessions or a Kurdish-Kurdish rapprochement. The Kurdish media exaggerated,” the source noted, quoting the delegation as saying, “We support the French initiative and we do not aim to replace it; we simply came to listen to what you had to say.” The French initiative had not failed, said the source — its implementation was rather delayed.

France is seeking to play a major role in the Kurdish-Kurdish rapprochement, and has previously called to arrange Kurdish affairs in the east of the Euphrates, and pave the way for internal Kurdish understandings in Syria. The Kurdish-Kurdish dispute remains focused on regional control and the future vision of governance in Syria.

“The delegation did not present any vision for a solution throughout Syria, nor did it show interest in finding any solutions, whether at the Syrian national level in general or when it comes to the Kurdish-Kurdish dialogue,” the source noted.

The source added that the delegation listened to the visions of all parties and discussed the humanitarian and relief aspects, explaining that the visit might have had hidden reasons behind it. “It [the visit] could be in response to US pressure on the UK to engage in the east of the Euphrates issue,” after the UK and France agreed to increase the number of their troops in Syria from 10% to 15%. France and Britain are the only two countries in the international coalition against the Islamic State with ground troops in Syria; these additional troops will serve as a substitute to the US forces if they were to withdraw.

Foreign Policy reported that the timetable and the number of troops remain unknown, as both France and the UK have a special interest in increasing the number of troops, as they no longer have much influence in the opposition areas in the north, northwest, and south of Syria after the regime forces advanced with Russia’s support.

They can then play an active part in preventing the release of IS detainees who are being held in Syria, either by the



A Syrian Kurdish woman dressed in military uniform holds a Kurdish flag in the town of al-Qahtaniyah, Syria, March 21, 2019. DELIL SOULEIMAN/AFP/Getty Images

Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) or by other parties. This could also ensure greater effectiveness and influence in the region, thus a positive, key role in the next phase between the autonomous administration and KNC.

All parties that met with the British delegation mentioned how friendly the sessions were. The source added that the talks focused on the safe zone east of the Euphrates, and the different parties’ expectations and readings for the future of the region and Syria.

Author and human rights activist Imran Mansour told Al-Monitor over the phone from Paris about the importance of international initiatives and the need for the international coalition to support them, although he does not trust the British or French initiatives can be a success.

“These initiatives cannot succeed in the absence of transparency between the concerned parties,” he noted, adding that the four meetings the Syrian Kurdish parties held between 2012 and 2015 in the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to agree on principles, an agenda and a joint political program to manage the Kurdish region in Syria, were all pointless.

Mansour told Al-Monitor, “The most important agreements for rapprochement between the parties of the Kurdish movement in Syria was when the Kurdish leaders, headed by Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani, came together face-to-face in Erbil and Dahuk and signed the Erbil and Dahuk agreements [in 2012 and 2014, respectively] but it was not implemented by the autonomous administration.”

According to Mansour, “Players in the international arena ought to exert pressure on Kurdish leaders to form a new administration with a new law and an interim constitution that contributes to resuming negotiation with the government of Damascus and taking back Kurdish national rights. We realize that we are part of the international community and our future is linked to the future of inter-

national relations and understandings throughout the Middle East.”

Meanwhile, most Kurdish political parties seem to uninterested by the initiatives to bridge the Kurdish-Kurdish gap, refusing to budge on their priorities.

Independent Kurdish politician Akram Hussein, told Al-Monitor, “The international community is working to stabilize security in the east of the Euphrates and not between the Kurdish parties. It is thus trying to involve all parties in the administration, including the KNC, which disagrees with the administration and does not recognize its legitimacy. The French and US attempts aim to bridge this gap and initiate compromise that could lead to an end to the Turkish threats to invade the east of the Euphrates.”

While France and the United Kingdom could easily pressure the Kurdish parties to reconcile, they are doing so very softly, raising questions among the Kurds.

Khalid Ali, a member of the advisory body of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria, told Al-Monitor over the phone from Hewler, “I think the international community is not interested in this issue and if there is a future interest, the international community can simply force the Kurdish parties [into agreement]. But it apparently does not show a desire to find solutions to problems.”

The source pointed out that within the series of international visits and meetings to the east of the Euphrates, it is possible for the KNC to meet with the Russians at the Hmeimim Air Base next. Russia, which plays a major role in the Syrian file, has repeatedly expressed readiness to mediate between Kurds and the Syrian regime.

Shivan Ibrahim is a journalist who holds a master's degree in philosophy. He writes opinion articles and covers social, political and civil topics in several Arabic and Kurdish periodicals and newspapers.



By Hiwa Shilani
September 05, 2019

PKK must not work against the interests of the Kurdistan Region: Official

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – An official from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) on Thursday said that the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) must not work against the interests of the Kurdistan Region and its citizens.

“The Kurdistan Region has strong ties with Turkey and Iran on diplomatic, economic, and political levels,” said Safeen Dizayee, head of the KRG's Department of Foreign Relations in an interview with Kurdistan 24.

He added, “The PKK needs to take into account the political situation of the KRG and not take steps that might negatively affect the region and its people.”

The PKK, headquartered in the Kurdistan Region's Qandil Mountains, has been fighting an almost four-decade-long insurgency against Ankara which has resulted in over 40,000 casualties on both sides. Its fighters have also carried out attacks on Iranian forces. Turkey, the US, and the EU view it as a ‘terrorist’ organization.

In the past decade, Turkey has regularly shelled areas over its border into the Kurdistan Region to target PKK fighters and positions, with operations intensifying and covering more territory in the past year. In some areas, Turkish forces



Safeen Dizayee, head of the KRG's Department of Foreign Relations. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

have mobilized as far as 30 kilometers deep into the region.

Dizayee praised the KRG's positive role in helping to establish a short-lived 2015 peace deal between Ankara and the PKK and said he hoped for resumed dialog to address the grievances of each.

Due to Turkish airstrikes and other military op-

erations in recent months, approximately 400 villages have been evacuated as a result of continued bombardment that has destroyed homes, damaged farms, and sometimes kills residents.

In recent years, the KRG has repeatedly called for Ankara and the PKK to take their fight elsewhere.

euro
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Euronews avec AFP
05/09/2019

Erdogan veut pouvoir acquérir l'arme atomique

Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a critiqué mercredi le fait que certains pays, dont le sien, soient sous pression pour ne pas acquérir l'arme nucléaire.

«Certains (pays) possèdent des missiles avec des têtes nucléaires mais je ne devrais pas en avoir. Je n'accepte pas cela», a-t-il déclaré dans un discours dans la ville de Sivas (est).

La Turquie ne possède pas l'arme nucléaire et adhère au traité de non prolifération nucléaire depuis 1980.

M. Erdogan a fait ces déclarations alors qu'il resserrait les liens en matière de défense avec la Russie tout en s'éloignant des Etats-Unis, allié historique d'Ankara au sein de l'Otan.

Les Etats-Unis ont réagi à la décision de la Turquie d'acheter le système russe de défense anti-



Murat Cetinmuhurdar/Presidential Press Office/Handout via REUTERS

aérienne S-400 en l'éjectant de son programme d'avion furtif F-35.

Washington estime que la Russie pourrait rassem-

bler des informations techniques stratégiques sur le nouveau F-35 si celui-ci était utilisé aux côtés d'un système S-400.

Vendredi, M. Erdogan avait suggéré que la Turquie pourrait se tourner vers la Russie pour trouver une solution alternative après son exclusion du programme F-35.

Annnonce de l'Iran sur le nucléaire : l'UE demande à Téhéran de "faire machine arrière"

Le pays a annoncé mercredi qu'il ne limiterait plus la recherche et le développement afin de doter le pays de tout ce qu'il a "besoin pour l'enrichissement" de l'uranium.

L'Union européenne a regretté, ce jeudi, l'annonce par l'Iran qu'il ne limiterait désormais plus la recherche et le développement dans le domaine nucléaire, appelant Téhéran à "faire machine arrière".

"Ces activités ne sont pas conformes au JCPOA [l'accord de 2015 sur le nucléaire iranien]. Et dans ce contexte nous sommes l'Iran de faire machine arrière et de ne prendre aucune autre mesure qui saperait cet accord", a déclaré Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela, porte-parole de la cheffe de la diplomatie de l'UE Federica Mogherini.

Cette dernière, qui s'est beaucoup investie au nom de l'UE sur ce dossier du nucléaire iranien depuis quatre ans, souhaite sauver l'accord conclu en 2015 avec Téhéran mais fragilisé par le retrait unilatéral américain en 2018. Les États-Unis ont depuis rétabli de lourdes sanctions contre Téhéran. Les activités nucléaires de l'Iran font donc désormais l'objet d'une vive tension avec le président, Donald Trump.

"Ce n'est pas le moment de tenir des pourparlers avec l'Iran, c'est le moment d'accroître la pression" sur la République islamique, a déclaré de son côté le Premier ministre israélien Benjamin Netanyahu, fervent adversaire de l'accord de Vienne.



Le président iranien Hassan Rohani pendant une conférence à Téhéran, le 26 avril 2019. Official Presidential website/Handout via REUTERS

Le détail des nouvelles mesures annoncé samedi

Mercredi 4 septembre, l'Iran a annoncé une nouvelle réduction de ses engagements nucléaires en faisant sauter toute limite à la recherche et au développement dans ce domaine, après avoir conclu à l'échec temporaire d'une médiation française pour amorcer un dialogue entre Téhéran et Washington. Il s'agit de doter le pays de tout ce dont il a "besoin pour l'enrichissement" de l'ura-

nium a commenté le président iranien, Hassan Rohani.

Selon l'agence iranienne semi-officielle Isna, c'est samedi que le régime de Téhéran annoncera le détail de la troisième phase de son plan de réduction des engagements pris devant la communauté internationale. Cette déclaration sera faite au cours d'une conférence de presse du porte-parole de l'Organisation iranienne de l'énergie atomique (OIEA), Behrouz Kamalvandi, a-t-elle précisé.

POLKA Le 05/09/2019
Propos recueillis par Elisa Mignot

Sebastian Meyer: "La poésie des Kurdes est entrée en moi"

Depuis près de dix ans, le photographe américain couvre l'actualité et la vie quotidienne au Kurdistan irakien. Son écriture photographique a progressivement évolué du news au documentaire. Ses images sont à retrouver dans le dernier numéro de Polka. Rencontre.

Quand êtes-vous allé pour la première fois au Kurdistan irakien ?

Sebastian Meyer C'était en 2008, à l'époque, je vivais à Londres et j'ai rencontré un journaliste

qui travaillait sur les Kurdes et leur histoire au long du XXe siècle. Il m'a proposé de l'accompagner faire les portraits des survivants du génocide de Saddam Hussein, l'opération Anfal. Je suis resté deux mois.

Une fois de retour en Grande-Bretagne, le Kurdistan me manquait. Un photojournaliste kurde que j'avais rencontré m'a invité à revenir. En 2009, je me suis installé à Souleimaniye, la deuxième ville de la région. On a créé ensemble une agence. **Metrography**, pour les photojourna-

listes irakiens, qu'ils soient kurdes, arabes, chrétiens, yézidis. J'ai habité là-bas jusqu'en 2013. Depuis, j'y retourne régulièrement.

Au début, votre démarche était très "news", puis elle est devenue plus documentaire. Comment décrivez-vous ce travail que vous allez bientôt publier dans un livre intitulé "Under Every Yard of Sky" ?

En arrivant en Irak, je faisais vraiment du photoreportage, je couvrais les opérations militaires, j'étais "embedded" avec l'armée américaine à



En mars 2015, dans la petite ville d'Akré (au nord du Kurdistan irakien), des hommes célèbrent Norouz. Vêtus de costumes traditionnels, ils défilent avec des torches et allument de grands feux. Le Nouvel An perse est aussi pour le peuple kurde un symbole de résistance à l'oppression et d'affirmation de son d'identité. © Sebastian Meyer.

Mossoul et à Bagdad, ou à Kirkouk avec des forces irakiennes...

Petit à petit, mon travail a changé. Je percevais davantage les détails, les subtilités de la vie quotidienne au Kurdistan, qui était devenue ma vie, et je voulais traduire cela. Les gens que je photographiais étaient comme moi, ils n'étaient plus des personnages dans mes histoires. Ils n'étaient plus les sujets de mes photos.

Est-ce une région où il est difficile de prendre des photos?

Le Kurdistan est un endroit très facile à photographier car les Kurdes aiment ça et ils sont très accueillants. D'un autre côté, la lumière est tout à fait nulle et il y a beaucoup de constructions en béton, ce qui n'est pas du tout photogénique. Donc humainement, c'est facile – et c'est surtout ce qui m'intéresse! – mais esthétiquement, moins évident.



A Lalish, en décembre 2015, des yézidites récoltent les olives dont l'huile servira aux cérémonies religieuses. Situé sur le territoire contrôlé par le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan (GRK), c'est un lieu saint de cette minorité religieuse. © Sebastian Meyer.

Il y a une forme de poésie dans vos photos...

Je n'ai pas essayé de transcrire la poésie du Kurdistan dans mes images, mais si la poésie des Kurdes est entrée dans mes photos, c'est sans doute parce que j'ai passé beaucoup de temps là-bas et que cette poésie est entrée en moi. Tout cela est inconscient.

Aussi, j'ai beaucoup réfléchi à mon style et aux

sujets de mes photos. Par exemple, l'humour est très présent dans mon travail car les Kurdes aiment faire des blagues. Certes, leur vie et leur histoire comptent beaucoup de drames, mais elles ne s'y réduisent pas. Dans la vie de tous les jours, il y a une forme de légè-

reté. Ignorer cela serait mentir sur le quotidien là-bas.

Le capitaine peshmerga Kamaran Omar est mort le 17 octobre 2016, au premier jour de la bataille de Mossoul. © Sebastian Meyer.

Tous les morts de la famille Omar sont enterrés dans le village de Sewaka. Ici, autour de la sépulture de Kamaran Omar sont réunis ses enfants, neveux et nièces. © Sebastian Meyer.

Depuis dix ans que vous travaillez au Kurdistan, vous avez rencontré de nombreuses familles. La famille Omar, dont nous racontons l'histoire dans Polka #38, est assez particulière. Pour quelles raisons?

Cette famille est très typique et, en même temps, pas du tout. Elle est représentative des autres kurdes parce qu'elle est très soudée, que des enfants ont émigré en Europe, qu'ils sont sunnites, qu'ils aiment les traditions tout en étant très connectés.

Mais ils sortent de l'ordinaire car, sur les six



Le capitaine peshmerga Kamaran Omar est mort le 17 octobre 2016, au premier jour de la bataille de Mossoul. © Sebastian Meyer.

frères Omar, quatre sont morts lors de chacune des guerres menées par les Kurdes d'Irak, ces trente dernières années. D'autres familles ont perdu beaucoup plus de gens pendant le génocide en 1988, mais un foyer qui a perdu quatre frères au combat, en tant que peshmergas, c'est rare.

Et puis, souvent les Kurdes, qui sont par ailleurs très accueillants, restent discrets sur la politique, surtout devant les étrangers. Devant nous, eux ont parlé librement de politique, du gouvernement, de la corruption. Ils se sont ouverts à nous, nous ont parlé de leurs morts, de leur douleur. Ils sont allés bien au-delà du discours assez habituel sur la fierté d'avoir des martyrs dans la famille. C'était une vraie rencontre.

La Turquie menace de laisser les migrants syriens partir en Europe

Recep Tayyip Erdogan réclame à l'Union européenne un investissement financier plus important pour l'aider à gérer l'accueil des réfugiés sur son sol. La Turquie craint un afflux de migrants syriens alors que la région d'Idlib, de l'autre côté de la frontière, subit depuis plusieurs mois les assauts du régime de Damas.

Une nouvelle fois, la Turquie brandit la menace d'ouvrir les vannes de l'immigration vers l'Europe. Le chef de l'État turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a réclaté à l'UE davantage d'aide internationale pour gérer l'accueil des migrants, alors que le pays compte plus de quatre millions de réfugiés sur son sol, dont 3,5 millions de Syriens.

Menace d'une nouvelle crise migratoire

« Si cela n'arrive pas, nous serons obligés d'ouvrir les portes. Soit vous nous aidez, soit, si vous ne le faites pas, désolé, mais il y a des limites à ce que l'on peut supporter », a-t-il déclaré jeudi 5 septembre à la télévision. La Turquie fait face à une pression migratoire importante. Alors qu'elle doit composer avec les réfugiés bloqués sur son sol depuis l'accord conclu avec l'UE en 2016, Ankara craint l'imminence d'une nouvelle crise à sa frontière avec la Syrie.

Pilonnée depuis plusieurs mois par les aviations russes et du régime de Damas, la région frontalière d'Idlib risque d'exploser à tout moment et de déverser sur la Turquie un flot de quelque 3 millions de personnes.

La menace d'un nouveau déferlement de migrants se veut percutante dans une Europe en prise avec la peur de revivre la crise de 2015. Mais elle semble toutefois difficilement réalisable. « Cela jouerait contre la Turquie, parce



La Turquie compte plus de quatre millions de réfugiés sur son sol, dont 3,5 millions de Syriens. ADEM ALTAN/AFP

que ça attirerait encore plus de migrants chez eux », considère Jean Marcou, spécialiste de la Turquie et chercheur à Sciences-Po Grenoble.

Le sous-investissement européen

Recep Tayyip Erdogan répond d'abord à un impératif intérieur, et tente de calmer les critiques qui montent dans son pays. « À l'heure actuelle, un certain nombre de politiques attaquent Erdogan sur la question des réfugiés, souligne le chercheur. La population, aussi, se montre moins favorable à l'accueil des migrants qu'au début. » Recep Tayyip Erdogan a donc haussé le ton et appelé l'UE à respecter ses engagements financiers établis par l'accord de 2016.

Ceux-ci prévoient que la Turquie récupère sur son sol les migrants illégaux arrivés en Grèce en échange d'une enveloppe de 6 milliards d'euros pour l'aider à accueillir les réfugiés. Ankara estime n'en avoir reçu que la moitié pour des dépenses évaluées à 40 milliards de dollars (soit 36 milliards d'euros). « À ce jour l'Union européenne a alloué 5,6 des 6 milliards d'euros approuvés », a répliqué dans la foulée une porte-parole de la Commission eu-

ropéenne, Natasha Bertaud, tout en assurant que le reste sera versé « prochainement ».

Coup de pression pour accélérer la mise en place d'une « zone de sécurité »

Se voir payer le prix de l'accueil des migrants, empêcher qu'une nouvelle vague ne déferle sur la Turquie et... se débarrasser de ceux déjà sur place. Telles sont les trois priorités du gouvernement d'Ankara qui a entamé les négociations avec Washington pour créer une « zone de sécurité » sur la rive orientale de l'Euphrate, dans le nord-est de la Syrie.

« Depuis plusieurs mois, la Turquie demande à contrôler la frontière pour de prétendues raisons de sécurité », rappelle Jean Marcou, tandis que la zone est contrôlée par les Kurdes, ennemis désignés du président Erdogan. Pris par le temps, ce dernier a exprimé sa détermination à ce que la « zone de sécurité », où doivent être relocalisés au moins un million de réfugiés syriens, soit créée « d'ici à la dernière semaine de septembre ».



Bedia Özgökçe Ertan : « le pays évolue en dehors de toute norme internationale »

Lors de la mission des Amitiés kurdes de Bretagne au Bakûr (Kurdistan de Turquie) au printemps 2017 à l'occasion des fêtes du Newroz, Tony Rublon et Christophe Thomas, accompagnés de leur interprète, ont rencontré Bedia Özgökçe Ertan, alors députée HDP de la province de Van. Éluée démocratiquement le 31 mars 2019 co-maire de Van, elle a été démise de ses fonctions le 19 août comme Ahmet Türk, co-maire de Mardin, et Selçuk Mizrakli, co-maire de Diyarbakir. Un entretien particulièrement pétri de sincérité et de lucidité.

La grande peur d'Erdogan

Je ne crois pas que l'attitude du gouvernement soit une vengeance face à l'entrée en 2015 du HDP à la Grande Assemblée (Parlement de Turquie). Il s'agit plutôt d'une continuité dans l'histoire oppressive de l'Etat sur les Kurdes. Il a feint de jouer le jeu démocratique et lorsqu'il a réalisé qu'il ne serait pas gagnant comme il l'espérait, il a pris peur. Notre présence à l'Assemblée a bouleversé la donne, le statu quo. Nous y posons des questions jusque-là impensables pour le gouvernement. Nous remettons en cause la gouvernance du pays, qui appartient aux peuples de Turquie. C'est à eux que revient le libre choix des moyens de se gouverner. Nous soutenons le pluralisme, l'auto-gouvernance et la démocratie radicale, des propositions et idées différentes des concepts étatiques. Ce constat, dressé par Bedia Özgökçe Ertan quelques semaines avant le référendum constitutionnel d'avril 2017 et la présidentialisation du pouvoir en Turquie qu'il consacra après de multiples fraudes, est toujours d'actualité. Profitant de l'état d'urgence qui était en vigueur et surfant sur la vague répressive (ininterrompue depuis) du coup d'Etat manqué de juillet 2016, le gouvernement AKP a modifié par décret en septembre de la même année la loi sur les municipalités. Désormais, révoquer des élus locaux serait une simple formalité. L'immunité parlementaire des députés avait, elle, été levée dès le mois de mai. Depuis, le pouvoir d'Ankara est libre de révoquer comme bon lui semble les élus du peuple.

Bedia Özgökçe Ertan, une avocate engagée, une femme à abattre

Diplômée de droit, avocate spécialiste des droits de l'homme (notamment concernant la défense des femmes et des réfugiés), Bedia Özgökçe Ertan a été élue à deux reprises (en 2016 et aux élections législatives anticipées de 2018) députée de Van, ville d'un demi-million d'habitants dont elle est originaire. Pour se porter candidate à la mairie de Van, elle démissionne de ses fonctions parlementaires. Lorsque nous l'avions rencontrée dans les bureaux

du HDP de Van en 2017, elle confiait alors être visée par trois enquêtes : en Turquie, les droits fondamentaux ont été suspendus et le qualificatif de « terroriste », vulgarisé. Chaque parole, chaque acte peuvent mener très loin, même s'ils remontent à plusieurs années.

Elle se savait en sursis, dénonçait la Grande Assemblée devenue une coquille vide, déplorait les milliers d'arrestations qui frappaient et frappent aujourd'hui encore militants et représentants politiques élus du HDP. Si elle avouait que le parti avait été affaibli par cette cabale politico-judiciaire menée par l'AKP, elle fondait d'immenses espoirs dans la jeunesse.

Le 19 août, le ministère de l'Intérieur a annoncé sa destitution de son poste de maire alors qu'elle a été élue avec plus de 53% des voix le 31 mars. Il convient de préciser que si elle est officiellement l'unique maire de Van, elle est dans les faits co-maire. Car le HDP n'a pas renoncé à son système de co-présidence pour l'ensemble des postes à responsabilité, que ce soit en son sein ou aux fonctions auxquelles ces représentants peuvent être amenés à être élus (hormis la députation). Concernant les élections municipales de mars, les futurs co-maires avaient été désignés au préalable par des assemblées populaires locales. Seulement, cette co-présidence, toujours constituée d'une femme et d'un homme (et également mise en œuvre par l'Administration autonome du Nord et de l'Est de la Syrie), n'est pas reconnue constitutionnellement par la Turquie et n'a donc pas d'existence légale.

« Soutien à une organisation terroriste » : une accusation récurrente

Le gouvernement turc, soumis à la volonté personnelle d'Erdogan, a donc une fois de plus balayé d'un revers de la main l'expression démocratique de la volonté du peuple à Diyarbakir, à Mardin et à Van. A chaque fois, les chefs d'accusation sont « l'appartenance et/ou le soutien à une organisation terroriste », en l'occurrence le PKK. Sur le plateau de Halk TV, la co-maire de Van expliquait récemment que la municipalité, outre le transfert d'argent vers Qandil, est accusée d'avoir permis à des membres du PKK de se faire soigner dans les hôpitaux de la ville... Nos prédécesseurs ont aussi fait face à ce type d'accusation. On nous accuse sans fondement, aucun document, rien ne vient étayer les accusations d'aides financières et matérielles au PKK que l'on nous attribue.

En 2017, l'élue HDP de 44 ans affirmait que « politiquement, le pays évolue en dehors de toute norme internationale ». Force est de constater que peu de choses ont changé depuis.

Les accusations de financements du PKK font sourire lorsque l'on connaît le délabrement économique dans lequel se trouvent les mairies déjà spoliées entre 2016 et 2019 par les administrateurs (kayyum), véritables potentats dévoués à Erdogan. Avec des moyens dérisoires, des dettes et des caisses vides, ces mairies métropolitaines auraient

donc trouvé les ressources pour financer le PKK. A Mardin, Ahmet Türk a regagné une mairie endettée à hauteur de plusieurs millions de livres turques tandis qu'à Diyarbakir, Selçuk Mizrali a constaté que les locaux de la mairie avaient été vidés de tous ses équipements et vandalisés une fois son élection actée. A Van, l'équipe municipale s'est retrouvée face à un tas de factures impayées. Nous avons trouvé dans un tiroir une facture de 300 000 livres turques (soit près de 48 000 euros) avec une liste manuscrite du matériel nécessaire pour organiser le meeting électoral du président de la République à Van en 2018. Cette facture a été payée par la municipalité de Van et nous avons sollicité le procureur pour qu'il ouvre une enquête à ce sujet.

Voir cette requête aboutir serait malheureusement pour le moins surprenant.

Hold-up sur les mairies métropolitaines

En s'emparant des mairies métropolitaines de Mardin, Diyarbakir et Van, l'AKP et son chef réaffirment leur emprise sur 3,8 millions de personnes, étant donné que les mairies métropolitaines, création de 2012, possèdent des prérogatives sur l'ensemble de la province dont elles sont le chef-lieu. Après les élections municipales de 2014, le HDP avait vu 95 des 102 mairies qu'il avait obtenues être saisies par des administrateurs désignés par Ankara. 93 co-maires ont été ou sont toujours emprisonnés, ainsi que des centaines de conseillers municipaux. Face à la passivité internationale à l'égard de la Turquie, il n'est pas impossible de voir l'histoire se répéter. Une chose est sûre, en déniait la volonté démocratique de millions de citoyens dans les régions kurdes de Turquie, Recep Tayyip Erdogan nourrit la discrimination à l'égard du peuple kurde et étale une fois de plus aux yeux de tous le peu de cas qu'il fait de la démocratie. Son mépris autocratique des droits les plus élémentaires, son absence de dialogue et de compromis, son recours perpétuel au fantasme de l'ennemi intérieur kurde présent partout et tout le temps, sa propension à jouer sur la fibre nationaliste (pour ne pas dire raciste et fasciste), tout cela creuse un peu plus chaque jour le fossé entre les peuples de Turquie. Surtout, il alimente une situation conflictuelle sans laquelle son AKP et son gouvernement ne sauraient s'épanouir. Tout cela, Bedia Özgökçe Ertan le sait très bien, ce qui ne l'empêche pas d'envisager « d'épuiser toutes les voies légales » pour contester sa révocation et celles des co-maires de Mardin et de Diyarbakir. Avec les sympathisants, militants, élus et dirigeants, elle se battra comme le HDP et ses prédécesseurs se sont toujours battus politiquement en Turquie depuis le début des années 90. Leur désir de démocratie, de justice et de paix est immense. Mais comme l'a fait remarquer Ahmet Türk, figure historique du mouvement politique kurde en Turquie et destitué à Mardin, « quand vous êtes face à un pouvoir guidé par la colère, un pouvoir qui se crée des ennemis pour se maintenir en place, vous ne pouvez savoir jusqu'où il peut aller ».

Germany's Leopard 2 Tank in Syria Was Beaten Badly in Battle. Why? Here's what happened.



However, photos on social media soon emerged showing that Leopard 2 tanks were being employed to blast Kurdish positions in Afrin, where there have several dozen civilian casualties have been reported. Furthermore, on January 21, the Kurdish YPG published a YouTube video depicting a Turkish Leopard 2 being struck by a Konkurs antitank missiles. However, it is not possible to tell if the tank was knocked out; the missile may have struck the Leopard 2's front armor, which is rated as equivalent to 590 to 690 millimeters of rolled homogenous armor on the 2A4, while the two types of Konkurs missiles can penetrate six or eight hundred millimeters of RHA.

This was shockingly illustrated in December 2016 when evidence emerged that numerous Leopard 2s had been destroyed in intense fighting over ISIS-held Al-Bab—a fight that Turkish military leaders described as a “trauma,” according to *Der Spiegel*.

Germany's Leopard 2 main battle tank has a reputation as one of the finest in the world, competing for that distinction with proven designs such as the American M1 Abrams and the British Challenger 2. However, that reputation for nigh-invincibility has faced setbacks on Syrian battlefields, and placed Berlin in a uniquely awkward

national-level dispute with Turkey, its fellow NATO member.

Ankara had offered to release a German political prisoner in exchange for Germany upgrading the Turkish Army's older-model Leopard 2A4 tank, which had proven embarrassingly vulnerable in combat. However, on January 24, public outrage over reports that Turkey was using its Leopard 2s to kill Kurdish fighters in the Syrian enclaves of Afrin and Manbij forced Berlin to freeze the hostage-for-tanks deal.

The Leopard 2 is often compared to its near contemporary, the [M1 Abrams](#): in truth the two designs share broadly similar characteristics, including a scale-tipping weight of well over

sixty tons of advanced composite armor, 1,500 horsepower engines allowing speeds over forty miles per hour and, for certain models, the same forty-four-caliber 120-millimeter main gun produced by Rheinmetall.

Both types can easily destroy most Russian-built tanks at medium and long ranges, at which they are unlikely to be penetrated by return fire from standard 125-millimeter guns. Furthermore, they have better sights with superior thermal imagers and magnification, that make them more likely to detect and hit the enemy first—historically, an even greater determinant of the victor in armored warfare than sheer firepower. A Greek trial found that moving Leopard 2s and Abramses hit a 2.3-meter target nineteen and twenty times out of

twenty, respectively, while a Soviet T-80 scored only eleven hits.

The modest differences between the two Western tanks reveal different national philosophies. The Abrams has a noisy 1,500-horsepower gas-guzzling turbine, which starts up more rapidly, while the Leopard 2's diesel motor grants it greater range before refueling. The Abrams has achieved some of its extraordinary offensive and defensive capabilities through use of depleted uranium ammunition and armor packages—technologies politically unacceptable to the Germans. Therefore, later models of the Leopard 2A6 now mount a higher-velocity fifty-five-caliber gun to make up the difference in penetrating power, while the 2A5 Leopard introduced an extra wedge of spaced armor on the turret to better absorb enemy fire.

German scruples also extend to arms exports, with Berlin imposing more extensive restrictions on which countries it is willing to sell weapons to—at least in comparison to France, the United States or Russia. While the Leopard 2 is in service with eighteen countries, including many NATO members, a lucrative Saudi bid for between four hundred and eight hundred Leopard 2s was rejected by Berlin because of the Middle Eastern country's human-rights records, and its bloody war in Yemen in particular. The Saudis instead ordered additional Abramses to their fleet of around four hundred.

This brings us to Turkey, a NATO country with which Berlin has important historical and economic ties, but which also has had bouts of military government and waged a controversial counterinsurgency campaign against Kurdish separatists for decades. In the early 2000s, under a more favorable political climate, Berlin sold 354 of its retired Leopard 2A4 tanks to Ankara. These represented a major upgrade over the less well protected M60 Patton tanks that make up the bulk of Turkey's armored forces.

However, the rumor has long persisted that Berlin agreed to the sale under the condition that the German tanks not be used in Turkey's counterinsurgency operations against the Kurds. Whether such an understanding ever existed is hotly contested, but the fact remains that the Leopard 2 was kept well away from the Kurdish conflict and instead deployed in northern Turkey, opposite Russia.

However, in the fall of 2016, Turkish Leopard 2s of the Second Armored Brigade finally deployed to the Syrian border to support Operation Euphrates Shield, Turkey's intervention against ISIS. Prior to the Leopard's arrival, [around a dozen Turkish Patton tanks were destroyed](#) by both ISIS and Kurdish missiles. Turkish defense

commentators expressed the hope that the tougher Leopard would fare better.

The 2A4 model was the last of the Cold War-era Leopard 2s, which were designed to fight in relatively concentrated units in a fast-paced defensive war against Soviet tank columns, not to survive IEDs and missiles fired by ambushing insurgents in long-term counterinsurgency campaigns where every single loss was a political issue. The 2A4 retains an older boxy turret configurations which affords less protection from modern antitank missiles, especially to the generally more vulnerable rear and side armor, which is a bigger problem in a counterinsurgency environment, where an attack may come from any direction.

This was shockingly illustrated in December 2016 when evidence emerged that numerous Leopard 2s had been destroyed in intense fighting over ISIS-held Al-Bab—a fight that Turkish military leaders described as a “trauma,” [according to Der Spiegel](#). A document published online listed ISIS as apparently having destroyed ten of the supposedly invincible Leopard 2s; five reportedly by antitank missiles, two by mines or IEDs, one to rocket or mortar fire, and the others to more ambiguous causes.

[These photos](#) confirm the destruction of at least eight. One shows a Leopard 2 apparently [knocked out](#) by a suicide VBIED—an armored kamikaze truck packed with explosives. Another had its [turret blown clean off](#). Three Leopard wrecks can be seen around the same hospital near Al-Bab, along with several other Turkish armored vehicles. It appears the vehicles were mostly struck the more lightly protected belly and side armor by IEDs and AT-7 Metis and AT-5 Konkurs antitank missiles.

Undoubtedly, the manner in which the Turkish Army employed the German tanks likely contributed to the losses. Rather than using them in a combined arms force alongside mutually supporting infantry, they were deployed to the rear as long-range fire-support weapons while Turkish-allied Syrian militias stiffened with Turkish special forces led the assaults. Isolated on exposed firing positions without adequate nearby infantry to form a good defensive perimeter, the Turkish Leopards were vulnerable to ambushes. The same poor tactics have led to the loss of numerous Saudi Abrams tanks in Yemen, as you can see in this [video](#).

By contrast, more modern Leopard 2s have seen quite a bit of action in Afghanistan combating Taliban insurgents in the service of the Canadian 2A6Ms (with enhanced protection against mines and even floating “safety seats”) and Danish 2A5s. Though a few were damaged by mines, all were put back into service, though a Danish

Leopard 2 crew member was mortally injured by an IED attack in 2008. In return, the tanks were praised by field commanders for their mobility and providing accurate and timely fire support during major combat operations in southern Afghanistan.

In 2017, Germany began rebuilding its tank fleet, building an [even beefier Leopard 2A7V model](#) more likely to survive in a counterinsurgency environment. Now Ankara is pressing Berlin to upgrade the defense on its Leopard 2 tanks, especially as the domestically produced Altay tank has been repeatedly delayed.

The Turkish military not only wants additional belly armor to protect against IEDs, but the addition of an Active Protection System (APS) that can detect incoming missiles and their point of origin, and jam or even shoot them down. The U.S. Army recently authorized the [installation of Israeli Trophy APS on a brigade of M1 Abrams tanks](#), a type that has proven effective in combat. Meanwhile, Leopard 2 manufacturer Rheinmetall has unveiled [its own ADATS APS](#), which supposedly poses a lesser risk of harming friendly troops with its defensive countermeasure missiles.

However, German-Turkish relations deteriorated sharply, especially after Erdogan initiated a prolonged crackdown on thousands of supposed conspirators after a failed military coup attempt in August 2016. In February 2017, German-Turkish dual-citizen Deniz Yücel, a correspondent for periodical *Die Welt*, was arrested by Turkish authorities, ostensibly for being a pro-Kurdish spy. His detention caused outrage in Germany.

Ankara pointedly let it be known that if a Leopard 2 upgrade were allowed to proceed, Yücel would be released back to Germany. Though Berlin publicly insisted it would never agree to such a quid pro quo, Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel quietly began moving towards authorizing the upgrade in a bid to improve relations in the face of what looks suspiciously like tank-based blackmail. Gabriel presented the deal as a measure to protect Turkish soldiers' lives from ISIS.

However, in mid-January 2018, Turkey launched an offensive against the Kurdish enclaves of Afrin and Manbij in northwestern Syria. The attack was precipitated generally by Turkish fears that effective Kurdish control of the Syrian border would lead to a de facto state that would expand into Turkish territory, and proximately by an announcement by the Pentagon that it was recruiting the Kurds to form a “border security force” to continue the fight

Turquie: premier acquittement d'une universitaire poursuivie pour une pétition

Un tribunal turc a acquitté ce vendredi 6 septembre une universitaire accusée, comme des centaines de confrères, de «propagande terroriste» pour avoir signé une pétition en 2016, première victoire judiciaire des signataires qui intervient après un arrêt favorable de la Cour constitutionnelle.

Ozlem Sendeniz, chercheuse à l'Université d'Igdir, a été acquittée par un tribunal d'Istanbul, a indiqué sur Twitter un collectif de soutien des pétitionnaires, «Les Académiciens pour la paix». «Il s'agit du premier acquittement dans nos procès», a-t-il ajouté. Ozlem Sendeniz était poursuivie pour avoir signé, comme environ 2000 autres intellectuels, une pétition «pour la paix» appelant à la fin des opérations des forces de sécurité dans

le sud-est à majorité kurde de la Turquie. La pétition a été lancée alors que le sud-est de la Turquie était ensanglanté par la reprise du conflit entre Ankara et le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), un groupe qualifié d'organisation terroriste par la Turquie et ses alliés occidentaux.

Le soutien des universitaires à cette pétition avait suscité l'ire du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan qui a qualifié cet acte de «trahison». Nombre des signataires ont été limogés par décret-loi ces dernières années, comme Ozlem Sendeniz, et la justice turque a engagé des poursuites contre plusieurs centaines d'entre eux, les accusant d'avoir fait de la «propagande terroriste». Selon le média indépendant Bianet, plus de 200 universitaires ont été condamnés à ce jour et des cen-

taines d'autres sont encore en procès. Mais en juillet dernier, la Cour constitutionnelle de Turquie a rendu une décision qualifiant de «violation de leur liberté d'expression» la condamnation de neuf universitaires. Cet arrêt a ouvert la voie à l'acquittement des pétitionnaires dont le procès est toujours en cours et l'annulation de la condamnation de ceux dont le procès s'est déjà achevé.

Les milieux universitaires sont soumis à de fortes pressions en Turquie, en particulier depuis une tentative de putsch en 2016 qui a été suivie de purges de grande ampleur qui n'ont pas épargné les campus.



Par Bruno RIPOCHE,
le 08/09/2019

Migrants : Pourquoi Erdogan menace l'Europe d'un nouvel afflux

La Turquie héberge à elle seule 3,6 millions de réfugiés syriens. Elle redoute une nouvelle arrivée massive, alors que la dernière poche de résistance au régime de Bachar al-Assad menace de s'effondrer. Son président, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, réclame plus d'aide financière et la création d'une zone tampon dans le nord de la Syrie.

Bluff ou intention réelle? Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a menacé jeudi 5 septembre d'**ouvrir les portes** de l'immigration, autrement dit de laisser les Syriens, les Afghans, les Irakiens ou les Pakistanais qui cherchent à gagner l'Europe traverser librement la mer Égée. La Grèce, aux premières loges, s'inquiète: l'île de Lesbos, séparée des côtes turques par seulement 20 km, est de nouveau saturée. La seule journée du 29 août, treize embarcations ont accosté sur son rivage, transportant quelque 540 personnes.

Arrivées record à Lesbos

Selon Athènes, le mois d'août a vu une **hausse sans précédent** des arrivées de clandestins sur les îles de l'Égée. Le ministre grec des Affaires étrangères, Nicos Dendias, a convoqué l'ambassadeur turc pour lui signifier son **fort mécontentement** et exiger qu'Ankara respecte l'accord conclu en mars 2016 avec l'Union européenne.

La Turquie s'était engagée à «fixer» sur son sol les migrants et à **reprendre** ceux qui parvenaient à passer en Grèce. En échange, l'UE avait promis à la Turquie de lui prendre autant de Syriens éligibles au statut de

réfugié, ainsi qu'une aide de 6 milliards d'euros. Ce dispositif a largement enrayeré le flux de migrants traversant l'Égée: leur nombre est passé de 850 000 en 2015 à 50 000 en 2018. Selon l'ONU, il est resté stable sur les huit premiers mois de 2019, avec 34 000 arrivées.

L'argument remis sur le tapis

Il n'empêche. Recep Tayyip Erdogan est bien décidé à **remettre l'argument des migrants sur le tapis**, souligne, ce samedi, le journal turc de gauche *Cumhuriyet*. Autrement dit, à l'utiliser dans une négociation, si ce n'est un chantage assez récurrent.

Selon l'ONU, la Turquie héberge sur son sol 3,6 millions de réfugiés syriens, soit deux tiers des Syriens qui ont fui leur pays depuis le début de la guerre civile, en 2012. Probablement plus, en réalité, car ce chiffre ne prend en compte que ceux officiellement enregistrés par le Haut-commissariat aux réfugiés des Nations



Des habitants de l'enclave d'Idlib assiégée par l'armée de Bachar al-Assad, dans le nord de la Syrie. La Turquie et les Nations unies redoutent un nouveau déplacement de civils fuyant les combats. | AFP

unies. Selon Ankara, la facture se monte pour la Turquie à 40 milliards de dollars. Et l'Union européenne n'aurait versé que la moitié de la somme promise, ce qu'a vigoureusement démenti Bruxelles. **«Soit vous nous aidez, soit vous ne le faites pas. Mais il y a des limites à ce que nous pouvons supporter»**, gronde le président turc.

Alors que la région d'Idlib, dernière poche rebelle dans le nord de la Syrie, est **assiégée par les troupes**



La Turquie redoute un afflux de migrant en provenance de la région d'Idlib, théâtre de violents combats entre l'armée d'Assad et les rébellions modérée et salafiste. | INFOGRAPHIE OUEST-FRANCE

d'Assad et que la Turquie redoute un nouvel afflux de réfugiés, Ankara somme l'UE d'agir : « Nous ne sommes les gardiens de personne. Nous ne sommes pas le lieu de stockage des réfugiés », déclare à *Cumhuriyet*, le vice-président turc Fuat Oktay, soulignant que les déclarations d'Erdogan « ne sont pas du bluff ». La région d'Idlib abrite plus de trois millions de civils.

Ankara veut renvoyer les réfugiés en Syrie

Erdogan ne réclame pas seulement de l'argent. Le gouvernement turc est confronté à l'échec de sa politique syrienne. Il a soutenu les rebelles syriens et misé sur l'effondrement du régime syrien. Or, Assad, sou-

tenu par la Russie et l'Irak, est en train de sortir victorieux de sept années de soulèvement et les Kurdes syriens, « cousins » du PKK, la guérilla kurde de Turquie ont pris le contrôle de toute la région frontalière entre le fleuve Euphrate et l'Irak.

La Turquie exige aussi un soutien politique face aux États-Unis, avec lesquels les relations sont épidémiques : Erdogan leur reproche de s'être alliés aux Kurdes de Syrie, perçus comme un danger, pour vaincre l'État islamique. Ces dernières semaines, Ankara a obtenu de Washington la création d'une zone tampon, patrouillée conjointement, le long des 140 km de frontière entre l'Euphrate et l'Irak. Cela permettrait au pouvoir turc de repousser les combattants kurdes à plusieurs dizaines de kilomètres et, à terme, de renvoyer en Syrie des centaines de milliers de réfugiés.

Au nord de la frontière, les soldats turcs sont prêts à intervenir. Au sud, les combattants kurdes ont entamé leur retrait, mais l'armée américaine ne se presse pas et Erdogan s'impatiente. La zone tampon « n'est qu'un mot sur le papier », a-t-il déclaré cette semaine.

LE FIGARO

Par Minoui Delphine
le 8 septembre 2019

Opération militaire américano-turque en Syrie

Des soldats des deux armées ont patrouillé ensemble dans le nord du pays, près de la frontière avec la Turquie.

MOYEN-ORIENT Perchés au-dessus d'une colonie de véhicules blindés, drapeaux turcs et américains glissent en un seul et même convoi le long du mur de béton qui délimite la frontière syrienne. L'image, particulièrement symbolique, a été diffusée dès dimanche matin sur la chaîne turque TRT. Quelques minutes plus tôt, Ankara annonçait le début de patrouilles conjointes turco-américaines dans ce secteur convoité, censé se transformer, à terme, en « zone de sécurité ». La manœuvre militaire s'inscrit dans le cadre d'un accord, conclu in extremis le 7 août, entre la Turquie et les États-Unis pour désamorcer les différends opposant les deux pays.

Ankara, qui milite depuis des années pour une « zone tampon » dans cette enclave du nord de la Syrie, a pour objectif d'empêcher la création d'une entité kurde indépendante à la lisière de son territoire et à maintenir à distance les milices YPG (Unités de protection du peuple), positionnées à l'est de l'Euphrate et qu'elle considère comme « terroristes ». Mais pour Washington, ces milices kurdes ont toujours été de précieux alliés dans cette région volatile où elles ont contribué à combattre les djihadistes de l'État islamique. Au tout début du mois d'août, le ton

était monté d'un cran lorsque le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait annoncé une intervention militaire turque imminente dans le Nord syrien. « Nous allons continuer à combattre ceux qui sont les ennemis de notre pays, les groupes terroristes tels que le mouvement Fetö, Daech et le PKK (le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, considéré comme le « parrain » des YPG, NDLR) », avait-il déclaré. À deux reprises, la Turquie était déjà intervenue de l'autre côté de sa frontière : en 2016, à Jaraboulous, pour déloger les combattants de l'État islamique ; en 2018, à Afrine, pour repousser les milices YPG.

En un temps record, un « deal » aux contours relativement flous avait été signé avec Washington afin d'établir un centre d'opérations conjointes. Ces derniers jours, la Turquie avait de nouveau montré des signes d'impatience en mettant en garde contre toute « manœuvre dilatoire », et prévenu qu'aucun « retard » ne serait toléré.



L'opération militaire commune de ce dimanche intervient aussi sur fond de tension autour de la crise des réfugiés. Débordée par les quelque 3,5 millions de Syriens qu'elle accueille sur son territoire, la Turquie espère en renvoyer près d'un tiers dans ce périmètre frontalier. Le président Erdogan a ainsi menacé de remettre en cause l'accord migratoire signé avec l'Europe en mars 2016 (voir page 8) ; si cette dernière ne l'aide pas à créer une « zone de sécurité » pour abriter les réfugiés, la Turquie, a déclaré son président, leur « ouvrira les portes » - sous-entendu les frontières, terrestres et maritimes, qui mènent aux pays européens.

HDP delegation arrives in Erbil to discuss Kurdish unity, ‘regional issues’

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region— A high-profile delegation from the pro-Kurdish, Turkish opposition Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) arrived in Erbil on Saturday to meet with Kurdistan Region’s authorities and political leaders, discuss “regional issues and the unity of Kurds.”

HDP co-chair Sezai Temelli is heading the delegation. This is Temelli’s first trip to Kurdistan Region.

“Our presence here today is very important because, as you know, the main issues in the world are in the Middle East. The resolution of these issues includes the will and struggle of Kurds,” he told reporters after arriving at Erbil International Airport (EIA).

He said the Kurdistan Region is one of the places in the Middle East where “the politics of the world is determined.”

“We have an important initiative and responsibility for the resolution of Turkish and Middle East issues. We hope that our visit will bring peace to all the people of the region,” he added. The delegation met with Masoud Barzani, leader of the ruling Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), in Erbil. Though there has been no readout from any side regarding the visit, a video tweeted by the party’s English-language account showed a meeting between Barzani and HDP members in session.

Headed by our co-chair Sezai Temelli, our delegation met with Mr. Massoud Barzani in Iraqi #Kurdistan. The parties exchanged views on various matters including regional issues and the unity of Kurds. pic.twitter.com/kvDPVoXH3A — HDP English (@HDPenglish) September 7, 2019

Temelli told reporters at the EIA that “I want to exchange views on Bashur [Kurdistan Region] and Turkey relations with him.”

The delegation is expected to meet on Sunday with President Nechirvan Barzani and the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), then head to Sulaimani province on Monday to meet with Iraqi President Barham Salih and Sulaimani-



Caption: HDP leader Sezai Temelli received by Erbil governor Nawzad Hadi at Erbil International Airport on September 7, 2019. Photo: HDP

based political parties, Muzeyyen Gunes, head of HDP office in Kurdistan Region told Rudaw before the delegation arrived.

It is not yet clear whether they will meet with Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Masrour Barzani during their four-day visit.

The HDP has faced waves of crackdown by Turkish authorities that worsened after a failed military coup attempt in July 2016, which led to the arrest of both the HDP co-chair Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag, as well as thousands of party members - despite their condemnation of the putsch.

The **removal** of three democratically-elected HDP mayors on August 19 was the latest example of the clampdown.

Adem Geveri, a former HDP lawmaker and outspoken party member told Rudaw TV from Van province in Turkey that the deposed mayors will be among the range of Kurdish-related issues to be discussed in the meetings.

“The HDP is practicing diplomacy with both in-

ternational and local powers. Although it is late, it wants to have meetings with its friends from Kurdistan Region regarding [Kurdish] unity,” he said, adding that the HDP is seeking support against “threats” against Kurds in Syria and Turkey.

Another HDP delegation consisting of women party members visited Kurdistan Region last week, trying to create a Kurdish women’s union.

Temelli, the ethnically Turkish co-chair of the HDP, told journalists on Saturday in Erbil that they are fighting for peace not only for Turkey but globally.

“We are fighting for peace in Turkey. The fight is not limited to Kurdish borders. If there is no peace in the Middle East, there will be no peace for the whole world,” he said.

“One of the most important subjects [in Turkey] is to stay away from Kurdish animosity. If there is not peace with Kurds, there will be no peace in Turkey or the region.”



September 08, 2019

Kurdistan president calls for peaceful solution to Kurdish question in Turkey

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – President of the autonomous Kurdistan Region Nechirvan Barzani stated on Sunday that Kurdish issues in neighboring Turkey should be resolved through peaceful means.

Barzani's statement came during a meeting in Erbil with the delegation of Turkey's pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), headed by the party's co-chair Sezai Temelli.

"It's time for peace and the Kurdish question in Turkey should be addressed through peaceful means because war would resolve nothing," Barzani said, according to a statement released by his press office.

"No opportunities for peace in Turkey shall be missed," he added.

Since the 1980s, more than 40,000 people have been killed in the conflict between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Turkish government. After a few years of a ceasefire, established in 2013 with leaders from the Kurdistan Region playing a key role in the process, clashes once again restarted between the PKK and Turkish forces in 2015.

Barzani stated that he would continue his efforts to restart the peace talks in Turkey and will do what is necessary to take the process forward, the statement added.

The HDP delegates congratulated Barzani for assuming his new role as President and praised his past efforts toward peace. They also stressed that peace is in the interest of all in Turkey and that the Kurdish people hope for a successful solution.



The HDP delegation met on Sunday with the president of the Kurdistan Region, Nechirvan Barzani (right), Erbil, Sept. 8, 2019. (Photo: Kurdistan Region Presidency)

The meeting came one day after HDP members arrived in Erbil to meet with Masoud Barzani, president of the leading Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and former president of the Kurdistan Region.

Over the past few years, Ankara has increased its military operations against the PKK, which Turkey, the EU, and the US have designated a "terrorist organization."

Turkish forces have crossed into the Kurdistan Region up to 30 kilometers deep in some areas to target the group, with regular airstrikes aimed at its fighters and hideouts. The PKK's headquarters is located in the autonomous region's Qandil Mountains.

Editing by John J. Catherine



September 8, 2019

US and Turkish troops conduct first joint ground patrol of Syrian 'safe zone'

(CNN)US and Turkish troops conducted their first ever joint ground patrol within what Turkey has called the "safe zone" that runs along the Syria-Turkish border and extends into the northeast.

The operation is aimed at creating a buffer zone that will keep US-backed Kurdish militia -- the People's Protection Units (YPG) -- away from Turkey's border. Ankara regards the YPG as a terrorist group affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has fought the Turkish state for more than three decades.

"Today's patrol maintained security within the area and demonstrates our continued commitment to ad-

dress Turkey's legitimate security concerns," said US Army spokesman Col. Myles B. Caggins.

The US refers to the area as a security mechanism.

The patrol, Caggins said, will allow the coalition and America's Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) partners to "remain focused on achieving the enduring defeat of Daesh (ISIS)."

Joint land and air patrols will continue over the next few days, Turkey's Defense Ministry said, according to state-run Anadolu news agency.

Caggins said during the operations Turkish officers documented that the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) had withdrawn their troops from the designated area and had removed a series of some defensive fortifications.

The joint patrol follows earlier aerial surveillance flights and the establishment of a joint operations center.

While the US has not said how deep the zone will go into Syria, but an SDF commander told CNN Friday that it will average five kilometers (three miles) deep and extend as far out as 12 kilometers (seven miles) in a few places.



Several casualties in clashes between Iranian forces and Kurdish opposition parties

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – A series of clashes between Kurdish opposition groups, civilians, and Iranian troops in different locations in western Iran resulted in at least two deaths and several injuries, according to multiple reports from a semi-official media agency and a local human rights watchdog.

The latest incident occurred on Saturday in a remote village near the border of the Kurdistan Region in Mariwan County of Iran's Kurdistan Province. The semi-official Tasnim agency reported that the unknown gunmen were “attempting to enter Iran illegally.”

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) units stationed at the border, according to Tasnim, intercepted the Kurdish fighters, and, during the ensuing exchange, an IRGC member was killed and another was injured.

Tehran has assigned the IRGC the task of policing remote areas and borders of the country in Kurdish parts of Iran due to the presence of opposition groups fighting for expanded rights of the ethnic minority. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the most recent skirmishes.

The clash comes amid an apparent uptick in confrontations following an almost one-month-long period of quiet between IRGC units and most Kurdish groups. This was after Iranian forces **bombarded** the bases of Kurdish parties across its western border into the Kurdistan Region.

At the same time, Iranian officials and Kurdish opposition parties were reportedly due to hold a secret meeting last month as tensions between Tehran and the West continues, with the Kurds holding little optimism for good results. It is still unclear if the talks have taken place and if they have, whether any results have yielded.

Nevertheless, multiple exchanges have taken place since late August, involving on at least one occasion, fighters from a Kurdish party that was able to be part of the talks with Iranian officials. Civilians from the region have also clashed with IRGC troops amid the country's continued crackdown on alleged supporters of Kurdish movements.

Late Friday, an IRGC member was killed by unknown gunmen in the village of Zkriyani, located within Saravband, in Kurdistan province. The county is immediately south of Mariwan and has been the site of many armed exchanges in recent months.

In another incident to the north of Mariwan in the Kurdish-populated areas of West Azerbaijan (Shno) province, another armed group battled Iranian forces with no reports indicating the number of casualties. The latter then responded with concentrated shelling of the surrounded area in search of the fleeing fighters.



Iranian border guards patrol a road near one of the nation's borders. (Photo: Archive)

Hengaw, a local watchdog that documents these incidents as well as Kurdish rights abuses in Iran, reported last Sunday that Iranian forces that day skirmished with Kurdish workers in the city of Sardasht, West Azerbaijan.

The monitor wrote that Iranian security forces had chased a car carrying an unspecified number of purported workers, and after the latter vehicle came to a grinding halt due to an accident, the two sides exchanged fire. Two workers and six security officers were wounded.

While the Iranian officers were transported to the nearest hospital, the fate of the armed workers was not clear.

In an earlier standoff on Aug. 28, the IRGC killed two opposition fighters, which the Kurdistan Democratic Party – Iran (KDP-I) later confirmed were their members, in a clash in Piranshahr, West Azerbaijan. Another affiliate was injured and arrested. This occurred after unknown gunmen killed an IRGC officer in the same city.

About ten days following the late August confrontation, IRGC forces detained and gunned down two persons in the city of Mahabad for “supporting” the KDP-I, the party said in a statement. The exact circumstances of this incident could not be confirmed.

These developments come as Tehran continues to decrease its commitments to its nuclear deal with international powers, from which the US withdrew last year and re-imposed punitive sanctions on Iran as the latter continued to bolster its extraterritorial military presence and violate human rights of its citizens.

Since May, Iran has started to reduce its commitments to portions of the nuclear deal and has an-

nounced it will continue to do so. The country's atomic energy agency confirmed recently that their stockpile of 4.5 percent enriched uranium had reached about 370 kilograms.

The limit Iran was originally allowed in the JCPOA was 300 kilograms of uranium not to exceed 3.67 percent purity. On Saturday, the country's atomic energy agency said the country had the technological capability to go beyond 20 percent enrichment.

In tandem with this, the security situation in the Gulf waters south of Iran—which are a major international oil-exporting route—has become precarious since May this year as multiple tankers were attacked and IRGC naval forces seized multiple ships, including a British-flagged vessel.

Iranian authorities undertook the lattermost action after British special forces impounded early July an Iranian supertanker, Grace 1, off the coast of Gibraltar intending to deliver 2 million barrels of oil to Syria in contravention to European Union sanctions. **Related Article: Released Iranian tanker heads to Greece despite skepticism of its final destination**

On Aug. 18, the vessel, renamed Adrian Darya 1, sailed back into international waters after local authorities stated Tehran had given guarantees the ship would not be heading to Syria despite Iranian authorities claiming otherwise.

In a photograph taken by an American satellite firm, Maxar Technologies Inc. on Sept. 6, Adrian Darya 1 was seen off the Syrian port of Tartus, Reuters reported. British authorities have not commented on the issue yet with their vessel still anchored in an Iranian port.

Editing by John J. Catherine

KRG prime minister says Kurdistan will not give up ‘national demands’



A meeting between Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Masrour Barzani and Kurdish blocs in the Iraqi parliament in Erbil on September 8, 2019. Photo: KRG media office

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region — The Kurdistan Region is not only concerned with the debate over the federal budget in its deliberations with Baghdad, and will not give up its “national demands,” the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) said in a [release](#) on Sunday.

KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani made the comments in Erbil in a meeting with the heads of Kurdistan Region political parties and members of the finance committee in the Iraqi parliament.

“The Prime Minister asserted that the problem of the people of Kurdistan is not merely about the budget [share] and salaries, but that we have a national question and national demands, and we will not relinquish our constitutional rights and demands,” read the statement.

Barzani notified the heads of the Kurdish blocs of the progress of talks with the Iraqi government over the budget, disputed territories and other issues. The two disagree about oil sales and the KRG’s share of the federal budget, as well as the administration of the disputed Iraqi-Kurdish territories in the north of the country.

“We hope, on the bases of the constitution, the issue are resolved in a manner that the princi-

ples of true partnership, balance, and consensus are taken into consideration,” the statement quoted the Kurdish prime minister as saying.

The Kurdish blocs in the Iraqi parliament later met with [Rewaz Faiq](#), the Speaker of the Kurdistan Region’s parliament, on Sunday to discuss the Kurdistan Region’s budget share, among other matters.

One of the sticking matters between the Kurdistan Region and the government of Iraq is [independent oil sales](#) of the former. According to Iraq’s 2019 budget law, the KRG is to handover 250,000 barrels of oil to Iraq’s State Oil Marketing Organization (SOMO).

The revenue would go to the federal treasury. The KRG, however, has yet to handover a single barrel, while Baghdad has been sending the salaries of more than 600,000 public employees of the KRG. According to the budget bill, an amount equivalent to the 250,000 barrels per day of oil not handed over would be cut off from the KRG’s share.

In case of a failure to resolve the oil issue, the KRG might have to endure another financial crisis, like in 2014, when it could no longer pay its bloated, more than one million individual-strong public sector employees.

Regarding the disputed territories, Iraq retook them from the KRG in 2017 following the Kurdistan independence referendum. Since then, there has been an [Islamic State \(ISIS\) resurgence](#) in the areas.

Currently, Baghdad and Erbil have two technical teams, one concerned with budget and oil matters, and the other concerned with the disputed territories and security cooperation, working on the outstanding issues between the two.

There is also a supreme committee, composed of the Iraqi and Kurdish prime ministers, to approve the agreements that the two committees reach.

A member of the Iraqi parliamentarian from the opposition Hikmah Front has said that Iraqi parliamentarians will soon [reconsider agreements](#) between the KRG and federal Iraqi government as KRG has shown “no good will” in keeping its side of the bargain with the Iraq.

Many Kurds consider Iraqi’s current prime minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi as [friendly to Kurds](#), as he has previously admitted that the Kurdish issue in Iraq is as old as Iraq itself.

Kurdish no longer offered as elective subject in public schools – Mezopotamya

Kurdish language, which has been offered as an elective subject by the Turkish Ministry of Education since 2012, has effectively been removed from the ministry's curriculum, pro-Kurdish Mezopotamya news agency [reported on Monday](#).

The introduction of up to two hours of Kurdish classes in grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 in schools where there is sufficient demand has failed to get off the ground due to inadequate classrooms, lack of teachers or students being forced to choose another elective, according to officials and students, the agency said.

The inclusion of Kurdish as an elective course in Turkey's schools arrived as part of a Turkey's reforms introduced by then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development Party to [ease tensions with the Kurdish minority](#), who account for approximately 15 percent of the country's population.

A total of 77,931 students chose Kurdish - Kurmanji and Zazaki - as an elective in academic year 2015-2016, according to the latest statistics on students by the Ministry of Education (MEB).

However, the ministry has only appointed 59 teachers for Kurdish in total classes to date,



Mezopotamya Agency said, citing MEB statistics.

No teachers have been assigned as Kurdish teachers for the current academic year, it added.

The Vice Chair of Diyarbakır Educational Union Branch No.2 Recep Şimşek maintains the problem is caused by a lack of teachers and course materials provided by the ministry.

"School administrations do not provide adequ-

ate information, and parents are being misled. Parents are told there is not enough demand or teachers, and encouraged to pick different electives for their children," Şimşek said.

According to a 2009 study within Turkey's Kurdish-speaking population, approximately 46 percent of the country's Kurdish population have not completed primary education, which accounts for 9 percent of the Turkish population as a whole. Some 37 percent of the Kurdish-speaking population is illiterate.

Syrie: 18 combattants pro-iraniens tués dans des frappes aériennes dans l'est

Des frappes aériennes dans l'est de la Syrie ont visé dans la nuit de dimanche à lundi des positions des forces iraniennes et de milices alliées, tuant 18 combattants selon une ONG qui n'était pas en mesure d'identifier l'auteur de ces raids.

«Des frappes aériennes ont visé plusieurs positions des forces iraniennes et des milices alliées dans la région de Boukamal», à la frontière avec l'Irak, a indiqué l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH). «Dix-huit combattants ont été tués, mais leur nationalité n'est pas encore déterminée».

L'Observatoire qui dispose d'un vaste réseau de sources dans le pays en guerre n'était pas en mesure d'identifier l'auteur de ces frappes.

L'attaque a eu lieu dans la province de Deir Ezzor, théâtre d'opérations complexes où plusieurs forces sont présentes.

En juin 2018, des frappes sur l'extrême est syrien près de la frontière irakienne avaient tué 55 combattants des forces pro-régime --notamment syriens et irakiens, selon l'OSDH.

Un responsable américain s'exprimant à Washington sous le couvert de l'anonymat avait alors imputé la frappe à Israël, mais l'armée israélienne avait refusé tout commentaire.

Ennemi juré d'Israël, l'Iran est militairement engagé en Syrie au côté du pouvoir de Bachar al-Assad. A plusieurs reprises, Israël a annoncé avoir mené des frappes en Syrie contre des posi-

tions des forces iraniennes, ou du mouvement libanais du Hezbollah, allié de Téhéran et du régime syrien. Dans la province de Deir Ezzor, les forces du régime sont engagées avec l'appui de milices étrangères, notamment des combattants irakiens et iraniens.

Dans cette même province, une alliance de combattants kurdes et arabes, les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), est également sur le terrain, soutenue par les avions de la Coalition internationale emmenée par Washington. Le conflit syrien, déclenché en 2011 par la répression de manifestations prodémocratie, s'est complexifié au fil des ans avec l'implication d'une multitude d'acteurs et de puissances étrangères. la guerre dans ce pays a fait plus de 370.000 morts et des millions de déplacés.

Kurdish Official Warns against Turkish Plans to Resettle Refugees

Tal Abyad - Kamal Sheikhou

Top Kurdish official Badran Jia Kurd warned in a statement to Asharq Al-Awsat that Turkey's motives for resettling Syrian refugees in eastern Euphrates are neither humanitarian nor contributing to the resolution of their cause.

"Settling refugees in areas other than their own will not solve the crisis but will create other social and political crises," he warned against Ankara's plans.

Another People's Protection Units Kurdish official confirmed that Turkish-US joint patrols in east of the Euphrates were in coordination with the International coalition and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

SDF units had withdrawn from the area and handed it over to US-allied local councils. Another Kurdish official warned that the refugee-filed safe zones can be exploited as a new "Arab belt" in the Kurdish-run area.

"Patrolling was conducted in full coordination between Turkey and the international coalition and our forces," SDF Spokesman Mustapha Bali told Asharq Al-Awsat.

"Coalition-trained border protection forces, in coordination with local military councils, are filling the void after our military units have withdrawn," he said, adding that the implementation of the "se-



Turkish and US military vehicles seen during a joint patrol in the East Euphrates region, Syria, Reuters

curity agreement will bring stability to the region and will also reflect positively on the battle against remnants of ISIS."

Armed Turkish military vehicles have crossed into northeast Syria to begin joint patrols with the US Army as part of a planned so-called "safe zone" along the border.

The joint ground patrols were launched as part of the first phase of the "safe zone" plan agreed between the two countries last month. The US-Turkey deal for the zone is intended to manage tensions between Ankara and US-backed Kurdish-led forces, who mainly control the region east of the Euphrates

River and are branded by Ankara brands as "terrorists".

"SDF units dismantled checkpoints and military points of a defensive nature, and handed them over to the military councils and local fighters there," Bali noted, pointing out that the Turkish forces and the US-led coalition forces will guard borders but will be stationed inside Turkey with the operations center established there.

Considering the agreement a "security mechanism" and not a "Safe Zone," Bali said it is meant to quell Ankara's alleged national security fears.

 September 9, 2019

'Kirkuk is Kurdistan': Kurdish parties to run on joint list for provincial elections in disputed Kirkuk

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region — All political parties in the Kurdistan Region agreed to run together on Monday in upcoming provincial elections in the disputed Kirkuk province.

The parties want people to register to vote following the formation of the new alliance, they said in a statement they read at a press conference in Kirkuk on Monday.

"All the parties decided to run in the upcoming provincial elections of Kirkuk on a joint list named 'Kirkuk is Kurdistan,'" read a statement from the Kurdish parties in Kirkuk on Monday.

"We are calling on the Kuridstanians in Kirkuk to visit the voter registration offices."

The joint electoral list's name "Kirkuk is Kurdistan" reflects their belief that the contested area is an integral part of the Kurdish nation. The provincial elections are scheduled for April 1, 2020 in Kirkuk and other disputed territories between Erbil and Baghdad.

Though the ruling Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) did not attend today's meeting in Kirkuk, Rawand Mala Mahmood, the deputy head of the second-largest Kurdish party the Patriotic Union

of Kurdistan (PUK) office in Kirkuk, said the KDP also agreed to form the electoral list.

"They spoke with the KDP by phone and they also agreed to run for the elections in Kirkuk. The joint list will include them as well," said Mahmood to the press conference.

The KDP is the only Kurdish political party that has not returned to Kirkuk since Iraqi forces retook the city from the Kurdish Peshmerga in 2017 following the Kurdistan independence referendum. The KDP also **did not contest** May 12 Iraqi parliamentary elections in Kirkuk, calling

the city “occupied and sold out” due to the presence of Iraqi forces.

Today's agreement between the political parties in Kirkuk comes after the **PUK sent a letter** to Kurdish parties on Thursday asking them to prepare the mechanisms through which they could run together as one list in the upcoming elections.

Kirkuk is one of the disputed territories between the federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq. Kirkuk has a mix of Kurdish, Arab, Turkmen, and Christian inhabitants. Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein forcibly moved people to and from Kirkuk and the surrounding areas during his reign, further exacerbating tensions.

Kirkuk hasn't had a provincial council elections since 2005, mainly due to its disputed nature and disagreements between Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen in the province.

In 2005, out of 41 provincial council seats, Kurds were able to win 26 seats when they ran on the joint Kurdistan Brotherhood List that included some Turkmen parties as well.



Representatives of different Kurdish parties in Kirkuk Province during a joint press conference, announcing a unified front for the upcoming provincial elections. Sept. 9, 2019. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

The Kurdish parties called for peace between the different ethnic and religious groups in the city with their announcement.

"The Kurdish parties are stressing the need for peaceful co-existence among all the components of the city," the statement read

THE
JERUSALEM POST
September 9, 2019
By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

What are Turkey-U.S. 'joint patrols' in eastern Syria and why they matter

In 2014 ISIS attacked the area and threatened to exterminate and ethnically cleanse Kurds, minorities and anyone who didn't adhere to the ISIS extremist interpretation of Islam.

The US and Turkey began joint military patrols in northeast Syria along the Turkish border, a possible sign that the US is trying to cater to Ankara's demands regarding the future of eastern Syria. The patrols, which saw Turkish military vehicles and US military vehicles, each with their country's large flags attached, driving around dry farmland, come after a year of Ankara's **threats** to launch an attack on eastern Syria against US partner forces.

According to reports the US said that the patrols are part of the "security mechanism" that was announced last month amid renewed Turkish threats. The patrols are one part of a mechanism that has seen the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) uproot fortifications near the border and claims to illustrate that the YPG has left an area of eastern Syria along the border.



U.S. and Turkish soldiers conduct the first-ever combined joint patrol outside Manbij, Syria, November 1, 2018. Picture taken November 1, 2018. Courtesy Arnada Jones/U.S. (photo credit: ARMY/HANDOUT VIA REUTERS)

The **complex backstory** to this is that in 2014 ISIS attacked this area and threatened to exterminate and ethnically cleanse Kurds, minorities and anyone who didn't adhere to the ISIS extremist interpretation of Islam. Instead ISIS was met with resistance from the mostly Kurdish YPG who eventually were able to push them back with the help of US and coalition airstrikes. Later, with more assistance from special forces and light arms, the YPG and the Syrian Democratic Forces helped liberate Raqqa and defeat ISIS in eastern Syria. But for Turkey this was problematic because Turkey claims the YPG is part of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) which Turkey had fought a war with after a ceasefire broke down in 2015. Turkey invaded Afrin in northwest Syria in January 2018 to defeat the YPG and has said it intends to do the same thing to eastern Syria. In Afrin more than 150,000 Kurds were displaced by fighting and hundreds of thousands of mostly Arab Syrian refugees settled in Afrin, changing the demographics of this historic Kurdish area. Turkey says it will return eastern Syria to its "true owners" and has said it wants to send a million Syrians, most of whom are not from eastern Syria, to move into eastern Syria in a "safe zone" that Turkey has demanded control over.

The US, which is partnered with the SDF and wants to see ISIS fully defeated, has objected to Turkey's plans for a military operation, concerned it will destabilize eastern Syria at this unique time when the area requires peace and prosperity. When Turkey announced plans for a similar military offensive in Manbij the US came up with a concept of joint military patrols. But Turkey has said that it will not accept a Manbij-style solution to areas along the border. So it has demanded that its forces be allowed into Syria, which the US appears to have facilitated in order to avoid a possible Turkish offensive.

Last month Turkey said it had informed the US and Russia that an offensive would take place and only last minute discussions with US military officials supposedly stopped the operation. Since then Turkey has gone to Russia to propose buying more Russian military equipment, has threatened to build nuclear weapons and threatened to "open the gates" of refugees going to Europe if its demands are not met in eastern Syria. It's unclear if Ankara's threats are just talk designed to see if the US will budge, or if it would actually launch an offensive in an area where US forces are present.

Washington is in a difficult place because Turkey is ostensibly a NATO ally and Washington has paid lip service to caring about Turkey's concerns, while some wonder what Turkey's real goal is. Turkey has acquired Russia's S-400 missile defense system and seems to want to play the US and Russia off against one another, while Ankara claims it has been betrayed by the US which it accuses of training a "terrorist army" in eastern Syria. But for the US the SDF and mostly Kurdish forces on the ground have proven capable partners defeating ISIS.

The joint patrol that took place on September 8 leaves many questions. No one seems to agree exactly how far these patrols will extend. According to CNN's Ryan Browne they could go as deep as 5-12km into Syria. The patrols are also complex because they involve not just US-Turkey cooperation at the three-star general level, according to recent comments by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Joe Dunford, but they also involve cooperation between US European Command and Central Command (CENTCOM). European Command is eager to show that these patrols go well and work closely with NATO ally Turkey. So it tweeted about how the US and Turkey had conducted the patrol "inside the security mechanism" on September 8. It followed an announcement over the weekend by European Command about US Black Hawk helicopters conducting an aerial patrol over northeast Syria with Turkish military helicopters alongside.

The patrols were photographed on the ground by locals near the area between Tel Abyad and Ras Al-Ain. SDF General Mazloum Kobani told CNN over the weekend that he is concerned about the prospect of a Turkish military offensive. Mazloum agreed to a safe zone and says his forces have shown flexibility. He is confident the Americans are going to be responsive. The SDF seems to be doing everything it can to make sure the US is pleased. This is because the US had threatened to leave eastern Syria last December which would have left the SDF exposed to a Turkish offensive and a repeat of what happened in Afrin. The SDF has said it removed fortifications that the Coalition forces surveyed on September 3. On the ground on September 7, in the lead up to the patrols, Coalition aircraft could be heard and vehicles were present, locals said. The patrols began at 10am and were one of several that are supposed to take place between Tel Abyad and Sere Keniye (Ras al-Ayn).

The SDF have sought to change the forces they deploy on the ground as part of making the security mechanism work. This included the participation of the Tel Abyad Military Council and the Sere Kaniya Military Council. The latter has some 300 locals that were trained for securing the area, according to the Rojava Information Center.

The joint patrols differ from the US-Turkey joint patrols that began last year near Manbij. There the patrols went along a line outside the city, but there are questions about where these patrols will go and the fact that the Turkish army is now operating inside northeast Syria. There are concerns that once Turkey begins operating there, it may not be willing to leave and this may presage more demands. It's unclear how the US will respond to those demands. It also appears that despite the efforts devoted to defeating ISIS that a tremendous amount of time and resources are going in to make sure these patrols work, but how they will satisfy both Turkey and the SDF and people on the ground is unclear. If the SDF senses that this is just way for Turkey to inspect the area and reduce fortifications in order to pave the way for an eventual land grab there will be a crises.

Turkey has already become an expert in provoking crises with the US in order to get the process moving. This is a linear process for Ankara that began with Euphrates Shield in 2016 when Turkey and its Syrian rebel allies took over an area of northern Syria between Jarabulus and Kilis. It extended to the Afrin operation in January 2018 and Turkey's observation points in Idlib. This is leading toward Turkey's fourth major demand in Syria in an ever-expanding military and civilian role. The joint patrols matter because they may have given Turkey an entrée into more demands in eastern Syria, but they could also prove to be a US solution to Turkey's demands so that Ankara can say it got its safe zone. That all depends on Turkey's next move.

AMN 09/09/2019
By Zen Adra

Turkish-backed militants clashes with former Ghouta rebels in Syria's Afrin

DAMASCUS, SYRIA (3: 25 P.M.) – Heavy firefights erupted, today, between Turkey-backed militiamen and former rebels of Eastern Ghouta in Afrin city, injuring scores from both sides.

According to local sources, a military commander from the Sultan Murad Division (an armed rebel group trained and financed by Turkey) assaulted a woman who is originally from Eastern Ghouta; sparking rage among Jaish al-Islam fighters.

Heavy clashes then broke out between the two warring parties, injuries reported.

In the same context, Sultan Murad Division militants physically attacked a shop owner (also an Eastern Ghouta evacuee), causing him a serious injury in the head.

Syrian rebels backed by Turkey have repeatedly molested families evacuated from Eastern Ghouta after the Syrian Army took over the entire rebel stronghold in April 2018.



Turkish-backed militants clashes with former Ghouta rebels in Syria's Afrin

IRAN NEWS UPDATE 09/09/2019

August Human Rights Report for Iran Released

An Iranian human rights watchdog has issued a report into human rights abuses in Iran for the month of August, which makes for horrific reading. Iran is besieged by economic, social, and political crises and Iran Human Rights Monitor reports that, in an attempt to silence dissent, the Regime has increased its crackdown on Iranians.

This includes executing at least 41 people, with two executions taking place in public. These executions include political prisoners Abdullah Karmollah Chab, Ghassem Abdullah, and Hamidreza Derakhshandeh. It's important to remember that the exact number of executions is definitely higher because most executions in Iran are carried out in secret.

The Iranian Regime also continued to torture prisoners, with several reports of beatings and floggings carried out in jails, including that of Sufi prisoner of conscience Elham Ahmadi receiving 74 lashes before her departure.

Other inhumane treatment of prisoners has continued, with Iranian authorities refusing to allow medical care for political prisoners Majid Assadi, who suffers from Ankylosing spondylitis (AS), digestive problems, and sight problems, and Arash Sadeghi, who has cancer and a paralysed right arm due to lack of care in prison.

Amnesty International said: "The deliberate re-



fusal by the authorities to provide Arash Sadeghi with medical care constitutes torture as defined in international law, since such deprivation is intentionally inflicting severe pain or suffering, apparently for the purpose of punishing him for his high-profile activism as a human rights defender and in reprisal for his peaceful hunger strike between October 2016 and January 2017, which attracted a major public outcry on his case. The denial of his access to life-saving medical care also violates his right to life."

While Farangis Mazloum, the mother of political prisoner Soheil Arabi, is being kept in indefinite solitary confinement, and political prisoner Mo-

hamamd Saber Malak-Raisi has been tortured for three months.

The Iranian Regime has also cracked down on lawyers and human rights defenders, with their 24-year sentence against Saba Kordi Afshari for protesting the forced veil. They've also cracked down on freedom of religion by arresting at least seven members of Iran's Baha'i community and increased their suppression of ethnic minorities by arresting at least 30 Kurds, three Arabs and a Baluch man. The Regime's suppressive forces also shot dead at least six Kurdish porters and two Baluch men under the pretext of smuggling, while 10 other Kurdish porters were wounded.



September 09-2019

In coordination with Peshmerga, Coalition airstrikes kill 10 ISIS militants in disputed Makhmour

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – US-led coalition aircraft, along with Peshmerga support, killed 10 so-called Islamic State members on Monday during an air raid on the borders of the disputed Makhmour district border southwest of Erbil.

Sirwan Barzani, a Peshmerga Commander at the Gwer-Makhmour front line, told Kurdistan 24 that the airstrikes “lasted two days, and targeted Islamic State positions in the Qarachokh mountain.”

“There is solid coordination between Peshmerga, Iraqi forces, and the coalition who closely observe the remaining terrorists’ movements in the area,” the commander added.

The airstrike comes after an increase in Islamic State sleeper cell activity in certain villages within the district of Makhmour.

The villages have been evacuated due to the con-



Qarachokh Mountain in the disputed district of Makhmour. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

stant Islamic State threats and sudden insurgent attacks in the area which target civilians, especially in the areas that are remote and far from the district center where security is weak.

A security source from the Iraqi army told local media that the terrorist group had “established bases close to the villages and used them as launching pads to attack Iraqi security forces and civilians.”

The security void between Peshmerga and Iraqi

Security Forces (ISF) in some of the disputed areas reaches up to 20 kilometers with suitable terrain from trees and hills providing cover for terrorist movements in the region.

Officials from Kurdistan, along with civilians in the disputed territories, have often called for a long-term joint security plan between the Peshmerga forces and the ISF to fill the security gaps in the disputed areas. However, so far, there has been no solid attempt from Baghdad to address the problem.

Although Iraq previously declared a “final victory” against the terrorist organization in December 2017, the so-called Islamic State continues to carry out sporadic attacks, including bombings, assassinations, and kidnappings in previously liberated areas.

Editing by Karzan Sulaivany



September 09-2019

KRG to participate in the UN’s Disability Rights and Special Needs Convention

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – A joint delegation from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Iraqi government will present initial reports regarding the rights of persons with disabilities in the country at an upcoming United Nation’s Human Rights Council (UNHRC) session, a Kurdish official said on Sunday.

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) will hold its twenty-second session on the 10th and the 11th of September 2019, at the UNHRC’s headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

Kurdistan Region representatives are participating within the framework of a National Committee writing human rights treaty-related reports. “The regional government remains committed to these international conventions,” as part of its efforts, said KRG coordinator for international advocacy, Dindar Zebari.

“The [KRG] delegation will try to highlight and present all the related laws, instructions, and prac-



tical steps that have been provided to serve people with special needs and disabilities in the Kurdistan Region,” he explained.

Zebari, who will head the KRG delegation to the UN session, stated there are serious efforts invested by the KRG in the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities and special needs.

“It is undeniable that these efforts were met by several external and internal challenges, such as the aftermath of the war against ISIS [Islamic State], the economic crises and the increased amount of displaced people,” the Kurdish official continued.

“However,” the KRG has maintained its efforts, “one of its most significant efforts include [the passing of] law no. 22,” in 2011, on ‘Disability Rights and Special Needs.’

“These instructions were eventually implemented in the educational, social, work, health, and cultural sectors.”

There are 95,916 individuals with disabilities, 54,142 men and 41,774 women, registered with the KRG’s Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. The data also includes Kurdish Peshmerga fighters and security members who suffered debilitating wounds in the fight against the Islamic State.

The representatives of the KRG within the Iraqi federal delegation will present the commitments of the regional government and measures undertaken by the KRG to assist and support people with disabilities and special needs as part of the UN’s learning exercise.

Editing by Nadia Riva

Appeals court approves release of pro-Kurdish leader Demirtaş

An appeals court in Ankara on Tuesday approved a lower court's ruling for the release of the imprisoned former leader of pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party's (HDP), Selahattin Demirtaş, left-wing Turkish newspaper [BirGün](#) reported.

Demirtaş has been in prison since November 2016 on charges of membership to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an armed organisation engaged in a conflict with Turkey for over three decades that has been designated a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the EU and the United States.

On September 2, an Ankara court ordered the conditional release of the top pro-Kurdish politician, however, Demirtaş remained in prison due to a previously-approved sentence of four years and eight months.

According to Ramazan Demir, one of Demirtaş's lawyers, Demirtaş could have been released on parole considering his time served. His lawyers are preparing to submit a request for parole.



The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in November 2018 [demanded Demirtaş's release](#), stating that the extension of his detention throughout two crucial elections had been designed to stifle pluralism and limit political debate.

A hearing will be held at the ECHR Grand Chamber on September 18 to resolve objections to the ruling.

HDP lawmaker and lawyer Meral Daniş Beştaş said that the Turkish court's approval of the ruling for Demirtaş's release constitutes a precedent for all imprisoned politicians, including Demirtaş's counterpart, former HDP co-chair Figen Yüksekdağ, who was arrested alongside him.

Parliamentary leadership begins push for new Iraqi Kurdistan constitution

HEWLÊR-Erbil, Iraq's Kurdistan region,— Speaker of Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament Rewaz Fayaq said on Monday that the legislative leadership is attempting to gather support from the political parties to write a permanent constitution for the Kurdistan Region.

After 28 years of governing and nine cabinets, the Kurdistan Region still does not have its own constitution. Between 2015 and early 2019, governance in the Region was severely disrupted by a political crisis over term limits for the Kurdistan Region President and the balance of power between the legislative and executive branches.

First Deputy Speaker Hemin Hawrami said that the Region reached a point where it should have its own constitution and said that he hoped that it would take place this year.

To that effect, the Speaker and her deputies have started meeting with the Region's parties to start



Iraqi Kurdistan parliament, Erbil, July 2019. Photo: Rudaw

discussing plans. During the meetings, they will also seek to build support for the government and its policies.

During the last parliament, a council was formed to write the constitution, which drafted a list of 70 articles to be included. The project, however,

was derailed after amid political disputes.

In 2015, the committee tasked with drafting the Kurdistan's constitution says the latest version of the charter will incorporate [elements of Islamic law](#).

The Secretary of the political bureau of Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Fadhil Mirani said in 2015 that the Constitution of Kurdistan region should [respect the majority Muslims](#).

Human rights campaigners and activists want to [remove a clause](#) in the draft Iraqi Kurdistan Constitution that says it must be based on Islamic law.

in 2006 Sherwan Haideri, head of the assembly's legal committee said "The constitution sets Islamic principles as one of the sources of legislation,"



September 10-2019

PM Barzani: Iraq's 2020 census should not be politicized

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Iraq's long-overdue census in 2020 should not be politicized or used against any ethnic and religious groups, Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Masrour Barzani said on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Barzani made the comments during a meeting with Iraq's Planning Minister Nouri Sabah al-Dulaimi in Erbil.

During the meeting, the Iraqi minister said there is a good chance to resolve the outstanding disputes between Erbil and Baghdad peacefully, within the framework of Iraq's Constitution as the relations between both sides have significantly improved, a statement from Barzani's press office read.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Federal Government of Iraq have long-standing issues related to budget, oil and gas, disputed territories, and a lack of respect for the country's constitution.

Dulaimi praised the experience of the autonomous Kurdish region over the past decades, describing it as "successful and well-established."

Barzani affirmed the Kurdistan Region's commitment to resolving differences peacefully in accordance with the constitution, the statement said.



Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Masrour Barzani (right) meets Iraq's Planning Minister Nouri Sabah al-Dulaimi in Erbil, Sept. 10, 2019. (Photo: KRG)

Both sides also underscored the importance of conducting the 2020 census in Iraq.

"The census is an important step to gather information and data, which is a very helpful tool in planning," Barzani said, according to the statement. The Kurdish leader also hoped the process would not be used for political purposes any of the ethnic and religious components in Iraq.

Ties between Erbil and Baghdad were considerably strained in late 2017 following the Kurd-

istan Region's historic independence referendum, which saw a landslide majority favor statehood.

Following the formation of the new Iraqi government led by Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi in late 2018, relations between both sides have significantly improved.

Editing by Karzan Sulaivany



10 Septembre 2019

Liberté pour Fariba Adelkhah

Notre collègue et amie Fariba Adelkhah, directrice de recherche au Centre de recherches internationales (CERI) de Sciences Po depuis 1993, spécialiste de la société iranienne, a été arrêtée en Iran au début du mois de juin 2019.

Depuis lors, en dépit des efforts constants de notre établissement et des autorités françaises, Fariba Adelkhah est toujours incarcérée.

Son arrestation et sa détention prolongée constituent une atteinte aux droits fondamentaux de la personne et au libre exercice du métier d'universitaire.

Toute la communauté de Sciences Po réaffirme avec force son indignation et exprime à Fariba Adelkhah, ainsi qu'à tous les scientifiques emprisonnés en Iran, son absolue solidarité.

**Olivier Duhamel, Président de la FNSP
Frédéric Mion, Directeur de Sciences Po**



Photo: Fariba Adelkhah



September 10-2019

US-led coalition drops 36,000 kg of bombs on 'ISIS-infested island' in Iraq

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The US-led coalition on Tuesday dropped over 36,000 kilograms of bombs on Islamic State positions on an island in Iraq called the Qanus Island, the US-led coalition spokesperson said on Tuesday.

Coalition Spokesperson Col. Myles B. Caggins III posted a video on Twitter which showed F15 and F35 jets drop 36,000 kilograms of bombs on a "Daesh [ISIS] infested island."

According to a statement from the US Central Command (CENTCOM), the airstrikes were part of an operation by the US-led coalition and the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service against Islamic State positions in Qanus Island, located in Iraq's Salahuddin province.

"Follow-on ground clearance operations are currently taking place by the 2nd Iraqi Special Operations Forces Battalion to destroy a major transit hub for Daesh members moving from Syria and the Jazeera desert into Mosul, Makhmour, and the Kirkuk region," the statement said.

Yahya Rasoul, a spokesperson for the Iraqi army, said in a separate statement that the US-led coalition carried out the strikes to assist Iraqi forces in clearing areas such as Qanus and other deserts in Salahuddin.

Rasoul added that these operations aim to prevent cross-border movement of Islamic State members between Syria and Iraq.



An image from a video the Combined Joint Task Force released shows 36,000 kilograms of bombs being dropped on an island believed to be used by the Islamic State, Sept. 10, 2019. (Photo: CJTF)

According to Maj. Gen. Eric T. Hill, Commander of the Special Operations Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve, the goal of the operation was to deny "Daesh the ability to hide on Qanus Island."

"We're setting the conditions for our partner forces to continue bringing stability to the region," he added.

The special operations arm of the US-led coalition operates in both Iraq and Syria.

The US-led coalition said they used "80,000 pounds of munitions on the island to disrupt Daesh the abil-

ity to hide in the thick vegetation."

"CTS Forces continue to conduct ground clearance operations to destroy any remaining...Daesh [militants] on the island," it added.

Despite over two years since Baghdad declared a final victory over the Islamic State, the group continues to conduct attacks in areas it once controlled, embarking on a wave of kidnappings, assassinations, and bombings that have raised fears of a new stage of heightened insurgency.

According to Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, a scholar who studies militant groups, the Islamic State is not only active in areas between the Jazeera desert, Makhmour, and the Kirkuk region, but also other places like Diyala.

"I think Iraqis need to continue to do operations even in areas like Diyala, for example, where there is a continued activity of ISIS elements," he told Kurdistan 24.

Editing by Karzan Sulaiwany



10/09/2019

Le Figaro avec AFP

Syrie: Ankara juge «cosmétiques» les efforts de Washington pour créer une zone tampon

Les efforts des Etats-Unis pour créer une zone tampon dans le nord-est de la Syrie sont «uniquement cosmétiques», a jugé mardi le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères, accusant Washington de traîner des pieds.

Un accord conclu le mois dernier entre la Turquie et les Etats-Unis prévoit la mise en place d'une zone tampon entre la frontière turque et les zones syriennes contrôlées par la milice kurde, appuyée par Washington, des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG), le fer de lance des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), à l'est du fleuve Euphrate.

«Il y a eu des patrouilles communes, c'est vrai, mais les efforts pour aller plus loin (...) se sont révélés uniquement cosmétiques», a déclaré à la presse à Ankara le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères, Mevlut Cavusoglu.

Patrouille commune

Militaires turcs et américains ont effectué dimanche matin leur première patrouille commune dans le nord-est de la Syrie, composée de six véhicules blindés turcs et d'autant de véhicules américains, pendant un peu plus de trois heures, avant le retour en Turquie des soldats turcs. Il s'agissait notamment pour les soldats d'observer le retrait progressif des forces kurdes de la frontière turque.

Mevlut Cavusoglu a mis les Etats-Unis en garde contre tout retard dans l'application de ce retrait. La Turquie a plusieurs fois menacé d'une action militaire unilatérale contre les forces kurdes. Les contours exacts de la future zone tampon restent flous. Une rencontre entre de hauts responsables militaires américains et turcs est prévue mardi, a indiqué le ministère turc de la Défense sur Twitter.

Le soutien américain aux YPG, en pointe dans la lutte contre les djihadistes du groupe Etat islamique (EI), a été un point de friction majeur entre les deux pays, pourtant alliés au sein de l'Otan, Ankara considérant cette milice comme une organisation «terroriste».

L'un des objectifs de la «zone de sécurité» pour Ankara est de pouvoir y renvoyer certains des plus de 3,6 millions de réfugiés syriens installés en Turquie. Un projet pressant au moment où les combats à Idleb (nord-ouest de la Syrie), où vivent environ trois millions de personnes, font craindre un nouvel afflux de migrants.

Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan doit rencontrer son homologue américain Donald Trump et évoquer cette question, en marge de l'Assemblée générale des Nations unies fin septembre.

Dyer: Bad habits of Ottoman Empire live on in Erdogan's plan to evict Syrian Kurds



A member of the Kurdish Internal Security Police Force of Asayish stands guard as Syrian Kurdish demonstrate against Turkish threats to invade the Kurdish region, in the northeastern city of Qamishli on August 27, 2019. - The Kurdish authorities in northeast Syria said Tuesday their forces had started to withdraw from outposts along the Turkish border after a US-Turkish deal for a buffer zone there. (Photo by DELIL SOULEIMAN/ AFP/Getty Images)

The Ottoman Empire had the bad habit of moving entire peoples around if they were causing trouble. And sometimes, as happened to the Armenians during the First World War, what started as deportation ended up as genocide.

The empire collapsed a century ago, but old habits die hard. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (whose admirers often call him “the Sultan”) has a new plan: he’s going to move a million Kurds away from Turkey’s southern frontier with Syria, and replace them with a million Arabs.

And if his Western allies don’t like that, he’ll dump another million or so Arabs in Europe. “Either this happens (in Syria),” he said last week, “or we will have to open the gates (to Europe).” All this is happening because Erdoğan is obsessed about the Kurds.

To be fair, the Kurds are a real problem for Turkey. They are about a fifth of the country’s population, concentrated mostly in the south-east, and they have been mistreated and their very identity denied by the Turkish state for so long that many of them would rather be independent.

Some of them have even taken up arms against Turkey in an organisation called the PKK (Kurd-

istan Workers’ Party), now mostly based across the border in Kurdish-speaking northern Iraq. There was a ceasefire and peace talks early in this decade, but Erdoğan started bombing the PKK again in 2015 when he had a tricky election to win and needed to appeal to Turkish nationalists.

Now he’s in trouble again: his party lost control of all Turkey’s big cities in the last election. Time to whack the Kurds again, and this time it’s going to be the Syrian Kurds, who lives just across the border from Turkey’s Kurds. But not for much longer, if Erdoğan has his way.

The Turkish strongman insists that the Syrian Kurds are really terrorists allied to the PKK, although there have been no attacks whatever on Turkey from Syria. The Syrian Kurds have actually been fighting Islamic State in Syria, who really are terrorists, with strong air support and some ground support from the United States.

However, Erdoğan now wants to evict the Syrian Kurds from their homes and drive them south, away from the Turkish border. And to make sure they don’t come back later, he wants to settle a million Arabs there permanently instead.

There are four and a half million Syrian Arab ref-

ugees in Turkey. They’d like to go home, of course, but most of them are afraid of living under the control of Bashar al-Assad, the cruel dictator who has won the Syrian civil war. And here’s that nice Mr Erdoğan, offering them homes in a safe zone in northern Syria.

That’s not where their real homes are, but maybe they’ll be happy there once Erdoğan has driven the Kurds out. As he said recently in Ankara, “we can build towns there in lieu of the tent cities here.” The only hitch in the plan is that the United States may feel queasy about betraying the Syrian Kurds who fought alongside American troops to destroy Islamic State.

To solve that problem, Erdoğan is threatening to send a million or so Arab refugees west into Europe. The Europeans will panic and make the Americans go along with his plan, or so he believes. He’s probably right.

Donald Trump wants U.S. troops out of Syria before next year’s election, so he’ll probably give in to Erdoğan (and the Europeans). But the Syrian Kurds will probably fight to protect their homes.

Gwynne Dyer is an independent journalist based in London, England

Le Point 12/09/2019
Par Guericc Poncet

Irak : l'US Air Force a rayé une île de la carte

VIDÉO. L'armée américaine a largué 36 tonnes de bombes sur une île du Tigre qu'elle jugeait « infestée » de combattants de l'État islamique.

Les images sont saisissantes. Prises depuis un aéronef américain, probablement un drone, elles montrent l'île de Qanus, sur le fleuve Tigre, dans le nord de l'Irak. En quelques secondes, des dizaines d'explosions tapissent cette langue de terre de quelques kilomètres carrés couverts de végétation, et des panaches de fumée s'élèvent partout. Nous sommes le 10 septembre 2019, et des avions de l'US Air Force viennent de larguer 36 tonnes de bombes GBU-31 (une tonne par munition) guidées par GPS. Le quadrillage semble parfait, les combattants du **groupe État islamique** n'ont probablement eu aucune chance s'ils étaient présents.

« Voici ce qui arrive quand nos F-15 et F-35 larguent 36 tonnes de bombes sur une île infestée par Daech », a écrit, en anglais et en arabe, le porte-parole de l'opération Inherent Resolve (l'opération américaine en Irak et en Syrie) dans un tweet accompagné d'un pictogramme d'avion de tourisme totalement inapproprié. L'opération a été menée par des avions de chasse de l'US Air Force (de vénérables F-15E accompagnés de F-35A furtifs flambant neufs) et non pas par des bombardiers B-52H, pourtant experts du tapis de bombe et déployés dans la région.

Pas encore de bilan

L'objectif était, officiellement, de réduire à néant un centre de transit pour les combattants de l'EI. « Nous empêchons l'EI de se cacher sur l'île de Qanus », a déclaré le général Eric T Hill, commandant des opérations spéciales de l'opération Inherent Resolve. « Nous créons les conditions nécessaires pour que nos partenaires puissent continuer d'apporter de la stabilité à la région », a-t-il poursuivi, évoquant le travail au sol de l'armée irakienne.

Mais au-delà de l'objectif tactique, l'opération de communication avec notamment la large diffu-



L'île de Qanus, sur le Tigre en Irak, a été massivement frappée par l'armée de l'air américaine début septembre 2019. © US Air Force

sion de la vidéo sur Internet, tombe à pic pour l'armée américaine comme pour le gouvernement irakien. Les troupes de ce dernier doivent désormais occuper l'île, ce qui permettra au

n'a été transmise dans l'immédiat. Selon la presse américaine, l'île n'était pas habitée par des civils, ce qui semble être confirmé par les images aériennes, mais compte tenu de l'ampleur de l'at-



L'île de Qanus, sur le Tigre en Irak, a été massivement frappée par l'armée de l'air américaine début septembre 2019. © US Air Force

commandement américain d'évaluer plus précisément le bilan du raid, dont aucune estimation

taque il semble peu probable qu'aucune victime collatérale ne soit à déplorer.

LE FIGARO 12/09/2019
Le Figaro avec AFP

Turquie : sept villageois tués dans l'explosion d'une bombe

Sept villageois ont été tués ce jeudi dans l'explosion d'une bombe au passage de leur véhicule, dans le sud-est de la Turquie, selon les autorités locales, qui ont accusé les militants kurdes du PKK.

La bombe a explosé vers 15h00 dans le district de Kulp, dans la province de Diyarbakir, a annoncé le gouvernorat local, qui en a imputé la

responsabilité à des «membres d'une organisation terroriste séparatiste», comme les autorités turques appellent les partisans du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Les autorités locales ont fait état d'un bilan initial de quatre morts et de 13 blessés. Trois des blessés ont succombé peu après leurs blessures, a-t-on appris de sources hospitalières.

Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a promis que tous les moyens seraient mobilisés pour arrêter les responsables de cette «attaque terroriste atroce», selon la présidence. Le conflit entre la Turquie et le PKK a fait plus de 40.000 morts depuis son déclenchement en 1984.

Seven killed in explosion in Diyarbakır, southeast Turkey

Seven forestry workers have been killed in an apparent bombing attack in Turkey's southeast province of Diyarbakır. [Turkish press reported on Thursday.](#)

A vehicle carrying the workers to collect wood from a forest in the Kulp district was struck in an explosion at 6 p.m. (GMT+2), the Diyarbakır Governorate said in a statement.

Thirteen people have been wounded, with seven of them suffering severe injuries, the statement said. All wounded are receiving treatment at a local hospital.

Turkey's state-run [Anadolu Agency](#) said the attack had been carried out by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an outlawed group that has fought the Turkish state for Kurdish self-rule since 1984.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was updated about the explosion by Diyarbakır Governor Hasan Basri Güzeloğlu and said all means

would be used to find the attackers, Anadolu reported.

AL-MONITOR **Sep 12, 2019**
By Dana Taib Menmy

Iraqi population census raises concerns of Kurds

SULAIMANIYAH, Iraqi Kurdistan — Political concerns among Kurds and Turkmens in Iraq may impede the [country's census](#), set to be held by late 2020, especially in the disputed oil-rich city of Kirkuk.

Iraq's [last population census](#) in 1997 put the country's population at 16 million, excluding Iraqi Kurdistan. It was estimated there were 3 million Kurds. Those figures are now out of date, and the real population unknown.

The Kurdish political parties in Kirkuk, except for the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), met Aug. 26 to [reject holding a census](#) in the disputed areas, citing Article 140 of the constitution.

Iraqi troops took [control](#) of Kirkuk in October 2017 following the failed Kurdish referendum for independence. Since then, the KDP has deemed Kirkuk an "occupied" city, withdrawing its officials and headquarters.

[Article 140 of Iraq's constitution](#) states that the fate of Kirkuk and other areas disputed by Baghdad and Erbil should be settled through

certain stages of normalization, including a census and a referendum on whether to remain under the control of the Iraqi federal government or the Kurdistan region.

Rebaz Sabir, head of the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG) in Kirkuk, told Al-Monitor that Article 140 ["should be implemented](#). Kirkuk's situation should be normalized, and any census should be conducted within the framework of Article 140. Kurds see the population census in Kirkuk as a tool for disregarding the rights of Kurds."

The Turkmens in Kirkuk also have concerns about the Iraqi census.

"In the current conditions that we live in in Iraq and Kirkuk, we have fears that the general population census would be used for political purposes by some political sides," Ali Mahdi, Turkmen member in the Kirkuk Provincial Council, told Al-Monitor. "There are demographic changes in some Iraqi provinces, including Kirkuk, therefore we think the general census cannot be held in a normal and fair way to fit all the provinces."

Abdul al-Zahra al-Hindawi, the spokesman of the Iraqi Planning Ministry, told Al-Monitor, "Concerning the Kirkuk issue, I think it is being resolved according to Article 140. Frankly speaking, the purpose and the procedure of the Iraqi general population census are quite different from Article 140 and its measures for dealing with the Kirkuk issue."

He added, "The purpose of the general census is developmental. We aim to build comprehensive and accurate figures about the reality of life and population in Iraq built on strong scientific foundations. Accordingly, the figures will help us in calculating long-term developmental plans."

The census will be carried out electronically, he said, via tablets linked to secure internet lines.

"In the current situation, the census cannot be done in Kirkuk, since demographic changes and Arabization policies were implemented during the reign of the ousted Baath regime," Khalid Shwani, member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan leadership committee, told Al-Monitor. "Following the war against the Islamic State, many Arab internally displaced persons from other Iraqi provinces flocked to Kirkuk, thus, the

current reality, as per Kirkuk's components, are not real figures."

Rebwar Karim Mahmood, a Kurdish lawmaker in the Iraqi parliament, told Al-Monitor, "Holding the census by late 2020 is in favor of some Iraqi political sides."

"The census, in general, is an important issue for rebuilding Iraq, but due to the country's multi-ethnic and multi-ethnic reality, the census never remains a technical subject. Therefore it is a purely political issue," he said.

Kirkuk's Kurds and Turkmens also have concerns regarding provincial elections, scheduled for April 2020. The elections will take place across Iraq, including in Kirkuk, which has not held a provincial election since 2005.

The Iraqi parliament amended the provincial election law in July. Consequently, Kirkuk's voter registration is based on food ration cards and Iraqi civil status identification cards. Kurds and Turkmens who have transferred their documents to other cities, as a result of the Arabization policy by the former Baath regime, cannot register their names to participate in the election.

Rebaz Sabir, with the KIG, said the Kurdish political parties rejected the law and brought a lawsuit to the Iraqi Federal Court to eliminate the amendment. The parties also asked Iraqi President Barham Salih, a Kurd, to not pass the law. The Kurdistan region parliament announced Sept. 4 that it would formally ask the Iraqi federal court to review the law.



Kurdish supporters of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan celebrate after the closing of ballot boxes during the parliamentary elections in Kirkuk, Iraq, May 12, 2018. © REUTERS/Ako Rasheed

Al-Monitor contacted Safin Dizayee, the head of the Kurdistan Regional Government's Foreign Relations Office, but he was not immediately available for comment.

Bilal Wahab, Wagner fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, told Al-Monitor that the census is a must for developing Iraq's oil-based rentier economy. He said the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) should not fear the census over budgetary concerns and that the census will help both Baghdad and Erbil achieve a "stable budget transfer formula."

"As for Kirkuk, the census would fulfill a long-ignored requirement of Article 140 of Iraq's Con-

stitution. As events before and after the KRG independence referendum showcase, Kirkuk's conflict is increasingly less over population and more over politics and oil," Wahab said. "With accurate data and a reengaged [United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq], the census may breathe life back into Article 140 and a peaceful resolution to the status of Kirkuk and other disputed provinces."

While politics may be influencing both Iraq and the Kurdistan region in the upcoming population census, both sides may realize that the policy planning benefits of reliable census data outweigh politics.

AMN NEWS 2019-09-13

New round of clashes breakout between Kurdish forces and Turkish-backed militants in northern Aleppo

BEIRUT, LEBANON – For the third night in a row, a fierce firefight has broken out in the Aleppo countryside between the Kurdish-led forces and Turkish-backed militants.

According to tonight's report, the Kurdish-led People's Protection Units (YPG) and Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army (TFSA) began clashing at the southern axis of Azaz city, prompting both sides to exchange heavy gunfire

No casualties have been reported by either side.

Since the implementation of a safe zone in northern Syria, the clashes between the Turkish-backed militants and Kurdish-led forces have mostly taken place in the Aleppo Governorate, where the U.S. has a small presence in the northeastern region.

Turkey views the YPG as a terrorist

group because of their affiliation with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which was involved in a violent war with the Turkish Armed Forces for several years.

The Turkish authorities have rejected any type of agreement with the YPG and they have pressured the United States to expel them from the border region.

U.S. Poised to Send 150 Troops to Patrol Northeastern Syria

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon is preparing to send about 150 troops to northeastern Syria to conduct ground patrols with Turkish forces, reversing at least temporarily a withdrawal from Syria that President Trump ordered last December.

The new troop deployment, which has not been previously reported, is part of an expanding series of military and diplomatic steps the United States has taken in recent weeks to defuse escalating tensions with Turkey, a NATO ally, over American support for Syrian Kurdish fighters. Those fighters led the ground war against the Islamic State, a shared enemy, but Turkey considers them terrorists.

The United States currently has just under 1,000 troops in Syria, mainly to help stamp out remaining pockets of Islamic State fighters.

Turkey threatened last month to invade northeast Syria to rout the Syrian Kurds from territory along the border they seized from the Islamic State. In response, the Pentagon in recent weeks has rushed to both set up joint reconnaissance flights and ground patrols with Turkish forces in a narrow buffer zone inside Syria, and destroy Kurdish fortifications near the border that Turkey considered threatening. Two senior American generals met this week with their Turkish counterparts in Ankara, Turkey's capital.

Taken together, the measures seek to prevent the war-ravaged region from sinking deeper into turmoil, which in turn could jeopardize efforts to fend off a [resurgent guerrilla campaign](#) by Islamic State fighters and imperil Mr. Trump's plan to [withdraw most American troops](#) from Syria by next year.

"Turkey could be a spoiler of U.S. policy regarding Iran, Iraq, Syria and ISIS, or it could be a facilitator," said Soner Cagaptay, the director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and author of "[Erdogan's Empire: Turkey and the Politics of the Middle East](#)."

Just as senior American officials expressed cautious optimism that tensions with Turkey were easing, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan upended that calculus with a [proposal](#) last week to involuntarily return at least a million Syrian refugees now inside Turkey, and push them into the buffer zone. If that does not happen, he is



American and Turkish troops patrolling a Syrian village on the border with Turkey last week. Credit... Delil Souleiman/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

threatening to send a flood of Syrian migrants to Europe.

Mr. Erdogan has long demanded a buffer zone along Turkey's border with Syria to exclude Kurdish forces. But he has repurposed the idea for a zone as a sanctuary for Syrians fleeing the war. Mr. Erdogan's plan prompted strong and immediate criticism from the Pentagon.

"The United States opposes any forced or coerced relocations of refugees or I.D.P.s," said Cmdr. Sean Robertson, a Pentagon spokesman, referring to internally displaced persons typically held in sprawling camps. "If and when conditions allow, any returns must be to a destination of the individual's own choosing, and must be voluntary, safe and dignified."

Mr. Erdogan [said Saturday](#) that he expected to meet with Mr. Trump at the United Nations later this month to discuss military operations in northeast Syria. "There are differences between what is said and what has been done," he said in a speech in the Turkish city of Eskisehir. "We must resolve this."

American military and diplomatic officials declined to publicly comment on the impending de-

ployment of about 150 troops, the final approval of which still hinges on the success of the initial joint ground patrols that are to continue in the coming days, military officials said.

A senior administration official said last month that the United States "will provide forces necessary" for northeastern Syria, noting that a platoon of a few dozen soldiers now carries out similar patrols with Turkish forces in Manbij, Syria. But it was unclear whether the new deployment would increase the overall number of American troops in Syria, or be offset by reductions in the existing force there helping directly with counterterrorism missions.

The future of northeastern Syria is just one area in which Turkey and the United States have engaged in contentious discussions.

The White House [informed Turkey in July](#) that the United States would not sell it F-35 stealth fighter jets, in retaliation for Turkey's \$2.5 billion purchase of Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile systems. The sale has also heightened the possibility of long-threatened American sanctions being imposed against a fellow member of NATO.

The United States and Turkey agreed in principle last month to establish a jointly patrolled zone for refugees along the border, but they are still negotiating the details and major differences remain.

Mr. Erdogan wants the zone to be 20 miles deep and run for 300 miles along the Turkish-Syrian border east of the Euphrates. The United States has limited Turkey's access to a few miles. Syria has already called the plan a violation of its sovereignty and Russia emphasized the need to preserve Syria's territorial integrity.

Mr. Erdogan threatened last month to carry out a major cross-border operation into Syria to rout the Syrian Kurds who took control there from ISIS. Turkey conducted previous missions into Afrin and Jarabulus west of the Euphrates River.

American officials expressed skepticism that the Turkish military could sustain such an extensive and complicated operation into northeastern Syria, but worried that any Turkish invasion would wreak havoc with American counterterrorism goals and its relations with a NATO ally.

Led by James F. Jeffrey, the State Department's special representative for Syria, and Gen. Joseph

F. Dunford Jr., the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the two countries quickly worked out several steps to defuse tensions and focus on a 75-mile-long buffer zone between Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ayn, which the two sides agreed to and the Pentagon calls "the security mechanism area."

The two militaries established a joint operations center in Ankara. They have conducted four joint reconnaissance flights over the area, including one on Thursday. And last weekend, American and Turkish troops conducted their first joint ground patrol.

In a sign of how diplomatic sensitivities are affecting the messaging behind these operations, the military's news release about the first ground patrol showed one photograph with a Turkish vehicle in the lead and another with an American vehicle in the lead.

On Thursday, the Pentagon's European command, which deals with Turkey, said that Lt. Gen. Stephen M. Twitty of the Army, the European command's deputy commander, and Lt. Gen. Thomas Bergeson of the Air Force, Central Command's No. 2 officer, had met with their Turkish counterparts to discuss future support for

the combined joint operations.

"You can see the progress," Col. Myles B. Caggins III, a spokesman for the American-led coalition overseeing operations in Iraq and Syria, said in a statement on Thursday, noting the delicate balance between addressing Turkey's "legitimate security concerns" and the coalition's efforts to combat ISIS.

But some political leaders on both sides characterized the measures as more akin to public relations than substantive steps, suggesting a difficult road ahead.

"There have been some joint patrols, yes, but steps taken beyond that ... are only cosmetic," Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told reporters in Ankara this week.

Brett McGurk, who until December was Mr. Trump's special envoy to the coalition fighting the Islamic State, was equally critical. "This is a worthy diplomatic initiative but it needs to be resourced," Mr. McGurk said in an email. "As with most things in Syria these days, we seem to have increasing policy goals under a president that wants to cut resources and leave. Where ends and means don't align, failure often follows."



September 13, 2019

Syrian activists: Car bomb in northern town; several wounded

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian opposition activists say a car bombing in a town in northern Syria controlled by Turkey-backed opposition fighters has wounded several people.

There were no reports of deaths in the explosion.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitoring group, said Friday's blast in

the town of Afrin occurred near the offices of a Turkey-backed rebel faction.

Afrin Now, an activist collective, quoted the Civil Defense in the town as saying as many as 25 people were wounded.

Activists also said that shortly after the initial explosion, two mortar shells wounded two people.

Turkey and allied Syrian fighters took Afrin last year, expelling Syrian Kurdish fighters considered terrorists by Ankara. The Turkish takeover set off a series of attacks against Turkey's presence in the originally Kurdish-dominated areas.

Trending on AP News

Des journalistes de Cumhuriyet libérés en Turquie

Jeudi 12 septembre, cinq ex-journalistes du quotidien turc Cumhuriyet ont été libérés. En avril 2018, le procès au cours duquel ils ont été condamnés à des peines de prison pour « assistance » à des groupes jugés terroristes par Ankara, a été emblématique de l'érosion de la liberté de la presse dans la Turquie d'Erdogan.

Liberté pour cinq ex-journalistes du quotidien turc Cumhuriyet. La Cour de cassation a cassé, jeudi 12 septembre, les peines de prison ferme, supérieures à cinq ans, infligées aux collaborateurs du journal d'opposition. Ces derniers faisaient partie d'un groupe de 14 employés du quotidien condamnés à des peines de prison en avril 2018 pour « assistance à une organisation terroriste ».

Ils ont été reconnus coupables de soutenir, par leurs écrits, trois organisations considérées comme terroristes par la Turquie dont le parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et le réseau du prédicateur Fethullah Gülen, à qui Ankara impute la responsabilité du putsch manqué de juillet 2016. En février 2019, la cour d'appel régionale d'Istanbul avait confirmé les condamnations.

Fausse ouverture

Si la Cour constitutionnelle turque a plusieurs fois annulé des textes et décisions du gouvernement, il est moins courant de voir la Cour de cassation, davantage soumise aux autorités, casser un arrêt. Par ailleurs, cette libération arrive quelques semaines après celle de l'historienne Füsün Üstel, enseignante à l'Université de Galatasaray et celle du mathématicien Tuna Altinel. « Pour autant, il faut être prudent et on ne peut pas parler d'ouverture du régime », considère Jean Marcou, professeur à l'IEP de Grenoble et chercheur associé à l'IFEA (1).

Depuis la défaite du parti présidentiel, l'AKP, aux

élections municipales d'Ankara mais surtout d'Istanbul, fief historique du président Erdogan, le gouvernement « souffle le froid et le chaud » rapporte le chercheur pour qui le chef de l'État oscille entre une stratégie d'assouplissement pour récupérer ses électeurs déçus et un durcissement pour séduire la frange la plus radicale de la population. « Certaines décisions surprennent par leur ouverture. Mais il ne faut pas oublier qu'il y a quelques semaines trois maires kurdes élus ont été suspendus. Des personnes suspectées d'être liées au PKK ou aux Gülenistes sont régulièrement arrêtées », rappelle Jean Marcou.

Autocensure de la presse

Si le quotidien Cumhuriyet, qui représentait la tendance kémaliste de centre-gauche, existe encore, il a toutefois perdu la majorité de ses grandes plumes. En septembre 2018, l'équipe dirigeante a été brutalement remplacée, entraînant une vague de démissions et un changement éditorial, plus favorable au pouvoir. Un fléchissement « qui caractérise les deux tentations qui divisent l'opposition turque aujourd'hui », considère Jean Marcou. Une partie rejette le système en place, qu'elle considère comme



Les journalistes du journal d'opposition Cumhuriyet, à leur libération, le 12 septembre 2019. STR/AFP

« fasciste et souhaite mener un combat radical. L'autre considère qu'il reste des espaces de contestation, de liberté et que leur combat pour la démocratie implique de s'adapter à ce système hybride. »

La Turquie occupe la 157^e place sur 180 au classement 2018 de la liberté de la presse de Reporters Sans Frontières. Les médias ouvertement anti-Erdogan sont aujourd'hui marginaux, avec peu de moyens alors que les grands groupes ne soutiennent plus la presse d'opposition. Les journalistes sont forcés à l'autocensure par « un système de dissuasion et d'intimidation insidieuse », explique le chercheur. Il n'y a pas vraiment d'interdit et cette ambiguïté entretient le facteur autoritaire. »

Turquie : Erdogan menace à nouveau d'« ouvrir la porte » de l'Europe aux réfugiés syriens

La Turquie craint une arrivée massive de migrants syriens et réclame plus d'aide à l'Union européenne.

Craignant l'arrivée en Turquie d'une nouvelle vague de réfugiés syriens en provenance de la province d'Idlib, le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan n'a eu de cesse, ces derniers jours, de réitérer ses menaces d'« ouvrir les portes » aux migrants afin de les laisser rejoindre l'Europe. « Allons-nous porter ce fardeau seul ? Si nous ne recevons pas le soutien nécessaire pour partager le fardeau des réfugiés, avec l'UE et le reste du monde, nous allons ouvrir

nos frontières », a déclaré le président turc lors d'une intervention devant les militants de son Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, islamo-conservateur), dimanche 8 septembre à Eskisehir (centre).

Ces propos inquiètent les partenaires européens de la Turquie, toujours soucieux de maintenir l'accord signé en 2016 avec Ankara pour contenir le flux de migrants vers l'Europe. Pour apaiser les tensions, la chancelière

allemande Angela Merkel s'est entretenue mercredi par téléphone avec le président Erdogan au sujet des réfugiés, tandis que le ministre allemand des affaires étrangères, Heiko Maas, rappelait à son homologue turc Mevlüt Cavusoglu que l'UE respecterait ses engagements.

L'accord en question, qui visait à réduire le trafic d'êtres humains et à prévenir les naufrages meurtriers en mer Egée, prévoyait l'octroi d'une aide de 6 mil-



Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, à Ankara, le 10 septembre 2019. AP

liards d'euros à Ankara. Quelque 5, 6 milliards ont déjà été versés quand bien même le président Erdoğan prétend n'en avoir reçu que la moitié.

Réelle menace

Malgré ces aléas, l'accord a jusqu'ici porté ses fruits : les arrivées de migrants en Grèce ayant considérablement diminué par rapport au pic constaté en 2015. Ces derniers mois, la situation a toutefois changé. Les autorités grecques se sont récemment retrouvées prises de court par la hausse des arrivées de migrants dans les îles de l'ouest de la mer Egée, notamment à Lesbos, Chios et Kos. Leur nombre a plus que doublé par rapport à l'année passée.

Y a-t-il une corrélation entre les menaces d'Erdoğan et la hausse des arrivées en Grèce ? La Turquie, qui héberge actuellement 3,6 millions de réfugiés syriens ne pourra assumer seule un nouvel afflux en provenance d'Idlib, le dernier bastion de la rébellion syrienne, actuellement cible d'une offensive militaire de grande ampleur menée par le régime et de son allié russe.

La menace est réelle. Selon Kerem Kinik, le président du Croissant-Rouge turc, 500 000 personnes chassées du sud de l'enclave par les bombardements se sont récemment massées dans des camps de fortune installés le long d'une frontière turque, elle-même fermée.

Le mécontentement populaire suscité par la présence de nombreux réfugiés syriens sur le territoire turc a atteint un pic cette année.

Le thème des migrants est devenu un casse-tête pour le président Erdoğan et son parti. Selon un récent sondage de l'institut Metropoll, 75 % des personnes interrogées désapprouvent la politique du gouvernement à l'égard des réfugiés syriens, tandis que 34 % souhaitent que les Syriens rentrent chez eux, même si la guerre se poursuit. L'enquête, conduite auprès de 1 085 personnes, montre même que 41 % des partisans de l'AKP, le parti du président Erdoğan, sont en désaccord avec la politique syrienne d'Ankara.

Le mécontentement populaire suscité par la présence de nombreux réfugiés syriens sur le territoire turc a atteint un pic cette année, mettant le président Erdoğan, dans l'embarras. Affaibli sur la scène intérieure, il tente de résoudre la question des réfugiés en pressant des États-Unis de lui accorder une « zone de sécurité » au nord-est de la Syrie où un million de réfugiés syriens (sur les 3,6 millions hébergés par la Turquie) seraient réinstallés.

Comme la Turquie, dont l'économie s'est délitée, n'a pas les moyens de financer ce projet, le président turc veut obtenir un soutien financier international pour l'établissement de ces implantations de réfugiés à l'est de l'Euphrate, d'où seraient délogées les forces kurdes syriennes des Unités de protection du peuple. Ces dernières, considérées par Ankara comme une menace sur la vie mais alliées de la coalition internationale menée par Washington dans le combat contre l'organisation Etat islamique.

L'Orient avec AFP - 15/09/2019
LE JOUR

Syrie: une voiture piégée tue 11 civils près d'un hôpital

Une voiture piégée a explosé dimanche près d'un hôpital, tuant 11 civils dans une ville contrôlée par des rebelles syriens soutenus par la Turquie, dans le nord-ouest de la Syrie, selon une ONG.

L'attentat, qui a eu lieu aux abords d'Al-Raï, près de la frontière turque, n'a pas été revendiqué, selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH).

Le véhicule, un camion frigorifique, a explosé à deux pas d'un hôpital, a confirmé à l'AFP Osama Abou al-Kheir, un membre des forces rebelles.

Selon le chef adjoint du conseil municipal, Alaa al-Hammad, l'explosion aurait été déclenchée grâce à une télécommande.

Un pharmacien et deux de ses enfants figurent parmi les morts, a-t-il précisé, ajoutant que des

maisons aux alentours avaient été détruites. En juin, un attentat similaire avait tué 19 personnes, principalement des civils, près d'un marché à Azaz, ville également limitrophe de la Turquie.

En 2016, les forces turques, aidées par certains groupes rebelles syriens, ont lancé une opération militaire contre l'organisation jihadiste Etat islamique (EI) et des combattants kurdes dans le nord de la Syrie, prenant alors sous leur contrôle Al-Raï et la ville voisine d'Azaz.

La Turquie maintient des troupes et des membres de ses services de renseignements dans cette zone.

Les Kurdes, une minorité ethnique longtemps marginalisée en Syrie, ont créé une zone autonome dans le Nord à la faveur du conflit syrien. La Turquie a vu d'un mauvais oeil cette émancipation, craignant que cela ne ravive les velléités indépen-

dantistes de cette minorité sur son propre territoire.

L'attaque à Al-Raï intervient un peu plus d'un mois après la conclusion d'un accord entre la Turquie et les États-Unis sur la mise en place d'une zone tampon entre la frontière turque et les zones syriennes contrôlées par la milice kurde des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG).

Turcs et Américains ont effectué leur première patrouille conjointe le 8 septembre dans cette zone.

Appuyées par Washington dans la lutte contre l'EI, les YPG sont considérées par Ankara comme un "groupe terroriste".

Déclenchée en 2011 avec la répression de manifestations prodémocratie, la guerre en Syrie a fait plus de 370.000 morts.

Fresh clashes breakout between Turkish-backed militants and Kurdish forces in east Aleppo

BEIRUT, LEBANON (11:00 A.M.) – Fresh clashes broke out this morning between the Turkish-backed militants and Kurdish-led forces in the eastern countryside of the Aleppo Governorate.

According to reports, the clashes broke between the Turkish-backed National Army and Kurdish-led People's Protection Units (YPG) inside the town of Daqliyash near the city of Al-Bab.

No casualties have been reported, nor has the reason for the clashes.

This latest firefight between the Turkish-backed militants and YPG marks the third time in the last four days that they have clashed in the Aleppo Governorate.

Despite the implementation of a safe zone in northern Syria, the FSA and YPG continue to clash in the Aleppo Governorate, with the majority of their firefights taking place near the cities of Al-Bab and Azaz.

Turkey considers both the YPG and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to be terrorist entities that are loyal to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

The PKK was involved in a deadly war with the Turkish Army that lasted for several years in the 20th Century.



AL-MONITOR 2019-09-16
Saad Salloum

Regional, international actors risk making matters worse in Iraq's Sinjar

The conflict over controlling the strategic area of Sinjar along Iraq's borders with Turkey and Syria has made the Yazidis' situation worse.

A statement by the local leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Mahma Khalil, regarding the need to expel the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) from Sinjar sparked a debate among the various political parties on the one hand and between the federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) on the other about the nature of the conflict over the predominantly Yazidi city.

Khalil's statement also raised questions about the repercussions of Turkish-Iranian-US conflict in an area close to Iraq's borders with Turkey and Syria.

On Aug. 18, Khalil said he had submitted a request to the US Embassy in Baghdad to help expel the PKK from Sinjar and have the displaced return to the city. "The official local administration in Sinjar has called on the Iraqi government, the Kurdistan Region and Washington to establish a buffer zone in Sinjar to contain the PKK," the statement said.

Khalil said his request would be sent to both Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi's office and the KRG and that the US Embassy is aware of this.

Sinjar is in Ninevah province, which the central government does not consider to be part of the KRG. Following the KRG's 2017 independence referendum, the central Iraqi government took over many areas that

had been disputed between the KRG and the central government.

Khalil, who had been the district administrator of Sinjar, has been appointed Yazidi affairs adviser in the KRG parliament. However, he is still going to his office and acting as if he were still administrator, observers said.

In an Aug. 13 statement, Khalil said the city had turned into a safe haven for the PKK, which abducts people, seeks ransom for them and imposes arbitrary punishment on them before the very eyes of the Iraqi army and the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU).

Yazidi sources in Sinjar denied the allegations, describing them as rumors and lies made up by political parties. They told Al-Monitor that the allegations were part of a political game.

Hafal Tirish Shankali, the head of communications in the Sinjar Protection Units, said the PKK announced its withdrawal from Sinjar after the end of its mission, which consisted of "officially and publicly rescuing the people and liberating the territory from the Islamic State [IS] in coordination with the Iraqi government. [The mission was completed] on April 1, 2018. Since then, there have been no PKK fighters in Sinjar."

Saman Daoud, editor-in-chief of Ezidi 24, said accusations that the PKK is preventing the displaced from returning to Sinjar illustrate the political hostility between the PKK and the KDP.

The IS invasion brought new actors into the Iraqi arena and changed the balance of power in the region. PKK militants entered Sinjar on Aug. 10, 2014, to fight IS. Yazidi military groups belonging to the PKK entered Sinjar as well. After Sinjar was liberated from IS, each military group took control of a part of the area.

Yazidi academic Majid Hassan said some Yazidi forces controlling large parts of Sinjar rejected Khalil.

The PKK is present in Sinjar through a military and political wing called the Sinjar Protection Units, which became an official force of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) after the PKK withdrew from Sinjar. The members of the Sinjar Protection Units are Iraqi Yazidis residing in the area, so it would be difficult to imagine their expulsion from their own geographic space. This is especially true as they have made sacrifices in the fight against IS, and this plays in their favor among Iraqis.

The Sinjar Protection Units denied any organizational



Displaced Iraqi women from the minority Yazidi sect, who fled the Iraqi town of Sinjar, walk at the Khanki camp on the outskirts of Dahuk, Iraqi Kurdistan, July 31, 2019. REUTERS / Ari Jalal.

ties with the PKK. But the group, in a written response to Al-Monitor, said the PKK is “a friend of the Yazidi people and is now an official force of the Iraqi state working in coordination with the military and security forces in the region. It joins all campaigns aimed at cleansing the area of IS cells. It also takes charge of internal security.”

Having developed a political party that participated in the recent parliamentary elections, namely the Yazidi Party for Freedom and Democracy, the Sinjar Protection Units now constitute a political concern for rival Kurdish parties.

The Yazidi Party for Freedom and Democracy joined the Yazidi alliance along with three other Yazidi parties — the Yazidi Democratic Party, which is close to the KDP, and two Yazidi nationalist parties, the Yazidi Progress Party and the Yazidi Movement for Reform and Progress.

The coalition declaration document stipulated that a military force to protect the region would be formed and that Yazidi citizens would account for half of this force. Also, the document provided for participation in the upcoming local elections with a unified list.

Turkey opposes the presence of the PKK in Sinjar, as

Ankara deems the PKK a threat to Turkey's national security. Ankara also fears the formation of a route linking the Qandil Mountains, the main fortress of the PKK, to the Sinjar Mountains and then to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) on the second side of the Syrian border. This would constitute a corridor for the transfer of fighters, weapons and logistical support that go against Turkey's interests.

Economically, Turkey is seeking to open the new Fish Khabur crossing with Iraq, from which Turkish goods would then go through Tal Afar and Sinjar and then go to Mosul, Baghdad and southern Iraq. This would increase the volume of trade exchange between Iraq and Turkey and reduce dependence on Iran, a plan Tehran opposes.

Iran is seeking to use the PKK as a card to threaten Turkey's trade with Iraq. Tehran also does not want any party to rival its influence in the south, especially after the restoration of Iraq's relations with the Gulf states, Egypt and Jordan in the framework of Washington's efforts to increase the regional players and bring Iraq back to the Arab ranks while keeping it as far away from Iran as possible.

Amid this conflict, which has taken on regional dimensions, Turkey refuses to allow Sinjar to be turned into a base for the PKK, which Ankara classifies as a terrorist party. Meanwhile, Iran seeks to extend its influence through its allies in order to control the region bordering Syria.

Khalil's message to the US Embassy reveals a Kurdish desire to let the United States join the competition over the disputed Yazidi area and restore the balance of power to the ruling KRG party.



16/09/2019

Nord-est syrien - Q&R - Extrait du point de presse

Q - Une dizaine de familles de femmes et d'enfants français retenus dans des camps kurdes en Syrie ont porté plainte devant la Cour de justice de la République contre Jean-Yves Le Drian pour "omission de porter secours" en refusant de les rapatrier. Quelle est la réaction du Quai d'Orsay concernant cette plainte, et où en sont les dossiers des mineurs français demeurés en Syrie ? Y-a-t-il de nouveaux rapatriements en vue ?

R - Nous avons vu ces annonces dans la presse.

Nous nous sommes déjà exprimés à plusieurs reprises sur la situation des enfants se trouvant dans les camps de déplacés dans le Nord-est syrien. Nous sommes pleinement mobilisés pour que chaque situation soit traitée dans l'intérêt supérieur des enfants.

Les mineurs retenus dans le Nord-est syrien se trouvent dans des camps placés sous le contrôle des Forces Démocratiques syriennes. Ils ne sont donc pas sous le contrôle effectif de la France. Je vous rappelle que la France n'est tenue de garantir les droits protégés par les Conventions internationales qu'elle a ratifiées qu'aux personnes qui relèvent de sa juridiction, c'est-à-dire aux personnes qui se trouvent sur son territoire ou sur un territoire dont elle a le contrôle effectif, ou qui se trouvent sous le contrôle et l'autorité de ses agents.

Pour autant, notre priorité est d'assurer le retour des mineurs orphelins ou isolés qui sont les plus vulnérables. C'est le sens de notre action. La situation locale, qui est encore une situation de guerre, rend extrêmement difficile l'obtention d'informations fiables et le travail d'identification et de localisation de ces enfants, indispen-

sables pour les ramener en France. Dix-sept mineurs orphelins ou isolés ont malgré tout pu être pris en charge depuis mars dernier. Nos efforts se poursuivent pour identifier d'autres situations similaires.

Sur le plan humanitaire, nous sommes également pleinement mobilisés. Depuis 2017, la France a consacré plus de 45 millions d'euros au Nord-est syrien pour la mise en œuvre de programmes humanitaires et de stabilisation. En matière humanitaire, la priorité reste la réponse aux besoins urgents des populations. Notre réponse a notamment permis de financer des programmes d'ONG pour la fourniture de tentes, la construction de blocs sanitaires, le fonctionnement de cliniques mobiles, l'approvisionnement en eau potable ou encore la distribution de fuel.

Iraqi court suspends landmark Baghdad-KRG legal battle

Iraq's Federal Supreme Court at the Aug. 14, 2018, hearing of a lawsuit by the federal Oil Ministry against Kurdistan's oil sector. (Source: Federal Supreme Court media office)

BAGHDAD - Iraq's Federal Supreme Court has indefinitely suspended a landmark case challenging the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) independent oil policy — a further sign that Prime Minister Adil Abd al-Mahdi is trying to create space for a political resolution of long-standing disputes.

Chief Justice Midhat Mahmoud said the court would not schedule any new hearing unless Abd al-Mahdi provides a signed statement affirming that he endorses the federal government's legal action, [which is a procedural step he has so far declined to take](#).

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Chief justice says case is indefinitely delayed until the prime minister personally endorses Baghdad's complaint against the KRG's independent oil policy.

vetted reporting and fair-minded analysis that enables readers to understand the dynamic events of Iraq. To meet this goal, we always seek to gather first-hand information on the ground, verify facts from multiple angles, and solicit input from every stakeholder involved in a given story.

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from an unusually wide array of sources because we can speak with all of them in good faith.

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September 16, 2019

Detained Iranian-Kurdish author Behrouz Boochani appointed visiting professor in UK

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Iranian Kurdish journalist Behrouz Boochani, who is currently detained by the Australian and Papua New Guinean governments on Manus Island, is unable to travel to the United Kingdom although he was appointed as a visiting professor by a London University.

"I am not able to move to [the] UK because they don't let me go. It is like a hostage [situation], but I will push them to let me go," the 36-year-old told Kurdistan 24.

"I have been participating [in] many conferences and events via Skype, and I will continue [to do] so."

On Sept. 12, Boochani was appointed as a visiting law professor at the Birbeck, University of London.

Academics at Birkbeck Law School plan to build on the current inclusion of Boochani's work in undergraduate and postgraduate curricula. His work is already required reading for Birkbeck law courses.

Through Skype, Boochani will participate in research and public engagement symposia on the legality and politics of immigration detention, the first of which will be the UK launch of Boochani's prize-winning book "No Friend But The Mountains" in Spring 2020.

His debut autobiographical novel was published in 2018. It recounts his journey from Indonesia to Australia by boat, and later imprisonment on the Manus. Last month, he won Australia's National Biography award for his book.



Kurdish refugee and novelist Behrouz Boochani was appointed as a visiting law professor at the Birkbeck, University of London on Sept. 12, 2019. (Photo: The Guardian/Jonas Gratzter)

“During his internment on Manus Island, Mr. Boochani has survived great hardship and humiliation to become the most internationally recognized and respected voice of prisoners in the Australian ‘gulag archipelago.’” Professor Stewart Motha, Dean of the Birkbeck Law School, said.

“My colleagues and I very much look forward to building further links with Mr. Boochani. We urge the Australian Government to end its cruel and degrading treatment of refugees.”

This is Boochani’s first appointment at a European university. He already holds two visiting professorships at Australian institutions.

Boochani, an asylum seeker from the Kurdish city of Ilam, arrived in Australia by boat in 2013. He was immediately captured and transported to one of the country’s offshore immigration processing centers, located on Papua New Guinea’s Manus Island.

The Australian government has sent thousands of refugees to offshore processing and detention

centers in Papua New Guinea and Nauru, in an attempt to deter people from entering Australia via boat.

“[For] over six years, I have been able to draw international attention to these hidden prisons, and I ask academics and researchers to work together to expose these horrific prison camps,” Boochani said in a statement.

“I thank Birkbeck, University of London for my new role as visiting professor; this is a significant form of recognition and support for my work, and it creates more opportunities for deep analysis of the border-industrial complex.”

He described his appointment as “the beginning of long-term collaborative action and research on Australia’s exile policy and related issues.”

Boochani is one of almost 600 refugees that reside on Manus’ camps, where the tough conditions that asylum seekers are subjected to have drawn widespread criticism.

Australia claims its policies are meant to stop deaths of refugees caused by traffickers who bring them for money on boats that are often unsafe and can capsize or sink.

Authorities at the processing centers are purportedly telling asylum seekers they would never be allowed on mainland Australia.

Editing by Karzan Sulaivany

LE FIGARO

avec Reuters
le 16 septembre 2019

Syrie: Turquie, Iran et Russie promettent de ramener le calme

Les présidents turc, russe et iranien, réunis lundi à Ankara, ont promis de faire le nécessaire pour ramener le calme dans la province syrienne d’Idlib, mais ne sont manifestement pas venus à bout de leurs divergences.

La reprise de l’offensive des forces gouvernementales dans cette région du Nord-Ouest où se trouvent les dernières positions rebelles menace les trois millions de civils qui y vivent et risque de provoquer un nouvel afflux de réfugiés en Turquie.

Russie et Iran apportent un soutien décisif aux forces fidèles à Bachar el-Assad, qui ont reconquis la majeure partie du territoire syrien, alors qu’Ankara a pris le parti de rebelles pro-turcs.

«Nous sommes dans une période où nous devons assumer davantage de responsabilités pour la

paix en Syrie, où nos (trois pays) doivent peser davantage», a déclaré Recep Tayyip Erdogan, hôte du sommet.

Dans la déclaration commune, les trois chefs d’Etat disent redouter une nouvelle détérioration de la situation humanitaire et promettent de prendre des «mesures concrètes» pour mettre fin aux violations des accords de «désescalade» qu’ils ont déjà conclus.

Des désaccords semblent toutefois persister, en particulier au sujet de la menace émanant de l’Etat islamique, qu’Erdogan a balayée lorsque Vladimir Poutine a exprimé sa préoccupation à ce sujet. «Bien sûr, nous sommes préoccupés par la situation dans le nord-est de la Syrie, où des cellules dormantes de l’Etat islamique sont en train d’émerger», a déclaré le président russe lors d’une conférence de presse commune, alors que

son homologue turc venait d’assurer que la seule menace émanait des rebelles kurdes.

Erdogan a par ailleurs insisté sur l’importance de la «zone de sécurité» que les trois pays ont promis d’instaurer dans le nord de la Syrie et qui pourrait, selon lui, accueillir jusqu’à trois millions de Syriens réfugiés en Turquie si elle était prolongée jusqu’à Daïr al Zour et Rakka. Ni Poutine ni Rohani n’ont évoqué le sujet, qui n’est pas mentionné dans la déclaration commune.

Les trois chefs d’Etat n’ont pas évoqué les attaques de drones qui ont visé ce week-end des installations pétrolières saoudiennes, mais le président iranien a jugé en marge du sommet qu’il s’agissait d’un acte de légitime défense de la part des Yéménites.

LE TEMPS Le 16 septembre 2019

Une attaque meurtrière à la voiture piégée près d'un hôpital en Syrie

Selon une organisation non-gouvernementale, un camion frigorifique a explosé à deux pas d'un hôpital aux abords de la ville d'Al-Raï. Le bilan est de onze civils tués

Une voiture piégée a explosé dimanche près d'un hôpital dans le nord-ouest de la Syrie. Elle a tué onze civils dans une ville contrôlée par des rebelles syriens soutenus par la Turquie, selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH). L'attentat, qui a eu lieu aux abords d'Al-Raï, près de la frontière turque, n'a pas été revendiqué.

Le véhicule, un camion frigorifique, a explosé à deux pas d'un hôpital, a confirmé à l'Agence France-Presse (AFP) Osama Abou al-Kheir, un membre des forces rebelles. Selon le chef adjoint du conseil municipal, Alaa al-Hammad, l'explosion aurait été déclenchée grâce à une télécommande.

Un pharmacien et deux de ses enfants figurent parmi les morts, a-t-il précisé, ajoutant que des maisons aux alentours avaient été détruites. En juin, un attentat similaire avait tué dix-neuf personnes, principalement des civils, près d'un marché à Azaz, ville également limitrophe de la Turquie.



La frontière entre la Syrie et la Turquie, vue de la ville d'Al-Raï. © REUTERS /Khalil Ashawi

Un accord entre Washington et Ankara sur la mise en place d'une zone tampon

En 2016, les forces turques, aidées par certains groupes rebelles syriens, ont lancé une opération militaire contre l'organisation djihadiste Etat islamique (EI) et des combattants kurdes dans le nord de la Syrie, prenant alors sous leur contrôle Al-Raï et la ville voisine d'Azaz. La Turquie maintient des troupes et des membres de ses services de renseignements dans cette zone.

Les Kurdes, une minorité ethnique longtemps marginalisée en Syrie, ont créé une zone autonome dans le Nord à la faveur du conflit syrien. La Tur-

quie a vu d'un mauvais oeil cette émancipation, craignant que cela ne ravive les velléités indépendantistes de cette minorité sur son propre territoire.

L'attaque à Al-Raï intervient un peu plus d'un mois après la conclusion d'un accord entre la Turquie et les Etats-Unis sur la mise en place d'une zone tampon entre la frontière turque et les zones syriennes contrôlées par la milice kurde des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG). Turcs et Américains ont effectué leur première patrouille conjointe le 8 septembre dans cette zone. Appuyées par Washington dans la lutte contre l'EI, les YPG sont considérées par Ankara comme un « groupe terroriste ».

LE FIGARO le 16 septembre 2019
avec Reuters et AFP

Le chef de l'EI appelle à « sauver » les djihadistes détenus et leurs familles

Le chef du groupe Etat islamique (EI), Abou Bakr al-Baghdadi, a appelé ses partisans à « sauver » les djihadistes détenus dans les prisons et leurs familles vivant dans des camps de déplacés notamment en Syrie et en Irak, dans un enregistrement diffusé ce lundi.

« Faites de votre mieux pour sauver (...) vos frères et vos sœurs (...) et forcer les murailles » des prisons, a martelé le chef de l'EI dans un long message diffusé sur l'organe de propagande du groupe djihadiste sur Telegram. « N'hésitez pas à les sauver en brisant leur siège par la force et à traquer leurs bouchers parmi les enquêteurs et les juges », a-t-il poursuivi. « Comment un musulman peut-il continuer de vivre alors que des femmes musulmanes croupissent dans les camps de la dispersion

et les prisons de l'humiliation », a lancé Abou Bakr al-Baghdadi, faisant référence à l'Irak, la Syrie et d'autres pays « aux quatre coins du monde ».

En Syrie, où l'EI a perdu en mars le dernier bout de son « califat » autoproclamé en 2014, des centaines de djihadistes présumés sont détenus par les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), dominées par les combattants kurdes et fer de lance de la lutte anti-EI en Syrie. Selon les autorités kurdes, quelque 12.000 étrangers venant de 30 à 40 pays -4000 femmes et 8000 enfants- sont en outre parqués dans les camps du nord-est de la Syrie qu'elles administrent. Le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge (CICR) a qualifié en juillet la situation d'« apocalyptique » dans ces camps.

En Irak, où les autorités ont proclamé leur « victoire » contre l'EI en 2017, plus de 500 étrangers ont été condamnés depuis 2018 à des peines de prison ou à la peine de mort. Les autorités ne diffusent pas de données sur les prisons et les détenus mais certaines études estiment à 20.000 le nombre de personnes emprisonnées en Irak pour des liens présumés avec l'EI. En avril, l'EI avait diffusé une vidéo de propagande appelant ses partisans à continuer le combat. Le chef de l'EI y apparaissait pour la première fois depuis cinq ans. En dépit de la défaite territoriale de l'EI, des combattants djihadistes et des « cellules dormantes » sont encore disséminés dans plusieurs régions du pays. Selon un rapport du Pentagone, l'EI est en train de « resurgir en Syrie ».

Femmes et enfants retenus en Syrie: des familles attaquent Le Drian devant la CJR

Une dizaine de familles de femmes et d'enfants de jihadistes français, retenus dans des camps kurdes en Syrie, ont porté plainte contre le ministre des Affaires étrangères Jean-Yves Le Drian pour "omission de porter secours" en refusant de les rapatrier, a appris lundi l'AFP de sources concordantes.

Ces plaintes, dont l'AFP a eu connaissance, ont été déposées en juillet et en septembre auprès de la Cour de justice de la République (CJR) - seule instance habilitée à juger des actes commis par des membres du gouvernement dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions - par les avocats Marie Dosé, Henri Leclerc et Gérard Tcholakian.

Les plaignants reprochent au chef de la diplomatie française de refuser, de manière "pesée, volontaire et intentionnelle", de rapatrier ces femmes et ces enfants de jihadistes français retenus dans des camps kurdes en Syrie alors qu'ils sont "en situation de péril".

"Depuis des mois, les Kurdes n'ont cessé d'exhorter les Etats à prendre leurs responsabilités et à rapatrier leurs ressortissants", observent les familles dans ces plaintes, également révélées par Le Monde.

Or, jusqu'ici, le gouvernement français n'a accepté de rapatrier des enfants de ces camps qu'au "cas par cas". Après des mois de tergiversations dans un contexte de forte hostilité de l'opinion, Paris a ainsi rapatrié, le 10 juin, 12 enfants, dont la majorité étaient des orphelins, après cinq rapatriements en mars.



Femmes et enfants retenus en Syrie: des familles attaquent Le Drian devant la CJR © AFP/Archives / GERARD JULIEN

"Cette politique dite du +cas par cas+ vise avant tout à laisser plus de deux cents enfants et leurs mères exposés à des traitements inhumains et dégradants et à un risque de mort imminent", s'alarment les plaignants.

Températures extrêmes aussi bien en été qu'en hiver, manque d'eau et de vivres, épidémies de tuberculose ou encore de choléra, absence de soins... Ils décrivent des conditions qui ne cessent d'empirer dans ces camps, où règne par ailleurs un "climat d'insécurité" croissant.

"C'est un choix politique de ne pas sauver ces enfants et ces mères détenus arbitrairement", a réagi auprès de l'AFP Me Dosé, affirmant qu'un enfant français de 12 ans était mort la semaine dernière dans le camp d'Al-Hol. "A un moment, il faut assumer pénalement ce choix politique", a-t-elle estimé.

La commission des requêtes de la Cour doit désormais se prononcer sur la recevabilité des plaintes.

L'avocat Me Jean-Pierre Mignard, proche de Jean-Yves Le Drian, a précisé à l'AFP ne pas avoir "été pressenti", "à ce stade", "pour assurer la défense de qui que ce soit dans ce dossier qui concerne la politique étrangère de la France".

Depuis un an, des recours ont été lancés tous azimuts pour tenter de faire rapatrier ces personnes dans l'Hexagone. Au début de l'année, les autorités françaises avaient préparé un plan de rapatriement global des jihadistes et de leurs familles, qui n'a toutefois jamais été mis en oeuvre, selon des documents révélés par Libération et consultés par l'AFP.

Sick prisoner Mustafa Akyol dies in prison

VAN - Kurdish political prisoner Mustafa Akyol, jailed in Ağrı in 2011, has lost his life in prison.

Mustafa Akyol, former co-chair of Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) was jailed in Ağrı in 2011 and sentenced to 13 years and 6 months in prison for alleged "membership to an illegal organization".

Jailed in Patnos L Type Closed Prison, Akyol was referred to the Yüzüncü Yıl University (YYÜ) Research Hospital in Van a week ago. He lost his life on September 15, Sunday.

Akyol was a Parkinson patient and suffered from heart disease. His body will be taken to Ağrı for burial today.

Akyol's lawyers had made an appeal 5 months ago for the release of the Kurdish politician who couldn't make it in prison.



On September 9, 87-year-old prisoner Sıdık Buğruhan lost his life in Maraş Prison.

Labour urged to act over dismissal of Kurdish mayors

TURKEY'S People's Democratic Party (HDP) issued an urgent appeal today for solidarity from the Labour Party in fighting for democracy in Turkey after the removal of mayors from three largely Kurdish provinces.

Exiled HDP spokesman Osman Baydemir told the Star that "a coup against democracy and against the people" had taken place after government trustees were appointed in Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van last month.

He appealed to London Mayor Sadiq Khan to support colleagues from the HDP, Labour's sister party, warning that silence indicates support for the attacks on democracy.

Mr Baydemir said: "Fascism is like an infection.

"If we don't stop Turkey it will infect Europe too," referring to the authoritarian government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

"If we cannot stop Erdogan, then we cannot stop fascism in our own country," the former MP for Urfa said.

"If this happened to Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, what would happen? What would the people say?"

"If you believe in democracy you must see this as a coup against democracy and against the people, particularly of Kurdistan."

He said Mr Khan must come out strongly.

"He should support his colleagues and help them take back their positions as elected mayors."



Kurdish mothers are demonstrate in front of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) headquarters

Turkish and Kurdish groups sent Mr Khan a joint **letter on September 4.**

The letter, signed on behalf of 25 organisations representing 40,000 domiciled Turks and Kurds, called on Mr Khan to send a message of solidarity to his counterparts in Turkey.

It highlighted the violent response from the Turkish state to those protesting against what the groups described as "an arbitrary, illegal, and anti-democratic move aimed at destroying the will of the electorate."

Mr Khan was asked to use his position to put pressure on the Turkish state to abide by international law and demand the reinstatement of the elected officials.

A major campaign will be launched at Labour conference next week in solidarity with the HDP.

Plans to be unveiled include a twinning programme for local authorities to build formal links with the municipalities that have had their mayors removed and those under threat from the Turkish state.

A number of councils have already indicated support and individual councillors and MPs are set to twin with their HDP counterparts as a gesture of solidarity.

To sign the petition use the online link at: chng.it/pQdRwS6XkW

To find out information on how to twin your local authority or to twin as a councillor or MP email: HDPCampaign@gmail.com

Mr Khan's office was contacted for comment.

LA CROIX 17 septembre 2019
Mathilde Blayo

En Turquie, les défections s'enchaînent au sein du parti d'Erdogan

Les défections n'en finissent plus au sein du parti au pouvoir en Turquie, l'AKP. L'ancien premier ministre du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan et pilier du parti, Ahmet Davutoglu, a annoncé la prochaine création d'une nouvelle formation politique, vendredi 13 septembre.

« Cela relève de notre responsabilité historique et de notre devoir envers la nation (...) de créer un nouveau

parti politique », a déclaré celui qui fut premier ministre de 2014 à 2016, avant d'être mis au ban du parti. En quittant le parti islamo-conservateur, Ahmet Davutoglu a devancé les instances dirigeantes de l'AKP qui avaient prévu son expulsion.

Des poids lourds marginalisés

En avril, déjà, l'ancien bras droit d'Erdogan était sorti

de sa réserve habituelle en publiant un « manifeste » critique de la « mauvaise gouvernance » des autorités et de la « politique arrogante » menée par le parti. En juillet, il déplorait la décision de l'AKP d'avoir exigé un deuxième scrutin aux municipales d'Istanbul, après avoir perdu le premier de justesse face à l'opposition. Face à cette prise de parole, le comité exécutif de l'AKP avait décidé à l'unanimité, début septembre, de

le renvoyer devant une commission disciplinaire en vue de son expulsion.

Ahmet Davutoglu suit d'autres poids lourds du parti, comme l'ancien président Abdullah Gül et l'ex-vice premier ministre Ali Babacan, membres fondateurs de l'AKP, qui ont pris leurs distances avec le président Erdogan. « *Cela fait plusieurs années que ces personnalités du parti sont marginalisées, éloignées des postes de décision*, rappelle Jean Marcou, professeur à l'Institut d'études politiques de Grenoble, chercheur associé à l'Institut français d'études anatoliennes. *Abdullah Gül a souvent exprimé ses désaccords avec Erdogan, et en démissionnant de son poste de premier ministre en 2016, Davutoglu marquait aussi son désaccord.* »

Désaffection générale

Ali Babacan, vice-premier ministre de 2014 à 2015, figure respectée des milieux économiques et crédité des succès de l'AKP dans le domaine, démissionnait du parti le 8 juillet en lui reprochant d'avoir sacrifié ses « *valeurs* » et évoquant le besoin d'« *une vision neuve* » pour le pays. « *Ce sont les représentants de la première version de l'AKP qui quittent le navire*, analyse Jean Marcou. *Ceux de l'AKP qui se montraient comme un parti d'ouverture, prêt à engager les réformes nécessaire pour entrer dans l'UE* ».

Si le président turc est rejoint par de nouveaux militants, plus nationalistes et obéissants, le chercheur constate que les défections ne concernent pas que les cadres de l'AKP. « *Il y a un départ bien plus large et une désaffection de l'électorat qui se voit dans les votes* », rappelle-t-il, alors que l'AKP a perdu la capitale Ankara ainsi qu'Istanbul aux dernières municipales.

Selon un sondage de l'institut Metropoll, 60 % des Turcs interrogés se disent opposés au système d'hy-



Ahmet Davutoglu (2e à gauche) annonce son départ de la formation AKP, le 13 septembre 2019. Le parti, au pouvoir, est en perte de vitesse et a notamment été défait à Ankara et Istanbul aux élections municipales. ADEM ALTAN/AFP

per-présidence mis en place par Erdogan, désormais président, chef du gouvernement, de l'AKP, commandant en chef des armées et maître de la politique monétaire.

Divisions chez les conservateurs

Ahmet Davutoglu comme Ali Babacan ont annoncé la formation de leur propre mouvement politique. Soutenu par Abdullah Gül, Ali Babacan a précisé qu'il ne se joindrait pas à Ahmet Davutoglu car leurs « *priorités politiques, leurs méthodes et leurs tons sont différents* ». Des luttes internes qui affaiblissent l'AKP et

l'ensemble d'une aile politique. « *Ce sera compliqué pour ces dissidents d'émerger politiquement. Leur départ va faire perdre des voix à l'AKP, mais il est peu probable que leurs partis lui succèdent* », considère Jean Marcou.

Face à ces départs, le président Erdogan semble assumer un nettoyage au sein de son parti, mais il peine à rebondir politiquement. Quelques libérations de journalistes et enseignants, ces derniers mois, donnent des signes d'ouvertures, rapidement contredits toutefois par des arrestations de maires kurdes ou de membres de partis d'opposition.

l'Humanité

19 septembre 2019
Gaël De Santis

Turquie

Un appel pour la libération de Demirtas.

La grande chambre de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (CEDH) a examiné hier le cas de Selahattin Demirtas. Elle devrait rendre son arrêt dans les prochains mois sur le sort réservé au dirigeant du Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP), incarcéré depuis novembre 2016 en Turquie et dont le procès doit se dérouler le 7 janvier. L'an dernier, la CEDH avait exigé de la Turquie la remise en liberté du dirigeant démocrate; Ankara avait alors saisi la grande chambre. Samedi, sur la Grande Scène de la Fête de l'Humanité, un appel international a été lancé pour



la libération de Selahattin Demirtas par Sylvie Jan. Il relaie en France, avec l'appui de l'Association France-Kurdistan, l'appel

lancé par le HDP. Le texte a déjà reçu, entre autres, les signatures du spécialiste en relations internationales Bertrand Badie, de l'éditrice en France de Selahattin Demirtas, Emmanuelle Collas, ou de l'universitaire malien Issah N'Diaye. Dans un message où il « *salue tous ceux qui se sont rassemblés ici pour la Fête de l'Humanité* », Selahattin Demirtas salue la résistance de « *dizaines de milliers de prisonniers politiques incarcérés (...) grâce aux millions de gens qui, à l'extérieur, les soutiennent* ». G. D. S.

MEPs to form Kurdish Friendship Group, nominate Demirtaş for human rights prize

Members of the European Parliament (EP) from the European Free Alliance (EFA), the European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL) and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) groups have announced the establishment of a Kurdish Friendship Group in a press briefing on Tuesday, [Deutsche Welle Turkish reported](#).

The meeting was focused on the government-appointed mayors who replaced elected mayors from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in Turkey's majority-Kurdish Diyarbakır, Van and Mardin provinces, DW said.

HDP's Co-chair Sezai Temelli was present at the meeting, according to DW, calling on European countries to not compromise on democracy and universal values, and to show solidarity with the HDP.

"This is a critical time, particularly for Kurdish people in Turkey who are seeing their democratic rights undermined by a government which allows the dismissal of properly elected mayors just because of their political allegiance," an [EFA statement](#) quoted MEP François Alfonsi as saying.

The 15 MEPs will meet in Brussels in October to formalise the Kurdish Friendship Group, Alfonsi said. The MEP added that they are expecting more MEPs to join.

The issue of appointed mayors goes beyond the HDP, as the country's interior minister Süleyman Soylu has also threatened Istanbul's mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu,



said S&D's Kati Piri, a Dutch MEP who has served as the EP's Turkey rapporteur. Centre-left opposition Republican People's Party's (CHP) İmamoğlu, who won the elections in Turkey's biggest city by a slim margin in March 2019 and then with a landslide victory in the re-vote in June, had visited the dismissed Kurdish mayors, a move that led [Minister Soylu threatening his dismissal](#).

Piri continued to say that the hearing to be held in the European Court of Human Rights' (ECHR) Grand Chamber on Sept. 18 for HDP's jailed former co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş is important for all politicians in a similar situation in Turkey, DW said.

Thousands of [HDP members and administrators remain in prisons](#) in Turkey over terrorist propaganda charges, which have led to convictions in the ECHR

for Turkey on grounds of freedom of speech violations.

Cypriot MEP Costas Mavrides proposed nominating Demirtaş for the EP's human rights award the Sakharov Prize, DW said. The proposal received support in the meeting.

The [Sakharov Prize](#), named after Russian scientist and dissident Andrei Sakharov, is awarded to "individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to the fight for human rights across the globe, drawing attention to human rights violations."

Nelson Mandela was the first recipient of the award in 1988. Leyla Zana, the first Kurdish woman elected to the Turkish parliament who served over 10 years in prison for her pro-Kurdish activism, [received the award in 1995](#).

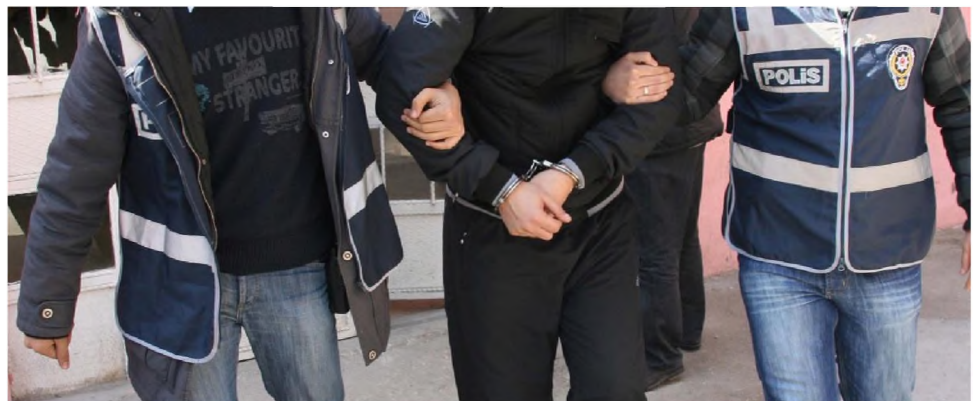
Turkey arrests pro-Kurdish HDP mayor in eastern province of Erzurum

Turkish police on Tuesday arrested the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) co-mayor of the town of Karayazı in the eastern province of Erzurum on charges of membership of a terrorist organisation.

Melike Göksü was detained along with six others, including two members of the HDP municipal council, while the group was leaving Karayazı for the western province of Aydın, independent news site [T24 reported](#).

Göksü, who was elected the co-mayor of Karayazı in March 31 local elections, was arrested on charges of membership of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) on July 10, 2017 and released after spending five months behind bars. She was then given a seven-year and six-month jail sentence, which was approved by the Supreme Court of Appeals leading to the issuance of an arrest warrant.

The PKK has been fighting an armed insurgency for



Kurdish self-rule in Turkey since 1984 and is labelled a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

The Turkish government accuses the pro-Kurdish HDP

of acting as the political wing of the PKK, a charge the party denies.

Hundreds of HDP members and around 40 of its mayors are currently in detention, including the party's former co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş.

Syria Kurds dispute Turkish plans to resettle ‘non-indigenous’ refugees

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region – Kurdish forces in northeast Syria said Monday that Syrian refugees hosted by neighboring Turkey who are not indigenous to the region should not be resettled in the area, contrary to Turkish plans.

Turkey and the US recently reached an agreement to establish a ‘safe zone’ along northern Syria’s shared border with Turkey.

Although the precise length and depth of this safe zone is still under discussion, Turkey says it intends to resettle some of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees it currently hosts inside a so-called ‘peace corridor’ in the Kurdish-controlled north.

Following a meeting with US-led coalition officials in Tel Abyad on Monday, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) set out its own vision for refugee resettlement, insisting only Syrians indigenous to SDF areas, and those not affiliated with “terrorist groups”, would be permitted.

In a [Twitter thread](#) following the meeting, the Coordination and Military Ops Center said: “Refugees may return when preparations are complete that include the support of international organizations and international aid,” specifically once a screening system has been established.

“The refugees must originally come from NE Syria ... [and] the refugees must not be connected to any terror activities or crimes against Syrian people,” the SDF added.

Any return must also be voluntary, the SDF said, urging the international community to step in to provide support and care for refugees and to prevent the return of the Islamic State (ISIS), territorially defeated in the East of Euphrates region in March.

The SDF’s vision of refugee resettlement differs sharply with plans outlined by Turkey in recent weeks

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan [said Monday](#) that up to three million Syrians hosted by Turkey would soon be moved to northeast Syria.



Members of the US-led coalition forces shake hands with local forces from the Tal Abyad military council in the northern Syrian town of Tal Abyad, September 15, 2019. Photo: Delil Souleiman / AFP

Turkey, which considers the region’s ruling Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the People’s Protection Units (YPG) as extensions of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), has more than once threatened to invade the Kurdish controlled areas.

The safe zone is supposed to prevent this from happening in return for meeting some of Turkey’s security concerns.

US and Turkish forces have already started joint aerial and land patrols along the proposed zone. Turkish forces usually return to their side of the border following these patrols.

Turkey hosts more Syrian refugees than any other country in the region, placing a strain on its public infrastructure and inter-communal relations. In response to this growing hostility, Ankara has promised to resettle them.

Speaking at a trilateral press conference with Russia’s President Vladimir Putin and Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani on Monday, Erdogan

said his country will focus on the “voluntary return” of Syrians.

“It is evident that Turkey cannot shoulder the refugee burden on its own. Nor is it possible for our country to face a new migration wave. Now it is time for us to focus on the safe and voluntary return of Syrians to their own country,” he said.

Two million Syrians currently taking refuge in Turkey can be resettled in this area and this figure might exceed even three million if this line can be extended all the way to Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa, Erdogan added.

Speaking to North Press Agency, a media agency close to the SDF, US Special Presidential Envoy for Syria Engagement James Jeffrey said the safe zone is being established to [prevent an ISIS resurgence](#). but did not clarify whether the return of refugees is on the agenda.

The US wants to establish a “security mechanism” that would ensure the permanent destruction of ISIS, he said.

ECHR holds Grand Chamber meeting in case of jailed pro-Kurdish leader Demirtaş

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on Wednesday held a Grand Chamber meeting in the case of jailed pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) lawmaker Selahattin Demirtaş.

The ECHR Grand Chamber's seventeen judges are now expected to take a decision that is likely to be announced in coming months.

The decision is expected to be in line with the court's Nov. 2018 ruling, which urged Turkey to swiftly process the pro-Kurdish leader's legal case, saying his pre-trial detention had gone on longer than could be justified.

The former HDP co-chair [Demirtaş was arrested on Nov. 4, 2016](#), along with 12 other HDP parliamentary deputies, and is accused of links to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an outlawed militant group that has fought for Kurdish self-rule in Turkey for over three decades.

Lawyers Başak Çalı, Kerem Altıparmak, Mahsuni Karaman, Benan Molu, Ramazan Demir and Aygül Demirtaş represented Demirtaş on Wednesday, pro-Kurdish Fırat News Agency [reported](#).

The defence submitted by Demirtaş's lawyers highlighted the role played by Demirtaş in the peace talks between PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and



Turkish state officials, which collapsed in 2015, ending a two-year ceasefire in a conflict that has killed more than 40,000 people.

The lawyers said a political coup was staged against the HDP on Nov. 4, 2016 in violation of articles of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Thousands of [HDP members and administrators remain in prisons](#) in Turkey over terrorist propaganda charges, which have led to convictions in the ECHR for Turkey on grounds of freedom of speech violations.

"The Diyarbakır Court put forth nine justifications concerning, all of which were related to the speeches he had made as the co-chair of the second biggest opposition party in Turkey. An opposition leader's political speeches were put forward as the base for the arrest warrant," it said.

Main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) lawmaker and lawyer Sezgin Tanrıkulu, Demirtaş wife Başak Demirtaş, as well as 20 members of the European Parliament from the Socialists and Greens groups were among those in attendance during Wednesday's hearing.

Iraq elections body rejects 'Kirkuk is Kurdistan' name for joint Kurdish party list

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region – Iraq's election body has rejected the 'Kirkuk is Kurdistan' name for a joint list of Kurdish parties formed earlier this month to run in the upcoming provincial elections, on the grounds that it could trigger further ethnic and political tension in the disputed territory.

All political parties in the Kurdistan Region agreed on [September 9](#) to run under the 'Kirkuk is Kurdistan' banner in Iraq's upcoming provincial elections, scheduled for April 1, 2020.

Rizgar Haji Hama, deputy head of the Iraqi elections body, told Rudaw on Wednesday that the list name would need revision for fear that it could stoke tensions.

"We will advise them to change the name. The problem is not that the word Kurdistan comes before or after, the idea should be changed. For example, instead of Kirkuk is Kurdistan, they could say Kurdistan List of Kirkuk or the Kurdistan Coalition."

"The name of any list and entity set to run for the election will have to abide by the commission regulations and laws and it should not mean to trigger national, sectarian, political and social issues," Hama explained, adding that no coalition has officially submitted their names to the commission.

Kirkuk is one of the territories disputed by federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq. The city and province has a mix of Kurdish, Arab, Turkmen, and Christian inhabitants. Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein forcibly moved people to and from Kirkuk and the surrounding areas during his reign, further exacerbating tensions.

Now aware of the commission's concerns, list member parties have decided to discuss the matter at their next meeting.

"We have not yet legally submitted the name of our list. We are trying to pick a name that serves the people

of Kirkuk and its components," Hakim Ubeid, head of the Change Movement (Gorran) office in Kirkuk said.

Dispute between its different ethnic and religious groups has meant Kirkuk has not had a provincial council election since 2005, when Kurds won 26 out of 41 provincial council seats by running on the joint Kurdistan Brotherhood List that also included some Turkmen parties.

When the 'Kirkuk is Kurdistan' list's formation was announced, participating parties stressed the need for peace between Kirkuk's communities.

Residents of the Kurdistan neighborhood in Kirkuk believe the Kurdish parties should not alter the list name to exclude Kurdistan.

"We are all of the view that the name of our list must contain Kurds or Kurdistan," said a resident, with another suggesting for the name to be changed to "the United Kurdistan List."

Pour un caricaturiste turc, les prisons et les tribunaux comme "seconde maison"

Istanbul (AFP) - Le caricaturiste turc Musa Kart, connu pour son travail pour le quotidien d'opposition Cumhuriyet, raconte avoir passé plus de temps en prison ou au tribunal qu'à son bureau depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir de Recep Tayyip Erdogan en Turquie en 2003.

Son dernier séjour en prison a commencé en avril, lorsqu'une cour d'appel a confirmé sa condamnation à trois ans et neuf mois pour "aide à une organisation terroriste", avant qu'il soit libéré la semaine dernière dans l'attente de l'examen d'un nouvel appel.

"Ces quinze dernières années, les prisons et les tribunaux sont devenus une seconde maison pour moi", dit-il à l'AFP.

Récompensé l'année dernière par la fondation suisse Cartooning for Peace, M. Kart est l'un des quatorze employés de Cumhuriyet condamnés dans cette affaire.

Il a été arrêté une première fois en 2016, au moment où les autorités menaient une implacable répression contre l'opposition à la suite du putsch manqué du 15 juillet.

"J'ai passé quasiment autant de temps dans les couloirs des tribunaux qu'au journal. C'est vraiment malheureux", regrette-t-il.

Incorrigible optimiste, le caricaturiste refuse de se laisser abattre et raconte avoir toujours essayé d'être le plus présentable possible pour ses visiteurs en prison.

"Je me rasais, je prenais la chemise la plus propre de ma modeste garde-robe et je les accueillais à bras ouverts", décrit-il. "Nous passions notre temps à plaisanter".

Son moral était également remonté par la conviction de n'avoir rien fait de mal. "Si vous êtes en paix avec vos actions, il n'est pas si difficile de supporter les conditions de détention", assure-t-il.

- "Ombre politique" -

Le premier procès de Musa Kart a eu lieu en 2005 en raison d'une caricature de M. Erdogan, alors Premier ministre, représenté comme un chat empêtré dans une pelote de laine.

"Je dessine depuis plus de 40 ans... Je l'ai fait



Le caricaturiste turc Musa Kart dessine dans un parc d'Istanbul, le 14 septembre 2019 ((c) Afp)

dans le passé avec d'autres dirigeants politiques, mais je n'avais jamais fait l'objet de poursuites judiciaires", dit-il. "Le cadre de tolérance s'est nettement restreint aujourd'hui".

Les défenseurs des droits de l'homme, dont Reporters sans frontières (RSF), ont appelé la Turquie à revoir ses lois anti-terroristes et anti-diffamation, affirmant qu'elles sont utilisées à outrance pour faire taire l'opposition.

Dans le procès en cours contre lui, il est reproché à M. Kart d'avoir contacté des membres du mouvement güleniste, accusé par Ankara d'avoir fomenté le putsch manqué de 2016.

L'accusation affirme également que les employés de Cumhuriyet ont conspiré pour changer la ligne éditoriale du quotidien afin de soutenir les gülenistes, ainsi que le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et le groupe d'extrême gauche DHKP-C, tous trois considérés comme "terroristes" par la Turquie.

"Quand vous regardez mes dessins, vous voyez combien je suis contre tout type d'organisation terroriste et avec quels force et sérieux je les critique", insiste M. Kart auprès de l'AFP.

Cumhuriyet, le plus ancien quotidien en Turquie, n'appartient pas à un grand groupe d'affaires,

mais à une fondation indépendante, ce qui en fait une cible facile pour les autorités.

Son ancien rédacteur en chef Can Dündar a fui en Allemagne après une condamnation en 2016 à la suite d'un article affirmant que la Turquie avait fourni des armes à des groupes islamistes en Syrie.

En outre, Cumhuriyet connaît ses propres problèmes internes, et certains, dont Musa Kart, ont démissionné en raison de différends avec la nouvelle direction qui a en pris les rênes l'année dernière.

Les poursuites judiciaires ont exacerbé le climat de peur dans lequel vivent les journalistes en Turquie, où des dizaines d'entre eux sont emprisonnés.

Et Musa Kart ne sait pas comment cette affaire va se terminer. "Tout le monde sait qu'une ombre politique flotte sur notre affaire", dit-il.

Mais quoi qu'il arrive, il souhaite se concentrer sur ses caricatures. "Les dessins de presse sont un langage très fort parce que l'on y trouve le moyen de s'exprimer sous toutes les circonstances, même sous la pression".

« L'objectif qui était de vaincre Daech n'est pas atteint » : retour sur cinq ans d'engagement de la France en Irak et en Syrie

Alors que Paris estime avoir consolidé sa relation avec son allié américain, l'armée française est toujours confrontée à la résistance de l'ennemi djihadiste.

Quand on évoque les cinq ans de l'opération française « Chammal » lancée le 19 septembre 2014 en Irak, puis en Syrie douze mois plus tard, un commentaire revient dans la bouche des militaires français : « On a réussi à très bien travailler avec les Américains. » Intégrée à la coalition internationale dirigée par Washington contre l'organisation **Etat islamique**, la France estime que sa modeste participation – 1 000 hommes actuellement – est payée de retour. En dépit des errements stratégiques de la présidence Trump et de la résistance de l'ennemi djihadiste, la relation militaire avec le grand allié a été consolidée, estime-t-on à Paris.

« La caractéristique de cette opération est qu'on s'est aligné sur les modes de fonctionnement américains, avec un modèle alliant frappes aériennes et forces spéciales, en favorisant les appuis indirects aux forces locales pour une empreinte légère au sol », résume l'historien militaire Michel Goya. Cet ancien colonel note que, « cinq ans, cela commence à être une des guerres les plus longues que la France ait mené. Si on voulait un rapport coût humain/efficacité correct, cela a été réussi. Mais l'objectif qui était de vaincre Daech n'est pas atteint ».

Selon les éléments collectés par *Le Monde*, l'armée française, qui a participé à quelque 2 500 bombardements aériens, a tiré 100 missiles de croisière *Scalp* et 3 000 bombes. Au sol, les canons *Caesar* ont lancé 18 000 obus de 155 mm. Un bilan à la fois faible – 5 % des frappes de la coalition – et significatif – seuls la France et le Royaume-Uni ont participé durablement à la campagne aérienne de l'opération « *Inherent Resolve* » (OIR).

Tournant en 2016

La France commence ses opérations sur le théâtre irako-syrien en 2014. Elle installe son *Transall Gabriel* bourré de capteurs sur la base Prince-Hassan de Jordanie, ainsi que des opérateurs à Bagdad et des forces spéciales à Erbil. Elle déploie ses moyens propres de renseignement, dont des avions légers de surveillance. Mais elle occupe, avec ses officiers dans les états-majors d'OIR au Qatar, à Koweït et à Bagdad, une place de simple exécutant dans la coalition, un « *coéquipier* », selon le langage officiel.

Les *Mirage 2000* basés en Jordanie volent d'abord hors des zones de combat. Après les attentats du 13 novembre 2015 à Paris, le président François Hollande promet qu'il mettra « *tous les moyens* » pour détruire l'EI, qui a organisé le carnage depuis Rakka. Et, le 15 novembre 2015, Paris lance un raid sur la ville syrienne avec dix avions. Mais les « *raids massifs contre l'EI* » promis à l'opinion ne se sont pas répétés. L'état-major français a voulu préserver les moyens de son opération majeure, « *Barkhane* », au Sahel. Et le porte-avions, envoyé sur zone à partir de fin 2015, ce qui permet de « *tripler* » l'effectif français engagé, dépend des ravitailleurs américains. Selon les informations du *Monde*, à l'automne 2016, l'état-major d'OIR refuse tout net les tankers indispensables pour mettre en œuvre ses 24 *Rafale* embarqués depuis Toulon. L'affaire se règle, après discussion.

Surtout, les plans américains ne satisfont pas Paris, en ce qu'ils visent à libérer Mossoul avant de s'attaquer à Rakka. L'année 2016 est heureusement un tournant. Le général Stephen Townsend, nouveau commandant d'OIR, décide d'unifier les théâtres syrien et irakien. On frappera les deux fiefs de l'EI en même temps. L'armée française négocie alors de pouvoir placer un général de l'armée de l'air dans le *command group* de Bagdad. Sa mission sera de peser sur la conception de la manœuvre générale. La France se trouvait naturellement exclue des réunions « *Five Eyes* » – les Etats-Unis et leurs quatre alliés du renseignement, Canada, Royaume-Uni, Australie, Nouvelle-Zélande. Depuis 2016, l'état-major d'OIR fonctionne avec des réunions « *Five eyes + France* ».

Paris annonce fin 2016 avoir tué 2 500 djihadistes. Un groupe d'artillerie, la « *Task Force Wagram* » avec des canons *Caesar*, est aussi envoyé en Irak, tandis que l'armée de terre forme des forces irakiennes. Les canons ne sont retirés qu'à l'été 2019 : le fait d'être le

antidrones inexistantes : des capteurs pas assez performants.

Le colonel Legrier, chef de la « *TF Wagram* », a provoqué la colère de l'état-major sur un autre point, en dénonçant en février 2019 l'échec de la stratégie menée lors de la bataille d'Hajin fin 2018. Les destructions civiles, que les Américains assument selon lui « *sans complexe* », ont été excessives et ont semé « *les germes d'une résurgence prochaine d'un nouvel adversaire* », assurait-il. En participant à la planification des frappes, l'armée française assure avoir conservé son « *autonomie* ». Selon plusieurs officiers, la retenue imposée a même pu être excessive. En pleine mission d'appui aux Forces démocratiques syriennes, des pilotes de *Rafale* ont dû demander l'autorisation du centre des opérations à Paris pour lâcher une bombe, conduisant les opérateurs au sol à préférer l'appui de F-18 américains.

Mais l'armée ne fournit pas le nombre de cas où le « *carton rouge* » a été levé par son officier du centre



Un Rafale sur la base Prince-Hassan, en Jordanie, le 31 décembre 2018. DAPHNE BENOIT / AFP

seul allié à fournir un tel moyen d'appui aux combats du terrain, en sus des forces spéciales, a été vu d'un bon œil par les Américains. « *Ils nous fournissent en retour des avions de transport et des ravitailleurs au Sahel. La bonne coopération d'un côté crée la bonne coopération de l'autre* », souligne une source militaire.

Retenue jugée excessive

« *La composante aérienne a été décisive* », assurent aujourd'hui sans surprise les aviateurs. Mais, une fois encore, l'armée française a mesuré ses lacunes. Outre le manque de ravitailleurs : des stocks de munitions bas et des munitions trop puissantes pour le combat urbain ; des drones en nombre insuffisant et des armes

des opérations du Qatar pour s'opposer à une frappe en raison des risques sur la population civile. Ni d'estimation des dommages collatéraux causés par ses avions ou ses canons. « *Il fallait, si l'on voulait obtenir une victoire face à un ennemi qui est délibérément s'installer dans les villes et au milieu de la population civile, le déloger de là où il était. Cela passait par des destructions* », a indiqué le chef d'état-major, François Lecointre, lors d'une audition parlementaire en juin. « *C'est certes terrible. (...) Mais il arrive un moment où l'on fait la guerre et où il faut vaincre l'ennemi.* » Selon un aviateur, « *les Etats-Unis nous ont fait de la place, pour qu'on puisse participer normalement* ».

Syria Kurds discuss aid, stabilization with French-German delegation

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region – A delegation of French and German officials met with the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (NES) in Ain Issa in Syria’s northern Raqqa province on Thursday to discuss humanitarian assistance and stabilization projects.

The joint delegation consisted of Eric Chevallier, director of the French Foreign Ministry’s Crisis and Support Centre, and Clemens Hach, head of Division Crisis Prevention, Stabilization, and Peacebuilding at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.

Syria’s Kurds have carved out an autonomous administration in the country’s north amid Syria’s protracted civil war and Islamic State (ISIS) insurgency.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) recaptured the caliphate’s de facto capital of Raqqa in 2017 and cleared the jihadists’ last holdout of Baghouz, Deir ez-Zor province in March this year.

Devastated in the fighting, northern Syria’s cities and rural areas are in desperate need of reconstruction and stabilization assistance.

“France has developed many projects since 2017 to support the people in this region, including health, education and agriculture, and in the field of supporting civil society institutions, and also helped in demining and we know that there are many challenges facing this region, but we as France and in cooperation with some partners excited to work together, to help people improve their lives,” Chevallier told the NES-affiliated [ANHA news agency](#) following the meeting.

The Crisis and Support Centre “responds to crisis situations abroad that affect French citizens or within the framework of a humanitarian crisis. It is also responsible for pre-crisis work (anticipation, preparation, monitoring, warnings) and post-crisis stabilization,” according to the [ministry’s website](#).

France is a member of the US-led international coalition to defeat ISIS and has been a key player in Syrian crisis. French President Em-



French soldiers from the Wagram Task Force kneel next to a CAESAR unit, a French self-propelled 155mm howitzer, north of Mosul, northern Iraq. File photo: Fadel Senna / AFP

manuel Macron has received delegations from the NES multiple times at the Elysee Palace.

France deployed troops, weaponry, and airpower in support of the SDF to push back the ISIS onslaught.

When US President Donald Trump announced plans in December 2018 to withdraw America’s 2,000 troops from northern Syria, Paris said it would step up its support for its Kurdish allies.

The Kurds feared a premature US withdrawal would clear the way for an invasion by Turkey from the north or by the Russian-backed regime of Bashar al-Assad, who has pledged to reconquer the entirety of Syria.

The French official’s visit indicates Paris intends to maintain its presence in its former mandate and cement Rojava’s achievements.

France has repatriated several of its citizens who traveled to Syria to join ISIS or who were born to French nationals inside the so-called caliphate. Several more have been sent to appear before Iraqi courts, raising concerns over their right to a free and fair trial.

The Kurdish administration has warned it lacks the capacity to host foreign prisoners indefinitely, and has called for an [international tribunal](#) to be held on Syrian soil.

A Foreign Relations Committee delegation from Paris previously met with the NES officials on May 31 to discuss reconstruction and stabilization.

“France has been at your side throughout this, and France will continue to be at your side for the reconstruction and stabilization of this region,” committee head Marielle de Sarnez [told journalists](#) following that meeting.

Germany has also been a key player in the fight against ISIS since the emergence of the group in Iraq and Syria in 2014. It supported the Kurdish Peshmerga in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region by providing weapons and training.

A [British delegation](#) of parliamentarians and journalists was also in Rojava this week to discuss repatriation of foreign nationals and options for transitional justice in the liberated areas.

Journalist Musa Anter Commemorated in 27th Year of His Murder

Kurdish journalist and writer Musa Anter, widely known as Apê Musa, was commemorated on the spot where he was murdered in Turkey's southeastern province of Diyarbakır 27 years ago today (September 20).

The commemoration ceremony held in front of Musa Anter Monument was attended by several people including journalists and politicians.

The ceremony was organized by the Free Journalists Initiative (OGİ). The ones who attended the commemoration carried the photographs of Anter as well as other murdered Kurdish journalists in their hands.

Police officers announced that they would not let the people carry the photos of other killed Kurdish journalists; however, the police permitted the photos upon the insistence of journalists.

Boltan: His voice has come to these days

Making a brief statement on behalf of the ÖGİ, Spokesperson Hakkı Boltan reiterated that more than 100 journalists including Musa Anter were massacred and added, "The murderers of several of them have been still unknown. There is a highly planned attack against free press from past to present. These attacks are increasing day by day."

"The ones who massacred Apê Musa aimed to kill his struggle as well. They thought that they could silence him by killing him. However, when they massacred Apê Musa, we saw that they could not bury his struggle and that of the free press. The voice that he raised in those years has come to these days. This voice has also risen for free press in the world, in Kurdistan."

Mızraklı: I was unlucky, I met them late

Indicating that he found the opportunity to meet Musa Anter and Vedat Aydın in the General Assembly of Human Rights Association (İHD) in 1990, dismissed Metropolitan Mayor of Diyarbakır Selçuk Mızraklı said, "I met them late, I was unlucky for that reason. I wish I could still benefit more from the values, the words, the language that they left behind."

Ceylan: They will not get away with it

Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Diyarbakır Provincial Co-Chair Zeyyat Ceylan indicated that Musa Anter was a philosopher of Kurds and added that dark forces have massacred the philosopher of peace and freedom.

"They have massacred him, but his hundreds of friends are following his footsteps and continue



* Photograph: Mezopotamya Agency

struggling. Those who did it thought that they would get away with that. But, no, they will not get away with it, they will be condemned in people's conscience", Ceylan stated further.

Group set off for Mardin to visit his grave

After the speeches, the ones who attended the commemoration walked to the point where Anter

was shot to death by chanting the slogan "Free press cannot be silenced". Laying carnations there, they also observed a moment of silence. Anter will also be commemorated at his grave in Mardin.



About Musa Anter

Born in Mardin in 1920, Musa Anter completed his secondary and high school education in Adana and studied law at İstanbul University.

It was during Dersim Revolt that he was taken into custody for the first time. He was among the founders of Revolutionary Eastern Culture Hearths, the Labor Party of People, Mezopotamya Cultural Center and İstanbul Kurdish Institute.

After leaving the Faculty of Law in the third year, Musa Anter started writing for Şark Postası and Dicle Kaynağı. He was imprisoned in 1959 because of his Kurdish poem "Qimil/Kımlıl" published on İleri Yurt newspaper. Anter was also faced with life imprisonment in the lawsuit known as 49s. He was arrested in 1963, sent to exile in 1967 and imprisoned after the military coups in 1971 and 1980.

Throughout his life, Anter wrote for İleri Yurt, Dicle-Fırat, Barış Dünyası, Deng, Yön, Azadiye Welat, Yeni Ülke, Özgür Gündem, Rewşen and Tewlo. He also published seven books and one Kurdish-Turkish Dictionary.

On September 20, 1992, Musa Anter attended the Culture-Art Festival in Diyarbakır, signed his books. An armed attack was launched against Anter and his nephew journalist-writer Orhan Miroğlu in Cumhuriyet Neighborhood. Anter died, Miroğlu was wounded. The attack was allegedly conducted by Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Organization (JİTEM), a controversial wing and intelligence agency of the gendarmerie.

(HA/SD)

Le périlleux retour des yézidis en Irak

Reportage. Chassé de la région du Sinjar en 2017, l'État islamique a laissé ce territoire stratégique en proie aux règlements de compte entre milices et à la rivalité opposant Bagdad au Kurdistan d'Irak. Entre destructions et insécurité, rien n'incite la population à retourner chez elle.

Sur la route qui serpente jusqu'à la ligne de crête du mont Sinjar, des centaines de tentes en bâche blanche rompent le charme bucolique des collines flanquées de petites maisons de pierre et de chardons bleus. A l'extrémité nord-ouest de l'Irak, à la frontière avec la Syrie, 2 300 familles yézidies ont trouvé un refuge temporaire sur ce massif montagneux qui sépare en deux le district du Sinjar qui, avec celui de Cheikhan, rassemble la majorité de cette minorité qui a payé un terrible tribut à l'organisation Etat islamique (EI).



INFOGRAPHIE LE MONDE

A la suite de l'attaque éclair de Sinjar par les djihadistes, le 3 août 2014, et du retrait des forces de sécurité kurdes, des femmes yézidies ont été réduites à l'état d'esclaves sexuelles, leurs enfants séquestrés et « élevés » pour devenir combattants, des familles massacrées. Des centaines de milliers d'habitants, en majorité yézidis, ont alors pris la fuite. Depuis 2015, le nord du district a été libéré ; le sud a dû attendre 2017. Les réfugiés attendent aujourd'hui un hypothétique retour sur leurs terres.

Cinq hivers et cinq étés se sont déjà succédé depuis que Kheiro Ketcho, berger yézidi de 32 ans originaire du village de Wardiya, situé au sud-est du district, s'est installé avec sa femme et ses deux enfants dans une tente équipée de matelas et d'une télévision. Ses quatre frères et leurs familles habitent des tentes mitoyennes. Entre petits boulots pour une organisation humanitaire internationale et l'épicerie qu'il tient en bord de route, Kheiro Ketcho peine à joindre les deux bouts. Cet homme longiligne aux grands yeux bleus exclut pourtant de rentrer à Wardiya. Seule une vingtaine de familles de bergers s'y est risquée. « A part les voies principales, le village n'est pas déminé. Notre maison n'a plus de fenêtres, pas d'électricité. Personne ne nous aide à reconstruire », explique-t-il, le regard voilé de tristesse.

Un tiers seulement des 400 000 habitants de Sinjar sont revenus, soit 19 000 familles, en majorité yézidies : 4 500 dans le sud ; 15 000 dans le nord, dont 8 000 sont originaires du sud. Au nord du mont Sinjar, la vie reprend son cours. Grâce à l'aide d'une vingtaine d'ONG internationales, l'électricité a été rétablie

presque partout, ainsi que l'eau, dans la moitié des quartiers et localités. Des centres de soin ont rouvert, mais, malgré la relative sécurité qui règne à Sinoni, chef-lieu du nord du district, le personnel qualifié est rare. « Les spécialistes viennent de Mossoul. Il y a des médecins yézidis, mais surtout des novices. Les plus expérimentés restent à Dohouk [dans le Kurdistan irakien] : pour eux, Sinjar, c'est loin et ils restent inquiets après les massacres en 2014 », confie un acteur humanitaire.

Plus de 80 charniers identifiés

Une fois franchi le massif montagneux pour rejoindre le chef-lieu du district sud, le contraste est saisissant. Détruite

à plus de 70 %, Sinjar reste une ville quasi fantôme plus de deux ans après le départ des djihadistes. « Cinq quartiers et vingt villages n'ont pas encore été déminés. Ils recèlent encore des charniers – plus de 80 ont été identifiés », précise Fahad Hamid Omar, maire de Sinjar depuis octobre 2017. Il regrette le manque d'aide de la part du gouvernement de Bagdad et des ONG internationales, peu nombreuses à intervenir dans le secteur.

« L'organisation UN-Habitat a réparé 500 maisons endommagées. L'électricité fonctionne en ville et 60 % du réseau d'eau a été réhabilité. Il y a une école, mais seulement un directeur et un professeur pour 1 800 élèves. En revanche, il n'y a pas d'administration délivrant des cartes d'identité ou des titres de propriété. Pour cela, il faut se rendre dans des bureaux situés ailleurs, dans la province de Ninive », énumère M. Fahed. Agé de 54 ans, le maire assure travailler bénévolement.

Outre l'incurie des services administratifs, la pauvreté des services de santé dissuade nombre d'habitants de revenir. Les locaux provisoires de l'hôpital de Sinjar, installés dans le quartier de Chouhada ne disposent pas d'un service des urgences, ni de moyens chirurgicaux. Ses quatre spécialistes prennent en charge les blessures et maladies bénignes et envoient les cas les plus sérieux à Tall Afar, à une demi-heure de route. « Comme tout le personnel de l'hôpital, je ne viens qu'une semaine tous les deux mois. La situation n'est pas assez stabilisée pour y rester. Les groupes armés sont partout », explique Mohamed, un infirmier de 44 ans qui vit à Dohouk.

« Quand je vois des Arabes au loin, je me prends à détester l'endroit. On ne leur fait pas confiance : ils étaient tous avec Daech »

Kheiro Ketcho, berger yézidi réfugié
La reconstruction n'est qu'une partie du problème. Le passé, avec son lot de massacres perpétrés par l'EI, a laissé des traces indélébiles. Ainsi seul un millier de



Un homme, qui s'est évadé après être resté caché un an et demi dans la maison d'un ami arabe musulman, retrouve son frère, à Sherfadin. MICHEL SLOMKA

familles arabes est revenu dans le district de Sinjar, tant la peur et la haine qu'elles suscitent chez les yézidis restent tenaces. « Quand je vois des Arabes au loin, je me prends à détester l'endroit. On ne leur fait pas confiance : ils étaient tous avec Daech [acronyme arabe de l'organisation Etat islamique] », confie Kheiro Ketcho. Quatorze membres de sa famille, dont sa sœur et cinq de ses enfants, ont été kidnappés par les djihadistes. Seuls trois ont réapparu. Sa soif de vengeance englobe tous ses anciens voisins arabes de la tribu sunnite Imteywit dont les villages s'étendent à une quarantaine de kilomètres au sud de Wardiya, entre Sinjar et la région d'Al-Baaj. « Si on les croise, on les tue : ce sera eux ou nous ! », lance-t-il, avant d'ajouter avec dépit : « Ils sont plus nombreux que nous, alors, si on attaque, ils reviendront en nombre et personne ne sera là pour nous protéger. »

La cohabitation entre habitants yézidis et arabes de retour à Sinjar a déjà été marquée par des règlements de compte sanglants. A deux cents kilomètres à l'est, dans un camp planté en lisière du Kurdistan irakien, des familles arabes sunnites de Sinjar vivent elles aussi un exil forcé. Sous la tente sommaire dans laquelle elle s'entasse avec son mari, chauffeur de taxi entre Mossoul et Erbil, et leurs huit enfants, Eman Madeya pleure encore la mort de huit membres de sa famille. Ils ont été capturés, en juin 2017, alors qu'ils essayaient de rentrer chez eux, à Qairawan, dans le sud-est du district de Sinjar. « Une milice yézidie a enlevé 52 personnes, dont mes proches, et les a tués. Ceux [des yézidis] qui ont perdu des enfants à cause de l'Etat islamique n'acceptent pas notre retour. Ils frappent tous ceux qui sont musulmans », explique cette mère de 30 ans.

Les 52 civils exécutés le 4 juin appartenaient tous à la tribu Imteywit, que les yézidis accusent d'avoir rallié en bloc l'EI. Des allégations que le porte-parole de la tribu, cheikh Abou Daraa, réfute. « Ce sont les étrangers de l'Etat islamique qui ont kidnappé les femmes. Seules quatre yézidies ont été kidnappées par des Im-



Les yézidis formulent une prière en nouant un pan de tissu coloré. La personne suivante défait le nœud et « libère » ou « active » la prière. MICHEL SLOMKA

teywit et elles ont été rendues à la libération de Sinjar, protesta-t-il. *Nous n'avions même pas d'armes pour protéger nos familles, comment aurions-nous pu protéger leurs femmes ?* ». L'homme âgé de 68 ans, qui fait la navette entre Bagdad et Qairawan, dirige sa propre brigade de combattants tribaux, soutenue par le commandement des opérations de Ninive, la province irakienne qui inclut Sinjar.

Il estime que seuls 380 des 45 000 membres de sa tribu ont rejoint l'EI, dont une majorité d'adolescents, attirés par l'argent et le pouvoir. *« La plupart ont été tués, les autres sont partis en Syrie ou en Turquie. Nous avons livré leurs noms aux autorités »*, assure Abou Daara. Il accuse : *« Nos champs et nos fermes ont été brûlés par la milice yézidie Lalesh, qui fait pression pour que notre tribu parte et pour que Sinjar devienne une région kurde ! »*. Lui aussi en appelle à la vengeance. *« Pour chacun des morts, nous sommes prêts à tuer dix yézidis ! »*, promet-il. Il affirme cependant qu'il n'est pas opposé à une médiation de Bagdad en vue d'une réconciliation : *« On veut s'asseoir ensemble, Arabes et yézidis, pour régler les choses, dit-il, mais les yézidis refusent de nous rencontrer. »*

Trop de miliciens dans un mouchoir de poche

Pour la majorité des yézidis, la réconciliation n'est pas envisageable, pour l'instant. Trop de massacres, trop de charniers. *« Il faut un mur, une ligne de démarcation entre eux et nous et une protection internationale, plaide le berger yézidi Kheiro Ketcho. Personne ici n'est capable de sécuriser la région et de nous protéger : ni les milices yézidiennes, ni l'armée irakienne, ni les peshmergas [forces armées du Kurdistan irakien]. Si c'était le cas, nous n'aurions pas été attaqués ! »*. Après le retrait des peshmergas, à l'été 2014 à Sinjar, les milliers de réfugiés yézidis n'ont dû leur salut qu'à l'intervention des combattants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, turc) depuis les zones qu'ils contrôlaient en Syrie, ainsi qu'à la mobilisation de petites milices yézidiennes. Le redéploiement des peshmergas dans le nord de Sinjar, fin 2015, fut de courte durée. Dans la foulée de l'échec du référendum d'autodétermination kurde, ils en ont été chassés par les forces fédérales en octobre 2017, comme ils ont été

chassés de tous les territoires du nord de l'Irak qu'Erbil disputait à Bagdad.

Redevenu officiellement maître du Sinjar, où l'armée irakienne et des unités de la Mobilisation populaire (MP, une coalition paramilitaire de milices en majorité chiites formée après la prise de Mossoul par l'EI, en 2014) ont aussitôt été déployées, Bagdad ne parvient pas à imposer son autorité. Les factions armées de toute obédience, qui ont prospéré à la faveur de la guerre, n'entendent pas renoncer au contrôle de cette région stratégique, voie de commerce et de contrebande vers la Syrie. *« Trop d'acteurs armés dans un mouchoir de poche : une seule balle tirée peut provoquer des affrontements »*, s'inquiète un acteur humanitaire.

« Il n'y a aucune unité entre les yézidis. Chacun fait sa petite cuisine dans son coin, en fonction de ses alliances et de ses amitiés, plus rarement en lien avec des convictions politiques »

Mélanide Genat, spécialiste du Sinjar

D'autant que la communauté yézidie connaît elle-même des divisions, exacerbées par les jeux d'influence auxquels se prête le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) de la puissante famille Barzani pour récupérer Sinjar, via ses réseaux de clientèle locaux et ses relais au sein du Parlement irakien. *« Il n'y a aucune unité ou cohérence entre les yézidis. Chacun fait sa petite cuisine dans son coin, en fonction du lieu où il se trouve, de ses alliances et de ses amitiés, plus rarement en lien à des convictions politiques »*, résume Mélanide Genat, doctorante à l'université Stanford (Californie) et spécialiste du Sinjar.

Cantonné à une portion congrue de territoire dans le nord de Sinjar, autour du mausolée sacré du vénéré cheikh yézidi Sheraf Ad-Din, sauvé de la destruction après d'âpres combats qu'il a menés contre les djihadistes, le commandant Qassim Shesho, yézidi et membre du PDK, est convaincu que Sinjar reviendra dans le giron d'Erbil. *« 80 % de la population du Sinjar voterait en faveur d'un retour au sein [de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien]. Les habitants ne*

rentreront pas chez eux tant que le PKK et la MP n'en seront pas partis : ils n'aiment pas leur propagande et ils ont peur d'eux », affirme-t-il. Selon lui, le PKK et la MP coopèrent avec l'Iran pour contrôler la région. *« Ils amènent des roquettes. Le PKK prend nos enfants et leur fait un lavage de cerveau. Ils les entraînent en Syrie et dans [leur base irakienne du] mont Qandil. La seule option est que [ces groupes] se retirent. »*

« Nous n'attendons pas deux ans : il y aura des affrontements et un seul restera », prévient-il. *« Quand les peshmergas et l'armée irakienne seront de nouveau unis, nous reconstruirons ensemble »*, explique-t-il, tout en accusant Bagdad de favoriser le retour des familles arabes au détriment de la reconstruction de Sinjar. Moins fanfaronnant, son fils Haval explique que *« la population veut que cessent les divisions entre les partis, car elles sont une bombe à retardement, prête à exploser à tout moment. Notre peuple leur sert de bouclier humain. Nous sommes prêts à négocier »*.

Dans le bureau de l'immense villa où il est installé à proximité du mausolée de Sheraf Ad-Din, Qassim Shesho, savamment parfumé et paré d'un costume seyant, d'un chapelet et d'un porte-cigarettes à chaque main, revendique 2 000 combattants dont la solde est prise en charge par les autorités d'Erbil. Les unités de protection d'Ezidkhan (zone de peuplement yézidi), que dirige son neveu Haider, compteraient 1 000 hommes, également dépendants d'Erbil. C'est sa milice qui, avec la milice yézidie Lalesh, est suspectée par l'organisation Human Rights Watch d'avoir exécuté les 52 membres de la tribu arabe Imteywit.

« Dans cette région, 99 % des Arabes ont participé au génocide. Il n'y aura pas de réconciliation »

Qassim Shesho, yézidi et membre du PDK

Resté populaire parmi les yézidis, qui saluent sa décision d'être revenu d'Allemagne en 2014 pour les protéger, Qassim Shesho a lui aussi *« à son actif nombre de vendettas qui n'ont pas été élucidées »*, note Mélanide Genat, citant en exemple l'accusation selon laquelle sa milice aurait rasé plusieurs villages de la tribu arabe Juhaysh, et exécuté une quarantaine de ses membres en février 2015. Le commandant préfère évoquer ses bonnes relations avec la tribu des Shammar, qui a protégé les yézidis en 2014, tout en ajoutant : *« Dans cette région, 99 % des Arabes ont participé au génocide. Il n'y aura pas de réconciliation. »*

Les imprécations de Qassim Shesho et ses prophéties sur le retour des peshmergas du PDK à Sinjar déclenchent le rire sonore de Khaled Ali, un commandant yézidi de 30 ans à la tête de la milice Lalesh, forte de 300 hommes, affiliée, elle, à la MP. *« Si le Sinjar revient sous contrôle du PDK, il ne connaîtra pas la paix ! »*, prévient-il dans son QG installé dans le centre de la ville de Sinjar. *« Le retour de ces peshmergas est inacceptable : comment pourrait-on le tolérer quand nos femmes ont été violées par la faute de leur chef »*, dit-il, en référence à Massoud Barzani qu'il considère responsable du retrait des peshmergas en 2014 et qu'il accuse aujourd'hui de manœuvrer auprès des élites locales pour déstabiliser Sinjar.

Pour l'avenir du district, lui préconise l'autorité unique – militaire et politique – de Bagdad, d'où il est revenu

en 2016 avec un petit collier de barbe bien taillée et un uniforme kaki bien huilé, à l'image des commandants chiites du sud de l'Irak. « *Il faut rétablir l'Etat de droit, en ne laissant que les forces légales : dehors les Shesho et le PKK !* » Envers ce dernier, beaucoup plus puissant et influent que sa milice, le jeune commandant évite cependant de pousser la provocation : « *Il n'y aura pas d'affrontement avec le PKK. Son intervention est le fruit d'un accord ; il y aura un accord pour qu'ils partent. Leurs combattants ont aidé les yézidis, mais la bataille est terminée. Ils doivent partir.* »

Un territoire autonome pour les yézidis

Aurolé de son rôle de sauveur, le PKK a étendu son influence à l'ensemble du Sinjar avec sa branche armée locale, les Unités de résistance du Sinjar. Ni Erbil ni Bagdad n'ont réussi à le mettre au pas. Avec 6 000 combattants revendiqués et une myriade d'organisations politiques et communautaires, ses chefs réunis au sein de l'« Assemblée populaire de Sinjar » ambitionnent de fonder un territoire autonome pour les yézidis. « *On suit la philosophie de notre chef Abdullah Öcalan selon laquelle chaque nation peut obtenir son autonomie* », explique Cheyat Qassem, un général de 32 ans, qui commande une section des Asayiches (forces de sécurité), assis sous le portrait du fondateur et chef historique du PKK, qui trône dans son bureau de Khana-Sor, siège du parti à Sinjar. Parmi ses missions, l'homme détaille son rôle aux barages de sécurité, la lutte contre la criminalité et la contrebande, mais aussi « *la résolution des questions communautaires* ».

Il n'empêche, les velléités dominatrices du PKK et ses méthodes inflexibles créent des crispations au sein de la population yézidie. Quant aux habitants arabes, nul n'ose entrer dans les zones qu'il contrôle. « *Depuis la reprise de Sinjar, tout est PKK : il construit des mausolées, contrôle des camps... et gère les choses à sa manière. C'est presque impossible de travailler avec eux* », déplore un acteur humanitaire. Leur est reproché le recrutement d'enfants-soldats, mais aussi le fait d'être dirigé par des cadres étrangers – Kurdes de Turquie, de Syrie ou d'Iran. Sur ce point, Cheyat Qassem se veut rassurant : « *En juin 2018, les chefs étrangers du PKK ont déclaré qu'ils se retiraient du Sinjar pour que les yézidis ne deviennent pas la cible de la Turquie.* » Pas question en effet pour Istanbul de laisser le Sinjar se transformer en bastion armé du PKK, qu'il considère comme une organisation terroriste et dont les chefs sont régulièrement la cible de ses frappes.

Le scénario n'est pas davantage acceptable pour le PDK de Barzani qui n'a jamais réussi à se débarrasser du PKK, qui poursuit ses entraînements militaires sur le mont Qandil. Pendant les deux années qu'a duré la mainmise du PDK sur le Sinjar, le parti de Massoud Barzani a tenté de l'étouffer économiquement pour le déloger. En vain. Seul Bagdad poursuit une bonne coopération avec le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, émaillée de quelques accrochages. Mais, conscientes de l'effet déstabilisateur de la présence de ces factions armées, les autorités fédérales voudraient reprendre seules le contrôle.

Depuis la capitale irakienne, le porte-parole de l'armée nationale Yahia Rassoul a assuré ainsi, fin juillet, que « *la 15^e division armée [allait] reprendre le contrôle*

de Sinjar ». En mai, le conseiller à la sécurité nationale, Falah Al-Fayyad s'était rendu à Sinjar pour apporter un message, notamment aux chefs du PKK : en échange de la démobilisation des factions armées, il a promis l'intégration de combattants yézidis à la police locale. Réaction du général Cheyat Qassem à cette proposition : « *Comment peut-il nous demander cela ? Ni le gouvernement irakien ni le Kurdistan ne peuvent nous protéger. S'ils pensent nous déloger, nous les combattons !* »

Rivalité entre Bagdad et Erbil

La population civile, elle, n'a d'autre choix que de subir les affres de la vieille rivalité entre Bagdad et Erbil, et celles qui opposent entre eux un imbroglio de groupes armés, créés pendant la guerre au Sinjar. Ces dissensions rendent le retour difficile, voire impossible pour certains habitants. « *Si un homme travaille avec les peshmergas, il ne peut pas aller à Sinoni [nord du district de Sinjar] ou à Sinjar [dans le sud du district]. S'il travaille pour le PKK, il ne peut pas se rendre au Kurdistan* », explique Kheiro Ketcho, le berger yézidi. Selon un acteur humanitaire, « *les peshmergas empêchent des yézidis de rentrer à Sinjar : les déplacés qu'ils hébergent sont source de rentrées d'argent. Par ailleurs, c'est plus facile pour eux de reprendre le contrôle d'une ville qui est vide.* »

Ces rivalités ont enfin engendré d'aberrants blocages administratifs. « *Nulle part ailleurs, vous ne trouverez deux administrations locales dans une même ville. Sinjar compte deux directeurs de district – un lié à Erbil, l'autre à Bagdad –, deux maires voire trois, avec celui du PKK. Tous ont ouvert leurs propres écoles. Les gens souffrent de cette division* », déplore Hassan Qassem, responsable média d'un petit parti yézidi, le Parti pour la réforme. Sous la pression de leur parrain, certains responsables locaux refusent tout simplement de remplir leurs fonctions. « *Le directeur des écoles de Sinjar ne quitte pas le Kurdistan irakien. Quand Bagdad le rappelle à l'ordre pour qu'il se rende à son poste, il répond qu'il n'ira pas, tant que les peshmergas n'auront pas repris le contrôle de Sinjar* », poursuit M. Qassem.

L'audacieux pari du retour

Malgré les blessures, les milices armées à profusion et les rivalités politiques qui freinent la reconstruction et menacent la stabilité, il y a les audacieux, rares, qui ont fait le pari du retour. Attablés dans le petit restaurant qu'ils ont ouvert fin 2018 dans la rue principale de Sinjar, Anna Mourad et Saadi Khalaf ne regrettent pas leur choix. Les deux amis, âgés respectivement de 19 et 25 ans, et leurs familles ont été parmi les premiers habitants à rentrer – Anna en 2017, à la libération ; Saadi dès 2016, sous les tirs de mortier –, décidés à échapper à une vie misérable dans les camps de réfugiés. Leurs maisons ayant été détruites, ils habitent celles d'habitants qui ne sont pas revenus, dans le centre-ville. Leur affaire tourne bien. « *Un avenir est possible, dit la jeune Anna. Des gens reviennent, ils trouvent du boulot et il existe des formations pour les jeunes et les étudiants.* »

Les deux amis font confiance à l'armée irakienne pour ramener à l'ordre les factions armées. Voir des familles arabes vendre leur maison, parce que trop effrayées pour rentrer, les rassure aussi. « *Ce ne sera pas comme avant. Il n'y aura plus la même mixité [avant la guerre,*



Un arbre des vœux, dans les hauteurs du sanctuaire de Lalesh. MICHEL SLOMKA

la ville était à 85 % yézidie], mais ce sera mieux. Les Arabes sunnites ne changent pas : ils répètent toujours les mêmes erreurs », assure Saadi Khalaf. Il ne cherche pas non plus à convaincre ses proches de rentrer. « *Je les comprends, dit-il, avec quand même une pointe de critique : Les gens veulent rentrer quand tout sera reconstruit. Pourtant, vivre à Sinjar, même sous une tente, c'est mieux que de rester loin de nos racines.* »

Lexique

Peshmergas Forces armées du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan irakien.

PDK Parti démocratique du Kurdistan, dirigé par la puissante famille Barzani qui domine la vie politique à Erbil.

PKK Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (turc). Considéré comme terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis, son bras armé est en guerre contre Istanbul depuis 1984. Il dispose d'une base arrière sur le mont Qandil (Irak) pour ses attaques en Iran ou en Turquie, s'est imposé dans le nord de la Syrie avec ses milices (Unités de protection du peuple, YPG) et dans le Sinjar (Irak), où ses Unités de résistance du Sinjar revendiquent 6 000 combattants.

MP Unités de la Mobilisation populaire, coalition de milices, en majorité chiites, formée après la prise de Mossoul par l'organisation Etat islamique, en 2014, intégrées dans l'armée nationale.

Milice yézidie de Qassim Shesho Proche du PDK, 2 000 combattants.

Milice yézidie des Unités de protection d'Ezidkhan Dirigée par Haïder Shesho, proche du PDK, 1 000 combattants.

Milice yézidie Lalesh Dirigée par Khaled Ali, affiliée à la MP, 300 combattants.

En Turquie, l'antique Hasankeyf se meurt à cause d'un barrage



Des cercueils sont amenés dans le nouveau cimetière d'Hasankeyf, le 13 septembre 2019, depuis l'ancien qui va être englouti ((c) Afp)

Hasankeyf (Turquie) (AFP) - Lorsque l'on regarde Hasankeyf, dans le sud-est de la Turquie, on voit des falaises sur des centaines de mètres, un mur naturel qui se dresse contre le ciel. Au coucher du soleil, s'en élèvent le chant des hirondelles et la mélodie cachée de l'histoire de l'humanité.

Hasankeyf, une ville vieille de 12.000 ans, sera bientôt engloutie et la vie des habitants de la région bouleversée par un lac artificiel en raison de la construction du barrage controversé d'Ilisu.

De nombreux villages vont également disparaître sous l'eau, qui emportera aussi les souvenirs de dizaines de milliers d'habitants.

Mehmet, 73 ans, regarde depuis son jardin la citadelle romaine de Hasankeyf, désormais entourée d'un mur de pierres blanches, comme on observerait les funérailles d'un proche grignoté pendant de longues années par la maladie. Il a passé toute sa vie ici, à cultiver son terrain au bord du Tigre.

Cette année, il récolte pour la dernière fois les fruits de ses vignes et de ses figuiers: en avril prochain, son terrain devrait être entièrement inondé.

Dans le village proche de Cavuslu (appelé Zewik en kurde), Meseha, 62 ans, s'accroche elle aussi à ses terres. "Cette année, des responsables nous ont dit de ne pas faire de semis parce que l'eau allait arriver, mais nous l'avons fait quand même", raconte-t-elle. "Nous sèmerons jusqu'au bout", assure-t-elle.

- Tombes déplacées -

Tout change également dans la vallée de Botan, elle aussi condamnée à devenir un lac, où des nouveaux ponts sont construits au-dessus des anciens.

Halil Ertan a dû se convertir, à 48 ans, de la pêche de rivière, qu'il pratiquait depuis son enfance, à la pêche dans un lac. Les poissons y sont plus gros mais sans goût, dit-il.

Gérant de l'hôtel Salikbahce, Firat, lui aussi 48 ans, soupire: "Depuis des années, on l'entend, on le sent, mais on ne voyait rien. Depuis des années, ça approche, on se dit qu'on doit partir mais on vit dans l'incertitude".

"Nous avons un jardin vieux de 60 ans ici, plein de fraîcheur et de vie", raconte-t-il. "Pour nous,

ce sentiment vaut plus que tout l'argent du monde, aucune somme ne peut racheter ces figuiers".

Le gouvernement rejette toute critique, arguant que la plupart des monuments de Hasankeyf ont été mis à l'abri et qu'une nouvelle ville a été construite à proximité pour reloger les quelque 3.000 habitants de la cité historique.

Les morts enterrés dans le cimetière sont aussi emportés vers la nouvelle ville, à condition que leurs proches en fassent la demande. Fatih regarde les employés déplacer les os de son frère, mort à 15 ans en 1997 à la suite d'une chute alors qu'il essayait d'attraper des pigeons. Un cérémonial qu'il vit comme un deuxième enterrement.

Yunus, 12 ans, est à la recherche de la tombe de son petit frère, mort peu après sa naissance en 2016. Sa tombe a quasiment disparu sous la terre, faute de signe distinctif. Il s'adresse aux employés venus déterrer les corps, qui l'aident à faire réémerger la tombe.

Mais on découvre un peu plus tard que la famille n'ayant pas fait de demande spécifique, la sépulture de l'enfant sera engloutie par les eaux.

Turkey's Erdoğan signals continued imprisonment of former HDP leaders



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Saturday said his government will not allow the release of those responsible for the death dozens of people during protests in October 2014, for which he has in the past directly accused Selahattin Demirtaş, the jailed former co-chair of the People's Democratic Party (HDP).

"I want to call out to those who are in front of or behind those terrorist organisations, those who support them. If some are looking for murderers in this country, there is no reason to look for an address. They have infiltrated even the parliament," left-wing Duvar news site quoted Erdoğan saying during a speech in Istanbul.

Turkish prosecutors on Friday issued arrest warrants for Demirtaş and former HDP co-chair Figen Yüksekdağ in relation to a wave of violence sparked in 2014 by demonstrations in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish southeast against Turkey's lack of action to protect the Syrian border city of Kobane from the Islamic State (ISIS).

"This nation does not forget and will not forget those who invited people to the streets and then killed our 53 children in Diyarbakır. We have been following, will follow this issue until the end. We cannot release those. If we release them, our martyrs will hold us accountable," Erdoğan said, in an apparent reference to Demirtaş.

Erdoğan has several times said that Demirtaş had responsibility in the death of 53 people.

"Turkey is a state of law. The person you have mentioned is a terrorist. He is such a terrorist that he encouraged my Kurdish brothers to spill onto the streets and thus caused 53 of my Kurdish brothers to be killed by other Kurds. That is only one of his crimes," Erdoğan had said in 2017 at the G-20 meeting in Hamburg when reporters asked him about Demirtaş.

Demirtaş was arrested in November 2016 and has been held since then on various charges related to his alleged links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an armed group that has fought the Turkish state for Kurdish self-rule for decades.

An Ankara court on Sept. 2 ruled the conditional release of the top pro-Kurdish politician over charges of insulting the president, as the trial continues in the main case against him, in which prosecutors are seeking a sentence of up to 142 years. The charges against him include those related to October 2014 protests.

Demirtaş remained imprisoned due to a previously-approved sentence of four years and eight months last September over comments he made in a 2013 speech.

His lawyers maintain he should be released due to time he served.

Erdoğan's comments echo statements he made after the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) last year ordered the immediate release of Demirtaş, stating that his further confinement without any new evidence would amount to continued violations of Article 46 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

"We will make a counter-move and finish the job," he said. Following his statements a court in Ankara rejected ECHR's release order and a court in Istanbul approved Demirtaş's four-years-and-eight-months prison sentence.

Europe's top human rights court this week convened to listen to Demirtaş's lawyers over another appeal. The court is expected to announce its verdict in the coming months.

Meanwhile, the Chief Prosecutors Office in Ankara said in a [written statement](#) that the new arrests warrants for Demirtaş and Yüksekdağ was issued in relation to an investigation into their statements in the media during "Kobane events". The prosecutors said 38 people lost their lives during protests in 2014 in 32 cities.

Turkey is ready to take unilateral action regarding the situation at the Syrian border, Erdoğan said during the same speech.

"Our preparations along our borders are complete," he was quoted by Reuters saying. The president continued to say, "We have no wish to come face to face with the United States, however, we cannot afford to overlook the U.S. support to a terrorist organisation."

Turkey and the United States have recently [come to an agreement regarding the establishment of a safe zone](#) along the Turkish border in the Kurdish-held territories in north Syria, but Turkish authorities repeatedly speak against the United States' continued support for the majority-Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which Turkey considers to be a terrorist organisation

Turkish court orders rearrest of jailed Selahattin Demirtas

Move comes after a court ruled earlier this month that the HDP's former leader should be released pending trial.

A Turkish court has blocked the release of the imprisoned former leader of a pro-Kurdish party after prosecutors requested his arrest once again over a fresh investigation on "terrorism" charges, according to state media.

Selahattin Demirtas, one of Turkey's most prominent politicians, has been in jail for almost three years and faces several other legal cases, mainly on "terrorism" charges, which he denies.

If found guilty in the main case against him, he faces up to 142 years in prison.

Earlier this month, a Turkish court ruled that he should be freed pending trial as the process continues. On Friday, Demirtas's lawyers applied for his release on parole, according to the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP).

But the HDP said that prosecutors then launched a new investigation into him and the other former coleader of the party, Figen Yuksekdog, and requested their arrest once again before they could be freed.



One of Turkey's most prominent politicians, Selahattin Demirtas, has been in jail for almost three years [Kemal Aslan/Reuters]

In an emailed statement sent to Al Jazeera, the HDP called the move "a political conspiracy" ordered by the Turkish government seeking "political revenge".

The HDP called the decision to rearrest Demirtas and Yuksekdog "legal bullying" and "massacring of the principles of universal law".

The prosecutor's office in Ankara was not immediately available for comment.

Crackdown

The independence of Turkey's judiciary has been hotly debated in recent years, especially since a crackdown on the judiciary and other state bodies following an abortive coup in July 2016 and after the country switched to an executive presidential system in June last year.

SOURCE: Al Jazeera and news agencies

Why isn't the media covering Turkish President Erdogan's ties to ISIS

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has pitched his tent at New York's glitzy Peninsula Hotel this week, where he will be dining (but not winning) American Muslim leaders on the sidelines of UN meetings.

During his 2017 New York visit, Erdogan met with then-freshman U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN). This past July, state-run media chiefs called on Turks around the world to donate to her re-election campaign, which is illegal if they are not U.S. citizens or green-card holders.

But what should disturb Americans most about Erdogan is not his efforts to influence Congress, his abysmal record as a jailer of journalists, his genocidal war against the Kurds, or even the \$100 million mosque he has constructed in Lanham, Maryland.

It's Erdogan's commitment to global jihad, and specifically, to ISIS terrorists. Since 2012, the Turkish intelligence service, MIT, under Erdogan's direction, has been providing resources and material assistance to ISIS, while Turkish Customs officials turned a blind eye to ISIS recruits flowing across Turkey's borders into Syria and Iraq.

Scores of ISIS fighters captured by pro-U.S. Kurdish forces in northern Syria showed Turkish exit stamps on their passports, and otherwise boasted of the direct assistance they had received from Turkish authorities.

"Turkish intelligence knows everything," one captured ISIS fighter told his Kurdish captors recently.

Many former ISIS fighters have now joined the Turkish-backed forces that have occupied the Syrian Kurdish city of Afrin, where they have engaged in ethnic cleansing.

Two Turkish intelligence officers, captured by Kurdish guerilla fighters in northern Iraq in 2017, provided insider accounts of Turkish government assistance to ISIS and other jihadi groups operating in Syria and Iraq.

Turkey's assistance to ISIS starts right at the top. In 2016, Wikileaks published an archive of 58,000 emails documenting the involvement of Erdogan's son-in-law, Berat Albayrak, in helping ISIS market oil stolen from Syria and Iraq.

Until the publication of the emails, Albayrak had denied any involvement in the illicit oil trade.

Sümeyye Erdogan, daughter of the Turkish president, reportedly set up an entire medical corps, including a hospital to treat wounded ISIS fighters in Sanliurfa, a city in Southeastern Turkey close to the Syrian border.

ISIS evacuated severely wounded fighters across the border into Sanliurfa in Turkish army trucks without undergoing Customs inspection.

The evidence of Erdogan's direct, personal and institutional support for ISIS and related jihadi groups is so extensive, the wonder is why the American media is not paying more attention to it.

This week a new group, the Turkey-ISIS Research Project, is sponsoring bus-billboards to roam the Big Apple. The message is clear: "Erdogan, the Godfather of Jihadist Terrorists, is Not Welcome in the United States."

Turquie: l'opposant kurde Selahattin Demirtas maintenu en prison

Depuis quelques semaines, les proches de **Selahattin Demirtas** espéraient fébrilement la libération de l'opposant. Un tribunal avait ordonné, au début du mois, sa remise en liberté provisoire dans le cadre de son principal procès. Certes, l'ancien dirigeant du parti prokurde, le HDP, a été condamné à une peine de prison ferme dans un autre procès, mais au vu du temps qu'il a déjà passé derrière les barreaux – presque trois ans – il aurait pu bénéficier d'une remise en liberté conditionnelle.

A peine ses avocats en avaient-ils fait la demande, jeudi, que le parquet d'Ankara ouvrait une nouvelle enquête contre le leader kurde. Sans attendre, un juge a ordonné son placement en détention préventive. Et tout aussi rapidement, le président turc, **Recep Tayyip Erdogan**, a exprimé sa satisfaction. « Nous ne les lâcherons pas », a-t-il lancé au sujet des élus prokurdes.

Pour les soutiens du HDP, ces propos du chef de l'État sonnent comme un aveu : **Recep Tayyip Erdogan** fera pression sur la justice chaque fois



Le leader kurde du HDP Selahattin Demirtas est en prison depuis presque trois ans. Sa visite a été refusée à des députés européens. REUTERS/Osman Orsal

que son rival Selahattin Demirtas – qui affronte des dizaines de procès – aura une chance d'être libéré.

Un scénario similaire s'était produit l'année der-

nière, lorsque la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme avait sommé Ankara de libérer l'opposant. Deux semaines plus tard, une cour d'appel confirmait sa peine de prison.

Iraqi Parliamentary Fact-Finding Committee Investigates Kurdistan Oil Exports

The Oil and Energy Parliamentary Committee decided Sunday to form a fact-finding committee on oil exports from Kurdistan region, which refrains from the obligation to deliver to the federal government its quota of oil.

The Kurdistan Region should deliver 250,000 barrels per day to the federal government in line with the 2019 budget.

“The new committee includes seven deputies and is required to submit its report to its presidency within two weeks of its formation,” the commission said in a statement published by the parliament’s official website. It said it has discussed the invitation by Kurdistan Region’s president to the oil and energy, legal and financial committees.

Member of Oil and Energy Parliamentary Committee Amjad al-Oqabi said the commission was formed at the direction of Parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi, who has recently visited the Kurdish region.



Flames emerge from flare stacks at the oil fields in Kirkuk, Iraq October 18, 2017. REUTERS/Alaa Al-Marjani

Oqabi said Halbousi agreed with the Kurdish region’s Prime Minister, Masrour Barzani, to send a parliamentary committee and resolve the outstanding problems between Baghdad and Erbil on the oil issue.

He told Asharq Al-Awsat that the parliament is about to legislate 2020 budget.

To avoid the problem of oil revenues and its

amount, he noted, this committee was formed to prepare a detailed report on the nature of the oil problem, and the quantities issued by the region and the parties to which this oil is sold.

He also stressed that the committee could know details of quantities issued by the region by relying on statistics of major regulatory companies and data released by the Federal Ministry of Oil. However, he noted that the region still refrains from handing Baghdad any barrel of oil from its share in the budget without providing any explanation.

Regarding news about some political parties and blocs’ determination to tighten up with the Kurdistan region’s financial share in the 2020 budget, Oqabi pointed out that “the oil committee will not bargain or compliment this time.”

“The region must deliver its assessed share of oil, and if it was proven that it exports more than 250 thousand barrels, it will be asked to hand over all the oil revenues it already exports,” he said.

Kirkuk mayor arrested on corruption charges: source

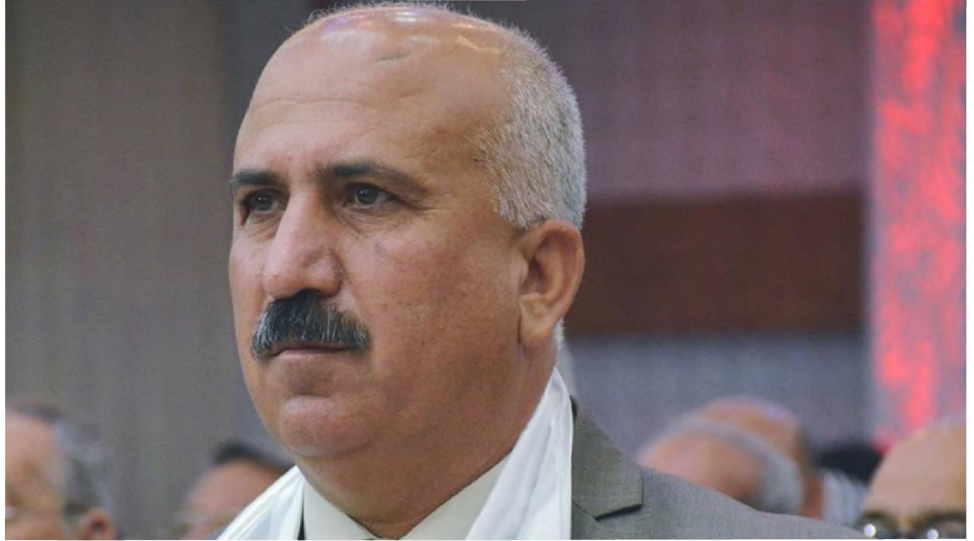
ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Local sources said on Monday that law enforcement authorities had arrested the mayor of Kirkuk, Falah Yayjli, on corruption-related charges.

Yayjli was reportedly detained following an official complaint that accused the local Turkmen official of failing to stop the seizure of state property by other actors.

The sources told Kurdistan 24 that Kirkuk District's Directorate of Youth and Sports had filed a complaint with the Integrity Commission, claiming abuses and seizure of public property located in the al-Ihtifalat square of central Kirkuk city and under the management of the directorate.

Kirkuk is an ethnically diverse province which consists of Turkmen, Arabs, Christians, and Kurds, who make up the majority of the population. It is one of the areas disputed by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Federal Government of Iraq.

The Turkmen Front, the largest umbrella party for the ethnic group in Iraq, criticized the arrest of Yayjli, demanding his release and that a case be opened to investigate alleged corrupt dealings.



The Kirkuk mayor, Falah al-Bayjli. (Photo: Archive)

The head of the Turkmen Front in the Iraqi Parliament, MP Arshad al-Salhi, claimed in a statement that "the issue of violation [of property] in Kirkuk dates back to 2003 by influential political actors...and the mayorship has no power to stop them in light of the complex political situation" in the province.

He warned that "the patience of the people of Kirkuk and the Turkmen, in particular, will run out," adding that the situation would "push the people to take to the streets."

Iraq ranks high on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index amid the continued waste of public funds.

Kurdistan : 37 Kolbars tués, 82 autres blessés en 6 mois

Selon la page [Kolbarnews](#), depuis mars 2019, 37 Kolbars ont perdu la vie et 82 autres ont été blessés aux frontières des trois parties du Kurdistan (Iran, Irak, et Turquie).

29 des Kolbars ayant perdu la vie ont été tués par les forces du régime iranien, 2 sont tombés d'une falaise, 4 ont été victimes d'avalanches et 2 autres sont morts dans des accidents de la route.

Des 82 Kolbars blessés, 72 l'ont été par des attaques des forces iraniennes, 3 en tombant de la falaise, 2 dans des explosions de mine et 1 dans un accident de la route.

Parmi les Kolbars tués et blessés, 85 étaient de la région d'Urmia, 22 de Sine et 12 de Kermanshah.

D'autre part, l'agence de presse kurde, Rojnews, rapporte qu'un Kolbar âgé de 22 ans, a été abattu par des soldats turcs à la frontière du Kurdistan, le jeudi 19 septembre.



Kolbars, des porteurs qui gagnent leur vie en transportant des marchandises à travers la frontière entre le Sud-Kurdistan (Irak) et l'Est-Kurdistan (Iran).

Kolbar vient des mots kurdes: "Kol" (dos) et "bar" (charge). Les Kolbars gagnent leur vie en portant des charges le long d'une frontière périlleuse. Leur charge comprend des cigarettes, des téléphones mobiles, des tissus, des ustensiles de cuisine, du thé et, plus rarement, de l'alcool. Ils se déplacent sur un terrain dangereux pour continuer ce commerce entre le Kurdistan du sud et de l'est. Les marchan-

dises qu'ils apportent sont vendues à des prix élevés à Téhéran, mais les Kolbars qui risquent leur vie pour les transporter sont reçoivent des rémunérations dérisoires.

Les intermédiaires qui reçoivent les livraisons et trouvent les acheteurs dans les villes sont appelés des Kasibkars.

Les Kolbars et les Kasibkars sont âgés de 13 à 70 ans. Certains n'ont qu'un certificat d'études primaires alors que d'autres sont des diplômés de l'université. Ces 5 dernières années, environ 300 Kolbars et Kafibkars ont été tués de sang-froid. Il n'y a pas de statistiques précises sur le nombre de morts.

Face aux politiques de discrimination, d'oppression et d'appauvrissement, transporter des marchandises en contrebande n'est pas un choix, mais une question de survie.

Au Kurdistan d'Irak, le parcours du combattant des cheffes d'entreprise

Erbil (Irak) (AFP) - Affamés, les clients se pressent devant le food-truck de Zilan Serwud. Avant de connaître le succès, cette Kurde irakienne a dû obtenir un feu vert sans lequel ses burgers n'auraient jamais existé: pas celui de son banquier, mais celui des hommes de sa famille.

Au Kurdistan, comme ailleurs en Irak, le taux d'emploi des femmes est l'un des plus bas au monde. Seules 15% de celles en âge de travailler ont un emploi, selon les autorités, et pour les trois quarts dans le secteur public.

Comme les hommes, elles doivent se débrouiller avec un secteur privé quasi inexistant, un système bancaire balbutiant, une économie régulièrement grevée par les violences... Mais en plus, elles doivent faire face aux préjugés sociaux et aux pressions familiales.

A 22 ans, Zilan Serwud a dû en passer par là. Si son père et son frère ont rapidement accepté son idée de créer un food-truck – son frère l'aide même régulièrement en cuisine –, d'autres ont froncé les sourcils.

- "Honteux" -

Mais l'élégante jeune femme, qui a ouvert "Zee Burger" le mois dernier à Erbil, la capitale de la région autonome kurde, a appris à faire fi des commentaires désobligeants.

"Des gens ont dit: +Elle a un père et un frère, pourquoi veut-elle son propre restaurant?+", raconte-t-elle à l'AFP devant son food-truck jaune vif et violet. "Mais quand tu as une idée ou que tu veux te lancer, il ne faut pas se laisser arrêter par les on-dit".

Pour Diman Fatah, qui dirige une pépinière à Erbil, "ce qui détruit les femmes dans la société (kurde irakienne), c'est notre conception de ce qui est honteux".

Cette Kurde de 59 ans tente de susciter des vocations dans le club de botanique qu'elle a fondé, composé de 450 membres dont 25 femmes. Elle espère que d'autres ouvriront

leur jardinerie malgré les préjugés sur les femmes allant seules au travail, vues comme trop libérales voire immorales.

"Les femmes ont peur d'innover et de se lancer à cause de ce que les gens pourraient dire d'elles", assure-t-elle à l'AFP sous l'une de ses serres, au milieu d'arbustes et de plantes qu'elle coupe, bouture ou arrose soigneusement.

- "Ouvrir la voie" -

Sur les pages internet d'entreprises tenues par des femmes, une flopée de commentaires ont de quoi décourager certaines: "stupide", "les hommes travaillent à l'extérieur et les femmes doivent s'occuper de leur maison"...

Mais Diman Fatah ne baisse pas les bras. Dans son club, elle appelle les femmes à "avoir confiance et à se battre pour leurs droits". Et, pour elle, cela passe aussi par le business.

"Quand une femme crée son entreprise, elle ne s'assure pas seulement un revenu, elle fait avancer la cause de l'égalité et ouvre la voie pour que d'autres femmes rejoignent le marché et gagnent leur liberté", plaide-t-elle, passionnée.

Selon un rapport de l'ONU de 2013, 66% des jeunes Irakiens soutiennent le travail des femmes, contre 42% des plus âgés.

Pour Avan Jaff, une militante qui publie sur internet des témoignages de cheffes d'entreprise, si davantage d'Irakiens soutiennent le travail des femmes, c'est parce qu'ils ont été forcés de l'accepter face à des "femmes qui ne renoncent pas à leur passion".

"La société n'est pas devenue tout d'un coup libérale: certains sont bien devenus plus tolérants, mais les autres ont compris que les femmes s'accrochaient", assure-t-elle à l'AFP.

- "Les familles décident" -

Dans la loi irakienne, les femmes n'ont tou-



Zilan Serwud, une jeune Kurde irakienne, a ouvert à Erbil le "Zee burger", un food-truck servant des burgers, ici le 17 août 2019 ((c) Afp)

jours pas le droit de travailler dans des domaines réclamant un effort physique harassant ou dans certains imposant des astreintes nocturnes. Quant à celles qui prennent un congé maternité, la loi kurde ne leur garantit pas un poste à leur retour.

Pour celles qui créent une entreprise, "c'est leur famille qui décide comment dépenser leurs bénéfices et où elles doivent investir, pas elles-mêmes", raconte Mme Jaff.

A Rania, à 100 km à l'est d'Erbil, Shawnem Hussein est l'heureuse propriétaire d'un immense club de fitness. Entre deux entraînements de musculation ou cours de zumba, elle entend régulièrement des femmes parler de leurs rêves d'entrepreneuriat.

L'une de ses 150 adhérentes se confie volontiers sur son expérience mais préfère rester anonyme. Inspirée par le succès de Mme Hussein et de son "Sky Fitness", elle a voulu ouvrir son restaurant. Mais son mari n'était pas franchement du même avis.

"Il m'a dit: +Le jour où tu ouvres ton restaurant sera le dernier où tu rentreras chez nous+".

Before sending oil, Kurds want Baghdad to clear their debts

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region – Baghdad should pay Erbil’s debts to international oil companies before the Kurdish administration agrees to send 250,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil to Iraq in exchange for its share of the federal budget, Kurdish MPs have said.

According to 2017 data, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) owed an estimated **\$3 billion** to oil companies operating in the Kurdistan Region.

Iraq’s former prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, cut the KRG’s share of the federal budget from 17 percent to zero in 2014 after the semiautonomous region began selling its oil independently.

This loss of revenues plunged the KRG into a debt crisis as its bills went unpaid.

Faced with a financial ruin, falling oil prices, a costly war with the Islamic State group (ISIS), and the burden of two million displaced Iraqis, the KRG was forced to introduce austerity measures, including the hated salary-saving scheme.

The wildly unpopular measure slashed the salaries of KRG employees and delayed payments for months at a time. Fed up with the austerity measures, public sector employees went on strike in early 2018.

Iraqi PM Adil Abdul-Mahdi, who took office in late-2018, reinstated the KRG’s share of the federal budget, albeit at the reduced rate of around 12 percent. In exchange, the KRG was asked to send 250,000 bpd of oil to Iraq’s state oil marketing body SOMO.

To date, Erbil has not kept its end of the bargain, however. Talks are now underway to break the impasse.

Jamal Kochar, a Kurdish lawmaker in the Iraqi parliament, told Rudaw on Sunday that an agreement between Erbil and Baghdad on the oil-for-budget arrangement is not expected any time soon, as Baghdad has so far refused to pay the KRG’s debts owed to the oil companies.

“I’m not very optimistic about the talks between Erbil and Baghdad,” Kochar said. “Erbil believes that Baghdad should repay the KRG debts to the oil companies accumulated over the years.”

Baghdad thinks it is the KRG’s responsibility to repay its own debts, Kochar said.

The MP suggested one compromise could be for Baghdad to repay the debts gradually, and then deduct the amount from the KRG’s share of the federal budget.

The Iraqi government has \$87 billion in reserves and can easily afford to repay the debts, he claimed.

Erbil-Baghdad relations have vastly improved since Abdul-Mahdi took office last year.

However, Iraqi lawmakers are pressuring Abdul-Mahdi’s government to implement the agreement, accusing him of being too soft on the KRG, which is yet to send a single barrel of oil to Baghdad in exchange of its 2019 budget share.

Falih al-Khazaali, an Iraqi lawmaker, has urged Abdul-Mahdi’s government to freeze the KRG’s share of the budget until oil deliveries are secured.

“We are pressuring the Iraqi PM to force the KRG to send the 250,000 barrels to Baghdad and implement the 2019 budget agreement efficiently or else cut the KRG share,” Khazaali told Rudaw on Sunday.

“We will keep on putting pressure on the Iraqi government to force the KRG to implement the budget agreement – otherwise we will start working on withdrawing confidence from Abdul-Mahdi’s cabinet.”

Khazaali does not believe the 2020 budget bill will pass easily.

Kurdish lawmakers in the Iraqi parliament have advised the KRG to start sending Baghdad the 250,000 bpd to avoid losing out in the 2020 budget.

“In order to minimize the pressures on Adil Abdul-Mahdi in Baghdad, the KRG should hand over the 250,000 barrels of oil every day to Baghdad in order to gain economic and political stability in Kurdistan Region,” Sherwan Mirza, a Kurdish lawmaker in the Iraqi parliament, told Rudaw.

“However, the KRG should receive at least a 12.67 percent share from the federal budget when the export of 250,000 barrels of oil begins through SOMO.”

According to Mirza, Baghdad is currently sending the KRG just 454 billion IQD – enough to cover public sector salaries. Under the 2019 budget agreement, Baghdad is supposed to send the KRG an additional 68 billion IQD to pay the salaries of its Peshmerga armed forces.

According to the Kurdistan Region’s Energy and Natural Resource Parliamentary Committee, Erbil and Baghdad also disagree over precisely how much oil the KRG is exporting to the Turkish port of Ceyhan via its pipeline.

The KRG claims it is exporting 435,000 bpd, while Baghdad believes the figure is closer to 500,000 bpd.



A worker checks pipelines at the Bai Hassan oil field in Kirkuk, October 2017. File photo: Ahmad Al-Rubaye / AFP

“The oil and gas committee in the Iraqi parliament has established a committee consisting of seven MPs in order to investigate about KRG’s oil exportation,” Balin Ismael, head of the KRG’s parliamentary committee, told Rudaw on Sunday.

“The committee is expected to visit the Kurdistan Region soon to investigate the number of oil barrels the KRG exports every day,” he added.

Ismael also says the KRG should send Baghdad the 250,000 bpd it asked for as soon as possible to secure its share of the 2020 budget.

“The KRG, by securing its share of the 2020 budget, will bring more political and economic stability to the Region,” Ismael said.

A KRG delegation will also soon visit Baghdad to thrash out the issue, after Abdul-Mahdi returns from a high-level visit to China.

Relations between Baghdad and Erbil turned sour after Erbil went ahead with its referendum for independence from Iraq in September 2017, a move that culminated in an embargo on international flights in and out of the Kurdistan Region and Iraqi security forces retaking the disputed territories previously controlled by the Peshmerga.

Correction: Earlier versions of this story stated that \$24 billion is owed to oil companies operating in the Kurdistan Region.

After being alerted to the figure’s inaccuracy, Rudaw English sought clarification from a number of Kurdish parliamentarians. While some failed to respond to our requests for data, others gave \$24 billion as the overall debt figure for the Kurdistan Region - including, but not exclusive to, money owed to oil companies. KRG debt owed specifically to oil companies stood at an estimated \$3 billion in 2017; the article has been corrected to include this data.

Roadside bomb ‘placed by PKK’ kills 2 Turkish soldiers in northern Iraq

Two Turkish soldiers were killed on Monday, September 23 in northern Iraq by a roadside bomb that Turkey’s defense ministry blamed on the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK).

The soldiers died after an improvised explosive device “placed by PKK separatist terrorists exploded as a supply convoy was passing,” the ministry said.

Turkey launched a cross-border ground offensive and bombing campaign, known as Operation Claw, into northern Iraq in May, the latest offensive against PKK militants outside Turkey.

Three Turkish soldiers were killed in skirmishes with the PKK in August in northern Iraq, and seven others were wounded, the Associated Press reported.

ANF, which is close to the PKK, reported on Sunday that the HPG, the armed wing of the PKK, had launched the ‘Battle of Heftanin’ campaign in response to the Turkish operation. It said PKK fighters killed the three Turkish soldiers in two separate incidents.

Turkey maintains a number of military bases and outposts in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in efforts to root out the PKK, which has conducted a separatist insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984, during which more than 40,000 people have been killed.

Senior PKK leader Cemil Bayik has said the group seeks to solve the “Kurdish issue” through diplomacy rather than violence, and the PKK has in recent years called for autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas of southeastern Turkey rather than a separate state, but the latest ceasefire between the group and the Turkish government collapsed in 2015. The PKK’s leadership and rear bases are located



Turkish and Iraqi militaries execute a joint military exercise in Silopi, Sirnak on the Turkish side of their shared border following the 2017 Kurdistan independence referendum. Image: Emrah Oprukcu/NurPhoto.

in the remote mountainous Qandil region and other areas of northern Iraq. The group is designated a terrorist organization by Ankara and its Western allies.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party, which leads the Iraqi Kurdistan regional government, enjoys good political and trade relations with Turkey.

Kurdish-Led Autonomous Administration Not Concerned With Constitutional Committee

The Department of Foreign Relations of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (NES) announced Monday that it was not concerned with the outcome of the formation of the Syrian Constitutional Committee due to its exclusion and the absence of its representatives’ participation in its meetings.

A delegation from the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), headed by Kurdish Leader Ilham Ahmed, is discussing with senior administration officials in Washington the formation of a constitutional committee and border security.

In a statement issued on its official page, the Autonomous Administration of NES stressed its firm position calling for dialogue to reach a national Syrian agreement with the participation of all Syrian parties.

The statement further highlighted the importance of the political will in NES, representing the voice of millions of components.

Regarding the absence of representatives of the Autonomous Administration and the SDC from the Syrian Constitutional Committee and peace talks, Abdul Karim Omar, who co-chairs the Kurdish administration’s foreign affairs

office, told Asharq Al-Awsat that drafting a Syrian democratic constitution with the participation of all Syrians is regarded as a significant issue.

“However, the absence of any party means the absence of democracy in the constitution,” Omar said.

“We in the administration believe that our exclusion from efforts to find a political solution and in particular the reformulation of the constitution is unfair,” he noted.

Omar believes that the continuation of the conflict, the ongoing crisis in Syria and the failure of all attempts to build stability and solution are due to “the absence of a political solution and the Syrian consensus.”

He stressed that ending this impasse could be achieved through serious and responsible stances from all parties.

It is noteworthy that the Autonomous Administration runs most of the eastern Euphrates region after it has cleared it from ISIS militants.

It receives military and logistical support from the US-led international coalition. The administration has shown vigorous and practical efforts for dialogue and held meetings



Fighters of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are seen in Deir al-Zor, Syria May 1, 2018. REUTERS/Rodi Said

between Syrian opposition parties at home and in European countries.

The statement pointed to the sacrifices made by the people to prepare the real ground for solution, especially with regard to ending the presence of extremism militarily.

It called for building a national Syrian project, represented by autonomous administration with all channels open for dialogue and consensus among Syrians. But attempts were lacking the willingness and practical readiness of other parties, it added.

Turkish appeals court approves sentences for pro-Kurdish politicians

A Turkish appeals court has approved the sentences of more than 100 defendants in a landmark case against Kurdish political figures, including prison sentences for three members of parliament and the suspended mayor of Mardin, secularist news outlet **Halk TV** reported on Tuesday.

Turkey's Court of Cassation ruled that the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)'s deputies for Mardin and Diyarbakır, Pero Dündar and Musa Farisoğulları, will each serve nine-year sentences for membership of a terrorist organisation, while HDP Hakkari deputy Leyla Güven received a six-year-and-three-month sentence on the same charge.

The court also approved the 15-month sentence handed to Ahmet Türk, the HDP's mayor of Mardin whom the government replaced in August over accusations of links to the outlawed militant Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The Turkish judiciary launched investigations into more than 1,000 people in 2009 and 2010 for membership of the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), an umbrella political organisation

that included political organisations from Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq.

Turkey outlawed the KCK over its affiliation with the PKK, a militant organisation that has fought the Turkish state for Kurdish self-rule since in 1984.

The eight-year KCK trials of 154 Kurdish politicians, journalists, activists and others resulted in 99 people receiving prison sentences worth a combined total of nearly 110,000 years in 2017.

The latest decision in the trial from Turkey's highest appeals court approved the sentences handed out to 118 people, but reversed the judgments against 36 people.

Among those who had their sentences quashed was HDP deputy for Van, Tayip Temel, who had faced an 18-year prison sentence for leading a terrorist organisation.



The Kurdish political movement in Turkey has been under severe pressure since peace talks between the PKK and the Turkish government broke down in 2015.

After the resumption of conflict between Turkish security forces and the PKK, parliament voted to lift parliamentary immunity, allowing the state to prosecute politicians from the HDP, Turkey's largest pro-Kurdish political party and the first to gain seats in parliament by passing the country's 10-percent electoral threshold in 2015.

In August, Turkey's Interior Ministry removed the HDP mayors of Diyarbakır, Van and Mardin over alleged links to the PKK.

Video: Kurdish fighters attack Turkish military in Syria's Afrin

DAMASCUS, SYRIA (2:45 P.M.) – A Kurdish military group said it has launched a series of attacks targeting locations and bases for the Turkish military in *the northern Syrian city of Afrin*.

Afrin Liberation Forces, a newly-formed Kurdish group, declared it had blown up an explosive device near a Turkish army base in Marimeen village of *Afrin region*.

The attack, which took place on September 22, has allegedly killed and injured several Turkish soldiers.

Turkish authorities neither confirmed nor denied the attack.

Footage released by the group show a Turkish military post under attack by an ATGM.

Assaults by the *Afrin Liberation Forces* have escalated recently after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced his forces' *readiness* to initiate a full-scale offensive against the Kurdish groups in northern Syria.

"If no specific measures are taken there [in the safe zone] within two weeks, we can start our own operation," Erdogan said after the Russia-Turkey-Iran summit on Syria in the Turkish capital.

In response, Turkish armed groups said it will fight off the 'Turkish invasion', promising a 'decisive response' to any military action by Turkey.

The Turkish military and its Free Syrian army proxies control parts of northern Syria following two military operations in 2016 and 2018 (in-

cluding *Afrin*) against the People's Protection Units (YPG) and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK); both blacklisted as terror organization by Turkey.

Erdogan, who announced that his country will not allow terrorists to appear in the area created on the border with Syria, has proposed to turn it into a refugee city.

"For the refugees there (on the Syrian border), it is necessary to create a city for them to participate in agriculture. I explained to my colleagues that it is necessary to build infrastructure for them. It is necessary to prevent the formation of a terrorist corridor," the Turkish president said after talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in Ankara on Monday.

Kurdish journalist gets 14 years in Turkey, others await similar fate

Today was another dark day for the [press in Turkey](#) as assorted journalists appeared in court and were either convicted or denied acquittal on varying terror charges, thereby ensuring that the country retains its title as the world's biggest [jailer of journalists](#) for a third consecutive year.

Take Ziya Ataman, a reporter for the pro-Kurdish DIHA news agency, was slapped with 14 years and two months for alleged membership of a terrorist organization, shorthand in this case for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

Including a lengthy pre-trial detention period, Ataman has already spent three years in a maximum security prison in the southeastern city of Van as his health steadily deteriorated, his lawyer Zelal Dogan told Al-Monitor.

The case fits a pattern of prosecution being used to intimidate numerous Kurdish and pro-Kurdish journalists working for outlets sympathetic to Kurds' decades-long struggle for linguistic and political rights, and in some instances, to the PKK.

Ataman was arrested on suspicion of taking part in a rocket attack against Turkish security forces along side PKK rebels in the township of Beytusebap in 2015. The prosecution's case rested on testimony provided by a witness identified in court solely by his initials for security reasons. The witness claimed to have seen Ataman take part in the attack, but he retracted his testimony last year. He did so again today in court, saying police officers extracted it from him under duress including torture.

The other piece of evidence was a notebook found on the person of a slain PKK rebel. The prosecution said it contained Ataman's personal information including his date of birth, his home address and his mother's name.

Dogan said, "It's by now obvious to all that Ataman had nothing to do with the rocket attack, so prosecutors decided to sentence him to 14 years on the grounds that he is a PKK member, all based on the entry in a notebook whose authenticity cannot be independently verified."

Frederike Geerdink is a Dutch freelance journalist who spent a year embedded with the PKK in the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan and authored a book called "This fire never dies: One year inside the PKK." She said some of the militants she met did indeed carry notebooks and diaries. "One of them said she had written about me in her diary, so it's conceivable that others who encountered Ataman while he was carrying out his professional duties as a reporter met with him and recorded information about him."



People hold placards prepared by Reporters Without Borders as they attend a demonstration organized for journalists detained in Turkey in front of the Berlin's main railway station, during the visit of Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan in Berlin, Germany, Sept. 28, 2018. REUTERS/Christian Mang

In a further twist, both the prosecutor and the judge who had ordered Ataman's arrest were fired on the grounds that they were linked to Fethullah Gulen, the Pennsylvania-based Turkish preacher who is accused of engineering the failed 2016 coup to bloodily overthrow Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. DIHA was among the more than 130 media outlets that were banned in the aftermath of the coup.

Dogan said his legal team would appeal Ataman's sentence at an appellate court before taking it to the Constitutional Court if need be.

In a separate case being heard in the mainly Kurdish city of Diyarbakir, a local court ruled to keep journalist Kibriye Evren behind bars. The reporter worked for the all-woman-staffed Kurdish Jin News agency, also shuttered in the wake of the attempted putsch, and like Ataman is accused of membership of the PKK.

She was arrested in October last year. Prosecutors are demanding that she be locked up for 20 years. Evren's lawyers say the evidence against Evren includes social media posts and a photograph of her taking part in a picnic that supposedly proves that she was undergoing guerrilla training. The testimony of secret witnesses is also being taken into account.

Evren told lawyer Ulku Sahin of the Journalists Union of Turkey that she has found mice dropping and shards of glass in her prison meals and is [unable to write](#) letters or work on a planned book because stationery is not being deli-

vered to the Diyarbakir prison where she is being held, the independent news outlet Bianet reported.

On Oct. 9, the day she was arrested, police raided Evren's house, breaking down the door. They pinned her to the ground, stepped on her back and strip-searched her.

Speaking at her seventh hearing today, Evren said, "The press is being shackled with this trial. If the [press is shackled](#), democracy cannot function."

Her trial will resume Nov. 12. The [Media and Law Studies Association](#), a non-profit group providing pro bono services to jailed journalists and monitoring their cases, shared information on Twitter about 12 other Turkish journalists who appeared in courts across the country today.

The Turkish Journalists Union said in its annual report released in May that 74 Turkish journalists were sentenced to a total of 256 years over the year-long period under review, which started April 2018. The body says at least [126 journalists are currently in jail](#).

Amberin Zaman is a senior correspondent reporting from the Middle East, North Africa and Europe exclusively for Al-Monitor. Zaman has been a columnist for Al-Monitor for the past five years, examining the politics of Turkey, Iraq and Syria and writing the daily Briefly Turkey newsletter. Prior to Al-Monitor, Zaman covered Turkey, the Kurds and conflicts in the region for The Washington Post, The Daily Telegraph, The Los Angeles Times and the Voice of America. She served as The Economist's Turkey correspondent between 1999 and 2016, and has worked as a columnist for several Turkish language outlets.

Trois femmes djihadistes et neuf enfants de retour en France

Une de ces trois femmes, arrêtées en Turquie en juillet, est la nièce des frères Clain, qui ont revendiqué au nom de l'EI les attentats du 13 novembre 2015.

Trois femmes djihadistes et neuf enfants les accompagnant ont atterri mardi 24 septembre au matin à l'aéroport de Roissy, de retour de Turquie où ils avaient été arrêtés, a appris l'Agence France-Presse de sources concordantes, confirmant [une information de France Inter](#).

L'une des trois Françaises, soupçonnées d'appartenir à l'organisation Etat islamique, est Jennifer Clain, la nièce des frères Fabien et Jean-Michel Clain, qui ont revendiqué au nom de l'EI [les attentats du 13 novembre 2015](#).

Les femmes placées en rétention

Jennifer Clain avait été arrêtée par les autorités turques avec deux autres femmes en juillet dans la province de Kilis, frontalière avec la Syrie. Elle est mariée à Kévin Gonot, un [Français condamné à mort en Irak le 26 mai](#) par le tribunal antiterroriste de Bagdad pour appartenance à l'EI.

Les deux autres femmes sont l'épouse de Thomas Collange, le demi-frère de Kévin Gonot, et celle du père de ce même Kévin Gonot, selon une source proche du dossier.

Visées par des mandats d'arrêt, elles ont été placées en rétention avant d'être présentées à un juge d'instruction en vue d'une éventuelle mise en examen.

Les neuf enfants, âgés de 3 à 13 ans, ont eux été confiés par la justice à l'aide sociale à l'enfance (ASE) de Seine-Saint-Denis, dont dépend l'aéroport de Roissy par lequel se font la majorité des retours.



L'armée turque en opérations près de Kilis, à proximité de la frontière syrienne, où avait été arrêté un groupe de deux femmes djihadistes avec des enfants. OZAN KOSE / AFP

Expulsions des djihadistes par la Turquie

Fabien et Jean-Michel Clain, vétérans du djihadisme français qui furent au cœur de l'appareil de propagande de l'EI, sont donnés pour morts depuis février, quand la coalition internationale contre l'EI [a annoncé leur mort dans une frappe](#), sans fournir de précisions. Depuis leur départ de France – le cadet avait rejoint la Syrie avant l'ainé, qui s'y rendra début 2015 – les deux hommes demeuraient introuvables, les autorités pensant qu'ils étaient toujours dans le pays.

L'opération de ce mardi est distincte des rapatriements au cas par cas d'enfants en provenance du Kurdistan syrien ; elle s'inscrit dans

le cadre des expulsions régulières des djihadistes par la Turquie.

Dans les premières années du conflit syrien, qui a débuté en mars 2011, la Turquie a été le principal point de passage vers la Syrie des étrangers, notamment occidentaux, souhaitant rejoindre des groupes djihadistes. Longtemps accusée par ses alliés de fermer les yeux sur ces passages, Ankara, à la suite d'attaques sur son sol, a fermé sa frontière avec la Syrie, multiplié les arrestations et expulsions de djihadistes étrangers présumés, et rejoint la coalition internationale anti-EI.

Ahval

Sept. 25, 2019

Istanbul police fire rubber bullets at group protesting ouster of Kurdish mayors

Istanbul police on Wednesday intervened on a sit-in protest against the ouster of Kurdish mayors in Turkey's southeast last month.

Police in the city's Esenyurt district, home to a large Kurdish population, fired rubber bullets at a group of protesters, including pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) members of parliament, that had gathered around the district square, independent news site [T24 reported](#).

Wednesday's sit-in protest was led by HDP deputies Garo Paylan, Hüda Kaya, Kemal Bülbül, Ahmet Şık,

Necdet İpekyüz and Ömer Öcalan, it said.

The intervention took place on the 39th day of protests against the [dismissal of pro-Kurdish HDP mayors in the Turkey's southeast](#).

The mayors of the provinces of Diyarbakır, Van and Mardin - Adnan Selçuk Mızraklı, Ahmet Türk and Bedia Özgökçe Ertan - were dismissed over alleged links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), an armed group that has been at war in Turkey for three decades.

They were replaced by government appointees just

three months after being elected to office.

The dismissal of the mayors has sparked nationwide protests and international condemnation from institutions including the EU and the Council of Europe.

Turkey accuses the HDP of links to the outlawed PKK and has intensified a crackdown on the group following the breakdown of the peace process between the ruling Justice and Development (AKP) government and [the outlawed PKK](#) in 2015.

HDP MP Leyla Guven prison sentence upheld by Turkey's Supreme Court

TURKEY'S opposition People's Democratic Party (HDP) MP Leyla Guven was sentenced to more than six years in prison on trumped up terrorism charges today as the country's Supreme Court upheld an earlier decision.

The MP for Hakkari in Turkey's largely Kurdish south-east was sentenced along with 118 others in the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) case, which opened in 2009.

Those who had their prison sentences approved by the court faced a range of charges including "membership of a terrorist organisation," "managing a terrorist organisation," "opposing the law on assembly and demonstration" and "opposing the law on firearms."

HDP deputy Pero Dunder was handed a nine-year prison sentence, also upheld by the Supreme Court. But the court in Diyarbakir overturned sentences for 36 people, including HDP MP Tayip Temel.

The Turkish state deems the KCK a banned terrorist organisation linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

Earlier this year Turkey was criticised by the European Court of Human Rights for rejecting detainees' appeals for release from pre-trial detention without holding a hearing. It also slammed Ankara for not allowing defendants access to their investigation files.

But President Recep Tayyip Erdogan regularly ignores such rulings, and blasts institutions for supporting terrorism.

Despite this and the continued human rights violations of his government, they are toothless to enforce any kind of sanction against Turkey and continue normalised relations with Mr Erdogan.

HDP's executive committee agreed to move the Democracy Watch protests to Istanbul and Izmir this week as the party continues protests over the removal of its elected mayors from Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van.

The municipalities were taken over by government appointed trustees on August 19 as the Turkish state escalated attacks on the HDP.

Its former co-leaders Figen Yuksekdag and Selahattin Demirtas were handed additional jail sentences last week and face the rest of their lives behind bars on trumped up terror charges.

This move came after domestic and European courts ruled that Mr Demirtas should be released from prison "if he is not convicted of other crimes."



Prosecutors claimed they had forgotten to include the charges of "crimes against the security of the state" and "causing damage to property" in the original indictment against the pair.

HDP spokesman Osman Baydemir said today that the world's media must take notice of what is happening to the Kurdish people.

He thanked the Star for being the only international daily newspaper to regularly report on the struggle for freedom and democracy in Turkey and Kurdistan.

Kurdistan : un mort et deux blessés dans des frappes aériennes de l'armée turque

Un jeune homme de 20 ans a été tué et deux villageois ont été blessés par des frappes aériennes turques au Sud-Kurdistan (Irak), mercredi soir.

Des frappes aériennes de l'armée turque sur le village de Kani Mazî, dans la province de Dohuk, ont causé la mort d'un jeune homme de 20 ans, dans l'après-midi de mercredi.

Par ailleurs, les villages de Zêwke, Aliyereş et Kunemaryan à Qandil ont été bombardés mercredi soir, vers 21h30 par l'aviation turque.

Au moins deux civils ont été blessés dans les frappes aériennes, tandis que de nombreux vignobles et jardins ont subi des dommages matériels.



Erdogan pushes Syrian safe zone at UN



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan holds up a map as he addresses the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly at the UN headquarters in New York City, New York, US, Sept. 24, 2019. REUTERS/Brendan Mcdermid

ISTANBUL — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan took his case for a "safe zone" in northeast Syria to the world stage this week, telling the United Nations General Assembly that as many as three million refugees could be moved to an area of the war-torn country now controlled by US-allied Kurds.

Turkey wants to create an initial "peace corridor" 30 kilometers (19 miles) deep and 480 kilometers (300 miles) long east of the Euphrates River to repatriate Syrians who have fled the eight-year war that has killed a half-million people, Erdogan told world leaders gathered for the UN's annual meeting on Tuesday.

"With international support, we can settle two million Syrians here, and if we expanded the area's depth to the Deir ez-Zor-Raqqqa line, we can lift the number of Syrians from Europe and other parts of the world returning home to three million. **Turkey is determined** to achieve this issue and has started its preparations," he said.

Turkey has welcomed 3.6 million Syrians fleeing violence since 2011 and has spent close to \$40 billion **caring for them**. But public discontent with the foreigners is **brewing**, especially amid a painful economic downturn, and the buffer zone could serve as a release valve if the government can repatriate Syrians there as well as its best bet to stymie Kurdish autonomy.

A large swath of northeast Syria is run by the Syrian Democratic Forces, a militia dominated by

Kurds that captured the territory from the Islamic State with the support of the United States. Turkey views the Kurdish fighters as terrorists due to their affiliation with insurgents who have waged an armed campaign inside Turkey since 1984.

The United States and Turkey reached a breakthrough on the buffer zone last month after protracted negotiations and have begun **coordinating patrols**. But in recent weeks Erdogan has revived his threats to launch a unilateral invasion that risks a confrontation in an area of Syria where an estimated 1,000 American soldiers are present.

The dispute is but one of the issues dividing the NATO allies. Turkey also faces possible US economic sanctions for buying the \$2.5 billion S-400 anti-aircraft system from Russia that NATO fears will undermine its security, and Turkish pilots have already been kicked out of the US-led F-35 fighter jet program.

Erdogan's **real purpose** in attending the UN General Assembly summit was to convince US President Donald Trump to **accept more of Turkey's demands** on the buffer zone, a pro-government columnist wrote this week.

By Wednesday, the two men still had not met and a meeting had not appeared on **Trump's schedule** as of this writing. Erdogan and Trump did **attend the same diplomatic reception**, but Erdogan turned down Trump's **lunch invitation** on Tuesday because the table included Egyptian Pre-

sident Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, whom the Turkish leader describes as a "tyrant" after he seized power from the country's first democratically elected president in 2013.

Trump and Erdogan did **speak by phone** before they arrived in New York, and the Turkish leader held talks in New York with US Senator Lindsey Graham, who has acted as a kind of mediator with Turkey in the past. Graham told reporters efforts were underway to **bring Turkey back** into the F-35 program. Senior aide Ibrahim Kalin met with James Jeffrey, Washington's Syria envoy, in New York and the two men agreed on **"intensifying joint efforts"** on the buffer zone.

Erdogan met the US ambassador to Turkey, who reportedly proposed a **way out** of the S-400 imbroglio by promising to lift bilateral trade to \$100 billion, readmit Turkey to the F-35 program and sell Ankara US-made Patriot missiles if the military doesn't activate the Russian system, according to news reports. Turkey has previously dismissed suggestions it will mothball the S-400s.

However, Erdogan prefers to do business face-to-face with Trump, with whom he says he enjoys a **"personal bond."** He was able to persuade him to agree to **withdraw US forces** from Syria last year and that it **wasn't his fault** he acquired the Russian missile in June.

"Maybe Trump's advisers have counseled him not to see Erdogan [with the] realization that the safe

zone is an issue between the two militaries,” said the Washington Institute for Near East Policy’s Soner Cagaptay, who recently published a book on Turkish foreign policy called “**Erdogan’s Empire: Turkey and the Politics of the Middle East.**” “The bureaucracy in America is trying to downgrade this issue from the presidential level to the technocratic level because Erdogan, in one-on-one sessions with Trump, knows how to get what he wants.”

Returning millions of Syrian refugees, who are overwhelmingly Sunni Arabs, to an arid corner of the country now controlled by Kurds may not be realistic without a broader political resolution of the conflict. But creating space for a few hundred thousand Syrians to return would address domestic political concerns as well as **force Europe**, which is loath to see another migrant crisis at its border,

to back Turkish control of the buffer zone, Cagaptay told Al-Monitor.

“It is not in vain that we have earned the title of the world’s most generous provider of humanitarian aid and accepted the most displaced people,” Erdogan said in the **potent speech** at the UN, during which he held up an image of a Syrian boy who perished trying to reach European shores and chided the international community for failing to shoulder more of the burden.

But Erdogan has also threatened to “**open the gates**” to encourage migrants to attempt the perilous crossing to Europe if international support for the safe zone does not emerge. Irregular migration to Greece from Turkey increased sharply last month, most of them from Afghanistan, aid workers say.

Syrians appear to be staying in Turkey despite **new restrictions** on their movements and reports of **forcible deportations** to Syria that Turkish officials deny. Still, the change in public sentiment may make them more vulnerable. Mobs in the southern city of Adana attacked Syrian homes and businesses last week following **false allegations** that a Syrian had sexually abused a boy. Police later arrested a Turkish citizen in connection with the assault.

Separately, Adana was the scene of a **bombing** that targeted police on Wednesday and wounded five people. There were no immediate claims of responsibility.

Found in: unga, turkish influence in syria, turkish intervention in syria, recep tayyip erdogan, donald trump, syrian civil war, safe zone



25 septembre 2019

Nouvel appel pour rapatrier les enfants français de Syrie

Dans un avis rendu public mercredi, la Commission nationale consultative des droits de l’homme demande au gouvernement de ramener en France les enfants détenus dans des camps du nord-est de la Syrie. Un rapatriement qualifié d’exigence humanitaire et d’impératif de sécurité.

Nouvel appel pour rapatrier les enfants français de Syrie

L’avis de la Commission nationale consultative des droits de l’homme (CNCNDH) est implacable. Il ne fait pas qu’appeler au rapatriement «*dans les plus brefs délais*» des enfants français et de leur mère détenus au Kurdistan syrien. Il balaie aussi les arguments du gouvernement français qui a opté pour des retours «*au cas par cas*». Environ 300 enfants, dont une majorité âgés de moins de 5 ans, vivent aujourd’hui dans des camps du nord-est de la Syrie où sont regroupées les familles de jihadistes de l’Etat islamique (EI). **Seuls 17 enfants, pour la plupart orphelins**, ont pour l’instant été renvoyés en France. «*Le maintien d’un refus de rapatrier l’ensemble des enfants de nationalité française retenus dans les camps du Rojava caractériserait une violation manifeste des droits fondamentaux et une atteinte grave portée aux valeurs de la République française*», affirme la Commission.

La majorité des enfants concernés vivent dans le camp d’al-Hol, à proximité de la frontière irakienne. C’est là qu’ont été emmenées la plupart des familles de jihadistes qui fuyaient les derniers territoires contrôlés par l’EI en début d’année. Nul n’avait anticipé qu’elles seraient aussi nombreuses.

70 000 personnes sont détenues dans le camp. Les Syriens et les Irakiens sont les plus nombreux. Les étrangers sont parqués dans une enceinte grillagée à l’intérieur du camp, surnommée «*l’annexe*». Une cinquantaine de nationalités sont représentées.

Manque d’eau et de nourriture

Les autorités kurdes, qui contrôlent la région, sont d’autant plus dépassées que très peu d’ONG sont présentes. «*Les conditions de vie sont particulièrement dégradées, en raison d’un manque d’eau et de nourriture, de l’insuffisance des structures sanitaires, au point d’avoir déjà provoqué le décès de plusieurs enfants*», note l’avis de la CNCNDH. D’après l’ONG International Rescue Committee, 339 enfants ont péri à al-Hol entre décembre et septembre, soit 80% du nombre total de décès. Selon nos informations, une fillette française de 3 ans, malade, est morte cet été après avoir été transférée trop tardivement à l’hôpital voisin d’Hassaké. Le rapatriement des enfants est donc «*une exigence d’ordre humanitaire*», estime la CNCNDH. «*Ils se trouvent dans une situation désastreuse, inacceptable au regard des principes fondamentaux du droit international humanitaire.*»

Le retour se justifie aussi pour des motifs sécuritaires. Les camps du Nord-Est syrien sont considérés comme des incubateurs d’une prochaine vague de jihadisme, un «*Etat islamique 3.0*», selon les termes de diplomates. Au milieu des tentes, les femmes les plus radicales s’en prennent à celles qui le sont moins et à leurs enfants. Elles attaquent aussi régulièrement les gardes kurdes, parfois à coups de couteau. «*Le retour de ces enfants sur le territoire*

français est d’autant plus urgent [...] que les tentatives d’évasion des camps se multiplient, parfois organisées par des sympathisants de l’EI désireux de ramener à eux les personnes qui vivaient sous son joug, y compris les enfants», indique la CNCNDH.

Levée de fonds

Le constat est partagé par la plupart des analystes. Dans **une note publiée lundi**, le centre de recherches *Institute for the Study of War* affirme que l’EI se préparerait à faire s’évader ses partisans des camps et des prisons où ils sont aujourd’hui enfermés. «*L’EI est actif à al-Hol. Il organise des levées de fonds via des canaux cryptés tel Telegram depuis au moins juin 2019*», expliquent les auteurs de la note.

Le gouvernement français refuse pourtant d’intervenir. Une attitude critiquée par les autorités kurdes, qui n’ont pas les moyens de gérer autant de prisonniers étrangers, et par plusieurs instances internationales, dont le Haut-commissariat de l’ONU aux droits de l’homme, l’Unicef et la commissaire aux droits de l’homme du Conseil de l’Europe. Interpellé en mai et en juillet par le président de la CNCNDH, le Premier ministre, Edouard Philippe, a rétorqué que les camps syriens ne relevaient pas de «*la juridiction*» de la France. Un argument rejeté mercredi par l’instance qui note «*l’existence d’un contrôle effectif des autorités françaises sur ses ressortissants présents au sein des camps*». Autrement dit, la juridiction de la France s’exerce bien dans le Nord-Est syrien.

Egypt Calls for Holding Erdogan Accountable over Terrorism, Targeting of Kurds

In a sharp statement, Cairo made several accusations against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, urging the international community to “hold him accountable” for what the Egyptian Foreign Ministry called “all of his crimes”.

The statement, released on Wednesday by Egypt’s foreign ministry spokesman, Ahmed Hafez, said that Erdogan was supporting terrorism, arming extremists and deliberately targeting the Kurds.

It also listed human rights violations in Turkey under Erdogan’s leadership, including thousands held as political prisoners, the suspicious deaths of dozens of detainees due to torture or inhuman prison conditions, and the closure of thousands of universities and educational institutions.

Hafez said that Erdogan “claimed to defend the values of justice in his speech, but at the core showed feelings of hatred and spite toward



Turkey’s Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan addresses members of parliament from his ruling AK Party (AKP) during a meeting at the Turkish parliament in Ankara April 29, 2014. REUTERS/Umit Bektas

Egypt and its people who have nothing but appreciation for the people of Turkey.”

His remarks came in response to Erdogan’s speech during the UN General Assembly meetings, in which he raised doubts on Mohammed Morsi’s death in court last June.

Cairo and Ankara have reduced their diplomatic relations since 2013 because of the Turkish president’s position against the June 30 Revolution that toppled the rule of former Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi, after widespread public protests against his continued rule. In the wake of a number of statements that Egypt considered “hostile”, Cairo decided to withdraw its ambassador from Ankara and expel the Turkish ambassador.

Hafez emphasized that Erdogan’s statements were a “desperate attempt to steer attention away from his deteriorating regime and the successive losses he is suffering.



Thursday, 26 September, 2019
By Rufiz Hafizoglu

Turkish Armed Forces launch operations in areas bordering with Armenia

Baku, Azerbaijan, Sept. 26. By Rufiz Hafizoglu - Trend:

The Turkish Armed Forces launched a new operation against the militants of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) terrorist organization in Turkey’s Arzi, Kars and Iğdir provinces bordering Armenia, Trend reports on Sept. 26 referring to a report of the Turkish Ministry of National Defense.

Reportedly, the KIRAN-4 operation is being carried out.

“The operation will be carried out until terrorists are fully destroyed in these territories,” the ministry said.

The conflict between Turkey and the PKK, which demands the creation of an independent Kurdish state, has been lasting around 40 years, claiming more than 40,000 lives. The PKK is recognized as a terrorist organization by the UN and the EU.



Iraqi President Barham Salih addresses UN General Assembly

WASHINGTON DC (Kurdistan 24) — On Wednesday, Barham Salih became the third Kurdish leader in UN history to address the opening of its General Assembly.

As president of Iraq, Salih issued a general call for peace, reconciliation, and economic development, with the aim of insulating Iraq from regional and international tensions, so it can focus on reconstruction, following the territorial defeat of the so-called Islamic State.

Salih reminded his audience of “the Iraqi people’s suffering” over 40 years—since Saddam Hussein came to power in Baghdad.

He noted the four decades of “oppression” and “campaigns of genocide, such as the Anfal genocides, mass graves, the use of chemical weapons in Halabja, the drying of the marshes, and the destruction of the environment.”

“Perhaps, no other country has experienced what Iraq has experienced in terms of span, whether in terms of time, or extent,” he affirmed.

Salih’s words were a useful reminder to those who have come to view Saddam’s rule with nostalgia, as some golden age of stability, before disorder ensued after the overthrow of his regime.

Yet as Salih recounted, that was a time of virtually constant conflict: the war with Iran, which lasted from 1980 to 1988; followed by the invasion of Kuwait in 1990; a brief US-led military campaign in 1991 that expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait; after which there were twelve years of a harsh, US-led international embargo; followed, from 2003 to 2011, by the US-led war that ousted Saddam and his regime; and the return to Iraq in 2014 of another US-led coalition to combat the Islamic State.

An entire generation of Iraqis has known nothing but strife and war.

Salih noted that although the Islamic State has been defeated militarily, “We must be aware that there are still terrorist elements that are trying to reorganize themselves.”

That battle is not over, even as new troubles are emerging, above all the conflict between the US and its Gulf allies, like Saudi Arabia, on the one hand, and Iran, on the other.

Iraq wants desperately to stay out of that fight, and it balances on a tightrope in order to do so. “Targeting the security of the Gulf and the sisterly kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a dangerous devel-



Iraqi President Barham Salih delivered his speech at the UN during its 74th annual general assembly on Sept. 25, 2019. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

opment,” Salih said, as he alluded to Iran’s Sept. 14 strike on Saudi oil facilities. “We in Iraq are very concerned by this tension.”

Salih also affirmed, “Iraq’s policy today is not the same as the policy of the former regime in dealing with our neighbors.” Rather, “our relationship is strengthened by our Arab and Gulf depth” and we seek to develop those ties.

Indeed, the US is promoting an alliance among regional states to enhance regional security. On Tuesday, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo hosted what the State Department called a “GCC + 2 Ministerial.” It included the foreign ministers of the GCC states—Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates—as well as the Iraqi and Jordanian Foreign Ministers.

The “GCC + 2” is, in significant part, an alliance of Sunni states against Iran. One reason for including Iraq is to tie it more closely to those states in order to limit Tehran’s influence in Baghdad.

But as he addressed the UN General Assembly, Salih added, “We also care about our relationships with our neighbor, Iran, with whom we enjoy ties of cultural and religious connections.”

As Salih suggested, Baghdad really wants to be left alone to focus on reconstruction of its damaged and failing infrastructure, while facilitating the return of displaced Iraqis to their homes and ensuring that the Islamic State does not re-emerge.

Salih also described the “positive climate” that now

exists “in dealing with the accumulated problems” between Iraq’s Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG.)

As Salih noted, those problems are being resolved on the basis of Iraq’s 2005 constitution, a point that is very important to the KRG.

Relations between Erbil and Baghdad have improved significantly since Adil Abdul Mahdi became Iraq’s Prime Minister following the 2018 elections. The previous prime minister, Haider al-Abadi, was never very popular in Iraq and was not elected to that position. Rather, he came into office after Washington insisted that Nuri al-Maliki, a sectarian figure, whose pro-Shia bias had contributed to the rise of the Islamic State, step down as a precondition for US support to combat the terrorist organization.

Among Abadi’s miscalculations was joining with Iran and pro-Iranian elements in Iraq to attack Kirkuk and other disputed territories, following the 2017 Kurdistan independence referendum. In the 2018 elections, Kurds voted against Abadi and succeeded in replacing him with Abdul Mahdi.

Salih delivered most of his UN address in Arabic, but after first ending his speech in Arabic, he repeated his conclusion in Kurdish.

“I salute the families of the martyrs, the victims of oppression, the victims of the mass graves and the Anfal genocide,” he said. “I salute their determination to live a life of freedom and dignity and peace and stability.”

“It is our duty to meet their aspirations,” Salih concluded.

Kurdish parties announce 'Kurdistani Coalition' for 2020 local election in disputed areas



Kurdish political party members announce the formation of the 'Kurdistani Coalition' joint list on September 28, 2019. Photo: Rudaw TV

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region — Major Kurdish parties have declared a joint Kurdish list will run in the April 2020 provincial election in Iraq's disputed areas, in a bid to consolidate Kurdish votes.

"We as Kurdistan parties met today to form a joint list for areas covered by Article 140 such as Kirkuk, Mosul, Nineveh, Diyala, and Saladin. We have all agreed to run as one list in order to prevent losses in Kurdish votes. It was a successful meeting and we approved all points," Kakamin Najari, a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) politburo said in a joint press conference with other parties in Erbil.

Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution was written to address the issue of lands disputed by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Erbil and the federal government in Baghdad. It calls for normalization of these areas, to be followed by a referendum on whether or not those regions want to be part of the Kurdistan Region.

According to the constitution, the article should

have been implemented by the end of 2007, yet so far no referendum has been conducted.

The main Kurdistan Region parties – KDP, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), Change Movement (Gorran) and Islamic Group (Komal) - are part of the joint list.

Opposition party [New Generation](#) said in a Friday statement they would not be attending today's meeting at the KDP's Leadership Council office in Erbil, citing a lack of preparation.

The announcement of a joint list for across the disputed territories comes after attempts by Kurdish political parties to form electoral coalitions in some of the disputed provinces.

The parties that form part of today's announced joint list had agreed on September 9 to run in [Kirkuk](#) under the name "Kirkuk is Kurdistan."

However, the name was [rejected](#) by the Iraqi electoral body who claimed the name could stoke further ethnic tension in the province.

Ethnically diverse Kirkuk is home to Kurdish, Arab, Turkmen, and Christian inhabitants. It has not held provincial council elections since 2005, mainly due to its disputed nature and disagreements between the province's ethnic communities.

Kurds were able to win 26 out of a possible 41 seats in the election held 14 years ago, when they ran on the joint Kurdistan Brotherhood List that also included some Turkmen parties.

A joint Kurdish party list for [Nineveh](#) province had also been proposed, but failed to materialize.

Saadi Pira, a member of the PUK politburo, said during the press conference that the list aims to "save" each and every Kurdish vote.

Kurdish political groups that have yet to join the coalition are welcome, Pira added.

"The doors are open for all existing groups and political organizations which intend to run for elections in these areas, we will happily welcome them," he said.

Kurdish filmmaker faces up to 15 years in jail for terror-related charges in Turkey



Kurdish director Kazim Oz faces trial in Turkey on October 1, 2019 for charges dating back to 2010. Photo : Jana Kunstekova

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region — Prominent Kurdish director, filmmaker and photographer Kazim Oz will be tried in Turkey on Tuesday, on terror-related charges dating back to 2010. If found guilty, he could face a seven to fifteen year jail sentence.

Oz, 46, detailed the charges for which he will be tried at a court in Tunceli (Dersim) province in a [tweet](#) on Wednesday.

Charges include “being a member of a terrorist organization” for attending an event hosted by the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) – a pred-

ecessor of the pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) – and participating in a protest against the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government in Istanbul’s Gezi Park protests in 2013.

The filmmaker was [arrested](#) in November 2018 as part of the case, but was conditionally released two days later.

“The ‘witch hunt’ launched by the government against anyone who opposes it continues to grow to include artists,” he said in the tweet, adding that the move is “punishment” for the films he has made over the last 20 years.

Turkey bans films or any other productions that it deems “propaganda” for the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) - an armed group struggles for cultural and political rights of Kurds in Kurdish-majority areas in Turkey, and designated a terrorist organization by Ankara.

Oz spoke to [Rudaw](#) in March about the making of *Zer*, a fiction film in which a Turkish-American protagonist traces his true ethnic heritage to Kurdistan and shines light on the Turkish gov-

ernment’s systematic murder of an estimated 40,000 – 70,000 Alevi Kurds.

Asked about the difficulties encountered in the making of the film, Oz said Turkish authorities actively suppressed its production.

“By the time *Zer* was in post-production, political tension was running very, very high. Not only did the Ministry of Culture withdraw its support for *Zer*, they actively began trying to suppress the film. As far as I know, *Zer* is the only film in Turkish history that was first supported and then suppressed in this manner,” he explained to Rudaw.

His work has been screened and awarded in Europe and the United States.

He Bu Tene Bu (Once Upon A Time), a film about Kurdish labor migration in Turkey, was [screened](#) at Hamburg 3001 Kino in Germany on Saturday.

“Anything you do about the Kurdish issue, anything with the word ‘Kurd’ in it gets a backlash from the government, especially recently,” he said.

Films broaching controversial topics beyond the Kurdish issue have also been known to face governmental pressure.

Oz expressed defiance as he awaits Tuesday’s trial, vowing to continue his craft.

“I’d like to make cinema in a free and democratic country. But even though we’re not in a country like that, I will continue to make movies under any circumstances.”

UN excludes one third of Syria, mostly Kurds, from constitution committee

A tug-of-war is taking place, in which the government in Damascus may pay lip service to this committee but will never allow it real power, instead trying to pack it with its own representatives.

A new UN committee tasked with writing a Syrian constitution has excluded voices from one third of the country and may be given foreign powers a veto over which Syrian voices are allowed, according to reports. Despite claims by the UN’s Geir Pedersen that the UN would have “Syrians sitting together,” including voices

from the diaspora, large groups appear to be excluded.

The committee was announced last week by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and will meet in Geneva on October 30. The committee is supposed to include “members of President Bashar al-Assad’s government and

opposition representatives,” according to reports. The agreement was made between the “Syrian Arab Republic” and the Syrian Negotiations Commission and is intended to be a “credible, balance and inclusive Constitutional Committee that will be facilitated by the UN.”

Unfortunately, like many UN actions it is the



Fighters of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) put an SDF flag in al-Omar oil field in Deir Al Zor, Syria March 23, 2019 - (photo credit: ABOUD HAMAM / REUTERS)

precise opposite of the language embodied in its formation. Critics say it is neither balanced or inclusive, excluding voices from the larger Kurdish groups in eastern Syria and largely excluding most Syrians from the process, erring instead on the side of Assad and Turkish-backed opposition groups to have a veto over the participation of others. Turkey's desire to exclude SDF-linked groups is because Ankara argues they are linked to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) which Ankara views as a terrorist organization. Similarly the Syrian regime describes many Syrian groups, particularly religious extremists, in Idlib as terrorists and will not want them represented.

A tug-of-war is taking place, in which the government in Damascus may pay lip service to this committee but will never allow it real power, instead trying to pack it with its own representatives. The committee will have 150 members. 50 of these members will from the Syrian government side, 50 from the opposition and 50 "chosen by the UN and members of Syrian civil society." Oddly it seems almost no representatives will come from eastern Syria, an area controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces, the main partner of the US in fighting ISIS. The SDF have their own political organizations, yet across the board they have all been excluded, even though they liberated millions from ISIS.

SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali said that the UN "must know that having a couple of Kurds from northeast Syria who are allied with Da-

mascus or the opposition doesn't mean Kurds are represented in the committee." The Syrian Democratic Council, which is linked to the SDF, has also been excluded. No Kurdish voices from Afrin, an area under military occupation by Turkey, appear to be included as well. Bassam Ishak of the SDC wrote that "Turkey has vetoed Syrian Kurds representation in the UN Syrian constitution committee. Few Syrian Kurds and Syriaacs [Christians] are chosen as members of the Syrian opposition."

The US has worked closely with the SDF to defeat ISIS but Washington has never appeared to support its partners in any kind of political process. This is because the main US mission in eastern Syria was to defeat ISIS but unlike Turkey or the Syrian regime the US has never sought to support Syrians from eastern Syria to have any representation in the future of Syria. This is convenient because it means that it doesn't have to be beholden to any of these groups politically and can walk away more easily from eastern Syria at a time of its choosing and still say that it accomplished its mission of defeating ISIS. This is because the US has gotten out of the state building and democratization business that it once championed during the 20th century and first years of the 21st century. Today's US policy is built on silos of military mission and state department mission, sometimes working at cross-purposes. In Syria the military works "by, with ad through" the SDF to defeat ISIS while the US State Department works with Turkey. Unlike other countries that do hybrid

diplomacy, working with states and groups they support, the US works with states and has a weak track record working with or consistently supporting others. That is partly why the US effort to support Syrian rebel opposition ended up training few fighters and largely abandoning all the groups it worked with in Turkey and Jordan. Turkey stepped into the vacuum and appears to be more invested in its friends.

But Turkey and the Syrian regime also exclude many voices from Syria, preferring those that are dependent on their leadership to be at the UN on the committee. This creates a potentially lopsided committee excluding vast swaths of the Syrian public. The US has largely squandered its role in the Geneva process, paying lip service to it but doing very little and enabling Turkey, Iran and Russia to work closely on the future of Syria. With a crisis in Washington over impeachment the US is even more beholden to Turkey and others to be its voice on Syria, preferring that to speaking up for its partners because the US has narrowly tailored its military mission to work with these partners, and largely ignored them in every other way possible. For instance the SDF or SDC has been largely excluded in Washington, and the US has reduced the diplomatic presence it once sought to send to eastern Syria. This is because US president Donald Trump decided to withdraw from Syria in December 2018. He was retrained in carry out the decision. But US commanders never know when the President might change his mind. One result is that the thousands of ISIS fighters the US helped "defeat" are today relaxing in camps in eastern Syria plotting their return and ISIS supporters in Al-Hol camp have reorganized and begun murdering civilians again. Of course, those civilians in Al-Hol don't seem to have much representation on the UN committee either.

In the end the UN committee will be so large and complex that its chances of success are slim. If it succeeds it will only set in stone the historic discrimination in Syria against the Kurdish minority in the east and north. Excluded for most of the 20th century, they seem to have been sidelined again, even though many of their fighters helped defeat ISIS. In a bizarre outcome, if the Syrian Kurds in the east had only allied with the Syrian regime they would likely have more representation at the UN committee. They chose to partner with the US and have ended up out in the cold. It is hard to see how the Geneva process will not result in either failure or a rubber stamp on the partition of Syria between Turkey and the Syrian government in Damascus, which has backing from Russia and Iran. Washington has taken most of its chips off the table.

VIDEO: 7th annual Diyarbakir Book Fair includes books by 22 Kurdish authors

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The seventh annual book fair in Diyarbakir opened its doors to visitors on Saturday.

According to the organizers of the fair, 24,273 people visited during the first day, and that number rose to over 50,000 by the second day.

Among the thousands of books on display and for sale are 22 written by Kurdish authors.

Those who attended the fair, and the author's whose books were included, believe such events will help push forward the recognition of the Kurdish language in Turkey.

“Kurds here [in Turkey] are deprived of their mother tongue. Many complain about this and want to learn the language and teach their kids as well, Bahoz Baron, a Kurdish author, told Kurdistan 24. “We are paving the way [with such events] for those who want to learn Kurdish.”

Some of the visitors at the fair said the responsibility lies on the shoulders of politicians and diplomats who should continue to work on behalf of the Kurdish nation.



Among the thousands of books on display and for sale are 22 written by Kurdish authors. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

“Kurds everywhere should defend their language; not only authors and readers but especially politicians,” Reshe, who attended the fair, told Kurdistan 24.

Other attendees said they came to the book fair to buy books and improve their Kurdish.

“I call on young Kurds, and those who enjoy reading not to forget their mother tongue and to do their best to learn it,” Eylem Suleymanoglu, an attendee stated.

The book fair began on Sept. 28 and will go on until Oct. 6. This is the first time the event will be held for nine days.

Le Monde

Par H el ene Sallon Publi e
le 31 ao ut 2019

Bagdad peine  a contr oler les milices pro-iraniennes

L'Irak subit la pression de ses deux parrains en conflit, l'Iran et les Etats-Unis, qui demandent des gages.

Les conclusions des enqu etes diligent ees par le gouvernement irakien sur une s erie d'attaques qui ont vis e depuis le 19 juillet des bases et d ep ots d'armes d'unit es de la mobilisation populaire (MP, compos ee  a majorit e de factions proches de l'Iran) n'ont pas encore  t e rendues publiques, mais la piste isra elienne est privil egi ee. « Des enqu etes gouvernementales ont conclu que le responsable de certaines de ces attaques est absolument, certainement Isra el », a fait savoir Ahmad Al-Assadi, porte-parole de la coalition parlementaire Al-Fatah qui regroupe des chefs de la MP, vendredi 30 ao ut. « Le gouvernement pr epare des preuves et documents suffisants pour pr esenter une plainte au Conseil de s ecurit e de l'ONU », a-t-il ajout e.

Si les chances de voir l'Etat h ebreux sanctionn e   l'ONU sont minces, la d emarche s'inscrit dans le jeu d' equilibrisme que s'efforcent de mener les autorit es irakiennes. Ces derni eres invoquent le respect de la souverainet e et la neutralit e de l'Irak pour  viter qu'il ne devienne un champ de bataille dans le conflit qui oppose l'Iran aux Etats-Unis et   ses alli es – dont Isra el – depuis le retrait am ericain de l'accord sur le nucl eaire iranien, en mai 2018. Tout en esp erant obtenir de Washington l'assurance qu'aucune nouvelle attaque ne sera perp etree sur son sol, Bagdad veut donner des gages de fermet e aux forces pro-iraniennes qui menacent d'attaquer les int er ets am ericains en Irak et exigent le retrait de leurs 5 000 soldats d eploy es   la faveur de la guerre contre l'organisation Etat islamique (EI).

« Si l'on reste silencieux, on risque de passer pour des faibles. Si l'on parle fort, certains  l ements de la MP vont l'interpr eter comme un feu vert pour lancer une guerre », a explicit e une source gouvernementale   l'Agence France-Presse. A l'issue d'une r eunion lundi entre les chefs de l'ex ecutif et ceux de la MP, la pr esidence irakienne a d enonc e, dans une communication, « un acte d'agression flagrant qui vise l'Irak » et r eaffirm e son soutien   la MP et   son r ole dans la lutte contre l'EI. Compos ee de milices et de volontaires chiites qui ont r epondu   l'appel   se mobiliser contre l'EI de l'ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani en juin 2014, plus de 150 000 hommes aujourd'hui, la MP a  t e institutionnalis ee fin 2016. Certains de ses chefs proches de l'Iran ont form e la coalition Al-Fatah, devenue

la deuxième force politique au Parlement en mai 2018.

Dans les limbes

Leur pouvoir politique accru limite la marge de manœuvre du premier ministre irakien, Adel Abdel Mahdi, candidat de compromis entre les Etats-Unis et l'Iran, sans base partisane. L'influence croissante du voisin iranien et la campagne de « *pression maximale* » de Washington contre Téhéran rendent plus difficiles ses efforts pour ménager les deux parrains rivaux. « *Les Américains ont le sentiment que l'Irak devient un terrain de jeu pour l'Iran, pour les menacer eux et les autres pays de la région* », estime le chercheur Hosham Dawood. Un observateur estime même que les relations bilatérales sont au plus mal. « *A la Maison blanche, ils sont soit hostiles, soit novices sur le dossier irakien. Ils veulent l'aborder de façon plus musclée, frontale et directe* », note-t-il.

« *Les Américains ont le sentiment que le premier ministre est davantage aligné avec l'Iran. Mais c'est contre sa volonté si l'Iran a accru son influence en Irak* », assure au Monde une source gouvernementale, évoquant le travail de longue haleine de Téhéran sur les terrains politique, culturel, commercial et religieux. « *La stratégie américaine en Irak est dans les limbes*, poursuit cette source. *L'Irak est en position de faiblesse et n'a pas de stratégie. L'Iran veille à ce qu'il ne gagne pas un plus grand rôle régional ou international, pour ne pas modifier l'équilibre. Elle a développé un modèle au Liban, au Yémen et veut maintenant l'appliquer en Irak.* »

Deux dossiers sont vus comme une priorité par Washington – un préalable, même, note un diplomate occidental, à la visite du chef du gouvernement irakien à Washington, sans cesse reportée : accroître l'indépendance énergétique vis-à-vis de l'Iran et contrôler les milices qui forment la MP. Si les avancées sont notables sur le premier dossier, de fortes résistances entravent la prise de contrôle effective de l'Etat sur les unités de la MP et leurs armements. Le délai d'un mois fixé par un décret gouvernemental du 1^{er} juillet pour finaliser leur intégration aux forces de sécurité a été reporté.

Or, l'inquiétude américaine s'accroît face à la menace posée par l'Iran par le biais de ces factions armées. Elle a été nourrie par une série d'attaques peu sophistiquées contre des cibles diplomatiques, militaires et économiques avant l'été. Washington s'inquiète surtout, tout comme Israël, de transferts par Téhéran d'armes plus sophistiquées à destination de l'Irak ou en transit vers la Syrie et le Liban. Des responsables américains ont ainsi affirmé que les drones qui ont visé un oléoduc en Arabie saoudite, en mai, avaient été tirés d'Irak.



Explosion d'une base militaire dans le sud-ouest de Bagdad, le 12 août. Loay Hameed / AP

« Déclaration de guerre »

La série d'attaques contre les unités de la MP accentue la menace qui pèse sur les intérêts américains en Irak. Dans un communiqué, le Pentagone s'est empressé, lundi, de nier toute implication dans ces attaques, rappelant le soutien des Etats-Unis à la « *souveraineté irakienne* » et son opposition à tout « *acteur extérieur* ». Mais la plupart des experts et représentants irakiens estiment qu'elles n'ont pas pu être menées sans l'aval de Washington et soulignent l'ambiguïté américaine sur le dossier. Si le porte-parole de la coalition Al-Fatah, Ahmad Al-Assadi, a reconnu qu'aucune preuve ne permettait d'impliquer Washington, pour les chefs de la MP la responsabilité américaine ne fait ainsi aucun doute.

La coalition Al-Fatah a elle-même appelé, lundi, au retrait des troupes américaines, estimant les Etats-Unis « *entièrement responsables* » de ces « *attaques sionistes* », qualifiées de « *déclaration de guerre contre l'Irak* ». Les brigades du Hez-bollah, une milice étroitement liée à l'Iran, cible

d'une attaque le 25 août, ont menacé de représailles en cas de nouvelles actions. « *Nous sommes les propriétaires de cette terre, non pas les Américains ou les Israéliens*, déclarait au Monde fin juillet Mohamed Mahi, l'un de ses porte-parole. *Nous voulons que les troupes américaines quittent l'Irak, car elles sont un danger pour notre sécurité et celle de nos voisins, surtout l'Iran. Si elles insistent pour rester, ce qui est contraire à la volonté du peuple et du gouvernement, alors nous les combattons.* »

De nouvelles attaques contre la MP pourraient donner davantage de leviers aux forces pro-iraniennes pour obtenir le retrait des troupes américaines, après plusieurs tentatives infructueuses au Parlement. Ce retrait remettrait en cause la stratégie américaine de barrage à l'influence iranienne dans la région. Il serait aussi un « *coup énorme* » porté aux efforts pour reconstruire un Irak stable et prospère après la victoire contre l'EI fin 2017, a averti mercredi l'émissaire de l'ONU en Irak, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert.