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### ROJAVA: TURKISH THREAT OF A NEW INVASION

**O**n 13 May, the commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Mazloun Abdi, welcomed the announcement made the previous evening by the US Treasury that it would lift sanctions on Syrian territories controlled by the Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria (AANES). The request had been made for months. Activities in 12 different sectors are now allowed in these areas not held by the Syrian

regime, notably in the fields of energy and health.

Conversely, the furious Turkish president warned that he could not *“accept that the United States lifts sanctions in Syrian regions held by the YPG”*. Mr Erdoğan had just announced on the 3<sup>rd</sup> his so-called *“Voluntary Return”* project according to which one million Syrian refugees currently in Turkey could return *“voluntarily”* to their country... Turkey proposes to have its *“humanitarian*

*associations”* build accommodation centres in 13 different areas of northern Syria for this purpose. These declarations coincided with the visit of the Turkish Interior Minister, Süleyman Soylu, to the west of Aleppo, where he inaugurated such a centre together with several Turkish humanitarian organisations...

The pro-AKP website *Sabah* said in a report published on the 5<sup>th</sup> that the project aims to establish

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residential complexes in the areas of Azaz, Jarablus and al-Bab in the northern and north-eastern countryside of Aleppo as well as in the areas of Tell Abyad and Ras al-Ain in the countryside of Hasaka and Raqqa, all controlled by the Turkish-allied Free Syrian Army (FSA) (*Al-Monitor*).

In fact, given the pressure currently being exerted by the Turkish authorities on Syrian refugees, returns could be anything but voluntary. And the literally apocalyptic situation of the Syrian areas currently under Turkish control gives reason for concern, if these are to serve as a model for Mr Erdoğan's project... Moreover, the idea hardly appeals to the main stakeholders. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reports that, according to its sources, "most Syrian refugees in Turkey and residents of the northern region of Syria, both displaced persons and indigenous inhabitants, express their rejection of the Turkish project". One interviewee in northern Idlib explained: "Sending one million refugees back to northern Syria will lead to a real humanitarian disaster that will affect the whole region [...], because [it] is already overcrowded and does not have the capacity to accommodate this large number of refugees". Others, who have been living in Turkey for years and have found work that allows them to send money back to their families in Syria, fear that an imposed return would destroy their fragile financial balance. Most reject the idea of "returning" to rudimentary settlements established elsewhere than in their home province, thus exchanging their refugee status for that of displaced persons...

Dozens of human rights organisations and several Kurdish parties also denounced the plan. The PYD, which dominates the AANES, said it "[calls] on the Syrian people to return to their orig-

inal regions and properties and not to the settlements established by the Turkish occupation or those established under the auspices of [Muslim Brotherhood] associations" (WKI). On the 15<sup>th</sup>, hundreds of residents under occupation bravely demonstrated against the project and denounced the "Syrian Opposition Coalition" that supports it as "traitorous" (SOHR).

A Syrian opposition leader told *Al-Monitor* on condition of anonymity: "We fear that this plan is ill-considered and will lead to counterproductive results in the northern parts of Syria, which are overcrowded after the influx of large numbers of displaced people from all parts of Syria. The question that arises in this context is: what would happen if Turkey brought in a million refugees? This would certainly exacerbate the problem [...]".

A refugee interviewed by the SOHR notes that the land of the future settlements "does not belong to the refugees, [...] but to other people. Therefore, this return will greatly contribute to changing the demography of the northern Syrian region". Behind the humanitarian veneer, this is undoubtedly one of Erdoğan's main motivations. Faced with an economic crisis in Turkey, he is killing two birds with one stone: chasing away the refugees who are denting his popularity and making the Kurds a minority in northern Syria. Here we find the logic that presided over the "reconstruction" of medieval Diyarbakir, the district of Sur – or rather its transformation into a sinister barracks.

In Sur, the ground had been, so to speak, "prepared" by the army, which had completely razed the areas concerned. Be that as it may, Mr Erdoğan completed his "humanitarian" project on the 23<sup>rd</sup> with the threat of a new Turkish military intervention in Syria that could allow

"clearing the ground". It is clearly a question of "resettling a million Syrian refugees on Kurdish lands occupied by the Turkish army".

The Turkish President said the new operation was aimed at completing the 30 km deep "security zone" planned several years ago, and would begin as soon as the army had completed its preparations. The target area stretches 458 km between Qamishli and Afrin, which implies seizing the city of Kobanê, highly symbolic for the Kurds (*Le Monde*). A year before a presidential election that looks very unfavourable for him, Mr Erdoğan also aims very clearly with this operation to revive nationalist sentiment in his favour among the Turkish electorate...

In response, Ilham Ahmed, Chairwoman of the Executive Committee of the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), the political arm of the SDF, tweeted that "the Turkish attack on the multicultural region of Tall Tamr which is inhabited by Kurds, Arabs and Assyrians is a continuation of the genocidal approach against our people. These attacks must be stopped, especially by the states that have guaranteed the ceasefire agreement" (*Rûdaw*). For Kurdish officials and commanders, Ankara keeps violating the 2019 ceasefire agreements without any reaction from the Russians and Americans, their so-called guarantors...

The day after the Turkish announcement, Washington, expressing "deep concern", warned Ankara against any new offensive in Syria that would endanger the 900 or so American soldiers still present there to fight ISIS. The Turkish president was quick to react: "We cannot fight terrorism by waiting for anyone's permission", he said, adding: "If the United States does not do its

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*duty in the fight against terrorism [...] we will do it ourselves" (AFP). On the 29<sup>th</sup>, he repeated his threats: "We will suddenly fall on them one night", before telling Vladimir Putin on the phone the next day that establishing, as foreseen in the 2019 Turkish-Russian agreement, a "terrorist-free zone" along the border was "imperative" (AFP). At the end of the month, Rojava was on high alert for the prospect of a new Turkish invasion.*

Throughout the month, the Turkish army and its auxiliaries continued and even significantly increased their harassment of the territories administered by the AANES, whereas in April, according to the SDF, they had already carried out more than 600 attacks... At the beginning of the month, they heavily shelled the north of the province of Aleppo, sending more than 100 rockets to Tell Rifaat on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. The clashes continued in the following days, with a Kurdish infiltration attempt against "National Army" positions and the death of a Turkish soldier in an attack on his vehicle. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, Turkish shelling injured 2 regime soldiers, deployed in the area in-between SDF positions.

At the other end of the border area, in Hassakeh province, Turkish rockets wounded 2 fighters in the Tell Tamr Military Council, where on the 5<sup>th</sup>, after 72 hours of relative calm, the Turks shelled civilian targets with heavy artillery, without casualties. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, several Assyrian villages were hit by rockets, again without casualties. On the 10<sup>th</sup>, the M4 highway and the surroundings of Raqqa, Hasaka and Ain-Issa were bombed again. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, two Turkish drones hit a vehicle near Kobanê, killing a civilian, and a house in the city a few minutes later. Further artillery strikes targeted regime soldiers near the city on the 13<sup>th</sup>. The same

sequence of events was repeated on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, this time targeting a pedestrian before a strike in the city.

In Manbij, a Turkish sniper killed a young man on the 3<sup>rd</sup> while Kurdish fighters announced that they had shot down a Turkish drone. On the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup>, the SOHR reported violent artillery exchanges lasting several hours between the Syrian army-backed Manbij Military Council on one side and Turkish forces and their Syrian auxiliaries on the other. Four Turkish soldiers and a girl were wounded by Syrian fire near Jerablous, while Turkish bombing caused fires in fields and wounded a woman and a child near Manbij.

On the 15<sup>th</sup>, the SOHR reported a "dramatic military escalation" by Turkish forces and the "National Army", which continued until the end of the month, with heavy shelling in the provinces of Aleppo, Raqqa and Hassaké. Hundreds of heavy artillery shells and rockets fired over 72 hours at more than 50 villages and towns caused extensive destruction to civilian property in the targeted areas, including near the M4 highway. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, villages in the Shahba area were hit by around 50 rockets. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, the Turks again shelled the villages around Tall Tamr. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, after several days of artillery exchanges, more than 20 rockets and artillery shells, fired from Azaz, hit Kurdish and regime positions in the Afrin countryside. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, a Turkish drone attacked a SDF checkpoint near Ain-Issa, injuring one fighter. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, the SOHR estimated that since the beginning of the month, Turkish attacks had targeted 57 villages, hit by hundreds of rockets or artillery shells, with almost daily strikes on dozens of villages. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, the NGO reported new strikes with more than 150 shells or rockets on 4

villages in Aleppo, with only material damage...

On 28 May, a Turkish drone flew over Tall Tamr while artillery strikes were intensified in the area. Dozens of shells fell in the centre of Abu Rasin, setting fire to a house and causing material damage. Several inhabitants of nearby Assyrian villages had to flee and one SDF member was injured. On the same day, the Turkish army again bombed villages near Kobane, while drones were flying over the area. Finally, on the 30<sup>th</sup>, a Turkish drone strike east of Qamishli killed 5 fighters and injured 3 civilians.

Another tug of war took place between the Turkish military and the inhabitants of Tadif, near Al-Bab. After 12 continuous days of sit-ins in front of the soldiers, the villagers succeeded in preventing them from digging as planned a trench separating the areas under Turkish control from those held by the regime, which would have cut their village in two... The Turkish soldiers evacuated their bulldozers, but for how long?

On the border, Turkish *Jandarma* again signalled themselves for their abuses against Syrians trying to flee the war. Since the beginning of 2022, they have already killed 12 people, including 3 children, and injured 20 others. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, they shot dead a young man in Ain-Diwar, north of Hassaké. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, they shot at shepherds in the same area and killed several sheep.

Turkey is also continuing its "Water War" against the Syrian Kurds, with increasingly serious humanitarian consequences (<https://www.syriahr.com/en/251969/>). The drop in the level of the Euphrates River threatens the irrigation of summer crops, including vegetables and cotton, particularly in Deir Ezzor. A

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local official told SOHR that four water stations had been put out of service and called on the UN and humanitarian organisations to “stop the violations committed by Turkey, which has deliberately blocked the flow of Syria’s share of water into the Euphrates”. The 1987 Syrian-Turkish agreement, according to which Syria should receive 500 m<sup>3</sup>/s, is clearly not being respected, as the flow has fallen below 400. According to the AANES Department of Agriculture, in the Hasaka and Raqqa regions, local farmers, who supply Syria with more than 90% of its bread, have already lost 80% of their harvest. The drop in water levels is increasing the pollution of the remaining water, and in the Tishrin dam, over 5m since December, it is causing electricity shortages. If it goes on, the turbines will stop completely, depriving the whole region of energy.

Turkey’s withholding of water is all the more damaging as it coincides with drought and worsening weather conditions across the Middle East, as evidenced by the sandstorm that killed at least seven displaced people in Abu Khashab camp (Deir Ezzor) in the middle of the month, including a woman and two children.

The human rights situation in Afrin remains dire, with the occupiers continuing to kidnap for ransom, steal, cut down fruit and olive trees, impose illegal taxes on all kinds of activities, and even kill. For example, it was reported earlier this month that on 30 April, members of *Al-Jabha Al-Shamiyyah* stationed at a checkpoint shot dead a young shepherd guarding sheep near their position in the village of Arab Wiran. The so-called “Sharia Courts” established by the factions only serve to give an

appearance of legality to their plundering, and civilians who are summoned to them are sometimes severely beaten. This happened in Jindires to a father and son who had filed a complaint against the *Nur Al-Din Al-Zanki* faction in an attempt to get their house back. In another case of murder at a checkpoint, this time in Bulbul, after the faction in charge of the “National Army” refused to hand over the murderers, the tribe of the deceased attacked the faction in charge with about 100 armed fighters.

Factions also continue to sell stolen property to residents. According to the SOHR, in Afrin, members of the pro-Turkish “military police” sold two houses in the Al-Ashrafiyah neighbourhood for US\$ 2,000 each, and rented shops for 400 Turkish Liras. In addition, *Ahrar Al-Sharqiyyah* set up its headquarters in a house confiscated from a civilian.

“Arrests” for “communication with Kurdish forces” or “relations with the former administration” continue – mere pretexts for kidnapping for ransom. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, a civilian imprisoned in Afrin for “participation in the self-defence forces of the former administration” was released for US\$ 1,000. The day before, a joint patrol of the “military police” and Turkish Intelligence had arrested 2 brothers for the same reason... Other “arrests” of the same nature took place until the end of the month, too numerous to be reported here...

For the inhabitants, the stress of the occupiers is compounded by the stress caused by attacks on them, which can cause collateral casualties: on the 28<sup>th</sup>, a motorbike bomb exploded in Afrin near the Turkish forces’ headquarters on the Jendires road,

injuring two people, including a policeman.

Jihadist factions occupying territories on behalf of Ankara also continued their archaeological looting. In Afrin, the “National Army” bulldozed the site of Be’r Jobana (Rajo district) in search of valuable artefacts, taking the opportunity to cut down dozens of olive and oak trees nearby. The site of Bishirak, near Maabatli, and nearby orchards were destroyed in the same way.

With regard to the jihadist organisation ISIS, after the considerable increase in the activities of its sleeper cells in April, there was some slowing down in May. This does not mean that the problem is over. The SDF has conducted several anti-ISIS operations in Deir Ezzor province this month and announced the capture of 7 jihadists, including 2 commanders.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, two Syrians escaped an assassination attempt in al-Hol camp, which remains subject to numerous escape attempts, attacks and killings. At the end of the month, security forces in al-Hol discovered in the camp the decapitated body of an Iraqi woman, the 18<sup>th</sup> murder in the camp since January.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, several French associations, including the human rights organisation *Human Rights Watch*, solemnly reiterated their appeal to France to repatriate the children and their mothers still detained in Syria as soon as possible. The signatory associations also asked to be received by the French President. AANES has been asking for this repatriation for years... At the end of the month, it handed over several Albanian women and children to a joint delegation from Albania and Kosovo.

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## TURKEY: INFLATION AT OVER 70%, THE GOVERNMENT TIGHTENS ITS CONTROL TO SILENCE CRITICS

**O**n 5<sup>th</sup> May, the Turkish Statistics Office (*Tüik*) published the inflation figures for April. At nearly 70% annually, it is at its highest rate since February 2002. And this is still the official figure: on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, independent Turkish economists calculated a figure more than twice as high, 156.86% over one year. Following the instructions of the Turkish president, who has been transformed into a “chief economist”, the Turkish Central Bank has contributed to this surge by maintaining its key rate at 14% since the end of 2021, the date on which Mr Erdoğan had already forced it to lower it from its previous 19%. As a result, the currency, which in 2021 had already fallen by 44% against the dollar, has lost a further 11% since January... (*France-24*) On the 10<sup>th</sup>, the March unemployment figures came out: it rose to 11.5%, compared with 11.1 in February, and on the 16<sup>th</sup>, the Turkish lira lost 1% against the dollar in a single day, increasing its fall to 16% since the beginning of 2022.

Despite Erdoğan’s optimistic words, promising a decline “after May”, little improvement is expected in the medium term. *Istanbul Analytics* predicts that the Turkish Central Bank’s reserves will now start to melt by approximately \$7-10 billion per month, even without monetary intervention. While Turkey imports 68% of its energy, the war in Ukraine is driving up both gas and oil prices, pushing up all production costs. Moreover, Ankara also imports 78% of its wheat from Ukraine (*Reuters*).

The population is overwhelmed by the increases that are piling up on all sides: +260% for meat,

+97% for electricity, +70% for rents, +60% for gas... with consequences on the popularity of the president. According to the latest *MetroPOLL* poll, dated April and published on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May, if the elections were held now, the AKP would get only 25.2% of the votes. This rate rises to 32.1% if the votes of the voters declaring themselves “undecided” are distributed. The poll explores various scenarios, with the conclusion that the CHP (Republican People’s Party, Kemalist) mayor of Ankara, Mansur Yavaş, if opposed to Erdoğan, could beat him, but the Kurdish votes then appear decisive in this regard. The next poll, conducted in May by *Yöneylem* and published on the 15<sup>th</sup>, is even harsher: the incumbent president would be defeated by any opposition candidate, as the question asked of the respondents did not specify the identity of the latter... (*Bianet*)

It is in this context of a popularity deficit that we can understand Erdoğan’s gesticulations about a new invasion of Rojava, the plan to return Syrian refugees to their country, or his opposition to Sweden and Finland joining NATO: everything is good for stirring up the patriotic fibre of voters... and reaping the benefits. As a victim of the crisis, public opinion is increasingly turning against refugees, estimated at 3.7 million on Turkish soil. Part of the opposition is now trying to pull the rug out from under the president by accusing him of not doing enough to drive them out. Thus Kemal Kilicdarođlu, the leader of the CHP, tweeted: “*Fugitives continue to pour in from the border. [...] We are fed up with your lies*”. The unfortunate Syrian refugees are thus blamed for the president’s economic mistakes.

Another aspect of this policy of hatred is the designation by the government of an internal enemy: as always, it is the Kurds and the HDP who play this role...

Already on 1<sup>st</sup> of May, Labour Day, hundreds of Kurds defied the government by gathering in Diyarbakir for a street meeting in the presence of several HDP leaders. In Istanbul, a similar demonstration was attacked by the police, who arrested at least 160 participants. In addition, earlier this month, former HDP MP Hilal Aksoy was sentenced to one year in prison for calling the Kurds killed by the Turkish government “our martyrs” during a speech in 2009. The case had originally been quickly dismissed but was reopened last year by a pro-AKP prosecutor... (*WKI*)

On the 5<sup>th</sup>, incidents took place in front of the HDP office in Ankara after 3 members of the *Diyarbakir Anneleri* (“Mothers of Diyarbakir”) laid a funeral wreath there. These are families, largely supported by the government, who accuse the HDP of being responsible for the disappearance of their children, “kidnapped” to fight with the guerrillas: the aim is to give credence to the government’s discourse according to which the HDP and the PKK are one and the same thing... After the departure of the protesters, the police, who had guided and protected them, blocked access to the office and, when the HDP cadres protested, attacked them. One of them, lawyer Yunus Emre Şahan, had to be briefly hospitalised after a blow to the head. A police officer threatened to shoot HDP MP Ayşe Acar-Başaran, who was trying to make a statement to the press, with his gun. Police

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attacked HDP members again in the afternoon. Eight people were arrested during these incidents and released the next day. HDP Foreign Affairs Committee co-spokespersons Feleknaş Uca and Hişyar Özsoy denounced the provocations, saying they expected them to increase, as in previous pre-election periods. The day before, they had already issued a statement denouncing the recent wave of illegal imprisonments using the “Kobanê trial” as a pretext to criminalise the HDP in order to get it banned (*Bianet*). These events led to demonstrations by Kurdish and feminist organisations in several Kurdish cities across the country.

On the same day, a well-known pro-AKP cleric, Ahmet Mahmut Ünlü, also known as Cübbeli Ahmet Hoca, called in a *Youtube* video to “destroy” the HDP and deprive its supporters of their Turkish citizenship. He accused voters choosing the HDP of “supporting the PKK” and, for good measure, the HDP of “working for the Jews”...

On the 8<sup>th</sup>, the HDP Women’s Assembly once again denounced the cruelty of keeping in a cell former MP Aysel Tuđluk, who is suffering from dementia and is now unable to perform daily life gestures by herself. But a new scandal sparked outrage, when on the 12<sup>th</sup> HDP MP Gülistan KÝlýç-Koçyiđit denounced before the Parliament’s Human Rights Inquiry Committee the non-release of Kurdish prisoner Dilan Oynaş, who had nevertheless served her sentence. After inquiring, it revealed that “four other prisoners in Sincan Prison [...], *Berrin Sarý, Haným Ýýldýrým, Jiyan Ateş and Rojdan Erez, were not released based on a decision of the Executive Supervision of the Prison Board*”. In fact, according to data obtained from the Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD) by KÝlýç-Koçyiđit, following the promul-

gation on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 of a new prison regulation, as of February 2022, at least 166 prisoners at the end of their sentences had not been released!

Beyond the HDP, all voices that could be an obstacle to the government are targeted. For example, on 12 May 2022, the Supreme Court of Appeal upheld the 4-year and 11-month prison sentence imposed on Canan Kaftancıođlu, the CHP’s provincial chairperson for Istanbul. The court approved three different sentences against her for “insulting an official”, “explicitly degrading the Turkish Republic” and “insulting the President”. The ruling smacks of revenge: Kaftancıođlu was head of the Istanbul CHP when it ousted the AKP in the 2019 municipal elections... The HDP has taken a stand against the conviction – which is far from always the case with the CHP when it is the HDP that is targeted...

On the 19<sup>th</sup>, police arrested 13 members of the HDP and the Youth Assembly in Diyarbakir, Urfa and Mardin. In Istanbul, several participants in an HDP rally against the Turkish invasion of Iraqî Kurdistan were also arrested. The government is also pursuing its “war on the dead”, as shown by the raid launched on the 24<sup>th</sup> by the Diyarbakir police on the home of the mother of the guerrilla fighter Agit Ipek, whose remains had been sent back to her by post. The previous week, police had already attacked participants in the funeral of Kurdish activist Aysel Dođan, who died in exile in Germany at the age of 69, and whose remains had been sent back to Turkey for burial. Several people, including women, were arrested (WKI).

In the face of these constant attacks, the HDP does not allow itself to be intimidated and con-

tinues its activities with courage, denouncing in particular the aberrant economic policy of the government. On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, it issued a statement condemning the military operation in Iraq against the Yezidis. When Erdoğan launched his threats of a new invasion of Rojava, HDP co-chair Pervin Buldan immediately made the party’s opposition known, quipping “*They are preparing to run their election campaign with tanks*” (WKI).

It is also worth mentioning the despicable use of the judiciary by the authorities in the case of the murder of the young HDP activist Deniz Poyraz by a Turkish fascist on 17 June 2021. After the father of the murdered young woman, Abdülillah, said in an interview: “*The Kurdish people are under pressure and whatever identity is oppressed, one should always oppose oppression*”, the government launched a case against him at the end of May for “*propaganda for a terrorist organisation*”.

Alongside the political and judicial attacks, cultural discrimination against the Kurds continues to grow.

If on the 5<sup>th</sup>, the Department of Religious Affairs had to add Kurmancî and Zazakî to the explanatory panels of the great mosque of Diyarbakir, which originally included English, Turkish, Arabic and even Russian, but not these two local languages, the authorities continue to regularly prohibit concerts in Kurdish throughout the country. The website *Bianet* has documented this and concluded that there have been dozens of bans in the last 3 years (<https://bianet.org/english/discrimination/262018-dozens-of-kurdish-concerts-plays-banned-in-turkey-in-three-years>), and that artists are now having difficulty finding venues to hold events. Throughout May, con-



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certs by musicians Aynur Doğan, Metin-Kemal Kahraman, Apolas Lermi, Niyazi Koyuncu and Burhan Peşen were cancelled. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, the AKP municipality of Derince (Kocaeli) cancelled Aynur Doğan's concert, scheduled for the 20<sup>th</sup>, as "inappropriate", without explaining what it meant by this. The singer had taken a stand for the Gezi protests. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, the rector of the *Middle East Technical University (METU)* in Ankara cancelled all the concerts scheduled for the evening of the 34<sup>th</sup> International Festival, citing the death of Turkish soldiers in Iraq as the reason. In Bursa, the governor's office banned the concert of Kurdish musician Mem Ararat (scheduled for the 29<sup>th</sup>) on the

26<sup>th</sup> for "public security reasons". The concert that musician Melek Mosso was to give in Isparta as part of the International Rose Festival was also banned. Two associations had campaigned on social networks against concerts "opposed to the morals and beliefs of society".

In addition, in Istanbul, Kurdish bard (*dengbêj*) Xalîde, one of the musicians of the *Mezopotamya Cultural Centre*, was beaten by police at her home and taken into custody. Special forces raided her flat as part of an "investigation", damaged a saz and beat her with their fists.

Internationally, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)

on the 31<sup>st</sup> condemned Turkey for the 2017 pre-trial detention "without plausible reasons" of the President of the Turkish branch of *Amnesty International*, Taner Kiliç. The ruling was made by a unanimous decision of the 7 judges, including a Turkish judge. After several prolonged pre-trial detentions, Kiliç was sentenced in the summer of 2020 to 6 years and 3 months in prison for "belonging to a terrorist organisation", allegedly the Gulenist "FETÖ"... After the ECHR ruling, *Amnesty International* immediately called on Turkey to "overturn the unjust and unfounded conviction of Taner Kiliç, who faces an additional two and a half years in prison if his sentence is confirmed" (*Le Monde*).

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## IRAQ: POLITICAL DEADLOCK PERSISTS, NEW ROCKET ATTACKS ON KURDISTAN OIL FACILITIES

**I**raq is still without a president or a government. The various political forces represented in the Baghdad parliament have not managed to reach an agreement, and each of the main communities making up the country's population is itself divided.

The parliament is divided into three parts: two rival blocs, plus independent MPs. The blocs are the "Salvation of the Homeland" (*Inqadh al-Watan*) alliance and the pro-Iranian "Coordination Framework". The first alliance, with 155 MPs, includes the Shiite supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Sunni "Alliance for Sovereignty" of Mohammad al-Halboussi. On the other side, the "Coordination Framework", with 83 elected members, mainly gathers the Coalition for the Rule of Law of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, the *Fatah Alliance*, a front for several militias of the Popular Mobilisation

Units (*Hashd al-Shaabi*), some Sunni deputies and the historical ally-adversary of the KDP, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) (*Al-Monitor*).

The two Kurdish parties – and thus the two alliances to which they belong – are opposed to each other over the choice of the Iraqi president, whose designation by the parliament is the prerequisite for the formation of a new government. The PUK supports the incumbent Barham Salih, while the KDP, for the first time, opposes its own candidate, Reber Ahmad.

Since 2005, the President, by tacit consensus a Kurd, was chosen by agreement between Kurdish parties, and the Prime Minister, a Shiite, similarly by agreement between Shiite parties. The KDP and PUK shared the posts, with the PUK taking the post of Iraqi President and the KDP taking the post of President of the Kurdistan Region. The PUK-PDK opposition for the presiden-

cy and the intra-Shiite divisions exploded this agreement, and since the last legislative elections, neither side has enough deputies (two-thirds of the 329 deputies are needed) to obtain the designation of its candidate for the presidency of the country.

After three successive failures, Sadr finally gave the "Coordination Framework" 40 days – until 8 May – to form a government. The latter failed to do so. Sadr then launched a new initiative, this time calling on independent members of parliament to try to form a government that the Alliance would support, giving them until 19 May to do so. Again, the attempt failed, with only 202 independents attending the session to nominate the president. The intra-Shiite division, which seems to be set in stone, with 73 "Sadrists" on one side and about 60 "pro-Iranians" on the other, does not allow for a quick resolution of the deadlock. But Sadr persists: even though his alliance does not have the necessary majority in

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parliament, he wants a majority government, unlike the national unity governments that have led the country since 2005. At the end of May, the situation remained blocked...

However, the last weeks of the month have seen some progress at the Kurdish level. Regional President Nechirvan Barzani (KDP) went to Suleimaniyeh in an effort to restore dialogue with the PUK and unblock the situation regarding the country's presidency. He met with all parties except *New Generation*. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, the KDP and PUK ended months of non-communication by meeting in Erbil. The two parties subsequently issued a joint statement stressing "the importance of dialogue" and announced further meetings. The establishment of a joint committee to try to resolve disagreements was also announced.

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, the United Nations Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) invited 6 Kurdish parties to a closed meeting in its premises in Erbil. Bafel Talabani (UPK), Fazil Mirani (PDK), Ali Bapir (Kurdistan Justice Group, Islamist), Salahadin Babakir (*Yekgirtû* Islamic League), Badria Rashid (*New Generation*), Omar Said Ali (Goran), took part in the meeting, in particular to discuss inter-party dialogue and the next elections in Kurdistan, scheduled for next 1<sup>st</sup> October (*UNAMI*)

Among the announcements that followed Nechirvan Barzani's visit to Suleimaniyeh was that of bilateral discussions to ensure unity against the Iraqi Federal Court ruling of unconstitutionality of the Kurdistan oil law. The oil issue, while the stalemate over the formation of the new government has taken it out of the spotlight somewhat, remains unresolved. Discussions in April between a KRG delegation and the Federal Ministry of Oil failed to reach an agreement and in early May, Iraqi Oil Minister Ihsan Abduljabbar Ismail threatened to implement

the Court's decision. The KRG counter-attacked the following week by accusing the Iraqi *North Oil Company's* (NOC) of operating illegally in Iraqi Kurdistan for years.

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, the Kurdistan Legal Council issued a statement in which it considered that the law in question was in conformity with the Iraqi Constitution: "*The Oil and Gas Law No. 22 (of 2007) issued by the Kurdistan Regional Parliament does not violate the provisions of the Constitution, and the implementation of its provisions should be pursued because the oil and gas issue does not fall under the exclusive competence of the federal authorities*". This conclusion is based on Articles 110 and 112 of the Constitution, in particular 112, which places "*present deposits*" under federal responsibility. This is in line with the KRG's interpretation that it is plausibly entitled to control all fields discovered after 2005, the time when the Constitution was adopted. This interpretation is obviously not that of the Iraqi National Oil Company...

In addition, Kurdistan has been the target of several attacks on its oil installations this month: on 1<sup>st</sup> of May, six Katyusha rockets targeted the Kawergosk refinery, near Khabat, two of which caused "minor damage", including the burning of one of the main storage tanks, which was quickly brought under control. The fire came from the province of Nineveh (Mosul), from the area of Hamdaniya where pro-Iranian militias of the *Hashd al-Shaabi* are present. Kawergosk had already suffered such shots on 6 April which had not caused any casualties or damage (*AFP*). It should be noted that the refinery belongs to the Kurdish oil company *Kar Group*, headed by Baz Karim Barzinji, whose home in Erbil was hit by a salvo of Iranian missiles on 13 March...

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the "Iraqi Resistance Coordination Committee" threat-

ened further attacks on the KRG, which it accused of training "*foreign and domestic anti-Iranian elements*" under "*clear Zionist influence*" on its soil. Formed in October 2020, the committee includes most of the Iranian-backed Shiite armed militias that have carried out rocket and drone attacks on coalition bases, government offices and energy facilities in Kurdistan. The Kurdistan Region Security Council (KRSC) responded the next day by declaring: "*Any aggressor against the Kurdistan Region, a constitutionally recognised Iraqi entity, will pay a high price*", and reiterating that it is the responsibility of the federal government to "*protect the sovereignty of Iraq and put an end to this aggression and unrest*" (*Kurdistan-24*).

Another source of tension between Erbil and Baghdad is the daily violence in the disputed territories. In addition to the terrorist actions of ISIS, which have fortunately decreased somewhat this month, there have been clashes in Sindjar between the Iraqi army and local Yezidi militias of the PKK persuasion, as well as numerous air strikes and ground operations by the Turkish army against this party.

In the first week of the month, the peshmerga repelled 2 attacks by ISIS jihadists near the Qarachokh Mountains in Makhmur. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, in a joint operation between the Peshmerga and the Iraqi military, with the support of the anti-ISIS coalition, an Iraqi air strike killed 6 suspected jihadists and destroyed several weapons caches in the same area. The peshmerga also killed two jihadists on the ground during the operation (*Kurdistan-24*). In another joint Kurdish-Iraqi operation, a peshmerga was injured by an IED near Tuz Khurmatu (*WKI*). However, at the end of the month, many Kurdish villages in Makhmour district remained empty of inhabitants, some of them abandoned for five years. A local resident told *Rûdaw*: "*There are 38 villages in the*

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*Qaraj area. They are empty*". In addition, jihadists launched two attacks on the evening of 23 May in the south of Kirkuk province and in Diyala, killing 10 people and wounding 6. In Daquq, fires targeted the fields of several Kurdish farmers. In Tuz Khurmatu, jihadists murdered 6 farmers working in their fields.

In Sindjar, the Iraqi army, which had brought in troops and armoured vehicles at the end of April, clashed violently on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> May with the "Sindjar Resistance Units" (YBŞ) in the Sinuni district. Baghdad is trying to implement the agreement reached with Erbil in October 2020, which provides for the evacuation of any non-governmental armed forces. According to an Iraqi source, one Iraqi soldier and 13 Yezidi fighters were killed, but more importantly, the fighting has forced many Yezidis to flee the district, to the point that UNAMI has expressed "concern" (WKI). By the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the fighting had already caused more than 4,000 displaced people to return to the Dohuk province of the Kurdistan Region, where many of them had been living in camps since 2014. By the 5<sup>th</sup>, the number had risen to over 10,000. Many of the newly displaced had only returned to Sindh in 2020. After years spent in camps, they have had to return, overloading them while conditions are already very harsh (AFP). One of the displaced from Chamisko camp, which has a population of more than 22,000, said:

*"If we are not guaranteed security and stability, this time we will not return to Sinjar. We can't go back and be displaced every time. [...] If the Hashd, the PKK and the army stay in the area, people will be afraid and no one will return"* (L'Express).

The local situation is very complex, with the presence of Iraqi troops, the YBŞ and several militias affiliated to them, such as the *Ezidjan Asayish*, *Hashd al-Shaabi* militias, which are mainly Shiite, but also include Yezidi units, peshmerga units composed of Yezidis, etc. (Al-Monitor). Many observers see Turkish pressure behind the latest Iraqi operations in this sector. Ankara regularly strikes Sindjar and declares just as regularly that it will not let it become "a second Qandil". For Turkey, eliminating pro-PKK elements from Sindjar is a strategic objective to isolate Qandil from Rojava...

At the end of the month, Turkish operations against the PKK intensified throughout northern Iraq, and were marked by the death of both Iraqi civilians and Turkish soldiers. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, according to local officials interviewed by AFP, at least 6 people, including 3 civilians, were killed in two separate areas by drone strikes blamed on Turkey. The first strike in the morning targeted the Chamchamal district, west of Suleimaniyeh. It appears that civilians were targeted as they tried to rescue fighters who had been seriously wounded by the first strike. The second strike, in the afternoon,

killed a resident of the Makhmour refugee camp, although it is theoretically under the protection of the United Nations... On the 24<sup>th</sup>, the Turkish Ministry of Defence announced the death of 3 soldiers in Iraq, without specifying the place of their death (AFP). On the same day, a restaurant owner from Kurdistan in Turkey who had been living in Suleimaniyeh for more than 10 years was shot dead by two unknown gunmen. Zaki Chalabi was known for his defence of the rights of Kurds in Turkey. In Dohuk province, several villages near Amedi were attacked by helicopters and ground troops (WKI). On the 25<sup>th</sup> again, 5 Turkish soldiers died and 2 were injured in northern Iraq. According to the *Anadolu* Agency, they were shot at by PKK fighters in a cave. Another Ankara soldier was killed the next day, while two children were killed in rocket fire on orchards near Bamarni, not far from a Turkish military base. The Kurdish anti-terrorist services blamed the PKK for the shooting, which it denied (AFP), but a local leader told the *Rûdaw* channel that soldiers at the nearby base had responded to a PKK attack by "bombing the crowd and our families".

On the 29<sup>th</sup>, Turkish warplanes also carried out at least 12 air strikes near the village of Hiror. With the death of another Turkish soldier that same day in a homemade bomb explosion as his vehicle passed by, and two others on the 30<sup>th</sup>, the Ankara army has lost eight men in five days.

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## IRAN: BREAD PRICES INCREASE FIVEFOLD, MASSIVE PROTESTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

**I**ran has been rocked this month by major "bread protests". In three weeks, the price of a kilo of bread has increased fivefold, from 25,000 rials (€0.10) to around 125,000 rials (€0.48) (*Middle East Eye*). The reason: the Raisi

government's decision to put an end to import subsidies for wheat and flour, which until then had benefited from a preferential exchange rate against the dollar (42,000 rials, the country's official rate, instead of the real rate of 300,000 rials). This measure was

bound to provoke strong reactions in a country where nearly half of the 85 million inhabitants live below the poverty line. At the same time, on the 10<sup>th</sup>, the prices of four basic products, chicken, eggs, oil and dairy products also rose sharply.

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The protests started on 6 May in Khuzestan and then spread to the whole country. It should also be noted that they did not only affect the big cities, but also all rural areas. An Iranian sociologist, testifying anonymously for fear of reprisals, told *Middle East Eye*: “People living in Tehran and the big cities can still endure economic hardship, but in the villages and small towns it is impossible to earn more to cope with these new difficulties”.

If the US sanctions and the war in Ukraine explain part of the country’s difficulties, Iranians know that other important reasons for their suffering are the government’s mismanagement and widespread corruption, and its policy of regional military intervention (Syria, Iraq, Lebanon etc.), financed at their expense. The reformist daily *Shargh* accused the government of manipulating market prices: “Officials claim that the current situation is related to the war between Russia and Ukraine. However, everyone is aware that years of government intervention in the market have caused the current food shortage and price hike” (*Middle East Eye*). Even the economist Hossain Raghfar, close to the regime, described the measure as “a new episode in the looting of the Iranian economy that the government is carrying out to compensate for the budget deficit”... (NCRI) Finally, the abolition of the preferential exchange rate will have allowed “insiders” close to the regime to make juicy profits by importing at the old price before reselling at the new one...

As in 2019, when the tripling of the price of fuel had sent many Iranians into the streets, the security forces, police and Revolutionary Guards (*pasdaran*) responded with violence, tear gas, gunfire and mass arrests. And as in 2019, the demonstrations quickly became politicised, with protesters calling for the end of the Islamic Republic and the resignation of Raisi and reviling the Supreme Leader. In

Tehran, dozens of bus drivers stopped work for several days (*HRANA*).

The regime also resumed its old method of cutting off the means of communication, mobile telephony, Internet and social networks. Then, on the 20<sup>th</sup>, faced with the scale of the mobilisations, it resorted to using its supporters to organise its own demonstrations. The state media, which had until then been at pains to play down the protests, obviously covered and supported this massive propaganda operation. Thousands of participants, including 50,000 *pasdaran* and *Bassij* militiamen, gathered outside the capital chanting “Death to America” or “Death to Israel”, and *pasdaran* commander Hossein Salami declared live: “Our enemies mistakenly thought that the Iranian people would be receptive [...] to the lies they tell” (*Reuters*).

But on the same day, the Iranian president, who had come to the Kurdish cities of Mahabad and Urumeh, was welcomed by a boycott of the inhabitants, who preferred to stay at home (*WKI*).

In Kurdistan, *Etelaat* (Intelligence) agents threatened dozens of Kurdish activists to dissuade them from demonstrating or posting information on social media about the price hikes. Dozens of activists were arrested, such as Shabaan Mohammadi in Marivan, Farhad Mirazee in Kermanshah, Ali Salihi in Sanandaj, and Narmin Abadi (61) in Bokoan (*WKI*). The regime has also deployed additional troops in several cities to deal with possible demonstrations. The popular Kurdish footballer Voria Ghafouri, who dared to criticise the regime’s inability to address poor living conditions, was banned from public television, prompting protests by thousands of football fans (*WKI*).

On the 25<sup>th</sup>, the “Human Rights Activists News Agency” (*HRANA*) published a report on the demon-

strations and their repression. Following calls for demonstrations, which have become viral on social networks, the demonstrations, which started in Khuzestan, have affected more than 31 cities and 10 provinces in 3 weeks, leading to hundreds of arrests and dozens of deaths and injuries, starting with at least thirty in Khuzestan. 53 protest rallies were held, but 45 others were aborted in the face of the massive presence of the repressive forces. Finally, *HRANA* says: “During these demonstrations, on at least 22 occasions in 14 cities, police and security forces used tear gas, warning shots, pellet guns and, in some cases, heavy weapons against demonstrators [...] In eight cities, security forces fired directly at the crowd”. By the 25<sup>th</sup>, there were at least 449 arrests and 6 deaths. On the same day, the Centre for Cooperation of Kurdish Parties in Iran (CCIKP) called for the creation of a “unified coordination structure” to continue the action.

Having acted as a kind of scout ahead of these massive demonstrations, teachers had started their own protests in April, and naturally joined the movement. As early as 1<sup>st</sup> of May, on the call of the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers’ Professional Associations, they gathered in front of the Ministry of Education in Tehran. The massive presence of security forces eventually forced them to hold several rallies in parks around the capital. On the 5<sup>th</sup>, a group of teachers from the Sanandaj and Mariwan unions held demonstrations on the day of the Education Minister’s visit to Sanandaj, demanding among other things the release of detained teachers Eskandar Lotfi and Masoud Nikkhah. On the 31<sup>st</sup>, a group of Sanandaj teachers gathered in front of the Ministry of Education to demand the release of the imprisoned teachers (*HRANA*).

Kurdish farmers also demonstrat-

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ed. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, they protested in Sheykh Taqqeh (Kordestan) against the plan to build a factory on their land, even though the former *Zagros Steel* factory is already there: “*It is already equipped with gas and water and is near the railway. We wonder why they want to build the factory on our farmland*”. In Sarpole Zahab (Kermanshah), a group of farmers gathered on the 19<sup>th</sup> in front of the Ministry of Agriculture office to protest against the poor quality of the seeds they received. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, they demonstrated in Khorramabad (Lorestan) to demand their irrigation water allocation: the disastrous effects of the current drought are compounded by the catastrophic management of water infrastructures due to the incompetence and corruption of officials (HRANA). In general, the corruption, demagoguery and incompetence of the Islamic regime’s leaders were revealed during these protests.

Besides, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) denounced the regime’s attempts to change the demography of the Kurdish areas, mainly by changing the administrative boundaries of several Kurdish villages in the districts of Mahabad and Bokoan to the Azeri-majority city of Miandoab... (WKI)

Despite the scale of the economic crisis, which is hitting particularly hard the Kurdish regions, which have been abandoned by the regime, the repressive forces have continued their systematic assassinations of cross-border carriers (*kolbars*) in the mountains of Kurdistan. The *Kurdish Human Rights Network* (KHRN) reported on 2<sup>nd</sup> of May that in Nowsud (Kermanshah), a porter from Paveh, father of two, was shot dead on 30<sup>th</sup> April by border guards, who reportedly fired on his group at point-blank range without warning, injuring five other members. According to KHRN, in the last three weeks of April, 2 *kolbars* were killed and at least 31 injured... In the middle of

the month, at least 8 porters were targeted and injured near Marivan and Nowsud. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, two more were injured in Hawraman and Nowsud, and on the 28<sup>th</sup>, another *kolbar* was killed in Baneh. Finally, the *Pasdaran* killed an Iraqi *kolbar* near Piranshahr.

Concerning the sentences, especially the death penalty, *Human Rights Activists in Iran* (HRA) reports in its latest report that at least 299 executions were carried out between 1<sup>st</sup> of January and 20 December 2021, including 4 minors. In the same period, 85 death sentences were passed. Over 88% of executions are not publicly announced (HRANA).

In anticipation of 1<sup>st</sup> of May, the security forces arrested in advance about ten activists in Baneh and Saqez, threatening others to dissuade them from any activity on this symbolic day (WKI). Furthermore, on 1<sup>st</sup> of May, the police attacked the rally we mentioned before in front of the Ministry of Education office in Marivan, making several arrests, including 3 Kurdish teachers, Shabaan Mohamadi, Eskandar Lotfi and Massoud Nikekha. They immediately started a hunger strike (HRANA).

On the 4<sup>th</sup>, a resident of Urmia was arrested for protesting by writing slogans on the wall of the intelligence office (!) and setting his own car on fire. A video showing a security guard pointing a gun at him went viral on social media (HRANA).

On the 9<sup>th</sup>, dozens of teachers gathered in front of the Education Office in Marivan in support of their imprisoned colleagues. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, in response to a call by the Coordinating Council of the Iranian Teachers’ Union, retired and active teachers from dozens of cities demonstrated in front of the Ministry of Education in several cities and in front of the Iranian Parliament in Tehran. Dozens of

them were arrested. According to information obtained by HRANA, many people other than teachers also joined the protests.

In Sanandaj, the brother of Kurdish activist Ramin Panahi, who was executed in 2018, Afshin Panahi, was sentenced to one year in prison for cooperation with the Kurdish exile party Komala. The same court also sentenced seven members of the Kurdish Revival Charity to prison for “forming illegal groups”. Meanwhile, several residents of Sanandaj, Kermanshah, Paveh and Malekshahi were arrested for protesting against price hikes. In Ouroumieh, an activist named Nakhshen Ahmed was sentenced to three months in prison for “cooperating with a Kurdish party”, and in Sanandaj, an environmental activist received six months for the same charge (WKI).

Finally, on the 31<sup>st</sup>, teacher trade unionist Majid Karimi was arrested in Sanandaj and held incommunicado. He was apprehended by the *pasdaran* when he came in front of their office with several other people to ask for information about the situation of Masoud Farhikhteh, another detained teacher unionist (HRANA).

On the 25<sup>th</sup>, a political prisoner named Siawesh Bahrami was found dead in his siblings’ house only hours after being released in Paveh. His relatives suspect that he was poisoned by the authorities before being released, although the coroner suggested it was a heart attack (WKI).

To the chapter on arrests, we must add those of several foreign or binational nationals, which allow Iran to exercise a real “judicial blackmail” on their country of origin, for example for the Iranian-Swedish academic Ahmad Reza Jalali. Professor Jalali, who has lived in Sweden since 2009, came to Iran in May 2016 at the invitation of Tehran University. He was

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arrested and accused of “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) because of “espionage activities for Israel”, which he has always fiercely denied, and was sentenced to death in 2017. Iran accused him of having provided the Mossad, the Israeli secret service, with information that allowed the assassination of two Iranian nuclear scientists. On the 4<sup>th</sup>, the ISNA agency reported that his execution had been set for the 21<sup>st</sup>. This announcement raised concerns that the regime intended to use the case to force Stockholm to release Hamid Nouri: this Iranian official is on trial in Sweden for “crimes against humanity” for his suspected involvement in the mass executions of political prisoners in 1988. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Jalali’s wife, who remained in Sweden, said the scheduled execution had not taken place, and his lawyers said they

had requested a retrial a few days earlier.

Other arrests of foreign nationals have taken place this month. On the 6<sup>th</sup>, a Swedish tourist who had come to Iran on an organised tour was arrested as he was about to leave the country. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence announced the arrest of 2 other European nationals, without giving details, also for espionage, adding that they were in contact with the Coordinating Council of the Iranian Teachers’ Professional Association. On the 13<sup>th</sup> they were identified as Cécile Kohler, a French teacher trade unionist, and her husband. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs called for their immediate release (*HRANA*).

In addition, the Iranian regime continues its practice of state ter-

rorism abroad: on the 11<sup>th</sup>, it launched new attacks with drones, rockets and artillery against bases of the Kurdish opposition in exile in Iraqi Kurdistan. Also in Iraqi Kurdistan, the head of the Sangaser (Suleimaniyeh) sub-district, Nehro Abdullah, said that Iranian forces had arrested seven Kurdish civilians on the Iraqi side of the border, near the Qandil mountains (*WKI*).

Finally, on the 30<sup>th</sup>, international tensions with Tehran were raised a notch when the *Pasdaran* naval forces boarded two Greek-flagged oil tankers leaving Basra, Iraq. This was in retaliation for the seizure by the Greek authorities a month earlier of a cargo of Iranian oil initially transported by a Russian ship, which was quickly transferred in an unclear manner to the Iranian flag... (*Le Monde*).

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## NATO: ERDOĞAN UNWITTINGLY PUTS KURDISH AND DEMOCRACY ISSUES AT THE HEART OF ENLARGEMENT

**A**fter the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Finland and Sweden decided to break with a policy of neutrality dating back more than half a century in the case of Finland, and several centuries in the case of Sweden, by applying for NATO membership.

However, an unexpected obstacle to this accession, motivated by concern about Russia, has arisen: the opposition of Turkish President Erdoğan. On 18 May, after the two countries had submitted their formal application for membership, a first meeting of ambassadors to NATO, which was supposed to launch the process immediately, was blocked by the Turkish refusal: Ankara demanded that the Alliance first take into account its security concerns. Finland and especially Sweden must put an end to what Mr Erdoğan calls “support for terrorist

organisations” in their countries, mainly the PKK.

Ankara’s second demand: the lifting of export bans on certain arms sales to Turkey – also due to hostility against the Kurds, this time from Syria, since these embargoes were decided in retaliation for the Turkish attack on Rojava in October 2019 (*New York Times*).

The Kurdish question is thus at the centre of the difficulties – and as always at the centre of relations between Turkey and the West.

Concretely, Mr Erdoğan is asking Sweden and Finland to accept the extradition of some 30 people, which has been refused so far, in particular 6 suspected PKK members from Finland and 11 from Sweden. In front of the Turkish parliament he said: “You will not hand over the terrorists but you want to join NATO. We cannot say yes to a

security organisation that is devoid of security”. Moreover, adding to the picture the Turkish President’s “other main enemy”, the preacher Fethullah Gülen, exiled in the United States since 1999, whom Ankara accuses of the 2016 coup attempt, Turkey is requesting the extradition of a total of 12 refugees in Finland and 21 in Sweden.

While NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has said he hopes for a swift conclusion, the fact that membership must be ratified unanimously gives Turkey undeniable leverage to slow or even halt the process. The *Guardian* notes: “No one doubts that Erdoğan’s intervention could put Nato in trouble over this for months”.

Erdoğan blames Sweden in particular, for allowing activities to take place on its soil during which the Kurdish community, which is very large (100,000 people) and well

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organised in that country, unfurls banners bearing pro-PKK slogans and flags and portraits of Öcalan. Stockholm, whose anti-terrorism laws have nothing to do with those in Turkey, can hardly change them – let alone change its culture regarding freedom of assembly and expression. But Kurds in the country are no less worried. In 2009, Erdoğan said he would not allow Anders Fogh Rasmussen to become NATO Secretary General if Denmark did not shut down the pro-PKK satellite TV broadcasting from its soil. Rasmussen did take up his post, but a year later the TV station closed down... Are we in danger of such a backroom deal on the backs of the Kurds?

The Turkish President then extended his anathema to other countries. After declaring on the 19<sup>th</sup> that “Sweden [...] is a hotbed of terror, an absolute nest of terrorists”, seeming less severe towards Finland, he went on to denounce “Germany, France and Greece”, which had “welcomed members of the Fetö [Fethullah Gülen] terrorist organisation in their homes”. After the visit of Swedish and Finnish delegations to Ankara on the 25<sup>th</sup> and a meeting that lasted 5 hours, Presidency spokesman Ibrahim Kalın said that nothing could move forward without “concrete measures and with a defined timetable”. On the 31<sup>st</sup>, Ankara summoned the French and German ambassadors to protest against activities organised in these two countries by Kurdish groups.

The Turkish president’s inflexibility could be counterproductive,

especially vis-à-vis a number of US senators who were already very wary of Ankara after the purchase of the Russian S-400 defence system and the 2019 attack on Rojava. In *The National Interest*, David L. Phillips points out the hidden reasons for Erdoğan’s position: his very bad domestic political situation, his economic ties with Moscow (which caused his refusal to apply sanctions against Russia). Moreover, notes the *Washington Post*, before the parliamentary elections scheduled in Sweden next September, there is little chance that any of the parties involved will want to display what might look like a submission to Erdoğan’s demands... As for Finland, which is home to a very small Kurdish community (15,000 people), its Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto noted that “anti-democratic practices, such as oppression and blackmail” are not suitable for “an alliance of democratic countries”...

Finally, if we are to mention the support given to terrorist groups by certain countries that are already members of NATO, then it is impossible to ignore the period during which jihadists were able to use the “Turkish highway” to travel from Syria to Europe without any problems in order to carry out attacks.

In the columns of *Haaretz*, Akil Marceau, former director of the Representative Office of Iraqi Kurdistan in France and a Frenchman from Rojava, compares the regimes established by “Sultan” Erdoğan in Turkey and by “Tsar” Putin in Russia. Then he recalls some of the personalities

that Mr. Erdoğan has in turn accused of “terrorism”: Zuhale Demir, the current Minister of Justice of the Flanders region in Belgium, the American pastor Andrew Brunson, to whom one can add many Turkish journalists – and the human rights defender Osman Kavala... He concludes: “Why should the Nordic countries, which are far ahead of the other major European democracies, such as Britain and France, in human rights, gender equality and feminism, debase themselves by trying to convince the authoritarian Islamo-fascist Turkish regime?”.

In Sweden, left-wing MP of Kurdish origin Amineh Kakabaveh told AFP that “accelerating NATO membership” should not lead to “weakening democracy”. *Le Monde* reports that on the 25<sup>th</sup>, seventeen personalities, including the presidents of the writers’, playwrights’ and journalists’ unions as well as representatives of Reporters Without Borders and the Pen association, published a tribune, urging not to “fall into Erdoğan’s trap: under no circumstances can Sweden hand over intellectuals to a regime that tries to silence its critics well beyond Sweden’s borders”. Kurdo Baksi, a journalist of Kurdish origin and signatory of the petition, says: “He is a demagogue fighting for his survival. If we start to give in to him, then he will make more demands”.

The subject will be at the heart of the NATO summit to be held in Madrid on 29 and 30 June. Baksi and Kakabaveh have made it very clear that the danger is not only for the Kurds, but also for democracy.



May 2, 2022

## ‘Condemnation of Erbil attacks is not enough’: Kurdistan Region President

**K**urdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani said that condemnation of recent rocket attacks against Erbil is “not enough”.

“The condemnation of the attacks is not enough as their repetitions pose real threats to security and stability,” President Barzani said in a statement on Monday.

His statement came shortly after Sunday night’s rocket attack against Erbil’s Khabhat district, launched from Al-Hamdaniyah district in northeast Nineveh province. At least six rockets landed in the vicinity of an oil refinery but did not cause



Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani speaking during a press conference. (Photo: Kurdistan Region Presidency)

any casualties or significant material damage. President Barzani also said that the Iraqi government is “responsible” for preventing similar attacks in

cooperation with relevant authorities in the Kurdistan Region. The Kurdistan Region’s Security Council (KRSC) pinpointed the launch site of the rockets

shortly after the attack. It noted that the area houses the Nineveh Operations Command’s Commando Battalion headquarters.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attacks, but Kurdish and Iraqi authorities have attributed them to “terrorist groups”.

In early April, rockets were also fired at the area near the same oil facility.

The United Kingdom’s diplomatic representative in Erbil and the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq condemned the attacks.

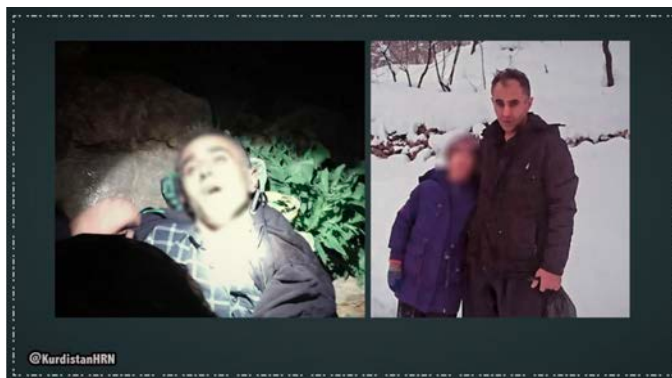


2 May; 2022

## Iran continues targeting kolbars in western border areas

**K**ermanshah province, killing a kolbar named Safar Sobhani and injuring several others on 30 April.

Reportedly, the forces shot the kolbars at a close range and without prior warning. Sobhani was the father of two children and came from the Durisan village of Paveh, Kermanshah province.



Kurdistan HRN

Although several other kolbars were injured during the shooting, so far, only the

identity of one of the kolbars, Mobin Hamed, who comes from the Desheh village of Paveh has been confirmed. Iranian border forces have turned Nowsud border areas into the deadliest area for kolbars in the past few weeks. In the last three weeks alone, two kolbars were killed and at least 31 were injured in shootings by Iranian border guards.



## Is Turkey behind border wall, Iraqi deployment in Sinjar?

Baghdad's military moves in Sinjar, coinciding with a Turkish military operation in northern Iraq, and the construction of a wall along the border with Syria have rekindled fears among the local Yazidi population.

**A**s the struggle for control in Iraq's northwestern region of Sinjar escalates, some observers believe that Turkish pressure underlies recent moves by Baghdad in the area, including the construction of a wall along the border with Syria and clashes between government forces and local Yazidi militia.

A fresh Turkish cross-border operation codenamed Claw Lock has been underway in northern Iraq since April 18 against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Simultaneously, the Iraqi government has deployed reinforcements to Sinjar, resulting in clashes with PKK-linked Yazidi forces in the area.

The PKK, which Ankara designates as a terrorist group over its nearly four-decade armed campaign in Turkey, has gained influence in Sinjar since it came to the help of the Yazidis after the Islamic State's (IS) brutal onslaught on the region in 2014. It helped create the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS), a Yazidi militia that remains a major actor in the war-ravaged region. The PKK foothold in Sinjar provided a crucial link between the group's long-standing bases in Iraqi Kurdistan's mountains and northern Syria, where PKK-affiliated Syrian Kurds hold sway. Ankara has warned it will not let Sinjar become "another Qandil," a reference to the PKK headquarters in Iraqi Kurdistan's Qandil Mountains, and carried out airstrikes in the region.

A local source close to the YBS told Al-Monitor that clashes between the YBS and government troops, dispatched at the behest of Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, erupted when the latter attempted to seize a checkpoint

controlled by Ezidخان Asayish, a security force affiliated with the YBS, in northwestern Sinjar on April 18. There were more clashes later in the day leading to casualties on both sides, as government forces took control of several positions along Highway 47, a crucial route in western Sinjar. The fighting prompted the Iraqi military to send tanks and howitzers to the region.

A complex balance of power has emerged in Sinjar after the defeat of IS. The YBS, Ezidخان Asayish, Iraqi government troops, the mostly Shiite militias known as the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), a Yazidi group within the PMU and a Yazidi unit within Iraqi Kurdistan's peshmerga forces are all present in Sinjar city and surrounding settlements. A key factor shaping the climate in the area is an enduring mistrust among Yazidis toward the Iraqi army and the peshmerga forces of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the ruling party in Iraqi Kurdistan, over their abandonment of Sinjar during IS's genocidal campaign in the region.

This mistrust has helped the PKK-linked YBS assert itself in the area and made it conjunctural allies with the PMU, which was similarly created to fight IS. The PMU has adopted a hostile posture against Turkey's cross-border operations and military presence on Iraqi territory, an attitude that clashes with Baghdad's rather flexible approach.

Under an October 2020 deal with Iraqi Kurdistan on stabilizing Sinjar, the central government has been taking steps to assert control in the region, including the establishment of about 10 checkpoints around Sinjar, but has failed to change the situation on the ground

thus far. Most recently, Kadhimi appointed the governor of Ninevah as the acting administrator of the Sinjar district on April 26 but was forced to retract the decision within hours after Yazidi objections.

More importantly, a concrete wall is being erected along the Iraqi-Syrian border to prevent infiltration. The construction began last month as part of a project that followed Kadhimi's visit to Sinjar in January. According to Kurdish sources, the wall — 3.75 meters high and 1 meter wide — is expected to run from the border town of Fish Khabur, not far from the point where the Turkish, Iraqi and Syrian frontiers meet, to southwest Sinjar, a distance of about 200 kilometers. The authorities have been installing also a barbed-wire fence at a depth of 5 kilometers from the border, running parallel to the wall. Local villagers have staged protests against the fence, which has separated Arab and Yazidi villages.

Highway 47 leads to an unofficial border crossing with Syria, which the Yazidis used to flee IS. The YBS took control of the crossing in 2014 but later ceded it to Iraqi border guards. On the Syrian side, the crossing is controlled by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). Though the crossing is used for commercial purposes today, it has been engraved as a "humanitarian corridor" or an "escape route" in the Yazidi psyche.

The local source said, "Shutting the border like this is cutting off trade, affecting cooperation with the YPG and thus scaring the Yazidis. The Yazidis mistrust the Peshmerga forces and the Iraqi army, which abandoned them in 2014. The wall is evoking a sense of besiegement. Imagine the wall existed in 2014 — all Yazidis would

have been slaughtered. Where will they flee if another massacre happens?"

Disabling such border crossings is a strategic priority for Turkey in its efforts to cut the connections between PKK-linked groups in Syria and Iraq. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's insistence on a second border crossing between Turkey and Iraq 15 kilometers to the west of the existing border crossing with Iraqi Kurdistan has similarly stemmed from security concerns, aiming to open an alternative route to Tal Afar and Mosul.

Erbil-based political analyst Siddik Hasan Sukru believes the escalation in Sinjar is linked to Turkey's Operation Claw Lock.

Since government-affiliated forces are already present in Sinjar, the latest deployment decision was "odd" and the troops acted "as if they were conquering an occupied land," Sukru told Al-Monitor. Kadhimi ordered the deployment at Erdogan's request, he claimed, noting that security cooperation was underway between the two sides under a deal reached during the Turkish defense minister's visit to Baghdad last year.

According to Sukru, Turkey's ongoing operation against the PKK in the KDP-controlled Bahdinan area is a "crucial" one, and its lasting success depends on "fully shutting" the militants' route between Iraqi Kurdistan and the Kurdish-controlled areas in northern Syria, known as Rojava in Kurdish. "So Turkey wants Sinjar to be in the hands of reliable forces. The KDP and Turkey prefer the Iraqi government forces to the YBS and the self-rule administration in the area. They are against a model similar to the one in Rojava. In fact, Erdo-

gan, Kadhimi and [KDP leader Massoud] Barzani share the same policy," Sukru said. He opined that Baghdad's deployment of troops to Sinjar was likely because of Turkish objections to the use of PMU forces in the area.

The PMU has vocally slammed Turkey's cross-border operations and been blamed for rocket attacks on a Turkish base in Bashiqa near Mosul.

Sukru stressed that Iran, too, would object to upsetting the power balance in Sinjar, given its close ties with the PMU. Should Turkey consider a ground operation in Sinjar after purging Bahdinan, it will face a joint resistance by the Yazidi and Shiite forces, he added.

As for the Yazidis' determination to maintain their self-rule, Sukru said, "The Iraqi army failed to protect

Yazidis and Shiites alike [against IS]. Turkey and other regional Sunni states had a hand in those events. This has left a deep scar and mistrust. Sinjar can now trust the PMU but not the KDP and the Iraqi army. And the KDP and the Iraqi army cooperate with the Turkish military and intelligence. They identify YBS targets for the Turkish jets to hit. For a people that has suffered massacres and genocide [throughout history], the Iraqi army

and the Turkish jets evoke the [trauma of] the Sinjar genocide."

Asked about the motives underlying Kadhimi's moves in the area, Sukru said, "What he does in Sinjar is aimed at placating Turkey and averting a prospective operation by the Turkish military. Besides, everybody is trying to consolidate their positions."



Washington Kurdish Institute

Est. 1996

May 3, 2022

## Kurdistan's Weekly Brief May 3, 2022

### Iraq

Unidentified militants struck a refinery owned by the Kurdish oil company Kar Group in Erbil Governorate's Khabat District with six rockets late Sunday. The attack caused no casualties but set fire to one of the refinery's main storage tanks. Iraq's Security Media Cell denounced the attack and blamed it on "criminal gangs." The Kurdistan Security Council said the rockets were launched from Ninewa Governorate's al Hamdaniya District, and Iraqi security forces seized the launcher several hours after the attack. The US, UK, and United Nations (UN) also denounced the attack, and Iranian-backed militias remain the prime suspects, as Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) struck the home of the Kar Group's owner, Baz Karim Barzinji, with ballistic missiles on March 13. Sunday's attack came a day after Barzinji demanded material and moral compensation for the March 13 attack that caused extensive property damage. Barzinji's demands came after the Council of Representatives of Iraq's investigative committee refuted Iran's claim it struck an Israeli base and ordered the Iraqi government to take "all measures that preserve the dignity and status of Iraq via diplomatic channels to prevent the recurrence of any attack on Iraqi territory."

The Iraqi army clashed with the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS) near the Sinjar District's Sinuni

subdistrict. A senior Iraqi official claimed one Iraqi soldier and 13 YBS fighters were killed during the hostilities, though hundreds of Yazidis were also forced to flee to Duhok. Several pro-YBS sources claimed the Iraqi army attacked the region with "heavy weapons and tanks." The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) voiced "concerns" regarding the displacement of Yazidi civilians, who suffered genocide at the hands of ISIS (Da'esh) and have been deprived of government services and security since 2014, and said, "Domestic and external spoilers have no place in Sinjar." The Iraqi government demands the YBS, an offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), leave the area as part of the implementation of the Sinjar agreement between Baghdad and Erbil. Separately, Turkish airstrikes targeted Duhok Governorate's Amedi District and struck several villages in the province.

### Syria

Turkey and its proxies shelled parts of northwestern Syria and areas near Ain Essa and Tal Tamer. Simultaneously, in Manbij, a pro-Turkish sniper killed a 27-year-old man named Hamoud al Khamis, while local security forces announced they shut down a Turkish "suicide drone." Concomitantly, Turkish proxies kidnapped three Kurds named Manan Bilal Hamo, Dian Bilal Hamo, and Ramzi Rushdi Hamo in occupied Afrin. Lastly, a Kurd-

ish official said Turkish authorities have been withholding water from al Hasakah since 2019 and that the most recent drought was caused by a lack of electricity at the Alouk water station.

Two Syrian men survived a Da'esh assassination attempt in al Hol camp. Al Hol continues to hold thousands of Da'esh operatives and their relatives and remains plagued by a string of murders, assaults, and escape attempts.

### Iran

Iranian authorities released several Kurdish activists who were arrested for organizing Newroz celebrations on bail last week. That said, the Iranian regime arrested seven labor activists in Baneh and a prominent activist named Osman Ismael in Saqqez days before International Workers' Day, which falls on May 1. Moreover, Iranian intelligence officers (Ettela'at) warned several labor activists not to participate in International Workers' Day activities. Separately, Iranian authorities arrested three Kurdish teachers, Shabaan Mohamadi, Askander Lotfi, and Massoud Nikkha, in Marivan on Sunday. Iranian security forces killed a Kurdish border porter (kolbar) named Safar Sobhan and wounded five in Kermanshah Province's Newsud District on Saturday. Iranian border guards wounded seven other kolbars in the same area during the past week. Four kolbars died, and at

least 51 were injured in April.

### Turkey

Hundreds of Kurds rallied in Diyarbakir (Amed) on International Workers' Day and chanted, "We will change together." Numerous political figures, including some from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), participated in the rally. Turkish police arrested at least 160 people for holding a similar rally on the same day in Istanbul. Meanwhile, former HDP lawmaker Hilal Aksoy was sentenced to one year in prison for calling Kurds killed by the Turkish government "our martyrs" during a 2009 speech. Though the case against Aksoy was initially closed in 2009, a pro-Turkish government prosecutor named Celal Kara reopened it last year.

The HDP released a statement denouncing Iraq's military operation against the Yazidis. "The Tension that is intended to be created in Shingal does not help anyone and the damage is suffered by all the people in the region. These attacks darken the future of the peoples and hinder social peace," read the statement. On another note, HDP Co-chair Pervin Buldan criticized the Turkish government for Turkey's ongoing economic issues. "The government thrives on constant crises and conflicts and exports wars to Iraq, Syria, and the Middle East to further destabilize the region and deprive the population," said Buldan.

## Dans le nord de l'Irak, la reconstruction à la peine, huit ans après l'EI

Dans le dialecte irakien "makou" signifie "rien". Issa dit beaucoup "makou": "pas d'électricité, pas de maison".

**H**uit ans après de violents combats entre le groupe Etat islamique (EI) et l'armée, la reconstruction de son village dans le nord de l'Irak est au point mort.

Issa al-Zamzoum vit à Habach, un bourg planté à 180 km au nord de Bagdad.

Avec sa femme, Oum Warda, et leurs cinq enfants, il occupe une bâtisse en béton dont une partie du toit s'est effondrée pendant les combats en 2014, mais ne s'est pas désolidarisée du reste de la structure.

Dans une pièce, une poule surveille ses poussins. Dans une autre, des matelas crasseux sont entassés contre le mur.

Cette maison n'appartient pas à M. Zamzoum, 42 ans, car la sienne a été détruite. Elle lui est prêtée.

"Il n'y a rien ici, pas d'électricité. Même le travail, il n'y en a pas", dit-il: "La reconstruction, on ne la voit pas. Il ne s'est rien passé depuis la guerre".

Au gouvernorat de Salaheddine, dont dépend Habach, un conseiller met en avant "l'étendue" de la province pour expliquer ces lenteurs.

"On ne peut pas toujours faire les choses à 100%", dit cette source qui ne souhaite pas être identifiée.

A Habach, les maisons en ruines ou partiellement détruites se comptent par dizaines.

Le village a payé le prix fort



Des enfants dans un bâtiment détruit du village de Habach, dans le nord de l'Irak, le 25 avril 2022

lors du siège imposé à l'été 2014 par l'EI à la ville d'Amerli, à moins de 10 km de là. A l'époque, les jihadistes contrôlent Mossoul et certains territoires du nord de l'Irak. Ils font route vers le sud et assiègent Amerli.

Fin août, l'armée irakienne, les milices chiites et les Peshmergas kurdes brisent le siège après des combats acharnés à Amerli, mais aussi à Habach et dans les villages alentours que les jihadistes utilisaient comme bases.

Fin 2017, le gouvernement de Bagdad déclare sa "victoire" militaire sur l'EI. Mais l'histoire ne s'arrête pas là.

- "Notre vie est une honte" -

Selon Human Rights Watch, après le siège de 2014, "des milices pro-gouvernementales, des combattants volontaires et des membres des forces de sécurité ont pillé des villages sunnites autour d'Amerli", y compris Habach.

L'ONG y avait identifié "d'épais

nuages de fumée se dégageant de bâtiments en feu, dus à des incendies criminels".

Aujourd'hui, dans le district de Touz Khoumatou, où se trouve Habach, "les besoins humanitaires sont significatifs. Près de 20.000 déplacés y vivent", explique à l'AFP le Norwegian Refugee Council.

Les papiers d'identité sont un autre casse-tête, souligne l'ONG. Pour les obtenir, certains habitants "ont des problèmes pour être blanchis de tout soupçon lié à la sécurité parce qu'ils sont perçus comme appartenant à l'Etat islamique".

A l'instar d'Issa al-Zamzoum et de son voisin Abdelkarim Nouri, les habitants de Habach sont pour la plupart arabes sunnites, branche de l'islam minoritaire en Irak où le chiisme est majoritaire.

"Notre vie est une honte. Je n'ai pas de travail. J'ai cinq moutons et ce sont eux qui me font vivre", explique Abdelkarim Nouri. Il dit avoir interpellé son député. En vain.

### Cellules de l'EI -

M. Nouri n'évoque pas spontanément son appartenance religieuse, pas plus qu'il ne parle de sectarisme, un sujet brûlant dans un Irak où des dizaines de milliers de personnes sont mortes lors du conflit interreligieux de 2006-2008.

Pourtant, quatre ans et demi après la fin du "califat" autoproclamé de l'EI, nombre de sunnites se disent victimes de vexations et de discriminations.

Dans un rapport de 2021, le département d'Etat américain se faisait l'écho de responsables sunnites dénonçant des "déplacements forcés de sunnites" par le Hachd al-Chaabi, d'ex-paramilitaires chiites pro-Iran intégrés aux troupes régulières, et d'"arrestations aléatoires" de membres de leurs communautés "soupçonnés d'être liés à l'EI".

L'EI, justement. Sans évoquer nommément les jihadistes, le conseiller du gouvernorat de Salaheddine parle "de risques sécuritaires" qui retardent la reconstruction.

Car si Habach est pacifié, à une quinzaine de kilomètres plus au nord des cellules de l'EI rôdent.

Sur la route qui mène au hameau de Bir Ahmed, le Hachd al-Chaabi monte la garde. "La situation à Bir Ahmed est hors de notre contrôle et de celui de l'armée", dit un haut gradé: "Vous pouvez y entrer, mais je ne garantis pas que vous pourrez en sortir".

## Irak : plus de 4000 déplacés après la poussée de violences au Sinjar

**D**es récents combats ont opposé l'armée irakienne à des combattants yazidis dans la région du Sinjar. Zaid AL-OBEIDI / AFP

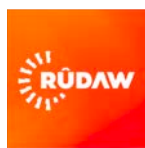
Plus de 4000 personnes ont été déplacées par les récents combats ayant opposé l'armée irakienne à des combattants yazidis affiliés aux rebelles kurdes turcs du PKK dans la région du Sinjar, a annoncé mardi 3 mai le Kurdistan d'Irak qui les a accueillies.

Un soldat irakien a été tué lundi dans une nouvelle poussée de fièvre dans la région du Sinjar,

dans le nord de l'Irak. Ce foyer historique de la minorité yazidie, communauté kurdophone pluri-centenaire adepte d'une religion ésotérique monothéiste, est régulièrement secoué par des affrontements entre l'armée et les Unités de résistance du Sinjar, faction armée affiliée au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Les dernières violences «ont entraîné le déplacement de 701 familles, soit 4083 personnes, qui se sont rendues dans la province de Dohouk», qui fait partie de la région autonome du Kurdistan d'Irak, a annoncé en conférence de presse Hussein Klari, responsable du

centre de crise du ministère kurde de l'Intérieur. Les autorités fédérales de Bagdad ont reconnu le phénomène. «Ces déplacements sont temporaires. La situation sécuritaire est très bonne et la situation est revenue à la normale» au Sinjar, a tempéré Ali Abbas, un haut responsable du ministère irakien de l'Immigration, chargé du dossier des déplacés internes. Les heurts ont éclaté dimanche soir et se sont intensifiés lundi, avant de cesser en fin d'après-midi. Chaque camp a accusé l'autre de l'attaquer. Les Unités de résistance du Sinjar, dont les combattants sont aussi affiliés aux

ex-paramilitaires du Hachd al-Chaabi, accusent l'armée de vouloir prendre le contrôle de leur région. L'armée souhaite, elle, faire appliquer un accord négocié par Bagdad avec le Kurdistan irakien voisin, qui stipule le retrait des combattants yazidis et du PKK. La minorité yazidie a été persécutée des siècles durant en raison de ses croyances religieuses avant de subir de plein fouet la violence des djihadistes du groupe Etat islamique. Sinjar est sporadiquement la cible de raids aériens menés par la Turquie voisine contre des bases du PKK, un groupe «terroriste» selon Ankara.



May 5, 2022  
By Chenar Chalak

## Coordination Framework call on Kurdish parties to agree on a presidential candidate

**T**he Coordination Framework has requested the Kurdish political parties to come to an understanding and agree on a candidate for the presidency of Iraq, as a part of its 18-points initiative announced on Wednesday attempting to bring an end to the political deadlock that has plagued the country, a week before Muqtada al-Sadr's political "step-back" nears its 40-day completion.

The initiative from the Iran-backed parliamentary blocs consists of nine original points, in addition to nine further points which it requests all political parties adhere to in order to end the deadlock.

Lauding the role of the President of Iraq, referring to the position as "the protector of the constitution," the initiative stresses that the person filling the position must be characterized by efficiency and good conduct and behavior, proceeding to urge the Kurdish parties to "make efforts to reach an under-

standing and agree on a candidate with these qualities and within the established contexts."

The recommendation to the Kurdish parties is due to the fact that the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) have been at loggerheads over who should become the next president of the country, with the KDP fielding its own candidate, Reber Ahmed, to challenge the PUK's incumbent and sole candidate Barham Salih for the post.

With the Kurds failing to reach an agreement, the Shiite factions are also fractured. The Coordination Framework and their allies insist on a new government being set up based on political consensus; an idea which has been repeatedly opposed by the Save the Homeland Alliance, consisting of the Sadrist bloc, the Sunni Sovereignty Alliance, and the KDP, who are attempting to form a national majority government.

Sadr, the leader of the Sadrist bloc, announced on March 31 that he would be stepping back from the government formation process temporarily, providing a 40-day window for the "obstructing third" to hold negotiations with all political parties around forming a national majority government, referring to the pro-Iran political parties and their allies.

The initiative by the Coordination Framework comes at a time where Sadr's window is expected to come to a close next week.

The initiative also stresses that the position of prime minister must be filled by "the largest component," referring to the Shiites, and proposing to the Iraqi parliament's independent MPs to field a candidate for the position that fits the characteristics required for a premier. An additional point in the commitment section of the initiative calls on "organizing" the relationship be-

tween the federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and solving the issues between them in accordance with the constitution, for example the issue with the KRG's oil and gas sector. The point also asked for supporting the Peshmerga forces, but requested that they commit to the commander in chief of the Iraqi armed forces.

In mid-February, the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court ruled against the Kurdistan Region's oil and gas law that regulates the oil sector in the Region, putting its industry in jeopardy. The ruling was widely condemned by Kurdish officials.

Almost seven months since Iraq's October 10 election, none of the political parties has been able to form a new government.

The Iraqi parliament was scheduled to elect a new president in March but failed to do so on three different occasions, with the last session being adjourned indefinitely.

## Iraqi coalitions look to break political deadlock

The proposals come as Iraqi cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's 40-day window to form a government draws to a close.

The process of forming the new government in Iraq has come to a halt due to the lack of agreement between Iraq's political parties.

The parliament is divided into two rival blocs: the Saving the Homeland alliance (SH) and the Coordination Framework (CF).

SH includes the Shiite Sadrist movement, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Sunni Sovereignty Alliance.

The CF includes Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law Coalition and the Fatah Alliance, which is associated with some of the Popular Mobilization Units factions and a few other small Shiite groups, in addition to an alliance with a small number of Sunni members of parliament and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

Neither side has been able to gather two-thirds of the members of the 329-member Council of Representatives (parliament), which is required to select a president.

After three attempts to select a president, Muqtada al-Sadr, who has the largest bloc in parliament in the SH alliance, announced that he would give 40 days' time to the CF to form a government. Those 40 days end next week.

With that said, both sides now prepare to move their chess pieces against the other.



This picture taken on March 26, 2022, shows a view of the exterior of Iraq's Council of Representatives in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone. - AHMAD AL-RUBAYE/AFP via Getty Images

The CF suggested on May 3 that SH should come to the negotiation table based on the sectarian principle that was followed in Iraq after 2003 in which the president is selected in agreement with all Kurdish groups and the prime minister is selected in agreement with all Shiite groups.

They also demanded changing the electoral law, which was just changed last year. The CF claims that SH has exploited the new electoral law to its benefit and gained more seats in parliament.

This means that the electoral law will remain a critical issue between the two sides in any upcoming election — whether in the 2025 elections or in early elections before that — if both sides fail to form a government.

The initiative also includes an offer to independent members to propose their candidates for the prime minister position.

The Sadrist movement has sought to bring in independent members in order to bring them into the alliance.

The initiative was relatively successful, as around 30 independent parliament members attended the second session to select a president, reaching 202 attendees — 18 less than the 220 required.

The more than 40 independent parliamentarians could sway the balance between the two camps.

Iraq's local media reported that Sadr is also preparing an initiative to form a government.

The details of Sadr's initiative are not known; however, it is very unlikely that he will propose something different from his first initiative to form a national majority government.

Soon after the CF's initiative, Sadr tweeted that Iraq's

political forces are divided into three parts: the national coalition (SH), which is the largest bloc and calls for a majority government; the CF, which calls for a consensual government and has already failed to form a government; and independents. Sadr called upon independents to join him in forming a government, offering them the option that Sadrists would not get any share in the new government. He is delivering the message to independents that he is not looking to dominate the government and there is no need to be afraid of him.

The approaches so far can be generalized as follows: Sadr is calling for a majority government, while other Shiite groups are calling for a consensual government.

It has also become clear that the main source of conflict in forming a new government is Shiite groups, who have split into two: Sadrists with 73 members, and other Shiite groups inside the CF with over 60 members.

The tension is compounded by the regional influence in Iraqi politics, which desires coordination among the Shiite parties in the selection of a prime minister.

In such circumstances, it is unlikely to witness a détente in the political deadlock in the near future



5 May 2022

## Kurdish refugee nominated for top Australian art prize

Mostafa Azimitabar, who painted using a toothbrush, fled Iran and was held for eight years in Australia's immigration system.

**M**ostafa Azimitabar, a refugee held for eight years in Australia's hardline immigration system, has been named a finalist in the country's top art prize for a self-portrait he painted with a toothbrush.

Azimitabar, a Kurd who fled persecution in Iran and is better known as Moz, said being a finalist for the prestigious prize was "one of the best moments of my life". The Archibald Prize for portraiture is worth 100,000 Australian dollars (\$72,192).

Moz's self-portrait was painted using a toothbrush, a technique he began experimenting with in 2014, soon after being sent to the offshore detention centre in Manus Island, Papua New Guinea.



Moz has been named a finalist in Australia's prestigious Archibald Prize for portraiture Angus McDonald via Moz Azimitabar]

"I asked one of the officers on Manus: 'Can I have some paint?'... I would like to do some artwork because I don't want to give up," he recalled.

After the officer said he might eat the paint to inflict self-harm, a frustrated Azimitabar returned to the room he shared with dozens of men.

On a table, he spotted a cup of coffee and a toothbrush.

"I don't know what happened ... that moment was so special for me. I grabbed the toothbrush and I put it in the coffee and I just dragged it [on some paper]," he said, describing this as his "moment of victory". KNS088

Azimitabar's self-portrait is entitled "KNS088", the government identification number he was given during his eight years in detention.

He said painting was a reminder that he was a person, not a number.

"Art and painting helped me to be strong, to continue. Because when I paint, I don't feel any trauma," he said.

The New York Times

May 4, 2022

By Ben Hubbard & Elif Ince

## Turkey's Plan to Draw Refugees Back to Syria: Homes for 1 Million

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkey will build homes, schools, hospitals and more in northern Syria, but experts question whether refugees will return willingly.

**P**resident Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey this week announced a dramatic expansion of his country's plan to entice refugees from Syria's civil war to return to their home country by building homes for them in Syria near the Turkish border.

Speaking by video link at the inauguration of new cinder block homes in northern Syria intended for returning refugees who had been living in Turkey, Mr. Erdogan said that in addition to the tens of thousands already built, Turkey would construct enough new build-

ings to house 1 million more refugees. But it is not clear that many Syrians will take him up on the offer.

The program, he said, was an extension of Turkey's initial welcome of millions of Syrians fleeing the war. Turkey is the

host of more Syrian refugees, by far, than any other country.

"We didn't just open our doors to save the lives and the honor of the oppressed," Mr. Erdogan said. "But we made, and are making, every effort for them to return to their homes."

Mr. Erdogan's announcement on Tuesday came amid a grave economic crisis that has hit the wallets of many Turks and fueled widespread anger toward the large number of people displaced from Syria, Afghanistan and elsewhere who now live in Turkey.

As the anger has grown, Turkish social media has lit up with furious posts about foreigners flying their flags in Turkish cities, enjoying themselves while Turks struggle to make ends meet and changing the cultural fabric of Turkish communities.

"In the beginning, refugees from Syria were considered to be temporary, as guests, and Turkish citizens were in solidarity," said Murat Erdogan, no relation to the president, a fellow of the Center for Applied Turkey Studies at the German Institute for International and Security Studies, and the director of a migration research center at Ankara University. "But I can say Turkish citizens don't want to share their future with Syrians. They are very clearly bothered and really want them to go back."

In recent years, calls to send Syrian refugees home have grown and been picked up by leaders across a growing swath of the political spectrum. Since the civil war in Syria began in 2011, more than 5.7 million Syrians have sought refuge abroad, according to the United Nations, and about 3.7 million ended up in Turkey, whose long border with Syria for many years was easy to cross.

Turkey's economy was strong when the fighting was at its worst, the government in Ankara was sympathetic to the refugees' plight, and the European Union paid billions of dollars to Turkey to help shelter migrants, in return for President Erdogan stemming the flow of them into the bloc.

But as the war settled into a stalemate and Turkey's economy flagged, the government



Syrian refugee children play near a large image of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey at a camp in southeast Turkey in 2019. Turkey houses more Syrian refugees than any other country. Credit... Mauricio Lima for The New York Times

firmed up its southern border and launched a policy aimed at encouraging Syrians to go home.

Turkey's own interventions in the war have made it the de facto overseer of a long strip of territory inside Syria and along the Turkish border, and in recent years, Mr. Erdogan's government has fostered

construction projects there aimed at providing homes for Syrian refugees in their own country.

Mr. Erdogan's announcement on Tuesday provided an update on those efforts and expanded their scope. So far, more than 57,000 out of 77,000 planned homes in Idlib Province in Syria's northwest

have been completed and now house 50,000 families, he said.

In the future, that number will grow to 100,000 homes, and a new project will be started, he said, to build enough homes for an additional 1 million Syrian refugees to move to other parts of northern Syria where Turkey holds sway.



A bakery in Istanbul in December. Turks are increasingly upset that millions of Syrian refugees remain in the country, which is struggling economically. Credit... Ivor Prickett for The New York Times

In addition to homes, the project will provide schools, hospitals and “all the needs of daily life and self-sufficient economic infrastructure, from agriculture to industry,” Mr. Erdogan said.

It is unclear how many refugees have returned to Syria so far. Turkey says 500,000 have gone back since 2016. A spokesman for the United Nations refugee agency said it had recorded about 130,000 voluntary returns in the same period, but that not all returns had been recorded.

Fighting in Syria has died down since 2019, but the total number of Syrian refugees abroad has not changed significantly, the U.N. figures show.

While large parts of Syria remain outside of President Bashar al-Assad’s control, he has effectively quashed all threats to his rule and has begun restoring diplomatic ties with some of his Arab neighbors.

But years of violence and extensive sanctions on Mr. al-Assad’s government have destroyed the economy, leaving refugees little to go home to. Many of them fear arrest by Mr. al-Assad’s security service or simply lack the money to rebuild their lives inside the country, refugee experts say.

“Finding 1 million Syrians to voluntarily return doesn’t seem very realistic at all,” said Mr. Erdogan, the refugee expert. “They don’t see a future in

Syria, the war there has become chronic, they don’t trust al-Assad, Turkey is a better place, they set up a life here.” Political opponents of Mr. Erdogan blasted his new plan as not strong enough.

“Erdogan, let go of these stories. Fugitives are still flooding in from the border,” Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the head of the Republican People’s Party, or C.H.P., wrote on Twitter. “We have had enough of your lies.” Over time, rising Turkish anger at the refugees could increase the pressure on them to leave.

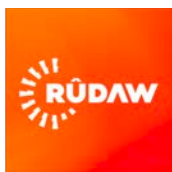
On Tuesday, a nine-minute video was posted on YouTube called “The Silent Occupation” that depicted a dystopian future where Istanbul is dilap-

idated and crime-ridden, Turks are being pushed out of their neighborhoods by Arab real estate agents and a Turkish surgeon works as a janitor in a hospital where the Turkish language is banned.

An actor playing a news anchor explains that the changes started with the Syrian war and uncontrolled immigration.

The video was commissioned by Umit Ozdag, a far-right member of Parliament known for his strident anti-refugee rhetoric.

By Wednesday night, the video had been viewed more than 2.6 million times.



May 5, 2022  
Karwan Faidhi Dri

## Kurdish language added to info board in Diyarbakir mosque following criticism

**T**urkish authorities on Thursday added both Kurmanji and Zazaki dialects of Kurdish language to a recently-prepared information board at the entrance of the Great Mosque of Diyarbakir (Amed) in northeast Turkey (Northern Kurdistan) after they were widely criticized for initially excluding Kurdish language.

The board, prepared by the country's department of religious affairs in early April, informs the visitors about the rules of the mosque in English, Turkish, Russian and Arabic languages while the majority of the population is Kurdish. This an-

gered many Kurds who doubted any Russian tourists ever visited the mosque.

Omer Esen, head of the department's branch in Amed and a speaker of Zazaki, told Rudaw's Mashallah Dakak on Thursday that the religious authorities “may have thought that there would be no need for our own language to be included but this was something wrong.”

“After we were told by some people that the board lacked something, we took this into consideration and fixed it - both Zazaki and Kurmanji dialects of Kurdish

language were added. We are as happy as you are,” he added.

Rudaw's Dakak said that many Kurdish visitors of the mosque were delighted to see their language on the board.

What made many Kurds angry was not only the absence of Kurdish language but the inclusion of Russian language as a few Russian tourists visit the Kurdish-majority province.

The mosque is open to tourists and other people and entry is free of charge. It is said to be the oldest and most significant one in Mesopotamia.

Responding to the criticism, a leadership member of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) said at the time it was a “fair criticism,” adding that he would speak with the head of religious affairs and “resolve this issue.”

Kurdish language had been banned in formal settings in Turkey since the establishment of the state until the AKP's government slightly removed the ban a decade ago, allowing Kurds to speak their language in informal settings and granted them the right to attend Kurdish elective courses at school and continue their studies in their mother tongue language at college.





5 mai 2022

## Turquie: l'inflation frôle les 70%, caillou dans la chaussure d'Erdogan

L'inflation s'est envolée en Turquie à près de 70% sur un an en avril, pesant sur les ménages et sur les chances de réélection du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan en 2023.

Les promesses du gouvernement et les baisses de TVA annoncées en début d'année sur les produits de première nécessité notamment n'y ont rien fait: les prix ont continué d'augmenter de 7,25% en avril, en plein ramadan, faisant culminer l'inflation à 69,97%, au plus haut depuis février 2002.

La hausse des prix à la consommation, continue sur les onze derniers mois, avait déjà dépassé 61% en mars en glissement annuel, conséquence de l'effondrement de la livre turque et de l'envol des cours de l'énergie.

Malgré les craintes de nouvelles hausses de prix liées à la guerre entre l'Ukraine et la Russie, d'où la Turquie importe énergie et céréales, la Banque centrale turque n'a pas pour le moment relevé ses taux d'intérêt, stables à 14% depuis fin 2021.

Le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui estime à rebours des théories économiques classiques que les taux d'intérêt élevés favorisent l'inflation, avait contraint l'institution à abaisser son taux directeur de 19% à 14% entre septembre et décembre, entraînant une chute de la livre.

La monnaie a ainsi vu sa valeur fondre de 44% face au



L'inflation s'est envolée en Turquie à près de 70% sur un an en avril, pesant sur les ménages et sur les chances de réélection du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan Adem ALTAN AFP/Archives

dollar en 2021, et a encore perdu plus de 11% face au billet vert depuis le 1er janvier.

L'inflation est au coeur des débats en Turquie, à quinze mois de l'élection présidentielle prévue en juin 2023, l'opposition accusant l'Office national des statistiques (Tük) de sous-estimer sciemment son ampleur. "Embarrassant pour la Turquie"

Des économistes turcs indépendants du Groupe de recherche sur l'inflation (Enag) ont affirmé jeudi matin que l'inflation atteignait en réalité 156,86% sur un an, plus de deux fois le taux officiel. Malgré des sondages qui prédisent une élection serrée, M. Erdogan espère être reconduit en 2023, après deux décennies au poste de

Premier ministre puis de président.

Le chef de l'Etat, qui avait promis en janvier de ramener l'inflation à un chiffre "le plus vite possible", a assuré la semaine dernière que celle-ci "commencera à ralentir après le mois de mai".

Une hyperinflation durable risquerait toutefois de nuire à la popularité du président, qui a bâti ses succès électoraux des deux dernières décennies sur ses promesses de prospérité.

La Banque centrale turque a elle aussi dû revoir la semaine passée à la hausse ses prévisions d'inflation pour la fin de l'année, estimant qu'elle se situerait à 42,8% - bien au-delà des 23,2% avancés jusque-là.

"Cela devient embarrassant

pour la Turquie", a commenté Timothy Ash, analyste au cabinet BlueAsset Management et spécialiste de la Turquie. "Certes, il y a une hausse des prix de l'alimentation et de l'énergie, mais c'est aussi l'échec spectaculaire de la politique monétaire turque." Pour Jason Tuvey, du cabinet londonien Capital Economics, l'inflation devrait continuer de croître dans les mois à venir, "rien n'indiqu[ant] que la Banque centrale de Turquie soit sur le point de relever ses taux d'intérêt".

La Turquie connaît une inflation à deux chiffres presque sans discontinuer depuis début 2017, mais n'avait jamais connu une telle hausse des prix à la consommation depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) du président Erdogan fin 2002.

## Un réfugié peignant avec une brosse à dents, finaliste du plus prestigieux prix d'Australie

Un réfugié kurde a été nommé jeudi pour le plus prestigieux prix d'art d'Australie, pour un autoportrait peint à l'aide d'une brosse à dents pendant ses huit ans de détention.

Mostafa Azimitabar, un Kurde ayant fui l'Iran, a déclaré à l'AFP vivre "un des meilleurs moments de (sa) vie", après avoir appris qu'il était finaliste du prix Archibald du portrait, décerné depuis 1921 aux plus talentueux peintres en Australie.

Il a commencé à peindre à la brosse à dents en 2014, alors qu'il venait d'être interné dans un des camps de détention "offshore" pour immigrants illégaux gérés par l'Australie sur l'île de Manus, en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée.

Après s'être vu refuser de la



peinture par ses gardiens, qui craignaient qu'il ne l'avale pour s'automotiler, M. Azimitabar est retourné dans le dortoir qu'il partageait avec des dizaines d'autres réfugiés. Là, son regard s'est arrêté sur une tasse de café et une brosse à dents.

"Je ne sais pas ce qui s'est passé... C'était un moment spé-

cial. J'ai saisi la brosse à dents, je l'ai trempée dans du café et je l'ai passée" sur du papier, a-t-il raconté, décrivant cet instant comme une "victoire".

Il a intitulé son autoportrait "KNS088", son numéro de matricule pendant ses huit ans de détention, et a voulu que son oeuvre capture "la souffrance,

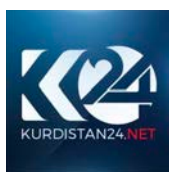
la tristesse et la force" de la vie de réfugié.

"L'art et la peinture m'ont aidé à être fort, à continuer. Parce que, quand je peins, je ne ressens plus aucun traumatisme", a-t-il dit.

M. Azimitabar a finalement été libéré le 21 janvier 2021, sans préavis ni explication. Depuis, il tente de refaire sa vie en Australie, en travaillant pour une organisation caritative.

Il continue la peinture, mais se dit désormais moins inspiré par les outils traditionnels. "Cette brosse à dents est une très bonne amie à moi", a-t-il expliqué.

Le vainqueur du prix Archibald, doté de 100.000 dollars australiens (68.000 euros), sera annoncé le 13 mai.



May 5, 2022

## 'Turkish government wants to criminalize Kurdish opposition party with fictional allegations': HDP

The pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) on Wednesday said the recent wave of detentions against its members is part of Turkey's ultimate aim of closing the party.

"As the Kobani case against the HDP continues, with its all-unlawful practices, another wave of detentions of HDP politicians has been carried out in connection with this case," Feleknas Uca and Hişyar Özsoy, co-sponsors of the HDP's Foreign Affairs Commission, said in

a statement. "In the face of all these scandalous practices, the government has made its next move against the HDP and launched a second wave of detentions."

"We have already underlined in our previous statements that there is a close link between the Kobani case and the closure case against the HDP, as the Chief Public Prosecutor of the closure case bases most of his accusations against the HDP on the Kobani protests," the statement added.

"The government wants to criminalize the HDP with fictional allegations, planning to use such accusations to close the party."

The so-called "Kobani trial" was launched against HDP officials for their role in protests in support of the Syrian Kurdish city of Kobani when it was under siege by ISIS.

On Apr. 12, the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office issued detention warrants against 91 people, including HDP party executives, mayors, municipal

employees, former party members, and administrators. At least 46 people were detained in many cities, including Mersin, Adana, Istanbul, Diyarbakir, and Urfa.

The HDP said the detainees were accused of "being involved in the financial organization of the Kobani incidents" and "providing financial assistance to PKK members who were killed or injured during the incidents." Some of them were also charged with "being a member of a terrorist organization."



May 5, 2022

## WKI Kirkuk Minute May 5, 2022

### Kirkuk

On Thursday, May 5, Peshmerga forces repelled a Da'esh attack near Pirde (Alton Kopri). The ministry of the Peshmerga is set to announce details of the terror attack. Separately, tensions arose between the Peshmerga forces and the Iraqi army in the Shwan district after the Iraqi Army checkpoint arrested six Peshmerga who were returning to duty from Kirkuk. The Peshmerga were released after hours of intervention by Kurdish officials who were warned of deploying Peshmerga scouts to free them. Elsewhere, security forces announced the capture of a "dangerous" ISIS (Da'esh) terrorist responsible for recruitment in Tobzawa last Friday and the capture of two suicide terrorists who planned to target Kirkuk city during Eid. Despite these arrests, Da'esh activities continued across the disputed territories, including an attack on the 2nd brigade of Iraq's 96th division near the Sargaran subdistrict on Saturday. According to a preliminary report, military helicopters of the International Coalition foiled the attack after hours of clashes. On Monday, Da'esh terrorists launched two attacks on the federal police near Daquq and Rashad attacking the federal police in Shabija village of Daquq district and Wadi Shahma in Rashad subdistrict, wounding six officers. Meanwhile, the Arab Coalition, led by the acting governor, Rakan Saed, appealed to the Iraqi government for "General Amnesty" in Kirkuk, arguing that many Sunni Arabs are jailed and "falsely" accused of Da'esh membership, the demand was rejected by the government.

The Turkish-backed Turkmen

Front and the Arab Coalition continue media exchanges for a second week over the hiring process in the North Oil Company (NOC). According to statistics leaked by Pro-Turkmen media, Kurds who make up the overwhelming majority of Kirkuk's population have only eight posts in the NOC, while the Arabs hold 29 senior positions and 14 posts for Turkmen. Kurds account for more than 55% of the population in Kirkuk but face discrimination by the federal and local governments. Meanwhile, both Sunni Arabs and Turkmen Front leaders fight for more posts on Kurdish accounts.

On World Press Freedom Day, May 3, the Association for the Defense of Journalists' Rights in Iraq released its annual report, showing Kirkuk as the third-worst province in Iraq for violence against journalists, with 37 cases. The assaults and arrests of Kirkuk's journalists were conducted by the army, police, and the bodyguards of government officials.

Citizens expressed outrage after the municipality cut down 200 trees which were planted 40 years ago in several median strips of Kirkuk's roads. Additionally, Kurdish and Turkmen activists and political figures accused the administration of changing nature by planting 1,350 date trees, part of an Arabization policy, a symbol of the Arab nation. Environmental activists also opposed the move, describing it as a hypocritical move since the same administration signed an executive order on April 21, obligating new college students to plant a tree as a condition of acceptance.

According to a leaked document of the compensation

committee, Mohammed Timimi, a Sunni Arab lawmaker with two of his siblings, received 849 million dinars for their destroyed homes by Da'esh in 2014. However, the leaked information raised anger among the Sunni population, of which only 10% have received compensation since 2015. Timimi has been a lawmaker since 2006, but from 2010 to 2014, he was Iraq's education director.

Kirkuk's April oil export recorded 3,290,062 barrels, a 127% increase compared to March, grossing 304,268,569 US dollars. Kirkuk exported 2,991,060 barrels via the Kirkuk - Ceyhan Pipeline, averaging 101.7 US dollars per barrel. The remainder were exported to Jordan.

### Khanaqin

On April 30, Iraqi forces, including Iranian-backed militias, conducted raids on 24 Kurdish villages of Khanaqin, confiscating light weapons owned by villagers for self-defense against repeated Da'esh attacks. A Kurdish lawmaker raised questions about the legitimacy of the raids since each household can own one firearm, per Iraqi law. According to many residents, the disarming of Khanaqin's Kurdish villagers will encourage further Da'esh attacks on the area which has already been vulnerable to terror acts since October 16, 2017.

### Tuz Khurmatu

On April 30, Da'esh terrorists attacked Peshmerga forces near the Zanana subdistrict between Tuz Khurmatu and Kifri. After 30 minutes of clashes, one Peshmerga suffered light injuries, but the Da'esh attack was repelled.

The Integrity Commission announced the filing of eight projects for corruption allegations, mainly in service projects. The commission did not release further details about the project or the names of those involved.

### Makhmour

As was the case in Shingal, Iraqi forces deployed large military units with heavy weapons to Makhmour near the refugee camp without announcing a potential military operation. Observers expect a military operation inside the Makhmour Refugee Camp, which houses Kurds from Turkey who had to flee their homes following government attacks and the destruction of their villages dating back to the 1990's.

### Shingal (Sinjar)

Clashes between Iraqi forces and the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS) resulted in the displacement of one thousand Yazidi families, mainly from Khana Mansour and Sunny district. The Iraqi troops announced their plans of "removing" all armed groups from Shingal. On and off clashes continued for more than a week, but neither side provided official numbers of casualties, despite media reports suggesting dozens of wounded and several deaths on both sides. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) "voiced "concerns" regarding the displacement of Yazidi civilians. Despite ongoing attempts to calm the situation, senior Iraqi forces traveled to the region and supervised their plans to control the area, part of implementing a security agreement between Baghdad and Erbil.

## Irak : plus de 10.000 déplacés après la poussée de violences au Sinjar

Plus de 10.000 personnes ont été déplacées par les récents combats ayant opposé l'armée irakienne à des combattants yazidis affiliés aux rebelles kurdes turcs du PKK dans la région du Sinjar, a annoncé jeudi un responsable local du Kurdistan d'Irak qui les a accueillies. Un soldat irakien a été tué et deux autres ont été blessés dans les combats ayant secoué dimanche soir et lundi la région du Sinjar, dans le nord de l'Irak.

Ce foyer historique de la minorité yazidie, communauté kurdeophone pluricentenaire adepte d'une religion ésotérique monothéiste, est régulièrement secoué par des affrontements entre l'armée et

les Unités de résistance du Sinjar, faction armée affiliée au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Les derniers combats "ont poussé des familles à fuir vers la région du Kurdistan et plus précisément la province de Dohouk", a indiqué jeudi à l'AFP Dayane Hamo, responsable local en charge du dossier de l'immigration et de la réponse aux crises à Dohouk.

"En trois jours, leur chiffre a atteint 1.711 familles et 10.261 personnes", a-t-il précisé dans son bureau. Ces nouveaux déplacés ont été installés dans des camps ou ont trouvé refuge auprès de leurs proches vivant déjà dans la province, a-t-il précisé. Les familles ont reçu des colis contenant des

produits alimentaires et d'hygiène qui doivent leur permettre de tenir une semaine, a-t-il dit.

La minorité yazidie a été persécutée des siècles durant en raison de ses croyances religieuses avant de subir de plein fouet la violence des jihadistes du groupe État islamique (EI) lors de leur montée en puissance en 2014. Parmi les déplacés accueillis au Kurdistan, nombreux sont ceux qui étaient rentrés chez eux en 2020 seulement, après avoir fui une première fois l'EI, a indiqué mercredi le Haut commissariat de l'ONU pour les réfugiés (HCR).

La plupart ont été installés

dans des camps, "avec un risque de surpopulation et un accès limité aux services de base, en raison d'une réduction des financements humanitaires", déplore le communiqué. Les Unités de résistance du Sinjar, dont les combattants sont aussi affiliés aux ex-paramilitaires du Hachd al-Chaabi, accusent l'armée de vouloir prendre le contrôle de leur région.

L'armée souhaite, elle, faire appliquer un accord négocié par Bagdad avec le Kurdistan irakien, qui stipule le retrait des combattants yazidis et du PKK. Sinjar est sporadiquement la cible de raids aériens menés par la Turquie voisine contre des bases du PKK, un groupe "terroriste" selon Ankara.

### Kurdistan au féminin

6 mai 2022

Le Kurdistan à travers le regard féminin

## Derniers jours pour le Festival des Films Kurdes de Paris

Actuellement, le Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles accueille la 2e édition du Festival des Films Kurdes de Paris qui offre une programmation riche et variée. En effet, des dizaines de courts et longs métrages, documentaires, animations et fictions réalisés par des cinéastes kurdes du Kurdistan et d'Europe sont projetés jusqu'à samedi 7 mai au Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles, dans le 4e arrondissement de Paris, à deux pas du Centre Pompidou.

Chaque séance du festival coûte 5 euros, mais avec la modique somme de 15 euros, vous pouvez assister à toutes les projections du festival sur 4 jours.

(L'achat des billets se fait sur place.)

### Voici la programmation de 6 et 7 mai:

Ce film raconte l'histoire de Xalko, mon village natal. L'un des rares villages kurdes situé au cœur de l'Anatolie centrale en Turquie. Aujourd'hui, déserté par ses hommes qui ont tous émigré en Europe ou en Amérique, Xalko existe encore grâce à celles et ceux qui restent envers et contre tout, en espérant le retour de leurs maris et de leurs pères absents, qui parfois ne reviennent jamais ou alors pour quelques jours, seulement, en été.

17h Séance courts-métrages (5) Barê Giran de Yilmaz Özdiil – Fiction, 17'

Kallima de Ashkan Ahmadi – Fiction, 15'

Ido de Saman Mustafa – Fiction, 12'

The Other de Saman Hosseinpour, Ako Zandkarimi – Fiction, 25'

Sar de Adar Baran Deger – Fiction, 18'

20h La Dance d'Ali et Zin de Mehmet Ali Konar

L'histoire se déroule dans un petit village kurde. Le frère cadet d'Isa est assassiné. Deux semaines après les funérailles, sa mère Zin rêve de célébrer le ma-

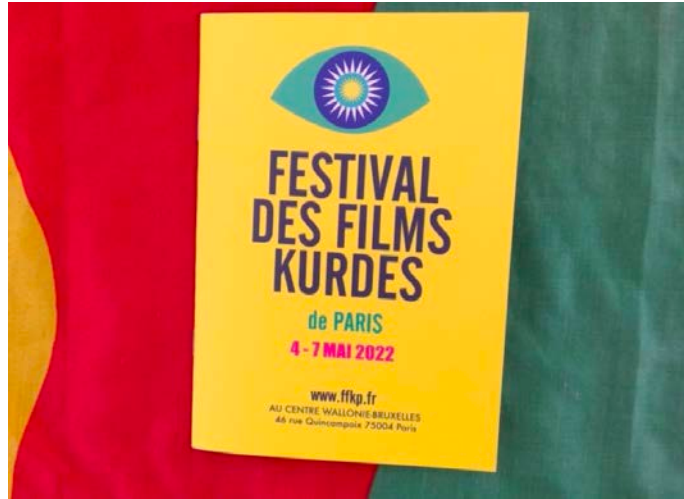
riage de son fils décédé. Cette idée étrange déclenche une foule de sentiments contradictoires en elle et sème le trouble entre elle, Isa et les membres de sa famille, encore sous le choc du deuil et du chagrin. La famille et les proches traversent un champ de mines psychologiques, luttant entre la logique, les normes, les émotions et l'irrationalité.

11h Voisins de Mano Khalil  
Un petit village à la frontière entre la Syrie et la Turquie au début des années 80: un jeune garçon kurde de six ans vit sa première année dans une école arabe et se rend compte de la façon dont son petit monde mute

radicalement en un nationalisme absurde. Empli d'un humour très fin et de satire, ce film raconte une enfance qui, aux dévotions de la dictature et de drames sombres, a aussi ses moments plus légers. Une question se pose : l'amitié, l'amour et la solidarité peuvent-ils réellement exister en période de répression et de despotisme ? (En présence du réalisateur)

14h Séance courts-métrages (5)  
Fingerprint de Zanyar Muhammedinko – Fiction, 12'  
La Chambre de Sami Mermer – Fiction, 20'  
Wesyet de Kamiran Betasi – Fiction, 13'  
Salvation Rain de Veysel Çelik – Fiction, 12'  
Seven Symphonies Of Zagros de Perwîz Rostemî – Documentaire, 24'  
17h Black Hours Memories de Shahram Alidi

Un groupe de jeunes amis, proches depuis leur enfance, essaie par tous moyens d'enseigner le kurde en Turquie malgré l'interdiction des autorités turques. Ils impriment et distribuent des manuels scolaires clandestinement. L'une des leurs, Aseke, a disparu depuis plusieurs mois. Afin de la retrou-



ver, ils partent sur les pistes de son cheval noir, un animal indomptable, porteur des souvenirs et de l'âme de leur amie. (En présence du réalisateur)  
20h The Exam de Shawket Korki Rojin, une jeune femme kurdo-irakienne s'apprête à présenter son examen d'entrée à l'université. Shilan, sa soeur cadette est malheureuse dans son mariage. Elle décide d'aider sa soeur à réussir avec le secret espoir que ces études lui permettront d'avoir un vie libre et indépendante. Malgré elles, les deux soeurs se retrouvent mêlées à un immense réseau de corruption qui implique tous les milieux de la société kurde. (En pré-

sence du réalisateur)  
Vingt ans de festivals de films kurdes à travers le monde  
Depuis plus de vingt ans, les festivals kurdes se multiplient aux quatre coins du Kurdistan (Turquie, Irak, Iran et Syrie) mais aussi au coeur des métropoles mondiales comme Londres, Stockholm, Istanbul, New York, Copenhague, Hambourg ou encore Berlin. Dans la même veine que tous les événements kurdes, le Festival des Films Kurdes de Paris est un lieu de rencontre majeur pour les professionnels et les passionnés du cinéma.  
Le Festival des Films Kurdes de Paris est organisé par l'Institut

Kurde de Paris et l'Association de Cinéma franco-kurde CinéBej en partenariat avec le Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles et le soutien du Ministère français de la Culture et la Mairie de Paris.

Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles  
46 Rue Quincampoix,  
75004 Paris  
Station Les Halles  
(Metro & RER A/B/D)

Liens pour suivre l'actualité du Festival des Films Kurdes de Paris

Mohammad Shaikhow, l'homme derrière le Festival des Films Kurdes de Paris  
Le Festival des Films Kurdes de Paris est porté essentiellement par Mohammad Shaikhow, un jeune auteur-réalisateur kurde passionné par le cinéma et qui consacre une grande partie de son temps à faire connaître le cinéma kurde sur la scène internationale en travaillant bénévolement pour de nombreux festivals, dont celui des Films Kurdes de Paris. Shaikhow et son équipe dynamique ont préparé cette deuxième édition qui permet aux spectateurs parisiens de voyager à travers le Kurdistan grâce aux films kurdes.



May 7, 2022

## Popular Turkish cleric calls for pro-Kurdish HDP voters to be stripped of citizenship

**P**opular pro-government Turkish cleric Ahmet Mahmut Ünlü has condemned supporters of the opposition pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), calling for them to be stripped of their Turkish citizenship.

In video posted on his YouTube channel of Friday, the fiery cleric, also known as Cübbeli Ahmet Hoca, called on the destruction of the HDP, the third largest party in parliament, as he implored on God to "curse" the group and not allow them to surpass the parli-

mentary threshold in the next elections.

"Unless you revoke the citizenship of those who vote in support of the HDP and thereby support PKK militants, you will not be able to obtain the sovereignty of the nation or prevent secession," the 57-year-old cleric said.

The Turkish government in recent years has intensified a crackdown on the HDP, which it accuses of harbouring sympathies for and acting in the interest of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), designated a terror-

ist organization by the United States, the European Union. The HDP denies the charges.

"May God cast all misfortunes upon them (the HDP)," Ünlü went on to say. "They work for Jews..."

Hundreds of HDP politicians, including the party's former co-chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, have been behind bars for several years on terrorism charges.

Turkey's second-largest opposi-

tion party, the HDP faces a closure threat as part of an indictment, which is also seeking to ban hundreds of party members from holding political office on terror-related charges.

One of Turkey's most distinctive preachers, Ünlü has made headlines over his expansive Quranic knowledge, which he delivers in an unapologetic and humorous fashion.

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# Rapport. Comment la Turquie dégringole sur l'échelle mondiale du bonheur

Dans le dernier rapport international sur le bonheur, établi sous l'égide de l'ONU, la Turquie est 112e sur 146 pays. Une place qui s'explique certes par les difficultés économiques des Turcs, mais qui révèle aussi un malaise plus profond. La Finlande caracole en tête de ce classement. L'analyse de "Gazete Duvar", site d'information d'opposition.

"Arrête !" Peut-on commencer une chanson par ce mot ? Cem Karaca [célèbre musicien turc des années 1970 et 1980, un des pères du "rock anatolien"] le peut. "Raconte-moi Istanbul, comment c'était ? Raconte-moi le Bosphore !" enchaîne-t-il. C'est en Allemagne, dans les affres de l'exil, après qu'il a fui le coup d'État de 1980 en Turquie et inspiré par le poète Nazim Hikmet (1902-1963, célèbre poète communiste turc) qu'il compose cette chanson : Toujours la tristesse.

Il se figure les habitants d'Istanbul, il les imagine heureux et il ne veut pas gâcher ce rêve, ni le confronter à la réalité, quitte à lui préférer le mensonge : "Les gens riaient, dans le tram, sur les bateaux et dans les bus, même si c'est un mensonge ça me plaît de l'entendre, raconte ! Toujours de la tristesse, de la tristesse, de la tristesse, je n'en peux plus."

Les gens rient-ils vraiment dans les trams et sur le pont des bateaux ? Sont-ils heureux ? Le sommes-nous ? Il n'y a pas de véritable réponse à cette question, nous le savons. Mais il existe néanmoins un World Happiness Report ["Rapport mondial sur le bonheur", en français], publié en [mars] 2022 par l'ONU, que nous avons consulté. Pour faire court : notre société n'est pas heureuse.

Cette enquête est publiée depuis dix ans par le Réseau des solutions pour le développement durable des Nations unies. Depuis cinq ans, c'est



Une vue générale d'Istanbul, en Turquie dans le brouillard, le 6 avril 2022 Photo/ MUHAMMED ENES YALDARAM/ Anadolu Agency via AFP

systématiquement la Finlande qui est classée en tête, talonnée par ses sombres et froids voisins scandinaves.

Cette année, nous sommes à la 112e position. Chaque année, nous dégringolons dans ce classement. En 2018, lorsque la Finlande s'est taillé la première place pour la première fois, nous étions 74e, puis 79e, 93e et enfin 104e l'année dernière. Après tout, la liste comporte 146 pays, nous avons encore de la marge.

Mais les Nations unies sont-elles vraiment équipées pour établir un tel rapport ? Les Finlandais sont-ils si différents de nous ? Existe-t-il une formule du bonheur ? Et surtout, peut-on vraiment mesurer et comparer le bonheur ou le malheur ?

Qu'est-ce qui nous fait grincer des dents ? Contrairement à ce que l'on pourrait croire, cet "index du bonheur" ne se fonde pas principalement sur des cri-

tères objectifs et chiffrés, tels que le chômage ou l'inflation. Les enquêteurs s'intéressent davantage à la subjectivité des personnes sondées. Ils demandent aux enquêtés où ils pensent se trouver sur "l'échelle du bonheur", puis établissent un calcul en fonction des réponses non seulement de l'année en cours mais des trois années précédentes. Notre 112e place est donc le fruit de plusieurs années de travail.

Il existe deux types de questions, celles générales sur votre vie que vous vous posez vous-même de temps à autre et d'autres plus spécifiques du type : "Avez-vous ri ou souri au cours de la journée d'hier ? Avez-vous fait quelque chose d'intéressant ou de nouveau dans la journée ? Vous êtes-vous senti respecté au cours de cette journée ? Avez-vous ressenti de la colère, du plaisir, du stress ou de la tristesse ?"

Les enquêteurs, une fois leur

classement effectué, cherchent également à trouver les causes du bonheur ou du malheur propres à chaque pays, à travers l'étude de six catégories. Le PIB par tête, le niveau de solidarité ("Si vous êtes face à des difficultés, pouvez-vous compter sur l'aide de votre famille ou de vos amis ?"), l'espérance de vie en bonne santé, le degré de liberté et d'autonomie des individus quant à leur choix de vie, la capacité et le désir de venir en aide à autrui, le degré de corruption dans le privé ou dans le monde politique...

Comme le souligne la première phrase du roman Anna Karénine, écrit par Léon Tolstoï : "Tous les bonheurs se ressemblent, mais chaque infortune a sa physionomie particulière." L'ambition de cette recherche est donc d'identifier les "physionomies particulières" du bonheur ou du malheur propres à chaque pays. Et voici ce qui ressort du rapport de 2022 nous concernant "Nous nous plaignons en majorité de deux choses, le manque d'argent et l'ampleur de la corruption dans notre pays."

Mais ce rapport ne s'appuie pas que sur des critères économiques, même s'il est évident qu'ils occupent une part importante. C'est pour cela que l'on trouve le Costa Rica à la 23e place, le Kosovo à la 39e ou l'île Maurice à la 52e, bien mieux classés que la Turquie depuis dix ans alors que le niveau de vie des habitants y est inférieur.

C'est ce constat qui est le plus triste, car il tend à nous montrer que nous n'avons pas qu'un problème d'argent. Les raisons de notre malheur sont plus opaques et profondes. Les membres de notre société ont répondu [majoritairement] non à la question "Avez-vous ri hier ?" comme à celles visant à savoir s'ils "s'étaient sentis respectés" ou s'ils "avaient fait quelque chose d'intéressant".

Et quoi qu'en disent les résultats du rapport sur les causes de ce malheur, il n'est pas dû qu'à l'argent, car nous ne cessons collectivement de nous

classer plus bas d'année en année. Nous nous appauvrissons, certes, mais nous déprimons plus vite que nous ne nous appauvrissons. "Toujours la tristesse"...

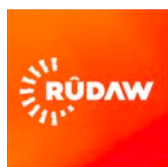
Mais alors qu'est ce qui rend les Finlandais si heureux ? Qu'est-ce que le bonheur pour eux ? Nous nous en doutons : ils ont leurs lacs, leurs îlots et leurs saunas, mais avec ce rapport, nous voyons surtout qu'ils ont la possibilité d'une vie sans la peur du lendemain. Le luxe de pouvoir se dire qu'ils pourront rebondir s'ils tombent malades ou s'ils perdent leur

travail. Qu'ils peuvent faire un enfant en toute tranquillité, qu'il recevra la meilleure éducation et qu'ils pourront le laisser jouer seul dans la rue car ils ont confiance les uns dans les autres. Peut-être aussi savent-ils se satisfaire de peu, et classer leur existence sur les dernières marches de l'échelle du bonheur, alors que les Américains, les Coréens ou les Japonais, pourtant plus riches, ont un plus gros appétit et s'en trouvent moins heureux ?

Au cours d'une journée, le Finlandais moyen se sent respecté, il ne se fait pas

houspiller ou bousculer, il a le sentiment de récolter le fruit de son travail, tente des expériences intéressantes, lit, se promène dans la nature et s'étend paresseusement à regarder autour de lui sans penser à rien de particulier. Il vit. Oui, le Finlandais sourit, rit dans les bus et sur les bateaux. Ce n'est pas toujours de la tristesse, ce n'est pas du mensonge non plus.

Mais après tout, il est beau et agréable d'écouter des chansons tristes, mélancoliques, nostalgiques. Il nous reste toujours cela.



May 8, 2022

## Local beekeepers in the Kurdistan Region struggle amid foreign honey imports

**T**he Kurdistan Region has the ideal conditions for beekeeping to flourish due to its terrain and climate however, local produce competes with imported honey sold on the market at a much cheaper price.

Wildflowers are able to thrive in the mountains of the Kurdistan Region, but beekeepers are struggling to keep their businesses alive.

Foreign honey imports are obstructing the development of the beekeeping sector in the Kurdistan Region. Customers complain that local honey is highly priced and opt for the cheaper imported product, causing local producers to run at a loss.

Local honey producers are reluctant to use cheaper ingredients as this will affect the quality of the product. Hamadamin Grgi, a beekeeper from the Kurdistan Region, made around two tons of honey last year.

"I need to provide pure honey



to my customers. The customers always complain about the honey. We do not want to give artificial sugars [sucrose] to our bees," Hamadamin Grgi, a bee-keeper, told Rudaw's Baxtyar Qadir on Sunday. He added that the main challenge local producers face is that

"Iranian honey gets imported and we cannot sell ours."

"We buy Iranian honey from Erbil and Sulaimani. The price of Iranian honey is cheaper and most people can afford it, but the local ones are expensive. We consume 10 to 20 tons of Iranian honey," Yassin

Hamad, a local honey seller and shop-owner, said.

Around 700 tons of honey were produced in the Region last year and at least 1,200 tons of honey are sold annually in Kurdish markets, according to the Beekeepers Network Association of Kurdistan.



May 9 2022

## PM Barzani and Belgian Ambassador emphasize strengthening economic ties

We discussed the latest developments of the political process in Kurdistan Region and Iraq and the security situation of the wider region.”

**K**urdistan Region Prime Minister Masrour Barzani and Belgian Ambassador to Iraq and Jordan Filip Vanden Bulcke emphasized strengthening economic relations between Erbil and Brussels in a meeting on Monday.

Prime Minister Barzani received Ambassador Bulcke

and his accompanying delegation in his office in Erbil.

“We discussed the latest developments of the political process in Kurdistan Region and Iraq and the security situation of the wider region,” the prime minister said in a Facebook post. “We also discussed the bilateral ties between Kurdis-

tan Region and Belgium.”

Prime Minister Barzani and Ambassador Bulcke “emphasized strengthening the bilateral ties in all sectors, especially the economic sector.

Belgium and the Kurdistan Region enjoy cordial ties. In June 2021, Prime Minister Barzani

met his Belgian counterpart Alexander De Croo in Brussels. During that meeting, the Belgian leader described the Kurdistan Region as “dynamic, vital, and effective.”

“We can provide assistance to the Kurdistan Regional Government’s (KRG) work program, especially in the agricultural sector,” he said.



May 9, 2022

## Letter from jailed Kurdish politician Leyla Güven for Mother’s Day

“You have always said the same... ‘We want peace’.” Leyla Güven wrote from prison to Peace Mothers.

**M**aybe the only word you learn in a language you don't know is, 'peace'” wrote from prison, Leyla Güven, a former People's Democratic Party (HDP) MP, who was stripped of her parliamentary status and sentenced to 22 years and 3 months in prison for her political activities. “You have always wanted peace”

Güven sent a letter from Elazığ Women Closed Prison for the International Mother's Day to Jin News. She called out to Peace Mothers, Saturday Mothers and Plaza De Mayo Mothers in her message.

“I'm sure that you, as Peace Mothers, are as always very busy, since wherever there is unlawfulness, injustice or inequality, you are there. You are the first to feel pain when there is conflict and war, wherever in the world it may be.” she wrote.

Hoping her wishes for the days of peace, Leyla Güven stated the following:

“You have always represented hope to our community with your boundless resistance, from the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo to the Saturday Mothers and yourselves, the Peace Mothers.

Maybe the only word you learn in a language you don't know is, 'peace' (...)”

“We as imprisoned women are asking you: Please do not be sorry for us. We are always hopeful and have high morale. We get our strength from your white scarfs. ”

“The days are not far off when all mothers will embrace their children, when an honorable peace will prevail in our lands. Take great care until that day. You already know that, hope is more valuable than victory.”

### About Leyla Güven

Living in Germany for a long time, she worked in the women's organization of the People's Democracy Party (HADEP) in 1994.

In the local elections in 2004, she was elected as the Adana Küçük Dikili Mayor; in 2009, she was elected as the Viranşehir Mayor.

As part of the operation against the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), Leyla Güven was arrested in December 2009. Following an imprisonment for five years, she was released in 2014. In the KCK main trial, she was sentenced to 6 years, 3 months in prison.

In the Parliamentary elections in June 2015, Leyla Güven was elected as the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) 25th Term Şanlıurfa MP and entered the Parliament. In the Parliamentary elections in 2018, she was elected as

the HDP 27th Term Hakkari MP.

While she was in prison as part of the KCK investigation, she went on a hunger strike, demanding that the isolation of imprisoned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan be lifted.

Her prison sentence of 6 years, 3 months in the KCK main trial was upheld by the Court of Cassation while she was the HDP Hakkari MP. With her finalized prison sentence read out at the General Assembly of the Parliament, she was stripped of her MP status on June 4, 2020. While she was arrested shortly afterwards, she was released on June 9, 2020.

On December 21, 2020, she was sentenced to 22 years, 3 months in prison on charge of “leading an organization”, arrested and sent to Elazığ Type E Prison in eastern Turkey. (TY/TB)



## En Irak, des Yazidis retrouvent les camps après les combats au Sinjar

La majorité des 10.000 déplacés accueillis ces derniers jours au Kurdistan irakien, dans le nord de l'Irak, ont déjà goûté aux conditions de vie précaires des camps. Ils avaient fui une première fois Sinjar, foyer historique de la minorité yazidie, avec l'arrivée en 2014 du groupe Etat islamique (EI).

"La dernière fois, on a été déplacé par peur de l'EI. On était resté six ans dans un camp", se souvient M. Kalo, 37 ans, arrivé le 2 mai avec sa femme et ses cinq enfants dans le camp de Chamishko, près de la ville de Zakho.

Cela faisait deux ans à peine qu'il avait retrouvé son village. "Malgré les difficultés, on se débrouillait au quotidien, soupire-t-il. Mais dernièrement, la situation s'était détériorée". Deux jours de combats d'une rare intensité ont opposé les 1er et 2 mai l'armée irakienne et les Unités de résistance du Sinjar, faction armée affiliée aux rebelles kurdes turcs Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Mais depuis longtemps, la région vit au rythme des escarmouches. "Quotidiennement on entendait les bruits des tirs et des explosions, on a eu peur pour nos familles", raconte M. Kalo.

### - "Surpopulation" -

Communauté kurdophone pluricentenaire adepte d'une religion ésotérique monothéiste, la minorité yazidie a été persécutée des siècles durant en rai-



Une déplacée yazidie dans le camp de Chamishko, près de la ville de Zakho, dans le Kurdistan irakien, le 5 mai 2022

son de ses croyances. Avant de subir de plein fouet la violence de l'EI.

Parmi les déplacés récemment arrivés au Kurdistan autonome, nombreux sont ceux qui, après avoir fui une première fois l'EI, étaient rentrés chez eux en 2020 seulement, selon le Haut commissariat de l'ONU pour les réfugiés (HCR).

Le long des allées de Chamishko, où vivent plus de 22.000 personnes, s'alignent les tentes faites de bâches épaisses. A l'intérieur, les mêmes matelas de fine mousse posés au sol, où sont assises de vieilles femmes au visage soucieux.

Près des bureaux de l'administration, des dizaines d'hommes et de femmes forment deux files devant un camion distribuant des cartons d'aides alimentaires: un kilo de sucre, du thé, du riz, de la farine, du lait. De quoi tenir une semaine.

Quelque 1.711 familles du Sinjar, soit 10.261 personnes, sont arrivées la première semaine

de mai au Kurdistan, selon un responsable local. Aujourd'hui, 964 familles vivent dans des camps. Les autres ont trouvé refuge chez des proches.

"Les camps sont surpeuplés et il y a un risque d'accès limité aux services de base, à cause d'une baisse de financements humanitaires", a indiqué à l'AFP un porte-parole du HCR, Firas al-Khateeb.

Son agence soutient les "solutions durables" permettant aux gens de retrouver leurs maisons, dit-il. "Mais tout retour doit être volontaire, respecter la dignité humaine, et se faire dans un environnement pacifique."

Selon les autorités irakiennes, le calme est revenu au Sinjar. Mais la dernière poussée de fièvre illustre les tensions qui couvent dans un secteur où sont impliqués une multitude d'acteurs.

### - "Personne ne rentrera" -

Les Unités de résistance du

Sinjar, dont les combattants sont aussi affiliés aux ex-paramilitaires du Hachd al-Chaabi, accusent l'armée de vouloir prendre le contrôle de leur région.

L'armée souhaite, elle, faire appliquer un accord négocié par Bagdad avec le Kurdistan irakien, qui stipule le retrait des combattants yazidis et du PKK.

Des "renforts militaires" ont été dépêchés au Sinjar pour "imposer l'hégémonie de l'Etat", a annoncé le commandement conjoint des forces de sécurité irakiennes dans un communiqué le 5 mai: "Nous n'autorisons pas la présence de groupes armés."

Le Sinjar est aussi la cible de raids aériens sporadiques menés par la Turquie voisine contre des bases du PKK, un groupe classé "terroriste" par Ankara.

Dans cette poudrière, les Yazidis sont des victimes collatérales.

Zaïm Hassan Hamad, 65 ans, a fui Sinjar une première fois à cause "des attaques de l'EI". Aujourd'hui, avec ses enfants et ses petits-enfants, sa famille de 17 personnes se retrouve à Chamishko.

"Si on ne nous garantit pas sécurité et stabilité, cette fois-ci nous ne retournerons pas à Sinjar. On ne peut pas rentrer et à chaque fois être déplacés", lance-t-il: "Si le Hachd, le PKK et l'armée restent dans la région, les gens auront peur et personne ne rentrera."



# The International Rights Groups Bias Against Iraqi Kurds

International rights organizations like Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and others have done a sub-par job of reporting human rights abuses in Iraq. While there is a general focus on the rights of religious minorities and women, human rights reporting in recent years has been primarily focused on the acts of ISIS terrorists, leaving many of the abuses by government forces unreported.

Local reporting on abuses by the federal government is often reported to the United Nations (UN), which calls for investigations into these events, but then those events no longer appear in international headlines. In most cases, abuses against the Kurds go unreported, especially in the disputed territories, like Kirkuk, Shingal (Sinjar), Khanaqin, and Tuz Khurmatu. The Iraqi mistreatment of the Kurds in the disputed territories resumed after October 16, 2017, when Baghdad removed the Kurdish forces and administration in retaliation against a non-binding Independence Referendum the Kurds had held.

Baghdad then started using Iranian-backed militias to attack Kurdish forces in the region, allowing them to commit war crimes. Since then, these forces and the administrations imposed by Baghdad have dictated residents' daily lives. They have captured resources necessary for day-to-day life and control the appropriation of said resources. The 2017 aggression by Baghdad caused massive civilian displacement and dozens of deaths among Kurdish fighters. Yet, the event had minimal coverage by human rights groups.

There is an ongoing process of Arabization of Kurdish towns and neighborhoods that the central Iraqi government supports in the disputed territories. The Arabization process started soon after the establishment of Iraq in 1923, but it peaked under the former regime of al Ba'ath, led by the former dictator Saddam Hussein. Today in Kirkuk,

the central Iraqi government continues to build military bases and checkpoints in residential areas, to the dismay of Kurdish residents. Local Kurdish residents believe this is part of the Iraqi government's campaign to pressure Kurds into leaving Kirkuk. Since the Iraqi government took Kirkuk, there has been very little reporting about events in Kirkuk, including many cases of Arab settlers attempting to occupy Kurdish farmlands. International media has mainly reported on the fights between government forces and ISIS in Kirkuk.

Since 2017, human rights groups have not once mentioned that Kirkuk is run by an administration imposed on the people in an undemocratic way, unlike all the other provinces in the country. As a result, dozens of Kurds have been removed from local and federal government posts and replaced with non-Kurds. In addition to the lack of primary services, the Kurds also suffer discriminatory policies in hiring and other opportunities. Kurdish politicians often face threats, including death threats.

In other towns in the disputed territories like Shingal (Sinjar), Zumar, Rabia, Hasansham, Khazir, Khanaqin, Khanaqin, and Mandali, the central Iraqi government has supported and protected Arab settlers' aggressive land grabs while dismissing victimized Kurdish citizens. The Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) commit most of the abuses against the Kurds because the government has little oversight over these paramilitary groups. In Kirkuk, a Kurdish war memorial was vandalized, and the government has taken no action to find the perpetrators.

The central Iraqi government cut budget allocations to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to strong-arm them in negotiations to retain oil revenues, which is in violation of the Iraqi constitution. They will force the KRG to underfund the Peshmerga, cut government sal-

aries, or cut funding to social services, which in turn worsens conditions within Kurdistan. Even though many of these instances are being reported by international media, they are spun as political disagreements between the Kurdish political parties and the federal Iraqi government rather than recognizing that the Iraqi government is violating its own federal laws in denying budget allocations. Very little is being reported about the effects of budget cuts beyond blaming the KRG for cutting the salaries of its government employees.

The central Iraqi government effectively shut down the Independence Referendum by the Kurds in 2017, and the international community applauded this denial of self-determination. Many international organizations pushed against the independence referendum out of concern, not for the Kurds but for the general security of the region. Then U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson stated that the referendum was "illegitimate," and the Trump administration doubled down on that stance. When it comes to securing political rights for the Kurds in Iraq, they are on their own and must go it alone. Western actors benefit from strategic military alliances with the Kurds but often balk at helping them gain political rights.

There were no international headlines on an election reform bill passed in 2019 that greatly disadvantaged Kurdish political parties and helped the Shia political parties. There is still massive tension between the Kurds and Arabs in Iraq, and the rise of ISIS has made community relations even worse. The Iraqi government often fails to control its allied militant forces like the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), which has allowed the Kurds to be victimized by government militant groups. The Iraqi government also fails to maintain its security agreements with the KRG, forcing the Peshmerga to bear the brunt of the fight against ISIS in the disputed territories. Fur-

thermore, several constitutional articles regarding the Kurds are ignored, leading to the undermining of the KRG.

International human rights groups seem to struggle when mapping abuses in the disputed territories of Iraq. In all of these reports, there is never any mention of the ongoing Arabization campaign against the Kurds in the disputed territories of Iraq. There is also no commentary on electoral policy, making it harder for the Kurds to be represented. Many of the abuses that have been documented by these human rights groups are committed by both the KRG and the central Iraqi government. There is a focus on what various governmental actors do. Still, international groups never seem to focus on the relationship between the KRG and the federal Iraqi government, even though this relationship is often one-sided.

## Amnesty International Report 2017

In 2017, the KRG was mentioned three times by Amnesty International in their annual review of Iraq. The KRG held a referendum on independence in 2017 for the territory of the KRG and some of the disputed territory in Iraq. The KRG and the Iraqi government have also been accused of enforced disappearances, torture, and inhumane conditions of suspected ISIS members. The KRG also used tear gas and live ammunition to disperse Yazidi protesters. According to the report, journalists and online activists were subject to "arbitrary arrest, beatings, surveillance, death threats, and smear campaigns."

## Human Rights Watch Report 2017

The Iraqi government and the KRG have reportedly arbitrarily detained men and boys for weeks at a time for suspected ties to ISIS. Government forces have been accused of

torture, mutilation of corpses, and enforced disappearances. Iraq has been deemed one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. The KRG held a referendum on independence.

### Local Reporting

International groups fail to report the anti-Kurdish rhetoric used by government forces, especially before elections in Iraq. In 2017, the governor of Kirkuk, a Kurd, was removed from his post after Iraqi and Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) forces occupied the province and imposed a new active governor on the people of Kirkuk. Kurdish land has been given to Arab settlers by the imposed governor. Many Kurds have been removed from various government posts in Kirkuk and replaced with Arabs. And after being removed, they were effectively banished from their hometowns. The acting governor has also enacted multiple contracts reminiscent of the Saddam era. Thousands of Kurds fled the towns of Kirkuk and Tuz Khurmatu as government forces reoccupied parts of the Saladin province. Hundreds of homes were burned down or bombed in these towns by Iranian and Turkish troops.

Amnesty International Report 2018

Turkish shelling and airstrikes continue in the mountainous northern region of Iraq with reported civilian casualties. Kurdish security forces violently dispersed peaceful protests in Erbil and Dohuk, and several journalists were detained and claimed to have been tortured by Kurdish security forces. Much like in 2017, Kurdish security forces were accused of enforced disappearances and of torturing suspected ISIS members.

### Human Rights Watch Report 2018

In an effort to screen for ISIS fighters, the KRG has stopped families for weeks at checkpoints that are right on the frontlines. ISIS suspects are being detained in inhumane conditions and are subject to torture. Families of ISIS members face collective punishment, including forced displacement and imprisonment. The cam-

paign against ISIS, according to the HRW, has allowed government forces to commit a litany of abuses. The KRG has also put a de facto moratorium on the death penalty.

### Local Reporting

The acting governor of Kirkuk province has barred Kurdish farmers from harvesting their crops, saying that ownership of the land is disputed. Nearly 17,000 Arab families have been settled in 500 villages in the disputed territories of Iraq. In Sargaran, Kurdish residents reportedly were given only 72 hours to leave the sub-district. There is growing concern that the Iraqi government is attempting to change the demographics of the disputed territory through targeted campaigns. Government security forces routinely protect Kurdish neighborhoods and villages even though they are one of the more frequent targets of Islamic State attacks. Nearly 1.2 million acres of Kurdish farmland are under threat.

### Human Rights Watch Report 2019

The KRG and the Iraqi government, according to the HRW, have no strategy for punishing the worst abuses first. There continues to be collective punishment for families of suspected ISIS members. Kurdish security forces were accused of arresting and detaining journalists at random. Protestors also accused Kurdish security forces of using violence to contain the protests.

### Local Reporting

The Arabization campaign continued in 2019 with Kurdish citizens being displaced in the disputed territories and political ostracization increasing. The region's farmlands have been in dispute since 2003 following the fall of the Saddam regime. In 2019, Arab farmers started harvesting wheat on Kurdish property. The Kurds also claim groups of Arab farmers have confiscated farm equipment. Others have had their land ultimately claimed by Arab settlers using Saddam-era documents to gain ownership of the farmland. Lastly, five Kurdish homes were demolished by Iraqi security forces. Also, Kurdish farm-

lands are being burnt down in Khanaqin and Kirkuk. Iraqi security forces are not directly responsible for the burning of Kurdish farmland. However, much of the farmlands that have been set ablaze have occurred in areas with many Iraqi security forces. Some have accused the PMF of conducting these burn campaigns on Kurdish farmland. Local Kurds also claim that Iraqi security forces have pointed guns at them. In Palakana, armed settlers raided the village and forced Kurdish citizens out of the village.

### Amnesty International Report 2020

Turkish airstrikes continue to shell northern Iraq killing five civilians. There was also intermittent Iranian shelling of the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK). The KRG, according to Amnesty, continues to assault freedom of expression in the Kurdish region of Iraq. The KRG also violently dispersed protestors in Erbil and Dohuk. The KRG prevents Arab IDPs from returning to their homes in the disputed territories. COVID-19 has hampered the judicial process for trying suspected ISIS members and has forced the closure of several IDP camps, leading to the camps being overcrowded. The Iraqi government and the KRG have failed in their obligations to the Yazidi.

### Human Rights Watch Report 2020

Government security forces used excessive force against peaceful protestors. The government reportedly blocked the internet to prevent social media from documenting the excessive force. There is evidence of widespread torture of suspected IS members. Collective punishment continues for families of suspected IS members.

### Local Reporting

For the third year in a row, there has been an ongoing Arabization campaign in the disputed territories that international human rights groups have not reported on. According to local reporting, Iraqi government forces and the PMF threatened Kurdish residents of Palkana if they did not leave. Arab settlers are given priority to farm-

able land in the disputed territory. In 2020, the Iraqi parliament passed a new election bill that created undue burdens on Kurdish political parties and worsened representation for Kurdish people in Iraq in violation of Iraq's constitution. Also, 50 Kurds were arrested by Iraqi security forces after celebrating the electoral victory of a local Kurdish party. Displaced Kurdish families are also having difficulty getting their paperwork, as was the case for a young Kurdish girl named Referendum. There have also been reported cases of voter intimidation targeting the Kurds at voting stations.

There is no mention by these international rights groups of the displacement of Kurds, the destruction of Kurdish farmlands, or the ongoing political ostracization. In all of these reports, there is no mention of the ongoing Arabization campaign against the Kurds in the disputed territories of Iraq. There is also no commentary on electoral policy, making it harder for the Kurds to be represented. Many of the abuses documented by these human rights groups are committed by both the KRG and the central Iraqi government. There is a focus on what various governmental actors do, but there is no real focus by international groups on the relationship between the KRG and the federal Iraqi government, even though this relationship is often one-sided. This includes the Iraqi government withholding constitutionally required funding from the budget to the KRG. The Iraqi government frequently backtracks on security agreements between the Peshmerga and the Iraqi military. This has created space for ISIS to operate freely and has led to the destruction of Kurdish farmlands and forced displacement of Kurdish residents in the disputed territories. There is minimal reporting on the state backed PMFs who operate in the disputed territories even though they are frequently the perpetrators in cases of abuse in the disputed territories. The international human rights community has an obligation to report abuses by the Iraqi government, including those that occur in the disputed territories.



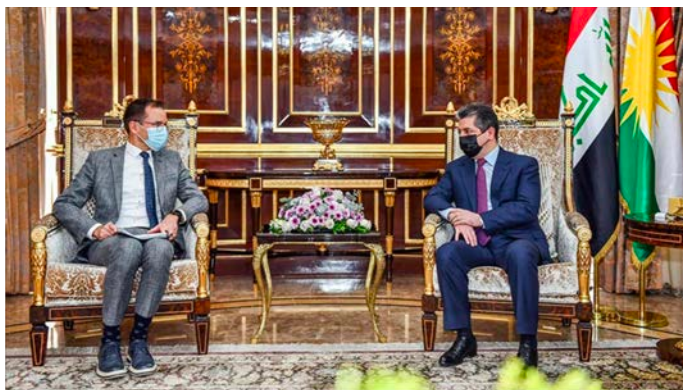
May 9, 2022  
By Dler S. Mohammed

## PM Barzani and Belgian Ambassador emphasize strengthening economic ties

Prime Minister Masrour Barzani and Belgian Ambassador to Iraq and Jordan Filip Vanden Bulcke emphasized strengthening economic relations between Erbil and Brussels in a meeting on Monday.

Prime Minister Barzani received Ambassador Bulcke and his accompanying delegation in his office in Erbil.

“We discussed the latest developments of the political process in Kurdistan Region and Iraq and the security situation of the wider region,” the prime minister said in a Facebook



Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Masrour Barzani in meeting with Filip Vanden Bulcke, Belgium’s Ambassador to Iraq and Jordan, May 9, 2022. (Photo: KRG)

post. “We also discussed the bilateral ties between Kurdistan Region and Belgium.”

Prime Minister Barzani and Ambassador Bulcke “emphasized strengthening the bilat-

eral ties in all sectors, especially the economic sector.

Belgium and the Kurdistan Region enjoy cordial ties. In June 2021, Prime Minister Barzani met his Belgian counterpart Alexander De Croo in Brussels. During that meeting, the Belgian leader described the Kurdistan Region as “dynamic, vital, and effective.”

“We can provide assistance to the Kurdistan Regional Government’s (KRG) work program, especially in the agricultural sector,” he said.

AL-MONITOR  
Customer Highlight

May 8, 2022  
By Sultan al-Kanj

## Syrian opposition wary of Erdogan’s plan to return 1 million refugees

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared that his country is preparing to return 1 million Syrian refugees to the northern Syria areas controlled by the Turkish-backed opposition, but he fell short of announcing the mechanism by which such numbers would return.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced May 3 a plan by his government that would allow the “voluntary return” of 1 million Syrian refugees from Turkey to northern Syria.

Erdogan’s statements came in a video speech he made during an event attended by Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu in the town of Sarmada in Idlib’s northwestern province of Syria to hand over housing units built by the Turkish government and Turkish relief organizations to the displaced.

The Turkish president said in his speech, “About 500,000 Syrians have returned to the safe areas that Turkey has provided since launching its operations in Syria in 2016.”

“We are preparing for a new project that will allow the voluntary return of 1 million of our Syrian brothers whom we host in our country,” he added.

He explained that with the support of civil society institutions both in Turkey and around the world, the project will cover 13

areas in northern Syria, such as Azaz, Jarablus, al-Bab and Tell Abyad, and will provide “all the necessary needs for a decent living, such as schools, hospitals and homes for our Syrian brothers.”

“We support migrants staying behind the border through voluntary return projects that include building safe houses,” the Turkish president added.

He continued, “We do not deal with the geographical areas that we have set foot in based on their natural resources, as we

only proceed based on the needs of the oppressed and the victims. We do not look at anyone’s skin, hair, eye color, belief or language, and we believe in God’s will given all the assistance we have provided to the oppressed. Today, we are one of the most aid-giving countries in the world.”

In this context, the Turkish Sabah website revealed the stages of the project announced by Erdogan.

In a report published May 5, the

website said that the project aims to establish residential compounds in the areas of Azaz, Jarablus and al-Bab in the northern and northeastern countryside of Aleppo, which are under the control of the Free Syria Army (FSA), Turkey's ally, as well as in the areas of Tell Abyad and Ras al-Ain in the countryside of Hasakah and Raqqa, which are also under the control of the FSA.

The paper said that the return project consists of eight phases, phase one of which will witness the voluntary return from major Turkish states that are crowded with Syrians, such as Istanbul, Ankara, Konya, Adana and Gaziantep. The second phase will witness the voluntary return to areas that guarantee military, political and security stability for refugees in northern Syria, with the cooperation of 13 Syrian local councils and the involvement of the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD).

In the third stage, the AFAD is to coordinate with 12 civil society organizations such as IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation and the Turkish Red Crescent, and establish new spaces to build homes, public facilities and infrastructure.

The project will also include the establishment of commercial areas such as small industrial areas, shops and markets, and it will provide new job opportunities in order to ensure the sustainability of daily life in those areas. It will mainly consist of building schools, hospitals and mosques as part of the fourth and fifth stages.

The project will provide in the sixth stage vocational courses to teach crafts. It will also organize professional workshops and provide small loans to enable Syrian refugees returning to their country to work.

Educational programs will be an important part of the project's phases, which will also witness the activation of rehabilitation and psychological support pro-



This picture shows an aerial view of internally displaced Syrians arriving with their belongings in a convoy of trucks at a new housing complex in the opposition-held area of Bizaah, east of the city of al-Bab in the northern Aleppo governorate, built with the support of Turkey's emergencies agency AFAD, on Feb. 9, 2022, after leaving a nearby camp. - BAKR ALKASEM/AFP via Getty Images

grams as part of stage seven.

In the eighth stage, requests for support will be submitted by local or international funding bodies, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Turkish government has yet to confirm the Sabah report.

A leader in the Syrian opposition told Al-Monitor on condition of anonymity, "Turkey informed the Syrian opposition of this project, but it has yet to provide us with more details. We fear that this plan might be ill-considered and lead to counterproductive results in the northern Syria areas that are overcrowded after huge numbers of displaced people flocked from all regions of Syria. The question that arises in this context is what would happen if Turkey brought in a million refugees? This will definitely exacerbate the problem, as it may lead to Turkey's withdrawal from the Syrian file. It could also lead it to be less enthusiastic as far as changing the Syrian regime is concerned."

Mohammed al-Sukari, a Syrian researcher who has Turkish citi-

zenship and resides in Turkey, told Al-Monitor, "It is clear that there is a Turkish tendency to have many Syrians return to the areas under the control of the Syrian opposition, at least as part of political propaganda before the Turkish public that has grown resentful of the presence of the Syrian opposition."

"This is the result of weak refugee policies in Turkey since the beginning of the refugee crisis erupted, as Turkey was unable to provide a sustainable environment for refugees away from the state of political polarization. The Turkish opposition has been turning the Turks against refugees for years, and it seems that things have spun out of the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AKP) ability to confront this propaganda against the Syrians," he went on to say.

Sukari added, "Therefore, Turkey believes that having groups of Syrians return to Syria in order to contain the anger of the Turkish street will aim to mitigate voter losses, especially in the upcoming 2023 elections, and may help defuse popular tension. The Turkish government will seek to have refugees return

to separate areas in northern Syria, all the while implementing projects that would serve as 'primitive' housing units, targeting different segments of Syrians in Turkey. These could include, for instance, people whose temporary protection ID card (known as Kimlik) have been suspended, refugees who do not have work permits or even violators residing in separate Turkish states."

He stressed that this return cannot be described as voluntary but rather as forced for many reasons, the most important of which is the instability and continuous bombing in northern Syria to which Turkey is seeking to have refugees return, and Turkey is aware that even its soldiers are being targeted in those areas it describes as safe. Differently put, the term "safe and voluntary return" is far from being accurate unless a comprehensive political solution is reached in Syria, he added.

Sukari concluded by saying that the restrictions on the Syrian refugees in Turkey will increase to unprecedented heights in the lead-up to the elections scheduled for next year.



May 10, 2022

## Kurdistan's Weekly Brief May 10, 2022

### Iran

The Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI) reported the Iranian regime was attempting to alter the demography of Kurdish areas, mainly Changing administrative boundaries of Kurdish villages in Mehabad and Bukan to Azeri-majority city of Mian-doab. Azeris are Iran's largest ethnic minority and often receive favorable treatment from the regime because of their adherence to Shi'ism.

A pregnant Kurdish political prisoner named Suda Khederzadeh ended a week-long hunger strike protesting Iranian authorities' denial of medical treatment in Urmia Central Prison. Khederzadeh's strike began when prison officials reneged on a promise to send her to a hospital for prenatal care. Khederzadeh has been imprisoned since October 2021. Concurrently, teachers in Marivan launched a strike on Friday to protest poor working conditions in Iran's schools. On Monday, Iranian teachers demanded the release of two retired Kurdish teachers, Iskandar Lutfi and Massud Nikkha, who were arrested on Saturday for organizing the strike. Also, on Monday, Iranian authorities detained a Kurdish teacher in Kermanshah named Farhad Mirzaie. Meanwhile, Saqqez's Islamic Revolutionary Court sentenced three Kurdish activists to prison for membership in an opposition party. Zamana Zainwa and Miqad Nazhad received six-month sentences, and Mohammed Salimi received an 11-month sentence.

### Iraq

The Iranian-backed blocs in Iraq's Council of Representatives failed to form a new government before Muqtada al Sadr's deadline passed last week. Al Sadr heads Iraq's largest parliamentary bloc and called upon the independents to form a government. Al Sadr's call received support from Sunnis and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and demanded at least 40 independent lawmakers establish a government that he will support. Al Sadr issued a May 19 deadline for the independent lawmakers to form a new government, but it is unlikely they will accomplish such a task before the latest deadline passes.

Renewed clashes between the Iraqi military and the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS) displaced 10,200 Yazidis from Duhok Governorate's Zakho District. Though the Iraqi government began its campaign against the YBS to facilitate the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the ongoing offensive has raised fears among Iraq's Kurds that the Iraqi government intends to use the conflict as a pretext for additional measures against Erbil. A Kurdish official reported the YBS met with an Iraqi delegation and agreed to leave residential areas, but the situation remains tenuous, and the Yazidis still suffer from a lack of security and services.

Iraq's Minister of Oil Ihsan Abdul Jabbar Ismail threatened to enforce a Federal Supreme Court of Iraq ruling that de-

clared the KRG's oil and gas law unconstitutional and would require the handover of all oil produced in the Kurdistan Region to the Iraqi government. Erbil is currently pushing for a new oil and gas law that would prevent such an outcome, but consensus with Baghdad remains elusive.

The Peshmerga repelled two ISIS (Da'esh) attacks on Thursday and Friday near Perdi and the Qara Chokh mountains in Erbil Governorate's Makhmur District. One Peshmerga was wounded during the fighting. Da'esh began launching an increasing number of operations in the "Disputed Territories" after Iraqi forces and Iranian-backed militias removed the Peshmerga from the region on October 16, 2017.

### Syria

Turkey and its Syrian proxies shelled several areas near the strategic M4 Motorway in an attempt to consolidate control of the road and hinder the movement of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Concurrently, the SDF asserted Turkey attacked SDF-controlled areas over 600 times in April, killing five SDF personnel and two civilians, wounding another 23 civilians, and damaging at least 36 homes. On another note, dozens of human rights organizations and several Kurdish parties denounced Turkey's plan to relocate one million Syrian refugees to Kurdish lands occupied by the Turkish military. "At a time when we call on the Syrian

people to return to their original areas and their properties and not to the settlements established by the Turkish occupation or those that were established under the auspices of [Muslim] Brotherhood associations aimed at achieving certain political goals," read a statement from the Democratic Union Party (PYD).

### Turkey

The Pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) condemned the police's aggression against the party headquarter in Ankara last Thursday. The Turkish police attacked party members and broke doors down with verbal threats. At least two people were injured, including a lawyer. Earlier that day, three Turks protested the HDP, but the police blocked access to the building resulting in the HDP's protest against the police's "provocation." In a statement, the HDP said: "These three protestors were directed and controlled by the police. The police continued their provocative actions and blockaded our headquarters, even after the protestors had laid their wreath." A senior HDP lawmaker said three police officials, Mukadder Kardiye, Deputy Police Commissioner for Ankara Security Branch, Serkan Cakmak, Security Branch Manager, and Superintendent Murat Guler, threatened to "kill" a party lawmaker. The attack on HDP sparked protests in several Kurdish cities, mainly by feminist and Kurdish organizations.

## Une centaine de prisonniers kurdes non libérés bien qu'ils aient purgé la totalité de leurs peines

La députée Gülüstan Kılıç-Koçyiğit du Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP) a dénoncé la non libération de la prisonnière kurde Dilan Oynaş à la fin de sa peine de prison lors de son discours devant la Commission d'enquête du Parlement sur les droits humains au sujet des violations des droits dans les prisons. La députée a déclaré qu'il y avait au moins 116 prisonniers non libérés bien qu'ils aient purgé la totalité de leurs peines.

Gülüstan Kılıç-Koçyiğit s'est enquis de la situation de la prisonnière Dilan Oynaş qui n'a pas été libérée bien qu'elle ait purgé sa peine. TURQUIE. Des prisonnières kurdes, Dilan Oynaş n'est pas libérée bien qu'elle ait purgé sa peine

« Elle doit être libérée »

Kılıç-Koçyiğit a noté ce qui suit :



« Les violations des droits se poursuivent dans les prisons turques. Selon les informations diffusées dans les médias, le prisonnier Dilan Oynaş, qui est derrière les barreaux depuis six ans dans la prison de type fermé de Sincan, n'a pas été libéré sans aucune justification. » Il a été rapporté qu'il y a quatre autres prisonnières dans la pri-

son de Sincan qui n'ont pas été libérées. Berrin Sarı, Hanım Yıldırım, Jiyan Ateş et Rojdan Erez n'ont pas été libérées sur la base d'une décision de l'Observation exécutive du conseil de la prison. »

116 prisonniers détenus emprisonnés malgré la fin de leurs peines de prison

Le 1er janvier 2021 en Turquie, un règlement est entré en vigueur concernant la situation des détenus ayant purgé leur peine.

Kılıç-Koçyiğit a déclaré que sur la base du règlement, de nombreux prisonniers sont empêchés d'être libérés.

« Selon les demandes faites à l'Association des avocats pour la liberté (ÖHD), le nombre de prisonniers qui n'ont pas été libérés est d'au moins 116 en février 2022.

La liberté des prisonniers dépend des décisions de l'administration pénitentiaire. Cette réglementation est discriminatoire et loin d'être juste. La commission d'enquête sur les droits de l'homme du parlement doit prendre des mesures à ce sujet. La commission doit l'inscrire à l'ordre du jour. »

## Une musicienne kurde battue et arrêtée à Istanbul

La police turque a pris d'assaut l'appartement de la barde kurde (dengbêj) Xalîde à Istanbul. La musicienne a été battue et arrêtée.

L'artiste kurde Xalîde a été placée en garde à vue jeudi par la police turque. Les forces spéciales ont pris d'assaut l'appartement de la célèbre chanteuse barde (dengbêj) dans le cadre d'une « enquête ». Les policiers ont endommagé un saz (instrument à corde) et confisqué des livres



tandis que la musicienne a reçu des coups de poing. Xalîde est l'un des musiciens du

Centre Culturel Mezopotamya (MKM).

Le Centre culturel Mezopota-

mya a été fondé à Istanbul en 1991. Son co-fondateur le plus connu était l'écrivain kurde Musa Anter, qui a été assassiné par l'État turc en 1992. Le centre culturel a apporté de précieuses contributions dans les domaines de la musique, du théâtre, de la danse, cinéma et littérature contre l'assimilation et l'ignorance dont est victime la culture kurde, notamment en Turquie. Après Istanbul, des succursales ont été créées dans plusieurs villes kurdes, toutes fermées depuis par le régime d'Erdoğan.



Washington Kurdish Institute  
Est. 1996

May 12, 2022

## WKI Kirkuk Minute May 12, 2022

### Kirkuk

The Peshmerga repelled two ISIS (Da'esh) attacks on Thursday and Friday near Pirde (Altun Kopri) and the Qara Chokh mountains in Erbil Governorate's Makhmur District. One Peshmerga was wounded during the fighting. Further, on May 10, security forces in Kirkuk announced the arrest of a Da'esh cell in the Hawija district, including two female terrorists.

The Kurds lost another security position as the Iraqi Interior Ministry replaced a Kurdish commander of government building protection with a non-Kurd. The position was given to a Christian officer. The Kurds have lost more than 120 administrative and security posts since October 16, 2017.

Kirkuk's Emergency Police announced the arrest of a criminal group responsible for human trafficking and drug dealing. According to police, the group which was arrested near Panja Ali had kidnapped women for prostitution. A

kidnapped female was freed during the raid, and some drugs were confiscated.

The Integrity Commission in Kirkuk announced the arrest of a "woman official" for receiving 20,000 US dollars as a bribe from a property management company in return for lower tax rates. Separately, the acting governor of Kirkuk, Rakan al Jabouri, deprived the Kurdish teachers hired by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of receiving land from the government. Due to ignoring Kurdish studies, the KRG hired hundreds of Kurdish teachers since 2003 for Kurdish schools in Kirkuk.

The director of Water Resources in Kirkuk, Zaki Karim, said that water levels have decreased to a "dangerous" level, dropping 70%. Karim said groundwater decreased by 50% due to drought and fishing farms using well water in the last three decades.

### Khanaqin

Da'esh attacked a police checkpoint from two fronts near Jalawla on Sunday, May 8. As a result, a police officer was killed, and three others were wounded. Further, Khanaqin police announced the arrest of three people, part of a group in charge of US dollar counterfeiting. The police said they confiscated 100,000 counterfeit US dollars.

### Tuz Khurmatu

Two Iraqi soldiers were injured by the Da'esh attack on their checkpoint near the Pirahmad village last Thursday. Additionally, Da'esh terrorists shelled the Iraqi army near the Abodi village, killing a soldier and injuring three others. Meanwhile, the terror group released a Kurdish shepherd for 30,000 US dollars ransom, kidnapped in late April.

### Makhmour

The Iraqi National Security hired 45 new personnel to its ranks in Makhmour, but Kurds were ex-

cluded from the hiring process. All new employees are Arabs, including some from Nineveh province. The US-led coalition conducted new airstrikes against Da'esh positions in the Qara Chokh mountains. According to an Iraqi security cell, the air raid resulted in the neutralization of seven Da'esh terrorists.

### Shingal (Sinjar)

The number of displaced Yazidis reached 10,000 as tension remains high between the Iraqi army and the Shingal Resistance Units (YBS) despite a truce. On Saturday, May 7, hundreds of the Yazidi residents protested the recent battles and called for an immediate stop. The protests also called for all the security forces aside from local police, to leave the town and its subdistricts. Meanwhile, Iraq's prime minister Mustafa al Kadhimi told senior Yazidi religious leaders and public figures that the Sinjar Agreement "aims for the Iraqi state to remain as the only existence present there."



May 12, 2022

## Erdogan opponents allege Greek border pushbacks

For years Greece has been accused of illegally pushing asylum-seekers back to Turkey, a practice it strenuously denies.

But according to witnesses and rights groups, the summary deportations are also hitting vulnerable opponents of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Kurdish writer Meral Simsek, 42, is one of several people who told AFP they were sent back to Turkey to face im-

prisonment and possible torture after already making a perilous crossing of the border on the River Evros.

Simsek said her experience was harrowing. She claimed Greek police forcibly strip-searched her and another woman from Syria, and that she nearly died on the journey back.

"They took our phones and all our documents. They told us to undress and strip searched us. They even put hands on my vagina," she said.

The two women were then put into an unmarked van and driven back to the river.

### 'Blood and urine'

"The vehicle smelled of blood and urine, indicating that other people had been abused in there," the writer said.

Simsek was then forced onto a dinghy piloted by two migrant men who "intended to drown" her, she claimed.

"I jumped into the water and

swam to the other bank," she said.

Last month Human Rights Watch said Greece was using men of apparent Middle Eastern or South Asian origin as "proxies" to facilitate illegal deportations at its land border with Turkey.

When she got back to the Turkish side, Simsek was locked up in the nearby city of Edirne.

She was fortunate to avoid a 22-year prison sentence for



belonging to a terrorist organisation thanks to help from Amnesty International and other rights groups.

But she still faces a 15-month sentence for spreading propaganda against the Turkish government.

"This experience at the Greek-Turkish border revived the trauma of my past," said the writer, who was jailed and tortured in Turkey in the 1990s. I wanted to rebuild my life in Europe, be protected. Instead of that, I lived a nightmare," she said.

### Change of attitude

Greece has traditionally been sympathetic to the plight of Kurds, some of whom have been waging an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984 that has claimed tens of thousands of lives.

But according to the Kurdistan Cultural Centre in Athens which assists fugitive Kurds, the policy appears to have



Pushback: Greece has denied illegally sending back refugees like these at the Turkish border in 2020 Sakis MITROLIDIS AFP/File

changed last summer and many are now sent back to Turkey before being given a chance to apply for asylum in Greece.

Hundreds of non-Kurdish Turkish citizens have also sought protection in Greece following the failed coup against Erdogan in 2016.

Mehmet, a former police officer accused of being loyal to Fethullah Gulen -- a preacher and former Erdogan supporter accused of plotting the coup -- claimed Greece pushed him back three times last year.

He avoided a fourth expulsion thanks to a Greek lawyer, who helped him lodge an asylum request.

Meryem, a 32-year-old with dual Franco-Turkish nationality, said she was turned back in October even after showing Greek police her French identity card and a copy of her passport.

She was jailed in Turkey after being sentenced for being part of Gulen's organisation, which is now illegal. Her case is pending before the European Court of Human Rights. Athens has always denied that its se-

curity forces engage in illegal pushbacks.

In March, Greece's national transparency authority said a four-month investigation found no evidence of such practices. EU border agency Frontex has also repeatedly been accused by rights groups of illegally returning migrants across EU borders.

Its chief Fabrice Leggeri quit last month amid an investigation by the European anti-fraud office OLAF, reportedly into alleged mismanagement.

Alkistis Agrafioti, a lawyer with the Greek Council for Refugees, said the time has come for the EU to mount a "serious" inquiry into pushbacks.

"Pushbacks not only run contrary to international law, but they are also accompanied by criminal acts -- stealing, violence, abuse" and lives being put in danger, she added.

AFP did not receive a reply to a request for comment from the Turkish authorities.



May 13, 2022

By Chenar Chalak

## Soaring food prices trigger protests across Iran

Protests against inflation and surging prices of goods spread on Thursday across a number of provinces in Iran after the government cut subsidies for food, Iranian media outlets reported.

Videos shared on social media showed protestors marching through Lorestan, Kermanshah, Khuzestan and Tehran chanting anti-regime slogans mainly targeting the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Ebrahim Raisi.

In the streets of Char Mahal and Bakhtiari, people chanted "Death to Khamenei," and "Shame on Raisi," reported Iran International. The Iranian president had promised to create jobs, lift sanctions and rescue Iran's economy upon his inauguration.

Iranian state media on Friday afternoon addressed the demonstrations, announcing the arrest of at least 22 protestors in two southern cities.

Prices of good in Iran have

skyrocketed since the start of May.

The price of one kilogram of flour rose from 2,700 toman (less than 10 cents) to 16,000 tomans (around 60 cents), according to Iran International. The surge in flour prices have resulted in increasing bread and pasta prices, leading to massive demonstrations engulfing the country.

The circulating videos depicted Iranian security forces using gunfire to disperse the protestors. Iran International also

reported that teargas and batons were used by the forces for that same purpose.

The media outlet also stated that internet services were cut off in a number of Khuzistan cities as the province has displayed a vocal presence in the recent protests in the area.

Protests broke out in Iran over water shortages in 2021. Excessive force was used by Iranian authorities to break up the protests, in addition to cutting off Internet services.

## Paris dénonce l'arrestation « sans fondement » de deux enseignants français en Iran

Arrêtés le 8 mai, les deux professeurs sont accusés d'avoir cherché « à provoquer le chaos », alors que se tenaient, quelques jours plus tôt, en Iran, des manifestations d'enseignants. Paris a demandé leur « libération immédiate ».

Une nouvelle affaire de « prisonniers-otages » va empoisonner les relations entre Paris et Téhéran, déjà au plus bas. Le ministère des affaires étrangères français a annoncé, jeudi 12 mai, l'arrestation « sans fondement » de deux Français en Iran, exigeant leur « libération immédiate » et promettant de « rester pleinement mobilisé à cette fin ».

L'ambassadeur de France à Téhéran s'efforçait d'obtenir un accès consulaire auprès de ces deux personnes et le chargé d'affaires de l'ambassade d'Iran à Paris a été convoqué au Quai d'Orsay, a affirmé le ministère dans un communiqué.

Mercredi, le ministère des renseignements iranien a annoncé l'arrestation de deux « enseignants européens », sans préciser leur nationalité, mis en cause pour avoir cherché à « provoquer le chaos et le désordre social dans le but de déstabiliser » le pays. Ils sont notamment accusés d'avoir rencontré des membres du Conseil de coordination des associations d'enseignants iraniens, un réseau syndical qui lutte contre la dégradation du niveau de vie et la répression.

Les deux ressortissants français, un couple d'enseignants membres de la confédération syndicale Force ouvrière (FO), auraient été interpellés à l'aéroport de Téhéran, le 8 mai, alors qu'ils s'apprêtaient à rentrer en France, selon le média Iran International, publié au Royaume-Uni. La Fédération nationale de l'enseignement, de la culture et de la formation professionnelle-

FO (FNEC-FP-FO) assure qu'ils étaient en visite dans le pays à titre privé, pour les vacances.

Mais leur profil, l'un d'eux étant membre de la direction de la fédération chargée des relations internationales du syndicat, a dû éveiller l'intérêt des services de sécurité en Iran. Les deux Français seraient entrés dans le pays le 29 avril, soit deux jours avant une mobilisation nationale, le 1er mai, des travailleurs du secteur de l'éducation ; elle a donné lieu à des rassemblements et à des manifestations dans près de soixante villes à travers les vingt et une provinces du pays, dans un climat tendu.

### Réveil social

Depuis le retrait unilatéral des Etats-Unis de l'accord sur le dossier nucléaire iranien, en 2018, à l'initiative de l'ancien président Donald Trump, des sanctions américaines ont été réimposées à la République islamique d'Iran, entraînant le pays dans une spirale inflationniste. La monnaie locale a perdu 80 % de sa valeur face au dollar et le taux d'inflation flirte avec les 40 % en rythme annuel.

Le front social s'est réveillé. Fonctionnaires, ouvriers de la pétrochimie ou encore retraités multiplient les manifestations contre la dégradation de leur niveau de vie et la corruption – qu'ils attribuent aux élites du régime –, vécue comme toujours plus insupportable. A la pointe de la contestation : le secteur de l'éducation.

Le pays est ainsi depuis des

mois le théâtre de rassemblements d'enseignants rejoints par d'autres fonctionnaires. Des contestations qui ne vont pas sans représailles et rendent le pouvoir nerveux, les autorités pourchassant les noyaux d'organisation de syndicats libres.

Selon l'agence de presse Emtedad, au moins 38 enseignants ont été arrêtés à travers le pays entre la mi-avril et le début de mai ; dix-sept d'entre eux seraient toujours détenus, poursuivis pour « rassemblements en vue de porter atteinte à la sécurité nationale » ou pour « avoir agi contre la sécurité nationale ».

### Echange de prisonniers

L'arrestation des deux ressortissants français intervient alors que Téhéran retient déjà plusieurs ressortissants étrangers, la plupart binationaux, pour des motifs jugés politiques par les pays occidentaux, qui considèrent que Téhéran s'en sert comme moyen de pression : pour desserrer l'étau des sanctions internationales ; comme levier dans le cadre des négociations sur le dossier du nucléaire ; et comme monnaie d'échange pour la libération de diplomates et de ressortissants iraniens emprisonnés en Europe.

Le chercheur Roland Marchal, compagnon de la chercheuse franco-iranienne Fariba Adelhah, condamnée en mai 2020 à cinq ans de prison pour « atteinte à la sécurité nationale », a été renvoyé en France en mars 2020, alors que Paris venait de libérer l'ingénieur iranien Jalal Rohollahnejad, dont les

Etats-Unis réclamaient l'extradition pour violation des sanctions américaines contre l'Iran.

Plusieurs échanges de prisonniers ont eu lieu, ces dernières années. Parmi eux, le journaliste du Washington Post Jason Rezaian, un Irano-Américain échangé, en 2016, contre sept Iraniens détenus aux Etats-Unis. Ou encore Massoud Soleimani, un scientifique iranien relâché contre la libération, en décembre 2019, d'un universitaire américain, Xiyue Wang.

Un ressortissant suédois a été arrêté, le 6 mai, selon Stockholm, alors que les relations entre les deux pays sont tendues en raison du procès en Suède d'un ancien procureur iranien jugé pour « crimes aggravés, crimes contre le droit international et meurtres » pour des faits remontant à l'été 1988, quand des milliers de prisonniers politiques avaient été exécutés en prison.

Egalement détenu, le Français Benjamin Brière a été arrêté en mai 2020 et condamné, en janvier, à huit ans et huit mois de prison pour « espionnage » et « propagande » pour avoir entre autres pris « des photographies de zones interdites » avec un drone de loisir dans un parc naturel. L'arrestation de Benjamin Brière, qui s'est toujours présenté comme un touriste de passage dans le pays, pourrait, elle, être liée au sort du diplomate iranien Assadollah Assadi. Ce dernier a été condamné, en février 2021, à vingt ans de prison par la justice belge pour avoir orchestré, en 2018, une tentative d'attentat en France.

## En Turquie, le président Erdogan réprime toujours plus ses opposants

La responsable du parti CHP à Istanbul a été condamnée à près de cinq ans de prison pour « insulte au président », un an avant les élections prévues en juin 2023.

**P**oursuivis, condamnés, menacés d'inéligibilité, les opposants politiques du président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, se retrouvent dans le viseur de la justice à environ un an de la présidentielle, prévue en juin 2023. Principale formation d'opposition, le Parti républicain du peuple (CHP) est particulièrement ciblé.

Canan Kaftancıoğlu, sa représentante pour la ville d'Istanbul, a été condamnée en appel, jeudi 12 mai, par la Cour suprême à quatre ans et onze mois de prison pour « insulte au président », « insulte à la fonction publique » et « insulte à l'État turc ».

Les accusations contre elle ont été établies sur la base de tweets publiés entre 2012 et 2017. Dans l'un d'eux, l'opposante critiquait l'absence d'enquête sur la mort de Berkin Elvan, un garçon de 14 ans, touché mortellement par une grenade lacrymogène lors des manifestations antigouvernementales du mouvement de Gezi en 2013.

### Frappée d'inéligibilité

« Nous respirerons ensemble quand nous rétablirons l'État de droit », a écrit l'opposante sur Twitter à l'énoncé du verdict. Le maire d'Istanbul, Ekrem İmamoğlu, a pour sa part dénoncé une « décision politique ». « Je suis derrière notre présidente », a-t-il tweeté jeudi.

Laissée en liberté pour le moment, Canan Kaftancıoğlu se retrouve néanmoins frappée d'inéligibilité, ce qui pénalise le parti à la veille d'élections – pré-



Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan lors d'une conférence de presse à Ankara, en Turquie, le 9 mai 2022. ADEM ALTAN / AFP

sidentielle et législatives – cruciales. De plus en plus critiqué pour sa mauvaise gouvernance économique (70 % d'inflation), le gouvernement islamo-conservateur craint la montée en puissance de l'opposition, réunie autour d'un projet commun, à savoir l'abolition du système présidentiel absolutiste mis en place par M. Erdogan. Depuis le début de ses déboires judiciaires, l'opposante, âgée de 50 ans et médecin légiste de formation, dénonce un « procès politique » visant à la punir pour son rôle dans la victoire de l'opposition aux municipales à Istanbul en 2019. Les islamo-conservateurs du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP), fondé et dirigé par M. Erdogan, n'ont jamais digéré la perte d'Istanbul aux municipales du printemps 2019, remportées par Ekrem İmamoğlu, le candidat du CHP.

Canan Kaftancıoğlu avait joué un rôle décisif dans la victoire de celui-ci. Elle était, selon la presse progouvernementale, « la femme derrière İmamoğlu ». « Depuis, l'AKP m'a accroché

une cible dans le dos », avait-elle confié au Monde en 2021.

« Erdogan accentue la répression, car il perd du terrain en raison de la crise économique qui monte. L'AKP tente de se venger d'avoir perdu Istanbul en envoyant Canan Kaftancıoğlu en prison », a commenté jeudi sur Twitter Seren Selvin Korkmaz, du groupe de réflexion İstanPol. La condamnation de cette alliée d'Ekrem İmamoğlu illustre la volonté des autorités d'affaiblir le maire, donné par les sondages comme l'homme politique le plus à même de détrôner le président Erdogan en 2023. Pluie d'enquêtes et procès douteux

Les enquêtes judiciaires pleuvent. Tous les coups sont permis. En 2021, l'édile a été poursuivi pour « comportement irrespectueux » après avoir croisé les mains derrière le dos alors qu'il visitait le tombeau d'un sultan ottoman. Le 1er juin, un tribunal d'Istanbul statuera sur son cas dans une autre affaire, concernant des « insultes » qu'il aurait proférées à

l'encontre de la commission électorale à la suite de l'annulation injustifiée du premier tour des municipales en 2019. Il risque quatre années de prison.

La sentence infligée à Canan Kaftancıoğlu renforce l'argument de l'opposition selon lequel le système judiciaire est devenu l'instrument de vengeance du président Erdogan, soucieux de faire taire les opposants qui lui font de l'ombre. Ainsi Selahattin Demirtaş, l'ancien chef du Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP, prokurde), qui s'est présenté par deux fois à la présidentielle contre M. Erdogan, en 2014 et en 2018, est en prison depuis 2016, accusé de « terrorisme » sur la seule foi de ses discours.

Au début du mois de mai, le philanthrope Osman Kavala, emprisonné depuis 2017, a été condamné par un tribunal d'Istanbul à une peine de prison à vie incompressible au terme d'un procès douteux, indigne d'un État de droit. Figure de la société civile, M. Kavala a été reconnu coupable d'avoir tenté de « renverser » le gouvernement à travers son soutien aux manifestants du mouvement de Gezi en 2013, ce qu'il nie.

Sept autres prévenus, l'architecte Mücella Yapıcı, la documentariste Çigdem Mater, le militant des droits civique Ali Hakan Altınay, la réalisatrice Mine Özerden, l'avocat Can Atalay, l'universitaire Tayfun Kahraman et le fondateur de plusieurs ONG turques Yigit Ali Emekçi ont été condamnés à dix-huit ans de prison chacun pour complicité du même chef d'accusation.

## How a Kurdish mayor pushed for tolerance in Turkey

Now in exile after being persecuted by Ankara, Abdullah Demirbas has propelled a vision of coexistence in Turkey that includes Armenians, Jews, Kurds and other minorities.

Israel uses three languages on its street signs; Hebrew, English and Arabic. That may be something most people take for granted when walking or driving around the country. For Abdullah Demirbas, a former mayor of the important Sur district in the city of Diyarbakir, the symbolism behind the signs is an indication of how Israel is a democracy that respects the language used by the Arab-speaking minority.

He contrasts this with the struggles in Turkey to have Kurdish language exist alongside Turkish.

“Even though the Turkish state says it has democracy, you are not allowed to speak your own language. I have been here for 10 days and I saw all this [signs in Arabic and Hebrew]. My impression here is that if Turkey did just 1% [of what we see in Israel] then we would have peace in Turkey and be happy; but in Turkey they deny us and according to them we do not exist,” he says, referring to the status of Kurds.

“In Turkey as a Kurd, I cannot have an education in the Kurdish language. Recently, Turkey permitted a one-hour elective class taught in Kurdish – but they don’t have Kurdish teachers.”

Demirbas was once a rising star in Turkish politics, as a popular mayor from the Kurdish-majority city of Diyarbakir in eastern Turkey. He traveled



ABDULLAH DEMIRBAS (second L), then-mayor of the Sur municipality, meets employees during an event ahead of International Women’s Day, in Diyarbakir, Turkey, 2013. (photo credit: Mehmet Engin/Reuters)

to Israel recently and sat down with the Magazine to discuss the initiatives he once championed there.

A student of sociology and later a teacher, Demirbas was often subjected to persecution for his work; he describes being banished into exile and twice purged from his position of employment. “The reason is because I was Kurdish and I was a dissident. I wanted everyone to have an education in their mother tongue. I wanted them to be able to learn in Kurdish; oppressed people like Kurds are not allowed to study in their mother tongue.”

In 2005, he was elected mayor of an important neighborhood in the city of Diyarbakir. He initiated a project to be more inclusive of minorities in Turkey. “In Turkey there is only one [official] line, everyone is Turkish

and everyone is Islamic, and everyone should identify with the Turkish culture and mentality. However, I do not accept this rule.

“Turkey as a country has many languages, cultures, religions and many communities.”

He notes that as mayor he sought to provide access for people using six languages; Kurdish, Armenian, Assyrian, Hebrew, Arabic and English. The city’s history goes back thousands of years and he says it has 33 different cultures that make up its historic diversity. Like many areas in the Middle East and Europe, the former diversity of previous eras has been erased or nationalized in the name of the modern nation-state of Turkey.

DEMIRBAS SAYS that his initiative to be more inclusive of

minority languages led to him being removed from his position by the government, with a trustee was put in his place. “Turkey removed me as the elected mayor and placed someone in my position. This is against democracy... They were supposed to have elections in six months but they didn’t have an election for two-and-a-half years and kept the state appointee in charge. The authorities didn’t respect their own rule. Would a democratic state act in this way?”

In 2009, he was elected again with 66% of the votes, improving upon his 2004 election results of 54%. But the government in Ankara would not stop targeting him. “In 2009, the Turkish state decided to put me in prison. According to the Turkish state we are all terrorists.

“I was legally elected with 66% of the vote, how can we be called terrorists? We never touched a weapon. I was in prison and was sick and had chronic health problems and I was released in 2010 due to public pressure.” Despite repeated arrests, he continued his work for multiculturalism in Turkey.

One project he supported included the restoration of religious sites, including a mosque and Chaldean, Catholic, Armenian, Gregorian, Jewish, Alawite and Yazidi religious sites. “The proposal was to show to the world and demonstrate that the holy places can live in co-existence.”

In a sense, his initiative was a precursor to some of the important interfaith and coexistence work we have seen in the aftermath of the Abraham Accords. “I think the Abraham Accords is a vital project to promote peace and friendship and bring animosity to an end in the Middle East,” he says. He notes that his initiatives included invitees of various communities to attend each other’s holidays, such as Muslims visiting Christians and vice-versa.

This didn’t always succeed, as the initiative failed to find a rabbi and Jewish community to participate in the exchanges – because some minorities were still hesitant to take part in these first steps of multiculturalism. “We asked the chief rabbi for support. We did do this with the other communities so that they would host each other.”

THE COEXISTENCE initiatives included 40 representatives of different groups that exist in Turkey, from Muslims and various Christian sects to Jews and Yazidis.

“We wanted all these diverse groups to work together and govern the city.”

The work brought recognition for these initiatives. This included a push at the time for recognition of the Armenian genocide, a mass killing of Armenians the Turkish state has long denied. In 2015, the 100-year anniversary of the beginning of the genocide, Reuters profiled this work as “Turkey wrestles with centuries-old Armenian massacres.”

The work of the pioneering mayor led to meetings with Pope Francis. An invitation to visit him was also offered, inviting him to visit the city and see its new coexistence initiatives.

“I told the pope that these groups come from the [symbolic] garden of Kurdish Diyarbakir to meet the pope. I said: Life is like a garden of flowers.



DEMIRBAS TODAY: ‘I wanted everyone to have an education in their mother tongue.’ (credit: SETH J. FRANTZMAN)

In this garden each plant exists with its own color and they all coexist. In this garden it is more beautiful because it is diverse. But the Turkish state says this garden is either black or white. But I say as a teacher of philosopher if there is only one color we will be blind.

“Diversity is beauty. Peace can occur only if this beauty coexists. This is democracy when these diverse groups are represented.”

The former mayor notes that in 2015, Pope Francis officially visited to Turkey and invited Demirbas to come to Istanbul. “In 2016, I met Pope Francis again. For all those reasons and because of all the projects I began, they [the Turkish authorities] wanted to put me in prison for 300 years. The state declared me a terrorist due to these activities. In 2019, I didn’t have any opportunities and couldn’t run in the election and I escaped to Switzerland.”

THE FORMER mayor was lucky to have escaped.

Turkey has become more authoritarian over the last decades under the ruling AKP party. There had been a limited opening to Kurds and other minorities in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Kurdish language lessons were first allowed as electives in 2012, for instance.

The government of Turkey went from denying the exist-

ence of Kurds to some limited engagement. However, the last years have seen increasing crackdowns on all kinds of dissidents across Turkey, including former allies of the ruling party. In addition, Ankara has increased its role in Syria, and millions of Syrians have become refugees in Turkey, fueling more tensions. Lastly, a coup attempt in 2016 led to massive purges in the country.

Demirbas says his activist role working with minorities led him to be persecuted by the state. Turkey often calls dissidents “terrorists” and he notes that he was put on an official list of people targeted for assassination by the government. Turkey has been known to rendition dissidents from abroad and in 2013, three Kurdish female activists were killed in Paris. “We were on this death hit list and were supposed to be killed. Swiss authorities provided me protection. The reason they wanted to put me in prison for hundreds of years was because of the multi-religious and diversity I wanted to establish.”

The former mayor says that Ankara could learn from the diverse history of Turkey. Diyarbakir is like Jerusalem in its historic diversity; yet, the government has instead tried to use minorities against each other. He points to historic tensions between Armenians and Kurds as an example of “divide and rule” tactics. “They pit us against each other.”

He says that the groups in Diyarbakir historically lived in peace and points to Jewish-Kurdish ties as an example. “I had many Armenian friends; there were also Jews in this council of 40 representatives, and they also had a sister city with Sur in Israel, which is Meveseret Tzion. The mayor of Meveseret invited us here and he visited Diyarbakir. But the Turkish state said we are not allowed to have this connection. The state said we cannot have this cooperation. We wanted this Kurdish-Jewish cooperation.

“We also had this sister city in Armenia but the Turkish state did not allow us to continue this partnership.”

Demirbas was invited to Israel in 2015 where he gave a talk at Tel Aviv University. He has been invited to conferences and other events, and in this context came in April of 2022.

Ankara has now shifted dramatically from the early 2000s when the AKP party pretended it wanted to bring democracy to the country; to seeking to transform Turkey into a far-Right country dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood. The mayor says that some of those who had hopes for democratization now have been left out in the cold.

“He [Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan] used and cheated us and his aim was to establish an Islamic Turkey, his hidden agenda was that he was not honest. He was a fundamentalist Muslim. He used democracy to achieve this. Today, wherever there are radical Islamist ideas, he has backed ISIS, Hamas and the Ikhwan-Brotherhood. Actually, one reason he attacked us is because we were against this... [we] told him that if he wants democracy then why do you remove us from our position?”

Demirbas says that because he and his friends struggled for democracy and diversity, they

suffered persecution. Today the HDP party – the left-leaning party that many Kurds vote for – has 67 members in parliament.

“In almost all cities in Kurdistan the HDP have one or two representatives. Millions of people go on the streets and identify themselves as Kurdish. They are aware of the social development. The Kurds show that what they want for themselves they also want for their neighbors. Kurds want equal rights for Assyrians, Jews, Turkmen and others.

“In our society we also see the importance of emancipation of women. We believe the emancipation of women is important in life but the Turkish state does not accept this,” says the former mayor. Many HDP members have been imprisoned and persecuted by the state.

IN ADDITION, the current regime’s anti-Kurdish policy has led to increased involvement in Syria and northern Iraq. Ankara claims in each instance to be “fighting terrorism” and claims it is targeting the PKK. A brutal conflict inside Turkey in 2015 between the government and the PKK accelerated these clashes, especially after the 2016 coup attempt. “Turkey does not want the development of [the unofficial Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria known as] Rojava. Because Rojava is a model for peaceful coexistence in the Middle East, the Turkish do not accept this. Turkey thinks that if the Kurds in Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran cooperate and make peace, then Turkey can’t invade more places. If the Kurds succeed then radical Islam will decrease,” says Demirbas.

“The situation is also connected to Israel. This is relevant for the safety of Israel,” he continued. “Because the development and success of



CASTING A ballot during the municipal elections in Diyarbakir. (credit: Sertac Kayar/Reuters)

Kurds means the success of peace and freedom, as Kurdish success in peace and liberation would block radical extremism in Iran and Turkey.

“I believe that a free Kurdistan is important and relevant for Israel. If the Kurds don’t hold their power in Rojava, then Iran would take that area. Also, the same can be said of Islamic fundamentalism; it would have taken Rojava and Basur [southern Kurdistan]. For this reason the success of the Kurds and the freedom of Kurds is important for the whole Middle East.”

He says that the role of Kurds in the region is pivotal, and due to this the success of the Kurds in Syria is essential. Kurds in Syria helped play a key role defeating ISIS in 2017 as well as in stopping the genocide of Yazidis in 2014.

“It’s important that Rojava receive recognized status; this is important for American and British and Israeli interests. The lack of status for Kurds is a huge problem. Powerful states should support Rojava by recognizing its political status for three reasons – because Kurds battled against ISIS and defeated this extremism; because it has a democratic system – the model we want to introduce when I was mayor. There are multiple languages and religions and all

are recognized. This model of the 40 representatives exists in each canton.

“And the third reason is that Kurds support emancipation of women. Rojava supports development and emancipation of women.”

He says that the strength of Kurds in Syria, the area called

importance of Jewish-Kurdish relations. Today Kurds and Jews can work together, including on combating antisemitism. “We want Kurdish people and all groups to have a strong relationship with the Jewish people. Neither in history nor now did we have animosity. I believe this is a holy friendship. The Jews suffered a lot, but I believe that [throughout] history Jews never suffered under Kurds.

“The Jews, given their own extreme pain, are the only people who understand the pain of the Kurds in [the] present. We want this relationship to improve much more.”

Being in Israel has also given him new perspectives on slander against the Jewish state. “Recently I attended a small event and it felt like I was in Kurdistan, because of the warmth of people. What I wanted to implement in Diyar-



A TORAH is brought to the Great Synagogue during its post-restoration ceremony in Edirne, western Turkey, 2015. This was the first synagogue to open in Turkey in two generations. (credit: MURAD SEZER/REUTERS)

Rojava in eastern Syria, is crucial for blocking Iran’s influence in the region. “To prevent these fundamentalist groups, we hope the international community will support freedom and unity of Kurds in Rojava and Basur. That would undermine Iranian influence as well. The freedom of Kurdish areas is a win-win for everyone.” Demirbas also highlights the

bakir I see here [already]: the signs in three languages. Turkey claims Israel is an apartheid state but I see Israel promotes language and education in Arabic; it’s just a lie what Turkey is saying.

“For this reason, I wanted to implement this multilingual project in Diyarbakir – but I see it here.”

## La langue kurde victime du génocide linguistique

**A**ujourd'hui, 15 mai, les Kurdes célèbrent la journée de la langue kurde alors que la majorité ne parlent plus le kurde à cause des politiques criminalisant la langue kurde et l'assimilation forcée imposée à près de 40 millions de Kurdes par les États colonialistes au Kurdistan.

Riche de ses nombreux dialectes millénaires, aujourd'hui la langue kurde est menacée de disparition car des dizaines de millions de Kurdes ne peuvent parler, apprendre, ou enseigner leur langue mais sont obligés d'apprendre la langue des colonisateurs. Aujourd'hui, parler en kurde est devenu un acte de survie pour le peuple kurde.

15 mai, journée de la langue kurde

Les Kurdes célèbrent le 15 mai la journée de la langue kurde. Une date associée à la première parution de la revue Hawar publié en 1932 par des intellectuels kurdes en exil. La particularité de la revue Hawar (le cri) est qu'elle est publiée en alphabet latin utilisé pour la première fois alors qu'on utilisait l'alphabet arabe jusqu'alors.

Le 15 mai 1932, paraît à Damas, le premier numéro de la revue kurde Hawar, sous la direction de Celadet Elî Bedirxan (Celadet Bedir Khan) et de ses amis, exilés en Syrie après la fondation de la République de Turquie en 1923. Revue à caractère littéraire, mais aussi politique, Hawar joue un rôle extrêmement important dans la renaissance et le développement de la langue kurde qui est menacée par les



**15ê Gulanê**  
**ROJA CEJNA**  
**ZIMANÊ KURDÎ**  
**Piroz Be!**

nouveaux États-nations occupant le Kurdistan.

Écrite essentiellement en kurmancî, principal dialecte kurde, mais aussi en soranî et zazakî, en plus de quelques publications en français, la revue bimensuelle contribue à la formation de grands noms de la littérature et de la langue kurde, comme le poète Cegerxwîn, et connaît un grand succès, avec ces 57 numéros publiés entre 1932 et 1943.

Outre son intérêt littéraire et linguistique, Hawar a pour particularité d'introduire l'alphabet latin dans l'écriture du kurde qui était jusqu'alors transcrit en alphabet arabe.

Fêtée depuis 2006, la journée de la langue kurde est l'occasion d'élever la revendication de l'enseignement dans la langue maternelle et de dénoncer les politiques répressives des États à l'encontre du kurde. Des quatre États qui occupent le Kurdistan (Turquie, Iran, Irak, Syrie), c'est la Turquie qui a déployé les plus

grands efforts visant à l'assimilation et la disparition de la langue kurde.

Alors que le kurde a toujours été interdit dans le sphère publique sous la République fondée par Atatürk, l'AKP, le parti du président Erdogan, avait montré une « tolérance » certaine aux travaux et réalisation autour de la langue kurde dans les années 2000. Avec la première défaite du parti AKP lors élections de 2015, ce dernier s'est attaqué au parti HDP, tenu responsable de cette défaite. Et comme le HDP était un projet kurde pour les peuples de la Turquie, le pouvoir turc a mené une répression sans précédent à partir de 2016 : avec la déchéance et l'arrestation des maires kurdes du Parti démocratique des Peuples (HDP) et leur remplacement par des administrateurs désignés par le gouvernement turc, toutes les structures kurdes – écoles, centres de formation, centres pour la protection des femmes, institut de recherche et de langue, maison d'édition, chaînes de radio et de télévi-

sion- destinées à la préservation, la diffusion et le développement de la langue kurde ont été interdites.

Malgré les tentatives centenaires menaçant le kurde d'un génocide linguistique, cette langue reste bien vivante, que ce soit au Rojhilat, Rojava, Bashur et Bakur ou dans la diaspora. Au Rojava (Kurdistan syrien) en particulier, elle connaît un grand essor, avec l'institution par l'administration autonome d'un enseignement généralisé dans la langue maternelle, c'est-à-dire le kurde, mais aussi l'arabe, l'assyrien et l'arménien.

La préservation de la langue kurde occupe par ailleurs une place de premier ordre dans les activités des organisations de la diaspora kurde qui déploient de grands efforts pour développer son enseignement et le transmettre aux nouvelles générations.

Cejna zimanê kurdî pîroz be!  
(Bonne fête de la langue kurde!)



May 15, 2022  
By Sierwan Najmaldin Karim

## Deal or No Deal on Nukes, the US Should Change Its Policy Toward Iranian Kurdish Opposition Parties

Following the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, the United States government ceased its relationship with all Iranian opposition, including the Kurdish-led parties. Kurds in the country have strongly opposed the Islamic Republic of Iran since its formation in 1979 and are fighting to establish a free and democratic society that respects their ethnic rights. When Iranian authorities held a referendum seeking the establishment of an Islamic Republic in 1979, not only did Iranian Kurds protest by boycotting the referendum, they confiscated and destroyed all of the ballots in Iranian Kurdistan. This area continues to pay the price for its opposition to the Iranian regime and remains neglected,

undeveloped, and has the highest unemployment rate in Iran.

Though the Obama Administration hoped the JCPOA would encourage Iran to take a softer stance at home and abroad, it did the opposite. Iran, a US-designated state sponsor of terrorism, used the billions of dollars released by the JCPOA to drastically increase its support for its proxies in the Middle East. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) was able to expand its influence by forming new militias and bolstering aid to existing proxies in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. Iranian-backed militias in Iraq remain a destabilizing force and continue to attack Sunni Arabs, Kurds, and US diplo-

matic as well as military facilities. Naturally, this outcome was unsurprising, as US policymakers, including then-Secretary of State John Kerry, acknowledged Iran would use windfalls from sanctions relief to fund terrorism.

In addition to repeatedly attacking American troops and diplomatic facilities, Iran's proxies in Iraq fan the flames of sectarianism that have fueled the Islamic State's (ISIS) re-emergence. Iranian-backed militias' atrocities against Iraq's Sunni population, coupled with the Iranian-influenced Iraqi government's discriminatory policies, drive Sunnis into the arms of groups like ISIS and have hindered US efforts to

stabilize the country since 2003. Iran's Iraqi proxies and the IRGC have also targeted the Kurdistan Region, the US' most reliable partner in the country since 1991, with ballistic missiles and drones. In Syria, the IRGC and its proxies have committed war crimes and remain devoted to supporting the Assad regime at all costs. Concurrently, Iran's Houthi allies in Yemen have perpetrated attacks on the Gulf states that threaten US interests and create gaps between the US and its Sunni partners which can be exploited by American adversaries such as Russia. In Lebanon, Hezbollah has ruined the country's economy and continues to pose a major threat to America's closest ally in the region, Israel.



May 16, 2022

## Erdoğan's AKP-led municipality bans top Kurdish singer's concert

Turkey's Derince municipality in the northwestern Kocaeli province, controlled by Turkish President Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), has banned a concert later this month by award-winning Kurdish singer Aynur Doğan, the Bianet news website reported on Monday. The municipality said it had

concluded after a review that the concert would not be "appropriate," Bianet said. It did not provide further reasoning. Kurdish songs and live performances have faced periodical and ad-hoc bans in Turkey since the 1980s during a war between the Turkish military and the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which seeks autonomous rights for

Turkey's Kurds, who number more than 10 million.

The municipality implemented the ban after Doğan was targeted by pro-government accounts on social media for defending the Gezi Park protests of 2013, Bianet said. In October, Doğan won the 2021 World Music Expo Award, granted annually to a member

of the world music community for musical excellence, social importance, commercial success, political impact and/or lifetime achievement.

In a speech at the awards ceremony, Doğan dedicated the prize to Kurdish mothers and to all women around the world who were struggling for peace and freedom.





May 15, 2022

## German minister condemns Turkish attacks on Kurdistan Region

**A** German minister on Saturday condemned the Turkish attacks on the Kurdistan Region and Iraq, claiming that Turkey should be working towards strengthening ties with its neighbors rather than attacking them.

"About Turkey's attacks on Iraq and Kurdistan, I strongly condemn that," Cem Ozdemir, German Minister of Food and Agriculture told Rudaw's Alla Shally. "Turkey needs to try and strengthen its ties with neighboring countries rather than use those attacks to distract its people from its internal issues."

Ozdemir went on to compare Turkey to Russia with regards to using attacks to divert the local population's grievances. "This is the same game Russia plays, whenever they have internal issues, fear losing elections, or are afraid of talks of corruption and inflation, hunger and bad economic situation,



Footage from latest Turkish operation in the Kurdistan Region launched on April 18, 2022. Photo: Rudaw

they immediately try to attack neighboring countries, but that does not solve the problems," he said.

Ankara has been receiving a lot of pressure from Berlin.

Turkey sentenced leading philanthropist and intellectual Osman Kavala to life in jail last month for his alleged involvement in a coup plot. Germany

summoned the Turkish envoy in Berlin on Friday over the case and called on other European Union countries to take a similar diplomatic approach.

Turkish state-owned Anadolu Agency at the time cited diplomatic sources as saying that German Ambassador to Ankara, Jurgen Schulz, was summoned by the Turkish foreign ministry late Friday. Schulz

was told that his country's condemnation of the controversial case was an attempt to politicize Kavala's case and interfere in the decision of "independent" Turkish courts.

Ozdemir reiterated Germany's condemnation of Kavala's sentence, saying that even the European parliament did not remain silent on the case. Kavala was arrested in November 2017 on charges of overthrowing the constitutional order of Turkey and espionage. He was accused of financing a 2013 protest in Istanbul and was acquitted, but was re-arrested and charged with taking part in the 2016 attempted coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

In 2019, the European Court of Human Rights ordered Turkey to release Kavala, with the Council of Europe warning Ankara to comply with the ruling or it would launch disciplinary proceedings.



16 May, 2022

## Survey: 31 percent of Kurdish families don't speak to their children in Kurdish

**T**he Socio-Economic Field Research Center has shared the results of its study titled "Education and Speaking Levels of the Kurdish Mother Tongue."

The study was conducted across Turkey, between April 20-May 5, 2022, and in the provinces of Adana, Adiyaman, Ağrı, Ankara,

Antalya, Batman, Bursa, Dersim, Diyarbakır, Antep, Hakkari, İstanbul, İzmir, Mardin, Mersin, Muş, Urfa, Şırnak and Van provinces of Turkey, 2638 people were interviewed.

89.4 percent of the respondents said that their mother tongue is Kurmanji, 10.1 percent Kirmancki/Zazaki, and 0.5 per-

cent both Kurmanji and Kirmancki/Zazaki.

68.4 percent of the interviewees stated that they "always" speak in their mother tongue in the household/family, while 22.8 percent responded as "occasionally", 6.7 percent "rarely" and 2.1 percent "never."

While 47.6 percent of the interviewees

stated that they do understand their mother tongue at a "very good level", 24.2 percent answered that question by saying "good level."

The rate of those who speak their mother tongue very well is 34.3 percent according to the survey, and the rate of those who stated that they speak their mother

tongue at a "good level" is 30 percent.

The rate of those who can read in their mother tongue at a "very good" level is 26.1 percent, while the rate of those who responded to the same question by saying at a "good level" remained at 21.7 percent.

Among the participants, the rate of those who can write in their mother tongue is 20.5 percent, while the rate of those who stated that they can write at a good level remained at 17.7 percent.

Of the participants who do not understand or partially understand their mother tongue, 31.7 percent said "because there was no one who spoke Kurdish in my family / around me, I could not learn it properly."

28.6 percent said that "because there was no school and resources where I could learn and develop my mother tongue" to the same question. 19.8 percent also said, "Since my family did not want me to be excluded, they only taught me the official lan-

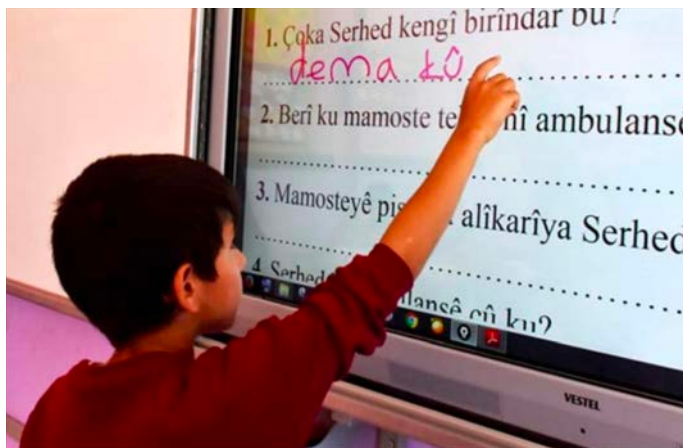


Photo: Social media

guage ." 13.5 percent of the people who cannot understand or partially understand their mother tongue said that the reason for that is, "because it was forbidden."

Of the participants who can not speak or partially speak their mother tongue, 52.8 percent said that the reason for that is "because there was no school and resources where I could learn my mother tongue."

26.7 percent said, "because there was no one who spoke Kurdish in

my family and my family did not teach." 6.9 percent said "because it is forbidden" and 6.7 percent said, "I was taught only the official language so that I wouldn't be excluded."

Families' concern for their children

72.8 percent of the interviewees stated that there are children in the 0-18 age group in their households. However, 67.7 percent answered "yes" and 31.5 percent "no" when they were asked whether they speak their

mother tongue with these children in the households.

When those 31.5 percent who don't speak in their mother tongue were asked the reason for that situation, 49.8 percent said, "because people in our environment always speaks Turkish." 20.9 percent of them said, "because I do not know enough to teach."

10.9 percent said that "they do not want their children to suffer at school" while 7.6 percent answered, "because I do not speak my mother tongue."

When those 31.5 percent who don't speak with their children in their mother tongue were asked the reason for that situation, 49.8 percent said, "because our environment always speaks Turkish." 20.9 percent of them responded by saying "because I do not know enough to teach."

10.9 percent said that "they do not want their children to face difficulties at school" while 7.6 percent answered, "because I do not know my mother tongue." (RT/TB/VK)

## Kurdistan au féminin 16 mai 2022

Le Kurdistan à travers le regard féminin

# Des manifestants kurdes victimes de violences policières à Berlin

Le samedi dernier, la police allemande a attaqué violemment des manifestants kurdes qui manifestaient à Berlin contre l'invasion du Kurdistan du Sud par la Turquie. Les organisateurs de la manifestation parlent de racisme anti-kurde au sein de la police allemande et des policiers d'origines turques animés par la haine des Kurdes. Il semblerait que l'Allemagne veut rassurer la Turquie en criminalisant les Kurdes sur son sol.

Des milliers de Kurdes et leurs amis sont descendus dans la rue samedi à Berlin contre l'agression militaire de la Turquie dans les régions kurdes de Syrie et d'Irak. La

police de Berlin a été extrêmement agressive et provocatrice par moment. Elle a attaqué violemment dans la manifestation et procédé à de nombreuses arrestations. L'initiative « Défend Kurdistan », qui a organisé la manifestation d'alliance des groupes kurdes, antifascistes et de gauche, parle dans un communiqué de la répression politiquement motivée par la police berlinoise et du racisme anti-kurde.

Après que plusieurs centaines de policiers aient initialement accompagné la manifestation de protestation, des dizaines des membres de services d'intervention d'urgence ont attaqué les manifes-

tants. Il y a également eu des provocations verbales de la part de policiers d'origine turque, qui visaient spécifiquement les militants kurdes du quartier des jeunes. Plusieurs des personnes concernées ont rapporté par la suite des insultes personnelles de la part des services d'urgence. Même un adolescent de 13 ans a été poussé au sol par un policier. En outre, deux travailleurs des médias, clairement reconnaissables comme tels, ont rapporté que la police avait délibérément saisi les caméras et les avait frappées. « Lors du rassemblement final, la police a alors provoqué une panique de masse lorsque les membres des services d'interven-

tion d'urgence ont traversé la foule à plusieurs reprises et frappé les gens sans discernement. Cela a conduit à six arrestations que nous connaissons, qui ont été extrêmement brutales. Trois policiers se sont parfois agenouillés sur des personnes déjà allongées immobiles sur le sol, et un autre a failli se casser le nez lorsqu'il a été emmené. Une autre personne a d'abord été jetée au sol, puis ligotée et frappée à coups de pied et de poing par trois policiers. En plus de ces cas, il y avait aussi d'autres endroits où une force policière excessive a été utilisée. On peut parler de la chance qu'une seule personne a dû être transportée à l'hôpital en ambulance. Il a

ensuite été annoncé que 18 enquêtes préliminaires avaient été ouvertes jusqu'à présent. »

La police berlinoise a justifié ce comportement en affirmant qu'un agent avait été légèrement blessé lors du lancement d'une bouteille. La plupart des jeunes participants ont attaqué les services d'urgence à un carrefour Unter den Linden à coups de poing et de pied, des mâts de drapeau et des affiches ont également été utilisés. Selon Defend Kurdistan, ces allégations sont factuellement insoutenables et simplement un mensonge. L'initiative soupçonne deux raisons principales derrière les tactiques policières agressives :

« Première; Parallèlement à notre manifestation, une réunion des ministres des Affaires étrangères du G7 a eu lieu à Berlin, à laquelle le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères était également présent. Comme l'ont largement rapporté les médias, l'État turc est bouleversé parce que la Suède et la Finlande vont être admises dans l'OTAN. Apparemment, en retour,



l'objectif est de légitimer le fait qu'ils étendent désormais l'attaque du sud du Kurdistan au nord et à l'est de la Syrie (Rojava). La violence de notre manifestation était donc un signe de « bonne volonté » de la part de l'Etat allemand envers le ministre turc des affaires étrangères.

Deuxièmement; le PKK a annoncé le 11 mai qu'il prendrait des mesures contre l'interdiction du PKK en Allemagne. Cela aussi a probablement provoqué le mécontentement du gouvernement turc. Cela pourrait être une raison de plus pour apaiser la Turquie et

montrer qu'elle continue à lutter radicalement contre les Kurdes. Cela devrait également véhiculer une image dans la société allemande selon laquelle « les Kurdes sont toujours dangereux » .

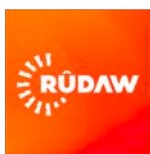
L'initiative poursuit en expliquant : « Une grande partie de ce que nous avons vécu le 14 mai peut également être résumée sous le mot-clé racisme anti-kurde. Les contrôles ciblés du peuple kurde, le silence sur le contenu, le refus de reconnaître et de nommer la Turquie comme agresseur, ainsi que la répression ciblée contre la société kurde ici aussi, représen-

tent une discrimination parrainée par l'État contre un groupe ethnique. une manière ciblée en ce moment, où la lutte de la société kurde est solidaire de celle des autres peuples, comme on l'a vu le 14 mai. Il y avait beaucoup d'amis internationaux, palestiniens, arméniens, basques, turcs et arabes.

En conclusion de notre communiqué, nous voudrions énoncer nos revendications par rapport aux violences policières. Car en nous concentrant sur les violences policières, nous ne devons pas perdre de vue notre préoccupation première :

Le double standard consistant à condamner la guerre d'agression russe dans les termes les plus forts possibles et en même temps à soutenir la guerre d'agression turque doit cesser !

Nous exigeons l'arrêt de toutes les livraisons d'armes à la Turquie et une rupture des relations diplomatiques avec l'État turc d'Erdoğan. »



Mai 17, 2022

## Kurdistan Region judicial council deems Kurdish oil and gas law 'constitutional'

The Kurdistan Region's oil and gas law is not a violation of the Iraqi constitution, the Region's judicial council said on Tuesday, noting that management of the oil sector is not exclusive to the federal government, three months after Iraq's top court deemed the law to be "unconstitutional".

The statement from the judicial council stated that the Region's management of the oil sector, in accordance with its 2007 oil and gas law, did not violate the Iraqi constitution, and implementing its provisions must be continued.

"The Oil and Gas Law No. 22 (of

2007) issued by the Kurdistan Regional Parliament does not violate the provisions of the constitution, and implementing its provisions must be continued because the oil and gas file did not fall within the exclusive powers of the federal authorities," the statement from the Kurdish judicial council read.

The council cited Articles 110 and 112 from the Iraqi constitution to support their claims, stating that, according to those articles, the Region has the exclusive authority to operate the oil fields that were found in areas under its administration after the implementation of the constitution in 2005.

Article 112 of the Iraqi constitution

states the federal government shall undertake the management of oil and gas extracted from "present" fields, granting the Region the plausibility to interpret that it has the right to control any fields found after 2005.

The Kurdistan Region passed its oil and gas law in 2007, enabling it to administer and develop its own oil and gas resources.

The Iraqi Federal Supreme Court's decision found the law to be "unconstitutional" in February, therefore striking down the legal basis for the independence of the Kurdistan Region's oil and gas sector. Kurdish leaders have slammed the

decision repeatedly.

Iraq's constitution tasks the federal government with running the country's "present" oil fields but that does not prevent it from managing fields that may be found in the future, the Iraq National Oil Company said in their financial examination of the Region's contracts, published on Thursday.

The report added that "some regions," most likely referring to the Kurdistan Region, have used this as an excuse to participate in the earnings of previous fields, as well as taking sole control of fields found after the implementation of the constitution.



May 18, 2022  
By Yousif Ismael

## Turkey's Growing Military Presence in the Kurdish Region of Iraq

Turkey's continued invasions in the KRI are part of Turkey's broader regional strategy and expansion.

On Monday, April 18, the Turkish military launched a new invasion into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), deploying ground and air forces into the mountains. As with previous incursions, Turkey used the pretext of fighting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to explain its entry into Kurdish territory. However, Turkey has established permanent military bases and posts after each military campaign since 2018. These bases are catalogued in a 2020 map released by the Turkish presidency, pinpointing forty military bases inside the KRI. Though the post was deleted soon after posting, the map remains on the internet.

Turkey frequently launches new operations within the KRI during the spring, translating into increasing land grabs in the KRI since 2018. Ankara's pretext for these operations has some justification; the PKK presence in the KRI has been real since the 1980s. But for Turkey, the invasion of KRI has had far more significant outcomes than limiting the operations of the PKK. For example, the PKK has not lost its ability to launch attacks inside Turkey, but it has limited its activities to self-defense. Instead, Turkish occupation of areas inside the KRI will allow it to target the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) entity and its aspiration of independence or even the thought of repeating an independence referendum-like event.

The expansion policy in Iraq is part of Turkey's regional aims

that have been taking shape since 2018. Turkey continues to directly meddle in the affairs of Syria and Libya, and continues to balance its relations with the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas while attempting to mend ties with Egypt and the Gulf states. Turkey also sided directly with Azerbaijan when it launched a war on Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh, and is seeding its influence in Africa. Turkey has been playing a double game in the Russian invasion, but the international community is turning a blind eye as long as Turkish drones are sold to Ukraine.

Furthermore, Turkish interests in the region also extend to its ability to secure the current oil pipeline from Kirkuk to its Cihan port and perhaps a future gas pipeline like the KRG is in progress to establish with the help of Turkey. KRI's natural gas is appealing for Turkey to control its security, especially as Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recently pledged to bolster Turkey's access to natural gas through a deal with Iraq.

Though it might not be an easy ride for Turkey to take the Kurdish natural gas—given the disputes among Kurds themselves and with Baghdad—Turkey is still the sole place to make the case for any party to export the natural gas. The gas deal is essential for Turkey, and it enjoys international backing. As Europe struggles to find alternative suppliers in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, this pipeline could replace a reasonable amount of the Russian natural gas being supplied to Europe, especially as expectations regarding increased production from Algeria and Libya have fallen by the wayside.

Geopolitically, Iran is against such a deal with Turkey, but its own limitations as an importer—due to U.S. imposed sanctions—make it an unrealistic alternative.

As part of Turkey's expansion policy, Iraq has been a significant target, including an attempt by Turkey to control a considerable number of Iraqi political entities. For example, Turkey has exploited the lack of Sunni leadership in Iraq since 2003, and after nearly two decades, Erdogan was able to recently unite the Sunnis under his banner. Indeed, Turkey's attempts started from Nineveh after 2003 but expanded to include Sunnis in the west of Iraq. Today, the semi-unified Sunni bloc in the Iraqi parliament is directly influenced by Turkey. Likewise, Turkey used the Turkmen minority in Kirkuk and Nineveh for its political advantage. For example, the Turkmen Front party was established by Turkey in Erbil in 1995. Since then, the Turkmen Front has been supported by Turkey and is used for various agendas, including targeting the Kurds and their political parties in the disputed territory. Turkey went even further by establishing militias for both Sunnis and the Turkmen Front. In 2015, without any agreements with Baghdad or the U.S.-led global coalition fighting ISIS, Turkey formed a Sunni force after establishing a military base in Nineveh's Bashiqa district. In Kirkuk, Turkey trained hundreds of fighters of the Turkmen and armed them as a pressure campaign against the Kurds under the pretext of fighting ISIS.

Turkey has also benefited from the intra-Kurdish division in the KRI, namely between the Kur-

distan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), as well as divisions between the KDP and their fellow Kurds from Syria and Turkey. However, the geography, historical regional competition between Iran and Turkey, and the reality on the ground have made the KDP naturally attracted to Turkey and the PUK to Iran. Today, Turkey is a major supporter of the KDP to a point, as it takes advantage of billions of dollars of energy and trade exchanges with the KRG.

In Baghdad, Turkey has established a new level of relations with Iraq via the current cabinet headed by Mustafa al-Kadhimi. Baghdad in turn supports the constant Turkish bombardment of the Yazidi areas, targeting local forces loyal to the PKK. Moreover, in January 2021, Turkey officially deployed troops to Baghdad using its NATO membership status, gaining further influence in the country. Despite Baghdad's occasional statements criticizing Turkish actions inside its borders, the current government agrees with Turkey's overall approach when it comes to its "fight" against the PKK. For Baghdad, this is a "win-win" situation—Turkish leverage over the Kurds.

For example, Baghdad's policies have always been to undermine the KRG's entity—even more so after the Kurdish independence referendum. Turkey's control over KRI territory has not moved Baghdad to take any action but condemnation. Despite the historical animosity between Ankara and Tehran, the two powers always agreed with Baghdad on crushing Kurdish aspirations. Moreover, a weak KRI translates to a

stronger Baghdad, resulting in more Kurdish dependence on the central government. At the same time, it will make Baghdad the sole side dealing with Ankara, unlike the current arrangement where Turkey deals with the KRG, mainly with KDP directly.

Realistically, Baghdad is also constrained by Turkey's water leverage on the country as its upstream neighbor, due in large part to successive Iraqi governments' lack of water planning since 2003. For example, Turkey temporarily cut off of waters from the Tigris and Euphrates in

a move that immediately impacted the country and became a political issue as farmers across Iraq struggled with droughts.

The negative Iranian influence in Iraq and its supporting of militias have also made Turkey a much more appealing alternative to Kadhimi's government. Turkey is also much closer to the international community than Iran is, and can offer the most of any regional power. Turkey is already providing Iraq with drones, and Baghdad has dropped the Russian contract for MiG-29s in exchange for a

deal for Turkish drones, with blessings from the United States. Additionally, Iraq is also a primary market for Turkish goods, as Turkish brands make up about 90% of those in Iraqi shopping malls.

These factors all suggest that Turkish influence and involvement inside Iraq will only continue to grow. Turkey suffers many domestic, economic and political issues resulting from Erdogan's authoritarianism. Yet Turkish regional expansion is likely unstoppable, especially due to the lack of unity in the Arab world. Like other regional

powers, Turkey is clearly interested in presenting itself as a leader of the Islamic world. Moreover, its geographic importance and military development in recent years make its importance in the region hard to deny. Even as Turkey faces elections in the upcoming year, its regional expansion policies will likely continue beyond an Erdogan presidency, were he not to be re-elected. With the Turkish opposition clearly aligned with Erdogan on a majority of his regional interventions—especially when it comes to the Kurds—this is a policy the KRI will have to grapple with long term.

The Guardian

May 18, 2022

## Why has Erdoğan doubled down on threat to veto Nordic Nato bids?

**Analysis: By demanding extradition of alleged PKK members, Turkish president could have one eye on elections**

**A**fter initial hesitation about the seriousness of Turkey's objections, its president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has doubled down on his threat to veto Finland's and Sweden's applications for membership of Nato, saying there is no point in either country sending delegations to Ankara to persuade him otherwise.

On Wednesday, he also extended his demands from the two he outlined on Monday to 10, leading to claims that he is using blackmail.

At his press conference on Monday, he made two key demands: that Finland and Sweden end their supposed support for the Kurdish Workers' party (PKK), which Turkey regards as a terrorist organisation, and that they lift their ban on arms exports im-



Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The Nordic political class initially appeared sceptical about his seriousness. Photograph: Murat Cetinmuhurdar/ PPO/ Reuters

posed in October 2019 after the Turkish incursion in north-eastern Syria.

No one doubts that Erdoğan's intervention could tangle Nato up in knots for months. It is now the task of alliance diplomats to establish Erdoğan's seriousness and the price that would have to be paid to make

him back down, and prevent a full-blown Nato crisis.

The Swedish foreign minister, Ann Linde, initially hoped that something had got lost in translation after she had been quoted in the Turkish press saying the Turks regard all Kurds as terrorists. Linde said on Sunday she had never

made these remarks, had never met the PKK, and would not do so.

She was cautiously optimistic that any misunderstanding could be cleared up, but by Wednesday it was clear her reassurances were falling short of what Erdoğan requires.

'Don't bother': Erdoğan says Turkey will not approve Sweden and Finland joining Nato – video

The Nordic political class initially appeared sceptical about Erdoğan's seriousness. Finland's president, Sauli Niinistö, said he spoke with Erdoğan a month ago and none of his current concerns were aired. It was also being said that no early warning flares were sent up by Turkey's Nato ambassador, Basat Öztürk. But that assessment is chang-

ing. Jonathan Eyal, the associate director of the Rusi think-tank, said Erdoğan "lives on the edge and operates through brinkmanship".

Eyal added: "Many of his demands about the PKK are part of a familiar Turkish tune. But he has domestic reasons to be standing up to America. The economy is in tatters and his popularity is at an all time low."

With inflation at 66.9% and facing elections next summer, there is no harm galvanising the nationalist vote, but that is not to say Erdoğan's complaints are entirely synthetic.

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On Monday, the Turkish justice ministry identified six alleged PKK members it is seeking to extradite from Finland and 11

from Sweden. Add in people accused by Turkey of supporting the US-based cleric Fethullah Gülen, who Ankara accuses of orchestrating the 2016 coup attempt, and Turkey wants 12 people returned from Finland and 21 from Sweden.

Nordic diplomats say this list was last presented in 2017 and has not been the subject of any Turkish lobbying in recent years.

Turkish media has reported what it describes as other examples of a "soft" Swedish attitude to terrorism, including evidence that the Syrian branch of the PKK has held meetings in Stockholm hosted by the Swedish foreign office and the Olof Palme International Center, a thinktank funded by Swedish trade unions.

Turkey also says that in 2019 PKK supporters held a protest

in a shopping centre in support of the jailed leader Abdullah Öcalan and Swedish security forces did nothing to prevent them from carrying the PKK's "flag" and pictures of Öcalan.

Eyal said it would be hard for the Nordic countries to bow to these complaints.

"It is not possible for either country ... to change its domestic legislation on freedom of assembly," he said. "Sweden in particular has an active Kurdish community that has political support. This episode is reminiscent of 2009 when Erdoğan said he would not allow Anders Rasmussen to be appointed Nato's secretary general unless Denmark closed a Kurdish TV station. Rasmussen was appointed but a year later the TV station was closed."

Some similar delayed behind-

the-scenes deal could happen this time. Neither country can simply tear up its own internal asylum systems and Sweden says it does not run independent terrorist lists different from those compiled at EU level.

Eyal argues Erdoğan's target is as likely to be the US as Finland and Sweden. Turkey's 2017 purchase of Russia's S-400 missile defence system turned it into a pariah in the US and led to Ankara being kicked out of the F-35 stealth fighter jet programme.

The recent rumours, denied by Moscow, that Vladimir Putin might visit Ankara in the near future were probably another signal from Ankara that it has cards to play. But it is precisely this double game that leaves so many other Nato states frustrated with Erdoğan's brinkmanship.



19 mai 2022

## Otan : Erdogan «résolu» à bloquer l'adhésion de la Finlande et de la Suède

Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a indiqué jeudi être "résolu" à bloquer l'adhésion de la Suède et de la Finlande à l'Otan, accusant, de nouveau, ces derniers d'héberger des terroristes du PKK et de l'YPG. Le président turc rappelle par ailleurs la nécessité d'un vote à l'unanimité pour l'adhésion d'un pays à l'Otan.

Le président turc Erdogan s'est de nouveau dit "résolu" jeudi à contrer la demande d'adhésion de la Finlande et de la Suède à l'Otan, qualifiant cette dernière de "nid de terroristes". "Nous sommes résolus à maintenir notre position, nous avons informé nos amis que nous dirons non à la Finlande et à la Suède qui veulent rejoindre l'Otan et

nous persisterons dans cette voie", a déclaré le chef de l'État devant une assemblée de jeunes gens, à l'occasion de la Journée de la jeunesse.

### La Suède, "un foyer de terreur, un nid de terroristes"

"Cette Suède et cette Finlande sont les pays qui hébergent les terroristes chez eux, le PKK et l'YPG", a-t-il martelé à propos du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et de ses alliés kurdes irakiens de l'YPG. Le PKK est considéré comme organisation terroriste par Ankara, mais aussi par les États-Unis et l'Union européenne. En revanche, l'YPG a combattu les jihadistes de l'État islamique aux côtés notamment des États-Unis.

"Nous sommes très préoccupés par ces deux pays, surtout par la Suède qui est un foyer de terreur, un nid de terroristes", a-t-il insisté. Recep Tayyip Erdogan a rappelé la règle de l'unanimité au sein de l'Otan : "Si un pays dit non, les autres ne peuvent pas accepter". Ces propos, enregistrés pour un programme télé qui sera diffusé jeudi soir, ont été par avance partagés sur le compte Twitter officiel de Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

### Un espoir que ses inquiétudes soient entendues

Dans son adresse, le chef de l'État a également dénoncé "l'Allemagne, la France et la Grèce",

qui ont "accueilli chez elles des membres de l'organisation terroriste Fetö". Le mouvement dirigé par le prédicateur Fethullah Gülen, installé aux États-Unis depuis 1999, est notamment accusé d'avoir orchestré la tentative de coup d'État de juillet 2016. "Les membres de Fetö voyagent à travers l'Europe via la Grèce et ces pays ignorent la liste de terroristes que nous leur avons remise, ils continuent de les protéger".

La Turquie persiste depuis une semaine à vouloir bloquer l'élargissement de l'Otan aux deux pays nordiques et a espéré mercredi que les autres États membres "entendront ses inquiétudes".



May 16, 2022  
By Kurmanj Nhili

## Duhok food festival featured a wide variety of traditional Kurdish cuisines

**T**he Duhok food festival began on May 12 and attracted thousands of people over the next three days.

It was held inside Tahseen Taha Park in Duhok city. Traditional Kurdish cuisines adorned the many tables at the event.

Over 30 restaurants and companies participated, ac-



Duhok Food Festival, May 14, 2022 (Photo: Kurmanj Nhili)

According to the director-general of Duhok tourism Khairi Ali Auso. Some even came from Erbil. The festival lasted three consecutive days. It was organized by the AVI institute and Duhok tourism directorate.

Besides food, attendees enjoyed several games and live music concerts, making it a unique experience for the people of Duhok.



May 18, 2022  
By Wladimir van Wilgenburg

## Syrian refugees in Kurdistan Region camps facing 'alarming levels of food insecurity': UN agencies

**S**yrain families living in camps in the Kurdistan Region face alarming levels of food insecurity, according to data from the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR.

Iraq hosts almost 260,000 Syrian refugees, the vast majority of whom reside in the Kurdistan Region.

"This includes 95,745 people who live in camps – 72,000 of whom receive life-saving food and cash assistance from WFP, while UNHCR provides a range of services, including, among others, legal support, registration services, cash assistance, and education support," the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNHCR said in a press release on Tuesday.

"86 percent of in-camp refugees

remain food insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity following a string of socio-economic shocks," the UN agencies said.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment in 2020 and the consequent devaluation of the Iraqi dinar are still being felt while price rises caused by the war in Ukraine continue to reduce people's access to basic food.

The UN agencies said that urgent additional funding is needed to continue assisting 72,000 vulnerable Syrian refugees, the majority of whom reside in camps in the Kurdistan Region.

"WFP requires US\$ 10.1 million to continue uninterrupted monthly food and cash assistance," the agencies said. "Receiving this is vital as 86 percent

of people in camps are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity – without the requisite funds tens of thousands of people will suffer ever more severe levels of food insecurity."

The Kurdistan Region continues to host the largest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in Iraq, the Quarterly Humanitarian Bulletin of the Kurdistan Regional Government in the US said in January.

The Iraqi government shut down all the IDP camps to force their populations to return to their areas.

However, the KRG has refused to close down the camps and continues to assist IDPs and Syrian refugees residing on its soil in partnership with international aid groups.

"According to the Kurdistan Regional Government Joint Crisis Coordination Center's (KRG-JCC) latest data, 926,018 displaced people are registered with the KRG, of whom 664,237 are IDPs and 261,781 are refugees," the bulletin said.

"Out of the refugees, 241,937 are from Syrian Kurdistan, 8,479 from Kurdistan of Turkey, 10,548 from Kurdistan of Iran, 736 are Palestinian, and 81 are from elsewhere."

According to the JCC data, 30 percent of refugees and IDPs (internally displaced persons) live within the 36 camps. The remaining 70 percent live outside camps. Forty-one percent of the displaced population lives in Erbil, 40 percent in Duhok, and the remaining 19 percent in Sulaimani.

The New York Times

May 18, 2022

By Steven Erlanger, Matina Stevis-Gridneff

## Strongmen in Turkey and Hungary Stall Unity in NATO and the E.U.

Russia benefits as Turkey slows down Swedish and Finnish applications to NATO and Hungary continues to block an E.U. embargo on Russian oil.

Europe's effort to stand up to Russia and Vladimir V. Putin, its president, is being slowed by two strongmen leaders insisting on the priority of their national interests and playing to domestic audiences.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey on Wednesday blocked a procedural vote on NATO moving ahead quickly with the membership applications of Sweden and Finland, handed in with much publicity Wednesday morning, a senior European diplomat said.

And Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary continues



President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey has criticized Sweden as a haven for Kurdish separatists whom he sees as terrorists. Credit... Adem Altan/ Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

While NATO and the European Union have shown remarkable unity in their



Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary in Parliament this month. Mr. Orban continues to block even a watered-down European Union effort to put an embargo on Russian oil. Credit... Attila Kisbenedek/ Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

to block even a watered-down European Union effort to put an embargo on Russian oil, part of a sixth package of sanctions aimed at Moscow for its war against Ukraine.

response to Mr. Putin's war, the actions of the two authoritarian leaders show the strains building as the war drags on, peace talks appear to go nowhere, and Western sanctions are contributing to

economic pain and high inflation at home, as well as in Russia. Mr. Erdogan and Mr. Orban may be outliers in their organizations, but they are able to use the requirement for consensus in both NATO and the European Union to get their political concerns addressed by blocking the action of all the others, even temporarily.

On Wednesday, a meeting of NATO ambassadors could not reach consensus on a first vote to proceed with the requests for membership because Turkey said it first wanted NATO to address its security concerns. In particular, Ankara wants Finland and especially Sweden to end what Mr. Erdogan has called support for "terrorist organizations" in their countries, primarily the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, as well as to lift export bans on certain arms sales to Turkey.

Turkey's decision to block consensus came hours before the Turkish foreign minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu, was set to meet with Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken in New York; Turkey wants its security concerns to be addressed before NATO's annual summit meeting in late June.

In an address to his lawmakers in Parliament on Wednesday, Mr. Erdogan criticized at length Western support for Kurdish groups that Ankara sees as a terrorist threat.

"It wouldn't be wrong to say that we are bittersweet watching the solidarity and cooperation in the region, the sources used, the arms opened, the tolerance shown," he said. "Because we, as a NATO ally who struggled with terror for years, whose borders were harassed, big conflicts occurred just next door, have never seen such a picture."

Turkey "asked for 30 terrorists," he said. "They said: 'We are not giving them,'" Mr. Erdogan told the Parliament. "You won't hand over terrorists but you want to join NATO. We cannot say yes to a security organization that is devoid of security."

The PKK is a Kurdish guerrilla group that has fought a decades-long separatist insurgency in parts of Turkey. It was designated by the United



States as a terrorist organization in 1997.

Mr. Erdogan remains angry over support from Washington and Stockholm for a PKK-affiliated militia in Syria, where the group was fighting the Islamic State. His government last year rebuked the United States and Sweden over the matter. And Turkey has demanded the extradition of six alleged PKK members from Finland and 11 alleged PKK members from Sweden.

Mr. Erdogan has said these issues cause him not to have “favorable thoughts” about the membership of the Nordic countries. But he has not said that he would veto their applications.

On Saturday, Ibrahim Kalin, Mr. Erdogan’s spokesman and foreign-policy adviser, said: “We are not closing the door. But we are basically raising this issue as a matter of national security for Turkey.”

National security is Mr. Orban’s argument, too. Hungary is dependent on Russia for its energy, getting 85 percent of its natural gas and 65 percent of its oil supply from Russia, as well as using Russian technology for its nuclear power plants.

While Hungary has approved all previous sanction packages, including an embargo on Russian coal, Mr. Orban proclaimed that an oil embargo would be the equivalent of an “atomic bomb” for the Hungarian economy.

But like Mr. Erdogan in NATO, Mr. Orban this time is the sole holdout, in his case,



A Hungarian oil plant this month near the town of Szazhalombatta, south of Budapest. Credit...Attila Kisbenedek/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

in the weeklong E.U. efforts to finalize a gradual embargo on Russian oil, the headline measure in a sixth package of sanctions since the invasion of Ukraine.

Talks began in mid-April. After extensive consultation between E.U. officials and diplomats from the bloc’s 27 member states, a proposal was put on the table incorporating different positions in early May.

But Hungary seemed to be moving the goal posts. The first proposal gave extensions to Hungary and Slovakia so they could find alternative suppliers. While the other 25 E.U. members would have until the end of the year, Hungary and Slovakia would have until the end of 2023.

Then Hungary demanded, and secured, even more time. The latest version of the package would grant it until the end of 2024, but Mr. Orban has insisted that Hungary would need billions from the bloc to shield his nation’s economy. His foreign minister, Peter Szijarto, said that

to use different oil and modernize Hungary’s energy system would cost between 15 billion and 18 billion euros and take five years.

Hungary’s block on an E.U. oil embargo, breaking unprecedented unity in punishing Russia, was well-received in Moscow. Dmitri Medvedev, Russia’s former president who currently serves as deputy chairman of the country’s national security council, said Mr. Orban’s opposition to the oil embargo was “a courageous step for voiceless Europe.”

In a post on his Telegram channel on May 6, Mr. Medvedev wrote: “Apparently, the most sensible leaders of the E.U. countries are tired of moving quietly to the precipice along with the entire sterilized European herd being led to the slaughter by an American shepherd.”

Diplomats said that they expected Mr. Orban eventually to acquiesce to an oil embargo, having secured both a long extension and extra funding for Hungary, but that he could drag the talks out

even longer, perhaps until the end of the month when leaders are due to meet in person in Brussels to talk about Ukraine.

NATO officials expressed the same confidence about Mr. Erdogan — that he will eventually agree to back Sweden and Finland joining NATO in return for some concessions that will help him politically at home, with his economy in crisis and new elections only a year away.

Alexander Stubb, a former Finnish prime minister and foreign minister, said that “the Finns are cool and collected and so are the Swedes — this will work out.”

In the end, he said, “this is about security in Europe and about strengthening the alliance, and both Finland and Sweden are strong advocates of Turkish membership in the European Union.”

In 1999, he said, it was the Finnish presidency of the European Union that opened the door for Turkish accession, “and our friends in Ankara will remember that.”

Sauli Niinisto, the president of Finland, said in Stockholm that the Turks “have communicated to us from many sources that Turkey would not block membership.” A fast process is still possible, he said.

Jens Stoltenberg, the NATO secretary-general, said on Sunday, “Turkey has made it clear: Their intention is not to block membership. Therefore, I am confident we’ll be able to address the concerns that Turkey has expressed in a way that doesn’t delay the accession process.”

## Adhésion à l'OTAN : la Finlande et la Suède ont soumis leurs demandes respectives

Cette démarche des deux pays nordiques, restés neutres en matière d'alliance militaire tout au long de la guerre froide, marque un changement radical dans l'architecture sécuritaire de l'Europe : elle est motivée par l'invasion de l'Ukraine par la Russie.

Elles ont franchi le pas. La Finlande et la Suède ont soumis, mercredi 18 mai, leurs demandes d'adhésion à l'Organisation du traité de l'Atlantique Nord (OTAN). « C'est un moment historique à un moment critique pour notre sécurité », a déclaré le secrétaire général de l'OTAN, Jens Stoltenberg, qui a reçu les demandes d'adhésion présentées par les ambassadeurs de deux pays. « Nous espérons conclure rapidement [la procédure] », a-t-il ajouté. Cette démarche des deux pays nordiques, restés neutres en matière d'alliance militaire tout au long de la guerre froide, marque un changement radical dans l'architecture sécuritaire de l'Europe : elle est motivée par l'invasion de l'Ukraine par la Russie.

Mais, alors que Vladimir Poutine a semblé mettre en pause ses menaces de représailles dans le cas d'une adhésion suédo-finlandaise, le principal obstacle semble désormais venir de l'intérieur de l'Alliance atlantique. Des consultations ont eu lieu mercredi au sein du Conseil atlantique pour tenter de lever l'opposition de la Turquie au lancement du processus d'adhésion.

Ankara peut le ralentir en refusant l'ouverture des discussions au sein du Conseil atlantique, première étape de la procédure. La Turquie peut ensuite mettre à l'arrêt le processus en refusant de signer

les protocoles d'adhésion et enfin refuser de ratifier l'adhésion. L'unanimité des trente membres de l'Alliance atlantique est impérative pour les adhésions.

Négociations avec la Turquie « Tout est possible », a confié un diplomate européen. « Mais, à l'OTAN, on trouve toujours des solutions », a-t-il ajouté. Le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, pourrait vouloir porter le sujet au sommet de l'OTAN organisé à Madrid les 29 et 30 juin. Ankara « ne cédera pas », a-t-il assuré lundi.

Les analystes estiment que la Turquie cherche certainement des contreparties en échange de son feu vert, par exemple la levée du refus des Etats-Unis de leur vendre des F-35, le puissant avion de combat américain. Ankara reproche notamment à la Suède et à la Finlande de ne pas approuver ses demandes d'extradition des personnes qu'elle accuse d'être membres d'« organisations terroristes » comme le PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), ou d'avoir gelé des exportations d'armes vers la Turquie. La Turquie a bloqué en début de semaine une déclaration de l'OTAN favorable aux adhésions des deux pays, a-t-on appris de source diplomatique.

Le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a espéré mercredi que ses « alliés entendr[ont] [ses] inquiétudes

» et « soutiendront [la Turquie] ». « Nous ne pouvons dire oui », a-t-il répété. « Soutenir le terrorisme et demander notre appui est un manque de cohérence », a insisté le chef de l'Etat. Le blocage turc prive la Finlande et la Suède de la protection assurée par l'OTAN à tous ses membres en cas d'agression. « Les intérêts de sécurité de tous les alliés doivent être pris en compte et nous sommes déterminés à examiner toutes les questions et à parvenir rapidement à des conclusions », a assuré mercredi Jens Stoltenberg aux deux ambassadeurs.

« Nous sommes en faveur d'une accession rapide »

Malgré ces querelles, le président finlandais s'est dit « optimiste » sur le fait d'obtenir le soutien de la Turquie, « à l'aide de discussions constructives ». « La Suède se réjouit de travailler avec la Turquie dans l'OTAN, et cette coopération peut être un élément de notre relation bilatérale », a affirmé la première ministre suédoise, Magdalena Andersson, assurant que Stockholm « est engagé dans le combat contre toutes les formes de terrorisme ».

Le Canada s'est déjà engagé à accélérer le processus : « Nous sommes en faveur, et nous sommes en faveur non seulement d'une accession, mais d'une accession rapide », a déclaré la ministre des affaires étrangères canadienne, Mélanie Joly, lundi.

De son côté, le chef de la diplomatie américaine Antony Blinken a rencontré, mercredi à New York, son homologue turc Mevlut Cavusoglu pour tenter de débloquer la situation. « Nous comprenons les inquiétudes [de la Suède et de la Finlande] liées à la sécurité », mais celles de la Turquie « doivent aussi obtenir une réponse », a plaidé le ministre turc, tout en se disant prêt à en « discuter avec les amis et alliés, dont les Etats-Unis ».

« Nous voulons surmonter les divergences par le dialogue et la diplomatie », a encore assuré, plus globalement, Mevlut Cavusoglu, semblant laisser la porte ouverte à une solution. Après la rencontre, qu'il a qualifiée d'« extrêmement positive », il a évoqué une médiation américaine. « Blinken a assuré que les Etats-Unis allaient transmettre les messages nécessaires pour dissiper les préoccupations de la Turquie », a-t-il affirmé.

A Washington, le conseiller de Joe Biden pour la sécurité nationale, Jake Sullivan, s'est aussi montré « très optimiste ». « Nous sommes confiants » quant « à la possibilité de répondre aux inquiétudes de la Turquie », a-t-il déclaré devant la presse à la Maison Blanche. Mme Andersson et le président finlandais, Sauli Niinistö, se rendront jeudi à Washington pour y rencontrer le président des Etats-Unis, Joe Biden, a annoncé la Maison Blanche.

**L'OBS**

19 mai 2022

Par MARIE VATON, (1)

Les prénoms ont été changés.

## SYRIE : Le “Guantanamo” des enfants français

Environ 200 petits Français sont toujours détenus dans des camps syriens. Malgré de nombreuses condamnations par les instances internationales, la France s'isole dans son obstination à ne pas les rapatrier, ni eux ni leurs mères.

C'est la tache sur le premier mandat d'Emmanuel Macron. Une faute, au regard des textes internationaux de protection des droits de l'enfant. Un acte manqué qui coûte cher à la France et lui reviendra comme un boomerang à peine le nouveau gouvernement constitué. Le 24 février, le Comité des Droits de l'Enfant des Nations unies a en effet statué : « Le refus de la France de rapatrier des enfants français détenus dans des camps syriens dans des conditions mettant leur vie en danger depuis des années viole leur droit à la vie, ainsi que leur droit à ne pas subir de traitements inhumains et dégradants. »

Avant ça, la Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, les Nations unies, le Conseil de l'Europe, le Parlement européen, l'Unicef, la Croix-Rouge, la Commission nationale consultative des Droits de l'Homme (CNCDH), la Fédération internationale pour les Droits humains (FIDH), Human Rights Watch, Amnesty et, il y a trois semaines, la Défenseur des droits, tous ont fustigé l'obstination du gouvernement français à laisser pourrir l'épineux dossier du sort des enfants français prisonniers des camps syriens. Dans quelques semaines, ce sera au tour de la Cour européenne des Droits de l'Homme (CEDH), saisie du cas de trois enfants et de leur mère, de décider si la France sera condamnée pour traite-



Le camp d'Al-Hol, où depuis 2019 des milliers d'enfants vivent dans la misère. (DELIL SOULEIMAN / AFP)

ments inhumains et violation du droit à la vie familiale.

Depuis 2019 et la fin du « califat » autoproclamé de Daech, médias, avocats, organisations internationales n'ont jamais cessé d'alerter sur la situation des quelque 200 enfants français et de leurs mères détenus depuis mars 2019 et la chute d'Al-Baghouz, dernier bastion de l'Etat islamique, dans le nord-est de la Syrie, dans des conditions décrites comme « apocalyptiques » par le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge (CICR). Des enfants qui, pour la moitié d'entre eux, sont nés et ont grandi dans des camps. Une vie de tentes, de poussière, de violence et de misère.

« Le seul pays européen à oser aller jusque-là »

« Une vie qui n'est pas une vie », résume Marie Dosé, l'avocate du collectif Familles unies, qui regroupe 130 familles dont les petits-enfants, les nièces ou les neveux crouissent dans ces prisons à ciel ouvert. Depuis 2017, l'avocate déploie une énergie folle pour les faire revenir. « En vain », nous dit-elle, puisque seuls trente-cinq enfants ont été rapatriés, en cinq fois. Parmi eux, dix-huit orphelins. Les dix-sept autres ? Des enfants que certaines mères, désespérées de les voir souffrir et dépérir, ont accepté d'envoyer en France, loin d'elles, sous la pression des autorités françaises, selon les témoignages recueillis par Amnesty International. Les messages vocaux qu'elle nous fait écouter, où l'on entend une mère hurler sa douleur devant le pick-up

kurde qui emporte ses garçons, se passent de mots. « La France est le seul pays européen à oser aller jusque-là », accuse-t-elle.

Il reste encore au moins neuf orphelins qui survivent dans le camp. Tant d'autres à ramener et à sauver. Mais, selon Marie Dosé :

« Le pouvoir cherche à en faire des enfants fantômes, sans réelle existence, à les faire disparaître, tout simplement. » Pas de droits non plus. Des « enfants de Daech », comme ils ont été surnommés, proscrits de leur pays, condamnés à l'exil, assignés à une attente sans fin, dans la zone grise du non-droit.

Rien n'y a fait : ni la mort, en septembre 2018, d'un petit

garçon français écrasé par un véhicule militaire dans le camp de Roj, ni celle, le 14 décembre 2021, d'une jeune Française de 28 ans après des mois d'agonie et de souffrances, qui a laissé derrière elle Sohan (le prénom a été changé), une petite orpheline de 6 ans. Ni même l'attaque par une centaine de djihadistes, le 20 janvier dernier, de la prison d'Hassaké, une ville située à quelques encablures des camps de Roj et d'Al-Hol où seraient détenus une dizaine d'adolescents français, selon l'Unicef.

« A croire que le gouvernement est sourd et aveugle », assène Françoise Dumont, présidente de la Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, qui se souvient avoir, lors d'une réunion, « tancé comme des petits garçons » une brochette de diplomates qui regardaient leurs pieds, honteusement.

#### « Le choix de la sécurité et de l'humanité »

Depuis trois ans, inlassablement, les tribunes se succèdent où les voix, de plus en plus nombreuses, de plus en plus indignées, appellent à leur rapatriement immédiat. En octobre dernier, 175 parlementaires de tous bords pressaient l'exécutif d'agir face aux risques de récupération de ces femmes par l'Etat islamique, rappelant qu'Hayat Boumediene, la veuve d'Amedy Coulibaly, qui a frappé la France en janvier 2015, s'était évadée du camp d'Al-Hol en 2019 pour rejoindre un groupuscule terroriste.

Dans leur sillage, l'avocat Patrick Baudoin, président d'honneur de la Fédération internationale des Droits de l'Homme, Françoise Dumont, de la Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, l'ancien Premier ministre Bernard Cazeneuve, l'avocat et diplomate François Zimeray puis, en avril, 70 personnalités dans « le Monde », parmi lesquelles Michelle Perrot, Didier Deschamps, Jacques Toubon, Edgar Morin,

Boris Cyrulnik, Leïla Slimani ou Arthur Dénouveaux, rescapé du Bataclan, tous ont appelé Emmanuel Macron à faire « le choix de la sécurité et de l'humanité ».

Au nom de quelle justice, écrivent-ils, des enfants devraient expier les crimes commis par leurs parents ? Enfants non seulement innocents, mais victimes des choix de leurs parents ? Ils rappellent que la France ne saurait se dédire et se dérober de ses obligations internationales et constitutionnelles de « protection de l'intérêt supérieur de l'enfant ».

Ils font tous valoir la même chose, à savoir que la réintégration de ces enfants dans la société française comporte moins de risques pour la sécurité intérieure de la France que leur maintien dans les camps. Ils dénoncent l'hypocrisie du choix de l'exécutif de procéder au « cas par cas », des enfants les plus « vulnérables », la seule réponse officielle qu'ils ont obtenue. Ils rappellent que plusieurs pays de l'Union européenne, comme la Belgique, la Finlande, le Danemark, les Pays-Bas, l'Allemagne ou la Suède la semaine dernière encore, ont procédé au rapatriement de la plupart de leurs ressortissants mineurs et de leurs mères. Tous ? Sauf la France qui n'a ramené personne depuis janvier 2021.

Des éclats de bombe dans la tête

Ni Sohan, qui a vu s'affaiblir et mourir sa mère diabétique et sous dialyse pendant trois longues années à Roj. Ni les quatre petits-enfants de Pascale Descamps, dont la fille, qui souffre d'un cancer du côlon depuis un an et demi, ne parvient plus à se lever. Ni même Sarah (le prénom a été changé), 18 ans depuis peu. Sarah, arrivée en Syrie à l'âge de 10 ans avec ses parents et qui affirme aujourd'hui à ses grands-parents qu'elle vit et pense comme si elle en avait 70. Sarah, mariée à 13 ans, qui a vu une bombe tomber sur la

maison de ses parents et ses cinq petits frères pendant le siège de Baghouz, le 15 février 2019 puis, un mois après, son « mari » de 17 ans atteint par un missile. Sarah qui a reçu des éclats de bombe dans la tête et qui survit, seule, à Roj. Son seul lien avec la France ? Ses grands-parents Monique et Jean-Marc, avec lesquels elle communique par messages vocaux une fois par semaine du bureau du camp.

En octobre 2019, après plus d'un an sans nouvelles, ils ont reçu de sa part un message poignant sur Telegram :

« Est-ce que vous avez appris que j'avais été marié et que maman et papa plus tous mes frères avait était tuer... [...] On a mangé du foing et le son où je ne sais plus comment ça s'appelle pendant neuf mois... je suis sortie comme une somalienne. J'espère que Dieu va me réunir bientôt avec maman et tous mes frères au Paradis, je ne me vois pas revivre tout ça. »

En décembre dernier, ses grands-parents ont remis une pétition à Emmanuel Macron par l'intermédiaire du maire de Vichy, signée par 150 élus de leur département. « On n'a jamais eu de réponse directe. On nous a juste fait savoir que maintenant qu'elle était majeure elle n'était plus la candidate prioritaire à faire revenir. »

Pour elle, pour Sohan et sa mère, pour tant d'autres, Marie Dosé a fait une quarantaine de demandes de rapatriements. Toutes restées lettre morte. A chaque fois, la même réponse, ou plutôt non-réponse : « On me dit que l'Etat ne peut pas intercéder auprès des autorités kurdes au motif qu'il n'a ni le contrôle de leur territoire ni de représentation diplomatique sur place. »

Pourtant, sur place, c'est une tout autre histoire. Par deux fois, en février et novembre 2021, le député du Rhône Hubert Julien-Laferrière (Génération Ecologie) a tenté de se rendre à Roj avec d'autres

parlementaires et des membres de la Commission nationale consultative des Droits de l'Homme : « La première fois, on a été refoulés de la frontière irako-syrienne par un officiel du gouvernement du Rojava qui nous a dit : "Je suis désolé, mais je tiens à garder de bonnes relations avec le gouvernement français." » La deuxième ? « On a réussi à passer la frontière, mais l'accès au camp nous a été refusé. »

#### « A travers le grillage »

Même inexplicable blocage pour toutes les familles qui ont fait le voyage, comme Suzanne et Marc Lopez, qui ont quatre petits-enfants dans le camp, et dont le fils Léonard fait partie des onze Français condamnés à mort en première instance à Bagdad, à l'issue d'un simulacre de procès :

« En juin 2019, on a réussi à accéder jusqu'à Roj, sous contrôle des autorités kurdes, mais on a été bloqués d'accès au camp, sur ordre de la France... On a vu des journalistes, des humanitaires rentrer, et même une famille autrichienne, mais pour nous, c'était nient ! Avant de repartir, on a seulement pu déposer un colis rempli de livres de classe pour notre belle-fille et on a entrevu à travers le grillage l'aîné de nos petits-enfants, une corbeille de pain qu'il avait préparée pour nous, en larmes. »

A l'époque, pourtant, quelques mois à peine avant leur tentative, le gouvernement avait commencé à préparer l'opinion publique : le Premier ministre Edouard Philippe, la ministre de la Justice Nicole Belloubet, et même Christophe Castaner, alors ministre de l'Intérieur, étaient publiquement favorables au rapatriement de tous, hommes compris. Le juge d'instruction David de Pas, coordinateur du pôle antiterroriste du tribunal de Paris, avait mis en garde les autorités françaises contre le « risque de dispersion » des djihadistes

vers l'Europe face à l'« instabilité géopolitique de la région ».

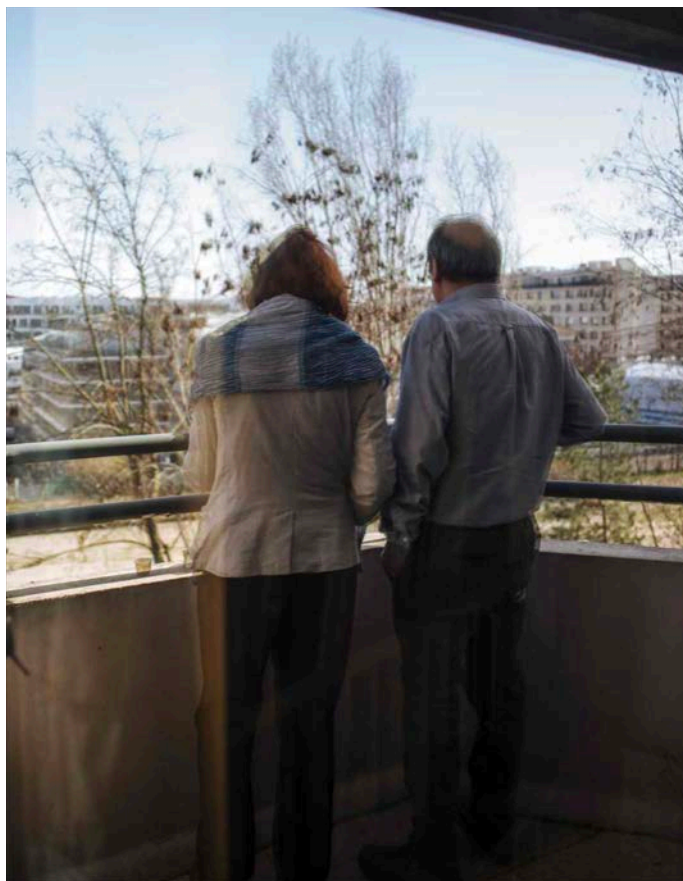
Il avait rappelé qu'ils devaient être jugés en France et non pas dans le nord-est syrien, qui n'est pas un Etat souverain, ne dispose pas de tribunaux et n'est pas reconnu par les Nations unies. Ou, pire, en Irak, où le chef de la diplomatie Jean-Yves Le Drian s'était rendu pour tenter de convaincre Bagdad d'accepter de juger sur son sol les djihadistes français après leur transfert depuis la Syrie, avec une fin de non-recevoir.

Selon « Libération », les services de l'Etat avaient même organisé jusqu'au moindre détail une opération d'exfiltration pour les Français retenus en Syrie, imaginée conjointement avec l'armée américaine, avec une liste comportant 350 noms, ainsi que leur numéro de siège et leur vol – deux avions avaient été prévus pour leur rapatriement, annoncé aux alentours du 14 février 2019.

« Tout était prêt pour leur retour, l'aide sociale à l'enfance (ASE) avait sélectionné et prévenu les familles d'accueil, on avait acheté les doudous pour les accueillir à l'aéroport », relate la productrice Fabienne Servan-Schreiber, l'une des premières personnalités, avec l'humoriste Sophia Aram et le cardiologue Patrick Aeberhard, cofondateur de Médecins du Monde, à avoir tenté d'infléchir le président et son entourage. Et puis la date du 14 février est passée. Les avions ne sont jamais partis.

#### Des « arguments fallacieux »

Quelques jours plus tard, la



Suzanne et Marc Lopez chez eux, à Paris. Leurs quatre petits-enfants sont retenus dans le camp de Roj. (LEWIS JOLY / JDD / SIPA)

tentative d'assassinat de deux surveillants par un détenu et sa compagne, tous deux convertis à l'idéologie djihadiste, à la prison de Condé-sur-Sarthe (Orne), change la donne. Le 26 février, Emmanuel Macron déclare qu'il n'y a jamais eu de « programme de retour des djihadistes ». Au même moment, le 28 février, France-Info et « le Figaro » publient les résultats d'un sondage de l'institut Odoxa selon lesquels 89 % des répondants sont hostiles au retour des djihadistes. Les deux tiers s'opposent même au retour des enfants.

Le 5 mars, changement de cap : un premier rapatriement

ramène cinq petits orphelins. Depuis ? C'est désormais la politique du « cas par cas », pilotée directement depuis l'Elysée, qui n'a pas répondu à notre demande d'entretien. « On nous oppose des arguments officiels fallacieux », observe l'avocat Patrick Baudoin, rapporteur de deux avis favorables au rapatriement à la Commission nationale consultative des Droits de l'Homme, la principale autorité administrative sur la question. « Comme le fait que l'ASE ou les prisons n'ont pas la capacité d'accueil nécessaire, alors même que tous les enfants qui sont rentrés ont été pris en charge sans aucun problème. »

Jusqu'à quand durera ce « Guantanamo des enfants », comme l'a qualifié l'intellectuel syrien Yassin al-Haj Saleh ? le pédopsychiatre Serge Hefez, signataire de plusieurs tribunes, déplore :

« En les abandonnant ou en les séparant de leur mère alors qu'elles sont leur seul référent, nous ne faisons qu'ajouter du traumatisme au traumatisme et les exposer encore davantage aux dangers de leur propre radicalisation. »

Juste avant sa réélection, Emmanuel Macron avait annoncé que la protection des enfants serait la deuxième grande cause du quinquennat. Au soir de sa victoire, il descendait triomphalement l'esplanade du Champs-de-Mars, suivi par un groupe d'enfants, promettant que « nul ne sera[it] laissé au bord du chemin ». La politique du « en même temps », jusqu'à l'absurde. □

#### UNE INCURIE FRANÇAISE

Depuis 2019, 1 844 étrangers ont été rapatriés dans leur pays, en grande majorité femmes et enfants.

Du 1<sup>er</sup> janvier au 31 décembre 2021 : 331 femmes et enfants ont été rapatriés, dont 97 femmes et enfants européens, et seulement 7 enfants français.

## Turkey Has Become an Uncertain Ally

The Biden administration has done yeoman's work promoting transatlantic unity to punish Russia for attacking Ukraine and limit its ability to aggress against other countries in the future. However, Turkey, a NATO member, is an outlier and uncertain ally. Turkey criticized Russia for attacking Ukraine but refuses to join multilateral sanctions aimed at limiting the Kremlin's ability to finance and wage war. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan plays both sides of the conflict to enhance his regional power and economic benefits.

Turkey has broken ranks with international consensus. Erdogan believes that preserving economic relations with Russia and Ukraine will cushion the conflict's impact on Turkey's economy, and benefit Turkey politically.

Doing business with Russia is a perilous decision for Turkey. Turkish private and state banks can face international scrutiny and the possibility of severe penalties for violating sanctions on Russia. Penalties could affect Turkey's ability to borrow from international markets.

Erdogan is focused on maintaining Turkey's economic relations with Russia. Turkey is Russia's fifth-largest export market, and Russia is Turkey's tenth largest. Last year, Russia supplied Turkey with about 50 percent of its imported gas, 17 percent of oil, and about 40 percent of petrol. Russia is also a major export market for fruits and vegetables from Turkey. In 2021, Turkey exported a record of nearly 1.5 million metric tons of fresh fruit and vegetables to Russia. Russia accounted for 56 percent of Turkish grain imports, valued

at \$2.24 billion. Russian tourism is a further key contributor to Turkey's economy, with seven million Russians visiting in 2019. Though the Covid-19 pandemic affected travel, Turkish officials predict that Turkey will break a record for tourists in 2022, and Turkish banks have expanded the Russian payment system for electronic fund transfers, "Mir," to facilitate tourist payments.

Many countries have denied Aeroflot landing and overflight rights, but Turkey keeps its airspace open to the Russian state carrier. The European Union prohibits Russian vessels from accessing ports in EU countries, but Turkey welcomes them.

Moreover, Turkey refuses to join NATO members who are sending military equipment to Ukraine. As Ukrainian cities were bombarded with missiles and air power, Turkey rejected Washington's proposal to transfer its Russian-supplied S-400 surface to air defense missiles to Ukraine. Ankara also refused to send other Soviet-era weaponry that could help Ukraine's self-defense.

The S-400 system is a sore spot in U.S.-Turkey relations. In response to the purchase, members of U.S. Congress pledged to sanction Turkey in accordance with the Countering American Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), and the U.S. Department of Defense suspended Turkey's participation in the F-35 stealth fighter program.

Meanwhile, Russia is helping to build Akkuyu, a Turkish nuclear power plant in Mersin Province. Russian investment is covering the cost of \$20 billion, and Erdogan is committed

to building two new plants—tethering Turkey's nuclear ambitions to Russia for the foreseeable future.

Turkey has split on Russia's oligarchs, too. These Russian elites accumulated vast wealth during the period of privatization in the 1990s and wield enormous influence through their wealth and personal association with President Vladimir Putin. The United States, Canada, Japan, and European countries sanctioned Putin and the oligarchs directly, freezing their assets, restricting their travel, and targeting their business ties.

But the oligarchs have tried to hide their wealth, and Turkey has become the most popular destination for oligarch-owned yachts and money. On a year-over-year basis, sales of high-end real estate to Russians have nearly doubled. Many Russian oligarchs have set up new bank accounts in Turkey to shield their assets from foreclosure. In addition, Russian companies are repackaging themselves as Turkish entities.

The EU adopted sanctions against 217 individuals, including oligarchs, and eighteen entities including a full ban on four Russian banks. Russian banks have been disconnected from SWIFT, the international system for processing payments, which has further isolated the Russian financial sector from the global financial system. Additionally, the G-7 recently announced travel and banking sanctions on 2,600 Russian and Belarusian officials, as well as Gazprom executives.

Oblivious to the cost of doing business with Putin's inner circle, Erdogan seeks to broaden Turkey's regional in-

fluence by serving as mediator between Russia and Ukraine. In March, Turkey brought Russian and Ukrainian officials together in Antalya and Istanbul; discussions failed to produce any tangible breakthroughs.

As two Eurasian countries ruled by autocrats, it makes sense that Russia and Turkey would share a certain strategic alignment. Putinism, the government system in Russia, is characterized by the concentration of political and financial powers in the hands of former intelligence officials. Erdoganism is a form of populist authoritarianism. Corrupt at its core, it is chauvinistic, nationalistic, and discriminatory towards ethnic and religious minorities. In both countries, government exists to advance the interests of leadership rather than to serve the electorate.

Putin's Russia is a lost cause, run by gangsters and kleptocrats. Turkey under Erdogan's dictatorship is also on the brink of pariah status. Erdogan hopes that war and sanctions will distract Turkish voters when they go the polls in 2023.

Turkey is at a fork in the road. Down one path lies reform with tolerance to those who want a truly democratic Turkey, which respects minority and human rights. Down the other lies greater kleptocracy and human rights abuses, as Turkey becomes an outlier in the Euro-Atlantic community.

David L. Phillips is Director of the Program on Peacebuilding and Human Rights at Columbia University. He served as a Senior Adviser and Foreign Affairs Expert at the State Department during the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations.

The New York Times

May 22, 2022  
By Emma Bubola

# In Iran, a New Wave of Repression Hits Acclaimed Filmmakers

The authorities in the Islamic Republic like to take credit for the country's achievements in film, but are warning those who make them not to cross red lines at home.

In the shadow of a crackdown in Iran this month on demonstrations by ordinary citizens against rising food prices, the authorities there also have gone after a widely celebrated sector of Iranian society: the filmmakers.

On May 10, as the food protests spread across the country, security forces went to the homes of Firouzeh Khosrovani and Mina Keshavarz, two internationally renowned documentary filmmakers, and arrested them, friends and rights activists said.

Around the same time, the homes of at least 10 other



The documentary maker Firouzeh Khosrovani at the Zurich Film Festival in 2016, when she was a member of the prize jury. Credit... Andreas Rentz/Getty Images

documentary filmmakers and producers were raided, with their mobile phones, laptops and hard drives confiscated, Iran's three main guilds representing the cinema sector said in a statement.



A cinema closed because of the pandemic in 2020 in Tehran. Iran's filmmakers have drawn acclaim worldwide. Credit... Str/EPA, via Shutterstock

Experts called it the largest crackdown on Iran's cinema industry in recent years.

"We demand that this constant environment of fear and insecurity be lifted from the lives and work of our documentary filmmakers," the guilds' statement said.

Another well-known figure in Iran's cinema industry, Reihane Taravati, who photographs celebrities and film sets, was also arrested, according to her friends and the Center for Human Rights in Iran, an independent advocacy group based in New York.

This past Tuesday, as movie stars and directors walked the Cannes red carpet in glittery dresses and tuxedos, Iran quietly released Ms. Khosrovani and Ms. Keshavarz pending a court hearing.

On Saturday, the International Coalition for Film-

makers at Risk, an organization that supports filmmakers facing political persecution, said Ms. Keshavarz and Ms. Khosrovani had been banned from leaving the country for six months. "Such measures are dangerous, and such artists deserve to be treasured, not persecuted," it said in a statement.

The Iranian authorities have not provided a reason for the crackdown, but analysts see it as a warning to the general population amid mounting discontent, and to documentary filmmakers in particular.

"It's an intimidation tactic that is trying to send a message to other Iranians," said Nader Hashemi, the director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Denver, who focuses on Iran. "It's also an ideological problem that the Islamic Republic has with these filmmakers."

In recent weeks, street unrest over rising food prices has

expanded to at least 20 Iranian cities, the Center for Human Rights in Iran reported. Teachers' unions and bus drivers' unions have gone on strike, demanding better wages and overdue payments.

Security forces have clashed with protesters in several cities. Rights organizations have reported that at least two protesters were killed and that others were violently suppressed or arrested, including teachers, bus drivers, a prominent journalist, an academic and activists.

Two French nationals were also detained this month on accusations of having organized protests in Iran. Reporters Without Borders, a press-advocacy group based in Paris, said in a Twitter post from its Persian account last Monday that Iran's intelligence agencies had summoned dozens of journalists in an attempt to scare them into silence.

The Iranian government has a fraught relationship with the country's internationally acclaimed film industry, taking credit for its success abroad and yet trying to control its messaging and reach.

The Iranian director Asghar Farhadi was selected last month to be a member of the Cannes festival's jury, and two films by Iranian directors, Saeed Roustaei and Ali Abbasi, are among the official selections.

Last Saturday, Mohammad Khazaei, the director of the Cinema Organization of Iran, a branch of the government that oversees cinema, said in a statement that the “presence in international events is one of the key parts of Iran’s national cinema,” but reiterated that only movies approved to be screened publicly in Iran could be submitted to foreign competitions.

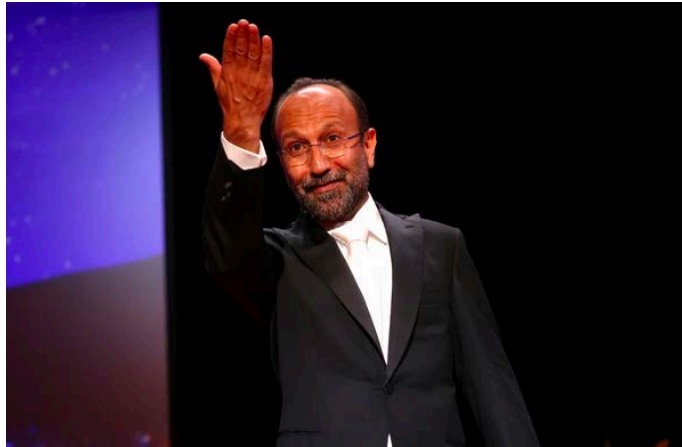
Mr. Roustaei said in an email that his film, “Leila’s Brothers,” did not have screening permission from the Ministry of Culture in Iran and that government officials



The director Mohammad Rasoulof in 2017. Credit...Alberto Pizzoli / Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

had reproached him for sending the film to Cannes without their approval. He said they also sent him a list of elements that had to be changed or censored to get the screening permit.

“I’m not going to give in to censorship,” he said, adding that the list targeted several



The Iranian director Asghar Farhadi during the opening ceremony of the Cannes film festival in France on Tuesday. Credit...Vianney Le Caer/Invision/Associated Press

of the movie’s most important and dramatic scenes. “I don’t want my film to be maimed.”

In the past several years, Iran has arrested or prosecuted prominent directors, such as Jafar Panahi and Mohammad Rasoulof, on charges of creating propaganda against the government.

“Not only widespread censorship, but also the involvement of security agencies in the field of cinema, has reduced the job security of filmmakers to the lowest possible level,” read a letter signed by more than 50 filmmakers and actors and published on Mr. Rasoulof’s Instagram page after the recent crackdown.

Many Iranian filmmakers have still managed to strike a delicate balance to produce their work, using allegories and personal and intimate tales to describe the broader struggles that afflict Iranians.

“We know that the Iranian government has red lines that we must follow,” said

Farzad Jafari, an Iranian filmmaker who is also a member of the guild. “We all know this, so we follow it.”

In Ms. Khosrovani’s latest film, “Radiography of a Family,” which won the best feature documentary prize at the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam in 2020, she explored the country’s tumultuous history through her parents’ relationship.

The film describes the impact of the 1979 Iranian revolution by focusing on the growing distance between her Western-leaning father and her religious mother, who became a loyal servant of the revolution that toppled the monarchy. Paintings, art objects and wine disappeared from her house, and music was turned down.

“This is my lifetime experience of being torn between two poles,” Ms. Khosrovani said in an interview in 2021 when her film was shown at New Directors/New Films, an

annual festival in New York. “This dichotomy inside the house is the same as the dichotomy in our society.”

In Ms. Keshavarz’s film, “Braving the Waves,” she told the story of a woman from rural Iran who has set up a bazaar that employs hundreds of local women, which the local male officials want to tear down. Ms. Khosrovani and Ms. Keshavarz were released on bail after their families had provided property deeds as guarantees, their friends said, and none of the three women arrested have been formally charged. Mr. Jafari said the authorities had returned the equipment and hard drives of Ms. Khosrovani and Ms. Keshavarz but not the other items seized in the house raids.

While the arrests and raids spread anxiety among Iran’s creative arts community, Ahmad Kiarostami, the head of a festival of Iranian documentaries in the United States, said he doubted such repression could discourage Iranian documentary filmmakers, who have intentionally embraced a dangerous path with little financial reward.

“It’s almost impossible to make money from the films. They are doing it out of passion, it is pure love,” he said. “I don’t think anybody can stop this passion.”

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May 23, 2022

## Factbox: Groups at the heart of Turkey's objections to NATO expansion

**T**urkey has opposed Sweden and Finland's membership of NATO, accusing them of harbouring individuals linked to the Kurdistan Workers Party militant group (PKK) and followers of a cleric Turkey accuses of orchestrating a coup attempt in 2016.

What are these groups?

### THE PKK

The Kurds are a minority living in a region straddling the borders of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey and Armenia. In Turkey, they make up about 20% of the population. The PKK was founded in 1978 with the aim of creating an ethnic homeland in southeast Turkey. It took up arms against Turkey in 1984, a conflict in which more than 40,000 people have been killed.

Western governments including the United States and European Union designate the PKK as a terrorist organisation.

The conflict extends into northern Iraq, where Turkey regularly attacks what it says are PKK camps and ammunition stores. It also spread into Syria as that country descended into war from 2011, and a group inspired by the ideology of PKK founder Abdullah Ocalan - the YPG - emerged as an armed faction.

### THE YPG

The YPG, or People's Protection Units, established a foot-



NATO, Turkish, Swedish and Finnish flags are seen in this illustration taken May 18, 2022. REUTERS/ Dado Ruvic/Illustration

hold in northern Syria at the Turkish frontier early in Syria's conflict. The group joined a U.S.-led coalition fighting Islamic State, becoming the spearhead of a wider militia, the Syrian Democratic Forces, which enjoys U.S. support.

Turkey says the YPG and PKK are one and the same, and views their Syrian foothold as a national security threat.

While Turkey brands the YPG as a terrorist group, Western governments do not. U.S. ties to the SDF have annoyed Ankara and been a source of tension for years, with Turkey particularly angered by Washington's supply of weapons to the group.

Turkey has launched several incursions into northern Syria. One such incursion, in 2019, prompted Finland and Sweden to ban some arms sales to Turkey. Lifting this is one of Ankara's demands.

### GULENISTS

Apart from the Kurds, Turkey complains about Western countries harbouring supporters of U.S.-based Islamic cleric Fetullah Gulen, whose Hizmet (Service) group once had wide influence in Turkey's military, judiciary and education.

Turkey blames the Gulenists for a failed coup attempt in 2016. Since then, more than 60,000 people in the army, judiciary, civil service and education have been detained, suspended or investigated for alleged links to the group.

### WHAT DOES TURKEY WANT?

Turkey says Helsinki and Stockholm failed to agree to Ankara's requests to extradite "dozens of terrorists" over the last five years, including individuals linked to both the PKK and Gulen.

Turkey has said it will not look positively on the Nordic states' NATO membership unless they clearly show cooperation on the fight against terrorism and other issues, and lift the arms embargo. Erdogan spoke to both countries' leaders on Saturday, telling Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson that Ankara expected concrete steps to address its concerns, and Finnish President Sauli Niinisto that failing to deal with terrorist organisations posing a threat to a NATO ally would not suit the spirit of alliance. [read more](#)

Many analysts have said Erdogan may be aiming to use this moment to press Washington over some long-standing issues that have weighed on ties, including support for the YPG.

### WHAT DO FINLAND AND SWEDEN SAY?

In her call with Erdogan, Andersson said she emphasised that Sweden welcomed the possibility of cooperation in the fight against international terrorism. Sweden supports the fight against terrorism and agrees with the PKK's terrorist listing.

Finland has said it condemns terrorism in all its forms and is open to discussing Turkey's concerns. Niinisto said he held "open and direct" talks with Erdogan and agreed to continue close dialogue.



May 23, 2022

## Kurdish villages in Makhmour remain empty in fear of ISIS activities

A large number of Kurdish inhabited villages situated in Makhmour have remained abandoned for the past five years in fear of Islamic State (ISIS) sleeper cell activities.

Villages in the open terrains of Makhmour's Qaraj region and Mosul province are deserted.

"There are 38 villages located in the Qaraj area. They are empty. One single Arab inhabited [village] is more populated than all of the Kurdish inhabited villages combined. They are almost entirely empty," villager Lawko Ali told Rudaw's Hiwa Husaamadin on Saturday.

ISIS seized control of swathes of



Kurdish villages in Makhmour remain empty in fear of ISIS activities. Photo: Rudaw

Iraqi land, including Makhmour, in 2014. The group was declared territorially defeated following a fight with the Iraqi, Peshmerga, and co-

alition forces three years later.

However, the Iraqi army forced the Peshmerga out of Makhmour and

other disputed areas in October 2017 after the Kurdistan Region's independence referendum. This development led to insecurity in Kurdish inhabited areas. "There are a handful of Kurdish villages remaining populated. Those who have opted to stay are busy with farming and raising livestock. Due to a security vacuum in this region, Kurdish villagers have found it difficult to stay," Abdullah Tahir, head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party office in Makhmour said.

In its propaganda magazine on Thursday, ISIS claimed to have conducted 12 attacks in Iraq from May 11 to May 19, killing and injuring 26 people.

HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
WATCH

23 mai 2022

## Appel au rapatriement des enfants français et de leurs mères détenus dans les camps du nord-est syrien

Depuis plus de trois ans désormais, 200 enfants français et leurs mères sont détenus dans le nord-est syrien par les autorités régionales kurdes dans les camps Roj et Al Hol. La plupart de ces enfants avait 2 ou 3 ans en entrant dans ces camps, et certains y sont nés. Depuis lors, ils grandissent entourés de barbelés, dans la boue ou la poussière, et dorment sous des tentes de fortune été comme hiver. Les conditions de vie dans ces camps sont désastreuses : les enfants manquent de soins adaptés, ne bénéficient d'aucun soutien psychologique, et ne sont pas scolarisés. Selon les Nations

Unies, des centaines de personnes détenues à al-Hol et Roj -dont au moins la moitié sont des enfants- sont déjà mortes ces trois dernières années, notamment en raison du manque de soins médicaux, de l'insalubrité, d'accidents comme des incendies de tentes et de l'insécurité grandissante.

Le 8 février 2021, une vingtaine d'experts indépendants des droits de l'homme des Nations Unies ont exhorté 57 pays, dont la France, à rapatrier les enfants et les femmes bloqués dans « les camps sordides » du nord-est syrien. « Les conditions humanitaires

désastreuses des camps mettent en évidence la nécessité d'une action collective, soutenue et immédiate pour prévenir des dommages irréparables aux personnes en situation vulnérable qui y sont détenues » estimaient les experts. Nombre de ces experts ont réitéré ces appels depuis, de même que la Haute-Commissaire des Nations Unies aux droits de l'homme, Michelle Bachelet.

Le Comité International de la Croix Rouge, la Commissaire aux droits de l'homme du Conseil de l'Europe, le Haut-commissaire aux droits de l'homme de l'ONU, le directeur régional du CICR, les Défén-

seurs des droits, et la CNCDH ont tous appelé au rapatriement des enfants et de leurs mères détenus dans les camps. Le Parlement européen a voté une résolution en ce sens, et Monsieur David DE PAS, coordonnateur des juges d'instruction antiterroristes français, a publiquement affirmé que ces rapatriements étaient une priorité tant humanitaire que sécuritaire. Les autorités régionales dirigées par les Kurdes qui détiennent ces enfants et leurs mères exhortent quant à elles les pays concernés à prendre leur responsabilité et à les rapatrier au plus vite. Parce que la France refuse de

rapatrier ces enfants, les laissant dans des camps aux conditions dangereuses pour leur survie, le Comité des droits de l'enfant de l'ONU a considéré en février dernier que notre pays portait atteinte au droit à la vie de ces enfants, les exposait à des traitements inhumains et dégradants, et violait ainsi les dispositions de la Convention internationale des droits de l'enfant.

La détention arbitraire de ces enfants viole aussi les principes internationaux relatifs aux enfants associés à des groupes armés, qui doivent être considérés avant tout comme des victimes. Plusieurs pays européens, dont l'Allemagne, la Belgique, le Danemark, et la Suède, rapatrient de nombreux enfants et leurs mères. En 2021, 97 femmes et enfants européens sont rentrés dans leurs pays respectifs, dont 7 enfants français seulement. Plus aucune opération de rapatriement n'a été diligentée par la France depuis janvier 2021, et notre pays s'isole de plus en plus dans le choix du pire. La France refuse de rapatrier les orphelins restés dans le camp Roj et livrés à eux-mêmes, dont la petite



Un jeune tient un parapluie alors qu'il marche sous la pluie au Camp Roj, où sont détenus des proches de personnes soupçonnées d'appartenir au groupe État islamique (EI), dans le nord-est de la province de Hasakah, en Syrie, le 4 mars 2021. © 2021 Delil Souleiman / AFP via Getty Images

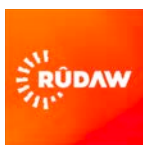
Sara, 6 ans, qui a vu sa mère décéder dans le camp le 14 décembre 2021 après que la France a refusé son rapatriement sanitaire pendant trois ans.

Ces enfants ne sont coupables de rien : ils sont au contraire doublement victimes ; du choix de leurs parents d'abord, et de l'abandon de leur pays ensuite. Les laisser grandir et prendre le risque qu'ils périssent dans des camps sordides est indigne d'un pays comme la France. L'intérêt supérieur de ces enfants commande qu'ils

soient rapatriés avec leurs mères - quand celles-ci sont encore vivantes. Il est à souligner que toutes les femmes de nationalité française sont sous le coup d'une information judiciaire criminelle française et d'un mandat d'arrêt international délivré par un juge antiterroriste français. Des procès seront organisés devant des cours d'assises spéciales et ces femmes seront jugées pour avoir rejoint l'organisation terroriste Daesh. Elles ne sont judiciairisées qu'en France, et ne peuvent être jugées qu'en France.

Nous appelons solennellement la France à rapatrier ces enfants et leurs mères dans les plus brefs délais. Les gouvernements qui contribuent activement à la détention de leurs citoyens sans procédure régulière et dans des conditions mettant leur vie en danger peuvent être complices de leur détention illégale et de leur punition collective. La France risque également de contribuer à l'insécurité dans la région en augmentant les risques que Daech tente de recruter des enfants français pour faire partie de leur prochaine génération de combattants. Les abandonner dans ces camps contribuera aussi à fabriquer de la radicalisation et de la défiance envers notre pays. Cette ignominie doit cesser, et vite. Les trois dernières années ont montré qu'en fermant les yeux sur ces détentions dans le nord-est de la Syrie, des pays comme la France n'ont fait qu'aggraver la crise et les risques sécuritaires.

Les associations signataires de cet appel demandent à être reçues dans les meilleurs délais par Monsieur Emmanuel Macron, Président de la République.



May 25, 2022

## Farmers forced to sell animals by lack of pasture

A shepherd in a village in Kirkuk was forced to sell most of his sheep because of poor pasture conditions for his animals and out of 300 sheep, only 27 of them are left.

Ahmad Khorshid has had a difficult year because of the drought. "Everything is expensive now. If fodders were available and cheap like before, I could have

survived. No one shepherds because of the lack of pasture," he told Rudaw's Hardi Muhammad Ali on Friday.

Khorshid has spent most of his life working as a shepherd in Jabal Bawr village, Kirkuk, but this is the first time he experiences such a lack in adequate pasture for his herd.

"I was only two years old when we came to this village. I am

now 74 years old. I have never seen anything like this before," Khorshid added.

Fodders were not necessary for the past years because farmers used to graze their sheep in a lush green pasture.

The demand for buying and keeping animals decreased lately and most people sell their own animals because they cannot keep them," Jawhar

Ahmad, a local butcher, said. Iraq is the fifth-most vulnerable nation in the world to the effects of climate change, including water and food insecurity.

A senior adviser at the Iraqi water resources ministry warned earlier this year that the country's water reserves have decreased by half since last year, due to a combination of drought, lack of rainfall, and declining river levels.

## Why Sweden's Stance on Kurds Riles Turkey's Erdogan

**A**t the heart of Turkey's threat to stop NATO's Nordic expansion is a clash of viewpoints over Kurdish political groups. Sweden, which along with Finland is seeking entry into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, has been one of Europe's most willing recipients of migrants fleeing conflict, including Kurds. Turkey opposes Kurdish demands for statehood and its president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has called Sweden a "nesting ground for terrorist organizations." Since NATO admits new members only by unanimous consent, his views can't easily be ignored.

1. Why do the Kurds matter to Turkey?

The Kurds are an Indo-European people, about 30 million strong, and one of the world's largest ethnic groups without a state of their own. Their homeland is divided among Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. The Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, has fought Turkish forces on and off since the mid-1980s as it seeks an autonomous region for Kurds inside Turkey. Turkey is particularly focused on the People's Protection Units, or YPG, a Kurdish militia in Syria that was instrumental in the defeat of

the Islamic State there. Turkey views the YPG as a security threat due to its ties to separatist Kurds in Turkey.

2. What's Sweden's policy on the Kurds?

Sweden has long sought to promote human rights and respect for minorities abroad, and the country's welcome of refugees has made it home to as many as 100,000 Kurds. While the government has open contacts with some Kurdish political groups, it's tended to align with other European nations in the way it treats Kurdish demands for self-determination. Sweden was the first country after Turkey to designate the PKK as a terrorist organization, in 1984.

3. So what's Erdogan's problem with Sweden?

Turkey has criticized Swedish officials for meeting with Kurdish politicians, citing one encounter between Foreign Minister Ann Linde and Elham Ahmad, who represents the PYD, the political wing of the YPG. When Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson was elected in 2021, it was partly thanks to the support of a Kurdish member of parliament, Amineh Kakabaveh. Her backing was se-

cured in exchange for a pledge to increase cooperation between Andersson's Social Democrats and the PYD. Another focus of tension is the Syrian Democratic Council, the political arm of a group of Kurdish-dominated forces in northern Syria. Turkey says the SDC is dominated by terrorists. Sweden says it cooperates with the SDC, but not with the YPG or the PKK.

4. What is Erdogan demanding?

He's called on Sweden to extradite suspects wanted by Turkey on terrorism charges, which he says the country has so far refused to do, and wants Sweden and Finland to publicly denounce the PKK and its affiliates. According to Turkish officials who spoke to Bloomberg on condition of anonymity, Turkey is also demanding an end to arms-export restrictions that Sweden and Finland imposed on Turkey in late 2019 in conjunction with many other EU countries after Turkey sent its army into Syria.

5. Will Sweden comply?

Sweden holds a general election in September, and any move that could be construed as kowtowing to Erdogan might be unpopular with voters. Andersson's govern-

ment is likely to resist being drawn into negotiations over its extradition policy, for example, or its weapons exports. Instead, Sweden's diplomats will likely try to enlist allies to pressure Turkey not to block Sweden's entry into NATO.

6. How does Finland fit it here?

It appears to have been caught in the crossfire. The country has no significant Kurdish minority, with only about 15,000 Kurdish speakers residing in the country. Finnish policy makers say the country complies with EU terrorism designations, meaning it has also banned the PKK. Finland, like Sweden, did end arms exports to Turkey in 2019, but that trade had been small. Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto called Turkey's stance a test of "whether NATO's open-door policy exists" and signaled that "undemocratic practices, such as oppression, blackmail" aren't fitting for "an alliance of democratic countries."

(Updates to add Finnish foreign minister comments at end. A previous version of this story corrected question 1 to say that the Kurds are one of the largest ethnic groups without their own state.)

## Poll: Erdoğan loses to unspecified 'opposition candidate'

**A**pollster has asked the respondents whether they would vote for President Erdoğan or his opponent, without specifying a candidate.

President and Justice and Development Party (AKP) Chair

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's popular support has fallen below 35 percent, according to a new poll.

In the poll between May 12-15 among 2,400 people in 27 provinces, the Yöneylem Research company, respondents were

asked, "If there was a presidential election next Sunday, would you vote for President Erdoğan or the opposition candidate?" According to the results, Erdoğan seems to have lost his chance against the opposition. The share of the respondents who said they

would vote for Erdoğan was 34 percent whereas 51.8 percent said they would vote for the opposition. Also, 7.4 percent said they would not cast a vote and 6.8 percent said they were "undecided."



May 24, 2022

## KRSC responds to threats against Kurdistan Region

The Kurdistan Region Security Council (KRSC) issued a statement on Monday night in response to a militia group's threats against the Kurdistan Region.

"An outlawed group called the Coordinating Committee of the Iraqi Resistance issued a statement in which they made baseless accusations and threatened the Kurdistan Region," read the KRSC statement. "These threats are not new."

The statement added that these groups have only pro-

duced "destruction and chaos" in Iraq. "Here, we inform them that any aggressor against the Kurdistan Region, an Iraqi constitutional entity, will pay a high price," the KRSC statement warned. "They haven't learned from history. Otherwise, they would know that greater forces with better armaments could not defeat the will of our people."

"The outlawed group is a threat to Iraq's sovereignty and security, and it has paved the way for the growth of terrorism and extremist ideology."

The statement also said that while the Iraqi Army and the Kurdish Peshmerga "are busy conducting joint operations against terrorism, these groups are busy creating destruction and sedition."

"The federal government is responsible for protecting Iraq's sovereignty and ending this aggression and disorder," the statement underlined.

On Monday, the Coordinating Committee of the Iraqi Resis-

tance alleged that it "observed training operations for armed groups in the Kurdistan Region." "We detected suspicious movements of foreign agents whose aim is to spread chaos with clear Zionist (Israeli) fingerprints," the Coordinating Committee of the Iraqi Resistance claimed. The group announced its formation on Oct. 10, 2020. It includes most of the Iran-backed Shiite armed militias responsible for launching rocket or drone attacks against coalition bases, government offices, and energy facilities in the Kurdistan Region.

Kurdistan au féminin

24 mai 2022

## L'État islamique tue six villageois dans la région kurde de Khoumatu

L'État islamique a attaqué des villageois à Xurmatû alors qu'ils travaillaient dans leurs champs et a assassiné six d'entre eux. Le meurtre des villageois a été suivi par des combats entre l'État islamique et Hashd-al-Shaabi.

L'État islamique a commis un massacre à Xurmatû dans le gouvernorat de Kirkouk.

Lundi, les jihadistes ont attaqué des agriculteurs travaillant dans les champs et en ont tué six. Le porte-parole des Unités de mobilisation populaire pro-



Iran (Hashd-al-Shaabi), Ali Hashmi, a déclaré à l'agence RojNews que les villageois travaillaient dans leurs champs

lorsqu'ils ont été attaqués par les terroristes de l'État islamique.

Après l'attaque, une unité de la 16e brigade des unités de mobilisation populaire a atteint la zone et des affrontements avec l'État islamique ont éclaté. Selon le porte-parole de la milice irakienne, les affrontements se sont poursuivis dans la nuit.

L'État islamique est particulièrement actif en Irak et dans le nord et l'est de la Syrie depuis des mois. Les analystes voient un lien entre l'agression turque et les attaques de l'organisation djihadiste soutenue par la Turquie.



May 24, 2022

## Erdogan hints at new offensive in Rojava to complete 'safe zone'

**T**urkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday that his country's army and intelligence are making preparations to launch new military operations along its southern border to complete the 30km-deep "safe zone" it planned years ago, likely aimed at Kurdish fighters in northern Syria.

Turkey and its Syrian proxies have carried out at least two major military operations against the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northern Syria in recent years: invading Afrin in 2018, as well as Sari Kani (Ras al-Ain) and Gire Spi (Tal Abyad) in 2019. Days after clashes with the SDF during the latter offensive, Turkey agreed to withdraw beyond a range of 30 kilometers following a deal with the Russians and Americans. As per the agreement with Moscow, the "safe zone" would be jointly run by Turks and Russians.

Following a cabinet meeting late Monday, Erdogan told reporters in Ankara that they are "taking steps regarding the missing parts of the work we started to create a safe zone at a depth of 30 kilometers along with our southern borders," referring to Turkey's borders with Syria.

"The areas that are the



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaks to journalists in Ankara on May 23, 2022 Photo Turkish presidency

center of attacks, harassment and traps against our country and our safe areas are at the top of our operational priority," added Erdogan.

He noted that as soon as the Turkish army and intelligence are done with their preparations, "these operations will be launched," saying that they will take decisions on the matter during a National Security Council (MKG) on Thursday.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said in 2019 that the range of rockets allegedly fired by Kurdish fighters from Nusaybin in northern Syria against Turkish positions in Turkey's Kurdish-populated Sanliurfa (Riha) province was about 30 kilometers.

He added that they do not

want to go beyond the 30 kilometers mark.

Erdogan holds up a map of northern Syria, which shows the "safe zone" Turkey wants to establish, during a UN meeting in New York on September 24, 2019. Photo: AFP

Turkey claims that the People's Protection Units (YPG), backbone of the SDF, is the Syrian offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) - an armed group fighting for the increased rights of Kurds in Turkey but is designated as a terrorist group by Ankara.

Ankara also claims that the YPG poses a threat to its borders and it has held the group responsible for several rocket attacks on its borders, saying the rockets were fired from Syria.

Turkey and its Syrian proxies regularly attack the SDF in northeast Syria (Rojava). Kurdish officials and commanders have accused Ankara of violating the 2019 agreements with Russians and Americans.

Elham Ahmed, president of the Executive Committee of the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), which is the political arm of the SDF, said in a tweet on Monday that the "Turkish attack on the multicultural region of Tall Tamr which is inhabited by Kurds, Arabs and Assyrians is a continuation of the genocidal approach against our people. These attacks need to be stopped especially by the states that guaranteed the ceasefire agreement."

Erdogan's latest speech comes as Ankara continues to oppose bids by Sweden and Finland to join NATO, over concerns of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Sweden has been one of the key supporters of Rojava since 2016, allocating tens of millions of dollars. However, Turkey's veto has blocked the country's entry into the security alliance. Ankara wants Stockholm to suspend all its support to Rojava in return for its approval for Sweden's membership in NATO, which takes all its decisions based on a consensus.

## Erdogan menace d'envahir de nouvelles zones kurdes en Syrie

**L**undi soir, le président turc Erdoğan a menacé d'envahir de nouvelles zones kurdes, dans le nord de la Syrie. « L'opération militaire à la frontière sud de la Turquie commencera bientôt. L'objectif est de créer une zone de sécurité de 30 km pour lutter contre les menaces terroristes de la région », a déclaré Erdoğan. Les villes de Kobané et de Qamishlo sont les cibles potentielles de l'État turc.

Les FDS accusent la Turquie d'alimenter davantage le conflit en Syrie avec ses nouvelles menaces

Les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS) ont accusé la Turquie d'alimenter davantage le conflit en Syrie avec de nouvelles menaces d'attaque. L'annonce d'une nouvelle invasion le long de la frontière sud de la Turquie vise à saper la



stabilité dans la région et à renforcer l'État islamique.

L'opération militaire turque contre le Rojava commencerait dès que l'armée, les services de renseignement et les forces de sécurité auraient terminé leurs préparatifs. Le Conseil de sécurité nationale de Turquie doit décider jeudi d'une autre

intervention.

Les FDS ont déclaré qu'ils « évaluent l'étendue et la crédibilité de la menace » et que la situation est surveillée en permanence. Un échange intensif d'informations sur les développements actuels a lieu avec les puissances garantes, la Russie et les États-Unis.

### Guerres d'agression en 2016, 2018 et 2019

Dans le passé, la Turquie a agi à plusieurs reprises en violation du droit international contre les zones de l'administration autonome du nord de la Syrie, qui sont principalement habitées par des Kurdes. Au cours de trois guerres d'agression en 2016, 2018 et 2019, de grandes parties de la bande frontalière ont été occupées par l'État turc et les alliés djihadistes du pays membre de l'OTAN, et des centaines de milliers de personnes ont été déplacées. Des milices islamistes du monde entier et leurs proches ont été installés dans les zones occupées par la Turquie, à la place des Kurdes et des minorités religieuses dans le cadre d'un changement démographique.

TV5  
MONDE

May 24, 2022

## Daesh : "Les enfants ne sont coupables de rien"

**M**arie Dosé, avocate et membre du collectif Familles unies, rappelle de simples faits : les femmes emprisonnées dans le camp syrien d'Al Hol, géré par les Kurdes, ne peuvent être jugées là-bas. Elles ont rejoint une organi-

sation terroriste et "pour cela, elles doivent être jugées en France".

Mais "les enfants ne sont coupables de rien". Voici des années que les enfants de djihadistes suédois, allemands, finlandais

rentrent avec leurs mères dans leur pays.

Les petits Français attendent depuis quatre ans de pouvoir rentrer chez eux et retrouver, pour certains, des grands-parents.

## Kurdistan's Weekly Brief May 24, 2022

### Iran

The Iranian regime rallied thousands of its supporters, including members of the Basij militia and Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), outside of Tehran in response to anti-government protests sparked by price increases. IRGC Commander-in-Chief Hossein Salami gave a televised speech and declared, "The enemies mistakenly think the Iranian people will respond to ... the rumors that they spread and lies they tell." The Iranian regime also deployed additional troops to several cities in the nation's Kurdish region to head off potential protests. At the same time, the state-owned Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) banned Kurdish soccer player Voria Ghafouri from television for criticizing the regime's failure to address Iran's poor living conditions and telling several reporters, "Aren't the authorities ashamed of this situation?" Thousands of activists and soccer fans protested the IRIB's ban on Ghafouri. On a separate note, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi visited the Kurdish cities of Urmia and Mahabad on Friday and received a cold reception, as many Kurds stayed home and boycotted his appearances. Iranian intelligence officers (Ettela'at) then questioned several Kurdish activists on Saturday.

Sanandaj's (Sena) Islamic Revolutionary Court sentenced a Kurdish man named Afsheen Panahi to one year in prison for cooperation with the exiled Komala party. Panahi was previously imprisoned for three years on similar charges, and the Iranian regime executed his brother, Ramin Panahi, in 2018. The same court also sentenced seven members of the Kurdish Revival Charity to

prison for "forming illegal groups." Moreover, Iranian security forces arrested Armin Sharifi and his wife Hawzhen Latifi in Sanandaj, Saadi Ahmadi in Kermanshah, Awsat Zardaie in Pawa, and ten people in Malekshahi County for protesting rising consumer prices.

### Iraq

Two unknown gunmen assassinated a Kurdish restaurant owner and refugee from Turkey named Zaki Chalabi in Sulaymaniyah on Tuesday. Chalabi had lived in Sulaymaniyah for over a decade and routinely advocated for the rights of Kurds in Turkey. Concurrently, two Turkish drone strikes destroyed several cars between Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah and killed seven people, including two villagers. Turkish forces also attacked several villages in Duhok Governorate's Amedi District with helicopters and ground troops. Concomitantly, Environmental Protection and Rehabilitation Board of Kurdistan head Abdulrahman Sadiq said, "Nearly one million dunams [247,000 acres] of forests were burned due to wars waged by our neighbors on the Kurdistan Region in 2019 and 2020."

President of Kurdistan Region Nechirvan Barzani visited Sulaymaniyah and pitched a new initiative intended to facilitate understanding between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Barzani met with leaders from every Kurdish party except the New Generation. The KDP and PUK will meet later this week to discuss several key issues, including the selection of a new candidate for the Iraqi presidency, the Kurdistan Region's election

laws, and uniting against the Federal Supreme Court of Iraq's ruling on the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) oil and gas laws. US Consul General Robert Palladino praised the KDP and PUK for restarting talks, and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) announced it held a "closed meeting" with Kurdish party representatives on Thursday to "openly exchange ideas."

The Iranian-backed Coordination Committee of the Iraqi Resistance released a statement on Monday threatening further attacks on the KRG. The group claimed "foreign and domestic anti-Iranian elements" were being trained in Iraqi Kurdistan to "spread chaos with clear Zionist fingerprints." The Kurdistan Region Security Council (KRSC) responded by stating aggressions against the region "will bear a heavy price."

ISIS (Da'esh) terrorists perpetrated two attacks in southern Kirkuk Governorate and Diyala Governorate's Jawala (Golala) on Monday night, killing ten and wounding six. Simultaneously, arsonists targeted Kurdish farmers' crops in Daquq last week. Most of the area's farmers harvested their crops earlier because of Da'esh threats and Baghdad's Arabization policies.

### Syria

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan revealed plans for a new invasion of northern Syria that will target the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). Erdogan said the operation will commence once the Turkish military completes preparations. In all likelihood, Erdogan wants to implement a 2019

plan that entails Turkish forces establishing a 30-kilometer deep "safe zone" in northeastern Syria and settling thousands of Syrian refugees there. Needless to say, the Turkish military and its proxies never stopped attacking Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)-controlled territories along the strategic M4 Motorway, and their most recent assault wounded three civilians west of Tal Tamer. The SDF announced it is "studying the level of expected Turkish threats to northern and eastern Syria and exchanging information with the international guarantor powers."

### Turkey

Turkish police raided the home of Agit Ipek, a deceased Kurdish fighter whose remains were sent to his mother by the government via mail. Ipek's mother, Halise Aksoy, who has been vocal against the government, was not found in the house located in Diyarbakir's (Amed) Baglar district. On Thursday, the police arrested 13 members of the HDP, including the youth assembly in Amed, Urfa, and Mardin. Moreover, the police in Istanbul detained several activists during a rally organized by the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), calling for peace against the Turkish invasion of Iraqi Kurdistan. The Co-chair of the HDP, Mithat Sancar, criticized the government's economic policy resulting in a crisis. Sancar said: "as inflation skyrockets, as exchange rates rise, the government embraces the rhetoric of war." As Turkey's Erdogan continued blocking Sweden and Finland from joining NATO, Sancar said: "Notice that all the issues that NATO is negotiating on the issue of enlargement again come to the Kurdish question."



## Entre Israël et la Turquie, une réconciliation à petits pas

La visite à Jérusalem du ministre turc des affaires étrangères, Mevlut Cavusoglu, n'a pas débouché sur un échange d'ambassadeurs entre les deux pays, brouillés depuis des années à propos de la question palestinienne.

Censée ouvrir un « nouveau chapitre » dans les relations dégradées entre la Turquie et Israël, la visite à Jérusalem, mardi 24 et mercredi 25 mai, de Mevlüt Çavusoglu, le chef de la diplomatie turque, n'a pas produit d'avancées significatives, preuve que la normalisation entre ces deux Etats avance à très petits pas.

Brouillés depuis des années à propos de la question palestinienne, Israël et la Turquie tentent de renouer les liens. Après la visite à Ankara et à Istanbul du président israélien, Isaac Herzog, en mars, le séjour à Jérusalem de M. Çavusoglu, le premier en quinze ans d'un haut responsable turc, devait marquer un tournant. Un échange d'ambassadeurs était attendu car, depuis 2018, la représenta-

tion diplomatique est entre les mains de chargés d'affaires. Elle le restera. A l'issue de leurs entretiens, mercredi, le ministre turc et son homologue israélien, Yaïr Lapid, ont déclaré vouloir renforcer la coopération économique, poursuivre le dialogue, mais sans annoncer leur intention d'échanger des ambassadeurs.

« Nous avons mené des pourparlers fructueux, francs et déterminés, et nous nous sommes mis d'accord sur un nouveau cadre pour nos relations », a déclaré le chef de la diplomatie israélienne lors de la conférence de presse conjointe, mercredi. M. Lapid n'a pas caché la nature houleuse des relations avec la Turquie et a minimisé ses attentes. « Nous avons toujours su revenir au dialogue et à la coopération », a-t-il souligné. Avant de se faire l'architecte, en juin 2021, de la fragile coalition gouvernementale qu'il tient encore à bout de bras, le ministre avait milité pour qu'Israël réduise le niveau de ses relations diplomatiques avec la Turquie de Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

### Echanges commerciaux en hausse

Avant la visite du président Herzog en Turquie, en mars, un responsable du gouvernement avait déjà prévenu que ce rapprochement serait mené « à la manière de deux porcs-épics qui font l'amour – avec prudence. » Les autorités israéliennes ont indiqué ne pas être excessivement pressées de renvoyer un ambassadeur à Ankara.

Les deux parties se sont entendues pour reprendre les travaux d'une commission économique conjointe. Le volume des échanges commerciaux a atteint plus de 7,5 milliards d'euros en 2021 et les chiffres du premier trimestre de 2022 sont à la hausse. En proie à des difficultés économiques, à une inflation record (70 % sur un an en avril), à la dépréciation de sa monnaie et à un manque cruel d'investissements, la Turquie tente de rompre son isolement en normalisant ses relations avec plusieurs pays auxquels elle s'était éloignée, notamment Israël, l'Egypte, les Emirats arabes unis et l'Arabie saoudite.

Pour autant, Ankara continue de manifester son soutien à la cause palestinienne. M. Çavusoglu a ainsi rencontré mardi des responsables palestiniens en Cisjordanie, auxquels il a réitéré le soutien de la Turquie à leur lutte pour un Etat indépendant aux côtés d'Israël. « Nous pensons que la normalisation de nos relations aura également un impact positif sur la résolution pacifique du conflit », a déclaré le chef de la diplomatie, qui a prié à la mosquée Al-Aqsa à Jérusalem et visité Yad Vashem, le mémorial israélien de l'Holocauste.

L'Etat juif se veut sans illusions face à M. Erdogan : il craint sa réaction à une nouvelle crise ouverte dans les territoires palestiniens occupés, notamment une éventuelle guerre à Gaza. Le gouvernement rappelle que la Turquie héberge de hauts responsables du Hamas, en particulier Saleh Al-Arouri, responsable du mouvement pour la Cisjordanie et Jérusalem, dont le rôle supposé dans les récents heurts du mois de ramadan a été longuement commenté.

## Iraqi Parliament ratifies a law criminalising normalisation with Israel

The Iraqi Parliament on Thursday unanimously approved a law that criminalises the normalisation of relations with Israel.

The law was submitted by the influential Shiite cleric Moqtada Al Sadr, whose political movement was the clear winner in October's national elections.

The move is aimed to boost his profile as an anti-Israel politician

and to alleviate his rival's concerns that his allies from Sunni and Kurdish parties will push for normalisation.

Iran-backed parties have continually spoken of the possibility that Israel could establish covert alliances within Iraq, in several instances singling out Mr Al Sadr's allies, the Kurdish Democratic Party, which they have accused of building bridges with the Israeli government. The US has said it is

“deeply disturbed” by the passing of the law.

The State Department said the law jeopardised freedom of expression and promoted “an environment of anti-Semitism”.

“This legislation stands in stark contrast to progress Iraq's neighbours have made by building bridges and normalising relations with Israel,” said spokesman Ned Price. The law expands on Iraq's

1969 Penal Code, which stipulates that citizens who communicate with Israel will face prosecution and possibly the death penalty.

The current law goes into more detail, requiring all government institutions, officials, media outlets, companies and individuals to refrain from establishing relations with Israel.

It will apply not only Iraqi citizens, but also to foreigners visiting Iraq and any Israel-linked organisations and companies.

May 26, 2022

## WKI Kirkuk Minute May 26, 2022

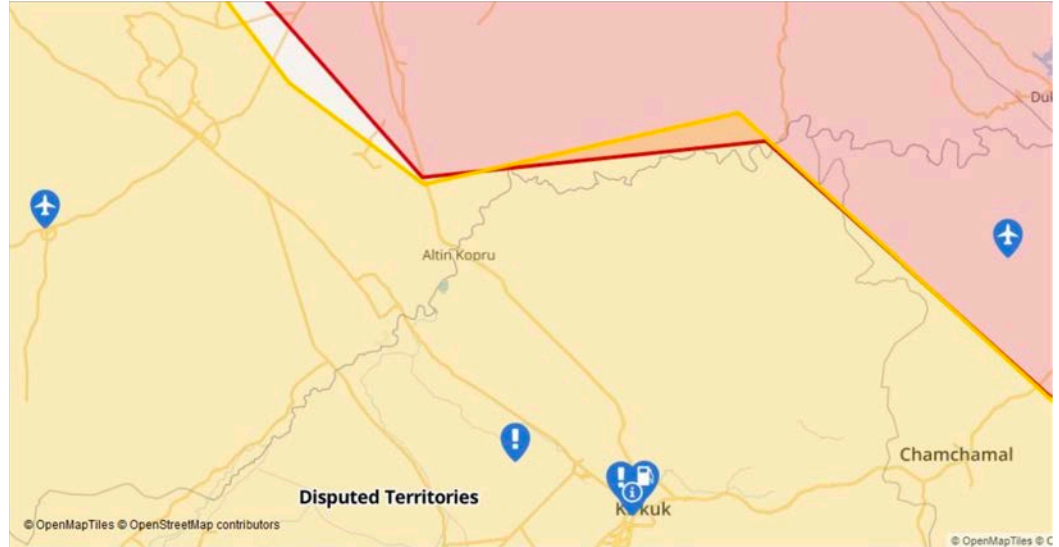
### Kirkuk

For the third time in less than two weeks, arson targeted farms owned by the Kaka'i Kurds near Daquq district. On May 24th, nearly 156 dunams (38 acres) of wheat crops were set on fire in the Kaka'i and Omar bin Khatab villages. The recurrence of arsons in recent years obligated some farmers to harvest crops earlier. ISIS (Da'esh) terrorists have been responsible for most fires set on farmlands in both Iraq and Syria since 2019.

Kirkuk police arrested 38 "foreigners" without proper residency cards. The police said they sent their cases to the court since they stayed in Kirkuk illegally. On a different note, nine people were arrested on Thursday, May 19, for drug usage and dealing.

Owners of private generators protested against the government for cutting their gas supply. A new government law makes the owners of generators buy gas from private refineries. The protestors announced they would raise the price of electricity to 200% due to the high cost of gas in private refineries. Another demonstration is set for June 1st. The electricity in Kirkuk has decreased by 75% since October 16, 2017.

On May 22nd, the Food Security Committee, a part of the Ministry of Commerce, decided to ban wheat and barley exports from Kirkuk. The committee's decision aims to force farmers to sell their crops to the government. The farmers are reluctant to sell their wheat to the government since it takes more than two years to receive payments. Currently, the government warehouses and silos are empty, risking



food crises in the province.

On May 23rd and 24th, the Turkish-backed Turkmen Front held its general congress and expelled Arshad Salihi, the party's lawmaker and former leader. His removal is due to internal differences between two wings: Islamists led by the current leader Hassan Turan and nationalists led by Salihi. Last year, the Islamist wing, part of the Muslim Brotherhood, removed Salihi as the head of the party. Salihi won a parliamentary seat last October. Meanwhile, On May 19th, Turkmen parties held a press conference demanding "joint administration" in the province at 32% for each Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, and 4% for Christians. The following day, the Kirkuk administration stated that they were not against the arrangement, and several posts were given to the Turkmen population.

At 5:14 am on May 21, Turkish warplanes bombed the village of Tutaqal in the Aghjaler district. Four hours after the incident, at 9:00 am, the village leader (Mokhtar), Aram Hamad Khan, and his son-in-law, Ismail Mamend, went to the scene and found three Kurd-

istan Workers' Party (PKK) fighters wounded. A Turkish drone bombed their vehicle taking the three PKK fighters to the Aghjaler health center, killing all five. Khan and Mamend were survivors of the Anfal process, and more than 80 members of their families were killed.

### Khanaqin

At 10 pm on May 23rd, ISIS fighters attacked Islah village in Jalawla (Golala) district and killed four civilians. The security media cell reported, "Four civilians, including a man, two women, and a child, were killed in the attack. Two soldiers were wounded during the rescue operation."

### Tuz Khurmatu

On May 23rd, Da'esh terrorists killed six Turkmen farmers during harvesting their lands. According to the security cell, the incident occurred between the two villages (Baldagh and Dugshman) belonging to the Taza Khurmatu district near Kirkuk province. Before withdrawing, the terrorists set fire to more than 25 dunams (six acres) and farm equipment.

Da'esh terrorists also wounded a soldier near Bastamali village in another attack on May 23rd.

The Mayor, Hassan Zain al Abdin, said the drought reduced 79% of agricultural planning in Khurmatu. According to the mayor, the water level has decreased significantly in the area, and most of the farmers remain displaced, and upon their return, "the water crisis will greatly worsen."

### Makhmour

On May 21st, hours after bombing the Aghjaler district, Turkish drones struck the Makhmour Refugee Camp twice. The first bombing targeted a pickup truck inside the camp, killing two people and wounding three others. The second bombing targeted the south of the camp without known damage.

### Shingal (Sinjar)

On May 21st, six "suicide drones" targeted the Zlikani base, housing the Turkish military near Mosul. After the incident, the "Ahrar Sinjar" group claimed responsibility for the attack in retaliation for the recent Turkish airstrikes in Iraq.

The New York Times

May 26, 2022  
By Cihan Tugal

## Opinion: Turkey Shows What NATO Really Is

In April, as the world was occupied with Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, a NATO member launched an attack on two of its neighboring territories. In a bombing campaign, Turkey targeted the camps of Kurdish militants in Iraq and Syria, inflicting damage on shelters, ammunition depots and bases.

The irony went largely unnoticed. That's hardly a surprise: For a long time, the Western world has turned a blind eye to Turkey's heavy-handed treatment of the Kurds. Across decades, the Turkish state has persecuted the Kurdish minority — about 18 percent of the population — with devastating zeal. Thousands have perished and around a million have been displaced in a campaign of severe internal repression. But Western nations, except for a brief spell when Kurdish resistance was holding back an ascendant Islamic State, have rarely seemed to care.

Turkey's treatment of the Kurds is now center stage — but not because allies have woken up to the injustice of Kurds' systematic oppression. Instead, it's because Turkey is effectively threatening to block the admittance of Finland and Sweden to NATO unless they agree to crack down on Kurdish militants. For President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, seeing an opportunity to further cement his nationalist agenda, it's a bold gambit. The tepid response from NATO allies so far suggests he might be successful.

However the situation shakes out, it's deeply revealing. For Turkey, it underlines once again the vigor with which Mr. Erdogan is keen to stamp out the Kurds while asserting the



A pro-Kurdish demonstration in Berlin this month against Turkey's military actions in Syria and Iraq. Credit... Christian Mang/ Reuters

country as a regional power. For the alliance itself, the impasse brings to light facts currently obscured by its makeover as a purely defensive organization. NATO, which has long acquiesced in the persecution of the Kurds, is far from a force for peace. And Turkey, a member since 1952, proves it.

Turkey's conflict with the Kurds goes back at least to the late 19th century, when Ottoman centralization led to tribal uprisings. The initial two decades of the Turkish Republic, founded in 1923, involved the denial of Kurdish identity, autonomy and language, all of which were mainstays of the Ottoman Empire. Rebellions ensued but were forcibly put down. After remaining largely dormant in the 1940s and 1950s, Kurdish militancy then experienced a revival, under revolutionary banners. The Kurdistan Workers' Party, or P.K.K., emerged in this atmosphere.

The organization is designated a terrorist group by Turkey, the United States and the European Union — and its methods are indeed violent. Across four decades of conflict, the P.K.K. has contributed to the blood-

shed and is responsible for the deaths of civilians as well as security officials. Yet Turkey's militaristic approach to the Kurdish issue has left little room for other, more conciliatory Kurdish organizations.

The country experienced a spring of Kurdish activism in the late 1960s and 1970s, when many left-wing Turkish movements and organizations also expressed solidarity with the Kurds. But a coup d'état in 1980 heavily crushed these forces, with the exception of the P.K.K., most of whose camps were already outside Turkey. In the years after the coup, the heavy torture suffered by Kurdish activists of various organizations swelled the ranks of the P.K.K. More embittered against the Turkish state than ever, many activists saw no other effective home for their struggle.

Things today aren't much better: Peaceful forms of Kurdish activism — such as those organized by the legal Peoples' Democratic Party, or H.D.P. — are under constant attack, accused of affiliation with the P.K.K. The government also claims that the P.K.K. is in cahoots with the Gulen move-

ment, a former ally of the ruling party the government accuses of orchestrating a failed coup attempt in 2016. It is members of these two groups who Mr. Erdogan is demanding Sweden and Finland give up.

Where was NATO in all of this? The 1980 military intervention, at least passively endorsed by the alliance, was led by Kenan Evren, a commander in NATO's counter-guerilla forces. Western countries kept on providing ample support for campaigns against the Kurds in the following years, even during the exceptionally violent clashes of 1993-95. As hostilities resumed in the 2010s, the West largely neglected internal waves of repression and Turkey's recurrent incursions into Syria and Iraq, where Kurds have long sought refuge.

If such enabling silence is so persistent, why did Mr. Erdogan choose this particular time to ramp up military adventures? The answer is simple: Elections are around the corner, and the government, overseeing the country's worst economic crisis in two decades, is counting on jingoism as a remedy for national ills. The ruling party has accordingly ratcheted up its moves against the Kurds, with imprisonment of politicians and journalists, military campaigns abroad and bans on concerts and plays at home.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has apparently further emboldened Mr. Erdogan. It has allowed Turkey to pose as a friend to the West, earning praise for its early blockade of the Black Sea while continuing to pursue its repressive agenda. What's more, by pushing Sweden and Finland — perceived to be longtime harborers of Kurdish militants — toward NATO, the war has

handed Turkey a golden opportunity.

If the United States were to pressure the two countries to accept Turkey's demands, as Secretary of State Antony Blinken has suggested might happen, it would be more than a rare symbolic triumph. Bombings and cultural bans would be nothing compared with an international admission, sealed by the world's most powerful country, that Kurdish rights can be waved aside. It's tempting to see Turkey as

an exceptionally bellicose state. Labeled the "sick man of Europe" in the final days of the Ottoman Empire, the country now appears to be the continent's belligerent man. But it's wrong to look at the country in isolation. Mr. Erdogan's aggression is not his alone. It is enabled, encouraged and buttressed by Western countries, as well as Russia.

In Turkey, this is a provocative claim: The authorities want their citizens, and the world, to believe that "foreigners" and "outside powers" have always

supported Kurdish separatism. This quite popular but highly twisted perception of reality says nothing about the weapons, logistical support and consent other countries have abundantly provided in the killing of Kurds.

The United States supplied weapons to Syrian Kurds during their fight against the Islamic State, it's true. But that's dwarfed by the sophistication and amount of military equipment that Turkey, home to NATO's second-largest military, secures thanks to being

part of the Western alliance.

The truth is that Turkey's aggression has gone hand in hand with NATO acceptance, even complicity. It's no use for Western countries to be lecturing Turkey, or Turkey complaining of Western hypocrisy: They are in it together. Whatever happens with the alliance's expansion — whether the Kurds are sacrificed on the altar of geopolitical expediency or not — this should be a moment of clarity. In a world of war, no country has a monopoly on violence.



May 26, 2022

## Concert bans continue in Turkey 'to protect public safety, morality'

While all concerts as part of the International Spring Festival were canceled at Middle East Technical University, one concert was banned on the grounds of "public safety" in Bursa, while another one is banned in Isparta for being against "morals of the society." If the concerts expected to be held at the Middle East Technical University (METU) yesterday (May 25) at 34th METU International Spring Festival have been canceled by the rector of the university.

Musician Burhan Şeşen announced the decision of the university administration on Twitter.

"Concerts to be held tonight at METU have been canceled by the rectorate. All the efforts of the International Youth Community that organized the concert have been gone in vain. Students have worked hard for a year to organize these

events. This is the result. Anyone who takes this decision and turns a blind eye to it is clearly BAD," wrote Şeşen. The reason for the cancellation was announced as follows by the rector's office:

"We wish God's mercy on our soldiers who were martyred in Operation Claw Lock, patience for their families, and fast recovery to our wounded soldiers. Concerts to be held on May 25 have been canceled due to this sad news that deeply saddens us all."  
"Public safety"

Another concert was banned in Bursa. The Governor's Office banned the concert of Kurdish musician Mem Ararat, which was due to take place on May 29.

Ararat announced on his Twitter account that the concert, to be held at Bursa Merinos Atatürk Congress and Culture Center, had been banned by a written decision of the Governor's Of-

fice only 3 days before the date of the event.

"Public Safety" was proposed as the reason for the ban by the Governor's Office.

"It is a decision that is divisive and hurts the conscience of the society to ban it three days before our concert, when all the tickets have been sold, the plane tickets of the musicians have been bought, hotel reservations and all similar preparations have been completed," Ararat wrote on Twitter.  
"Public morality"

As part of the International Isparta Rose Festival, singers Melek Mosso, Derya Uluğ and Funda Arar were going to give concerts on different days. Mosso was going to take the stage at Meydan AVM on 3 June.

Musician Melek Mosso's concert was also banned today after a statement from the Na-

tional Youth Foundation (MGV) and Anatolian Youth Association (AGD) Isparta Branch.

In a common statement by the two organizations, it was claimed that Isparta Municipality is organizing concerts that are "against the morals and beliefs of the society."

Mosso said the following from her social media account about the cancellation:

"I am the woman of this country. With my ideas, vision, and dreams, I continue making art every day. I have millions of fans, young and old. It is not the business of a few ignorant people to question my morals or insult my femininity. People with this mentality are trying to bring the darkness and perversion in their hearts into our lives, but I will never allow this, we will NOT... I will certainly go to Isparta and sing my songs. If not today, our hearts will hug tomorrow."



May 27, 2022  
By Ely Sannes

## Eight Years on from the ISIS Genocide Peace in Kurdistan

### Who are the Yazidis?

The Yazidis are a religious group settled predominantly in northern Iraq around the Sinjar mountains, located in the disputed territory of the Sinjar region, which is geographically between the Kurdistan region and central Iraq. They are a double minority community in much of the Middle East and have resided in or around the Sinjar mountains and northern Iraq, in the Kurdistan Region, for centuries. Though most of the Yazidis are Kurdish in ethnicity and speak the Kurdish language (Kurmanji), religiously they are very distinct from the majority Sunni Kurdish population.[1] As minorities, some of Yazidis prefer to be recognized as an ethnic group, distinctly separate from the Kurds because of their cultural and religious differences.[2]

The religion of Yazidism is somewhat complicated, which is a reason it is misunderstood so easily. Yazidism mixes elements from Islam, Zoroastrianism, Nestorian Christianity, ancient Persian faiths, and Mithraism (a near-eastern faith that was very popular amongst the Roman legionnaires) to form their faith. This syncretism, which is an amalgamation of various faiths is often a subject of heavy criticism, and as a result, the Yazidis are considered heretics by the fundamentalist Muslims. Unlike other religious minorities in the Near East, they are considered devil worshippers by many Muslims for their worship of Tawusi Melek, an angel who resists God to be a link to the divine for humans or that God left the management of the world to the seven archangels, among

whom Tawusi Melek enjoys the highest stature.

The Yazidi faith never practices proselytizing and its religion is one of orthopraxy with a focus on living life according to a set of rules rather than focusing on personal beliefs or scriptures. This means that many of the Yazidi traditions are transmitted orally through songs called qawls.[3] Because of this, the Yazidis culture is conservative in its social rules. Besides a strict caste system that defines Yazidi social and religious life, there are various other taboos too that are integral to Yazidism. The Yazidis also have a very strict set of rules about marriage because of the caste system. There is a belief among the Yazidis passed down from Sheik Adi Ibn Musafir that they are pure and therefore can only marry within the community. In fact, marriage outside the community is punishable by death. In 2007, Yazidis committed an honor killing when a 16-year-old Yazidi girl married a Muslim man and converted to Islam. This focus on maintaining ethnic cohesion by preventing intermarriage and relative isolation from the majority Arab population are the frontline reasons why there are many misconceptions about the Yazidis. It became a big issue for the upper echelons of the Yazidis following ISIS's ethnic cleansing campaign against them.

There are also strict rules around intermarriage within the Yazidis because of the caste system. The three castes are the Sheiks, Murids (laymen), and Pyir (clergy). While marriage is only allowed within the

class, the subcaste factor makes the marriage laws of the Yazidis further complicated. The Sheiks and Pyirs fulfill the clerical duties of the communities, but the principal ranks are drawn from the Sheiks and the Pyirs fill in the lower-level religious and political positions. In terms of religious ranks, the highest position is enjoyed by Baba Chawish who presides over all Yazidi religious ceremonies, and in the political sphere, the leader is known as the Mir. The Yazidis also believe in a form of reincarnation called transmigration in which after death the spirit of the individual remains in the community through successive incarnations. According to the Yazidis, they have been targeted for extermination as many as 72 times for their faith and ethnicity. Historically, millions of Yazidis have been killed for their faith in these 72 purges.

Throughout history, the Yazidis have been targeted by various kingdoms, either through displacement, ethnic cleansing, or war because they are believed to be devil worshippers. The Yazidi faith can be traced back to the Kurdish mountains of northern Iraq, where pockets of Kurds remained loyal to the Umayyad dynasty after its fall.[4] They remained loyal because the last King of the Umayyad dynasty was of Kurdish descent, and after its fall some of the descendants of this dynasty settled in the area. The origins of the Yazidi faith are believed to begin with the settling of a Sufi sheik named Adī Ibn Musāfir, an orthodox Sufi known as the Adwiyah, whose teachings blended with

local traditions. During the 15th century, Muslim rulers in Mosul and other areas of the Middle East began to view the Yazidis' growing religious and political power as a threat to the Muslim establishment. In response to this rise, a series of massacres and conversions, both forced and voluntary began that led to many Yazidis fleeing to the Caucasus mountains. There the community exercised considerable influence during the 16th century under the Ottomans and enjoyed vassalage of the province of Soran, located from Erbil to the Jazira region of Syria.[5]

Yazidi influence, however, waned during the late 18th century because conversions to Islam were frequent, and due to changes in the Ottoman law that targeted them and the Christian minority groups for religious persecution. This persecution led to massacres of the Yazidis, Armenians, and other minority groups by the Ottomans and Kurdish tribal leaders. Under such hostile circumstances, many of the Yazidis emigrated to Georgia and Armenia in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Many Yazidis still remaining in Turkey fearing further discrimination emigrated to Germany while many in Germany joined the diaspora efforts that include communication linkups with their brethren in Iraq and the Caucasus. Persistent persecutions have not only caused a wide diaspora of the Yazidis their worldwide population has also dwindled remarkably below one million. See Table 1 below.

### The Yazidis' Position in the Middle East

Iraq has the largest Yazidi population ranging anywhere between 300,000 and 700,000. It is extremely hard to calculate the exact population of the Yazidis due to the lack of consistent censuses in Iraq, and the ISIS targeting them for ethnic cleansing, displacing thousands and making it even harder to track the population. We assume that roughly 90% of Yazidis live under the federal government of Iraq and about 10% under the Kurds in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).[6]

However, in Iraq, the Yazidis struggled for a political identity for a long, and in 1975 the Ba'athist regime labeled their ethnic identity to Arab offspring to alienate them from the Kurds and the majority Shia Muslim population.[7] In the 80s Saddam Hussein forced the Yazidis to relocate from their ancestral home near the Sinjar Mountains to makeshift villages in the underdeveloped areas of Iraq and speak Arabic. Along with this, 126 Yazidi villages were collectivized into 10 villages. This forced many Yazidis to abandon their ancestral home and move into these underdeveloped camps. The villages and land that the Yazidis were displaced from then went to the Arab settlers to Arabize the region. Thousands of Yazidi properties were redistributed to the Arabs and Sunnis. Traditional Yazidi practices like animal husbandry were blocked by the Iraqi government, and many of the villages they were forced into had very limited space for livestock. This greatly decreased both the health and economic opportunities of an already otherized minority group. This was done to split them territorially from the Kurds who were vying for autonomy at that time. Iraqi schools were forbidden from teaching minority cultures or religions including the Yazidis. The Anfal Campaign in the 80s, although not meant to target the Yazidis, further weakened the Yazidis in Iraq. Many

Yazidis were detained, expelled, and disappeared as part of this Arabization campaign by the Ba'athist party.[8]

The Yazidis' position grew increasingly better with the establishment of the KRG, but they are still subjected to widespread repression. Since 2003, there have been religious hostilities that have taken the form of violent attacks on the community. In 2012, a Yazidi couple was brutally murdered by a still-unidentified gunman.[9] Muslim militants actively try to intimidate and harass Yazidi businesses and religious communities because they are considered devil worshipers. In 2010, a Yazidi business establishment was attacked by the Islamic militants for selling alcohol. The Yazidi also face oppression from the Iranian-backed militias in Iraq. In 2013, gunmen in jeeps attacked 12 alcohol stores killing nine people and wounding at least two more, and in a separate incident of bombing two people were killed and 15 were injured.[10] Although no group claimed credit for the attacks, some believe that Shiite militias were responsible. Many of these Shiite militias are backed by Tehran.[11] This attack led to the deaths of ten laborers in this business and minimal punishment for the perpetrators. Yazidi villages and shrines were repeatedly targeted by fundamentalist attacks. In 2007, a coordinated attack on the villages of Kataniya and Jazira by four truck bombs left almost 500 dead and over a thousand wounded.[12] This was the biggest explosion in Iraq since 2003. The Yazidi were believed to be one of the primary targets of this attack. Many of the displaced Yazidis have had their movement limited [13] and they refer to these camps as prisons because of the severe limitations on movement and the political pressure felt by Kurdish security forces.

Since 2014, the Yazidis in Iraq have been under constant

threat. ISIS carried out a systematic cleansing of the Yazidi community in Sinjar, Iraq. In 2014, it threatened the Yazidi communities in Sinjar village and many surrounding villages with ethnic cleansing, abduction, and other crimes against humanity. Tens of thousands of Yazidis fled their villages and took shelter in the mountains of the Sinjar region. In Sinjar alone, an estimated 10,000 Yazidis were killed or kidnapped by ISIS.[14] ISIS views the Yazidis as not only heathens but also as pagans who need cleansing. Those who escaped to the mountain were besieged by ISIS and denied access to water and shade in the harsh Iraqi summer, and many Yazidi children died from dehydration and exposure to the sun. Nearly all 88 villages in the Sinjar region were emptied by the ISIS of those who could not escape to the KRG or the mountains. In Kocho village, the nearly 1,200 strong Yazidi population was wiped out. Men were separated from the women and then executed and buried in unmarked mass graves. Nearly eleven mass graves were found in Kocho alone. Thousands of young Yazidi girls between the ages of 13 and 16 were taken by ISIS and forced into marriages. The Yazidi women that were taken and forced into marriages are bearing the impact of the abductions and rapes, and they are being isolated if they are lucky enough to return to their communities because of the Yazidi religious laws surrounding marriage outside the community. There are many stories of Yazidi women being impregnated by ISIS fighters and choosing between exile from their community and their children. Young boys were taken by ISIS and forced into their training camps where they were indoctrinated and given Muslim names. Women that were too old to bear children were executed in Kocho. ISIS also bulldozed or burned down entire villages, and cultural and historical sites with the intent to

wipe out the Yazidis, Christians, Turkmen, and other minority cultures. What the Yazidi experienced in 2014 was nothing short of genocide. According to Article II of the Geneva Convention, there are two elements to genocide: mental and physical. The Yazidis experienced both aspects of genocide when the IS targeted them in 2014. ISIS certainly had the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group," (Yazidis in this case) and certainly is responsible for all five forms of physical violence (killings, serious bodily/mental harm, physical destruction, prevent births, and forcibly moving children).[15] ISIS wanted to wipe out the Yazidis in Sinjar. In response, many Yazidis joined the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) to protect their people even though there remained a huge risk in joining the PMF because the Asyaish responded to the Yazidis joining the PMF by kicking out families of those who joined.[16]

Fast-forwarding to the present day, the Yazidis continue to face a variety of armed threats in Iraq, especially in the Sinjar region. Turkey, ISIS, and other armed militias continue to operate and present a security threat to the Yazidis both in Sinjar and in IDP camps. As of February 2022, nearly 80 Yazidis have been killed by Turkish air and artillery strikes.[17] The Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS), formed to combat ISIS, have been a frequent target by Turkey because of its supposed ties with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The YBS is a part of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units meant to combat ISIS, but Turkey continues to target them. There is also a growing concern that Iran-backed Shia militias will destabilize the balance that exists in Iraq. They have claimed that one of its goals is to drive the U.S. forces by undermining security in the Kurdish region of Iraq. In 2021, Iran-backed militias claimed

credit for a deadly rocket attack in Erbil.[18] The second reason can be linked to the KRG's relations with the west. Iran views the KRG as the "new Israel" and because of that, it must be resisted. Lastly, the Iranian forces hope to worsen relations between the federal Iraqi government and the KRG. All these goals, together, have the chance to destabilize the region which in turn can create a space for ISIS to resurge.

In Syria, the Yazidis have a longstanding history of being repressed by the faction in power. From Assad to ISIS, the Yazidis have suffered persecution, violence, and displacement because of their religious differences. They have had to deal with Basar-al Assad's Syria, the Islamic State, the KRG, the Yekineyên Parastina Gel (YPG), meaning People's Protection Units, and Turkey, all of whom have very different positions concerning the Yazidis. Before the Syrian Civil War, there were roughly 80,000 Yazidis living in Syria with almost all of them residing in Afrin.[19] The Yazidis have lived in Syria since the 12th century in the areas in and around Afrin. The number of Yazidi villages has greatly decreased since the 1900s, from 85 to around 30. However, many of the remaining villages were spared from the ethnic cleansing that their co-religionists went through in Iraq because they were geographically scattered and were under the protection of the YPG. That said, before the establishment of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), the Yazidis were effectively erased from civic life under Ba'athist rule. The Kurdish language, which many Yazidis speak, was banned in Syria under the Assad family's rule. Non-Muslim holidays, religious practices, and identification were banned under the Ba'athist regime. The Kurds and Yazidis both faced discrimination for being non-Arabs, but the Yazidis were also a re-

ligious minority which made their oppression intersectional. They were not allowed to identify with either their ethnic or religious identity, unlike the majority of Sunni Kurds. The laws of Syria under Assad were built around Sharia law, and the Yazidis were forced to comply with these laws in all aspects of life including marriage even though they are not Muslims. Syria under the Assad family has attempted to remove the Yazidi identity from government records and social life. As of 2021, the Yazidis continue to have their religious identity repressed. The Syrian Justice Ministry ruled that the Yazidis were a sect of Islam and therefore subject to Islamic personal status laws.[20] Unlike other religious minorities, they must go through Islamic courts rather than having their religious-personal status courts.

Under the Kurdish administration of northeast Syria, the Yazidis have had their position moderately improved since 2012. The YPG controlled many of the regions that ancestral Yazidi villages were in, and because of this was spared much of the violence that their co-religionists experienced in the Sinjar mountains. However, the YPG and the AANES did more than just protect the Yazidis. Unlike Assad's regime, they recognized the Yazidi religion as its own faith, independent from Islam. The Yazidis also occupied high positions in the AANES administration including the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Yazidis in the AANES have for the first time in decades experienced a state that was responsive to their needs and tolerant of their faith. The YPG and the AANES are not perfect, but the material and social conditions they have created for the Yazidis are significantly better than that of those under Assad. The AANES has done a good job of ensuring the security of the Yazidis, but there are concerns that ISIS is resurging, which

may undo this weak balance that currently exists in Syria.

However, the sanctuary that the Yazidis have found in northeast Syria is now under threat because of Turkish military operations in northern Syria. The Turkish military has effectively stymied the growth of religious freedom in northern Syria because it has threatened the stability of the region. The Syrian National Army (SNA), the Turkish-backed militia in Syria, has captured the city of Afrin which has a large Yazidi population. The entire Afrin canton is now under Turkish control, but the amount of actual control the Turkish government has on these groups is limited. Since the SNA has occupied Afrin, 90% of the Yazidi population has been driven out of the canton, some fled and others were forced out of their homes. Yazidi religious sites, burial grounds, and other cultural sites were destroyed by Turkish forces in Afrin. Nearly 50 Yazidis have been kidnapped since Turkey occupied Afrin, a number far larger than under the YPG. Turkey's militia forces have begun targeting the Yazidi for removal in territories controlled by Turkey in Syria.[21] Turkish airstrikes targeted the Sinjar mountains where thousands of Yazidi refugees live. Turkey has also targeted Yazidi militias for alleged connections to the PKK which has only worsened the security of the Yazidis who are not in displacement camps.[22]

For the Yazidis who have not been able to return, they live in IDP camps that are under-resourced, under-secured, and relatively ignored by international and local actors. In early June 2021, a fire broke out at the Cham Mishko refugee camp where nearly 15,000 Yazidis have lived for seven years. There are many instances like this because the tents are effectively tent cities and this makes them vulnerable to the elements and fires. In 2014, a camp near Baghdad

also burned down displacing 1,400 Yazidis who were under shelter there. In the Iraqi elections in October 2021, a major question facing the candidates was how to deal with internally displaced people and the continuing consequences of ISIS.[23] There are countless examples of IDP camps catching fire and burning down which has only worsened overcrowding in other camps. These campfires combined with the closing of IDP camps have left the residents in limbo. They can return to a different displacement camp or attempt to return home, but this is not an option for many displaced Yazidis. There is an ongoing security threat from ISIS and Turkey that makes returning to their ancestral homes near impossible. Settlers have moved into the disputed territory and have taken over homesteads.

In Turkey, the Yazidis occupy a precarious position. They are considered Kurds by the dominant Justice and Development Party (officially abbreviated as AKP or the AK Parti) but face discrimination from Sunni Kurds because of their religious differences. This makes them dually discriminated against both in terms of ethnicity and faith. Yazidi refugees in Turkey have been denied aid by the Turkish government and they face much of the discrimination experienced by the Kurds in Turkey including those in employment, violence, and lack of economic security. Because they are both an ethnic and religious minority the discrimination is often far more acute. Turkey has also occupied Afrin in Syria, the prime city for the Yazidis of Syria. In Turkish occupied Syria and Iraq, there are mass lootings, forced displacements, extortions, murders, kidnappings, and sexual violence conducted by Turkish forces. In Afrin, hundreds of civilians have been killed by Turkish airstrikes. However, what represents the biggest threat to the Yazidis in Afrin is the composition of Tur-

key's militias. The Turkish-backed militias in Syria have a large number of former ISIS fighters fighting in their ranks. Turkish airstrikes targeting YPG forces have allowed ISIS prisoners to escape including an airstrike near Jirkin that allowed some ISIS fighters to flee. According to the Pentagon, ISIS will benefit from Turkey's invasion of Iraq and Syria by having time to reorganize, rearm, and reconstitute itself.[24] There is also evidence that ISIS and Turkey have a much deeper strategic relationship. Many of ISIS's foreign fighters came through Turkey. It's pertinent to mention that in Turkey, ISIS fighters have found refuge following its defeat in 2016. Turkish citizens have also helped recruit for ISIS, arranged bus recruits to the border, and allowed its people to visit their family members in ISIS. There is also some evidence that Turkey helped ISIS generate oil revenues by supporting its extensive, illegal oil trafficking networks. Ultimately, Turkey has become in many ways the logistical hub for ISIS. In Afrin, there were 228 cases of kidnappings with the majority of victims being Kurdish and Yazidi women. These kidnappings, similar to the style followed by ISIS, have been committed by the Turkish-backed forces creating a new threat for the already threatened Yazidi communities in Syria and Iraq. Turkish airstrikes have slowed the home return for many of the Yazidis of Sinjar.[25]

### **Recommendations for Rebuilding the Yazidis**

Following the genocide of 2014 at the hands of ISIS, the Yazidis need true commitments from the coalition that fought against ISIS, and not just empty promises of support. They have three core needs – security, justice, and reparations. As of now, the insecurity that the Yazidis face is multi-polar. While armed threats

from various armed groups continue to loom without any break, acute economic and social insecurity are being felt intensely. Many of the issues the Yazidis face are exacerbated by the volatility of the region. The insecurity the Yazidis face undermines growth in other areas that they are lacking such as education, economic opportunities, and community building. There are three thousand Yazidis who are recorded to be missing for several years since the collapse of ISIS territorial caliph. Many of the Yazidis that are missing were taken captive by ISIS, and many are being held for ransom now in Syria. Many Yazidis are not in a position to pay the heavy ransoms to get their family members back, and that has left many like Abbas Hussein's teenage son to remain under bondage at the hands of the captors for over five years.[26] Mr. Hussein's son is being held by a former ISIS fighter who is now in Syria fighting with the Syrian National Army (SNA).

The missing Yazidis paint the larger threat the Yazidi community is subjected to in going back to their ancestral villages and towns, a telling reality that the specter of ISIS is far from over. ISIS continues to be a persisting threat to Yazidi communities in Syria and Iraq. In January 2022, ISIS launched one of its most coordinated and lethal attacks to date on the Al-Sina prison. This attack had the similarity with the activities it followed a couple of years back wherein actions were launched through the widely spread sleeper cells as a tactical measure to make good the territorial loss in 2019. As of 2019, there were roughly 18,000 fighters still in Iraq and Syria who have access to a war chest of an estimated USD 400 million. From a national security standpoint, ISIS represents a meaningful armed threat to the AANES and the KRG even without territory.

Following the death of Abu

Bakr al-Baghdadi, the former leader of Da'esh, ISIS began operating through a decentralized command structure that allowed for greater autonomy amongst disparate sleeper cells. In 2019, 37 people were killed in an ISIS bus bombing. This attack was one of the largest in recent years conducted by ISIS, and it did not require territory or a centralized command structure for the attack to take place. The instability along the Iraqi-Syrian border has created a porous passage for ISIS fighters to move between the two countries. In December 2021, the village of Khidir Jija was attacked by ISIS resulting in the death of three civilians and wounding of several Peshmerga fighters. This attack was launched in conjunction with another assault on the Markmour district which killed ten Peshmerga fighters and three civilians.

The largest ISIS attack in recent times was the Al-Sina prison assault in January 2022. Hundreds of ISIS fighters swarmed the Al-Sina prison in an attempt to free the ISIS fighters imprisoned there. The attack was preceded by several car bombings along the northern walls of the prison. The fight over Al-Sina prison lasted over a week in what was one of the largest engagements with ISIS since they lost its territory. Roughly, 374 ISIS fighters, 50 Peshmerga fighters, and 7 civilians were killed in the fighting. The YPG was able to retake the prison with assistance from U.S. airstrikes. There is a growing concern that ISIS is becoming more organized in launching its attacks. The potential for an ISIS resurgence presents the largest armed threat to the Yazidi communities. When ISIS rose to prominence in 2014, the Yazidis were targeted for ethnic cleansing and now that ISIS may be resurging, there is a growing concern that they will be targeted once again for genocide. The Al-Sina prison

represents two worrying trends: ISIS still has the organizational capacity to conduct attacks and coalition forces like the SDF are under strain and it is not the only armed threat the Yazidis face. They also are living at the crossroad in which four regional powers, Turkey, Iran, Syria, and the two Kurdish autonomous regions, are competing.

The Yazidis must interact daily with various armed groups from Iraqi government forces to Iranian-backed militias to the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army, and this continues to undermine the security of Yazidis in Iraq and Syria. While they have been affected by the military campaigns against the PKK in northern Iraq, airstrikes by the Turkish military have struck their villages and IDP camps forcing many to flee the mountainous areas of Iraq. In Sinjar, various armed groups vie for supremacy, and this has made it extremely hard for the Yazidis to return or rebuild. In Sinjar, the PMF sent three brigades in response to the Turkish threat. However, the PMF represents a unique threat to the Yazidis because the Iraqi government has limited control over them which in turn paved the way for them to violate human rights.[27] The PMF has consistently disobeyed orders from the Iraqi army including its failure to follow COVID-19 restrictions and attacking Iraqi security and police forces.[28]

Secondly, there is a deep distrust between the Yazidis and their Arab neighbors following the genocide of 2014 because the Yazidis feel that their Arab neighbors betrayed them when ISIS rampaged through Sinjar and other parts of Iraq. Local Arab, Kurdish, and Yazidi NGOs need serious international assistance to rebuild the lost trust between these communities and localized small-scale projects offer the chance for rebuilding social capital between these com-



munities. As of now, the Yazidis are lacking social capital (Putman's Social Capital) because of a lack of effort from outside communities including the international community to repair the snapped connectedness. It remains a fact that unless the Yazidis are allowed to gain social capital, they may never end up in a position to make meaningful demands for rights and reparations. Similarly, the Kurds are weakened for not rebuilding the trust with the Yazidi communities in the Kurdish region. The Yazidis have been relegated to what Tocqueville would describe as a little faction that only turns inwards for reliable support.

Unless this is changed, any approach to fix the security for Yazidi-populated regions, any approach for reparations, and any attempt to find justice will fall short. This is since the Yazidis, Arabs, and Kurdish populations are not working in conjunction, but rather working separately in their bubbles to achieve their needs. All these three populations were affected by the ISIS insurgency, and all three must recognize that they are better off working together to rebuild. This will be a lengthy process that will require the goodwill of international communities and their Kurdish and Arab partners. Rebuilding social capital will be a difficult task because of the role the segments of the population of Iraq played in assisting ISIS. It's thus apparent that encouraging multiethnic and multireligious interconnectivity may prove critical to the Yazidis returning to Sinjar and other ancestral homes. A major aspect of rebuilding trust between the various religious and ethnic groups may be by helping the Yazidis give their lost loved ones the proper burial rights. There are approximately 80 mass graves in Sinjar that are being exhumed so that those who died may receive a proper burial.[29] Many Yazidis refuse to leave the camps because they still have their loved ones missing, and

it's hard to attempt to bring back normalcy without any perceptible return of the factor of family intactness.

The Iraqi government and the KRG should focus on returning the kidnapped, missing, and displaced Yazidis to their families so that they can truly begin the process of rebuilding. Rebuilding social capital is very doable, as substantiated by a survey by Mercy Corps that found that displaced people regardless of ethnic or religious identity are more likely to accept returnees of those who had similar experiences. Sunni Muslims and Yazidis who were displaced together have a higher likelihood of having inter-communal trust. The 2017 independence referendum in the KRG has caused a divide in the Yazidi community. Many Yazidis nurture distrust toward all Muslims regardless of sect or ethnicity following the ISIS carnage against them. The independence referendum has highlighted the existing divide between the Kurds and the Yazidis.[30] Many Yazidis do not identify themselves as Kurds but rather as a separate ethnic group while many others are uncertain about the referendum because of the security implications that came from it. The other concern chasing many Yazidis is what their position would be if the referendum had actually been implemented especially because Sinjar, their ancestral home in Iraq, would have been split in half leaving them in a precarious position. The referendum would have brought either warfare to the Yazidis' homes or would have left them as a disputed and stateless people being competed over by Erbil and Baghdad. The Yazidis themselves were divided on the referendum – not a very conducive development for a community already divided following the onslaught by ISIS.

The genocide of the Yazidis, as mentioned above, has greatly degraded the unity that existed hitherto. The distrust of the

KDP has led to a diverse field of twelve candidates running for four seats. The Yazidis at one point were a major voter base for the KDP, but not any longer. Two of the Yazidi candidates are backed by the PKK; two women are running for the positions, one backed by the KDP and the other by PMU. Many Yazidis want none of their protected seats to go to Kurdish parties because the Peshmerga left them in the lurch in 2014. Distrust toward the KDP remains because of its history of repressive policies against the Yazidis. There are concerns that the Yazidis in IDP camps will be coerced into voting for the KDP candidates out of fear for their safety. Another major cause for the divide in the Yazidi community is the cultural policy around marriages. A child is not a part of the community if born to parents that are not Yazidis, and there are thousands of children that have been born out of rapes, an atrocity committed by ISIS with alarming regularity. Some Yazidis believe that the children and their mothers should be brought back into the mainstream while others have sided with the Yazidi Spiritual Council's decision not to accept children of women raped by ISIS.[31] Many women remaining in camps fear returning because they worry their children will not be accepted by the Yazidi community. The United States government should focus its aid on repatriating families and putting pressure on Yazidi sheiks to accept children born out of rape to return with their mothers.

Thirdly, there is a distinct lack of economic opportunities for the Yazidis. Their ancestral home of Sinjar still lies in pieces nearly five years on from the fall of ISIS. The Iraqi and Kurdish authorities stated that Sinjar was safe to move back to in the summer of 2020. The families that returned have come back to their destroyed homes and mass graves. Many of those returnees must live in tents around the flat-

tened ruins of their homes. The local economy is devastated to the point where those who are in Sinjar live off a few pennies a day. Those that returned are in the minority with nearly 200,000 still remaining in IDP camps. There is also a concern that in the process of fleeing ISIS, many documents were lost that outlined land and property rights. This creates another complication for the Yazidis returning to their homes.

Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution has made it more complicated when it comes to the sensitive issue of managing land tenure rights because of the Iraqi government's lack of will in implementing the law. Though intended to redistribute land that was illegally occupied, disputes over territories in the disputed zones of Iraq and a lack of political will has limited the effects of Article 140, especially for the Yazidis in Sinjar. The distinct lack of economic opportunities is not limited to the IDPs, in general, Iraq is struggling with unemployment, budget shocks, and volatile oil revenues. Oil revenues have started to recover with the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, a decline in oil revenues had drastic effects because of Iraq's excessive reliance on oil. This has left both the KRG and the federal Iraqi government struggling with corruption and maintaining basic social services such as electricity, etc. The High unemployment rate in Iraq (14.088%) has made the lives of the Yazidis who are already displaced and in camps more miserable. The rehabilitation of the Yazidis in Sinjar is nearly impossible because nearly 80% percent of the structures in the region are unusable. This means that even if the Yazidis return home, they will not have any form of normalcy there. The international community should focus on providing funding, resources, and protection via air cover for rebuilding the Sinjar region.

The international community must also take responsibility for the delivery of justice to the Yazidis. Local actors like the KRG, the Iraqi federal government, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), and Syria are attempting to process cases, but there are thousands of fighters waiting for their trial, along with tens of thousands of noncombatants languishing in prison, not to mention ISIS fighters that are still active in both Iraq and Syria. These local players are now left with the responsibility of handling these cases; and with minimal aid from major countries like the United States, the process of justice delivery to the Yazidis has been abysmally slow. Unlike previous cases of ethnic cleansing, the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice have taken no real action to help the Yazidis get justice.

It's worth recalling that in the aftermath of the Bosnian genocide, a special international tribunal was established to process and charge war criminals; but no international tribunal has been established to process and charge ISIS fighters. In the 8-year aftermath of the Yazidi genocide, there have only been a handful of ISIS fighters who were charged with crimes outside of Syria and Iraq. This is a stark failure by the international community to properly assist the Yazidis in the fallout of the ethnic cleansing of 2014. Local actors are doing their best to establish justice for the Yazidis, but they lack the resources to properly handle every case. For example, France refused to take back their nationals who had joined ISIS while simultaneously trying to dictate how they are punished.[32] The French government is worried that they will not be able to properly sift between those who actually committed war crimes and those who were just accused of being a part of ISIS. Many European

nations simply refused to repatriate ISIS fighters.[33] This has forced coalition forces and local actors to begin trying European nationals for the crimes they committed while fighting for ISIS. The international community has made calls for Iraq to bring justice to the Yazidis, but ISIS continues to be an active, persistent threat that undermines the judicial process. The Iraqi government and the KRG are doing well by following the UN recommendations. They passed the Yazidi Survivors Law and the Yazidi [Women] Survivors Law which focus on creating meaningful resources for survivors to overcome material and psychological damages.[34]

However, there is no global effort to help find the missing Yazidis even though there are still nearly 3,000 such cases. The United Nations should establish a program that focuses on family reunification for the Yazidis. The Iraqi government, Syrian government, AANES, and the KRG need assistance in finding Yazidis that may be in IDP camps or are still with ISIS holdouts. A global initiative is needed to ensure justice for the Yazidi community which is still shattered by the ISIS carnage. Many Yazidi families are in limbo because leaving the IDP camps means giving up on their missing family members. For ensuring that the Yazidis are located, their missing brethren returned, and the community is rebuilt, there is an urgent need for a massive and concerted international effort. There is a lot of criticism about how the ISIS prisoners are held by the International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs). But these INGOs fail to mention that the KRG, AANES, and the Iraqi government have taken the burden of both their locals who joined ISIS and citizens of foreign countries who came to Iraq/Syria and joined ISIS. As mentioned above, countries like France took more than five years to say they would repa-

triate their citizens who joined ISIS and many European counterparts stayed in line with this.

Kurdish leaders in the KRG must take responsibility for creating opportunities for the Yazidis. There is an acute lack of access to resources in IDP camps, especially in ones servicing the Yazidis in the Kurdish region. Many of the IDP camps are set up in isolated locations because it allows the KRG to use them as leverage against the federal Iraqi Government and to sustain the status of 'dependable' it enjoys, according to Houman Oliaei, a qualitative researcher at Brandeis University and an expert on Yazidi affairs. Furthermore, the KRG heavily limits the movement of IDPs for 'security reasons,' but according to the Human Rights Watch, there is no real necessity that would require this regulation.[35] For example, Yazidi women lack access to psychological and mental health resources to help recover from the trauma of displacement, kidnapping, and rape. There are high suicide rates in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, with several clustered cases of suicide in certain camps becoming commonplace. But the lack of resources makes it nearly impossible to evaluate the mental health of the Yazidi population.[36] Mental health resources must be better managed by the KRG and Iraq. It is now 8 years since the aftermath of the Yazidi genocide and many of the Yazidi ancestral villages still lay in ruins. The combination of the pandemic and a struggling economy has created a situation in which both Iraq and KRG are unable to properly focus state resources on restoring damaged hamlets, villages, and towns that ISIS targeted for destruction.

COVID-19 has ravaged the Yazidi population because they were in consolidated and un-

derserved camps. A few mental health services that were provided in the IDP camps were shut down at the onset of the pandemic. Iraq has been particularly vulnerable to the pandemic because of a lack of resources, and the IDP camps received even less aid because the KRG and the federal Iraqi Government had to allocate resources to thwart the dreaded virus. Given the fact that Iraq's medical capacity is limited, for those who have returned to Sinjar, the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing restrictions on movement have further worsened the already weak local economy of Sinjar.[37] In Sinjar, the Yazidis can no longer go to the hospital in Dohuk and instead must take a four-hour ambulance ride to Mosul if they want to receive intensive care. Moreover, those remaining in camps are in an extremely dangerous position because the camps continually get merged leading to overcrowding which in turn creates the perfect environment for the pandemic to spread. At these crowded camps, COVID-19 tests are hard to conduct and many cases go unreported. The international community must step up its efforts to distribute the COVID vaccine to Iraq and build trust among the Iraqi people about the efficacy of the vaccine.

As of February 2022, roughly 17% of Iraqis have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. This is not because of a lack of supply of vaccines, but because of a general distrust in the government and the vaccine itself. That being said, it was not until very recently that Iraq had a large stockpile of vaccines that could vaccinate its entire population. The United States should take the lead role in promoting and supplying the vaccine to the global south because two of its manufacturers hold the patents. The IDP camps that are already underserved must become the focus of the

COVID-19 vaccination campaign in Iraq now that it has the vaccine stockpile and the vaccination rate has declined. These camps are overcrowded, lack medical facilities, and are under-resourced which makes them a great venue for the virus to spread. While the international community must make commitments to the global south to help these nations to get the COVID-19 vaccine in general, for the Yazidis, the vaccine is critical for a return to normalcy. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the severe restriction of movement of IDPs in Iraq, and without improving the vaccination rate amongst Iraqis and IDPs these movement restrictions may stay in place for a much longer time than initially expected. If this becomes the case, it will be a further setback to the Yazidis in rebuilding their ancestral homes in Sinjar because they simply cannot return or there is nothing to return to. The Washington Kurdish Institute recommends the United Nations Task Force on COVID-19 vaccines focuses their vaccination efforts on displaced peoples. These people are the most vulnerable to the pandemic and are more likely to become super-spreaders as there is no effective way to isolate them in refugee/IDP camps.

What is important for the western world is that they must truly focus on the plight of the Yazidis. There is a dangerous habit nurtured by the Western media which is to glance over issues in the Middle East. The coverage of the current Ukraine crisis gives evidence of that. A writer at the Daily Wire, Michael Knowles's tweet underlines the issue of western coverage of issues in the Middle East. His tweet: "It just occurred to me that this is the first major war between civilized nations in my lifetime" represents the greater western media's understanding of the Middle East as lacking civility and that their issues are less important because they are un-

civilized. Or to quote a CBS reporter "this isn't Iraq or Afghanistan... This is a relatively civilized, relatively European city," when speaking about the war in Ukraine. This narrative around the Middle East as justified bloody interventions by western nations helps to explain why the Yazidis continue to be marginalized and forgotten. This logic in the west is pervasive and undermines many of their operations in the Middle East. Western policymakers must look critically at the rhetorical differences in describing the war in Ukraine versus wars in the Middle East and understand how these rhetorical differences are often translated to policy differences. The Yazidis continue to struggle because the west has ignored them and there is a serious divide between how the west evaluates struggles in Europe versus the Middle East. Much of the work being done to rebuild Yazidi communities and the Yazidi culture is being done by local NGOs with marginal support from INGOs and western governments.

The Yazidis are losing faith in both regional and international actors, and for genuine reason. It has been nearly eight years since ISIS began its onslaught against them, and there has been very minimal material restitution of their position. Villages and towns in Sinjar still lay in ruins, hundreds of thousands of Yazidis remain displaced, and thousands more are still missing. Instead of working together to establish peace in Sinjar, the international and regional actors have effectively turned it into a warzone. The Yazidis still cannot return to their homes because of the continued threat of ISIS, but also because the state actors like Turkey continue accentuating its influence in the region. When American experts evaluate the Turkish-United States relationship, its primary focus is on preventing a realignment between Turkey and Russia. The United States,

when working for its interests, has historically used sanctions and other means to steer Turkish politics in its favor. It should reevaluate its policy with Turkey based on its experience in fighting ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Turkey was a poor ally in the fight against ISIS, and in many ways actually supplemented ISIS rather than combating it. And unlike Turkey, the YBS was a critical ally in the fight against ISIS because they operated in remote regions that coalitions at the start of the war struggled to reach. The United States should make it clear in its Turkish policy that continued incursions with civilian casualties in Syria and Iraq will be reciprocated with punishments. Specifically, targeting the Sinjar mountains and IDP camps will be met with a response. Until western actors take a meaningful stance on Turkish aggression toward its neighbors, the Yazidis will continue to exist in limbo. Unfortunately, the Yazidis are probably correct to not trust the west when it comes to Turkey. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has created a complex geopolitical situation in which the United States must be careful in balancing its relationship with Turkey. Turkey has, in recent history, purchased arms from Russia creating security concerns for NATO members, and a growing fear amongst US security policy experts that if pushed too hard, Turkey will realign with Russia. The lack of trust makes sense when one looks at the history of U.S. interventions in the Middle East. The Kurds, which can include the Yazidis and often do, have been betrayed by the United States no less than eight times in recent history.

### **The Yazidi Genocide and Previous Genocides**

There are several basic traits to identify a genocide. The primary one is centered around the idea that by eliminating a targeted group, society is made better. However, unlike previous genocides, ISIS was

targeting the areas in which the Yazidis lived with the primary intention of occupying themselves. The Yazidi genocide, the Rwandan genocide, the Holocaust, and the Armenian genocide all followed this idea that society was better off without the targeted group.[38] This is because in some way the underlining idea is that by wiping out a specific group, the nation can restore its former glory, or at least this has been the propaganda used effectively to fuel ethnic cleansings.

At least some part of the campaign against the Yazidis was rooted in ISIS's goal of establishing a caliphate. Much like previous genocides, the primary target for mass killings is the men and boys of a given ethnic group. This has been the case in Rwanda, Armenia, and Myanmar, and it is also the case with the ISIS genocide of the Yazidis. The manner in which ISIS conducted its genocide of the Yazidis was systematic. When ISIS occupied a Yazidi village, the process was formulaic; they would separate the men and boys from the women, girls, and young children. The women would be subject to forced marriages, sterilization, rape, and other crimes while the men and boys would either be executed or sent to ISIS training camps. The men and boys are generally targeted because they are viewed as those who will fill leadership and community roles and the second reason is to display dominance over the targeted community. A Yazidi woman claims that she was told by an ISIS fighter: "you have no husband. I am your husband now."

In Yazidi culture, one is only a Yazidi if both of their parents are Yazidis, and because of family separation and the killings there runs a risk that an entire generation may be stunted in terms of population numbers. This is not just because of the sheer number of Yazidi men killed but also because the children of IS

fighters and Yazidi women are considered Muslims and not Yazidis by the community. This has forced the Yazidi women to choose between their children, often born as a result of rape, and returning home.[39] Unlike the Rwandan or Armenian genocide, the targeted group has strict religious/cultural laws surrounding its identity that complicate the process of identification of the surviving Yazidis. Another core component of genocides is the focused sexual violence that the targeted group experiences when being attacked. In Iraq, ISIS took Yazidi women as sex slaves, a tactic that is reminiscent of the Ottoman empire's ethnic cleansing of the Armenians or that of the Rwandan genocide and the Tutsi women.

It is important that international human rights groups recognize sexual violence and the psychological harms emanating from this crime as explicit parts of genocide. Sexual violence is more than just depravity in the case of genocide, it has the intent to undo the social fabric of the targeted ethnic/religious group. The means that the ways sexual violence can upend social capital are multifaceted, ranging from victimized women being ostracized to young women struggling with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), coupled with the social impact of a mass mental health crisis. These are just a few examples of how sexual violence changes the social structure of an ethnic group. For example, it was an unprecedented, surprising decision by Yazidi religious leaders to welcome back women who were enslaved and sexually violated by ISIS. The fact that it was unprecedented for the Yazidi religious leaders to do this shows how mass sexual violence has the potential to completely tear apart communities.

As discussed above, even now the Yazidi women with children

of ISIS fighters are struggling with the aftermath of the mass sexual violence they underwent. The aftermath continues to create tensions within the community. While there are obvious impacts from mass killings, the impact of sexual violence, unlike mass killings is pervasive and a major hindrance for normalcy to return. This is especially true for the Yazidi culture because it is male-dominated, and gender-based violence had been instrumental in isolating Yazidi women from their communities.[40]

The Yazidis, like other communities that experienced genocide and ethnic cleansing, are dealing with both material and physiological impacts. The aftermath of the Yazidi genocide and the effects on the Yazidi shares some commonalities with other genocide survivors. Nearly 43% of the Yazidi survivors suffer from PTSD with nearly 80% of their women suffering from PTSD-like symptoms.[41] This high prevalence of PTSD is similar to that of the survivors of the Bosnian genocide of the 1990s, with nearly 35% of Bosnians suffering from this ailment.[42] Much like in the aftermath of the Yazidi genocide, it is a massive issue when it comes to stability and economic opportunities. Nearly 40% of Bosnians were out of work with 67% of youth struggling to find employment. Much like the survivors of the Bosnian genocide, the major concern of the Yazidis has shifted from armed security threats to economic insecurity looming over them. The combination of displacement and pandemic restrictions has made the rebuilding efforts of Sinjar logistically difficult, and since the Yazidis lack access to basic healthcare, many of them are extremely vulnerable to COVID-19. The Yazidi genocide, like other instances of ethnic cleansing, has caused

massive psychological harm to the survivors. A major factor that sets apart the Yazidi genocide from other mass killings is the actor who conducted the killings. In Bosnia, Armenia, and Myanmar the ethnic cleansings were part of the respective state policy and were backed by the state military forces, whereas the Yazidis were targeted by a non-governmental armed group. Government forces usually carry out much more organized and sanctioned violence, but unorganized groups like ISIS represent a unique threat to the victimized communities. The state-sponsored perpetrators of crimes come in uniforms whereas an ISIS fighter could be the neighbor of a Yazidi. It is this camouflage pattern of assault that has fueled a greater distrust between the Yazidis and their Arab neighbors that in turn is crippling the rebuilding processes. That is why it's of paramount importance to rebuild social capital in such cases because, without it, these communities will continue to harbor distrust and work against their own and each other's interests. The Rwandan genocide is unique and incomparable because militias conducted the majority of killings and unlike the Yazidi genocide, the Hutu militias were backed by the state – a marked dissimilarity from the ISIS-engineered genocide where the direct challenge came from the state actors. Similar to the Rwanda episode, the Rohingya genocide was backed by the Myanmar military. The ISIS genocide is one of the few genocides in modern times that did not have the weight of the state behind it. This has created a discrete lack of trust between communities in the Middle East which has only grown gradually because of the difficulty to identify who was actually a part of ISIS as the majority of its fighters were average citizens before joining militancy.

## **Conclusion**

The Yazidis are a strong and resilient people, but without aid from the international community, they may become one of many displaced people who have not been able to return home. There are concrete actions that the international community can take – from establishing tribunals to compelling the international ISIS members to establish a program to assist in finding the missing Yazidis. It needs no elaboration that these are all actions that are doable and manageable. Local actors like the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and Iraq must stop using the Yazidis as a political tool in negotiations over budget allocations, land appropriations, and the disputed territories. This is because the Yazidis do not trust either of the institutions due to obvious reasons. The KRG should not create any obstacle for the Yazidis returning to Sinjar by limiting travel but instead should facilitate their safe return and the rebuilding process of Sinjar. Of course, this will require the assistance of the federal Iraqi government because Sinjar lies in the disputed territories. Nevertheless, a joint operation by the KRG and Iraq is feasible as we have seen in the fight with ISIS, and may serve not only to improve the Yazidis' position but also to increase the trust between Kurdish and Iraqi security forces. Material promises made to the Yazidis must be kept, or else the distrust will only amplify. International actors like the United States and Russia must assist the Yazidi people. Russia should recognize the genocide of the Yazidi people as a bare minimum. But ultimately, the Yazidis, especially the Yazidis of Sinjar, need support from local, regional, and international actors to return home and truly begin the process of regular life.

## Adhésion à l'OTAN : les Kurdes de Suède s'inquiètent du marchandage d'Ankara

La Turquie conditionne son soutien à l'entrée de Stockholm dans l'Alliance atlantique à l'extradition d'une trentaine de réfugiés politiques, accusés d'être en lien avec le PKK.

L'entrevue a été « constructive » et la discussion va « se poursuivre ». Quelques heures après la rencontre de représentants des gouvernements finlandais, suédois et turc, à Ankara, mercredi 25 mai, Helsinki et Stockholm espéraient encore trouver un terrain d'entente pour que la Turquie lève ses objections à l'adhésion des deux pays nordiques à l'OTAN. Mais les négociations pourraient prendre « des semaines » plutôt que « des jours », a prévenu le ministre finlandais des affaires étrangères, Pekka Haavisto.

Le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, n'a pas caché que ses réserves concernaient surtout la Suède. Le 23 mai, ses services ont présenté une liste d'exigences sous forme de réquisitoire contre Stockholm, accusé de financer et d'armer le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et sa branche syrienne, les Unités de protection du peuple (YPG). La Turquie réclame que la Suède mette fin à son « soutien politique au terrorisme », lève l'embargo qu'il impose depuis 2019 sur les exportations d'armes vers Ankara et extrade une trentaine de personnes soupçonnées d'avoir des liens avec le PKK.

« Nous allons regarder la liste présentée par la Turquie et résoudre certaines ambiguïtés », a réagi la première ministre sociale-démocrate suédoise, Magdalena Andersson. Affirmant que la Suède « n'envoyait pas d'argent ou d'armes

à des organisations terroristes », elle a rappelé que le royaume scandinave avait été « un des premiers pays (...) à classer le PKK comme organisation terroriste [dès 1984] ».

Son gouvernement fait face à une pression croissante pour ne pas céder au « chantage » d'Ankara. Mercredi, dix-sept personnalités, dont les présidents des syndicats des écrivains, des dramaturges et des journalistes ainsi que les représentants de Reporters sans frontières et de l'association Pen, ont publié une tribune, exhortant à ne pas « tomber dans le piège d'Erdogan ». Selon eux, « en aucune circonstance, la Suède peut remettre des intellectuels à un régime qui essaie de réduire au silence ses critiques bien au-delà des frontières suédoises ».

« C'est un démagogue qui se bat pour sa survie. Si nous commençons à lui céder, alors il posera d'autres exigences », commente Kurdo Baksi, journaliste d'origine kurde et signataire de la tribune. Il fait part du malaise dans la communauté kurde en Suède. Selon les estimations, ils seraient autour de 100 000, originaires de Turquie, d'Irak, d'Iran, de Syrie et du Liban. « Beaucoup trouvent que le gouvernement suédois n'est pas assez ferme face à la Turquie et ceux qui font l'objet d'une demande d'extradition sont particulièrement inquiets », précise M. Baksi.

### Diaspora très active

Si la Suède se trouve aujourd'hui dans le viseur d'Ankara, c'est parce qu'elle est depuis longtemps « un refuge pour les réfugiés politiques, notamment pour des Turcs et des Kurdes qui ont fui après le coup d'Etat militaire en 1980 puis à la suite des violences avec le PKK, dans les années 1990 », explique Paul Levin, chercheur à l'Institut suédois des affaires internationales de Stockholm et spécialiste de la Turquie. « La diaspora kurde est très active et politiquement mobilisée », précise-t-il. Or, elle dispose d'une « forte sympathie chez les Suédois, au sein du Parti social-démocrate en particulier, mais également dans les formations plus à gauche ou auprès du Parti libéral ».

Au Parlement, huit des 349 députés sont d'origine kurdes. « Les Etats scandinaves sont comme des pensionnats pour les organisations terroristes. Il y en a même au Parlement dans certains pays », relevait M. Erdogan, le 13 mai. « Je peux vous assurer, Monsieur le président, que ce n'est pas vrai. Nous sommes des démocrates », a réagi la députée libérale Gulan Avci, née en Turquie, publiant une photo d'elle avec la députée indépendante Amineh Kakabaveh, ancienne peshmerga née en Iran. « L'une est pour l'adhésion de la Suède à l'OTAN. L'autre ne l'est pas. C'est comme cela

que ça fonctionne dans une démocratie », précisait Mme Avci. L'ambassadeur de Turquie à Stockholm a confié – avant de se rétracter – qu'il souhaitait voir Mme Kakabaveh être extradée en raison de l'accord que la députée a passé, en novembre 2021, avec les sociaux-démocrates : en échange de son soutien au gouvernement Andersson, Stockholm renforcerait sa coopération avec le Parti de l'union démocratique (PYD) kurde en Syrie. Estimant que cet accord n'avait pas été honoré, la députée menace d'ailleurs le gouvernement de ne pas voter le prochain budget.

Pour les sociaux-démocrates, la situation est d'autant plus compliquée qu'ils ont opéré un virage à 180 degrés sur la question de l'adhésion à l'OTAN et que le parti reste divisé, observe M. Levin. « Beaucoup craignent qu'en abandonnant son non-alignement, la Suède doive renoncer à sa politique étrangère indépendante, qui inclue la défense des minorités comme les Kurdes, ce qui est exactement ce que la Turquie a exigé à peine la demande d'adhésion déposée. » Les pressions du président Erdogan donnent d'ailleurs des arguments aux opposants à l'OTAN, pour qui une des raisons principales du refus de la candidature suédoise était justement la présence de la Turquie au sein de l'Alliance atlantique.

## La Turquie s'apprête à lancer une nouvelle intervention militaire au nord de la Syrie

Le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan espère notamment prendre le contrôle de Kobané, actuellement aux mains des Kurdes syriens. Et raviver ainsi le sentiment nationaliste de l'électorat, à un an de l'élection présidentielle.

La Turquie s'apprête à lancer une nouvelle opération militaire dans le nord de la Syrie. Annoncés quelques jours plus tôt par le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan, les plans en vue d'une incursion transfrontalière ont été avalisés, jeudi 26 mai, par le conseil de sécurité, composé de dirigeants civils et militaires. Aucune date n'a été donnée, mais le communiqué publié à l'issue de la réunion ne laisse aucun doute. « Les opérations existantes et nouvelles à mener visent à débarrasser nos frontières sud de la menace terroriste. »

Les « opérations existantes » sont celles que l'armée turque mène actuellement dans le nord de l'Irak, afin d'en déloger le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, autonomiste, interdit en Turquie), contre lequel Ankara est en guerre depuis quarante ans. Celles « à mener » auront pour théâtre le nord de la Syrie. Elles viseront à en chasser les combattants kurdes syriens des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG), soutenus par les Etats-Unis, mais considérés comme des « terroristes » par la Turquie.

### Trois incursions en Syrie depuis 2016

Le président Erdogan l'a dit, « il faut finir ce qui a été commencé ». A savoir, prolonger la « zone de sécurité », profonde de trente kilomètres, conquise par l'armée turque et ses supplétifs syriens, au fil des précédentes interventions (2016, 2018, 2019). Il s'agit

de prendre le contrôle de la bande de terre qui reste, longue de quatre cent cinquante-huit kilomètres entre la région d'Afrin, conquise par les Turcs en 2018, et la ville de Kamechliyé, dans l'Est, où l'armée russe possède une base aérienne.

u cœur de cette bande de terre se trouve la ville de Kobané, reconquise de haute lutte, en 2014, par les YPG, après avoir été assiégée par l'organisation Etat islamique (EI). Il y a dix jours, un poste militaire turc avait subi une attaque au mortier lancée depuis Kobané, selon le ministère turc de la défense, qui avait ordonné des représailles après la mort d'un soldat.

En lançant son armée à l'assaut des territoires tenus par les combattants kurdes syriens, M. Erdogan espère des retombées. Il compte raviver le sentiment nationaliste de l'électorat et renflouer du même coup sa popularité déclinante à un an de l'élection présidentielle, une échéance cruciale qu'il n'aborde pas en favori. Déjà utilisées à des fins électorales par le passé, les opérations militaires au nord de la Syrie ont pu renforcer son aura.

La conquête de nouveaux territoires en Syrie s'inscrit dans le droit-fil du plan annoncé récemment par le président turc, lequel prévoit le renvoi de plus d'un million de réfugiés syriens sur les 3,7 millions hébergés actuellement par la Turquie. Quelque deux cent mille logements vont être construits dans « des zones sûres » situées « près de la frontière ».

L'accueil des Syriens est en effet devenu un enjeu électoral en Turquie. Confrontée à des difficultés économiques croissantes, appauvrie par l'inflation (70 %), la population turque est de plus en plus hostile aux « invités », comme on les appelle ici.

Le moment est bien choisi. Contrairement aux interventions précédentes, M. Erdogan n'a, cette fois, pas besoin de demander la permission à son homologue russe, Vladimir Poutine, qui se retrouve isolé, pris par sa guerre en Ukraine. Une bonne partie du contingent russe en Syrie, soit environ cinq mille hommes, a d'ailleurs été évacuée pour aller renforcer le front du Donbass.

### Un moment bien choisi

Pas d'opposition à prévoir non plus de la part des alliés occidentaux. Le président turc est convaincu que ces derniers n'ont pas les moyens de s'opposer à ses visées expansionnistes en Syrie, au moment où ils désespèrent d'obtenir son feu vert pour l'adhésion de la Suède et de la Finlande à l'OTAN. Les deux pays nordiques, en particulier la Suède, qui compte une large communauté d'exilés turcs d'origine kurde, sont accusés d'abriter des militants kurdes « terroristes ». L'obstruction promet de durer, les négociations menées jeudi à Ankara avec des émissaires suédois et finlandais n'ayant rien donné.

Seuls les Etats-Unis, qui ont près de mille soldats dans l'est

de la Syrie, ont mis en garde Ankara. « Nous sommes profondément préoccupés par les informations et les discussions évoquant un potentiel accroissement de l'activité militaire dans le nord de la Syrie et, en particulier, de son impact sur la population civile », a déclaré Ned Price, le porte-parole du département d'Etat, mardi 24 mai. Si la Turquie passe outre, le Congrès américain, sollicité depuis des mois par le gouvernement turc pour l'achat de chasseurs bombardiers F-16, risque de ne pas donner son feu vert. Les deux alliés sont durablement brouillés au sujet des combattants kurdes syriens. Ankara veut les éradiquer, tandis que Washington les soutient en tant que fers de lance du combat contre l'EI en Syrie.

La lutte contre l'EI occupe aussi la Turquie. Le site OdaTV, connu pour sa proximité avec les milieux policiers, a ainsi annoncé, jeudi 26 mai, la capture d'Abou Hassan al-Hachemi al-Qourachi, le chef de l'organisation djihadiste, arrêté à Istanbul par des agents du contre-terrorisme. L'arrestation a eu lieu il y a une semaine, mais l'identité du prévenu demandait à être vérifiée. Selon le site, il revient désormais au président Erdogan de l'annoncer. Si elle venait à être confirmée, la capture, à Istanbul, du chef de l'EI rappelle que l'organisation dispose de cellules dormantes et de « centres logistiques pour son financement », sur le sol turc, selon un rapport du Trésor américain daté de janvier 2021.

## In the battle against Tsar Putin, don't trust Sultan Erdogan

Russia's Putin and Turkey's Erdogan share similar brutish ambitions. The West should oppose Erdogan's stunningly hypocritical blackmail over new NATO members with the same force as it rejects Putin's invasion of Ukraine

**F**rom the top of his one thousand and one room palace, the Turkish president declared that he would oppose the entry of Finland and Sweden as new members of NATO. The reason: they are guesthouses for terrorists.

Hannah Arendt, referring to totalitarian regimes, said we don't know when we should laugh and when we should take them seriously.

Has the Turkish president forgotten, or is he just trying to take for a ride, the research centers and intelligence agencies who know full well that Istanbul is a hub for jihadists, from Hamas to the Muslim Brotherhood, the movement that is the ground zero of all contemporary Islamist terrorism?

In 2009, the very same Recep Tayyip Erdogan opposed the appointment of Anders Rasmussen as NATO's Secretary General unless Denmark closed a Kurdish TV station. The Turkish media close to Erdogan's AKP party also accused Zuhair Demir, the current Flemish Minister of Justice, Energy and the Environment, of being a terrorist. She is doubly at fault: very critical of the Islamist movements in her native country, Belgium, and openly affirming her Kurdish origins. Indeed, the Nordic states, with their great democratic



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin hold hands as they mark the launch of a phase of the Turkish Stream gas pipeline carrying Russian natural gas to EuropeCredit: Pool Presidential Press Service

tradition, have welcomed many citizens of Kurdish origin, who have gone on to become active participants in their new homes' democratic values, as members of parliament, journalists and influencers, criticizing authoritarian practices in Turkey and elsewhere in the world.

Why should the Nordic countries, far ahead of other major European democracies, such as Great Britain and France, on human rights, gender parity and feminism, debase themselves by trying to convince the Turkish Islamofascist authoritarian regime? This same regime which, according to the testimonies, documented evidence and videos of brave Turkish journalists, has allowed ISIS to infiltrate its border with Syria,

in convoys loaded with weapons and jihadists from around the world. Today, these brave Turkish journalists are either in prison or in exile.

Erdogan trades like a merchant in the bazaar, with both goods and principles. He kicks the West's soft belly, while tickling the most conservative and nationalist wing of his base, like he did with the American pastor Andrew Brunson, also accused of being a terrorist, jailed for two years and then expelled. He also receives billions of euros from Europe to shelter Syrian refugees whom he then instrumentalizes for political gain.

The Turkish president is now trying hard to oversell the role that his country could play within world politics and se-

curity. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, neither Tsar Putin in the Kremlin, nor Sultan Erdogan on the Bosphorus, have been able to adapt to the new geopolitical context. They both share the same revanchist ambition to restore an imperial past, working against Western interests, invading neighboring countries by brute force, and prosecuting territorial conquests which are presented to the rest of the world as a fait accompli.

In many respects Putin and Erdogan are alike. They both started out as young hoodlums. In a fight you have to strike first said Putin, without batting an eyelid, when talking about his childhood. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin hold hands as they mark the launch of a phase of the Turkish Stream gas pipeline carrying Russian natural gas to EuropeCredit: Pool Presidential Press Service

The young simit (Turkish bagel) seller in the streets of Istanbul, a leading actor during his university years in the extraordinarily antisemitic play "Masons, Communists and Jews," has long held a visceral hatred of the West and a hidden agenda: to come to power by all means. His Trojan horse: the instrumentalization of religion and the mass of poor Muslims around the world, crushed by

authoritarian regimes, in search of a piece of bread and a little hope.

But whereas Erdogan's Muslim leadership ambitions are globalizing, at home his conception of national identity is small-minded and punitive.

The Turkish president never hesitates to accuse Israel of apartheid towards the Palestinians, but he removed parliamentary immunity from the Kurdish MPs who represent Turkey's own 20 million Kurds, and has sent them to prison. Since the 2019 municipal elections, the mayors of 48 out of 65 municipalities won by the pro-Kurdish HDP party have been replaced by state-appointed administrators.

There are more than two million Kurds in Europe today. The vast majority are from Turkey. They have fled war, political repression, and

economic misery. The second generation, well integrated thanks to a secular identity, do not deny their origins.

They have become speakers of the Norwegian and Israeli Parliaments - Masud Gharakhani (Kurdish from Iran), Mickey Levy (Kurdish from Turkey), the UK Minister of Education, Nadim Zahawi (Kurdish from Iraq) as well as many members of other European parliaments.

I myself am a proud French citizen born in Syrian Kurdistan. When I first achieved the right to vote in the 1994 European elections, I voted for the list for which I myself was standing as a candidate. A beautiful revenge on history, and a lesson to all the authoritarian regimes in the world who are blind to multiple identities and multilingualism as a source of pride and wealth.

When welcoming the Finnish President and the Swedish Prime Minister to the White House, American President Biden quoted the Musketeers' motto: "All for one, one for all," in the spirit of Article 5 of the NATO pact.

But Turkey has not complied with this spirit with its NATO allies. Take the S400 system, bought from his friend Putin, followed by his aggressive maneuvers in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. Turkish troops and allied Islamist militias have occupied Kurdish areas since the defeat of ISIS in Syria, committing war crimes and displacing populations. The Turkish air force, in its 40-year war against the PKK, has been bombing Iraqi Kurdistan since the beginning of April, killing civilians and emptying villages.

Turkey uncomplainingly has shared its border with ISIS-

controlled regions of Syria. Worse still, thousands of foreign terrorists crossed this border to fight the Kurds who are allied with the West in the war against terrorism. Other terrorists crossed in the opposite direction to commit murder in the streets of European capitals. And today the Turkish occupying troops control the Syrian province of Idlib, along with Al-Qaida affiliated Ahrar-al-Sham.

So when Erdogan tries to bargain with NATO over the accession of Finland and Sweden, should we be tempted to laugh, à la Arendt's dictum, or take him seriously? Can the West and NATO oppose the Kremlin Tsar's conquests in Europe on the one hand, and concede to Bosphorus Sultan's blackmail in the Middle East on the other hand? Following this path is not only unethical and hypocritical: It would be an ill-fated strategic mistake.



May 30, 2022

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## Greece Planning Major Wall Extension on Border With Turkey

**G**reek authorities say they are planning a major extension of a wall along the country's border with Turkey and are seeking European Union financial support for the additional construction.

Notis Mitarachi, the migration affairs minister, said the steel wall would be extended from 40 to 120 kilometers (25 to 75 miles), with construction work

due to start later this year. "It is a government decision to extend the border wall further and we have requested European funding," Mitarachi said, speaking in an interview Sunday with a radio station near Athens. The minister posted the audio of the interview on social media Monday. He gave no details on the projected cost of the project.

Greece has accused neighbor

and fellow-NATO ally Turkey of "instrumentalizing" migration as a means of exerting pressure on EU countries. That is an assertion rejected by Ankara, which says it has shouldered a disproportionately heavy burden, hosting some 4 million refugees, most of whom fled the civil war in neighboring Syria.

Last year, 12 countries, including Greece, requested EU

funding for border walls which are currently financed by national budgets.

The EU Commission does not currently pay for wall construction at its external borders, arguing that it would drain funds from other migration-related activities, including financing the EU border protection agency, Frontex.



## L'Iran arraisonne deux pétroliers grecs dans les eaux du Golfe

Téhéran s'est emparé de deux navires grecs en représailles à la saisie d'une cargaison de pétrole iranien en mer Méditerranée transporté sous pavillon russe.

La tension monte à nouveau dans les eaux du Golfe. Vendredi 27 mai, après une opération hélicoptérée menée par les forces navales des gardiens de la révolution, l'armée idéologique de Téhéran, l'Iran s'est emparé de deux pétroliers battant pavillon grec qui naviguaient près de ses eaux territoriales après avoir embarqué du carburant dans le terminal pétrolier irakien de Bassora.

Ces raids, qui s'apparentent à des représailles de Téhéran après une saisie de pétrole iranien en mer Méditerranée par les autorités grecques, mettent également en lumière le rôle de la Russie dans le transport du brut iranien, le navire saisi par Athènes étant d'origine russe. Téhéran et Moscou sont tous deux sous sanctions internationales.

Dénonçant des « actes qui s'apparentent à des actes de piraterie », la diplomatie grecque a appelé à la libération immédiate des navires et de leurs équipages et a averti que la saisie aurait des « conséquences particulièrement négatives » dans les relations bilatérales et dans celles de l'Iran avec l'Union européenne (UE).

Le corps des gardiens de la révolution, qui a revendiqué les arraisonnements, a accusé les pétroliers de violations – non précisées – des règles de navigation. Un site Web proche du Conseil suprême de sécurité nationale de l'Iran, Nour News, avait prévenu quelques heures auparavant, vendredi matin, que Téhéran prévoyait de prendre des « mesures pu-

nitives » contre la Grèce, que l'Iran accuse d'avoir aidé les Etats-Unis à saisir du pétrole iranien un mois plus tôt sur un navire nommé par les autorités iraniennes le Lana, et dont Téhéran affirme être le propriétaire.

### Le navire a changé à six reprises d'identité

Le 25 mai, les autorités maritimes grecques ont annoncé la saisie du pétrole, à la demande de la justice américaine, au nom des sanctions que Washington a imposées à l'Iran. Les Etats-Unis soupçonnaient le Lana de transporter 600 000 barils de brut iranien et de naviguer en Méditerranée dans l'espoir de leur trouver un acheteur.

Téhéran a vivement réagi, qualifiant la saisie de la cargaison d'« exemple de piraterie », selon un communiqué de l'Organisation maritime et portuaire iranienne. Le ministre iranien des affaires étrangères a convoqué le chargé d'affaires de l'ambassade de Grèce à Téhéran, affirmant que le navire « était sous la bannière de la République islamique d'Iran ».

Les données du site de suivi de l'activité maritime Marine-Traffic montraient au même moment ce qui s'apparente à un transbordement de la cargaison du Lana à bord d'un autre navire, confirmant la saisie du pétrole. Cette action, qui semble avoir précipité les représailles iraniennes, met en lumière le rôle d'un quatrième acteur : la Russie. Le comportement du Lana et les interrogations sur son identité sont en effet typiques des navires

qui opèrent dans l'ombre, le navire ayant changé à six reprises d'identité depuis sa mise en exploitation, en 2003.

Quand, au début du mois d'avril, le pétrolier de 115 000 tonnes fait son apparition au large des côtes grecques et demande une assistance pour effectuer des réparations mécaniques avant de poursuivre son voyage, selon les autorités iraniennes, leurs homologues grecques pensent, elles, avoir affaire à un navire russe. D'après son immatriculation au registre de la Lloyd's, le leader de l'assurance maritime, il s'appelle alors le Pegas, les 19 membres de son équipage sont russes et il arbore le pavillon tricolore russe. Le 15 avril, les autorités grecques décident de le retenir en vertu des sanctions récemment annoncées par l'UE à l'encontre de la Russie après le début de l'invasion de l'Ukraine par les troupes de Moscou. Son propriétaire est alors identifié comme PSB Leasing, une filiale de la banque russe Promsvyazbank, interdite d'activité en Europe.

L'immatriculation, la nationalité et le nom du pétrolier sont également cités dans une liste de cinq navires russes placés sous sanctions américaines par le département du Trésor américain fin février. L'ambassade de Russie à Athènes confirme alors son arraisonnement et dit analyser la situation.

### Appel à la libération immédiate des équipages

La suite des événements n'est pas claire. Le 21 avril, les autorités grecques auraient, selon les agences Reuters et

AFP, donné l'ordre de libérer le pétrolier. La Promsvyazbank, qui assure ne plus en être le propriétaire depuis avril 2021, l'aurait cédé à une autre société russe, TransMorFlot, non concernée par les sanctions. Pour ajouter à la confusion, le Pegas a été rebaptisé Lana, le 1er mars 2022. Le 1er mai, nouveau rebondissement : toujours immobilisé en raison de ses problèmes mécaniques, l'ex-Pegas devenu Lana change de nationalité après avoir changé de nom. Il bat désormais pavillon iranien, d'après Equasis, la base intergouvernementale de données pour la sécurité maritime...

Les motivations, russes comme iraniennes, qui ont conduit à ce transfert de nationalité restent inconnues : volonté de brouiller les pistes ? De mettre la Grèce sous pression ? La France a appelé, dimanche 20 mai, à la libération immédiate des équipages des deux pétroliers grecs arraisonnés par Téhéran. « La saisie par l'Iran de deux pétroliers battant pavillon grec, le 27 mai 2022, dans le Golfe constitue une violation grave du droit international que la France condamne fermement », écrit le Quai d'Orsay dans un communiqué.

L'UE, par la voix du porte-parole de son service diplomatique, le Service européen pour l'action extérieure, dit, elle, suivre « avec une grande inquiétude la saisie inacceptable de deux navires grecs par l'Iran dans le golfe Persique. » L'UE assure également être « en contact très étroit avec les autorités grecques à propos de la situation du navire Pegas, placé sous la garde de la Grèce ».

## La Turquie condamnée pour l'emprisonnement du président de la branche d'Amnesty International dans le pays

La Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (CEDH) considère qu'Ankara n'avait pas de « raisons plausibles » pour mettre en détention provisoire Taner Kiliç en 2017. Amnesty International a appelé à annuler sa condamnation.

La Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (CEDH) a une nouvelle fois condamné la Turquie mardi 31 mai pour avoir violé les droits humains en emprisonnant arbitrairement le président de la branche turque d'Amnesty International.

A l'unanimité, les sept juges, dont une juge turque, de l'institution judiciaire du Conseil de l'Europe, ont considéré qu'Ankara n'avait pas eu de « raisons plausibles » pour mettre en détention provisoire Taner Kiliç en 2017. Ce faisant, la Turquie a enfreint la liberté d'expression de M. Kiliç.

A la suite du jugement de la CEDH, « Amnesty International a de nouveau appelé les autorités turques à annuler la condamnation injuste et sans fondement de Taner Kiliç, qui risque deux ans et demi de prison supplémentaires si sa condamnation est confirmée », a réagi dans un communiqué le directeur de l'ONG en Europe, Nils Muiznieks, ancien commissaire aux droits humains du Conseil de l'Europe.

« Cette tentative, motivée par des considérations politiques, de réduire au silence un défenseur des droits humains s'inscrit dans le cadre de la répression plus large des autorités turques à l'encontre des droits et libertés et de ceux qui les défendent. La condamnation de Taner doit être annulée. »



Des militants d'Amnesty International tenant un portrait du responsable d'Amnesty International en Turquie, le 15 juin 2017. La CEDH condamne la Turquie, le 31 mai 2022, pour son emprisonnement  
JOHN MACDOUGALL / AFP

Quatorze mois de détention et de multiples prolongations

Taner Kiliç était accusé d'appartenance à l'organisation FETÖ (pour Fethullahist Terror Organization – « Organisation terroriste de Fethullah »), un mouvement dirigé par le prédicateur Fethullah Gülen, installé aux Etats-Unis depuis 1999, et nommé ainsi par le président Erdogan depuis le coup d'Etat manqué de 2016. FETÖ est accusée par le pouvoir turc d'être une organisation terroriste et d'avoir orchestré la tentative de coup d'Etat de juillet 2016.

La CEDH « conclut à l'absence de raisons plausibles de soupçonner M. Kiliç d'avoir commis une infraction, tant à la date de sa mise en détention provisoire qu'après la prolongation de celle-ci », explique-t-elle dans un communiqué.

La détention provisoire du responsable de l'ONG dura plus de quatorze mois et fut prolongée à plusieurs reprises jusqu'à ce qu'une cour d'assises ordonne sa remise en liberté, en août 2018.

Taner Kiliç fut ensuite condamné, à l'été 2020, à six

ans et trois mois de prison pour « appartenance à une organisation terroriste », rappelle la cour. La Turquie devra verser au requérant 8 500 euros pour dommage matériel et 16 000 euros pour dommage moral.

Régulièrement condamnée par la CEDH, la Turquie fait aussi l'objet d'une rare procédure de sanctions enclenchée par le Conseil de l'Europe pour être restée sourde aux demandes de libération immédiate du médecin Osman Kavala, récemment condamné à la perpétuité.

Kurdistan au féminin 30 mai 2022

Le Kurdistan à travers le regard féminin

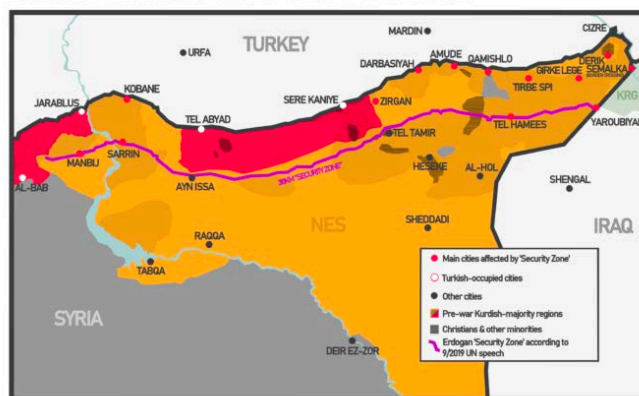
## Le Rojava en alerte maximale contre une éventuelle incursion militaire turque

Les forces arabo-kurdes ont publié un communiqué disant que « toutes nouvelles véhiculées par les médias affiliés à l'occupation turque » concernant une éventuelle invasion du Rojava « s'inscrivent dans le cadre de tentatives de tromperie militaire et politique [...]. Nos forces prennent les mesures nécessaires. »

Ce dimanche, le président turc Erdogan a réitéré les menaces d'invasion du Rojava, malgré les mises en gardes des USA. Avec sa soi-disant « zone de sécurité » de 30 km de profondeur, il veut anéantir le Rojava. En parallèle aux déclarations belliqueuses d'Erdogan, les médias turcs pro-Erdogan continuent à propager de la propagande hostile au Rojava.

Erdogan a réitéré que son gouvernement « lutte contre les

ERDOĞAN'S PROPOSED 'SECURITY ZONE'



Source: Rojava Information Center, May 2022

terroristes dans le nord de la Syrie et nous le poursuivrons jusqu'à ce qu'ils soient extirpés » lors d'un événement commémorant hier le 569e anniversaire de la conquête ottomane d'Istanbul.

« La Turquie n'attendra pas la permission des États-Unis [qui ont condamné l'annonce d'une opération militaire turque

contre le Rojava], pour lancer une nouvelle offensive en Syrie », a déclaré dimanche le président turc R.T. Erdogan, à un groupe de journalistes au retour d'une visite en Azerbaïdjan.

Le bombardement des régions de Shehba, Manbij, Ayn Issa, Tel Tamir et Zingon s'est poursuivi jusqu'à hier soir. Un civil,

Fadi Khalawi, a été blessé par des attaques depuis le territoire occupé par la Turquie près d'Ayn Issa hier.

Samedi soir, la ville d'al-Aghibish près de Tel Tamir a été ciblée par plus de 50 obus selon les habitants. L'attaque n'a pas fait de blessé, mais détruit de nombreuses maisons.

Des hélicoptères militaires russes ont été vus au-dessus de Shehba ce matin après des tirs d'artilleries répétées venant de la région depuis les zones occupées par la Turquie.

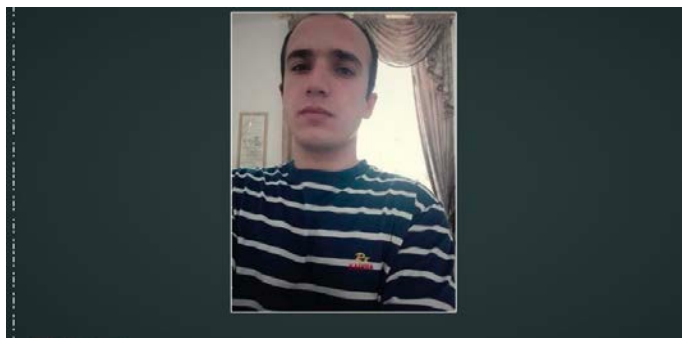
Les Forces Démocratiques Syriennes (FDS) sont en état d'alerte maximale contre une éventuelle nouvelle incursion militaire turque contre le Rojava qui a déjà été dépecé par la Turquie avec l'occupation d'Afrin (en 2018) et de Seré Kanîyê (en 2019).



May 31, 2022

## Kurdish civilian continues to be held in custody in Sanandaj

A detained Kurdish civilian named Farshid Karimi, who was arrested by forces of the Ministry of Intelligence in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province, about three weeks ago, continues to be held in the detention centre of the ministry. In a short phone call a few



days ago, Karimi confirmed that he was being held in the detention centre of the intelligence ministry in Sanandaj. No information has been obtained about the charges against the Kurdish civilian. He has been denied the right to an appointed lawyer as well as receiving family visits.



# Kurdistan's Weekly Brief May 31, 2022

## Iran

The exiled Cooperation Center for Iranian Kurdistan's Political Parties' (CCIKP) leaders convened on Wednesday to discuss Iran's recent anti-government protests. The CCIKP anticipated the demonstrations would "continue and target the system and the entire power of the Islamic Republic." The CCIKP also called for the creation of a "unified political center and structure to lead the protests and achieve success." Iran's major Kurdish parties formed the CCIKP in 2018 to establish a unified political platform, and it remains committed to reconciling with offshoots from the main parties.

A political prisoner named Siawesh Bahrami died hours after his release from prison in Pawa (Paveh) on Wednesday. One of Bahrami's relatives told the Hengaw Organization for Human Rights they suspect Iranian authorities injected him with poison before his release. Bahrami was found dead in his siblings' home from what a coroner's report suggested was a heart attack. Concurrently, Iranian security forces arrested three Kurds in Sarpole Zahab, including a physician named Ali Delbakhta, for voicing opposition to the regime's failure to address rising consumer prices. Iranian authorities also arrested an activist named Arej Rahimzadah in Marivan. Separately, Urmia's Islamic Revolutionary Court sentenced a female activist named Nakhshen Ahmed to three months in prison for "cooperation with a Kurdish party." The same court sentenced an environmental activist named Saman Meraki to six months in prison for similar offenses in Sanandaj.

Iranian security forces killed a Kurdish border porter (kolbar) named Ako Rasouli near Baneh on Saturday. The Islamic Rev-

olutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) killed an Iraqi kolbar named Kaiwan Abdullah near Piranshah. Iranian authorities also wounded two kolbars near Hawraman and Newsud on Wednesday.

## Iraq

Turkish artillery killed two children in Duhok Governorate's Bamarni subdistrict on Thursday. A local leader told Rudaw that the Turkish military responded to a Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) attack on a nearby base by "shelling into the crowd and our families." Turkish warplanes also carried out at least 12 airstrikes near Hiror village on Sunday.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) ended months of disengagement by meeting in Erbil on May 25. The two parties then released a joint statement that emphasized the "importance of dialogue" and announced plans for additional meetings. The KDP and PUK also decided to establish a joint committee to review and resolve disagreements. On May 26, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Jeanine Hennis-Plaschaert facilitated a meeting between six major Kurdish parties in Erbil, where leaders and senior members exchanged views on several issues, including the parliamentary elections scheduled for October 1, 2022. Hennis-Plaschaert launched the UNAMI initiative after repeatedly warning Kurdish parties that division jeopardizes the viability of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

On Thursday, May 26th, Iraq's Council of Representatives passed a law criminalizing normalization with the "Zionist entity." 275 deputies, including Kurdish parties, out of 329, participated in

the session. The law contains sixteen articles stating "death sentence or life in prison" anyone establishing "diplomatic, economic, political, militarily, security, cultural, and any other" relationship with Israel. The United States denounced the law since it's "jeopardizing freedom of expression and promoting an environment of antisemitism."

## Syria

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan continued threats to invade more Kurdish areas in Syria. On Saturday, Erdogan told reporters that the military operations could happen "suddenly one night." Moreover, during a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Erdogan said his plans to create a "safe zone," 30 km deep inside Syria, is an "Utmost necessity." On Monday, May 30th, the US National Security Adviser, Jake Sullivan spoke to a senior Turkish official and "reiterated the importance of refraining from escalation in Syria to preserve existing ceasefire lines and avoid any further destabilization." The Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East of Syria (AANES) accused Turkey of creating "more chaos in Syria" and "supporting terrorism." On the ground, Turkish forces struck a vehicle in Qamishli on Monday, killing a security officer and wounding three others. Meanwhile, The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) said Turkey and its Syrian proxies had "randomly" fired "more than 320 shells" on civilians, medical institutions, and communications in the center of the town of Zarkan. The SDF also warned that Turkey had regrouped the "Hayat Tahrir al-Sham," al Qaeda offshoot south of the occupied Afrin, to launch attacks on the Kurdish areas.

The AANES handed "several" Albanian children and women of ISIS (Da'esh) families to the Alba-

nian government. The repatriation occurred during a joint delegation from Albania and Kosovo visit. Separately, the security forces in al Hol camp for Da'esh terrorists and their families found an Iraqi woman "decapitated" in the 18th murder case in 2022. The Da'esh sleeper cells have been responsible for most of the crimes occurring in the camp that holds tens of thousands of people.

## Turkey

The Turkish government remains against Sweden and Finland joining NATO until they "change laws," mainly their handing of Kurds to Turkey. On Tuesday, May 31st, Ankara summoned German and French ambassadors to Ankara over events held by Kurdish activists against authoritarianism in Turkey.

The Co-chair of the Pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Pervin Buldan, announced that her party is against the planned Turkish invasion of Syria's Kurdistan. "HDP did not remain silent, and HDP will not be silent," she said. Buldan also accused the government of using the wars as a tool before elections. "After the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, they are now pursuing a new war and annexation plan for Northern and Eastern Syria. They are getting ready to run their election campaign with tanks," she added.

The Turkish government is prosecuting the father of Deniz Poyraz, a deceased Kurdish woman killed by a hate crime last year. Denize's father, Abdülillah, conducted an interview and said, "Kurdish people are under pressure and that no matter what identity is oppressed, it is necessary always to oppose oppression." The government accuses him of "making propaganda for a terrorist organization."

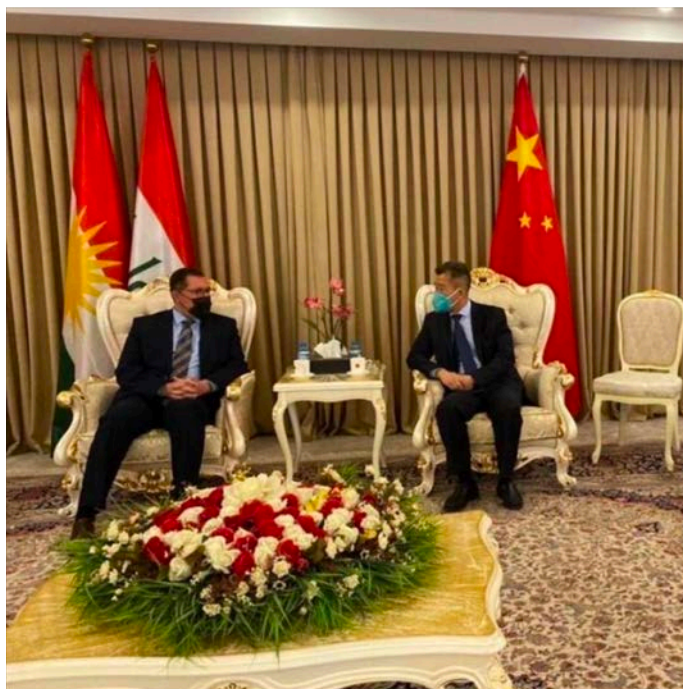
## Kurdistan in China: Are the Iraqi Kurds Interested in a Relationship?

China's presence in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan is expanding rapidly against a backdrop of China's growing presence across the Middle East.

The era of China's limited involvement in the region is a thing of the past; China's ties to the region solidified during the COVID pandemic as China supplied countries with vaccines and medical supplies, and as regional officials and publics expressed increasing concerns about a U.S. withdrawal from the region.

This trend manifested in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) as well, where China has expanded its relationship beyond the traditional oil market. China exported medical supplies to the KRI, China's Consul General and the KRG Health minister held a joint press conference in Erbil, Chinese companies signed contracts to build schools across Iraq, and Chinese language instruction has become increasingly common in Erbil. China is also currently competing with two regional powers—Iran and Turkey—to flood the local Kurdish market with goods. Chinese companies are becoming increasingly visible and outpacing more established ones, namely western firms, by gaining contracts in various areas, especially in the oil sector.

An adviser to an international oil company once explained to the authors that Chinese companies are winning bids more easily than Western companies in Iraq because they are state owned enterprises that have the flexibility to prioritize energy security over profits. Meanwhile, Western companies constrained by



regulations are less willing to conduct business in a risky, corrupt environment. In recent years, major international oil companies have become less interested in investing in Iraq and have abandoned the country entirely. The Iraqi government is concerned, but because of nature of Iraqi oil contracts (service contracts) and oil nationalism, the country is unable to prevent these companies from leaving the country.

### China-KRI relations

Similar to the rest of Iraq, the Chinese relationship with the Kurdistan region is diverse. Just recently, the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Ministry of Agriculture and PowerChina International Group Ltd signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to construct four dams in the region. In an interview, KRG Minister of Agriculture and Water Begard Talabani said that the Chinese company offered a

better deal that would cost the KRG less. In 2020, China signed a \$5 billion residential and leisure development in Erbil called Happy City.

Yet while China is expanding in every area within the KRI, the relationship remains notably one-sided. China opened its general consulate in Erbil in 2014, when the KRG was fighting ISIS. For the Chinese, it was an opportunity to show solidarity. In contrast, a U.S. State Department official characterized it as China capitalizing on the KRI's weakness as it struggled to survive. Regardless of the motive, bilateral relations with China are important to KRG diplomatic elites, who understand the significance of China's permanent membership on the UN Security Council. Through private conversations and interviews, we learned that China was the last permanent UNSC member to open a consulate in Erbil, and had done so at the insistence of senior KRG diplomats.

Yet seven years after the opening of the Chinese General Consulate in Erbil, the KRG has yet to open an office in Beijing. Decision-making elites explain this discrepancy in different ways. In a recent, private conversation we held with former Iraqi ambassador to China Mohammad Sabir, the former ambassador was very enthusiastic about China and the country's culture. Moreover, Sabir explained that following a Kurdish request to Beijing for political representation in 2007, Chinese officials told Iraqi president Jalal Talabani, a long-time self-proclaimed Maoist, that the KRG could only open a commercial office registered under a company name.

China was not willing to open the office, but nevertheless wanted a channel to communicate with Iraqi Kurdistan—a relationship without recognition. China's reservations regarding official diplomatic ties with the KRI stemmed from concerns about the repercussions of recognizing a regional government within a nation state.

For one, China worries that recognition of the KRI could empower Chinese provinces to demand a role in Chinese foreign policy. The central government in Beijing monopolizes every aspect of political, economic, and social activities—leaving provincial governments with no say in foreign policy-making—and China would not want to make a foreign policy decision that jeopardizes this domestic arrangement. Additionally, the CCP's positions on Taiwan and Hong Kong and its strong rejection of separatism makes it leery of establishing ties with a sub-state entity. And while China claims not to politi-

cize its leverage, we found through our interviews that it prevented the KRG from building ties to Taiwan.

However, Chinese diplomats present an entirely different story when asked about the discrepancy. In 2021, Chinese Consul General to Erbil Ni Ruchi said the KRG had not opened an office in Beijing because the KRG had not made such a request. Former ambassador Sabir said this was diplomatic talk rather than the actuality.

Falah Mustafa, senior advisor to the KRI president, said that the KRG had plans to increase its number of representations globally, including in East Asia, but that this initiative faced numerous challenges and setbacks. Mustafa explained that Baghdad's cut of Kurdistan's

share of the national budget, the ISIS incursion, an influx of refugees and IDPs, and decreases in global oil prices collectively prevented the KRG from submitting a request to open an official office in Beijing. Other senior KRG diplomats corroborated this explanation, saying that they did not submit a request to Beijing due to the funds and resources required to open the mission at a time of extreme austerity in the KRI.

According to China-Middle East scholar Yitzhak Shichor, "one of the basic components of post-Mao China's policy, domestic and international, is opposition to separatism. These rules also apply to the Kurds." However, recent events are providing China with more room to maneuver when it comes to an official KRG pres-

ence in Beijing. Relying on Iraq's constitutional recognition of the Kurdish-ruled entity and the international reaction to the 2017 referendum, China could quell its prior concerns about the potentially harmful ramifications of KRG representation in Beijing.

While China still seems to be leary of official relations, the Chinese consulate in Erbil is attempting to strengthen its relationship with the KRI through unofficial channels by focusing on ties with political parties rather than with the government. The Chinese government is specifically attempting to attract the cadres of the prominent Kurdish political parties—the, PUK, KDP, and the Gorran party. According to interviews with senior party officials, each year two delegations are invited to China: one

of senior party members and the other of mid-level party officials. Even so, there is growing skepticism about China's presence and expansion in Kurdistan and Iraq. While both Iraq and Kurdistan are attracted to Chinese megaprojects, and many Iraqi political forces prefer development discourse over democracy, rising global tensions between China and the United States concern local leaders.

In this context, the failure to open the KRG representation in Beijing could be attributed to mutual disinterest on the part of the Chinese and the KRI, each for their own reasons. Kurds cannot sacrifice security for economic development, especially at a time when other regional powers are preparing to intervene and expand in Iraq.



May 31, 2022

## Turkey summons German, French envoys over Kurdish militant events, minister says

The German and French ambassadors to Ankara were summoned to the Turkish foreign ministry to protest events organised by Kurdish militants in those countries, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Tuesday.

Speaking to state-run Anadolu news agency, Cavusoglu said the ambassadors were told of Turkey's discomfort with the events or-



Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu gestures as he speaks during a news conference with Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau and Romanian Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu, in Istanbul, Turkey, May 27, 2022. REUTERS/ Umit Bektas

ganised by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which is considered a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

Separately, Turkey has said it opposes Sweden and Finland's bids to join NATO over what Ankara calls its harbouring of Kurdish militants in those countries, and also over their arms export ban