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TURKEY: ARTICLE 301: A “COSMETIC” AMENDMENT ?

ON 30 April, the Turkish Parliament passed a highly controversial amendment to Article 301, which limits the freedom of expression in Turkey by criminalising any “insult to Turkishness”. The Parliamentary debate that preceded the vote was stormy, but the amendment was finally passed with 250 votes for and only 65 against.

According to the Minister of Justice, Mehmet Ali Sahin, 6075 individuals have been charged under

this Article and Article 159 (that it replaced) over the last five years — 745 of them have been sentenced. Thus the murdered journalist, Hrant Dink, had been sentenced under this law. Some writers, like Orhan Pamuk, and Elif Shafek, had also been sued for their stand on the Armenian genocide but been acquitted. However, according to Erdol Onderoglu, editor responsible for questions of freedom of expression on the Bianet web site and correspondent of *Reporters sans Frontières*, these

figures show how, apart from the 150 intellectuals pursued, on whom the press mainly focused, “it is more the ordinary people in the street who were the victims in this period” — and many of these were minors.

Despite the many voices raised for its abolition, particularly with in the European Union, which made it a precondition of Turkey’s membership, the Article, nevertheless, was only subjected to a very light “sweetening” of the nature of the offence that it attacked: “public denigration of Turkish identity”. When applied to the Republic or the Turkish Grand National Assembly,

it will be punishable by six months to three years imprisonment. When applied to the government of the Turkish Republic, the State's judicial institutions, the military or security structures the penalty is three months to two years — "increased by a third" if the offence of denigration by a Turkish citizen takes place outside the country. Another alteration — "charges under this Article must receive the approval of the Minister of Justice" and no longer left to the judgement of the Public Prosecutor.

According to the Turkish correspondent of *The Economist*, Ambari Zaman, this amendment is a clumsy attempt to please both the European Union and the Turkish nationalists: "I think that it a kind of acrobatic exercise but, by walking on a tight rope in this way, they are bound to fall as neither the nationalist (who they are trying to appease) nor the E.U. seem satisfied. Indeed we have heard many E.U. officials saying, in private, that this was just a cosmetic change".

The woolliness of the term of "Turkish nation" in the law will allow many Prosecutors to continue to sue whosoever they feel like on the basis of very subjective assessments of what might constitute "insulting" the nation. Moreover, its dissuasive effect will probably be just as ineffective as in the past, as is confirmed by Ambari Zaman: "I think that we will continue to see writers like Orhan

Pamuk and others defying official history — whether on the question of the massacre of Armenians in 1915 or on the fate of the Kurds. Consequently these prosecutions will continue".

Erol Onderoglu sees no change in this reform but points out that "it is more a matter of the way justice is practiced. In writing, this may seem quite normal to a Westerner who compares the texts of laws in his own country with those in Turkey. I would like to stress that the problem is due, to a great extent, in the application of these article by the Turkish courts".

The reduction of the maximum sentence means that, henceforth, "the accused will not be tried by criminal courts but by police courts. That is to say that, even in the event of passing the maximum sentence, the penalties will be reduced and commuted to suspended sentences. There will be more mechanisms at the judges disposal to see that an accused person does not go to prison even though found guilty". However, in Erol Onderoglu's opinion, this lightening of the offence will be offset by the fact that "the accused will have difficulty in getting media coverage of their case because journalists in the national and international press will not attach an importance to their case since the accused will not be sent to prison".

Despite this, the European Union's Presidency (undertaken by Slovenia) described the amendment of Article 301, in a statement, as a "constructive advance towards guar-

anteeing freedom of expression". Nevertheless, many Human Rights defence organisations have denounced its ineffectiveness and called for the abolition of all the legal articles that limit freedom of expression in Turkey, particularly those inherited from the Anti-Terrorist Law and those condemning any "crime" against the memory of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

Other celebrities accused under Article 301, the academics Ibrahim Kaboglu and Baskin Oran, have been finally and permanently acquitted this month, after 4 years of legal harassment. Having written a report on cultural and minority rights — a report made at the government's request — they were criticised and charged by the Public Prosecutor of "inciting hatred and hostility between the peoples" (Article 216) as well as insulting Turkishness (Article 301). The accusation was based on the term "turkiyelilik" or "of Turkey" that the report proposed using to describe "Turkish" citizens of different ethnic origins. On 10 May 2006 the 28th Ankara Criminal Court had dismissed the case regarding the two articles. This judgement was quashed by an appeal court before being finally confirmed by the Plenary Appeal's Commission on 28 April last.

Peaking about this decision, Ibrahim Kaboglu considered that this was an important victory for freedom of discussion and opinion,

since it would create a judicial precedent for all future cases. According to BIA Media Monitoring Report, since the beginning of 2008 186 people, 71 of them journalists, have been subject to proceedings regarding 92 cases, 12 of them started on the basis of Article 301 (as against 4 last year at the same period).

On the occasion of the International Press Freedom Day, 3 May, many Turkish editorial writers and journalists debated the difficulties that freedom of expression and information meets in their country, going from physical attacks to death threats or a variety of forms of intimidation or else pirating Internet sites. As for police intimidation, the authors of such forms of intimidation are never bothered, the report stresses so that aggression against journalists take place in an atmosphere of impunity.

The most frequent grounds for proceedings against journalists are "insult", "propaganda" and "defamation". The publishing houses are also targeted: *Haftaya Bakis*, *Yedinci Gun*, *Yasamda Demokrasi* and *Toplumsal Demokrasi* have been obliged to stop their activity six times for "propaganda in favour of the PKK". The Internet sites are subjected to censorship. Thus *Indymedia-Istanbul* has been banned by decision of an Army court, as has the YouTube.com site, a site for the free sharing of video pictures, for contents that were insulting to

Ataturk. This last was on the basis of a law that, as Erol Onderoglu explains, "is not part of the Turkish penal code — it is a totally separate law. What is surprising is that, during the reforms for the European Union, this law was never mentioned and, in my view it is a memory law, like the one passed in France. It represses all those who want to call to question the practices of the past, of the Ataturk period".

Finally the Supreme Radio and Television Council (RTUK) has rebuked the Star TV channel because of remarks by the famous

transsexual performer that opposed military operations against the Kurds.

In general, there is an increase in censorship taking place at the levels of news and publishing, that even goes as far as purely and simply forbidding certain events to be covered in the press: the 11th Istanbul Criminal Court has thus forbidden the media from making any mention of the trial by Army of the eight Turkish soldiers that had been captured and then released by the PKK at the end of 2007.

WASHINGTON: AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ARTICLE 140 AT THE US CONGRESS

Commenting on the meeting between Nechirvan Barzani and the Turkish delegation that took place in Baghdad at the beginning of the month, the Iraqi Vice-President, Tariq al-Hashemi, on his return from a visit to Ankara, pointed out to the daily *Al-Sabbah* that Turkey's attitude to Iraq had changed. It now seemed less concerned with the status of Kirkuk and the Turcomen as with strengthening economic and social relations between the two countries. This change, according to al-Hashemi, can be attributed to the development of relations between the Turks and the Iraqi Kurds, particularly following Irbil's agreement to post-

pone the Kirkuk referendum for six months.

Opinions are divided, however, on the appropriateness of such a delay. During a conference in the US Congress building, organised jointly by the Washington Kurdish Institute and the University of Pennsylvania, a number of speakers stressed, in their contributions, that postponing the application of article 140 would only increase Iraq's instability.

Thus the President of the Washington Kurdish Institute, Dr. Najmaldin Karim, saw Article 140 as the most urgent problem for Iraq, and General Jay Gardner,

who was US pro-consul in Iraq before Paul Bremer, in comparing the situation of the Kurdistan Region with that in the rest of Iraq and even of the Middle East as a whole, stated, in relation to the holding of the referendum: “If I was living in Kirkuk, I know how I would vote”.

The first discussion panel was on the issue of Article 140 and the Iraqi constitution. It included Peter Galbraith, former US Ambassador to Croatia, Joe Reeder, Jason Gluck and Professor Brendan O’Leary. The moderator was Dr. Karim. Peter Galbraith, a member of the Centre for the control and non-proliferation of armament, presented Kurdistan as a country independent in all respects save in terms of international recognition — and this *de facto* independence is recognised in the Iraqi Constitution. Peter Galbraith stressed that Kurdistan is the only place in Iraq where any democracy exists, even though this democracy is still imperfect. He added that referenda are not, in themselves, sources of compromise — there is always a winner and a loser, and that is a fact that must be accepted, even though seeking to attenuate the resentment of the losers, in particular by a significant degree of power sharing. Joe Reeder, former US Assistant Secretary of State for Defence, on the other hand, recommended compromise as the only possible solution: the challenge involved in the application of Arti-

cle140 is immense and factors such as justice, self-determination, equity and stability must be taken into account in settling the issue: minorities must be assured that they will be decently treated.

For Jason Gluck, legal advisor to the American Peace Institute, the application of this article is difficult because of a “*hostile environment*”. Moreover, the Iraqi government is no longer legally obliged to be bound by it since the ultimate time limit set by the Constitution expired on 31 December last. “Political reality shows us that a political agreement is necessary”. The situation of Iraqi Kurdistan, isolated and surrounded by Turkey, Syria and Iran does not allow it to hold the referendum by sheer force of will. On the contrary, Jason Gluck fears that it could lose the regions it already administers.

However, Brendan O’Leary, professor of political Science at Pennsylvania University, who was advisor to the Kurdish government during the drafting of the Iraqi constitution, pointed out that, if the referendum was cancelled, the Kurds might be tempted to settle matters themselves, especially as the two main Kurdish parties are subject to nationalist pressures. He added that it would be a serious mistake to consider article 140 null and void. O’Leary endeavoured to demolish certain “myths” about the Kirkuk issue, particularly that of the stranglehold of oil resources

said to be connected with the city: this ignores major Iraqi constitutional measures that provide for the sharing of all the natural resources between the regions, regardless of origin. “*There is no conspiracy for any takeover of the oil there*”.

The second “myth” he attacked was that Kirkuk was a powder barrel. In Brendan O’Leary’s opinion, it is false to imagine that reuniting Kirkuk with Kurdistan would plunge it into violence, so long as security was maintained. The third myth that can be called the “*terrible Turkish thesis*” is that the Turks would do all in their power to prevent such a reunification. He did not believe in this thesis, because of Turkey’s desire to join the European Union. Finally, there is the “*fanciful*” theory of the “*crazy Kurdish conjecture*”, the idea that the Kurds were planning to declare their independence, whereas the Iraqi Kurds had no need to declare this openly since they already had more freedom in their self-government than, for example, any country in the European Union.

Before the second panel discussion, Kamal Kirkuki, spokesman of the Kurdish Parliament, explained that the danger was more likely to come from a centralised Iraq and that the Kurds were no seeking revenge but the to put right certain past injustices, recounting all the stages of Saddam’s takeover of Kirkuk and its forcible Arabisation.

He concluded: *"We only want the people to be able to return home in a peaceful and legal manner."* Mohammad Ihsan, Minister for Extra-regional Affairs of the KRG and, thus in charge of the question of re-uniting all the regions claimed by the Kurds, described at length the demographic problems. In 1968, a *"normalisation"* policy set up a forcible movement of emigration and immigration in these regions by attracting new settlers with agricultural contracts.

The President of the Paris Kurdish Institute, Kendal Nezan, stressed the hostile manoeuvres of neighbouring countries against Article 140. Because of the marginalisation of their own Kurdish population, Iran and Syria view the emergence of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region in an unfavourable light. But while the United States attaches little importance to these two countries concerns, this is not the case with Turkey, which has always refused to resolve the problem of its 10 to 15 million Kurds, while posing as the *"protector"* of the 400-500,000 Iraqi Turcomen. The Ottoman sources always referred to Kirkuk as Kurdish and the League of Nations, in 1925, confirmed its Kurdish character. To wing up Kendal Nezan called for a dialogue between the Kurds, the Turks and the western countries to find a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish question as a whole.

Saman Shali, President of the Kur-

dish National Congress, then took the floor, recalling that the Iraqi Constitution, and thus Article 140, was supported by the United Nations, the United States and Iraq. It gave the people living in the disputed regions *"the right to choose their own destiny"*. Failure to apply this article would compromise peace and stability and altering it would undermine the constitution as a whole. Failure to observe Article 140 would be *"a slap in the face of democracy, freedom and human rights"*.

The second panel covered reconciliation and power sharing, with David Phillips, Ambassador David Berger, Erin Mathews, David Pollack and Qubad Talabani, the Kurdistan Regional Government's representative in the United States. The discussion was chaired by Brendan O'Leary. Phillips, a research worker studying human rights at Columbia University, recalled that reconciliation was a process, not an event, and that power sharing was essential if the population was not to feel it had no other recourse but that of violence. Thus *"it is important to give minorities a share of the cake"*. The director of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for Iraq, Erin Mathews, reporting the field work carried out by his Institute to resolve the communal problems in Kirkuk, in particular by bringing together the actors of civil society, outside political parties, expressed the feeling of *"powerlessness"* of

the citizens when the question of Article 140 comes up. He considers it responsible for the growing sectarianism in the city, which also reflects the communal divisions throughout Iraq.

David Berger, former member of parliament and former Canadian Ambassador, stated, on the contrary, that federalism is a cause of freedom, without which only three solutions are possible for a composite State: I single group rules, or the State breaks down or there is a *"shaky democracy"*, as is federal Iraq. In the view of David Berger, the Kurdish experiment is *"the beginning of a new direction for the Middle East"*.

David Pollack, a member of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, sees Article 140 as one facet amongst others of the delicate problem of reconciliation — of which the most important aspect, in his view, is the sharing of power between Kurds and Arabs and the reconciliation between Iraq and its neighbours. Kurdistan, David Pollack warned, must not follow the road of Pakistan regarding Kashmir, and not jeopardise its future because of Kirkuk.

Qubad Talabani, speaking in the name of the Kurdish government, states that the latter does not want anything other than a just and viable resolution of the conflict. *"No national reconciliation can take place without the question of disputed*

territories being settled and no justice will be possible without some reparation of wrongs committed to the victims of former regimes”.

The last panel, dealing with the history leading to the present situation included some participants who had already spoken, Kamal Kirkuki, Mohammad Ihsan and Dr. Karim, with Saman Shali acting as moderator.

All insisted on the importance of protecting the rights of each group and of building an atmosphere of confidence.

About a hundred people, including many Congress assistants and journalists, attended this conference, whose aim was to contribute to informing the American public on a subject that is blocking the future of Iraq.

Furthermore these peasants' children have to follow their parents and interrupt their schooling.

The drought also hits the stock breeders who have to take them summer pastures still further from their villages or else sell them to be slaughtered. Thus Yakup Kaçar, a herdsman of the Diyarbakir region, explained that, with his clan, he had to lead their herd of 4,000 head to the North of Van, because the pastures round Batman had completely dried up. As, for security reasons, they were forbidden to do the whole journey herding their beasts on foot, they had to hire lorries, which added to the expense.

In the Kurdish South-East, more than half the population works in the agricultural sector, but the peasants are not the only ones to suffer: the small shopkeepers also have economic difficulties, as their customers are essentially agricultural. The president of the Diyarbakir Union of Chambers of Trade and Crafts (DESOB), Alican Ebedinoglu, explained that many of these small shops give during the winter and are paid when after the harvest. However, this year such an arrangement will not be possible: *“There hasn't been such a drought since 1970. The farmers will not be able to pay their debts to the shopkeepers and craftsmen. This will affect nearly 100,000 shopkeepers and this drought means their unemployment for them”.* Alican Ebedinoglu

DROUGHT: THE KURDS DEVASTATED



THE drought that is hitting certain regions of the Middle East is particularly affecting the Kurds of Turkey, Syria and Iraq. The Turkish Minister of agriculture, Mehdi Eker, has even raised the possibility of declaring the Southeast *“a natural disaster area”*, which would lead to special measures in support of the inhabitants, going from grants to reduction of debts. However, Turkish law does not include drought in its list of *“natural disasters”* for the region. According to the Diyarbakir Chamber of Agriculture, the situation is so serious that it could lead to an increase in the emigration of inhabitants of the region, whose small peasant farmers and shopkeepers are facing bankruptcy while the price of food are constantly increasing.

Last year, the rainfall in the period

from October to March was about 377mm per square metre as against 147 this year. In 2007 had already seen a drop in rainfall of 47%, according to Turkish national metrological statistics.

According to the President of the Union of Turkish Chambers of Agriculture (TZOB), Semsî Bayraktar, interviewed by the daily paper Zaman, the cost of the drought has reached 5 billion Turkish liras, about 2.5 billion euros. The first social consequence will be the emigration of peasants, even those owning their own land, to other regions next spring to find jobs as seasonal workers. Already, every day, the railways stations are full of people leaving for the West of the country, which causes other problems — the influx of agricultural workers with a daily wage of between 25 and 18 Turkish lire.

pointed out that many of these craftsmen and shopkeepers have been unable to pay their social security contributions, which excludes them from Health Service benefits.

The Kurdish DTP party has demanded that the region be declared a disaster zone, which the Minister of Agriculture considers one of the "possible options": *"We are watching the situation carefully. Before the start of the sowings, we asked the farmers to avoid those crops that require a lot of water. But there is no moisture in the subsoil and everything that was sown has withered through lack of rain. We are examining the situation before deciding what to do"*.

It is anticipated that there will be a shortfall of 2.5 million tonnes of wheat, 1.4 million tonnes of barley and 250,000 tonnes of red lentils, which will lead to price increases and unemployment.

According to the president of the Urfa Chamber of Agriculture, farmer who do not use irrigation will be unable to save their harvest, even if it does rain this month, while those use it will only save about 10% of it. He sees as *"the only lasting solution"* the completion of the project of dams for South-East Anatolia (GAP) for which the government has just announced a budget of 2.3 billion Turkish lire (\$1.82 billion) to launch it again. This project

includes building dams (about 20 of which have already been built) with the aim of irrigating 1,800,000 hectares (4.3 million acres). The GAP project also envisages infrastructures for the Kurdish South-East, which is still a very disadvantaged region, involving the creation of motorways and airports as well as the region's industrialisation. It also has some social programmes in partnership with NGOs, such as UNICEF. As for its political objective, it is solidly to weld to the Turkish idea, this rebellious Kurdish region, so resistant to assimilation.

However the GAP project is still highly controversial, at once by the local population and by neighbouring countries that also depend on the Tigris and Euphrates watercourse, as well as with ecologists and NGOs that attack Turkey's lack of any social policy or help in rehousing the displaced villages.

The areas already irrigated, which have started producing cotton, as at Urfa or Sivan, have, in fact, been appropriated (after the expropriation of the smallholders (because of the dams, of forced displacement or indebtedness) by a handful of big landowners, linked to the local powers that be. The labour force working in the cotton fields consists largely of former peasants and small landowners, as well as women and children employed at very low wages, with the effect of increasing the unemployment of

adult men. Moreover, no industrial takeoff has yet been observed. Moreover, the ecological repercussions of these dams have not been evaluated and there are now serious health problems developing, as for example epidemics of dysentery malaria etc.

Finally, the disappearance of major historic sites of upper Mesopotamia, such as Zeugma and soon Hasankeyf has been sharply criticised.

During a meeting at Duernstein, in Austria, the Ministers of Economy of Germany, Austria and Switzerland threatened to withdraw from the guarantees offered to the credits for financing the Ilisu Dam (the one that threatens Hasankeyf) if Turkey persisted in neglecting social and environmental implications in its management of such projects.

These three countries have, hitherto, granted guarantees to firms involved in building this to a total of more than a billion euros.

Building the Ilisu dam, as well as drowning a unique historic and ecological site, will displace 50,000 people. Turkey's assurances of rehousing them and rehabilitating them in new kinds of work have clearly not convinced the European ministers, especially in view of what has already happened in similar cases.

Furthermore, the Turkish Association for the Protection of Water and the Environment has launched an appeal regarding the possible disappearance of Lake Van, whose water level is dropping as well as it being subjected to heavy pollution. The practice of intensive and uncontrolled fishing is already threatening several species with extinction. Thus a group of Turkish scientists has estimated that in the next 10 or 15 years the lake could disappear if adequate measures were not taken and applied.

Moreover the drought also affects Iraq and this country has asked Turkey to release more water to the Tigris and Euphrates, whose

sources are in Turkish Kurdistan. *"The irrigation of Iraq is entirely dependent on the Euphrates and the Tigris"*, explained Abdullatif Jamal Rashid, the Iraqi Minister for Water Resources after a meeting he'd had with the Turkish Minister of External Trade, Kursad Tuzman. *"The last few years Turkey has supplied us with enough water — even more than needed. This year, however, we have difficulty coping with a drought that is much more severe than expected"*.

Turkey, Syria, Iraq have recently buried the hatchet on the question of water and agreed to cooperate through an institute formed of 18 experts from the three countries.

have been overcome: *"We hope that positive stages will finally be passed. Relations with Turkey are improving. The cold winds that have been blowing on both sides have disappeared after the last meeting. This meeting has been useful. We hope to have close relations with the neighbouring countries. However, these relations suffer from these countries' internal conflicts. The Kurdish question cannot be resolved by war. The solution can only come from dialogue and through political and peaceful means. Turkey's military operation last February was not a good thing. I am grateful to the population of the Region that behaved in a generous manner during this operation. We are ready to help all parties, provided that the aim is a political solution"*

IRAQI KURDISTAN: THE BEGINNING OF A THAW WITH TURKEY

At the beginning of this month, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, for the first time ever, met a Turkish delegation in Baghdad. The latter was led by Ahmet Davutoglu one of the Turkish Prime Minister's advisors, and included Murat Ozçelik, Turkey's coordinator for Iraqi Affairs and the Turkish Ambassador to Iraq, Derya Kanbay.

This meeting covered a whole range of burning issues that oppose the KRG and Turkey, in areas of economics, politics and security. The KRG spokesman described the

discussions as *"cordial, conducted in an open atmosphere"*, pointing out that the two parties had similar views on many subjects, with *"a desire for mutual understanding and common interests"*.

For his part, the president of the Kurdistan Region, Masud Barzani, repeated, during a meeting of his party at Salahaddin, that the PKK should renounce the use of force and reaffirmed that the Iraqi Kurds hoped to dialogue with Ankara. He commented on the meeting between his Prime Minister and the Turkish delegation by speaking of a *"psychological barrier"* that would

Adopting the same conciliatory tone, the Turkish Prime Minister, whose government is struggling with a serious internal crisis, declared in a meeting with his own party, which is being threatened with being banned: *"Our dialogue both with the central government and with the groups will continue. We treat seriously the problem of counter-terrorism in its political and economic dimensions as well as its security dimension. Iraq and Turkey must act in mutual understanding and confidence"*.

For its part, the principal Kurdish party in Turkey, the DTP, also sent a delegation led by Ahmet Turk, President of its Parliamentary group, to see Jalal Talabani and ask him to play an active role in the res-

olution of the Kurdish problem in Turkey, insisting on the vital necessity for the Kurdish people of remaining united. After this meeting, Ahmet Turk indicated that Jalal Talabani supported a political solution to the Kurdish problem in Turkey on the basis of mutual disarmament. He also added that they had agreed to meet more often in future.

However, the delegation was not able to meet with either Masud or Nechirvan Barzani as they had hoped. Sources close to the Kurdish government explained that the two Kurdish leaders considered it hardly useful to compromise the resumption of contact with Turkey just as relations were beginning to improve. The Kurdish Prime Minister repeated, in a statement published on the official KRG web site, that the PKK forces were based on a zone beyond his control and that the Iraqi Kurds did not want their territory to be used to attack Turkey and so could not be held responsible for that movement.

Meanwhile, Turkish shelling and bombing of Kurdistan continued on the Qandil mountains, which shelter the PKK bases — without causing any casualties, according to the movement's spokesman, Ahmed Denis, who accused Turkey of exporting its internal problems to its neighbours: *"It is important for the Iraqi Kurds to realise that Turkey wants to relieve itself of the PKK, which is an internal problem, by accus-*

ing neighbouring countries of supporting the PKK. The leaders in Iraq must be conscious of this fact when dealing with the Turkish delegation".

So far, the principal victims of this bombing, whether they come from Turkey or Iran, have been the border villagers who have had to flee their homes and now live in refugee camps not far from their homes, as the *Los Angeles Times* reported. As Mohammad Khorshed, from the village of Rezga explained to the paper's reporter: *"We have some herds, which we need to feed. We cannot lead them up to summer pastures in the mountains. We cannot work on our farms and we do not know to whom claim compensation"*. Another villager, Saman Haidar, who came under fire during the bombing does not envisage returning in the immediate future, and described the air raids they

had suffered as *"terrifying"*: *"We escaped to a little shelter we had built some time before. We put out all the lights"*. When they were able to come out, Saman Haidar left the village, taking his entire herd with him, hoping to keep it safe until the problem was resolved.

Iran, for its part, has regularly shelled Kurdish villages on the Iraqi border, in Suleimaniah Province, aiming at the PJAK group, the Iranian branch of the PKK — though apparently without causing any casualties. The Kurdistan Regional Government has, nevertheless, asked UNO, through its representative to Iraq and the KRG in Erbil, Dindar Zebari, to make representations to Teheran for an end to this shelling. Dindar Zebari has pointed out that 12 villages had suffered Iranian shelling and that 140 families had fled.

SHABAKS AND FAYLIS: SOME DOUBLY PERSECUTED KURDS

A report in the Kurdish weekly, *Kurdish Globe*, draws attention to the alarming situation of the Shabaks, a Kurdish religious group resulting from a split in the Shiite movement, like the Alevis of Turkey. Like their Northern cousins, they have developed an original cult, very far from the duodecimal Shiism of the Iraqis. Less known and less numerous than

the Yezidis, the Shabaks are stigmatised both as Kurds and as *"Shiites"*. They are mainly located in Mosul Province, and are the preferred target of al-Qaida. Thus the group called *"the Islamic State of Iraq"* has recently distributed leaflets in the province ordering the Shabaks to leave the region or suffer *"an uncertain fate"*.

One of the members of this group,

speaking anonymously to the *Kurdish Globe*, explained that his community was caught between two fires in that region: as Kurds they are targeted by the nationalist terrorists and as Shabaks by the Sunnis (who make up the majority of Mosul's population). He says he himself left the province three years ago because of incessant attacks on his village by insurgents. This village, only 15 Km from the city of Mosul, had already become filled with Shabak families who had left the city because of threats. *"I think that the main motive that hides behind this declaration is the determination of the Sunni islamists to control the areas inhabited by the Shabaks because they are both Kurdish and Shiite. We are asking Baghdad to find a solution to these attacks"*.

According to a report issued by the Shabak community itself, over a thousand people have fled Mosul province since 2004, principally from the villages of Darwish, Bazawia, Kukji, Khazna, and Fathlia, before the escalation of violence.

Hanin Qado, president of the Office of Minorities in Iraq and member of the Iraqi Parliament for the Shiite United Alliance, led by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, has asked for a protection of minorities by the Iraqi State to be set up rapidly. *"These threats have the aim of sowing discord between the different components of Iraq and driving (the Shabaks) out of Mosul"*.

For his part, Khasro Goran, a Kurdish assistant to the Governor of Mosul, explains that this is not the first time since 2004, that religious extremists and insurgents have threatened the Shabaks. According to him the principal reason is that they consider themselves Kurds and not Arabs.

Delegations from his community have also gone to Kurdistan Region to ask the government at Irbil for help. Meanwhile, they are waiting impatiently for Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution to be applied so that they can opt, by referendum, for their area to be included in the Kurdistan Region.

The Shabaks are estimated at between 40 to 60,000 strong. Their language is sometimes linked to the Kurdish gorani dialect, and includes many words borrowed from Turkish, Arabic and Persian. They cover some 35 villages to the East of Mosul.

North and East of Mosul, as well as the Nineveh region, contains many non-Arab and non-Moslem communities, that are particularly subject to attacks by former Baathists and Sunni extremists. Last February the kidnapping and death of the Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul, Monsignor Faraj Rahou, had moved the whole Christian community of Iraq.

Another Kurdish group that has been harshly persecuted and deci-

mated because of both its ethnic and religious status, the Faylis, has seen a large number of its members forced to flee to Iran. The Kurdish Faylis have lived for centuries on the Zagros chain, between the Iraqi and Iranian borders. Unlike the majority of Kurdish Moslems, they are Shiites of the duodecimal faith. For this reason, accused of being *"Iranians"* by Saddam Hussein during the Iraq-Iran war, they were stripped of their Iraqi nationality and driven out of the country or else deported and secretly slaughtered. The refugees that did manage to escape to Iran (several hundreds of thousands in the provinces of Ilam and Ahwaz) are thus officially *"stateless"* and live in refugee camps such as Jahrom. Only about 760 of them, in Ilam province, have secured Iranian nationality, after long and difficult procedures. Many returned to Iraq after the fall of Saddam and the number who have chosen to remain in Iran is about 7,000. However, an official of the Jahrom camp explains their dilemma: *"When they return to Iraq people say: "You are Iranians". Here people say they are Iraqis and must leave. In Iraq they meet with many problems — firstly that of insecurity. Moreover, they have been exiled so long that they no longer have any contacts there, nor jobs nor homes"*.

In 2005, the new Iraqi constitution stipulated that Iraqis deprived of their nationality could apply to regain it. This would be the legal

solution for these Fayli Kurds, but they are hardly optimistic about this: "We survived the Saddam regime when we were thrown into tanks of

acid. We have no confidence in governments — old or new. We cannot return there, for security, political and religious reasons".

programmes follow the line of state policy, this would not make much sense to the Kurds. It would be more significant to give more freedom to the private channels, that are more responsive to popular expectations".

A NEW LAW ON USING "NON-TURKISH" LANGUAGES IN THE AUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA

ON 29 April, the Turkish Parliament passed a law authorising the Turkish National Radio and Television (TRT) to broadcast programmes in languages "other than Turkish". The General Manager of TRT, Ibrahim Sahin, confirmed that he planned initially to broadcast programmes in Kurdish, Arabic and Persian.

At the end of 2004 TRT had already started broadcasting 30 minutes a week of broadcasts in Kurdish as well as leaving room for other minority languages, in response to repeated demands from the European Union — despite the hostility of the caste Army leadership and a part of the Turkish political caste that see this as encouraging "separatism".

The passing of this law has provoked a variety of reactions in Turkey. Hasip Kaplan, the DTP (pro-Kurdish) party's Member of Parliament for Sirnak, commented on this decision: "It is a form of cultural vandalism to forbid 20 million Kurds to speak their mother tongue. These 20 million Kurdish citizens,

who do their national army service and pay their taxes, have the right to expect programmes in the Kurdish language from the TRT. Our country will not be split just because some folk songs are sung or some poems are read on the air. On the contrary, this will strengthen our brotherhood".

Some Kurdish intellectuals consider that this will raise the morale of the Kurds in Turkey. Tarik Ziya Ekinçi see in these Kurdish language broadcasts a factor that could greatly contribute to establishing social peace in Turkey. "It is an important step and I think that it will help ensure less blood shed and silence the guns". Serafettin Elçi, leader of the pro-Kurdish KADEP party also thinks that this can give the Kurdish citizens the feeling that the State is concerned about them, though with some reservations. "Till now the official policy was to deny the existence of a Kurdish language. This means rejecting and denying the Kurds. This law sends out the message that such a policy has been abandoned — from that point of view its significant enough, and important in terms of the official acceptance of the Kurdish language. However, if the

It was at Diyarbakir that Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced these Kurdish language programmes at the same time as the resumption of the GAP project. The Turkish Prime Minister affirmed his determination to improve democracy and the quality of life in Turkey. However Diren Keser, Production Director of the Kurdish GunTV channel, which, moreover was cited by the Prime Minister in his speech, is also more reserved, pointing out that, for the moment, GunTV is not broadcasting and that the television and radio programmes that have been broadcast since 25 January 2004 in fact come up against many restrictions. Diren Keser stresses that Tayyip Erdogan, had made the same remarks in a speech four months earlier, without this changing the situation in any way.

GunTV broadcasts 4 hours a week, that is 45 minutes a day. Broadcasts on learning the Kurdish language and children's broadcasts are forbidden. It can only broadcast news, music and programmes regarding traditional culture. All broadcasts in Kurdish must, imperatively, be sub-titled (in Turkish).

In the issue of the Kurdish language in the Turkish public area, Sezgin Tanrikulu, had clashed publicly with the Prime Minister when the latter met 17 NGOs representing civil society. Recep Tayyip Erdogan had declared that: “*the Treaty of Lausanne did not provide for the public use of Kurdish*” (see the Paris Kurdish Institute’s Bulletin for April 2008). Sezgin Tanrikulu in an interview given to the daily paper *Zaman* returned to this question of the right to education in ones mother tongue, pointing out that it was, in principal, a matter of education in this language at all levels of schooling, but that, as things are, Turkey turns out to be incapable of allowing its citizens to learn Kurdish. “Turkey has opened the way for the learning of mother languages — but only in private classes. Many of these classes have closed, moreover, because of too restrictive regulations. They were only open to those over the age of 15, and it was very difficult to find teachers. Learning mother tongues must take place in all the state schools. There must be optional courses in the state schools. We are also asking that the obstacles and restrictions of broadcasts in languages other than Turkish be lifted. As for programmes, there are no legal obstacles, in fact — the law shows that this kind of programme is allowed. However, the regulations of the Supreme Radio and Television Council (RTUK) say that this can only be done by TRT. We have taken the matter of these

regulations to the State Council but our case was rejected on the grounds that we did not have the right to lodge such a complaint”. (*Zaman*)

Finally, some Kurdish politicians,

including Osman Baydemir, the Mayor of Diyarbakir, boycotted Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s speech, criticising his refusal to recognise the Kurds as a minority in Turkey, with measures of cultural protection and political autonomy.

AS WELL AS ...

• ISTANBUL: THE FIRST OF MAY VIOLENTLY REPRESSED.

Like last year, the dominant theme of the May Day demonstrations was violence. Since the coup d’état of 1980, this day is no longer a public holiday and the AKP government refused to restore it despite demands by the Trade Unions.

Over 50,000 police were mobilised in preparation for the demonstrations and Taksim Square, Istanbul’s symbolic rallying point, forbidden to the Unions, although many of them, including DISK and TURK-IS the two main workers union confederations, had asked to commemorate there the death of 34 Unionists, killed on 1st May 1977 by marksmen officially “*unknown*” even though the extreme Right and the secret services have been publicly accused of it.

The government refused to authorise rallies in the square, alleging threats of trouble from “*extremist groups*”. Thus, as from dawn, Taksim Square was held by the police as well as the area around it, where the schools and the metro stations were all closed and anti-riot police

were deployed in the Square’s gardens while Army commandoes and paramilitary units were deployed in a park overlooking the Square. Helicopters flew overhead and sharpshooters were posted on the roofs.

At first the Unions decided to march from Sisli to Taksim, defying the ban. But at midday Suleyman Celebi, the head of the great left-wing Union Confederation DISK announced a change of plan for fear of violence. This, however, did not stop the police from dispersing, with tear gas and water canons, the demonstrators gathering in front of the DISK offices. The clashes caused several injured and many people were arrested (over 500 according to the NTV channel).

In the afternoon, groups of anarchists or of the extreme left that wanted to force the barricades round Taksim Square were attacked by the police and dispersed with truncheon blows. They riposted by throwing Molotov cocktails and paving stones and removing the barricades in the adjoining streets. According to Anatolia Press agency, one demonstrator was arrested in

possession of 17 Molotov cocktails. About 300 to 400 activists of the Turkish Communist Party (TKP) also tried to force their way into the square shouting slogans against the AKP.

The Governor of Istanbul, Muhamer Guler, who had banned the demonstration, the police forces and the Turkish government were all criticised for what was judged to be an "excessive use" of force. The left-wing Member of Parliament, Ufuk Uras, accused the AKP of "creating a republic of fear". "They are trying to deprive the workers of their democratic rights with methods dating back to the cold war. A government that treated its workers in such away would not be able to last a single day in a Western democracy. This is inadmissible".

• **IRAN: DEATH OF A KURDISH PRISONER FROM THE AFTER-EFFECTS OF TORTURE.** Kaveh Azizpour, a Kurdish political prisoner, died on 23 May as a result of torture, according to his family. Kaveh or Kawa Azizpour, 25 years of age, was arrested two years earlier for supporting the Kurdistan Democratic Party – Iran, which is banned in the country. According to the Iranian authorities he had been transferred from the Mahabad prison to Urmiah Hospital after a very serious cerebral haemorrhage (a stroke). He died after 20 days in a coma.

However his family states that this stroke was, in fact, the sequel of the tortures to which he had been subjected, as his brother Assad related to the newsletter of Amir Kabir Uni-

versity, Dastranj: "When Kaveh fell into a coma for the second time, he underwent an operation. However, the authorities, against the advice of the doctors and despite Kaveh's critical condition, which required intensive care, transferred him to the Secret Service prison 48 hours after his operation". Assad makes the point that this was his third stroke his brother had had — all occurring while in detention.

Furthermore, the Teheran Revolutionary Court has decided to try the Kurdish journalist Mohammad Sadegh Kabovand, *in camera* — a decision severely criticised by his lawyer, Masomeh Sotoudeh: "Such a decision can only be adopted for a trial if the arguments are likely to shock public morality, as in trials for rape".

Masomeh Sotoudeh also points out he is very concerned about his client's state of health. He is being held in Evin Prison, Teheran, but has not have any appropriate medical treatment or examination though he has been suffering from giddiness since 19 May. He is charged with activities "threatening national security". Sadegh Kabovand was arrested on 1 July 2007.

Reporters sans Frontières denounces this decision, taken, according to the organisation, to prevent the press covering the case and revealing the irregularities.

• **FREEDOM OF THE PRESS: MASUD BARZANI MEETS THE CPJ.** On 3 May, the President of the Kurdistan Region, Masud Barzani, and his chief of staff, Fuad Hussein, met a delegation from the Commit-

tee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) that had just published a report on freedom of the press in Iraqi Kurdistan. The delegation was led by Michael Massing, Director of CPJ, Joel Campaigna, co-ordinator of the Programme for the Middle East and North Africa and Robert Mahoney, assistant director.

Massud Barzani welcomed the report by reaffirming his support for a free press. He also recognised that freedom of the press in his region had some "weak points" but that, on the whole, the journalists were working freely. He also pointed out the necessity of Kurdish journalists conforming to a professional code of ethics: "The Kurdistan Region has accomplished significant advances to improve freedom. Our long struggle, in the past, was one for freedom, not only for journalists but all the citizens of Kurdistan. We do not claim to be without faults and we know that we have several more stages to go through to reach complete freedom. I think that the press is free now, and that a law is needed regulating the profession".

Masud Barzani was referring to the sharp opposition from the press that had arisen from a law passed by the Kurdistan Parliament last December. The president had then asked the members of parliament to review the law that many Kurdish papers presented as detrimental to freedom of expression, even if, in fact, it was hardly different from similar clauses regarding the protection of private life or State Security in force in most democracies.

"*Withdrawing the latest law shows that*

we want freedom of the press” explained Masud Barzani. “We do not want to impose restrictions on journalists but, at the same time, the journalists must also conform to professional rules and to their own ethics. Do not forget the environment in which we live and the culture of persecution that we have inherited from the old Baath regime, which, unfortunately, has left its mark on Kurdish society. I think that the law that is now being debated in the Kurdistan National Assembly will have to set clear lines to the journalists. Professional journalism requires more than just the ability to write. We consider that it is a respectable profession that the journalists must also respect and not let it be used by others or have recourse to defamation to serve private interests. The journalists are free to criticise — but their criticisms must be constructive and not defamatory”.

The Kurdish President added: *“Personally I think that the press must be completely free but that the journalists must understand the situation in which we are living. If we compare ourselves with the United States, we have a long way to go. However, if we compare ourselves with this region and, above all, with where we were ten years ago, we have accomplished a great deal of progress and are doing better and better”.*

In general the relations between the political class and journalists in Kurdistan or between the independent press and the party organs are hardly warm, the first accusing the

second of sowing a lack of professionalism while the second always suspect the first of trying to control them. The discussions with the CPJ also covered the existing regulations and penalties in force in other countries. The CPJ recognised that in most legal systems journalists could be sanctioned and sued in the courts and the NGO representatives present recognised the progress accomplished by the Kurdistan Region towards greater freedom.

• **MOSUL: A KURDISH JOURNALIST ASSASSINATED.** On 5 May, some armed men killed by pistol shots, Sarwa Abdul-Wahab, 36 years old, lawyer, journalist and activist on support of the rights of journalists and the free-lance press. According to the police, the victim had left her house to walk to a market when two armed men jumped out of a car and tried to kidnap her. As she was resisting she was shot down with two bullets in the head. This attack does not seem accidental since Sarwa’s mother, who was accompanying her, told the Associated Press that she had begged the kidnappers to spare her daughter: *“I begged them to kill me in her place. They pushed me aside saying that they had nothing against me”.*

The lawyer also worked for a press agency close to the Kurdistan Democratic Party, according to the Nineveh authorities as well as for the satellite TV channel Salahaddin TV and other local papers. She was

also a member of an Association for the Defence of Journalists, as pointed out by Yasir al-Hamadani, director of the Mosul branch of the Association, whose head office is in Baghdad: *“Besides her work as a journalist, she was an activist, working with NGOs and a lawyer. We are terribly upset at losing her. She was very active and enthusiastic about her work”.* On 25 April last, another journalist, Jassim al-Batat, 38 years of age, was assassinated in Mosul. An Iraqi who originated from Basra, he worked for a local radio belonging to a Shiite party, the principal rival of Moqtada al-Sadr’s religious militia.

Since 2003, over 175 journalists and people employed in the media have been killed, according to the New York-based Committee for the Protection of Journalists. *Reporters sans Frontières*, for its part set the figure at 211 victims in the press and media as well as 14 journalists kidnapped, whose fate is still unknown. Hundreds of members of this profession have gone into exile, mainly to Syria and Jordan, after receiving death threats.

On 4 May, the wife of the Iraqi President, Jalal Talabani, narrowly escaped a bomb attack that wounded four of her bodyguards. An explosive charge was aimed at her car as she was going to the Baghdad National Theatre for the opening of the 6th Al-Mada Cultural Festival.

CONTRE-INSURRECTION En créant de nouvelles milices, les militaires américains ont acheté une relative accalmie auprès de leurs anciens adversaires

Les sunnites d'Irak contre al-Qaïda

PAR ADRIEN JAULMES,
envoyé spécial à Bagdad

Des jeunes gens armés filtrent la circulation dans la rue qui mène à la mosquée Abou Hanifa, dans le quartier d'Adhamiyah, au nord de Bagdad. Jeans à la mode, lunettes noires, cheveux gominés et kalachnikov tenue comme une guitare électrique, ils jettent des regards suspicieux à l'intérieur des voitures, laissent passer les véhicules connus et fouillent ceux qui ne sont pas du quartier.

Il y a moins d'un an, certains de ces mêmes jeunes gens dissimulaient des engins explosifs improvisés sur le passage des patrouilles américaines, ou participaient à des kidnappings ou des assassinats contre leurs voisins chiïtes. Adhamiyah, quartier sunnite de Bagdad, coïncé dans une boucle du Tigre, sur la rive droite du fleuve, et entouré de zones chiïtes, était depuis la chute de Saddam Hussein l'un des districts les plus dangereux de Bagdad. Al-Qaïda en Irak s'y était particulièrement bien implanté, et les prêches de la mosquée Abou Hanifa lançaient régulièrement des appels à la lutte armée contre les Américains.

Mais depuis quelques mois, les commerces ont rouvert et tout semble de nouveau relativement paisible dans les rues d'Adhamiyah. Entre-temps, les anciens insurgés se sont transformés en forces de sécurité. Recrutés par les militaires américains pour 300 dollars par mois, ils assurent à présent le maintien de l'ordre dans le quartier. Hier qualifiés de « terroristes », ils sont devenus, dans la terminologie américaine, des « citoyens locaux concernés ». Mais eux-mêmes préfèrent s'appeler les « conseils du réveil sunnite », ou « al-Sahwah », en arabe.

Il a fallu du temps aux dirigeants américains pour revenir sur la tragique erreur de dissoudre, en 2003, les forces de sécurité de feu le dictateur Saddam Hussein, dont le résultat avait été de jeter dans l'insurrection des dizaines de milliers de sunnites ulcérés. Après avoir considéré pendant plus de quatre ans leur soulèvement comme un dernier sursaut des nostalgiques de Saddam Hussein, puis comme un complot de djihadistes internationaux acquis à Oussama Ben Laden, après avoir essayé de les réduire militairement, d'abord directement, puis en lançant contre eux des forces irakiennes recrutées parmi les chiïtes, les États-Unis ont fini par trouver une solution en apparence toute simple : retourner une partie des insurgés pour les charger eux-mêmes de la sécurité de leurs districts.

L'idée naît au début de l'année 2007 chez des officiers américains stationnés dans la très volatile province d'al-Anbar. Certains d'entre eux, après plusieurs séjours en Irak, ont enfin fini par acquérir une certaine connaissance du terrain. Ils sentent qu'une partie des sunnites commence à être lassée par des violences qui ne mènent à rien. La lutte à outrance d'al-Qaïda contre les militaires américains et le nouveau pouvoir chiïte, n'a en effet réussi ni à chasser les uns, ni à renverser les autres pour rendre aux sunnites leur ancienne préémi-

Dans le quartier sunnite d'Adhamiyah, au nord de Bagdad, des hommes armés surveillent la rue qui mène à la mosquée Abou Hanifa. Recrutés par les militaires américains pour 300 dollars par mois, ces anciens insurgés assurent à présent le maintien de l'ordre dans un district qui fut l'un des plus dangereux de la capitale après la chute de Saddam Hussein. Hadi Mizban/AP



nence. À Bagdad, l'épuration confessionnelle a aussi tourné au désavantage des sunnites. Plus nombreux, les chiïtes contrôlent la police et les forces de sécurité, et leurs escadrons de la mort tuent plus que les attentats d'al-Qaïda.

Adhamiyah, îlot sunnite à l'est du Tigre, dans une ville qui a presque entièrement basculé sous le contrôle des chiïtes, a longtemps été en état de siège, alors que la guerre confessionnelle faisait rage à Bagdad. « Il y avait une vingtaine de morts chaque mois, dit un habitant d'Adhamiyah. On était arrêté à un barrage, et on disparaissait. »

L'armée américaine a commencé par entourer le quartier de hauts remparts. Ces alignements de « T-Walls », murs encastrables en forme de T devenus le symbole de l'aventure américaine en Mésopotamie, visent autant à empêcher les assassins chiïtes de s'introduire dans le quartier que de bloquer les tueurs sunnites à l'intérieur.

« Les gens honnêtes ont décidé de défendre leur quartier »

Alors que le général Petraeus lance son « Surge », le « sursaut » militaire américain censé enrayer ce déchaînement de violence, les mouvements du Réveil sunnite permettent de ramener le calme dans la province d'al-Anbar. L'expérience est peu à peu étendue à d'autres provinces. « Les gens honnêtes se sont inspirés de l'exemple d'al-Anbar, et ont décidé de défendre leur quartier », explique Farouk Abou Omar, le numéro deux du conseil du réveil d'Adhamiyah. « Nous nous sommes rassemblés un matin de novem-

bre 2007, et nous avons commencé à faire la chasse aux terroristes. Il nous a fallu une demi-journée pour nettoyer le district des criminels, là où ni les Américains ni l'armée irakienne n'y étaient arrivés ! », explique cet homme d'une cinquantaine d'années, la moustache taillée à la mode baasiste et les cheveux coupés en brosse.

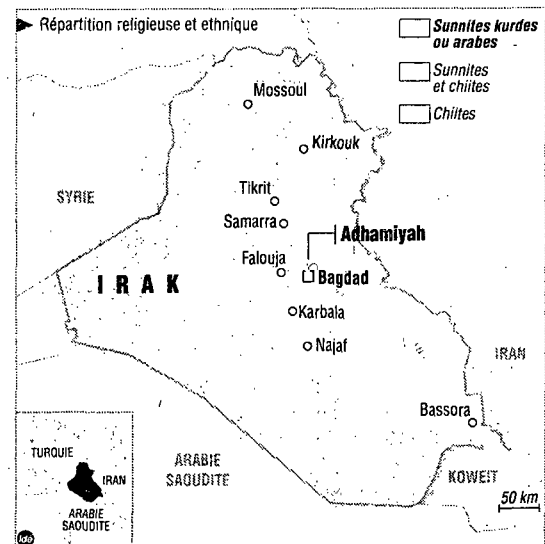
Il reste cependant très allusif sur les « éléments criminels », que le mouvement du Réveil a neutralisés avec une telle rapidité. Peut-être qu'une fois les principaux responsables de l'insécurité d'Adhamiyah passés du jour au lendemain du côté de la justice, il ne devait de toute façon pas rester beaucoup de monde à arrêter. « Nous sommes tous des moudjahidins, admet Farouk Abou Omar. Nous avons tous combattu les Américains. Mais au bout d'un certain temps, nous nous sommes dit qu'il n'y avait que deux solutions : soit nous continuions d'attaquer les Américains, soit nous faisons avec eux. Pour faire vivre nos villes, nos

familles, nos communautés, c'est finalement ce que nous avons choisi. » Farouk Abou Omar vante à présent « la bonne entente » qui règne entre les « vrais Irakiens ». « Les divisions entre chiïtes et sunnites n'existaient pas à l'époque de Saddam Hussein », dit-il, reprenant une des antennes de l'ancien régime baasiste. « Mais les Américains et les Iraniens ont attisé la haine entre les Irakiens pour casser le pays en divisant pour régner. Mais le jour où nos frères chiïtes comprendront les véritables intentions des Perses en Irak, ils seront les premiers à les combattre. »

Le mouvement du Réveil reste contesté, même parmi les sunnites. Le fondateur du mouvement du Réveil d'Adhamiyah, le colonel Riyadh al-Samarrai, a été tué en janvier 2008 par une bombe humaine. L'assassin, soupçonné d'appartenir à al-Qaida en Irak, s'est présenté chez lui comme s'il était venu s'enrôler dans le mouvement, avant de faire exploser la charge qu'il portait. Farouk Abou Omar a lui aussi été blessé. Il explique, en retroussant son pantalon sur une vilaine cicatrice au tibia, comment il a été touché par un éclat de grenade, reçu en venant en aide, dit-il, à un chiïte attaqué par des membres d'al-Qaida.

« Les sunnites n'ont pas oublié leurs anciennes allégeances »

En payant leurs anciens adversaires, les militaires américains ont acheté une relative accalmie, mais pas la paix. Les limites de ce mouvement du Réveil sunnite sont nombreuses. D'abord, ces miliciens sont organisés par les anciens chefs de l'insurrection. Ils ont cessé leurs attaques contre les forces américaines, mais en officialisant l'existence de milices armées indépendantes du gouvernement, les États-Unis ont encouragé un peu plus le fractionnement du pays en groupes armés recrutés sur des bases confessionnelles. Et le volet politique du « sursaut » voulu par Washington, visant à calmer les sunnites en leur donnant une place accrue dans les nouvelles institutions irakiennes dominées par les chiïtes, reste le plus difficile à mettre en œuvre. Les pressions de Washington



sur le gouvernement Maliki n'ont pour l'instant pas abouti à grand-chose.

Les chiïtes se battent à présent entre factions rivales pour le contrôle des institutions irakiennes. Ils ne sont pas prêts à accorder une place à des sunnites qu'ils considèrent toujours avec méfiance comme des représentants de l'ancien régime de Saddam Hussein. Les sunnites n'ont pas non plus été intégrés, si ce n'est marginalement, aux nouvelles forces de sécurité irakiennes. La police et l'armée restent majoritairement chiïtes et sont largement infiltrées par les membres de l'Armée du Mahdi, la milice chiïte de Moqtada al-Sadr, ou des brigades Badr, le bras armé de l'Assemblée suprême islamique en Irak, l'un des partis chiïtes au pouvoir. Les autorités irakiennes refusent aussi que l'armée américaine équipe en matériel lourd des miliciens sunnites qu'elles pourraient être amenées un jour à combattre.

Du côté sunnite, les conseils du Réveil sont considérés comme des traîtres à la solde de l'occupant par les branches les plus radicales de l'insurrection. Dans une récente déclaration enregistrée, le bras droit d'Ousama Ben Laden, l'Égyptien Ayman al-Zawahiri, a ironisé sur le mouvement du Réveil. « Ces Réveils n'auraient-ils pas dû hâter le retrait des forces américaines, ou bien ont-ils besoin de quelqu'un pour les défendre et les protéger ? », a dit le numéro deux d'al-Qaida.

« De toute façon, les sunnites qui rejoignent les mouvements du Réveil n'ont pas oublié leurs anciennes allégeances, dit un journaliste irakien de Bagdad, lui-même sunnite. Ils prennent l'argent américain, mais leurs chefs restent en contact avec al-Qaida, ne serait-ce que pour ne pas être assassinés. Le moment venu, tout repartera. »

Le succès du Réveil reste une réalité. Ces milices ont rétabli le calme dans des provinces entières et dans les quartiers de Bagdad encore contrôlés par les sunnites. Mais la formation d'une nouvelle armée irrégulière dans un pays en voie de fractionnement accéléré entre provinces et confessions, hypothèque encore un peu plus la possibilité de rétablir un semblant d'État unitaire en Irak.

AFP

IRAK: 6 REBELLES KURDES TUÉS DANS LES BOMBARDEMENTS TURCS DANS LE NORD

SOULEIMANIEH (Irak), 2 mai 2008 (AFP) - Six rebelles kurdes ont été tués dans les raids aériens turcs menés dans la nuit de jeudi à vendredi dans le nord de l'Irak, a affirmé samedi à l'AFP un porte-parole du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), Ahmed Danis.

"Six combattants du Pêjak (l'organisation séparatiste kurde d'Iran) ont été tués dans les attaques qui se sont produites dans la nuit de jeudi à vendredi dans les monts Qandil", a dit ce porte-parole.

Il a accusé le gouvernement turc de mener "une guerre psychologique contre le PKK et le peuple kurde" et les médias turcs d'"exagérer" le chiffre des morts.

"Seuls six combattants du Pêjak ont été tués", a-t-il encore affirmé.

L'armée turque a annoncé samedi que plus de 150 rebelles kurdes du PKK avaient été tués dans des raids aériens menés jeudi et vendredi dans le nord de l'Irak.

Depuis décembre, l'armée turque a bombardé douze fois les positions du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak. Elle a effectué des raids aériens ainsi qu'une opération terrestre d'une semaine en février dans cette région où sont retranchés, selon Ankara, plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes.

La Maison Blanche a approuvé vendredi le nouveau raid turc. "Il y a des opérations en cours contre le PKK, une organisation terroriste. Les Etats-Unis, l'Irak et la Turquie sont tous trois engagés pour s'occuper de ce problème", a déclaré un porte-parole de la Maison Blanche, Gordon Johndroe.



ré un porte-parole de la Maison Blanche, Gordon Johndroe.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, se bat depuis 1984 pour l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes.

AFP

PLUS DE 150 REBELLES KURDES TUÉS DANS DES RAIDS EN IRAK (ARMÉE TURQUE)

ANKARA, 3 mai 2008 (AFP) - Plus de 150 rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste) ont été tués dans des raids aériens menés jeudi et vendredi dans le nord de l'Irak, a annoncé samedi l'armée turque.

"Selon les premières estimations, cette opération a permis de neutraliser plus de 150 terroristes", souligne un communiqué publié sur le site internet de l'état-major des armées.

Le document souligne que des commandants du PKK pourraient figurer parmi les personnes tuées et que l'offensive aérienne turque a provoqué un "grand mouvement de panique parmi les membres" du PKK.

Un total de 43 objectifs, comprenant des abris et un centre de communications du PKK, ont été détruits par les bombardements menés dans la région montagneuse de Qandil, qui ont débuté jeudi en fin de soirée et se sont poursuivis pendant la nuit de jeudi à vendredi, avait précisé vendredi soir un précédent communiqué de l'armée.

De son côté, comme il en est le cas à chaque fois que l'armée turque pillonne ses positions, le PKK a démenti le bilan de l'état-major. "Six combattants du Pêjak (une organisation séparatiste kurde d'Iran, proche du PKK) ont été tués dans l'attaque de jeudi et de vendredi sur le mont Qandil", a affirmé à l'AFP, un porte-parole Ahmet Danis qui était interrogé à Souleimaniyeh (nord de l'Irak).

Il a accusé le gouvernement turc de mener une guerre psychologique contre le PKK et le peuple kurde et les médias turcs d'"exagérer" le chiffres des morts. La région des monts Qandil est une zone difficile d'accès située aux confins de l'Irak, de l'Iran et de la Turquie. Elle sert de repaire aux rebelles séparatistes kurdes.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, se bat depuis 1984 pour l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes. Le conflit a fait plus de 37.000 morts.

Depuis décembre, l'armée turque a bombardé douze fois les positions du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak. Elle a effectué des raids aériens ainsi qu'une opération terrestre d'une semaine en février dans cette région où sont retranchés, selon Ankara, plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes.

Le gouvernement turc dispose d'une autorisation d'un an du Parlement, qui expire en octobre, pour mener des opérations militaires transfrontalières contre le PKK.

Depuis le début des actions d'Ankara contre le PKK en Irak, les Etats-Unis, allié de la Turquie au sein de l'Otan, l'assistent en lui fournissant en temps réel des informations sur les mouvements des rebelles kurdes en territoire irakien.

La Maison Blanche a approuvé vendredi le nouveau raid turc. "Il y a des opérations en cours contre le PKK, une organisation terroriste. Les Etats-Unis, l'Irak et la Turquie sont tous trois engagés pour s'occuper de ce problème", a déclaré un porte-parole de la Maison Blanche, Gordon Johndroe.

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LE JOURNAL DU DIMANCHE 3 mai 2008

Le PKK affirme n'avoir subi aucune perte

Les rebelles du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan basés dans le nord de l'Irak ont démenti samedi des allégations de l'armée turque selon lesquelles ils auraient perdu plus de 150 hommes dans les raids aériens opérés jeudi et vendredi par la Turquie dans le nord de l'Irak. "Il n'y a pas eu 150 combattants du PKK tués. C'est totalement inexact", a affirmé Ahmed Danees, porte-parole du PKK, qui s'exprimait par téléphone satellite d'un lieu tenu secret dans le nord de l'Irak. Il a déclaré que les raids aériens avaient tué six rebelles kurdes d'une faction différente et qui combat en Iran. Les raids visaient une zone aux confins de l'Irak, de la Turquie et de l'Iran. Les militaires turcs ont affirmé samedi avoir tué plus de 150 combattants du PKK. Les forces de sécurité au Kurdistan irakien ont dit qu'à leur connaissance, les raids n'avaient fait aucune victime.





3 mai 2008

L'armée turque se «félicite» de ses derniers raids en Irak contre le PKK

Avec notre correspondant à Istanbul, Jérôme Bastion

Selon l'armée turque, plus de 150 rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan auraient été tués lors des derniers raids aériens turcs, dans la nuit du 1er au 2 mai, sur des bases du PKK. Ce dernier dément le bilan de ces attaques qui ont été menées par une cinquantaine d'avions bombardiers durant plusieurs heures.

« Des bombardements très réussis », a commenté visiblement satisfait, le numéro 2 de l'état-major, énumérant les 43 cibles détruites, parmi lesquelles : 29 abris, 5 greniers à vivres et un centre de communication, mais apparemment, pas de dépôt de munitions. Le général turc a par ailleurs annoncé que « les services de renseignements avaient pu établir que ces bombardements avaient fait, un grand

KONTROL MONTAŞI BARNAK (ZAP) TAARUZ ÖNCESİ



KONTROL MONTAŞI BARNAK (ZAP) TAARUZ SONRASI



nombre de victimes ». Mais il n'en n'a pas livré le nombre précis.

Ce ne sont pas, bien sûr, les premières frappes aériennes turques en Irak du Nord qui visent les camps du PKK, puisqu'elles ont commencé il y a six mois et se répètent à intervalles réguliers. Mais c'est seulement la deuxième fois que le mont Quandil est aussi systématiquement visé. A une centaine de kilomètres, au sud de la frontière turque, et limitrophe de l'Iran, ce massif inexpugnable cache le centre de

commandement du PKK, ainsi que ses chefs.

Autre nouveauté, l'ouverture d'un dialogue direct entre Ankara et l'administration kurde nord-irakienne, jusque-là tabou, parce que le gouvernement de Barzani est accusé de soutenir la rébellion. Un premier contact a été établi, ce vendredi, à Bagdad entre le Premier ministre, Nurchiyan Barzani et un émissaire turc. Il vise à renforcer la coopération contre le PKK et éviter donc de nouveaux bombardements.



L'AVOCAT DE TAREK AZIZ RÉCLAME LE TRANSFERT DU TRIBUNAL AU KURDISTAN IRAKIEN

AMMAN, 4 mai 2008 (AFP)

- Un avocat de l'ancien vice-Premier ministre irakien Tarek Aziz a annoncé dimanche avoir demandé au gouvernement irakien de transférer au Kurdistan le tribunal jugeant ce dernier, en mettant en doute la sécurité d'un procès à Bagdad.

"Je demande au gouvernement (irakien) de bien vouloir transférer le tribunal au Kurdistan, au nord de l'Irak, afin de garantir la sécurité de tous les avocats, irakiens, arabes ou occidentaux, ce qui n'est pas le cas à Bagdad", a déclaré à l'AFP Badie Izzat Aref, résidant à Amman, lui-même dans l'impossibilité "pour raisons de sécurité" de se rendre à Bagdad.

"Bagdad ne réunit en aucun cas les conditions de sécurité nécessaires à la tenue d'un procès dans cette ville", a-t-il ajouté.

Le procès de Tarek Aziz, qui fut le porte-parole à l'étranger de Saddam Hussein de 1979 à 2003, s'est ouvert mardi à Bagdad avant d'être reporté au 20 mai. Il est jugé, en compagnie de sept autres dignitaires du régime de Sad-

dam, pour la mort de dizaines de commerçants irakiens en 1992.

M. Aref a dit avoir conseillé à M. Aziz, unique chrétien du cercle étroit des puissants de la dictature de Saddam Hussein, de garder le silence durant tout le procès.

"M. Aziz est un diplomate et n'a aucun lien, direct ou éloigné, avec les services de sécurité, je lui conseille donc de garder le silence absolu durant tout ce procès", a-t-il poursuivi.

"Son silence sera la preuve que nous ne reconnaissons pas ce tribunal et je lui demande de ne s'exprimer que pour se défendre au cas où seraient produites des preuves contre lui."

Tarek Aziz, né en 1936, s'était rendu dès avril 2003 aux troupes américaines et est détenu au Camp Cropper, près de Bagdad. Il a été plusieurs fois hospitalisé et sa famille a demandé sa libération pour raisons de santé.

LeMatin 4 mai 2008

Echauffourées entre Kurdes et Turcs à Berne: trois blessés

Des échauffourées entre des Kurdes et des Turcs ont nécessité un engagement massif des forces de l'ordre ce matin à Berne. Trois blessés ont dû être conduits à l'hôpital et deux personnes ont été interpellées.

Entre 80 et 100 personnes ont participé à une manifestation interdite organisée par des Kurdes et dirigée contre une fête culturelle de l'Ambassade de Turquie en Suisse sur la Place fédérale. D'abord rassemblées aux abords de la gare, elles ont tenté de se rendre devant le Palais.

Les manifestants se sont alors heurtés au dispositif policier mis en place pour protéger la fête autorisée. Alors qu'ils essayaient de se munir du matériel d'un chantier, les forces de l'ordre ont utilisé du gaz irritant, indique la police cantonale.

La situation s'est encore envenimée lorsque des personnes se trouvant à la fête turque ont provoqué les manifestants kurdes. Des confrontations directes s'en sont suivies. La police a alors dû faire usage de balles en caoutchouc afin de rétablir le calme. La manifestation s'est finalement dissoute.



Kurdistan Regional Government

KRG statement on first high-level talks with Turkey

01 May. 2008 Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) –

A Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) delegation led by Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani today in Baghdad met with a delegation from the Republic of Turkey headed by Mr Ahmet Davutoğlu, the senior advisor to the Turkish Prime Minister; Mr Murat Özçelik, the Special Coordinator for Iraqi Affairs at the Turkish Foreign Ministry; and Mr Derya Kanbay, Turkey's Ambassador in Baghdad.

This first high-level official meeting of both sides focused on a wide range of political, security and economic issues between Turkey and the KRG. The meeting was conducted in a cordial and open atmosphere in which both sides stressed similar views on many issues and

expressed a desire for common understanding and interests. The meeting concluded with future practical steps laid out and a desire on both sides for continued dialogue.

Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani expressed the Kurdistan Region's desire to develop good neighbourly relations with Turkey. He recognised Turkey's legitimate concerns and highlighted the importance of solving common problems through cooperation, political negotiation and dialogue.

The meeting in Baghdad follows efforts by the Iraqi federal government, such as the recent visit of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani to Ankara, and other friends, to enhance relations between both sides.

TIME

May. 01, 2008

Istanbul's Economic Tension

By Andrew Purvis/Istanbul

Turkey has attracted a lot of attention lately thanks to a series of political crises--from armed forays into neighboring Iraq in pursuit of autonomy-seeking Kurdish militants to an atavistic attempt by Turkish prosecutors to ban the country's own ruling party. The political intrigue has created a speed bump--or maybe a stop sign--for an economy that had been striding with determination toward inclusion in the European Union and recharging its ancient trade links with the Middle East.

Since 2002, annual foreign direct investment in the mainly Muslim but officially secular country of more than 70 million people, which has traditionally served as a crossroads between East and West, has jumped more than 30-fold, to about \$22 billion. Investment in banks, retail and commercial real estate has risen sharply. Turkish businesses have been investing aggressively in oil-rich Russia and the Middle East. All told, an economy that was shrinking as recently as 2001 expanded more than 5% a year through last year.

Turkey's economic surge is, moreover, a sign of underlying political progress. The West couldn't hide its nervousness when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) was elected in 2002. The AKP is moderately Islamist, but its economics have turned out to be decidedly liberal. The party has nurtured economic reforms that have tamed inflation, stabilized a jittery currency and entrenched the independence of the country's central bank. Privatization of state-owned properties continues to attract outside investors. Turkey's application to join the E.U. is stalled on objections by France and Germany, among others. But the process of meeting reform benchmarks for membership eligibility has already paid off nicely. Whether or not Turkey joins the E.U., its government says its chief goal is to increase incomes to European levels.

But its Old Guard secular establishment is now backing a lawsuit aimed at banning the democratically elected AKP, casting a shadow over Turkey's prospects, at least in the short term. The suit seeks to bar the party and its members from political activity for allegedly violating Turkey's constitutional prohibition against mixing politics

and religion. The move has rattled markets. After tripling from 2002 through last November, Turkey's stock index has dropped 32%. The global credit crunch has not helped. The ratings agency Standard & Poor's in April cut Turkey's credit rating to negative from stable, citing a fraught political and global environment. "The Turkish economy is in a major transformation with high efficiency gains, whose impact will be even more evident in the next decade," asserts Suzan Sabanci, chairwoman of Akbank, Turkey's largest privately owned bank, and a scion of one of Turkey's wealthiest families. "Global events will have an influence on the Turkish economy," she notes. "But I do not expect them to be dramatic."

Modern Turkey has looked Westward since its staunchly secular founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk decreed the separation of mosque and state shortly after World War I. The pro-Western political bent did not immediately translate into liberal economics. Corruption, cronyism and protectionism continued to cloud prospects until the 1980s. Even then, after a period of economic liberalization under reformist Prime Minister Turgut Özal (a pal of Margaret Thatcher's), the old habits died hard. In 2001, Turkey suffered a full-blown financial crisis in which the Turkish currency lost nearly 50% of its value overnight.

That shock proved to be a wake-up call. Turkey was compelled, as a result, to accept World Bank and International Monetary Fund prescriptions, including fiscal discipline and regulatory changes, that have since paid off handsomely, triggering five years of more than 6% annual growth, single-digit inflation and rising incomes.

Turkish banks have been particularly attractive to outside investors. Citigroup last year bought a 20% stake in Akbank (for \$3 billion). "The foreign appetite for Turkish companies and stocks is high," said Hakan Avci, director of asset management at the Istanbul office of Raymond James Securities, a U.S. company, before the recent political blowup. In the past 18 months, Lehman Bros., Morgan Stanley and Credit Suisse bought local brokerages in the country. Avci has since lowered his projections because of the political turmoil but says he is "optimistic that this crisis will be overcome and a solution found." The Turkish govern-

ment has vowed to press ahead with privatization plans, including a 15% treasury-owned stake in Turk Telekom, the Turkish telephone operator, as well as regional electricity-distribution grids and Halkbank, Turkey's second largest state-owned bank.

Commercial real estate in big cities like Istanbul has become particularly attractive to foreign investors who see markets in Turkey that have yet to be picked over. The graceful domes and minarets of Istanbul and other cities are being augmented by a thicket of building cranes, and futuristic shopping malls are competing for space among the red-tiled roofs. Analyst Roger Barris at Merrill Lynch predicts that outsiders will pour more than \$15 billion into Turkish real estate in the next five years. Turkish coffee may be famous, but Turkey is now one of Starbucks' fastest-growing markets.

Turkish businesses, meanwhile, invested \$28 billion in Russia last year, up from \$15 billion in 2005. They are poised to take advantage of the \$1 trillion that Russia says it will spend on infrastructure by 2020. And while Turkey refused to permit U.S. troops to invade neighboring Iraq from its territory in 2003, Turkish construction and retail companies have since invested up to \$10 billion in the war-torn country.

Falling trade barriers with the West have also reinvigorated some of Turkey's ancient trade centers. In the old Silk Road city of Kayseri, formerly Caesarea, 150 miles (240 km) southeast of Ankara, some 400 factories producing everything from electric cables to blue jeans have sprung up in the past several years. Exports from that city and its sister "Anatolian tigers," as Turks call the industrial hubs of the central part of the country, have doubled since 2002. "We will take care of Europe in its old age," jokes Mustafa Boydak, head of Kayseri's Chamber of Commerce, citing Turkey's entrepreneurial efforts and the youthfulness of its population, 70% of which is under 35. The region's growing economic clout, says Gerald Knaus, director of the European Stability Initiative, an Istanbul-based think tank, suggests that divisions in Turkey between wealthy, secular élites and the conservative Muslim middle class are disappearing. "We are seeing the transformation of an agrarian society into an industrial economy," he says.

But the latest political problems show how Turkey's old secular establishment, a wealthy class rooted in western coastal cities, is not ready to surrender its prerogatives yet. It is backing the court challenge to the AKP, whose electoral base, incidentally, is central Anatolia. (Turkey's President, Abdullah Gul, is from Kayseri.) "The reason

the economy was booming in recent years," says Raymond James analyst Avcı, "was that there was finally political stability with a single-party government. That is now in jeopardy, which is worrying." And yet businessmen like Serdar Bilgili remain upbeat. The Istanbul entrepreneur just invested in a \$75 million project to build a new W Hotel

in the trendiest part of Istanbul. "We are very positive in the long term," he says. "The outlook might seem unclear now, but financial markets and bank reserves are strong, and we are confident in the potential of Turkey to grow." The fact that he is not alone in that view is, ultimately, Turkey's real headline news.

United Press International

ANKARA, Turkey, May 2, 2008 (UPI) -- Turkish representatives gathered with the prime minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq in Baghdad, opening talks between Iraqi Kurds and Turkey.

Iraqi Kurdish officials said the meeting was a positive move that will serve as the foundation for further relations between both sides.

The Turkish delegation, led by Turkish Prime Ministry's head, Ahmet Davutoğlu, Thursday gathered with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, the Prime Minister of Kurdish administration Nechirvan Barzani and other Iraqi and Kurdish

leaders, the New Anatolian reported.

Both sides have decided on future moves to stabilize and build on interactions, Kurdistan Regional Government External Affairs chief Falah Mustafa said.

"The two sides have found the necessary mechanism to overcome these problems and hurdles which hinder the development of the relationship between the two sides," a statement out of Talabani's office read.

REUTERS

Turkey says kills 150 PKK rebels group denies it

May 3 2008

By Selcuk Gokoluk

ANKARA (Reuters) - The Turkish army said on Saturday that it killed more than 150 Kurdish PKK fighters in air strikes in northern Iraq this week, but the rebel group denied this and security forces in the region also expressed scepticism.



ticism.

The Turkish General Staff, in a statement on its website, said its warplanes had destroyed all the PKK posts they had targeted in bombing operations in Iraq's Qandil area on Thursday and Friday.

"It was established that more than 150 terrorists were left ineffective and the operation caused a big panic among the terror organisation's members," the statement said. The Turkish army uses the term "ineffective" to mean killed.

Senior PKK members might be among the killed, it added.

The PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party), which is fighting for an ethnic homeland in southeastern Turkey and operates from bases in northern Iraq, denied this.

"There were not 150 PKK fighters killed. This is totally inaccurate," PKK spokesman Ahmed Danees told Reuters by satellite phone from a secret location in northern Iraq.

He said the air strikes had killed six Kurdish rebels from a different faction that is fighting Iran. The strikes took place near an area where the borders of Iraq, Turkey and Iran meet.

Iranian forces have also often clashed in Iraqi border areas with rebels from the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), an offshoot of the PKK and which analysts say has bases in northeastern Iraq from where they operate against Iran.

Security forces in Iraq's largely autonomous Kurdistan region said they were not aware of any casualties from the strikes on Thursday and Friday.

"We are not aware of 150 dead. We think there were no casualties in the Turkish bombings on the Qandil Mountains," Jabbar Yawar, spokesman for the Kurdish Peshmerga security forces, told Reuters.

The Turkish air attacks in a remote mountainous area of Iraq were part of a pattern of escalating strikes against PKK positions and increasing operations against the rebel group in Turkey.

Military sources told Reuters that at least 30 warplanes had been involved in the new raids in Qandil area.

Turkish troops conducted an eight-day large-scale incursion across the border in February in which the army said it killed 240 guerrillas and lost 27 of its own men.

Turkey blames the PKK for the deaths of more than 40,000 people in its campaign for a homeland. The United States and the European Union consider it a terrorist organisation.

TURKISH DAILY NEWS

May 3, 2008

Dialogue channel with N. Iraq opens as Turkish jets bomb Kandil

ANKARA - Turkish Daily News

A Turkish delegation met with Nechirvan Barzani, prime minister of the semi-autonomous regional government, in Baghdad Thursday, the same day that Turkish jets bombed the Kandil mountain range, a safe haven for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq.

Jabbar Yawar, an official from the northern Iraqi administration, said that Turkish warplanes bombed terrorist bases inside Iraq in an almost two-and-a-half hour overnight operation, reported the Anatolia news agency from Arbil.

The Turkish military confirmed the strike in a statement posted on its Web site Friday, saying that the operation targeting the terrorist bases started at 11:00 p.m. Thursday. It emphasized that

the assaults targeted only the PKK, not civilians and local elements.

The Turkish delegation made up of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's chief foreign policy advisor, Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu, and Turkey's special envoy for northern Iraq, Murat Özçelik, set out for Baghdad Thursday to hold talks with Iraqi officials over Ankara's proposal to set up a joint mechanism for strategic dialogue. The planned mechanism is ex-

pected to be chaired by the prime ministers of the two countries accompanied by some ministers.

Besides their contacts with the central Iraqi government officials, the Turkish officials also met with Barzani, marking the first dialogue with northern Iraq.

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani expressed pleasure with the Turkish officials' meeting with northern Iraqi authorities and said it was important for Turkey to strengthen ties not only with Baghdad but also with the Iraqi Kurdish administration

in the north, reported Anatolia.

The delegations highlighted the significance of a resolution to all the problems between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds, and the continuity of political, economic, social and security consultations, it added.

Foreign Minister Ali Babacan said Thursday that dialogue with the administration in northern Iraq depended on strong and concrete steps to combat the PKK.

If they [Iraqi Kurdish leaders] man-

age to put distance between themselves and the PKK, and assume a strong position through concrete steps, this situation will undoubtedly influence the quality and intensity of our dialogue with the local administration in the north, he added.

Babacan said Turkey wanted the PKK issue to be removed from the agenda of relations with Iraq.

There is no room for terrorist organizations in today's Turkey and the Iraq of the future. Everyone should understand this well.



03 May 2008

Kurdish Rebels Dispute Turkish Report of Heavy Rebel Casualties

By VOA News

Kurdish rebels are disputing a Turkish military report that the rebels suffered heavy casualties in Turkey's most recent air strikes on northern Iraq.

Turkish authorities said Saturday that their warplanes' latest cross-border attacks into northern Iraq have killed more than 150 Kurdish rebels.

Turkish military officials say the bombing raids are part of their ongoing operations against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

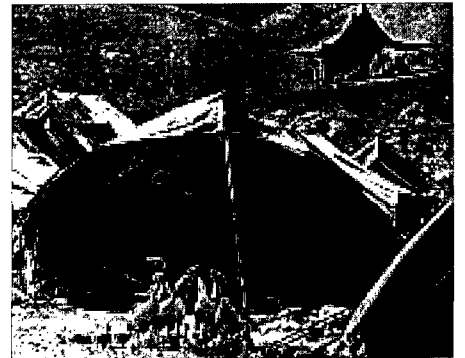
However, PKK sources say Turkey's bombs killed only six rebels, and that those Kurdish fighters were members of a faction that targets Iran, not Turkey.

Independent confirmation of casualty tolls in the area near Iraq's border with Turkey is seldom possible.

Turkey charges that the PKK uses Iraqi territory as its base for launching deadly raids into southeastern Turkey, and authorities in Ankara have demanded that Iraq's government crack down on the rebels.

On Thursday, senior Turkish policy adviser Ahmet Davutoglu discussed the issue in Baghdad with the prime minister of northern Iraq's Kurdish region, Nechirvan Barzani.

It was the first direct high-level meeting between Turkey and northern Iraq's Kurdish regional government, and reports say the two sides took up many political, security and economic issues.



A Kurdish woman displaced by the conflict between Turkey and Kurdish rebels is seen at a refugee camp in the Qandil region, northern Iraq, 2 May 2008

FINANCIAL TIMES May 3 2008

Crude recovers ground after Turkish attacks

By Chris Flood

Commodity markets struggled for traction this week as uncertainty over the outlook for the dollar before the Federal Reserve meeting on Wednesday led to a reluctance among traders to open new positions. Oil hit a record \$119.93 a barrel on Monday as the strike at the Grange-mouth refinery in Scotland grabbed the headlines but a more important supply squeeze came from Nigeria, where about 40 per cent of crude production was shut due to attacks by militants and a strike affecting ExxonMobil, the country's top foreign oil producer.

The pause signalled by the Fed in cutting US interest rates further bolstered the dollar and weighed on oil, which sank to a low of \$110.30 on Thursday.

However, crude rallied strongly yesterday after Turkish warplanes attacked Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq.

Nymex June West Texas Intermediate settled up \$3.80 at \$116.32 a barrel while ICE June Brent closed \$4.06 higher at \$114.56 a barrel yesterday.

Gold fell 3.3 per cent to \$855.80 a troy ounce this week, sinking to a four-month low of \$845 yesterday,

under pressure from investors who sold holdings in gold exchange-traded funds, which encouraged short-term momentum players to open bets on further price weakness. Holding the \$850 support level could prove crucial to sentiment as this was the historic price peak, which lasted from January 1980 until gold breached the \$1,000 mark earlier this year.

In base metals, the copper conundrum continued, with the red metal torn between weak Chinese buying interest due to high prices and supply disruptions in Chile, where strikes are affecting Codelco, the world's largest producer.

Copper fell 1.8 per cent to \$8,415 a tonne this week.

In agricultural markets, wet, cold weather has delayed the planting of the US corn crop, which has fallen well behind schedule.

Further delays will reduce this year's crop yields and farmers are hoping for a favourable break in the weather. CBOT May corn rose 5.8 per cent to \$6.11 a bushel this week.

CBOT May soybeans slipped 2.5 per cent to \$12.92 a bushel on expectations that the government in Argentina and farmers would reach agreement over new export taxes, which led to strikes earlier this year.

AP Photos

Iraqi team discusses militant aid with Iran

From news reports

BAGHDAD: Several senior Shiite Iraqi leaders met with officials in Tehran on Thursday to discuss their concerns that Iran was arming and financing militias in Iraq.

An Iraqi official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to release the information, said the delegation would present the Iranian government with material that implicated the elite Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guard.

The delegation was expected to meet with the supreme religious leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to discuss the issue and stress that continuing fighting between Shiite extremists and U.S. and Iraqi forces were threatening political gains by Shiites.

A member of the delegation, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the delegation had already met with the commander of the Quds Force, Ghassem Soleimani, and showed "him all the evidence." He did not share further information, but said a second meeting with Soleimani was expected to take place Friday.

The Quds Force is believed to operate overseas, helping to create the militant Hezbollah group in 1982 in Lebanon and to arm Bosnian Muslims during the Balkan wars.

Iraqi officials, including Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, have traveled to Iran, but this appeared to be the first time that a delegation had been dispatched by Maliki to discuss reports of Iran's intervention in Iraq.

U.S. officials supported the trip, but portrayed it as Maliki's idea. One U.S. official described the Iraqis' concern about Iran's role as "the silver lining" to recent fighting between Shiite militias and Iraqi and U.S. security forces in Basra and in the Sadr City area of Baghdad, a militia stronghold.

The members of the delegation were chosen by Maliki, who went out of his way in an interview Wednesday to stress his independence.

"I have never been the man of Iran, and I told America that I'm not the man of America in Iraq," he said in an interview on the news channel Al Arabiya.

Information about the trip was closely held because of the sensitivity of the relationship between the countries. Sadiq al-Rikabi, a senior political adviser to Maliki, said all issues would be on the table.

Some officials said the Iraqi delegation might meet with Moktada al-Sadr, the cleric whose Madhi army has been involved in attacks on U.S. and Iraqi troops, and who is now thought to be staying in Iran. But that was denied by an aide to Sadr and by officials linked to the delegation.

In recent weeks, President George W. Bush and other U.S. officials have complained about what they say is a growing Iranian role in arming, training and fi-

nancing antigovernment Shiite militias. Iraqi military officials said their forces discovered a large cache of Iranian-made arms in Basra several weeks ago, in the course of the Maliki government's offensive against militia groups there.

Some of those munitions had markings indicating they were made this year, according to U.S. military officials. The Green Zone in Baghdad, which is the seat of the Iraqi government and the site of the U.S. Embassy, has regularly come under fire from Iranian-made rockets. (AP, IHT)

■ Bombs hit wedding convoy

The Iraqi police said Thursday that a double suicide bombing struck a wedding convoy, killing at least 30 people and wounding 65, The Associated Press reported.

The attacks occurred in the town of Balad Ruz, northeast of Baghdad. There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Earlier Thursday, a car bomb aimed at a U.S. patrol in Baghdad killed a U.S. soldier and nine Iraqi civilians. At least 26 people were wounded in that attack, the police and military officials said.

The explosion occurred at about 9:15 a.m. in a crowded commercial area in eastern Baghdad, police officials said. The U.S. military said a soldier died of wounds sustained in the blast. Three women and a child were among the nine Iraqis killed in the attack, the police said.

First lady of Iraq escapes bombing

From news reports

BAGHDAD: The first lady of Iraq narrowly escaped death on Sunday when a roadside bomb exploded near her convoy in central Baghdad, the president's office said.

Hiro Ibrahim Ahmed, the wife of President Jalal Talabani, was headed to the National Theater to attend a cultural festival when her motorcade was hit

in the Karrada district of Baghdad, the president's office said.

It was not clear if she was the target or if it was a random bombing. She was not hurt, but four bodyguards were wounded, the president's office added.

The attack on the motorcade came as U.S. troops killed 18 Shiite extremists in unrelenting street battles in the capital's Shiite militia strongholds on Sunday. The military said it used drones and Bradley fighting vehicles against the militants in several clashes in Shiite militia strongholds in Sadr City, Shula and New Baghdad.

Also Sunday, the U.S. military said that 11 insurgents of Al Qaeda were killed over the weekend in central and northern Iraq.

U.S. troops killed nine Qaeda insurgents, including three who were wearing suicide vests, in a clash Sunday near Lake Thar Thar in the predominantly Sunni Salahuddin province northwest of Baghdad, the military said. Two other

Qaeda insurgents were killed in Samarra north of Baghdad on Saturday, it said.

The U.S. military also said Sunday that a powerful roadside bomb killed four marines Friday in the deadliest attack in months in the former Qaeda stronghold of western Anbar Province. No details of the incident were released.

In other violence, gunmen shot and killed an Iraqi reporter Sunday after hauling her out of a taxi in Mosul, a notoriously violent city in northern Iraq where journalists are often targeted and live in fear of their lives.

The police said the reporter, Serwa Abdul-Wahab, was on her way to work when gunmen forced her out of a taxi in east Mosul, 390 kilometers, or 240 miles, north of Baghdad, and shot her in the head.

A colleague, who declined to be named for fear of being attacked, said she had received a text message on her phone three weeks earlier warning her to stop reporting or she would be killed. (Reuters, AP)

May 4, 2008

Los Angeles Times

Kurds dispute toll in Turkey's airstrikes in Iraq

The military says 150 rebels were killed, but the guerrillas say six died. Villagers previously displaced by cross-border fighting are again caught in crossfire.

By Asso Ahmed and Tina Susman, Special to The Times

SHIRWE HASSO, IRAQ -- As Turkey's military on Saturday claimed it had killed 150 Kurdish separatists in airstrikes in northern Iraq and a rebel spokesman disputed the account, those caught in the crossfire were struggling to survive in tent cities and even caves.

Turkey's military said a series of airstrikes ending Friday had hit 43 targets and killed at least 150 "terrorists" in its most aggressive offensive since its ground incursion in February.

A spokesman for the separatists, who operate from mountain bases along the Turkish and Iranian borders, scoffed at the claim.

"I affirm that their airplanes have bombed some of our sites in the mountains in the last days, but they were empty ones as our fighters are moving continuously in the mountains from one place to another," Zagros Bokani said.

He said six rebels died in the latest attacks.

Bokani represents an Iranian Kurdish rebel group, the Party for Free Life in Kurdistan, which is allied with the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK. Both groups are fighting for an autonomous Kurdish state.

Since fall, Turkey has staged occasional incursions into the Qandil mountains. Rarely is it possible to

confirm either side's accounts of the fighting because of the remoteness of the region, but civilians living in the rugged mountains have been displaced.

The United States considers the PKK a terrorist organization but says it has urged Turkey to avoid hitting civilian areas in its bombardments. But the people living



in an encampment in the Shirwe Hasso region said they were caught in the middle.

On Friday, Owaz Jamal was singing in a low voice while sewing a dress for her 6-year-old daughter in her neatly kept tent. She said they had fled the border village of Rezga, about 35 miles away, because of the cross-border airstrikes and artillery.

Jamal and others living in this cluster of 200 tents said Iran as well as Turkey had been bombarding the region. Both countries have Kurdish populations agitating for autonomy.

"We're staying close to our old village and the mountains so we can keep an eye on them, and keep up hopes of returning to them," said Jamal, who cares for two daughters and a son.

She recalled life in Rezga as simple and carefree. Summers were spent in the mountains tending to their sheep. Winters were spent mostly inside, staying warm.

That has changed, she said.

"Having our homes destroyed, and being on the run, has become part of our lives," Jamal said.

Khaja Rasoul was carrying firewood to prepare food for her family of nine.

"We are tired of living like this," she said. "Each time we build something or gather some money, it is incinerated by fire from bombs, and we go back to square one."

As she spoke, columns of smoke could be seen rising from what villagers said were the remains of a Party for Free Life building, which they said had been bombed.

Los Angeles Times

May 4 2008

IRAQ: The Kurds struggle, inside a tent city

—Asso Ahmed in Kurdistan

She was singing in a low voice while sewing a frock for her little girl, Tavga Ahmed, who stood quietly at her side. Home for the girl and her mother, Owaz Jamal, is a tent, one of about 200 erected in a remote mountainous area of Iraq near the Iranian border.

This tent city was hastily established after the latest round of air strikes from Turkish forces sent residents of Rezga, about 35 miles away, fleeing for safety. Most left everything behind — their livestock, their clothes, sometimes even their money. It is a life many have become accustomed to as the tensions between Kurdish separatists operating from bases in the mountains lead to clashes with Turkish troops.

In Rezga, people say they also are bombarded by Iranian munitions. Both Iran and Turkey are fighting Kurdish rebels who want a separate autonomous state.

The latest fighting erupted Thursday and Friday, and Turkey's military claimed Saturday that it had killed 150 rebels. The rebels scoff at that. Civilians don't know how many people have died on either side. They just know that they are caught in the middle of this war, which has been going on since 1984.

"We have many livestock that we need to tend. We can't take them to the mountains," said Muhammad Khorsheed. "We can't even work our farms, and we don't know who to complain to." He sees no end to the conflict.

Tensions began rising last fall after Kurdish strikes on Turkish troops over the border. Turkey responded by massing troops along the frontier and staging occasional air strikes. Then, it staged a surprise ground invasion in February.

The United States considers the main Kurdish rebel group a terrorist organization and says Turkey has the right to defend itself, but it also doesn't want to see northern Iraq — the calmest part of the country — destabilized.

For civilians living in this region, it's too late for that. Saman Haidar returns to his village daily from the



tent camp to tend to his livestock. On his last visit a couple of days ago, he described "horrifying air strikes."

"We entered a small shelter which we had built awhile ago. We turned off all our lights," Haidar said. The experience scared him so much that he has given up returning again. When he came to the camp, he brought his livestock with him, in hopes they'd be safe there until the problem was solved.

Photos by Asso Ahmed. From top: Owaz Jamal, with daughter Tavga Ahmed, sews inside the family's tent; Tavga Ahmed washes dishes; about 200 families live in this tent camp; a woman who gave her name as Nashmel scours a pot.



Mystery of a killer elite fuels unrest in Turkey

Arrest of 47 people over alleged coup plot sparks fears of hidden ultra-right network

Jason Burke in Istanbul The Observer

It has the elements of a thriller: a shadowy group of right-wing former soldiers, a mafia don, extremist lawyers and politicians; hand-grenades in a rucksack; plots to kill the Prime Minister and a Nobel-prize winning writer; allegedly planted evidence and falsified wire taps.

Even the name of the villains - the Ergenekon network - has an airport paperback flavour, and the stakes involved are high: the stability of one of the world's most strategically important countries. This highly charged political reality is splitting Turkey.

In the coming days the Ergenekon investigation will reach its climax. According to newspaper reports, a long-awaited indictment will be issued by the state prosecutor. After successive waves of arrests, 47 people are in custody. They include senior figures in the ultra-right-wing Workers' Party, a dozen retired senior army officers, journalists and a lawyer accused of launching legal attacks that drove Nobel award-winning writer Orhan Pamuk from his homeland.

Crimes being blamed on Ergenekon include a series of murderous bomb blasts, a grenade attack on a newspaper, the murder of an Italian bishop and the killing last year of Turkish Armenian journalist Hrant Dink - all aimed, investigators believe, at creating a climate of terror and chaos propitious to a military coup that would depose Turkey's moderate Islamist government.

The coup attempt has revealed deep divisions in Turkey's 73 million-strong population over the country's identity: pro-European or anti-European, fiercely nationalist, ethnically homogeneous and militaristic, or globalised and pro-Western, more or less Islamic, more or less sunk in historical bitterness and dark conspiracy theories.

'The cleavage is deep: every institution, every social class, everybody is divided,' said Professor Murat Belge of Bigli University, Istanbul, an analyst. 'I am deeply apprehensive about what is going on now and what might happen.'

But for Mehmet Demirek, a lawyer defending a colleague accused of being a key member of Ergenekon, the allegations are 'imaginary'. 'There is not a shred of truth in them,' he said. 'This is 100

per cent political. It has all been cooked up by the government and by the imperialist powers, the CIA, Mossad and the Jewish lobby and the European Union to eliminate Turkish nationalism. There is no such thing as Ergenekon.' His imprisoned client, Kemal Kerincsiz, told The Observer in an interview prior to his arrest he was a 'patriot fighting the disintegration of the nation'.

For Fethiye Cetin, a lawyer representing Hrant Dink's family, Ergenekon has 'existed for years'. 'A small part of what has been previously hidden is being exposed. Call it the "deep state".'

An investigation was launched by state prosecutors after 27 hand-grenades, said to be the make used by the military, were found in a home in a rundown part of Istanbul last June. Investigators claim that they later uncovered an underground network dedicated to extremist nationalist agitation.

Wire taps led to further finds of explosives, weapons and documents listing security arrangements of senior political and military figures and death lists. The papers supposedly proving Ergenekon - the name of a mythic mountain in Asia where the ancestors of the Turkic peoples escaped the Mongols - was set up in 1999 as a clandestine and violent organisation aimed of maintaining a reactionary, purist vision of a strong, militaristic Turkey, the heritage, the extremists believed, of the founder of the nation, Kemal Atatürk.

The plotters tap 'into a psyche that is based on a new and extreme nationalism', said Cengiz Candar, one of Turkey's most prominent journalists. 'The idea is that to preserve Turkey it is necessary and legitimate to resist in any way. And anyone who is pro-European, liberal, who argues for increased rights for minorities and so on is a traitor.'

According to Candar, this new nationalism is the result of a coincidence of factors: the difficulties of Turkey's accession to the European Union, soul-searching over nation identity generated by the debate on Europe, the emergence of a strong, semi-autonomous Kurdish state in post-Saddam Iraq with all the potential implications that has for Turkey's large Kurdish population, and, perhaps most importantly, the continuing electoral success of the AKP, the Jus-

tice and Development party, the moderate Islamist party led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan to power in 2002. 'With no way of ousting them through democratic means, other means become attractive to the extremist nationalists. This country has a long tradition of such actions,' said Candar.

Turkey's political history has been marked by interventions by the army, each preceded by a period of violent instability and each justified by the need to preserve the constitution and the nation. The repeated electoral success of the AKP, its social and economic policies, its pro-European, pro-free market stance, the growth of newly wealthy, religiously conservative middle classes who vote for Erdogan and his colleagues and the party's break with Turkey's fiercely secular ideology - all threaten the nation's powerful military and bureaucratic establishment.

A legal bid to ban the party - on the grounds that it wants to impose Sharia law on Turkey and thus overturn the constitution - is one tactic, AKP party loyalists say. Violence and the activities of Ergenekon is another. 'How long are these people going to keep their power when it is incompatible with a European, fully democratic Turkey?' asked Belge. 'And how big is Ergenekon? Who are they? How high does it go?'

No official military spokesman would comment but General Haldun Somazturk, who retired three years ago, told The Observer 'the Ergenekon group is trivial, barely worthy of attention', saying that though 'it was possible' a few military officers might have become involved in the group, the vast majority of Turkish soldiers were 'committed to maintaining democracy'.

Somazturk, who said that his own views 'reflected those of most senior soldiers', insisted 'there are far more grave problems facing Turkey than a handful of right-wing crazies'. Instead, he said, it was the government that worried him. 'The AKP are a concern. There is no such thing as moderate Islam. Either a government is influenced by religion or it isn't. And if it is, then it is not secular and not democratic,' he said. 'We want to move democracy forward, they want to move it back and we are approaching a point of no return.'

In a rundown working-class suburb of Istanbul, far from the tourist sights of the historic centre, the deputy chairman of the Nationalist Action Party in the city, Nazmi Celenk, made an effort to show his party's moderate side. 'In Turkey we are on the front line of the clash of civilisations,' he said. 'We are the natural allies of America and Britain in this region. Our future is in Europe - but not necessarily in the European Union.'

Yet Celenk was critical of last week's reform of Turkey's strict rules on 'insulting Turkishness', pushed through parliament in the face of fierce resistance from the 70 deputies from his own party. If he was in power, Celenk said, the tight laws on freedom of expression would be maintained. And, if he had the power, he would invade Syria and split the state between Turkey and Iraq. The violent Kurdish activism in the south-east of his country would be solved 'in 24 hours'.

A street away, a group of mechanics and local shopkeepers played backgammon. They said they were worried by rising crime, drug use and low wages, but would not vote for the nationalists. 'They try and cause fights between us to get votes,' Hikmet, a bus owner, said.

Fethiye Cetin, the Dink family lawyer, is still optimistic despite the tensions. She discovered her own minority roots - an Armenian grandmother - at the age of 25. 'This period is the peak of aggressive nationalism in Turkey, but there is still peace,' she said in her small office on a hill above the blue waters of the Sea of Marmara. 'But everyone always focuses on the negative side and never on the tens of millions who live together without any trouble at all.'

Victim of the plot?

Hrant Dink was a 52-year-old journalist, assassinated in January 2007. As co-founder of Agos, a newspaper published in both Turkish and Armenian, he became a prominent member of the Armenian minority in Turkey and pushed for Turkish-Armenian reconciliation and human rights.

Dink was shot in Istanbul by Ogün Samast, a 17-year old Turkish nationalist. 100,000 mourners turned out to Dink's funeral to chant: 'We are all Armenians'.

TODAYS ZAMAN

May 05, 2008

'Stick' for PKK and 'carrot' for Barzani

Istanbul Today's Zaman

Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani remains committed to rapprochement in relations with neighboring Turkey, his remarks published yesterday show, despite ongoing Turkish military operations in northern Iraq against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Barzani, president of the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq, said while receiving a group of lawyers from the southeastern province of Diyarbakir that the PKK must stop violence and asserted that the Iraqi Kurds wanted dialogue with Ankara, private NTV reported yesterday. Kurds, he said, should not resort to violence either in Iraq or anywhere else, and, he added in reference to the PKK, Kurds must change their views on violence because it is no longer a viable means to achieving goals.

The Kurdish leader's remarks echo similar statements he has made in recent weeks. Last week, Turkey's special envoy to Iraq, Murat Özçelik, and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's chief foreign policy advisor, Ahmet Davutoğlu, held the first high-level direct meeting with Nechirvan Barzani, the prime minister of the Kurdish administration, in Baghdad. Observers say Massoud Barzani's recent remarks calling for dialogue and signaling readiness for good neighborly ties were one of the factors paving the way for the landmark meeting. Turkey severed dialogue with Iraqi Kurds in the aftermath of the US-led Iraq war in 2003, saying they support the PKK, which attacks Turkish targets from bases in northern Iraq.

The nascent dialogue with the Iraqi Kurds comes as the military continues to hit PKK targets in the Kurdish-run Iraqi north. About 150 terrorists, including senior members of the terrorist group, were killed in air strikes on PKK targets in the Kandil Mountains in northern Iraq May 1-2, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) announced on Saturday. Dozens of PKK targets, including shelters and other logistics facilities, were also destroyed in the strikes.

The operation is the eighth confirmed aerial strike on the PKK in northern Iraq since Dec. 16, when the first cross-border operation on the terrorist group was carried out. The operations have the backing of the United States, which

provides intelligence and airspace clearance for the Turkish fighter jets.

Iraqi Kurds, who have previously vowed to consider any attack by Turkey in their territory as an act of war, have also not come up with any serious criticism of the Turkish operations, apparently under pressure from the United States to take action to marginalize the PKK in northern Iraq. In fact, the first direct talks between Ankara and the Iraqi Kurds coincided with the aerial strikes on the PKK's Kandil bases.

This is a serious sign that the PKK, which has poisoned ties between Ankara and the Kurds since 2003, may no longer be an obstacle blocking dialogue. Turkish officials said before the key meeting with Nechirvan Barzani last week that Ankara had already revised its policy toward Iraq by taking the PKK presence out of the equilibrium -- and that it wants to do the same thing in regard to ties with the Kurdish administration in the country's north.

Heeding Turkish complaints, the Iraqi government labeled the PKK as a terrorist group and pledged to cooperate with Ankara against it, opening a space for closer dialogue in many areas, most notably in the field of energy. Iraqi Kurds have stopped short of calling the PKK a terrorist group, but they have gone a long way in saying that they are not welcome in northern Iraq and that the PKK must halt its violence against Turkey.

Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, who met with Turkish leaders last week in Ankara, noted in remarks published yesterday that Turkey's stance toward Iraq had changed, seeing a shift from a policy based on the status of the disputed city of Kirkuk and the fate of Turkmens to a new approach that places the focus on social and economic ties. Both issues deepened mistrust between Ankara and the Iraqi Kurds, but tension eased significantly when the Kurds agreed to the postponement of a planned referendum on the fate of Kirkuk, which they claim belongs to them.

According to al-Hashemi, efforts of the Kurdish leadership in northern Iraq also helped establish better ties between Turkey and Iraq. He said the Kurds acted "sensibly and impartially" in regard to the presence of the PKK in their territory, Iraqi newspaper Al-Sabah reported.

PKK leader may have been killed in air strike

Murat Karayılan, the acting head of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), may have been killed in air strikes by the military last



week, according to Turkish media reports.

The military said on Saturday that it killed more than 150 members of the PKK in air strikes on the group's targets in the Kandil Mountains in northern Iraq on May 1 and 2. All the targets determined ahead of the operation were destroyed in the attack, the military said, stressing that "places where a terrorist who is claiming to rule the terrorist organization frequently stays" were also among the targets that were destroyed. The statement did not identify the PKK member in question, but newspapers widely reported yesterday that it could be Karayılan. The Hürriyet daily said military authorities had received reports that Karayılan was among the dead. The military said senior PKK members might have been killed in the strikes. "It was established that more than 150 terrorists were rendered ineffective and the operation caused a big panic among the terror organization's members," the statement said.

Responding to questions on reports of Karayılan's death at a press conference with his Macedonian counterpart, Branko Crvenkovski, in Skopje yesterday, President Abdullah Gül declined to comment, saying only that the military's operations do not target civilians and that Turkey will continue to determinedly fight terrorism. *Istanbul Today's Zaman with wires*

Chicago Tribune May 5, 2008

Kurdish rebels threaten suicide attacks against US interests in Iraq, Turkey

By YAHYA BARZANJI Associated Press Writer

QANDIL MOUNTAINS, Iraq - Kurdish rebels could launch suicide attacks against American interests to punish the U.S. for sharing intelligence with Turkey after Turkey bombed rebel bases, a spokeswoman for a wing of a rebel group warned.

Turkey's military said more than 150 Kurdish rebels were killed in Friday's air strikes against bases of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, on Mount Qandil on the border of Iran and Iraq. Peritan Derseem, a senior official of the rebel group's Iranian wing, PEJAK, claimed that only six people were killed in latest Turkish strikes.

The PKK fights for autonomy in Turkey's southeast and also has a wing fighting for Kurdish rights in Iran.

Derseem blamed the United States for helping Turkey in an interview late Sunday.

She said some rebels want to join suicide squads to avenge the deaths of their comrades but that "combatants are under the control of the organization," which she



Fighters of anti Iranian Kurdish rebel group PEJAK sit at their camp in Qandil mountains in Iraq, Sunday, May 4, 2008. AP Photo/Yahya Ahmed

said is against such attacks. That may change, Derseem hinted.

"We have changed our stand toward the United States government and we are standing against them now," she said. "Maybe some day ... individual combatants might launch suicide attacks inside Iraq and Turkey, and even against American interests."

Kurdish rebels have staged several suicide attacks against Turkish targets in the past in Turkey.

The United States has labeled the rebel group a terrorist organization and supports Turkey's fight against the group. The conflict has killed nearly 40,000 since it began in 1984.

Derseem claimed that her group was acting independently from the main branch of the PKK.

"We have common goals with the PKK and the two parties follow the principles of Chairman Abdullah Ocalan," who is imprisoned on a prison island near Istanbul, Turkey. "But we have our own decision making."

The Turkish military has launched several air assaults on Kurdish rebel targets in northern Iraq in recent months. In February, it staged a ground offensive that lasted eight days. Since then, clashes between rebels and Turkish troops have erupted along Turkey's border with Iraq.

Until the most recent air raid, the military had not announced an operation that penetrated into Iraq as far as Mount Qandil.

"They want to annihilate us. But we will not surrender," said Derseem. "We have been hiding in caves and nearby mountains."

The rebels said the Turkish jets fired more than 50 missiles at the site and demolished some buildings, including a meeting hall, a library and a media center.

Iranian artillery units have also been shelling Mount Qandil in recent weeks, Derseem said. Craters said to be left by Iranian shelling were visible on a mountain path leading to the rebel camp.

Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) Press Release

7 May, 2008

PJAK DO NOT WORK AGAINST US OR IRAQI INTERESTS

"The media news articles which claim that PJAK will carry out suicide attacks against Iraq and the USA interests in the region are untrue and fabricated" - Official PJAK Press Release

Press release

On Thursday, 1 May 2008, Turkish military warplanes heavily bombed the Qandil region in Southern Kurdistan/Northern Iraq. The attacks carried out by 30 to 40 Turkish warplanes for three hours, from 11:00 pm on the first of May, to 2:00 am on the second of May.

They bombed the Press Central Unit of PJAK as well the villages of Rezge, Marado, Shnawe, Zergelêsh and Qelatukan. These attacks caused major physical and economic damage to the Kurdish civilian and their properties. In the bomb attacks six members of PJAK, four of them journalists from the Press Central Unit have become martyrs. They are: Diyako Bakhtiyari known as Herish Amed From Mahabad, Kardo Eliyali known as Arghesh Bawer From Piranshahr, Behjat Takin Alp known as Firat Chele, Jamal Rasuli known as Armanj Mariwan From Mariwan, Memed Guren known as Wedad Amed From Amed, Rahim Borna known as Raman Cawid From Mahabad

Hundreds of families who live under difficult circumstances have been intimidated by the air raids. A school has been destroyed and the teachers have left the villages, thus the children are now without school and teachers. Hundreds of livestock have been killed, causing serious economical damage to the villages. On top of this, the regional government and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) have imposed an embargo on the region and closed it off to journalists.

The attacks occurred shortly after a high level Iranian delegation visited Turkey in April and signed a security and economic agreement between the two countries to cooperate against PJAK and the Kurdish people in both countries.

While Turkey shouldered the role of the actual attacker, the assaults were the result of an agreement between Iran, Turkey and Iraq and of American intelligence sharing. It is important to mention that on the day of the attacks a Turkish delegation, led by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Chief Adviser Ahmet Davutoglu was in Iraq and at the same time the deputy president of Iraq, Tariq Al-Hashimi, was in Turkey for diplomatic talks. This means that a new phase of attacks against the Kurdish people has started, which will lead to more turmoil in the region. The role of the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government is submissive to the Turkish policies against the Kurds.

It is necessary to find out why the headquarter of PJAK has been bombed. Why the intelligence provided by the United States used in favour of the Iranian state? And why does the Turkish regime militarily targets Kurdish organisations of another part of Kurdistan? We ask the United States and the Kurdistan Regional Government to give an explanation for this, or they shall lose all credibility in our eyes. The USA tells the world that it has a strategic conflict with the theocratic regime in Iran. But when the Kurdish people in Iran wages a sacrificing, modern struggle for the democratisation of the country, they provide the means for an attack on them!

Meanwhile 25 bombs that did not explode have been found. The writings on the bombs suggest that they contain chemical weapons. They are being examined; the results from independent scientific laboratories will be published soon.

In addition to these Turkish barbaric attacks the Associated Press, hired journalists and other press agencies are publishing misinformation about PJAK. These media news articles which claim that PJAK will carry out suicide attacks against Iraq and the USA interests in the region are untrue and fabricated, they are against PJAK principles, policies and democratic values. We ask the AP and other press agencies to clarify and correct their wrong information about PJAK and the Kurdish people.

Clarification:

1. PJAK is based mainly inside Eastern Kurdistan and Iran, not in Iraq. It depends on the support of the Kurdish and Iranian people. It is a democratic national movement for the Kurds in Iran. Its aim's are to unite the Kurdish and Iranian opposition, to change the oppressive Islamic regime in Iran and to establish a free democratic con-federal system for the Kurds and the Iranian peoples. "Changing of the regime to a democratic system in which all citizens; Iranians, Kurds, Azaries, Baluchs, Turkomans and Arabs and all other ethnic groups within the framework of the democratic system, can govern themselves."

2. PJAK is against any suicide or terrorists attacks. It adheres to the roles of the United Nations human rights declaration. It is in self defense and does not launch any military cross border attacks from Iraq. All of the operations inside Iran are in self defense and to protect our people from the Iranian security and revolutionary Guards forces continues atrocities and forced assimilation.

3. PJAK is not a rebels organization. PJAK is a political massive national democratic movement of the Kurds in Iran. PJAK strategy is to use all form of struggle; political, social, economic, nonviolence civil disobedience, human rights, NGOS and to carry arms in self defense etc.. "PJAK is always continuing the work and struggle needed to achieve an increase in the level of intelligence, a democratic organization of people as well as practice of the democratic values, to achieve a radical type of democracy and to be able to launch a system of democratic confederacy in eastern Kurdistan."

4. PJAK is a self sufficient and independent organization. It depends on the Kurds and Iranian people support, contrary to the Iranian dictatorial regime misinformation campaign that PJAK getting help from the USA and the west. We again declare to the public opinion that PJAK did not receive any help from any country including the USA. We depend on the support of our people and on our organization.

The Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) calls upon the United States of America, Iraq, the European Union and the European states to realize that the path to security and democracy in the Middle East leads through a change of the Iranian theocratic regime. Therefore a positive approach to the Kurdish question and the demands and views of Iran's peoples and the peoples of the Middle East is necessary. Oligarchic, theocratic and reactionary states cannot be force of stability and cannot meet the demands of the peoples. At the same time these states undermine global security by setting up and funding fundamentalist groups.

It is time to put stop to the atrocities and human rights violations of the Turkish and Iranian Islamic oppressive regimes.

We call upon the international community to help the Kurds and the peoples of Iran in their struggle for democracy, freedom and peace.

Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) - Coordination Committee

L'EXPRESS

04 mai 2008

Irak: l'épouse du président Talabani échappe à un attentat

BAGDAD (AFP) -

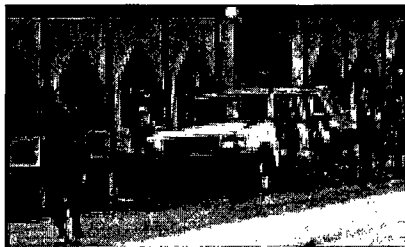
L'épouse du président irakien Jalal Talabani a échappé dimanche à un attentat dans le centre de Bagdad, où 13 miliciens chiites ont été tués par l'armée américaine dans de nouveaux combats.

Le convoi de Mme Hero Ibrahim Ahmed, 60 ans, a été visé par une bombe près du Théâtre national, dans le quartier de Karrada. Elle a échappé à la déflagration mais quatre de ses gardes du corps ont été légèrement blessés.

"Une bombe a explosé au passage du convoi de Mme Hero Ibrahim Ahmed alors qu'elle se rendait dimanche matin au Théâtre national pour assister à un festival culturel", a indiqué un communiqué de la présidence irakienne.

Auparavant, Adel Kawiss, chargé de la protection de l'épouse du président avait indiqué à l'AFP que l'explosion s'était produite vers 10H00 (07H00 GMT), et que le dernier véhicule du convoi avait été touché.

Mme Talabani, âgée de 60 ans, est une femme d'affaires active dans le domaine de la communication. Elle est la fille d'Ibrahim Ahmed, l'un des fondateurs du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK).



Dans le même temps, le commandement américain a annoncé que treize miliciens chiites avaient été tués depuis samedi soir dans des accrochages dans Sadr City, bastion du chef radical antiméricain Moqtada Sadr.

Des combats meurtriers opposent depuis la fin mars dans ce quartier immense du nord-est de Bagdad, des unités américaines et irakiennes à des miliciens de l'armée du Mahdi, de Moqtada Sadr.

Les combats à Sadr City ont fait plus de 900 morts en avril sur un total de 1.073 Irakiens tués sur l'ensemble du pays, selon des chiffres officiels irakiens.

L'armée américaine a également annoncé que quatre soldats américains ont été tués vendredi par l'explosion d'une mine dans la province d'al-Anbar, dans l'attaque la plus meurtrière depuis des mois dans l'ouest de l'Irak.

Al-Anbar, la plus grande des 18 provinces irakiennes, fut longtemps la plus dangereuse du pays pour les militaires américains avant de devenir l'une des plus sûres.

Elle a été stabilisée à la fin 2007 lorsque les tribus locales se sont ralliées aux Américains, moyennant finance, pour s'opposer aux extrémistes d'Al-Qaïda en Irak.

Ces quatre décès portent à 4.071 au total le bilan des militaires américains tués en Irak depuis le début des opérations en mars 2003, selon un décompte de l'AFP à partir des chiffres du site internet indépendant icasulaties.org.

Par ailleurs, le gouvernement irakien a rejeté dimanche des allégations, soutenues par les Etats-Unis, selon lesquelles les miliciens chiites radicaux recevaient un soutien iranien, et notamment des armes.

"Nous n'avons pas ce genre de preuves", a indiqué le porte-parole du gouvernement Ali



Dabbag, interrogé sur des saisies d'armes iraniennes évoquées par le commandement américain en Irak.

Le commandement américain dénonce régulièrement l'action des "groupes spéciaux", des extrémistes chiites qui sont, selon lui, entraînés, financés et armés par des services iraniens.

L'Iran a assuré soutenir les efforts du gouvernement irakien pour désarmer les milices en Irak mais lui a déconseillé l'usage de la force.

"Nous soutenons les efforts du gouvernement irakien pour désarmer les milices armées mais nous lui conseillons de ne pas confronter (par la force, ndr) la population", a déclaré un responsable iranien ayant requis l'anonymat.

En outre, une journaliste freelance irakienne a été tuée en plein jour et en pleine rue, dimanche à Mossoul (nord).

Tharwat Abdel Wahab, 30 ans, se rendait en taxi à son travail quand elle a été interceptée par un groupe d'hommes armés, qui lui ont alors tiré plusieurs balles dans la tête, selon la police.

L'Observatoire irakien de la liberté de la presse avait indiqué vendredi que 235 employés de presse irakiens avaient été tués dans le pays depuis mars 2003.

LE TEMPS

5 mai 2008

Ankara préparerait une nouvelle incursion en Irak

TURQUIE-IRAK. L'aviation turque a pilonné des positions de la rébellion kurde du PKK

Delphine Nerbollier, Istanbul

Deux mois après son intervention terrestre dans le nord de l'Irak, l'armée turque a relancé les opérations, aériennes cette fois, contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Il y a dix jours, l'aviation a mené deux raids dans les montagnes nord-irakiennes où se trouve le quartier général de cette organisation qualifiée de terroriste par Ankara, Washington et Bruxelles.

Samedi, l'état-major turc a confirmé avoir de nouveau pilonné la zone dans la nuit de jeudi à vendredi, durant trois heures. Cette fois, ce sont les monts Qandil, situés à la frontière de l'Iran, qui ont été visés. Plus de 150 «terroristes» y auraient été tués, dont certains haut gradés. Ces raids «réussis» auraient atteint leurs cibles et créé «une grande

panique» au sein de l'organisation. «La lutte contre le terrorisme a eu des résultats très positifs cette année, a commenté le numéro deux de l'armée turque, le général Basbug. L'organisation terroriste est dans un état de confusion et de trouble.»

Le son de cloche est toutefois très différent du côté de la rébellion. Le PKK a démenti ce bilan de 150 morts et confirme uniquement la mort de six personnes, membres d'une autre faction kurde, le Pejak, qui vise l'Iran et non la Turquie.

Une fois encore, ces déclarations contradictoires sont impossibles à vérifier, la zone où se déroulent les attaques aériennes étant inaccessible. Néanmoins, les deux parties s'accordent à dire que ces opérations sont les plus importantes de l'année. Selon un chef du PKK, elles annoncent une nouvelle incursion terrestre turque dans le nord de l'Irak,

semblable à celle de février. L'armée en les moyens. En octobre dernier, le parlement l'a autorisée à traverser la frontière durant une année.

Dialogue avec les Kurdes d'Irak

Les choses bougent aussi au niveau diplomatique. Pour la première fois, une délégation turque a rencontré officiellement des représentants de l'administration kurde d'Irak, jeudi à Bagdad. Cette rencontre ouvre une brèche dans la diplomatie turque. Ankara a en effet refusé durant des années de dialoguer avec les Kurdes d'Irak, soupçonnés de soutenir le PKK et de vouloir à terme obtenir l'indépendance. La glace avait commencé à se briser en mars, avec la visite à Ankara du président irakien, Jalal Talabani, d'origine kurde.



ANKARA SALUE LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DU DIALOGUE AVEC LES KURDES D'IRAK

ANKARA, 5 mai 2008 (AFP) - Le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères Ali Babacan s'est félicité lundi du développement d'un dialogue entre Ankara et les Kurdes d'Irak mais a souligné que la poursuite de ce rapprochement dépendrait du soutien de ces derniers à la lutte contre les rebelles kurdes de Turquie.

Une rencontre entre des diplomates turcs et le Premier ministre de la région autonome kurde du nord de l'Irak, Nechirvan Barzani, a eu lieu la semaine dernière à Bagdad "dans une atmosphère extrêmement positive", a déclaré M. Babacan, indiquant qu'il s'agissait du premier contact direct depuis plusieurs années entre les deux parties.

"Il va y avoir un dialogue plus rapproché dans la période à venir à la fois avec le gouvernement central irakien et avec l'administration locale dans le nord sur des questions concernant la lutte contre le terrorisme, l'énergie et le commerce", a poursuivi le ministre, qui s'adressait à des journalistes.

"Naturellement, le niveau et la fréquence de ce dialogue seront étroite-

ment liés à la rhétorique concrète et aux actions qui seront entreprises en particulier dans la lutte contre le terrorisme", a-t-il ajouté.

Ankara a souvent accusé les Kurdes irakiens de tolérer sur leur territoire, voire de soutenir, les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui utilisent les montagnes du nord de l'Irak comme bases arrière pour leurs attaques dans le sud-est de la Turquie, à la population en majorité kurde.

Depuis la mi-décembre, l'armée turque a bombardé à plusieurs reprises des positions du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak où sont retranchés, selon Ankara, plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes.

Le dernier raid aérien, mené la semaine dernière, a fait plus de 150 morts dans les rangs des rebelles, selon l'état-major turc.

La Turquie a également lancé une opération terrestre d'une semaine en février dans cette région, une initiative critiquée par Bagdad et les Kurdes d'Irak.



DEUX REBELLES KURDES DU PKK ABATTUS DANS LE SUD-EST DE LA TURQUIE

ANKARA, 5 mai 2008 (AFP) - Deux rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont été tués dimanche lors de combats dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a affirmé lundi dans un communiqué l'état-major de l'armée turque.

Les deux rebelles ont été abattus dans la province de Sirnak par des unités chargées de la surveillance de la frontière alors qu'ils tentaient de pénétrer en Turquie depuis l'Irak voisin, indique le document, diffusé sur le site internet de l'état-major.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les

Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, se bat depuis 1984 pour l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes. Le conflit a fait plus de 37.000 morts.

Selon Ankara, quelque 2.000 rebelles se sont retranchés dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, qu'ils utilisent comme base arrière pour leurs opérations dans le sud-est anatolien.

Depuis décembre, l'armée turque a bombardé douze fois les positions du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak. Elle a également mené en février une opération terrestre d'une semaine dans cette région.



FRANCE: 14 KURDES POURSUIVIS POUR DES ATTENTATS CONTRE DES CIBLES TURQUES

PARIS, 6 mai 2008 (AFP) - Quatorze jeunes gens d'origine kurde, présumés proches du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), sont poursuivis en France pour des attentats contre des commerces et associations turcs, a-t-on appris mardi de sources judiciaires à la clôture de l'enquête.

Les jeunes gens sont inculpés et incarcérés notamment pour des faits de "destruction de biens par l'effet d'une substance explosive" et de "fabrication, détention et transport d'engins explosifs ou incendiaires", après des attentats commis en 2007 notamment à Bordeaux (sud-ouest) et près de Marseille (sud-est).

Ils sont également poursuivis pour "financement du terrorisme" et "association de malfaiteurs en relation avec une entreprise terroriste".

Ces jeunes, membres des "jeunesses apoïstes" - en référence au chef rebelle kurde emprisonné Abdullah Öcalan surnommé Apo - sont soupçonnés de s'être attaqués à une épicerie turque en mars 2007 et d'avoir lancé des cocktails Molotov les 23 et 24 avril 2007 contre un bar et une association culturelle turque à Bordeaux.

Ils sont également poursuivis pour des attaques similaires en avril-mai 2007 à Marignane et Port-de-Bouc, près de Marseille.

Certains de ces attentats avaient fait des blessés, parfois brûlés sérieusement.

Les inculpés disposent maintenant de trois mois pour demander d'éventuels actes complémentaires avant que le parquet ne prenne ses réquisitions. Le juge se prononcera ensuite sur un éventuel renvoi des mis en cause devant le tribunal.

Les rebelles du PKK ont pris les armes en 1984 contre le pouvoir central d'Ankara pour la création d'un Etat kurde indépendant dans le sud-est anatolien (peuplé majoritairement de Kurdes). Le PKK est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne.

Le conflit déclenché par Abdullah Öcalan, condamné à la prison à vie en Turquie où il est détenu depuis 1999, a fait environ 37.000 morts.



TURQUIE: 3 MORTS, 5 BLESSÉS LORS D'EXPLOSION DE MINES DANS LE SUD-EST

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 9 mai 2008 (AFP) - Trois personnes ont été tuées et cinq autres blessées vendredi lors d'explosion de mines survenues dans deux provinces du sud-est de la Turquie, théâtre de la rébellion des séparatistes kurdes.

Une première explosion s'est produite à Sason, dans la province de Batman, où un minibus transportant des villageois et des "gardiens de village", miliciens kurdes armés par l'Etat pour lutter contre le parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste), a sauté sur une mine, rapporte l'agence Anadolu.

Selon les autorités locales, la mine a été télécommandée à distance par des rebelles du PKK.

Dans un incident séparé à Siirt, une mine a également été activée à distance par des rebelles au passage d'un convoi militaire, blessant un soldat et un "gardien de village", a-t-on indiqué de source de sécurité locale.

Le PKK a régulièrement recours à des mines commandées à distance dans ses opérations contre les forces de sécurité.



9 MAI 2008

A Ankara, Jouyet rassure sur le processus d'adhésion

L'exercice tient du funambulisme. Alors que le président Sarkozy, rappelait, dans son interview télévisée du 24 avril, son opposition à toute future adhésion de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne « parce qu'elle n'est pas en Europe mais en Asie », Jean-Pierre Jouyet, le secrétaire d'Etat chargé des Affaires européennes, doit rassurer Ankara alors que Paris s'appête en juillet à présider l'UE pour six mois.

«Intérêt». «La France n'entend pas casser les négociations avec la Turquie et notre message est clair: la présidence française sera objective, impartiale et équilibrée vis-à-vis de la Turquie», a expliqué mardi et mercredi Jean-Pierre Jouyet, qui achevait dans la capitale turque une tournée de plusieurs mois des 26 partenaires de l'Union et des pays candidats. Il s'agissait de convaincre des interlocuteurs, certains que Paris est désormais leur principal opposant au sein de l'Union, que la présidence française défendrait « l'intérêt général des Vingt-Sept » et non la position française, car

«une présidence réussie est d'abord une présidence qui fait avancer la construction européenne». Sur le cas de la Turquie, il a même assuré à ses interlocuteurs que, «si les critères sont remplis, de nouveaux chapitres de négociations seront ouverts». L'enjeu porte toutefois sur des domaines mineurs.

« La présidence française [de l'Union européenne] sera objective, impartiale et équilibrée vis-à-vis de la Turquie. »

Jean-Pierre Jouyet, secrétaire d'Etat aux Affaires européennes

La mission n'en était pas moins difficile pour ce haut fonctionnaire, longtemps proche des socialistes, qui a accepté d'entrer dans le gouvernement pour relancer la construction européenne, notamment avec le traité simplifié finalement adopté à Lisbonne. Il n'a jamais caché non plus avoir – comme son ministre de tutelle, Bernard Kouchner – une position nettement différente de celle de l'UMP à l'égard de la Turquie. Le mes-

sage se résumait donc à rappeler une position commune a minima des Européens: «deux voies restent ouvertes» pour la Turquie, celle d'une adhésion pleine et entière, mais aussi celle d'une relation différente et privilégiée. Les autorités d'Ankara comme les élites économiques turques refu-

sent toute autre solution qu'«une adhésion pleine et entière».

«La Turquie doit rester dans le camp européen, car cela représente une garantie pour le processus de démocratisation et un levier pour les réformes mais, en même temps, il ne faut pas déstabiliser l'Union», explique Jouyet, soulignant le poids démographique de ce pays de 70 millions d'habitants, en écrasante majorité musulmans, dont le revenu est nettement inférieur à la moyenne communautaire. «Les arguments sur la capacité d'absorption de l'Union sont suffisamment sérieux pour qu'il ne soit pas besoin d'en rajouter», explique Jouyet. Nombre de Turcs

sont indignés par les amendements sur mesure présentés pendant le débat sur la réforme constitutionnelle par des parlementaires UMP afin d'imposer le recours au référendum pour le seul cas turc.

«Rive». L'autre grand enjeu était de rassurer Ankara sur l'Union pour la Méditerranée, projet de coopération réunissant d'un côté les Vingt-Sept et de l'autre les pays riverains du Sud. «Ce n'est pas un piège pour la Turquie ni un substitut aux négociations d'adhésion», a expliqué Jouyet, afin de convaincre les Turcs de participer au grand sommet du 13 juillet qui doit lancer ce chantier phare. Ankara réserve encore sa décision mais se dit intéressé. De par son poids économique, mais aussi par son rôle diplomatique de puissance régionale, la Turquie peut y jouer un rôle clef. D'où l'importance de convaincre Ankara. Fin diplomate, Jouyet a rappelé à ses interlocuteurs que la Turquie est en tout état de cause «sur la rive nord». Comme les Européens.

Envoyé spécial à Ankara ◀ MARC SEMO

INSTITUTIONS PROJET DE RÉVISION CONSTITUTIONNELLE

Les élus UMP cherchent à maintenir l'obligation de référendum pour l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE

RÉSOLUMENT hostile à une éventuelle entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne, une large partie de la majorité parlementaire s'inquiète de la suppression, dans le projet de révision constitutionnelle sur les institutions, de l'obligation de référendum pour la ratification des nouvelles adhésions à l'UE. Une délégation d'une trentaine de députés, conduite par Richard Mallié (UMP, Bouches-du-Rhône), a été reçue, mardi 6 mai, par Nicolas Sarkozy. Le président de la République s'est dit favorable à un « enrichissement » du texte.

Comment, toutefois, se dispenser d'une procédure de référendum systématique tout en maintenant ce « verrou » en ce qui concerne la Turquie et sans la désigner nommément ? Le débat continue d'agiter la majorité.

M. Mallié et plusieurs de ses collègues veulent déposer un amendement visant à maintenir l'obligation référendaire pour les pays dont la population représente au moins 5 % de celle de l'Union.

Frédéric Lefebvre (Hauts-de-Seine), porte-parole de l'UMP, a annoncé, pour sa part, son intention de déposer un amendement prévoyant l'obligation de référendum pour les pays n'étant pas « géographiquement » en Europe.

Pierre Lequiller (Yvelines), président de la délégation de l'Assemblée nationale pour l'UE, a rédigé un amendement précisant que le référendum reste la règle pour tous les traités d'adhésion, mais que la ratification parlementaire, peut être autorisée « sur proposition conjointe des deux assemblées ».

« Sans aucune vexation »

En déplacement à Ankara, mardi, le secrétaire d'Etat aux affaires européennes, Jean-Pierre Jouyet, a voulu rassurer les autorités turques sur les intentions de la France, qui prendra, le 1^{er} juillet, la présidence de l'Union. Celle-ci sera « objective, impartiale et équilibrée », a-t-il affirmé, en précisant que Paris ne souhaitait pas « casser » les négociations d'adhésion. M. Jouyet a assuré que les pourparlers se poursuivraient normalement, « sans aucune vexation contre la Turquie », et avec l'ouverture de nouveaux chapitres.

« La présidence française [de l'UE] ne peut être réussie sans une progression dans les négociations », a-t-il indiqué, citant « la liberté de circulation des capitaux, la propriété

intellectuelle et l'environnement » parmi les dossiers qui pourraient s'ouvrir au second semestre 2008.

M. Jouyet a plaidé auprès du gouvernement turc pour obtenir l'assurance qu'il participerait à la conférence de Paris sur l'Union pour la Méditerranée, le 13 juillet, l'assurant que ce projet n'était pas destiné à se « substituer » à l'adhésion à l'Union. ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER (À ANKARA)
ET PATRICK ROGER

Le Monde

Vendredi 9 mai 2008

Hezbollah said to train Iraqi rebels near Tehran

By Michael R. Gordon

BAGHDAD: Militants from the Lebanese group Hezbollah have been training Iraqi militia fighters at a camp near Tehran, according to U.S. interrogation reports that the United States has supplied to the Iraqi government.

A U.S. official said the account of Hezbollah's role was provided by four Shiite militia members who were captured in Iraq late last year and questioned separately.

The United States has long charged that the Iranians were training Iraqi militia fighters in Iran, which Iran has consistently denied, and there have been previous reports about Hezbollah operatives in Iraq. But the interrogation reports provided by the Americans about Hezbollah's role at the Iranian camp offer important details about Iranian assistance to the militias, includ-

ing efforts Iran appears to be making to train the fighters in unobtrusive ways.

The account of the interrogation reports was given to the Iraqi government, along with other data about captured Iranian arms, before it sent a delegation to Tehran last week to discuss allegations of Iranian aid to militia groups.

It is not known whether the delegation confronted its Iranian hosts with the information from the interrogation reports, or how the Iranians responded.

Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki's government announced Sunday that it would conduct its own inquiry into allegations of Iranian intervention in Iraq and document any interference.

"We would like the Iranians to keep their commitment, the commitments they made in meetings with the prime minister and with other groups that have visited them," Ali al-Dabagah, a senior Iraqi government spokesman, said in an interview. "They had made the promise that Iran would be playing a supportive role."

President George W. Bush and other U.S. officials have said the Iranians have long sought to arm and train Iraqi militias, which the U.S. military has called "special groups."

In a possible effort to be less obtrusive, however, it appears that Iran is now bringing small groups of Iraqi Shiite militants to camps in Iran, where they are taught how to do their own training, U.S. officials say.

The militants then return to Iraq to teach comrades how to fire rockets and

mortars, fight as snipers or assemble explosively formed penetrators, a particularly lethal type of roadside bomb made of Iranian components, according to U.S. officials, who describe this approach as "training the trainers."

The training, the Americans say, is carried out at several camps near Tehran that are overseen by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Command's Quds Force, and the instruction is carried out by militants from the Lebanese organization Hezbollah, which has long been supported by the Quds Force.

According to U.S. officials, the four Shiite militants who provided the information on Hezbollah's role were captured between September and December of 2007 after they had returned from training in Iran. The militants were questioned individually and provided similar accounts, the U.S. officials said.

A U.S. official summed up information from the interrogation reports but did not make them available. He declined to be identified because the information had not yet been publicly released.

Other evidence of Iranian involvement that U.S. officials have provided to Iraqi officials includes details of captured Iranian arms, like 81 mm mortars and 107 mm rockets that U.S. officials say bear markings indicating that they were manufactured in 2008. The weapons have a particular type of fuse and are painted in a way U.S. experts say is unique to Iran.

U.S.-Iran talks postponed indefinitely, Iraq reports

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD: The Iraqi foreign minister said Wednesday that security talks between Iran and the United States had been indefinitely postponed because of an "exchange of accusations" between the sides.

As Washington escalated its accusation of Iranian backing for extremists, Tehran on Monday called off further Iraq security talks with the United States until American forces stopped their crackdown on Shiite militias. U.S.-led forces have been engaging in fierce street battles in Sadr City, a Shiite militia stronghold in Baghdad.

"It is impossible to hold a new round because of exchange of accusations between the two sides," Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari told a news conference Wednesday in Baghdad. "The negotiations are postponed indefinitely because of tense atmosphere."

"We had three important rounds, but they yielded no fast results," said Zebari, adding that Iraq's efforts to hold the next round of talks had failed.

U.S.-led forces are fighting Shiite extremists as well as Sunni insurgents from Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, a largely Iraqi group with some foreign leaders. One U.S. soldier was killed in a clash on Tuesday in the former Sunni insurgent

stronghold of Anbar Province, the military announced Wednesday.

The clashes in the Sadr City district erupted after an Iraqi government crackdown on armed Shiite groups began in late March. The U.S. military is now trying to weaken the militia grip in the teeming slum neighborhood and disrupt rocket and mortar strikes on the U.S.-protected Green Zone.

■ Militants kill 10 Iraqi soldiers

Sunni insurgents killed 10 Iraqi soldiers and wounded 13 in an attack on a checkpoint in Diyala Province north-east of Baghdad, the U.S. military said, according to an Associated Press report from Baghdad. The U.S. military blamed Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, which has recently escalated its attacks in the province, for the killings.

■ Ex-detainee linked to attack

The U.S. military said Wednesday that a former Guantánamo detainee from Kuwait carried out a recent suicide attack in northern Iraq. The Associated Press reported from San Juan, Puerto Rico.

A spokesman for the U.S. military's Central Command said the Kuwaiti, Abdullah Salih al-Ajmi, took part in an attack in Mosul.

Commander Scott Rye of the U.S. Navy said the authorities did not know the motive for the attack, which was reported last week by the Dubai-based Al-Arabiya television. Iraqi security forces were apparently targeted.

The U.S. military transferred Ajmi to Kuwaiti custody in 2005. A Kuwaiti court later acquitted him of terrorism charges.

AS BAGHDAD GRAPPLES WITH SADR CITY, IRAQI KURDISTAN BUSILY BUILDS 'DREAM CITY'

The Kurdistan Regional Government is briskly pursuing oil and gas contracts and economic development, a drive that is chafing Iraq's central government in Baghdad.

By Sam Dagher | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

ARBIL AND SULAYMANIYAH, IRAQ - Shakir Wajid showed off his company's plans for "Kurdistan Gas City" - a futuristic residential, commercial, and industrial city that will run entirely on natural gas.

"We believe there are huge gas reserves under the ground in Kurdistan," says Mr. Wajid, an Iraqi Kurd and executive with United Arab Emirates-based Dana Gas, whose company is in the final stages of negotiating over a 14.7 square mile plot of land for the \$20 billion project.

Dana Gas has already invested \$650 million in Iraqi Kurdistan to extract gas, build a liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) plant, and transport the fuel to new power plants in the region. "This area will transform economically in a massive way.... It will be a revolution," says Wajid from his office in the northern Iraqi city of Sulaymaniyah.

Further north in Arbil, the region's capital, authorities are finalizing a deal estimated at \$12 billion with a consortium of South Korean companies that will give the energy-starved Asian country access to several oil fields here in exchange for investment in infrastructure projects in northern Iraq.

Over the past year, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has briskly awarded oil exploration and production contracts to foreign companies. The roster now includes the likes of America's Hunt oil, Austria's OMV, and Russia's TNK-BP. And all of this is happening in defiance of the oil ministry and the central government in Baghdad.

But as the government of this semiautonomous region, home to about 4.5 million people, forges ahead with its ambitions to transform this long deprived part of Iraq, it must maneuver through many external and internal challenges.

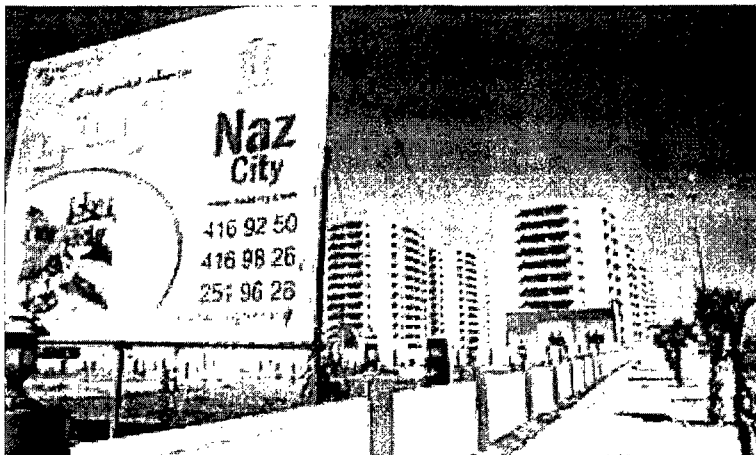
For average Iraqis, and some in the central government, Iraqi Kurdistan's actions are nothing short of its efforts to lay the foundations for independence. In many neighboring countries, particularly Turkey, which is waging a war with its own separatist Kurdish rebels, sometimes in Iraqi Kurdistan, this is cause for alarm.

Last Thursday, the KRG held rare talks in Baghdad with senior Turkish officials partly to allay these concerns.

Even inside the region, discontent is rising among many residents who see little benefit from big projects and are starting to question the motives and capabilities of the two main ruling parties - the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) the Patriotic Union for Kurdistan (PUK) - that have had a grip on power for decades.

Beyond the crumbling old buildings of Arbil's center an entire district is in the making: New Hawler. Cranes stretch into the sky as foreign laborers toil on the building sites of hotels, office towers, and gated communities with names like Dream City and Italian City. Signs of wealth are everywhere. You see it in the shopping malls and gleaming cars.

At Empire World, a \$365 million housing and commercial development being built by wealthy



'The other Iraq': The New Hawler development in Arbil is one of many new projects under construction in northern Iraq.
SAM DAGHER

Kurdish businessmen who have benefited from US contracts in Iraq, manager Basma Azouz says villas in the project that average \$250,000 are being sold at a fast clip. Many families of rich Iraqis and Baghdad-based government officials have over the past few years opted to live in the relative safety of northern Iraq.

"Have you seen the other Iraq? It's spectacular. It's peaceful. It's joyful. Fewer than 200 US troops are stationed here," says a promotional campaign for investment in the Kurdistan region.

During a recent interview, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani spoke with passion about his vision for the region, which he says can serve as a model for the rest of Iraq and a "steppingstone" for investment in the rest of a country that has some of the world's largest untapped oil reserves.

"We just want to rebuild our region as part of Iraq, that's it. We are not a threat to anybody. We want to be a factor of stability," says Mr. Barzani, denying that his region eyes secession.

His foreign relations adviser, Falah Mustafa, says that while 97.5 percent of Kurds in the region support the idea based on the results of an informal referendum in 2005, it would be unrealistic. "It's better for us to go for something that's achievable and viable. We did not push too hard, we did not go unrealistic."

Barzani says his government's decision to start awarding oil and gas contracts to foreign investors - before a much-delayed national hydrocarbons law has been agreed on with Baghdad - is in keeping with the spirit of the new Iraqi Constitution. He says the heart of the dispute with Baghdad is that his region is committed to a federal Iraq, which many in Baghdad seem to be backing away from.

But Iraq's Oil Minister Hussein al-Shahristani has accused Kurdistan of signing the contracts

"secretly and without competition."

"It did not give Iraq the highest possible return," he says, adding that all companies that have inked deals with Kurdistan have been blacklisted.



Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani is one of the driving forces behind economic development in semiautonomous northern Iraq.
SAM DAGHER

On April 22, Barzani said he was "very optimistic" that an agreement would be reached with Baghdad even though it "may take time" to work out oil contracts and other sticking issues, such as the resolution of disputed territories.

Although average Kurds admire their youthful-looking prime minister, many see the new prosperity as feeding corruption. Ari Harsin, an Arbil journalist with the weekly Awene, says that members of the KDP and PUK hold stakes in almost every development project.

"In Kurdistan the politburos of the KDP and PUK decide where the budget goes," says Mr. Harsin. "There is no transparency. People do not understand how these oil deals are going to benefit them. Sometimes it's almost like a mafia state."



- May 9, 2008

A Conference Sponsored by Washington Kurdish Institute, the Penn Program in Ethnic Conflict – Univ. of Pennsylvania, and Kurdish National Congress of NA

Article 140 and the Future of Iraq

Friday May 9, 2008

Event Summary and Primary Sources

Washington, D.C. - On May 9, 2008, the Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI), the Penn Program in Ethnic Conflict at the University of Pennsylvania, and the Kurdish National Congress of North America (KNC) hosted an all-day conference in the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill. The focus of the conference was Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, which mandates a process of normalization and referendum for disputed territories.

Dr. Najmaldin Karim, President of WKI, opened the conference with a warm welcome and a moment of silence for those who have sacrificed their lives to fight against tyranny. Dr. Karim's remarks underscored that Article 140 was the most pressing issue in Iraq today, with campaigns of gerrymandering, expulsion, and ethnic cleansing by the Baathist regime that have yet to be addressed, as obligated by the Iraq constitution. Regarding Kirkuk, Dr. Karim said that the governorate needs a clear administrative direction, and that dithering is inimical to the growth of civil society and development in the province; he posited that "the best outcome for Kirkuk's prosperity is a 'special status' within the Kurdistan Region," with a locally elected government that represents all of its communities.

Gen. Jay Garner said that his passion for the region began 17 years ago, at a time when the American people and administration knew little about the Kurds.

Gen. Garner described the Kurds as the most vibrant people that he's ever met, with a range of skills that are noticed today by investors, and the security in Iraqi Kurdistan as the finest in the Middle East. He also described their democratic values and emphasis on minority rights, citing the Christians and Arabs that have migrated to Kurdistan for these reasons. "If I lived in Kirkuk," General Garner said, "I know how I'd vote."

The first panel of the conference, "Article 140 and the Iraq Constitution," included Ambassador Peter Galbraith, Joe Reeder, Jason Gluck, and Professor Brendan O'Leary, and was chaired by Dr. Karim.

Ambassador Galbraith, a fellow at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, described his first visit to Iraqi Kurdistan in 1987 with the realization that "villages simply weren't there," and his consequent education about the Kurds. On the subject of Kurdistan's status, Ambassador Galbraith said that it is an independent country in every regard except in terms of international recognition, and cited the articles of the Iraq Constitution that enshrine Kurdistan's de facto independence. He affirmed that the only place in Iraq where American alliances in Iraq overlap with democracy is in Kurdistan, which he qualified as imperfect but pluralistic.

On the subject of Kirkuk, Ambassador Galbraith said that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has made a point of giving all parties a political voice and recognizes the degree of diversity in Kirkuk. The issue of Kirkuk has been a source of dispute since 1921, he said, and emphasized the necessity of a system for solving the problem. Ambassador Galbraith criticized policy-theorists, the International Crisis Group in particular, who have urged the postponement of the referendum. He described Kirkuk's ratified unification with the KRG as sensible and inevitable. Meaningful power-sharing once this happens, he said, should include an allowance for all groups to have their own schools, the right of assembly, security responsibility devolved to neighborhoods, and super majorities on Kirkuk's governing council. Ambassador Galbraith said there was great receptivity to these ideas and that, after 80 years, the problem of Kirkuk could be solved. Postponing the referendum, he concluded, is "the height of irresponsibility," and not in the interest of the Middle East's long term stability.

Joe Reeder, former Undersecretary of the United States Army, began his remarks by describing the challenges of implementing Article 140 as momentous, with the factors to take into account including justice, self-determination, fairness, and stability. The extended June 30, 2008 deadline will not be met, Reeder said, because of two main challenges: the inherent difficulty of political line drawing and the ambiguity of Article 140. He added that the drawing of geographical boundaries is always contentious, which he illustrated with maps of gerrymandered U.S. congressional districts, and compared

other examples of the American experience in messy democracy.

Mr. Reeder described the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) plans to resolve the disputed areas from Sinjar to Diyala province, and assessed that compromise will be part of the process. He compared the situation to tensions in Kosovo, and said that drawing lines comes down to villages and houses, with the biggest winners being those that are committed to the rule of law and good governance. While describing Article 140 as unclear in regard to areas eligible for a referendum, he characterized the argument that Article 140 is null and void -- due to the passage of the original deadline -- as "ludicrous in law and logic," on the grounds that the constitution would have to explicitly state such an abrupt reversal. Mr. Reeder said his most important advice to all parties was "be nice." The future looks messy but good for the Kurds, he said, since people are voting with their feet by migrating to Kurdistan and the absence of U.S. casualties is the region's biggest asset.

Jason Gluck, a rule of law advisor for the U.S. Institute of Peace, offered an opposing viewpoint by advocating a political compromise outside of Article 140. With the original deadline past, Mr. Gluck said, "there is no longer a constitutional obligation for Iraq to hold a referendum on Kirkuk or any other of the disputed territories." He added that there was no purely legal solution and pointed to Article 140 as incomplete, citing questions on voter eligibility and residency requirements.

Mr. Gluck said that a referendum will not be accepted by the losers, positing that the result would be increased tension and violence. He cited the opposition to a referendum by Arab leaders and Al Qaeda in Iraq, evidenced by their move of operations from Anbar to Ninevah province. Mr. Gluck also argued against Article 140 on the grounds of regional opposition by Turkey, Syria, and Iran. He reemphasized that an additional political agreement is necessary, and he suggested a number of concessions that the KRG could offer, including relinquishing the right of oil management and revising the supremacy of regional law over federal law.

Professor Brendan O'Leary, Director of the Penn Program and Lauder Professor of Political Science, responded in disagreement with the remarks of Mr. Gluck. Political agreement is desirable but it is not necessary to have a comprehensive agreement before Article 140 is implemented, and it would be wrong to hand out veto powers that are not in Iraq's constitution, he said. Prof. O'Leary emphasized that Article 140 is a critical element of Iraq's constitution, and that Kurdistan would not have endorsed the constitution without its inclusion. He added that the KRG can pursue lawful options if the federal government will not fulfill its constitutional obligation.

Prof. O'Leary then addressed four misleading clichés about Kirkuk. First, he refuted the theory of an 'oil grab' by Kurds in Kirkuk by citing the key constitutional provisions that ensure that all oil revenue from already exploited fields will be distributed through Iraq, regardless of its location. He showed a 1919 Treaty of Versailles map with Kirkuk inside of Kurdistan, proving that Kurdish interest in Kirkuk predates the knowledge of oil. Through the use of maps and data he documented Saddam's injustices in Kirkuk -- coercive Arabization, expulsions and boundary manipulation. Second, arguing against the description of Kirkuk as 'powder-keg,' Prof. O'Leary said that unification through due process would not precipitate an increase in violence as long as sufficient security was maintained, provided that the losing nationalities were well-protected -- and pointed to explicit attempts by the KRG to propose power-sharing and political provisions for minorities in Kirkuk. He commended the inclusion of such measures in Kurdistan's regional constitution. Third, he contested the thesis that a Turkish invasion would follow Kirkuk's unifica-

tion with the KRG. He suggested the impossibility of this scenario if Turkey intends to pursue its candidacy as member of the European Union. He also argued that the Turkish elite know that an occupation of Kirkuk would be a recipe for a long-term disaster. Turkey has considerable interest in a mutually productive relationship on its borders with the KRG, he said. Last, he tackled the conjecture that Kurdistan is planning to declare independence in the immediate future, arguing that while all Kurds undoubtedly wish for their own state, Kurdistan and its leaders have little to gain and lots to risk in this gesture.

Prof. O'Leary said that the idea of postponement as a means to stability in Kirkuk was mistaken -- any further delays would cause instability, he said. Prof. O'Leary argued that the international community should instead focus on facilitating a fair referendum process, where necessary, encouraging the KRG to confirm constitutional commitments to protect minority nationalities, and encouraging the minority nationalities to engage with the KRG on that agenda.

Dr. Kamal Kirkuki, Deputy Speaker of Parliament in the KRG, said that Article 140 is a less complicated issue than often thought, arguing that while the disputed territories are part of Kurdistan, only their administration will be decided by Article 140. Dr. Kirkuki emphasized the rights of the majority as well as the minority, using the example of minority rule during Iraq's rule by Saddam Hussein, and expressed his support for federalism as the only solution supported by the constitution. Dr. Kirkuki also said that Kurds simply "want to remember" the injustices of the regime in Kirkuk and to correct them, and referred to a series of maps of the Kurdish population before the tampering of the Baathist regime.

Dr. Mohammad Ihsan, Minister for Extra-Regional Affairs in the KRG, spoke about the issue of demographics and past Iraqi government policy to shift them toward Arab majorities. In addition, a policy of 'correcting nationality' meant that Kurds were forced to declare themselves Arabs, he said. Dr. Ihsan discussed the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq's (UNAMI) role in setting internal boundaries and gave examples of boundaries being redrawn in other countries, including India, Nigeria, Switzerland, Canada, and the United States. Dr. Ihsan argued that boundaries could be redrawn successfully in Iraq, provided that there is rule of law, tolerance, and defined power-sharing.

Dr. Kendal Nezan, President of the Kurdish Institute of Paris, mainly spoke about the concerns of neighboring countries regarding Article 140. Dr. Nezan said that Iran and Syria are dissatisfied with the developments in Iraq Kurdistan because of their own marginalized Kurdish populations, but the U.S. does not take account of these concerns. The United States does, however, consider the concerns of Turkey, where the Kurdish issue remains unresolved, he said. Dr. Nezan urged the United States to address the moral responsibility of Kurdish issue and its history. He also argued that Iraq's constitution is not simply a piece of paper -- it is the only political agreement for the new democratic Iraq, he said. If the conditions of the constitution are not met, Dr. Nezan said, Kurds have no reason to remain part of the country.

Dr. Saman Shali, President of the KNC, said that Iraq's constitution was endorsed by United Nations, the U.S., and Iraq, and that Article 140 provides the people who live in disputed territories freedom to "choose their destiny." Dr. Shali urged the U.S. to use its authority to implement Article 140, but stressed that the responsibility lies with all parties within Iraq to resolve the situation through the constitution. He stressed that a failure to implement Article 140 would be a great injustice, and would restart the cycle of mistrust between Kurdistan and governments in Baghdad.

The second panel discussion, "Reconciliation and Power-sharing," included David L. Phillips, Ambassador David Berger, Erin Mathews, David Pollack, and Qubad Talabani. Prof. O'Leary chaired this discussion.

David L. Phillips, a visiting scholar at Columbia University's Center for the Study of Human Rights, described reconciliation as a long process, and said that power-sharing is essential to preventing violent recourse. He listed the technical issues under international law that are associated with minority rights, addressing governance, economy, culture, assembly, security, media, freedom of movement, language, and education. Mr. Phillips emphasized the importance of the draft process for a KRG constitution and the inclusion of minority rights provisions, arguing that it would reassure its citizens and prepare for all the future possibilities, including the breakup of Iraq, where Kurdistan would already have a system in place for democratic self-governance.

Erin Mathews, director of Iraq programs at National Democratic Institute (NDI), spoke about NDI's projects at the community level in Kirkuk and the challenges faced on a local level. Ms Mathews said that citizens felt power-

less in regard to the governance of Kirkuk and tended to have no second choice in their party of preference. She emphasized NDI's efforts to poll citizens and to determine solutions for inclusive and effective governance in Kirkuk.

Ambassador David Berger, a former Canadian ambassador and MP, spoke about the experience of "ethnic and religious conflict of an unprecedented scale in the 20th century," citing the partitioning of India and Pakistan, and juxtaposing this with a draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He emphasized federalism -- American in principle and Canadian in practice -- as the means for people of different backgrounds to live together in one state. Ambassador Berger also said that Kurdistan has established a new trend in representation for minorities in Iraq, with a stark contrast to the old Iraq, and suggested that the KRG should initiate power-sharing in detailed terms that reaches accommodation beyond the Canadian model. He called Kurdistan's experience "the beginning of a new direction in the Middle East."

David Pollock, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, described his recent trip to Kurdistan and offered that Article 140 is only one aspect of the broad issue of reconciliation and the larger issue of power sharing between Kurds and Arabs, as well as reconciling Iraq and its neighbors. Dr. Pollock said that from a legal and historical perspective, Article 140 should be applied, though he argued that the more important question was "what works?"

in the pragmatic point of view. With regard to Iraq's neighbors, he urged greater cooperation between the Kurds and the Turks to eliminate the PKK, which he said would make Turkey more inclined to help. Within the KRG, Dr. Pollock cited the need to improve press freedoms, based on instances of newspaper editors that face charges for publishing criticisms of the government. Finally, Dr. Pollock argued that Kirkuk is about making compromises and warned with the example of Pakistan and Kashmir as the destructive outcome to avoid for Kurdistan and Kirkuk.

Qubad Talabani, KRG Representative to the US, said that there has not been enough dialogue about the issue of disputed territories and that the KRG ultimately wants a sustainable, just resolution. There can be no justice or national reconciliation without rectifying the wrongs committed during the previous regime, Mr. Talabani said. In Iraq, he said, defensive posturing becomes offensive and the pain caused by the past creates further obstacles. The KRG must show good governance, Mr. Talabani said, and it is working on developing a culture of better governance. "We are not Switzerland -- yet," he said, and offered that the KRG needs to campaign to convince people in the disputed areas that "Kurdistan can govern you better than Baghdad." He emphasized that the KRG aims to govern all of its citizens without regard to ethnicity or identity, and assured that it will "be nice," affirming Mr. Reeder's comment earlier in the day.

The third panel discussion, "History and Current Situation" included Dr. Kirkuki, Dr. Ihsan, and Dr. Karim. Dr. Shali chaired the panel.

Dr. Kirkuki said that people naturally live together in Kirkuk and the situation does not simply equal Kurd versus Arab, and argued that the KRG has dialogue with a wide variety of groups in Kirkuk. He said that human rights was the crux of the issue and noted the number of Christian families in Kurdistan as evidence of their rights. Dr. Kirkuki also said that the KRG is trying to have good relations with Turkey and Iran and that "we don't need to fight with our neighbors." Finally, he noted that Iraq's unity depends on respect for the constitution.

Dr. Ihsan said that the situation significantly was better than many people assumed, arguing that the historical conflict lies between the Kurds and central government, not the various ethnic groups despite problems of trust. Citing his work on repatriation committees, Dr. Ihsan said that Arabs and Kurds are both returning home peacefully, and that slow, forward progress is being made. \$275 million has thus far been spent on compensation, he added.

Dr. Karim said that the KRG should improve its efficiency and emphasized its preparation for future challenges. He also described the concerns of unequal Kurdish language rights, and trends toward a centralized government in Baghdad, including threats by the oil minister. Dr. Karim urged the KRG leadership to use all of its influence in the coming years to prevent a regression into Iraq's old methods.

The consensus of the convening experts: Article 140 should be duly implemented with protection for rights of minorities through due process and political compromise.

Iraq, Iran and the United States

Whose side are they all on?

BAGHDAD

The Americans and the Iraqis find it hard to read the ambiguities in Iran's policy towards Iraq

IN HIS five years as Iraq's foreign minister, Hoshyar Zebari has often expressed alarm at the prospect of his battered country becoming a cockpit for a power struggle between the Americans and their regional enemies, Iran and Syria. Keep your quarrels away from us, says Mr Zebari, an affable Kurd, who has kept his job longer than any other minister since Saddam Hussein was toppled. Iraq has more than enough on its plate already, he says.

In recent weeks fighting has intensified, with Iraqi and American forces fighting together against assorted Shia militias and "criminal gangs" (in the government's words) linked to Iran—first in Basra, the main port city of the south, and now in the Shia districts of Baghdad.

Basra has since got much calmer. But fierce fighting has continued in the sprawling slums of Sadr City, home to some 2m Shias and a bastion of support for a populist Shia cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr, and his Mahdi Army militia. Iraqi health officials say that more than 1,000 people have been killed since the fighting began in late March. In return, Sadrist militiamen have sent waves of mortars and rockets hurtling into the Green Zone, the fortified district on the west bank of the Tigris river where Iraq's government is situated, as well as the American and British embassies.

Iraq's prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, a Shia, has repeatedly stressed that the military campaign he launched in March, backed by American and British forces, was not directed against any one faction, certainly not just the Mahdi militia. It was, he said, an effort to impose the rule of law. Iraq's government is setting great store on provincial elections in the autumn, and Mr Maliki says he wants to disarm all the militias before they take place.

In his onslaught on these armed groups, Mr Maliki, not so long ago widely dismissed as weak and sectarian, has won rare support from most of the main political parties across the spectrum—Kurdish, Sunni and Shia. But the Sadrists have cried foul, raising fears among Mr Maliki's backers that prolonged fighting may drag Iran and America more deeply into a conflict that many Iraqis, including Mr Zebari, would rather solve without their involvement. As the words exchanged by America and Iran, Mr Maliki's two key international backers, get angrier, the prime minister and his government face a dilemma.

Indeed, says a European diplomat, a "perfect storm" could brew up, with Iraq's already blighted political landscape being further ruined by battles fought by outsiders. "Iraq is getting caught in the middle and the tensions are affecting it immediately and directly," says the diplomat.

It is devilish hard to fathom Iran's precise intentions in Iraq. No one can say with



certainly how much influence it has on the main political groups, including the one loyal to Mr Sadr, on whom Iran's government seems to blow hot and cold. Nor is it clear why large numbers of Iranian-made weapons are turning up in the hands of Shia militiamen, who undermine a government that Iran seeks to strengthen. This week, Iraqi state television aired images of an Iraqi general in Basra standing by a seized cache of rockets, which he said could have been supplied only by Iran's army. One of Mr Sadr's top men, Salah al-Obeidi, said that a criminal gun-running network that has operated in the region for years probably acquired the arms. "Everyone, even the pro-government forces, has Iranian weapons," he explains.

Moreover, American and Iraqi forces have tried to draw a distinction between the mainstream units of Mr Sadr's Mahdi Army and what American commanders call "special groups", who are funded and trained by Iran and have fought on, despite a truce called by Mr Sadr.

Iran's government has fiercely denied the charges, refusing to take part in the next round of talks with American officials on security in Iraq until American troops stop killing innocent people in Sadr City. This week Haider al-Ameri, a senior figure in the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, a key party in the ruling Shia-led alliance, annoyed Mr Maliki by saying there was little evidence of direct Iranian interference.

Moreover, Iran has long argued that it is the presence of American troops in Iraq that is most responsible for destabilising both the country and the region. Yet, confusingly, the government in Tehran has endorsed Mr Maliki's American-backed campaign to impose his will on the Shia militias, which is the main reason for the current spate of fighting in Sadr City.

Stirring this diplomatic stew still more, a

group of pro-Iranian politicians from Iraq's ruling Shia alliance this week embarked on a bout of freelance diplomacy, flying to Tehran to present the Islamic Republic with evidence of Iranian involvement in recent fighting in Iraq. But the trip achieved little. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, refused to see them.

Still, there have been efforts by people close to Iraqi and Iranian centres of power to accommodate each other. In recent weeks Iraq's president, Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, has twice gone to the border between Iraq and Iran to meet Qassem Suleimani, the head of Iran's Quds Force, a special unit of the Iranian army which helps revolutionary Islamist forces in the region, including Lebanon's powerful Shia movement-cum-militia, Hizbullah. Mr Talabani, who has known Mr Suleimani since the Kurdish leader's days in opposition to Saddam Hussein, appealed for Iran's help to reduce tension between Iraq's various militias. Mr Suleimani is said to have agreed, adding some rude words about Mr Sadr.

Have the Iranians turned against Mr Sadr? Or do different parts of Iran's establishment have different agendas? Iraqi intelligence sources say that the Iranians had once hoped to groom Mr Sadr, who has spent most of the past year in Iran, as an Iraqi version of Hassan Nasrallah, the charismatic head of Lebanon's Hizbullah. Mr Nasrallah, whose family is linked to the Sadrs, has become influential and widely admired in the region.

But most rank-and-file Sadrists are fierce nationalists and would strongly object to the idea of boosting Iran's influence. For instance, this week one of Mr Sadr's prominent members of parliament, Hassan al-Rubaei, walked out in protest against the fighting in Sadr City. But he was equally fierce in his condemnation of both the Americans and the Iranians.

Omaha World-Herald

May 8, 2008

Kurds need U.S. support, Bruning says

BY TIM ELFRINK WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

With sectarian violence continuing across southern Iraq, the United States should work to build bridges with the more stable Kurdish north, Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning said while visiting the region Wednesday.

Speaking by phone from Erbil, the capital of Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdish region, Bruning said the first two days of a weeklong stay have shown him a pro-American and economically thriving region that needs more U.S. support.

"There is a country here that's very friendly to us, and it's in our interest to have good relations with Kurds," Bruning said. "We need all the allies we can get in this part of the world."

Bruning arrived in Iraq early Monday on a trip organized by Oregon State Sen. Jason Atkinson and funded by the Kurdistan Regional Government. Also making the trip are former Maryland Lt. Gov. Michael Steele and several Oregon businessmen.

Kurdish officials hope the trip helps forge bonds between their burgeoning government and political and business leaders in America, Bruning said.

"This is not what you or I imagine from Iraq. It's not a war-torn or destroyed place," he said. "The purpose of the trip is for the Kurds to point out to our state leaders that there is a different part of Iraq."

Bruning said he has met with the Kurdish foreign, planning and agriculture ministers and plans to meet with the region's prime minister later this week.

Earlier this week, the group toured a Saddam Hussein-era torture facility and visited the city of Sulaymaniyah, near the Iranian border. Bruning plans to return to Nebraska this weekend.

The Seattle Times

10 May 08

Shiites ruin McCain's Sunni disposition

By Andy Borowitz

In a major speech on the war in Iraq today, presumptive GOP nominee Sen. John McCain said that the Iraqis have split into two factions, Shiites and Sunnis, with a sinister goal in mind.

"My friends, the Iraqis have divided themselves into these two groups for one reason and one reason only," McCain told an audience in a retirement village in Scottsdale, Ariz. "They are trying to confuse me."

McCain said that while the two groups of Iraqis are "well-nigh impossible" to tell apart, he vowed to commit American troops to Iraq "for as long as it takes for me to figure out just what the difference between Sunnis and Shiites is."

"If it takes 100 years, 1,000 years, or a billion zillion years, we will stay there

until I can tell Sunnis and Shiites apart," the Arizona senator said.

McCain reserved his harshest words for the Shiites, who he said were trying to confuse him by sometimes referring to themselves as "Shiites" and other times as "Shia."

"What's that all about, anyway?" he asked. "Stop clowning around and call yourself one thing."

McCain seemed alarmed when a reporter asked him whether he believed that the Kurds, the third major group in Iraq, were trying to confuse him as well.

"The Kurds?" McCain said. "Who the heck are they?"

McCain then cut short the campaign appearance, explaining that he needed a nap.

BELFAST TELEGRAPH

12, May 2008

'Ghost city' Mosul braces for assault on the last bastion of al-Qa'ida in Iraq

Mosul looks like a city of the dead. American and Iraqi troops have launched an attack aimed at crushing the last bastion of al-Qa'ida in Iraq and in doing so have turned the country's northern capital into a ghost town.

Soldiers shoot at any civilian vehicle on the streets in defiance of a strict curfew. Two men, a woman and child in one car which failed to stop were shot dead yesterday by US troops, who issued a statement saying the men were armed and one made "threatening movements".

Mosul, on the Tigris river, is inhabited by 1.4 million people, but has been sealed off from the outside world by hundreds of police and army checkpoints since the Iraqi government offensive against al-Qa'ida began at 4am on Saturday. The operation is a critical part of an attempt to reassert military control over Iraq which has led to heavy fighting in Baghdad and Basra.

The besieged city is now difficult to reach; we began the journey from the Kurdish capital Arbil in a convoy of white pick-up trucks, each with a heavy machine gun in the back manned by alert-looking soldiers, some wearing black face masks, that were escorting Khasro Goran, the deputy governor of Mosul, to his office in the city.

Soon after crossing the long

bridge over the Zaab river and leaving territory officially controlled by the Kurds, we saw lines of trucks and cars being stopped by police. Their drivers presumably had not heard of the curfew. At the Christian village of Bartilla we exchanged our pick-ups for more heavily armoured vehicles with windows a few inches across of bulletproof glass.

I had been to Mosul down this road half a dozen times since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 and on each occasion the military escort necessary to reach the city safely has grown bigger. Squinting through the small glass portholes it was clear that local people were taking the curfew seriously. Even the miserable cafes used by the truck drivers, and which I

had imagined never closed their doors, had pulled down their metal shutters.

In eastern Mosul the streets are usually bustling and stalls spill on to the road near the tomb of the prophet Jonah, who died here some time after his alarming experience with the whale. Most of the people living in this part of the city are Kurds, who support the central government against al-Qa'ida. Yet, here too every shop was shut and there were police and soldiers at checkpoints every 50 yards. An extra brigade had been sent from Baghdad for the offensive along with special security troops to reinforce the 2nd and 3rd divisions.

Outside the police headquarters,



the black vehicles of the Interior Ministry, each with a heavy machine gun and a yellow head of a tiger as an insignia on the doors, were drawn up in rows. American helicopters flew high overhead as well as drones for reconnaissance. There was the occasional burst of firing and bomb blast in the distance. The governor of Mosul, Dunaid Kashmoula, says the city "has come to be dominated by the leaders of al-Qa'ida as a result of the delay in the military operation" originally scheduled for earlier this year.

Nevertheless, the insurgents in Mosul have never held whole quarters of the city and there was no street fighting.

The Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki promised this offensive on Mosul as the last battle against al-Qa'ida. He promised revenge for the assassination of the previous police commander for the city who had been assassinated by an al-Qa'ida suicide bomber dressed in a police uniform.

These are critical days for Mr Maliki's government. Since 25 March he has launched military offensives in Basra and Baghdad. He is receiving support from the Americans and the Kurds. But it is not clear if the Iraqi army will fight without the backing of US firepower in the air or on the ground. On Saturday a ceasefire was

agreed with the Mehdi Army of Muqtada al-Sadr in Sadr City giving the government greater control. But, as in Mosul, it is not clear how far the government's opponents have simply retreated to fight another day.

There is no doubt that security in Mosul has been deteriorating over the last six months. Mr Goran, who in effect runs the city, said that 90 people were killed in Mosul last September compared to 213 dead this March, including 58 soldiers and policemen. The number of roadside bombs had risen from 175 to 269 over the same period.

The official theory for this is that al-Qa'ida in Iraq, which has only a limited connection with Osama bin Laden and is largely home grown, has been driven out of its bastions in Anbar and Diyala provinces and Sunni districts of Baghdad. It has retreated to Mosul, the largest Sunni Arab city and the third largest in Iraq.

This is probably over-simple. Attacks on US troops in Anbar province have restarted and in Sunni districts of west Baghdad al-Qa'ida appears to be lying low rather than being eliminated. In many cases in Baghdad al-Sahwa, the supposedly anti-al-Qa'ida

awakening councils paid by the Americans, in practice have cosy arrangements with al-Qa'ida.

I had decided to go to Mosul – arriving in the first hours of the government offensive – because of what proved to be a false report that the head of al-Qa'ida in Iraq, Abu Ayyub al-Masri, had been captured in the city. Later Iraqi security officers said they captured many "Emirs", al-Qa'ida cell leaders, and targeted hundreds of suspected houses.

I was in Mosul on the day it was surrendered by Saddam Hussein's

forces in 2003. Scenes of joy were succeeded within the space of a few hours by looting and gun battles between Arabs and Kurds. Five years later Mosul, one of the great cities of the world, looks ruinous and under siege. Every alley way is blocked by barricades and the only new building is in the form of concrete blast walls. The fact that the government has to empty the streets of Mosul of its people to establish peace for a few days shows how far the city is from genuine peace.



12 May 2008

Oil Search signs 2nd contract in Iraq

The KRG, Oil Search will drill two wells to test the Shakal structure.

Herald Sun

Oil Search has signed a production-sharing contract in Iraq for an area that has the potential to contain 250 million barrels of oil. The area, the 632 square kilometre Shakal block, is on trend with the Pulkhana oil field, which has proven reserves of around 300 million barrels of oil. In a deal the Kurdistan Regional Government, Oil Search will drill two wells to test the

Shakal structure in mid-late 2008.

Under the contract, the Papua New Guinea-focused company has a seven year exploration period and a 20 year extendable production period.

Oil Search has an 18.75 per cent stake in the venture and a 15 per cent revenue interest. "Kurdistan is one of the few places left in the world where independent oil companies can capture material exploration positions with large reserve

potential and on satisfactory commercial terms," managing director Peter Botten said in a statement today. "The region is lightly explored and contains some of the most prospective geology in the world.

"Although Iraq is clearly a high-risk area, the Kurdistan region is regarded as relatively stable from a business and security risk perspective with increasing foreign investment occurring as a consequence."

Oil Search is active in Iraq already through a 20 per cent shareholding in a company that holds 50 per cent in the Bina Bawi production sharing contract.

Mr Botten said the two contracts potentially would make a material contribution to the company's production prior to the expected commencement of the PNG liquefied natural gas project in 2013/14. Shares in Oil Search were six cents higher at \$5.80 at 1312 AEST.



Voices of Iraq

May 13, 2008 Arbil

Kurdistan supports Operation Lion's Roar in Mosul

Arbil, May 13, (VOI) - Iraq's Kurdistan region announced on Tuesday its support to the Operation Lion's Roar being implemented in the city of Mosul by Iraqi security forces since Saturday, noting the region's Peshmerga fighters do not participate in it.

"We in the Kurdish government support any plan by the federal government and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to stabilize the country and to realize peace and security," a statement posted on the Kurdish government's official website quoted the official Spokesman Jamal Abdullah as saying.

He denied the participation of Peshmerga forces in the operation, explaining that "the federal government did not ask for Peshmerga participation.

Ninewa province was placed under curfew until further notice last Friday in

preparations of the large-scale military campaign.

On Saturday, the commander of Ninewa operations, Staff Lieutenant General Riyadh Jalal, announced the commencement of Operation Lion's Roar with the aim of tracking down al-Qaeda operatives, following the arrival of "substantial" military reinforcements from Baghdad.

Mosul, the capital city of Ninewa province, lies 405 km north of the Iraqi capital Baghdad.

"Iraq's Kurdistan region is part of the Iraqi institutions and a main partner and it supports the Iraqi government in Baghdad and outside it," Abdullah noted.

SH/SR

Arbil - Voices of Iraq

May 13, 2008



Kurdish parliament speaker says KRG oil contracts legal

Arbil, May 13, (VOI) – The oil contracts signed by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) with a number of foreign corporations were "legal" and concluded in accordance with the Iraqi constitution and the powers granted to the natural resources ministry, said the speaker of the Iraqi Kurdistan region's parliament.

"The natural resources minister has expounded in detail the steps accomplished by his ministry and the oil contracts it signed with the foreign corporations," Adnan al-Mufti said in statements to Aswat al-Iraq – Voices of Iraq – (VOI) after a session held by the parliament to hear the minister. The minister also touched on the differences between the KRG and the Baghdad central government as well as efforts exerted to solve these problems, said Mufti,

adding these contracts are based on the Iraqi constitution and the law on oil and gas passed by the Iraqi Kurdistan parliament. A heated controversy took place between the Iraqi oil ministry and the KRG on oil contracts concluded by the latter in November 2007 with a number of foreign companies undertaking oil prospecting and production. Iraq's central government Minister of Oil Hussein al-Shahrestani had threatened to have these contracts rescinded and the contracting companies punished by prohibiting any form of cooperation between them and the Iraqi government. Several political and parliamentary blocs criticized the contracts, which were signed without prior approval by the Iraqi government and parliament. AE

Enduring Saddam, Enduring Today

ENDURING FREEDOM

Quietly Surviving in A Not-So-New Iraq

By CAMERON W. BARR

In the last years of Saddam Hussein's rule, eager for some relief from Iraq's dreary state-run television, a businessman named Emad T. Yousif bought an illegal satellite dish. He set it up on his Baghdad rooftop, making sure that it couldn't be seen from the street or his neighbors' houses. Only then did he realize that he had gone too far.

There was no way to prevent his young children from letting slip a reference to the new entertainment they were suddenly enjoying, which might get back to their friends' parents, which might get back to the regime. Such was life during what Iraqis call "the Saddam time": the very real possibility that the parents of your kids' friends would rat you out.

He dismantled the dish.

Yousif enjoyed some personal prosperity and a whispered, furtive liberty under the Baathist regime, always striving to avoid any undue attention from the vast intelligence apparatus that helped keep Hussein in power. Balding, oval-faced, eyes slightly downcast, Yousif played the gray man well.

Five years into the U.S. effort to remake his country, Yousif, now 53, plays that role still. If the essence of freedom is the opportunity to assert oneself, Iraq has a long way to go. Now as then, Iraqis who want to survive shrink back into themselves, lie low, let attention find someone else.

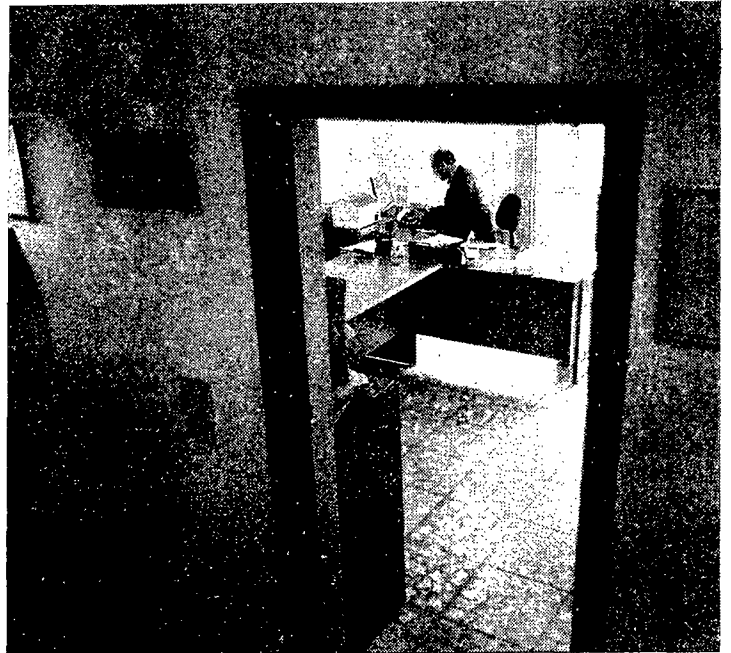
Satellite dishes are no longer a problem; everyone has them. And the Stasi-like repression of the dictatorship is over: Government agents no longer visit Yousif once a week to ask after his well-being and whether — polite smile — the intelligence service might be of some help. He is certain no one is vetting his e-mails or recording his overseas phone calls.

But in this post-Saddam time, other threats impose themselves. Material ostentation draws kidnapers, political engagement invites assassination, and time spent outside the seeming safety of four walls carries the risk of being caught in the middle of horrific violence. In 2006, Yousif's cousin, an engineer, "was

driving in the street, and they shot him," Yousif recalled when I met with him in Baghdad in March. The family has no idea who killed the man, or why, or even if there was a reason.

Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, told Congress last month that levels of violence had significantly diminished. But Yousif is still afraid to live in the high-end Baghdad neighborhood where he has built his dream home, because from time to time there are "accidents" in the area. Accidents? "I mean killing," he explained in his clear but sometimes imperfect English. "We don't know the reason behind this killing, but it still tells you that it's not under control."

The chaotic aftermath of an invasion intended, in part, to promote democracy has convinced Yousif to stay as far away as possible from power: "We are people not involved in hot issues, which is politics or religion or whatever it is. We are normal, neutral people. I believe most of Iraq is like this.



"We got experience from the old regime how we can manage ourselves."

— Emad T. Yousif

And we got experience from the old regime how we can manage ourselves."

In October 2002, Iraq beckoned the international media to cover a referendum on Hussein's rule. The scores of foreign reporters visiting Baghdad overwhelmed the Ministry of Information, enabling me to slip away from my government "minder" and take a taxi to Yousif's office. I arrived alone and unannounced, bearing an introduction from a mutual friend in Jordan. Yousif took me into his confidence.

We spent many hours together over the next few days, mainly in his SUV, driving around Baghdad at night. He told me that he felt safest in the car, which he was certain was not bugged. Meeting anywhere else — his home or office, my hotel, a restaurant — attracted undue attention.

Then the country manager for a Swiss-based agricultural products company, Yousif enjoyed an enviably productive life in an atrophied economy. He was proud of his nation, his family, his career. He despised Hussein for the Iran-Iraq War and the U.N. sanctions the dictator had provoked by maintaining the illusion that he was hiding weapons of mass destruction.

The regime's grip was both brutal and banal. Yousif told me about relatives and friends who had come under suspicion. Some had disappeared, some were dead, some were in exile.

He also described what had happened after he established an e-mail account with the state-run Internet service provider: His messages were taking days to reach their recipients abroad. When he complained, officials told him to write more simply to make it easier for the intelligence service to read

his e-mail.

As we talked, U.S. forces were beginning to arrive in Kuwait, and an invasion seemed likely. I waited until the end of our time together to ask Yousif whether it was a good idea for President Bush to topple Hussein. I remember how trapped he looked by the question. "We want change," he said, "but we want it a different way."

The rest of his answer became the ending to the profile of Yousif — whose identity I shielded by using the pseudonym Ahmed — I wrote for the Christian Science Monitor, my employer at the time:

"They always say, let the Iraqi people decide," he says. "That's like telling a man in jail to free himself. He can't."

"The only thing Iraqis can do, Ahmed says, is wait. They have no influence over the US. They can't change their government themselves. 'We are like cockroaches feeding on sewage,' he says. 'We survive.'"

I saw Yousif briefly in August 2003, after the U.S.-led invasion. He showed off his newly built house, a stylish villa with a circular atrium decorated with a stained-glass window. He described how his sons had explored two ransacked houses in his posh Baghdad neighborhood. The intelligence service had used one building to store weapons and the other as a repository for files, including cassette tapes of international phone calls to or from Iraq.

Like many Iraqis, Yousif was still giddy that the Saddam time was over. Baghdad's mood was lighter; the anti-American insurgency was just gaining momentum.

I was happy to visit Yousif again this past March. He is now the general manager of his own firm, which imports and sells seeds, fertilizers and other agricultural and industrial goods. His company's sales to the private sector were \$1.1 million in 2006, he told me; he expects them to reach \$2 million this year. "I have an optimistic feeling," he said.

But the post-invasion conduct of the Americans continued to dismay him. When militaries topple governments, they usually maintain order, he observed. "But the Americans, they came here, and they break all the walls for the people, and all the laws fall down, and they let the people like this, so

the people live like in a jungle."

When a client fails to pay for goods or services, Yousif asks mutual friends or members of the client's family or tribe to intercede. In the absence of a viable court system, shame-by-network generally makes people pay up. "You can close the book after a while," he said.

Yousif had once been pained at the thought of U.S. intervention; he now appeals for its continuation. If there is a rapid U.S. pullout, he said, "the scenario is very clear: The Kurds immediately will spin out. In the south, the Shia will spin out immediately, from eastern Baghdad to the south." The splintering could be avoided, he argued, if the Americans continue shepherding Iraqi politicians toward new elections and help them to build better security forces. "If you decide to come to this, you have to continue it; this is a commitment," he concluded.

Yousif's immediate family remains in Jordan, where they have lived since mid-2004. He hopes that they will be able to return in the summer of 2009, perhaps to resume life in their Baghdad villa. He brought me once again to the house, which he now uses to store goods for his company. We walked through the dusty atrium, the formal living room filled with gilded furniture draped in sheets, the overgrown garden.

As we parted, we stood in the driveway. He pointed to other houses in the neighborhood. "This is an empty house, this is empty house, this is empty house, this is empty house, this is empty house," he said. "You cannot live alone, in an empty area."

The main threat is kidnapping, and Yousif's response is discretion. He stays in his brother's house in a middle-class part of Baghdad. He keeps his SUVs on cement blocks so they can't be stolen and drives a decrepit Volkswagen Golf.

He could afford to hire bodyguards, but they attract attention. And just as he did during the Hussein regime, he doesn't use a part of his name that would identify him as a Shiite from the south. Emad T. Yousif could be Shiite or Sunni or Christian. He could be nobody.

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INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
May 13, 2008

Sadr agrees with Iraqi lawmakers to set truce

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD: Representatives of the Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr and lawmakers from Iraq's main Shiite political bloc signed a four-day cease-fire Monday in an effort to end seven weeks of

fighting in the neighborhood of Sadr City here.

Sadr is thought to have influence over some of the militants in the area, but not all of them. Many of those fighting Iraqi and U.S. forces are thought to have broken away from Sadr's militia, the Mahdi army, so it was unclear how the truce would unfold.

Even as the cease-fire was signed, the U.S. military reported that soldiers killed three Shiite extremists who attacked them with small arms and rocket launchers in Sadr City.

That exchange came Sunday afternoon, the first day of the reported cease-fire between representatives of Sadr's political movement and the government.

Meanwhile, Iraqi police and army forces expanded a crackdown in the southern city of Basra at dawn Monday to pursue suspected Shiite extremists, said Major General Mohammed Jawad Huwaidi, security commander in the city. About 10 men were arrested and 62 machine guns and 20 rocket launchers were seized in the raids, Huwaidi said.

The truce signed Monday stipulates

that Iraqi forces have the right to "impose the law and to pursue illegal situations."

"No one and no side has the right to interfere in the work of these forces," it says, adding that the government retains the right to pursue "those who carried out armed attacks against the government."

Sheik Salah al-Obeidi, an aide to Sadr, stressed that the cleric had rejected conditions set by Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki to disband the Mahdi army and hand over its weapons. "We have agreed on a cease-fire and to end displaying arms in public," Obeidi said. "But we did not agree on disbanding the Mahdi army to hand over its weapons."

The Sadrist movement, he said, does not have any "medium or heavy weapons" and added that "the government forces were free to raid and search any suspected place."

Health officials said Monday that the latest clashes in Sadr City killed 2 people and wounded 25. They said it was not clear if there were any militants among them.

LE DEVOIR

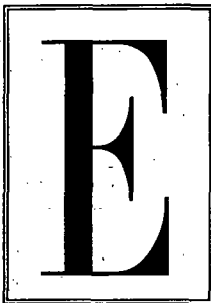
12 MAI 2008

Le Kurdistan de tous les dangers

LOUISE BEAUDOIN

Membre associée du Centre d'études et de recherches internationales de l'Université de Montréal (CERIUM)

FRANÇOIS DORLOT



En Irak, à la ville comme à la campagne, on peut se promener en toute quiétude, prendre un bus ou un taxi sans jouer à la roulette russe, flâner dans les marchés bien approvisionnés, et même, homme ou femme, siroter tranquillement une bière à la terrasse d'un café.

Précisons. Pas partout en Irak, bien sûr, mais au Kurdistan, dans cette région de quatre millions d'habitants du nord du pays qui jouit d'une quasi-indépendance depuis 1991 lorsque la communauté internationale, France en tête, avait décidé, pour faire cesser les massacres menés par Saddam Hussein et autres Ali Le Chimique, de la soustraire à l'autorité de Bagdad.

Un État pour les Kurdes

C'est la première fois dans l'histoire, sauf quelques brefs intermèdes, que les Kurdes, cette nation de trente à quarante millions d'habitants dispersés entre cinq pays, disposent d'un État. Fortes de leurs effectifs militaires, composés de 100 000 redoutables «peshmergas» et de ses propres services de renseignements, les autorités kurdes ont réussi à mettre al-Qaïda en échec: depuis 2003, aucun attentat visant des étrangers n'a été

commis. Et pourtant (ou grâce à cela...), on ne voit aucun soldat américain: l'aide militaire américaine se limiterait à une centaine de conseillers.

Cette stabilité amène de nombreux chrétiens ciblés par des attentats visant à les éliminer de l'Irak à s'installer au Kurdistan, en particulier à Ain Kawa, dans la banlieue de la capitale, Erbil. Le récent assassinat de l'évêque de Mossoul a accentué cet exode.

Autonomie

Depuis, la Constitution irakienne de 2005 a consacré cette autonomie par la création d'un Parlement régional auquel ont été élus l'année suivante des députés d'une étonnante diversité: musulmans sunnites kurdes, chrétiens assyro-chaldéens, turcomans, et comprenant près d'un tiers de femmes. Mieux, cette constitution (bel exemple de fédéralisme asymétrique) a investi le nouveau gouvernement kurde de pouvoirs en matière de relations internationales, dont le droit à des représentants à l'étranger.

C'est d'ailleurs afin de mettre en œuvre ces dispositions que le gouvernement, par l'intermédiaire de l'Institut kurde de Paris — sorte de délégation générale pour l'Europe — dirigé par M. Kendal Nezan, nous a invités par deux fois au Kurdistan. D'une façon pratico-pratique, les autorités kurdes voulaient savoir comment fonctionne le système tout à fait particulier de relations internationales d'un pays non souverain, le Québec, notamment en ce qui concerne le statut de «gouvernement participant» au sein d'une organisation intergouvernementale (la Francophonie).

De nouvelles frontières

Mais la construction du Kurdistan irakien se heurte à deux problèmes majeurs. Le premier est celui du tracé des frontières; 40 % des Kurdes d'Irak vivent en dehors du territoire sous contrôle kurde. La constitution prévoyait dès la fin 2006 la tenue de référendums destinés à adapter les frontières de ce territoire en fonction de la composition de sa population.

Comme souvent, là comme ailleurs, le pétrole est venu bouleverser ce plan. En effet, la ville de Kirkouk et ses environs sont riches en or noir. Historiquement, elle est majoritairement kurde, mais Saddam Hussein avait mené une politique de déportation des Kurdes pour les remplacer par des Irakiens, de sorte que cette majorité est fort érodée.

Par ailleurs, le puissant voisin turc s'oppose de toutes ses forces à ce que les champs pétrolifères de

Kirkouk passent sous contrôle kurde, car cela donnerait de formidables atouts à la constitution d'un puissant État kurde indépendant, ce qui déclencherait des mouvements annexionnistes parmi les quelque 13 millions de Kurdes de l'est de la Turquie. Les Américains empêtrés dans les problèmes du Proche et du Moyen-Orient, et soucieux avant tout de ménager leur meilleur allié dans la région — la Turquie — ont



JOSEPH BARRAK AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Le puissant voisin turc s'oppose de toutes ses forces à ce que les champs pétrolifères de Kirkouk passent sous contrôle kurde, car cela donnerait de formidables atouts à la constitution d'un puissant État kurde indépendant.

LE DEVOIR

13 MAI 2008

baissé les bras et confié la patate chaude à l'ONU.

Le plan de l'ONU

L'ONU a accouché d'un plan compliqué, mais acceptable pour les Kurdes: les zones où les listes kurdes aux dernières élections ont obtenu plus de 70 % des suffrages seraient rattachées au Kurdistan; celles où ce chiffre serait inférieur à 50 resteraient irakiennes; là où celui-ci se situerait entre 70 et 50, il y aurait référendum, mais pas avant qu'un consensus ait été constaté, pour des raisons évidentes de probables dérapages et d'embrasements communs à la région.

Une fois de plus, la Turquie s'oppose à tout agrandissement de l'actuel territoire autonome, donc à ce processus.

L'action des Kurdes de Turquie

Selon M. Nezan, «les Kurdes ne peuvent être que des tribus arriérées et sauvages que la grande nation turque doit civiliser ou des terroristes à abattre». Rien d'étonnant donc que les droits culturels des Kurdes de Turquie soient limités à l'extrême et que l'enseignement de leur langue soit fort limité.

Pour faire valoir ces droits fondamentaux, les militants du PKK (Parti des travailleurs kurdes) ont relancé ces derniers temps des actions armées dirigées contre les militaires turcs. Ces combattants, estimant qu'en tant que membres de la nation kurde, ils peuvent agir comme bon leur semble, en Turquie comme en Irak, sans même en référer aux autorités du Kurdistan irakien, se sont arrogé le droit de se servir du territoire de ce nouvel État autonome comme base arrière.

Patience et retenue

Les résultats de ces opérations ne se sont pas fait attendre. Au nom de la défense de leur patrie, les Turcs, malgré l'opposition des Américains, ont lancé des opérations aériennes et terrestres visant le PKK à l'intérieur même de l'Irak et atteignant aussi, inévitablement, les populations civiles pourtant assoiffées de paix après des décennies de guerre et de massacres. Ils ont aussi profité de l'action du PKK pour accroître leur opposition au gouvernement du Kurdistan et faire déraiser le processus de rectification des frontières en cherchant à instrumentaliser (sans grand succès semble-t-il) les minorités turcomanes pour qu'elles votent non aux référendums.

Quelle que soit la justesse de son combat, le PKK ne devrait-il pas faire preuve de plus de patience, de plus de retenue? Une meilleure réflexion stratégique ne devrait-elle pas l'inciter à ménager le nationalisme (ou plutôt l'ultranationalisme) turc? Ou du moins à ne pas liguier islamistes, militaires et modérés contre la cause kurde tout entière, en Irak comme en Turquie? Pour la première fois, un embryon d'État kurde viable et prometteur est en place. Il a besoin de souffle, de calme et de paix pour naître et s'ouvrir au monde. Entre sagesse et aventurisme, que choisira le PKK?

■ M. Kendal Nezan donnera demain une conférence sous les auspices du CERIU. Intitulée Les Kurdes en 2008: entre gains et reculs, elle aura lieu au-3744, Jean-Brillant, salle 6450, entre 16 h et 18 h.

Urgence démocratique au Kurdistan irakien

*Le président
de l'Institut kurde
de Paris s'inquiète
des manœuvres
de la Turquie*

CLAUDE LÉVESQUE

Les récentes opérations menées par l'armée turque au Kurdistan irakien surviennent au moment où le rattachement à celui-ci de plusieurs régions irakiennes à majorité kurde est de nouveau à l'ordre du jour.

Un référendum à cette fin aurait dû avoir lieu à la fin de 2007 à Kirkouk et dans d'autres «territoires disputés», mais il avait été reporté de six mois. Les Nations unies devraient dévoiler cette semaine un nouveau plan pour ce réaménagement des frontières internes de l'Irak, qui est prévu par la constitution de ce pays.

Kendal Nezan, le président de l'Institut kurde de Paris, croit que la Turquie a choisi ce moment pour lancer des opérations contre des maquisards du PKK, afin de déstabiliser le Kurdistan irakien et, par ricochet, de décourager les revendications autonomistes de sa propre population kurde.

«À l'approche du référendum dans la province pétrolière de Kirkouk et dans d'autres régions kurdes, la Turquie fait monter les tensions et se sert du prétexte de la présence dans les montagnes de la zone frontalière de quelques centaines de maquisards du PKK pour intervenir et déstabiliser le Kurdistan irakien, a dit M. Nezan hier au cours d'une entrevue.

Le président de l'Institut kurde doit prononcer cet après-midi une allocution à l'Université de Montréal, après avoir participé à Washington à une conférence sur le Kurdistan en compagnie d'experts américains et de responsables kurdes irakiens.

«La Turquie exerce le maximum de pression alors qu'à l'intérieur de ses frontières, il y a 2000 à 3000 combattants du PKK dans les maquis: si l'armée turque est incapable de les déloger à l'intérieur même de la Turquie, elle n'a aucune raison d'intervenir dans une zone frontalière située dans un État souverain. C'est simplement pour

montrer qu'elle peut à tout moment intervenir et menacer le Kurdistan irakien.»

Des dizaines de milliers de Kurdes qui avaient été chassés de leurs foyers dans la région de Kirkouk et dans d'autres provinces irakiennes sous le régime de Saddam Hussein vivent encore dans des camps de réfugiés, mais, en tout, ils sont près de 1,8 million à souhaiter une extension territoriale du Kurdistan autonome afin de jouir de leurs droits culturels, linguistiques et politiques.

«Il y a urgence à régler cette question pour tous ceux qui sont soucieux de la stabilité de la région» juge M. Nezan.

Né à Dyarbakir dans l'est de la Turquie, ce dernier a quitté ce pays dans les années 1970, pour Paris, où il a fondé en 1983 l'Institut kurde, qui œuvre à la promotion d'une langue menacée par les mesures répressives dont elle a fait l'objet.

«C'était une époque très noire pour les Kurdes, aussi bien en Irak et en Iran qu'en Turquie, a-t-il rappelé. Heureusement, les choses se sont beaucoup améliorées.»

Plus d'un million de Kurdes vivent actuellement en Europe. Depuis la création d'un Kurdistan autonome en Irak au début des années 1990 et surtout depuis la chute de Saddam Hussein en 2003, plusieurs réfugiés sont retournés dans leur pays d'origine, où ils jouent,

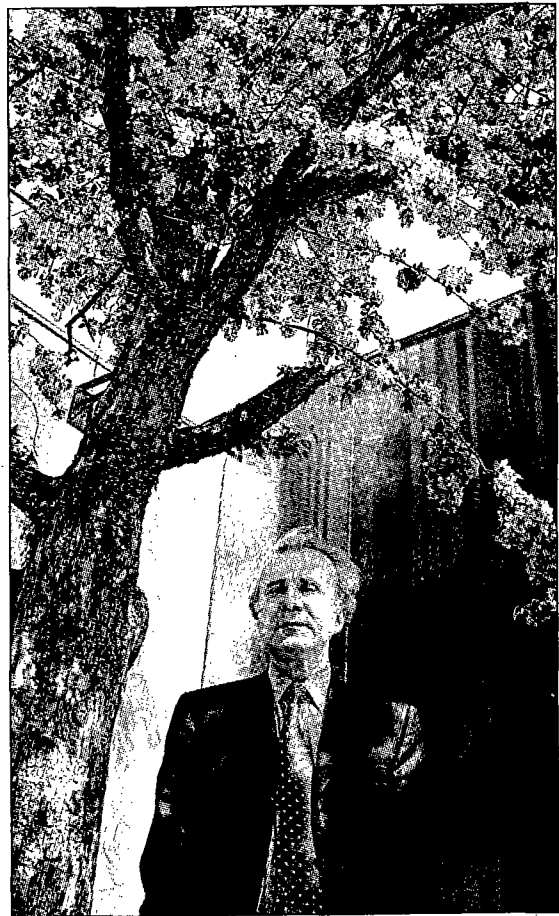
selon M. Nezan, *«un rôle important dans la démocratisation».*

M. Nezan connaît bien le Québec, qu'il a visité pour la première fois en 1981. *«On essayait alors de sensibiliser l'opinion publique aux malheurs des Kurdes et de trouver des amis et des alliés»,* a-t-il raconté.

«Les droits obtenus par les Québécois sur le plan linguistique, culturel et politique ont été pour nous une source d'inspiration, a-t-il ajouté. Moi même, j'ai beaucoup écrit dans la presse kurde et turque, en invoquant l'exemple québécois pour un règlement civilisé de la question kurde.»

En comparaison, la Turquie est restée attachée à son modèle unitaire et centralisateur, souligne le directeur de l'Institut kurde de Paris: *«Il y a eu des changements positifs, mais à doses homéopathiques. Jusqu'en 1991, même l'usage oral de la langue kurde était interdit. Cette loi a été abolie, mais la langue kurde est encore interdite dans les réunions publiques et dans les médias. Régulièrement, des élus sont poursuivis pour avoir assuré un service en langue kurde à leurs administrés.»*

Pour tenter de séduire l'Union européenne à laquelle elle rêve de se joindre, la Turquie *«se dit prête à reconnaître aux Kurdes des droits culturels à titre individuel, mais pas en tant que groupe collectif»,* juge Kendal Nezan. *«L'usage de la langue dans la vie privée est maintenant permis, mais son enseignement n'est autorisé que pour les adultes, et dans des établissements privés*



MARIE-HÉLÈNE TREMBLAY LE DEVOIR

Le président de l'Institut kurde de Paris, Kendal Nezan, photographié à Montréal hier sous un arbre en fleurs.

seulement. Il n'existe aucune école publique, aucune télévision et aucune université dans la langue des Kurdes, qui totalisent entre 15 et 18 millions de citoyens en Turquie.»

Ce n'est plus le cas au Kurdistan irakien, où cinq chaînes de télévision sont diffusées, à côté des quatre chaînes satellitaires kurdophones basées en Europe. L'Institut kurde de Paris, pour sa part, prévoit lancer une chaîne culturelle en septembre.

Le Devoir

Le Monde
16 mai 2008

L'Iran est au cœur d'un nouvel enjeu mondial : le gaz

Energie Un gisement géant attise les appétits des grandes compagnies internationales

Le 11 février 2008, à l'ambassade d'Iran à Paris, Christophe de Margerie était des nombreux convives qui se pressaient à la réception marquant le 29^e anniversaire de la révolution islamique. Le directeur général de Total est loin d'être un incondicional de la république des mollahs, mais la compagnie pétrolière française a toujours cherché à entretenir de bonnes relations avec Téhéran. Malgré la difficulté d'investir dans un pays sanctionné par les Nations unies pour son programme nucléaire, rien ne serait pire que d'injurier l'avenir : l'Iran, qui possède les deuxième réserves mondiales de gaz, sera tôt ou tard une nouvelle source d'approvisionnement de l'Europe.

Pour l'heure, la situation des majors américaines, européennes et asiatiques est intenable. Elles lorgnent toutes sur les champs pétrolifères et le gisement géant de South Pars dans le golfe Persique, le plus grand réservoir gazier de la planète. Mais tout se conjugue pour retarder leur mise en production : les tensions géopolitiques, l'emballage des coûts des projets pétro-gaziers, le caractère peu lucratif des contrats *buy-back* proposés par les Iraniens en paiement des investissements des majors.

Depuis le Qatar, qui partage l'immense champ gazier avec l'Iran, M. de Margerie a réitéré, lundi 12 mai, son intérêt « sur le long terme » pour des partenariats en Iran, tout en ajoutant qu'il ne faut pas s'attendre à une décision rapide. Total hésite à investir plusieurs milliards de dollars dans Pars LNG, un projet d'extraction et de liquéfaction de gaz. Plusieurs compagnies pétrolières tergiversent aussi. L'anglo-néerlandais Shell et l'espagnol Repsol veulent renégocier le contrat d'exploitation d'un bloc de South Pars, signé en 2002, qui devait déboucher sur une production en 2007, et se donner du temps.

Ces hésitations ne sont pas du goût des Iraniens. « L'Occident affirme que l'Iran est en train d'expulser Total et Shell, mais aucun ultimatum ne leur a été adressé », a récemment déclaré le ministre du pétrole. En mars, Gholâh Hossein Nozari leur avait pourtant signifié qu'ils avaient jusqu'au mois de juin pour se décider. Et Téhéran ne cesse de rappeler que, en cas de délais excessifs, le russe Gazprom et

des groupes indiens ou chinois prendront leur place.

Non sans dépit, les Iraniens constatent en effet que sur la côte opposée du golfe Persique, le Qatar est devenu en quelques années le premier exportateur mondial de GNL grâce à des partenariats avec les majors étrangères. Puits d'extraction et usines de liquéfaction du gaz sont si nombreux que Doha a décidé un moratoire sur les nouveaux investissements gaziers jusqu'en 2010 !

Concurrence russo-iranienne

Téhéran en est encore à se demander ce que le pays doit faire de son gaz. « Il existe un débat interne sur la définition des priorités gazières : privilégier l'utilisation du gaz pour la consommation interne [L'Iran a dû en importer cet hiver], les injections dans les champs de pétrole [pour améliorer le pompage] ou les exportations », souligne Clément Therme, spécialiste de l'Iran à l'Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI).

Faute de capacités financières suffisantes, l'Iran ne peut suivre toutes ces pistes. Dans tous les cas, ajoute M. Therme, « d'importants investissements étrangers seront indispensables pour réaliser l'objectif fixé par les autorités : devenir le troisième producteur mondial d'ici dix ans ». Une ambition systématiquement contrariée par Washington. La loi d'Amato, votée par le Congrès en 1996, sanctionne tout investissement important dans la République islamique. Et les Etats-Unis, qui n'ont cessé de renforcer leur arsenal,

font pression sur les banques et les industriels de l'énergie pour tuer dans l'œuf toute velléité de conclure des affaires avec la République islamique.

En attendant des jours meilleurs, l'Iran cherche à prouver qu'il est resté un grand pays pétrolier capable d'exploiter seul ses richesses. Son président, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, est de ceux qui veulent pousser les sociétés nationales à démontrer leur capacité à se passer des technologies et des financements occidentaux. Après le quasi-retrait du japonais Inpex fin 2006 – sous la pression des Etats-Unis, indiquaient alors certain-

CLASSEMENT DES RÉSERVES PROUVÉES DE GAZ

	en trillions de m ³	Part des réserves mondiales
Russie	47,65	26,3%
Iran	28,13	15,5%
Qatar	25,36	14,0%
Arabie saoudite	7,07	3,9%
Emirats arabes unis	6,06	3,3%
Etats-Unis	5,93	3,3%
Nigeria	5,21	2,9%
Algérie	4,50	2,5%
Venezuela	4,32	2,4%
Irak	3,17	1,7%

Source : BP Statistical Review, 2007

nes sources –, il a fait de la mise en production en février de l'énorme champ d'Azadegan (sud-ouest) un enjeu autant politique qu'économique.

Plus complexe, la production de GNL nécessite le recours au savoir-faire des majors étrangères. Gazprom peut-il se substituer aux Occidentaux et renforcer ainsi son emprise sur les livraisons vers l'Europe ? Le géant russe ne dispose pas de compétences dans ce domaine et n'a donc fait aucun investissement massif dans South Pars. Quant au rapprochement énergétique scellé en 2007 par M. Ahmadinejad et Vladimir Poutine, il ne fait pas l'unanimité à Téhéran, où certains courants dénoncent la vieille tentation « impérialiste » russe, rappelle M. Therme.

Sous couvert du rapprochement Téhéran-Moscou dans l'énergie (électricité, nucléaire, pétrole), les deux pays sont en fait concurrents. La situation géographique de l'Iran en fait un fournisseur-clé de l'Europe et de l'Asie. Or Gazprom ne souhaite pas que le gaz iranien coule vers le Vieux Continent, notamment dans le pipeline Nabucco, ce qui en ferait un rival redoutable. Et sans l'or bleu iranien, ce projet de gazoduc soutenu par l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis n'est pas viable puisque l'Europe a si mal manœuvré en Asie centrale qu'elle a laissé la Russie préempter une partie du gaz des pays à l'est de la Caspienne.

Avec le pétrolier italien Eni, Gazprom défend son propre « tuyau », le Southstream, qui acheminera le gaz de Sibérie et d'Asie centrale au cœur de l'Europe, ce qui accroîtra sa dépendance. Et Moscou soutient le « gazoduc de la paix » reliant l'Iran à l'Inde (et peut-être à la Chine) à travers le Pakistan. Un projet vigoureusement combattu par Washington, qui voit là un moyen pour la République islamique de sortir de son isolement économique et diplomatique. ■

JEAN-MICHEL BEZAT



TURQUIE: 19 REBELLES KURDES, 6 SOLDATS TUÉS DANS LE SUD-EST (ARMÉE)

ANKARA, 10 mai 2008 (AFP)

- L'armée turque a affirmé samedi avoir tué 19 rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et avoir perdu six de ses soldats lors de combats et de bombardements survenus vendredi soir dans le sud-est de la Turquie.

Les affrontements se sont produits dans la province de Hakkari, riveraine de l'Irak et de l'Iran, lorsque des rebelles du PKK ont attaqué une caserne, a indiqué l'état-major de l'armée turque sur son site internet.

"Les unités déployées dans la région ont immédiatement riposté à cette attaque et des éléments des forces aériennes ont été dépêchés vers la région. Nos avions ont atteint leurs cibles à partir de 22H25 (20H25 GMT) et ont commencé à frapper l'organisation terroriste", poursuit le document, faisant état de 19 morts chez les rebelles et de deux parmi les forces de sécurité.

Dans un deuxième communiqué publié sur son site, l'armée a indiqué que quatre autres soldats sont morts dans les combats au sol qui ont suivi les

bombardements.

Auparavant vendredi, quatre personnes avaient été tuées et neuf autres blessées dans l'est de la Turquie lors de l'explosion de mines posées, selon les autorités par le PKK, au passage de véhicules transportant des membres des forces de sécurité.

Depuis décembre, l'armée turque a renforcé son action contre le PKK procédant à plusieurs raids aériens contre des bases rebelles. Elle a aussi effectué une incursion terrestre d'une semaine dans le nord de l'Irak où Ankara affirme que plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes ont trouvé refuge.

Le PKK est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne. Il a déclenché en 1984 une insurrection en vue d'obtenir l'indépendance du sud-est anatolien, dont la population est majoritairement kurde. Le conflit a fait plus de 37.000 morts.

11 mai 2008



Bombardements turcs contre des positions du PKK en Irak

Avec notre correspondant à Istanbul, Jérôme Bastion

L'armée turque a annoncé dimanche que son aviation et son artillerie avaient bombardé durant la nuit de samedi à dimanche des positions des séparatistes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak. Ces opérations visaient des éléments kurdes qui avaient attaqué vendredi soir un poste de gendarmerie en territoire turc et avaient ensuite cherché refuge en Irak.

Les agences d'information kurdes nord-irakiennes confirment les bombardements aériens de samedi soir, annoncés par un communiqué laconique de l'état-major turc, sur une profondeur de cinq kilo-

mètres et « visant des villages abandonnés par les populations civiles ».

Ces frappes dont on ignore le bilan, sont une réponse à l'attaque vendredi d'un poste de gendarmerie turc, proche de la frontière mais en Turquie, par un commando d'environ 200 rebelles qui avait fait 6 morts.

Les mêmes sources kurdes nord-irakiennes confirment également que depuis les raids menés la semaine dernière contre le massif qui abrite le ou les centres de commandement du PKK, des combats se déroulent à la frontière irako-iranienne entre les forces de sécurité iraniennes et les rebel-

les du PJAK, une branche du PKK.

Selon l'armée turque, ces affrontements sans doute, coordonnés avec Téhéran à la faveur de la panique suscitée par les frappes turques, auraient notamment blessé l'un des plus hauts responsables de l'organisation séparatiste, Cemil Bayik dont l'état n'est pas précisément connu.

Le Premier ministre Tayyip Erdogan a en tout cas promis de poursuivre ce harcèlement militaire jusqu'à ce que le terrorisme s'arrête et que le PKK dépose les armes.



17 mai 2008

décryptage

Adhésion de la Turquie : l'Elysée dit finalement oui au référendum

De notre correspondant à Bruxelles (UE) JEAN QUATREMER

Le référendum «anti-turc» est de retour. Alors que Nicolas Sarkozy voulait supprimer l'obligation d'organiser une consultation populaire pour ratifier tout nouvel élargissement de l'Union européenne, les députés UMP ont réussi à imposer son maintien pour la Turquie. La commission des lois de l'Assemblée nationale propose, en effet, avec le soutien de l'Elysée, que le référendum reste obligatoire pour l'adhésion de pays représentant «au moins 5 % de la population européenne».

Quelle est l'origine du référendum obligatoire ?

On le doit à Jacques Chirac. Le chef de l'Etat, sans qui la Turquie n'aurait jamais pu commencer des négociations d'adhésion, a voulu, par ce biais, désamorcer un vote négatif anti-turc lors du référendum sur la Constitution européenne, en 2005. En effet, même si les deux questions n'ont rien à voir, les opposants à la candidature d'Ankara, qui se recrutent surtout à droite, auraient pu instrumentaliser

cette consultation. En février 2005, un article 88-5 fut donc introduit dans la Constitution française qui oblige le chef de l'Etat à organiser une consultation pour tout nouvel élargissement après l'adhésion de la Croatie qui devrait devenir membre de l'Union en 2009.

Pourquoi Nicolas Sarkozy voulait-il supprimer le référendum ?

Cette procédure limite la capacité de négociation du Président puisqu'il court un sérieux risque d'être désavoué par son peuple. Ensuite, la France s'arroge le droit de prendre en otage toutes les futures adhésions à l'Union. Enfin, Paris assumera seul les conséquences de la crise diplomatique qui suivrait un éventuel non. En particulier, la Turquie, qui a commencé ses négociations d'adhésion en 2005 avec l'assentiment de la France, ne lui pardonnera jamais une telle humiliation qui se paiera économiquement et politiquement. Et tous les pays musulmans prendront l'éventuel vote négatif des Français comme un camoufflet à

leur égard : qui peut croire que la campagne ne portera pas sur la religion de ce pays ? Chaque référendum risque, en outre, de donner lieu à des dérapages xénophobes du pire effet.

L'Elysée est-il prêt à accepter le maintien du référendum ?

Nicolas Sarkozy n'a manifestement plus la confiance de ses troupes. L'UMP a introduit un amendement au projet de révision constitutionnelle qui rend obligatoire le référendum pour ratifier l'adhésion des Etats représentant «plus de 5 % de la population européenne». Ainsi, la Turquie n'est pas la seule à être visée, puisque l'Ukraine et la Russie, comme on le précise sans rire à l'Elysée, font aussi parties du lot. Néanmoins, l'amendement de l'UMP «stigmatise en réalité la seule Turquie», puisque c'est le seul grand pays qui négocie son adhésion, critique le député socialiste Pierre Moscovici : «On ne peut pas traiter un pays de 70 millions



d'habitants comme ça, c'est lamentable.»

A l'Elysée, on estime qu'il est normal de consulter les Français pour les grands pays, comme cela a été le cas en 1972 pour la Grande-Bretagne. Pierre Moscovici n'est guère convaincu : «Si cette disposition, qui est une défaite pour Sarkozy, est maintenue en l'état, je pense que le PS ne votera pas la réforme constitutionnelle.»



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BOOK REVIEW

Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence

by Aliza Marcus. New York and London: New York University Press, 2007. 351 pages. \$35.00, hardcover.

Michael M. Gunter Professor of political science, Tennessee Technological University; author of *The Kurds Ascending: The Evolving Solution to the Kurdish Problem in Iraq and Turkey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

Formally established on November 27, 1978, but with immediate roots dating back several years earlier, the Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan (PKK), or Kurdistan Workers party, led by Abdullah (Apo) Ocalan long labored in relative obscurity as far as the United States was concerned. No longer, however. Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the PKK camps in northern Iraq have become an increasingly important issue for the United States. Turkey has repeatedly threatened large-scale military intervention into northern Iraq to root them out if the United States, Iraq or the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq refuse to do so. If such intervention were to occur, it would not only threaten the relative stability of the KRG, but might even result in disastrous U.S.-Turkish clashes.

However, the United States, battling the insurgency to the south, is in no position to go after the PKK, ensconced in its mountainous retreats. Indeed, retired U.S. General Joseph Ralston has been serving since August 2006 as the U.S. "Special Envoy [to Turkey] Countering the PKK." His mission seems to be to placate Turkey with largely meaningless verbal assurances in order to forestall Turkish intervention. The issue of the PKK sanctuaries even became involved in the July 22, 2007, Turkish parliamentary elections. Accordingly, Aliza Marcus's reader-friendly, but detailed, study of the PKK will be welcomed by both policy makers and scholars.

As a journalist reporting on the PKK in the early 1990s, Marcus had run afoul of Turkey's stringent security laws for an article she published in November 1994 on the government's torching of Kurdish villages during its anti-PKK campaign. Her present book is not the first dealing solely with the PKK. More than a half a decade ago, Paul White published a solid analysis, *Primitive Rebels Or Revolutionary Modernizers? The Turkish National Movement in Turkey* (Zed Books, 2000), which largely dealt with the PKK. More recently, Ali Kemal Ozcan published a detailed theoretical analysis, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Ocalan* (Routledge, 2006), while Kevin McKiernan's journalistic account, *The Kurds: A People in Search of Their Homeland* (St. Martin's Press, 2006), also dealt in part with the PKK. David Romano's recent sophisticated study, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Mobilization and Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2006) also contains some significant analysis of the PKK, while Denise Natali's equally sophisticated work, *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran* (Syracuse University Press, 2005), has little. Of all these recent studies, Marcus only lists the White book in her bibliography, which also omits several other earlier works in English that had previously dealt with the PKK. The inevitable time lag between final revisions and publication probably explains some of these omissions. Certainly, Marcus now gives us the most thorough and readable account of the rise of the PKK and its charismatic leader, Abdullah

Ocalan.

The author bases her analysis on detailed interviews with very knowledgeable former PKK members, most now living in European exile. She also "incorporates information from a variety of [other] sources, including interviews with well-known Kurdish opponents of the PKK, independent Turkish and Kurdish activists, and foreign sources with knowledge" (p. vii). Her analysis is particularly objective, given her own thorough knowledge of events based on her years of earlier reporting on the PKK.

Marcus divides her study into four parts, the first dealing with the origins of the PKK. "Ocalan's supporters would make much of the fact that he came from as depressed surroundings as his followers, unlike many of the earlier leading Kurdish figures, who often were linked to large tribal or wealthy landowning families" (p. 15). He literally "came out of nowhere" (p. 30). On the other hand, Marcus also adds that "what is missed is that many of the early supporters were actually those who had lifted themselves out of their poverty-stricken, uneducated 'lumpen' surroundings" (p. 37). After a brief stint working in a Turkish government office in Diyarbakir and then Istanbul (measuring land deeds), Ocalan "enrolled in the prestigious political science department of Ankara University" (p. 23). "The state's own assimilationist policies had in some cases awakened exactly what it was trying to wipe out" (p. 26). "Being arrested for joining a peaceful demonstration convinced Ocalan there was little room to act in Turkey's democracy . . . [and] that armed revolution was the only answer" (p. 25). "The negative reaction of the Turkish leftists to his ideas helped convince Ocalan that there was no point in continuing to look for a Turkish partner" (p. 28). Ocalan also argued that the "fatal flaw" of the other Kurdish leaders was that they "always remained part of feudal Kurdish society" (p. 34). Thus, these other Kurdish "leaders were not true Kurdish revolutionaries. . . . While rivals accused Ocalan of hate-mongering, some Kurds saw in his stance a certain independence that made them think he could be the one to lead them to their own state" (p. 35). Citing one of Ocalan's earlier associates, Marcus writes how "the 1920s were our model, how the Russian Communist party forbade all other parties and got rid of the cliques. We saw this as all positive and we wanted to do the same" (p. 42).

In the summer of 1979, more than a year before the military coup of September 1980, Ocalan secretly left Turkey for Syria, where he remained for almost 20 years. It proved to be a fortuitous move, enabling him to avoid being captured with most of the other Turkish and Kurdish militants when the military seized power. In Syria, Ocalan eventually made useful contacts. As one former associate explained: "From the Palestinians we learned things. We learned about making demonstrations for martyrs, about ceremonies. We did a lot of reading on a people's war; we also had armed training. They gave us clothing, cigarettes. We owe the Palestinians something" (p. 58). Soon the PKK

had the Helwe Camp (later called the Mahsun Korkmaz Camp) in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley of Lebanon. Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic party (KDP) also allowed the PKK to build a base in northern Iraq. "In Lebanon they learned how to make bombs and throw grenades, but in northern Iraq they would learn how to survive in the mountains as a guerrilla force" (p. 71). In the early 1980s, the PKK sent survey teams into south-eastern Turkey to map out the terrain and finally caught Turkey by surprise when it launched its guerrilla struggle in August 1984.

Part II deals with the consolidation of the PKK's power. In practice, this meant Ocalan's consolidation of absolute authority over the organization. Indeed, at times, Marcus's major theme appears to be "Ocalan's cult of personality" (p. 210), "narcissism" (p. 266) and sheer "paranoia" (p. 135). He "always was concerned about challenges to his authority and to the unity of the PKK under his authority" (p. 90). "Between 1983 and 1985, Ocalan ordered or encouraged the murder of at least 11 high-level former or current PKK members" (p. 94). "At least 24, perhaps closer to 50 or 100, new recruits were executed in 1989 and 1990 on suspicion of being real or potential traitors" (p. 135). Sometimes Ocalan even blamed others for these murders and then executed the perpetrator. Referring to himself as "the 'Party Leadership,' . . . Ocalan . . . applied, manipulated, ignored and changed everything at will" (p. 144). He even "began to believe that the PKK's actions were behind many world events . . . [and] saw himself as the center of world events" (p. 266). To protect his position, Ocalan also opposed broader Kurdish unity. "The development of a politically experienced Kurdish class was hobbled" (p. 163). Reading this, one cannot help but be reminded of Stalin's tactics and wonder how the PKK ever became so powerful.

In the third part of her book, Marcus analyzes the PKK's serious attempt to win control of south-eastern Turkey in the early 1990s. She explains that Ocalan also could be "politically savvy and reasonable" (p. 211). He had a "relatively strong grasp of the need for political changes, underscoring the very practical, ideological elasticity that had helped the PKK survive and grow so successfully over the years" (p. 244). Although at times he had a "coarse, patronizing and even threatening way of talking . . . [it] could be tempered by a vigorous defense of the Kurdish struggle" (p. 157). "Thousands of other young Kurdish men and women began to throw their support behind the groups, helping turn the PKK into a mass organization" (p. 160). The PKK's pursuit of a relentless guerrilla war won it mass trust and respect, while its decision also to move into legal, nonviolent activities gave it a much longer reach. Marcus refers to this mass civilian support as the "milis" (p. 154), although it was more commonly referred to as the Kurdistan National Liberation Front (ERNK). "It helped that the PKK was the only Kurdish nationalist organization fighting the Turkish state, making it hard for Kurdish nationalists to ignore it and still be active" (p. 217).

The Serhildan (people's uprising) that occurred in the spring of 1990 even had the possibility of becoming "something like the Palestinian intifada" (p. 180). Weapons proved easy to obtain: "After U.S.-led Coalition Forces established a safe haven in north Iraq [in 1991], huge stocks of old Iraqi army weaponry and equipment were there for the taking" (p. 186). "The Turkish military clearly was on the defensive" (p. 219).

The PKK's success, however, "assumed a static situation, one in which the Turkish army did not learn from its mistakes and Ocalan did not make any" (p. 181). In May 1993, the Turkish military began to change its overall counterinsurgency tactics by burning villages that had supplied the PKK and resorting to the clandestine murder of civilian Kurdish activists. "Everyone spoke of the same problems, not enough supplies, no contact with the local people, constant attack by [pro-government Kurdish] village guards" (p. 240). Ocalan proved incapable, or maybe unwilling, to react. Indeed, he "may have spoken against a mass uprising because he feared that it would remove the Kurdish fight out of his control" (p. 181). "When [PKK] commanders raised the problem of the forcible evacuation of Kurdish villagers, Ocalan exhorted them to press the villagers to return. But PKK rebels could barely protect themselves any more, let alone unarmed civilians" (p. 241). "To the

extent that mistakes had been made, Ocalan stressed, they were made by rebels who were too weak or too cowardly to properly implement his orders" (p. 240).

The fourth and final part of this book deals with Ocalan's capture in February 1999 and subsequent events. This section is not as thorough as the previous three. Marcus could have said more about why Ocalan was finally expelled from Syria, the rise of the new legal Kurdish parties (HADEP and then the DTP), and how in her own words "the PKK survives" (p. 305) despite seeming "empty, bereft of a focus" (p. 299). She correctly argues that "Ocalan in captivity became a symbol of the Kurdish nation — oppressed, imprisoned, used and then discarded by nations with other interests at heart" (p. 280). She also concludes that "the PKK survives because it is popular among Kurds in Turkey. It is popular because it fought for so long, and the PKK's fight tied people to the party and gained it Kurdish respect" (p. 305). The PKK also remains because "the state's fundamental approach did not change: In front of every, even limited, reform, the state put obstacles to slow down implementation" (p. 293). "The Kurdish problem will remain because the answer lies in Turkey opening a real dialogue with Kurds, and taking it from there" (p. 304).

Despite her detailed interviews to gain insights

into the workings of the PKK, Marcus apparently never met Ocalan himself. In addition, she interviewed few if any of his top political associates, such as Cemil Bayik, Duran Kalkan, Murat Karayilan (who currently heads the PKK guerrillas in northern Iraq's Kandil Mountains), Halil Atac, Mustafa Karasu and Ali Haydar Kaytan. She does not even mention that Kani Yilmaz, once considered possibly the PKK's number three in command, was expelled from the organization after Ocalan's capture and eventually assassinated in northern Iraq. Although she gives an excellent analysis of his falling out with Ocalan and eventual capture by the Turks, Marcus never even mentions the well-known nickname of the legendary PKK military commander Semdin Sakik, aka Parmaksiz Zeki (Fingerless, having had a thumb blown off while firing a missile). For some reason, she also writes about "Iraqi Kurdistan, as it is now called" (p. 301), instead of using its current, universally known name, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

But this is petty carping. Marcus has given us an excellent, objective and most readable account of the PKK, complete with a bibliography, an index, and numerous interesting photos. Her book will be must reading for policy makers, scholars, and lay persons interested in this still-important organization.

United Press International

BAGHDAD, May 13, 2008 (UPI) -- A Kurdish lawmaker Tuesday said Baghdad is so divided over a constitutional provision concerning the legal status of Kirkuk that it won't address the issue.

Iraqi lawmakers extended by six months a December deadline to address Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution. Article 140 is a three-step process that reverses the "Arabization" of Kirkuk when Saddam Hussein tried to influence demographics in the city.

A pending census that is part of the Article 140 process will determine whether the semiautonomous Kurdistan region in northern Iraq can annex Kirkuk.

Kirkuk lawmaker wary of city's status

"I believe the political leaders do not have even the intention to raise differences on Article 140 due to the yawning gap in the leaders' views," Kurdish lawmaker Sameh al-Atroushi told Voices of Iraq Tuesday.

In related news, the Iraqi Parliament Tuesday formed a special committee to examine retracting immunity protecting some lawmakers, at the request of the Supreme Judicial Council.

"The Council demanded Parliament lift some legislators' immunity, to interrogate them regarding petitions filed by people against them," said council spokesman Abdul Sattar al-Berqdar.

The committee expects to submit its report to Parliament in two weeks.



institute for war & peace reporting

May 13, 2008

Iraqi Crisis Report

Experts Urge Power-Sharing for Kirkuk

But Kurds in no mood to give up on demand for referendum on province's fate.

By Mariwan Hama-Saeed in Washington (ICR No. 258, 13-May-08)

Kurds should explore the possibility of a power-sharing agreement for Kirkuk because the competing claims of the province's communities will not be resolved through a referendum over its future, several international experts told a Washington conference at the weekend.

But Kurdish participants at the gathering in the US capital warned that a ballot over whether Kirkuk is governed by the Kurdistan region or central government, as required by Article 140 of the constitution, was the only way forward for the province — and that failure to hold one would be disastrous.

The conference, held May 9-11, and sponsored by the Washington Kurdish Institute, the Kurdistan National Congress of North America and the University of Pennsylvania, attracted more than 100 Kurds and experts from think-tanks and the US government.

The conference tackled issues ranging from the conflict between Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers' Party, PKK, to discrimination against Kurds in Iran, Syria and Turkey — but Kirkuk and the challenges of implementing Article 140 headlined the event.

Kurds have grown increasingly frustrated over delays in its implementation. "Washington is the centre of politics and the way things are dealt with here affects all the world," said Najmaldin Karim, president of the Washington Kurdish Institute. "We want to send the message that Article 140 is not dead."

In the 1970s and 1980s, hundreds of thousands of Kurds, Turkomans and Assyrians were expelled from Kirkuk. The regime brought in Arab families as

part of its Arabisation policy to change the demographics of the diverse, oil-rich province.

Article 140 calls for a process of normalisation that compensates and moves settlers back to their places of origin while allowing original inhabitants to return and also receive compensation. A census and referendum would then take place.

The normalisation process has been pushed back due to violence and chaos in Kirkuk — often referred to as a "powder-keg" — and many argue that disputes over Kirkuk can only be resolved with a power-sharing agreement between the province's many ethnic and religious groups.

Kurds are likely to benefit from a referendum, which is why some Turkomans and Arabs, who want to see Kirkuk become part of the central government or an independent province, are against the implementation of Article 140.

Arabs, Turkomans, Assyrians and Kurds from Kirkuk were invited to the conference but did not receive visas, said Karim.

Tensions have been mounting between the Kurdish authorities and the central Iraqi government, with the former accusing the latter of dragging its feet on Kirkuk.

"Article 140 is very important for us and our people in that area. [We] are impatiently waiting for the article to be implemented," said Kamal Kirkuki, deputy speaker of the Kurdistan parliament.

He vowed that Kurds "will resort to mass civil disobedience if we find out there

is a conspiracy against the implementation of Article 140".

But some international experts at the conference argued that parties representing Kirkuk's many communities must reach a power-sharing agreement, because the current instability and ethnic rivalry would not be resolved through a referendum.

Jason Gluck, a rule of law adviser with the United States Institute of Peace, said it was difficult to implement the article in what he called a "hostile environment". He also said that the Iraqi government is not legally obliged to abide by Article 140 because the deadline for its implementation expired on December 31.

"The political reality indicates that a political agreement is necessary," he said. David Pollock, a visiting fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, agreed that a power-sharing deal could provide Kirkuk with some stability. He maintained that because several groups have competing legal and historical claims on Kirkuk, a referendum is not the solution for the province's problems.

"The best approach is to figure out what works for all parts and reach a consensus that will work and satisfy all parts," he said.

Kurdish parties hold 26 of the 41 seats in the Kirkuk provincial council and have been accused of marginalising other communities. But they seem to be recognising the importance of political consensus, however, as Arab lawmakers

agreed to return to the council in December in a power-sharing agreement following a year-long boycott.

Qubad Talabany, Kurdistan Regional Government representative to the US, maintained that Kurdish leaders must win the hearts and minds of non-Kurds in Kirkuk.

"We must not resolve a crime by committing crimes," he said.

But a power-sharing agreement in place of a referendum is not a popular option with Kurds, who pushed hard for Article 140 to be included in the Iraqi constitution.

University of Pennsylvania political science professor Brendan O'Leary, who advised the KRG in drafting the Iraqi constitution, warned that if a referendum isn't held, Kurds may be prepared "to take matters into their own hands".

The two main parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, are also under pressure from nationalists to push for Article 140, he noted.

Mohammed Ihsan, a senior KRG representative, said there would be dire consequences if the referendum is not held.

"Implementing Article 140 is going to bring some problems," he said. "But neglecting it is going to bring a disaster to Iraq."

Mariwan Hama-Saeed is IWPR's Iraq editor.



May 14, 2008 Azzaman.

Kurds announce major oil find

By Basel al-Khateeb

Excavators have struck three oil fields with reserves estimated at about 2 billion barrels, Kurdish region's Oil Minister Ashti Horami said. The discovery is a signal that the region, currently including three provinces, is rich in oil reserves. The find is tempting for foreign oil firms which are vying to win deals to develop oil fields in the region.

The Kurds have signed several production-sharing agreements with companies including Norwegian DNO ASA and Turkey's PetOil and Gnel Enerji. They have also signed a memorandum of understanding with Australia's Woodside Petroleum and Heritage Oil and the U.K.'s Sterling Energy.

But the deals are still in question due to resistance

from the Oil Ministry in Baghdad which considers them illegal.

But Horami defended the deals, claiming that the Kurdish regional government would reap 90 percent of revenues while other governments only obtained 20-40.

The Kurds have divided their region into small exploration blocks in order to lure medium-size oil firms. "Some majors wanted to have the whole region as one block or at least be divided into two," Horami said.

He said splitting the Kurdish region into smaller blocks gave the authorities the chance to deal with many companies and strike deals with "much higher profit margins."

The latest find is the largest in the region so far. But the Kurds say it is of a "very small scale" in comparison to the massive recoverable reserves of the oil-rich region of Kirkuk.

The Province of Kirkuk, which the Kurds want to annex, is one of the richest in Iraq holding reserves estimated at more than 40 billion barrels.

But there is much opposition in Iraq from across the political spectrum for the Kurdish ambition to have Kirkuk as part of their self-rule areas.

Oil companies are attracted to Kurdistan because of its relative safety compared with the rest of Iraq where it is virtually impossible for foreign oil companies to work.

The Washington Times

May 14, 2008

Dancing with the Kurds

By Julia Duin

This past weekend, I spent time with Kurds; the first event being an all-day hearing on the Hill involving Kirkuk, the much-disputed oil-rich Iraqi city known as the Kurdish Jerusalem. The Washington Kurdish Institute put together a very impressive line-up of speakers to argue for residents of the city being allowed to vote on their future. Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution allows for self-determination, but the vote allowing the city's residents to do so keeps on getting put off.

And the Americans occupying much of Iraq aren't doing much to help matters for their loyal Kurdish allies. The Americans and the Turks — who are also supposed to be our allies — don't want residents to vote to join the city to the already existing Kurdish Regional Government. The city historically was Kurdish until Saddam Hussein, starting in 1968, purged the city of much of its Kurds, moving Arab Iraqis into its precincts and splitting off the city's suburbs into adjoining provinces.

One interesting factoid dropped during the hearing in the Rayburn building was how the Kirkuk question is partly a Muslim vs Muslim argument. Some Sunni Muslims want the Kurdish government to take over Kirkuk because the



Kurds are Sunnis themselves. This is far more preferable to the city coming under control of the Shi'ites who control Baghdad's government. Turkey's Muslims are also Sunnis but because of historic hatreds between the Kurds and the Turks, they don't want Kirkuk turned over to the Kurds.

The Kurds — whose flag I have included on this post — have called themselves "the Jews of the Arab world" because of the persecution directed toward them by both Sunni and Shi'ite. What happens to the Kurds will have a domino effect all over the Middle East, which may be why a yarmulkeh-wearing official with the Zionist Organization of America was seated in the back row quietly listening.

I was quite interested, being that I spent three weeks inside Iraqi Kurdistan (Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaimaniya) and Turkish Kurdistan (Van, Sanli Urfa, Mardin, Cizre, Silopi and Diyarbakir) in July 2004, plus invested a year in learning the Sorani version of Kurdish. On Saturday night, my daughter and I attended a 20th anniversary banquet held by the Kurdish National Congress where we danced Kurdish dances until 11 p.m. There was such a joy to all that movement but at the same time, a banquet participant told me, a listlessness felt by all the Kurds.

"All the Kurds want is independence," he said. "They will never rest until they get it." Considering all the odds against them, this will be a long wait. But consider Israel, which declared independence 60 years ago this month. They too were surrounded by hostile neighbors, who invaded them the moment independence was declared. To paraphrase Jesse Jackson, they didn't wait for the right time. They made the time right and 60 years later, we're observing their anniversary.

The Kurds may need to make just as bold a move for themselves.

— Julia Duin, assistant national editor/religion, *The Washington Times*

Turkey combines dialogue with bullets

By David Romano

In a significant change of policy, Turkey recently initiated high-level official dialogue with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq. A columnist for the Turkish mass circulation daily Zaman commented that such an official dialogue "was not an ordinary step. It was a turning point in the approach to the Kurdish issue and broke a taboo."

The talks - which focused on a wide range of political, economic and security issues - are the first to occur on such a high official level. The May 2 talks in Baghdad involved a delegation led by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and a Turkish delegation led by Ahmet Davutoglu, the senior advisor to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan; Murat Ozcelik, the special coordinator for Iraqi affairs at the Turkish Foreign Ministry; and

Derya Kanbay, Turkey's ambassador in Baghdad.

The KRG official media described the meetings as cordial, open and focused on a convergence of common interests of both parties. According to the KRG, "Prime Minister Barzani expressed the Kurdistan region's desire to develop good neighborly relations with Turkey. He recognized Turkey's legitimate concerns and highlighted the importance of solving common problems through cooperation, political negotiation and dialogue."

Turkish officials and media stressed the positive effect of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's March visit to Ankara, as well as KRG President Massoud Barzani's recent statements against attacks by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and in favor of good relations with Turkey.

President Barzani's recent statements have included: "Today, the use of violence is left in the past. Kurds should adjust themselves to this transformation and change their mentality; they should try the other path that is modern and peaceful"; as well as: "Now is the phase of dialogue. Kurds shouldn't get involved in violence, either amongst themselves

or in neighboring countries ... The mentality of the Kurds should change, and this way the mentality of these countries will also change."

Ankara's new willingness to officially engage with the KRG stems from a number of factors besides the KRG's well-worded diplomatic overtures, however. Turkey's late February military incursion into northern Iraq to attack PKK rebels, which lasted only eight days, did limited damage to the PKK and may have convinced Ankara of the need to pay more attention to a variety of counter-insurgency approaches.

At the same time, the incursion probably succeeded in convincing KRG leaders of the need to work harder to both contain the PKK and improve relations with Turkey. To Ankara's credit, its February military operation and a number of air raids against the PKK in Iraq carefully avoided civilian casualties, which in turn left KRG leaders the freedom to pursue better relations with Turkey. The avoidance of civilian casualties and the operation's short duration probably helped dispel Iraqi Kurdish suspicions that Turkey's real agenda aims at damaging the Iraqi Kurdish autonomous government, rather than fighting the PKK.

The additional problem of increasing Iranian agitation regarding Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK - closely tied to the PKK) cross-border attacks on Iran has also left the KRG worrying about joint Turkish and Iranian military operations inside KRG territory. Finally, for obvious reasons, the United States has likewise been working hard to convince both its Turkish and Iraqi Kurdish allies to improve their often tense relations. Turkish business interests currently doing an increasing amount of investment and trade in the KRG region are also keen to see Ankara improve relations with Iraqi Kurds.

KRG actions against the PKK have stopped short of confronting the group militarily, however. The principal approach consists of isolating the group by blocking supplies to its mountain bases, forbidding journalists

from visiting the PKK, closing PKK political front organizations in Iraq, limiting the PKK's ability to move about the region and similar tactics.

Because Turkish foreign policy tends to designate friends and enemies according to their stance on the PKK, these KRG moves constitute a very necessary minimum policy to pursue good relations with Ankara. Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan, while agreeing that the recent talks with KRG officials were very positive, stated: "The level and the frequency of this dialogue will be closely related to concrete action, especially on [the] fight against terrorism."

The KRG continues to resist Turkish pressure to act militarily against the PKK, however, and Prime Minister Barzani insisted on May 7 that the KRG is not responsible for the activities of the PKK, since the group's mountain bases are not under its control and the group is not under the Kurdish administration's influence.

KRG actions to constrain and isolate the PKK may prove more effective now that they are being combined with Turkish military operations based on actionable, real-time intelligence provided by the United States. Turkish air raids on PKK positions have thus become more effective than in the past, and the PKK is probably feeling a significant amount of pressure.

As a possible indication of this increased pressure, a PJAK leader based in Qandil on the Iraq-Iran-Turkey border recently threatened suicide attacks against US interests, in retaliation for US intelligence assistance to Turkey. The PJAK admitted to suffering six dead from a Turkish bombing raid the previous day. The threat, however, was quickly repudiated in an official PJAK press release and removed from the Kurdistan Observer website.

With the snows now thawing on the Iraqi-Turkish-Iranian borders, both the PKK and its PJAK allies have begun spring infiltrations into Turkey and Iran, with close to 20 Turkish

soldiers killed since mid-April. The Turkish military in turn claims to have killed upward of 150 PKK and PJAK militants in its air raids, although this number appears a bit high and lacks independent confirmation. In any case, both the PKK and the Turkish state appear eager to achieve a psychological advantage with the start of the new fighting season, convincing opponents and observers alike that they have taken the initiative.

At the same time, officials in Ankara concede that a military approach, while a necessary part of their policy in the face of PKK attacks, will not succeed without a political program. In general, the non-military aspect of counter-insurgency programs involves both a political and economic dimension.

In the economic realm, increased government services and prosperity buttress the state's legitimacy, and the current robust trade between Turkey and the KRG is helping to develop southeastern Turkey's economy. Combined with economic initiatives, political reforms and concessions are also necessary.

These must generally be aimed at helping to mitigate the discontent that breeds insurgency in the first place. The details and timing of such a political program remain unclear, however, especially with Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party facing the threat of legal closure for violating constitutionally-mandated secularism. While any Turkish governing party faces severe challenges reforming the state's approach toward its Kurdish minority, one under the threat of legal closure must likely focus on more immediate, pressing issues than a new Kurdish policy.

David Romano is an assistant professor of International Studies at Rhodes College.

(This article first appeared in The Jamestown Foundation. Used with permission.)



Missan - Voices of Iraq
May 15, 2008

Article 140...end of deadline, start of questions

Baghdad, May 15, (VOI) - By the beginning of next July, the extension of the extra term of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution will end, raising questions over one of the most controversial Iraqi issues.

The questions will focus on the fate of the constitutional article, which have to settle the disputes in the Iraqi ethnic areas, mainly the oil-rich Kirkuk.

Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution is related to normalization in Kirkuk, an important and mixed city of Kurds, Turcomans, Christians, Arabs, and Assyrians.

Kurds seek to include the city in the autonomous Iraq's Kurdistan region, while

Sunni Muslims, Turcomans and Shiites oppose the incorporation. The article currently stipulates that all Arabs in Kirkuk be returned to their original locations in southern and central Iraqi areas, and formerly displaced residents returned to Kirkuk, 250 km northeast of Baghdad.

The article also calls for conducting a census to be followed by a referendum to let the inhabitants decide whether they would like Kirkuk to be annexed to the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region or having it as an independent province.

These stages were supposed to end on December 31, 2007, a deadline that was later extended to six months to end in July 2008.

The former regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had forced over 250,000 Kurdish residents to give up their homes to Arabs in the 1970s, to "Arabize" the city and the region's oil industry.

The extension of the deadline flares up big controversy between Iraqi parliamentary blocs and politicians.

From the Arabs side, some voiced concern that some Iraqi regions, such as Kirkuk, could be included in Kurdistan region if the article was implemented.

"Article 140 failed by the end of 2007 because the term is part of the constitutional article and not separated from it," MP Usama al-Nigiefi said.

"Several lawmakers, politicians, and legal experts believe that the article ended," he underlined.

"Even the Kurdish side is convinced that the issue ended and another solution should be found," he added.

He expressed belief that extending the deadline was 'illegal'.

"The constitutional amendments committee, which works in accordance to Article 142, is the only one which can change the article or amend it and this did not happen actually," the legislature noted.

For his part, MP from the Kurdistan Coalition (KC) attributed the controversy to an absence of good intentions, announcing Kurd's commitment to the article.

"Article 140 is not a problem of time but a problem of intentions," Saadi al-Barzanji said.

"Not implementing the article contributes in the continuity of tensions and

instability as Kirkuk and other disputed areas spread a state of tension since the establishment of the Iraqi state until now," he explained.

"Honest intentions could lead to the agreement on another extension of deadline," the Kurdish official highlighted.

"There are different suggestions regarding the article; some want to cancel it and others want to find other solutions, but the Kurdish side is sticking to it as originally worded in the Constitution," al-Barzanji continued.

A member of the Unified Iraqi Coalition admitted that the constitutional amendments committees facing a lot of obstacles which affect its work.

He expected another extension because, according to him, it is not enough to solve all these disputes.

Raed Fahmi, the head of the committee assigned to implement Article 140, said that the article remains constitutional despite there having been a date for its implementation.

Tareq Harb, a legal expert, said that "so far the article did not complete the first stage (the normalization stage) and there are two other stages (census and referendum)."

"I think the remaining time is not enough to complete the three stages," he asserted.

SH/SR

TODAYS ZAMAN

May 15, 2008

Türk to Erdoğan: PKK not cause, but effect of Kurdish problem

Today's Zaman

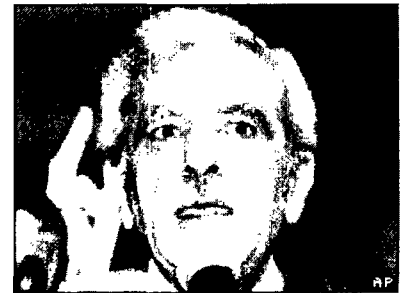
Ahmet Türk, the chairman of the parliamentary group of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP), said yesterday that the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is not a cause, but an effect of Turkey's Kurdish problem and that the country must first solve the Kurdish problem if it is to solve the PKK problem.

Speaking at the DTP's parliamentary group meeting, Türk said: "The state has been waiting for them to surrender for 20 years. Mr. Prime Minister finds consolation in these empty expectations. They think that the problem will be solved when people surrender. Shouldn't you tidy your home before calling people to return home? Who would want to return, given the current state of this home? Who returned in the past? At this point, the essence of the problem should be addressed. The problem is not one of the return of several people or of introducing pardons. The PKK is the result of the Kurdish problem, not its cause. If you do not solve the Kurdish problem by tidying your home, then this PKK will go and another PKK will come. Turn

the pages of history and see this. ... Why do you deny this? The problem is inside this house. It should not be sought in other places, in the mountains or rocks. Do you really want those young people in the mountains to come back? Then, start the democratic participation process. Take a step toward it."

Touching on Sunday's Mother's Day celebrations, Türk said: "I wonder how I can celebrate this day immersed in blood and tears. Unfortunately, we are living in a place where mothers tend to lament for their lost ones. How can we celebrate this day in such an atmosphere? What can we say to our mothers? Are we giving them peace or friendship? What is the present we offer to them in return for their unique labors? How can we celebrate this day? Let us give our mothers the best of all presents: peace and friendship."

Türk also briefed his colleagues about the DTP's three-day visit to northern Iraq and its meeting with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani. He noted that the DTP and Talabani agreed that a solution to the Kurdish issue should be based on a common strategy. Türk maintained that Turkey



was the only place where the Kurdish problem can be solved, adding that Turkey has closed itself to Iraqi Kurds because of its fears.

"However, we believe that the Middle Eastern peoples may contribute to the process. We are not seeking external support, as some groups are doing. The reason why we attach importance to this dialogue attempt by Ankara is that we think that this will contribute to Turkey overcoming its 'Kurdophobia.' The peaceful atmosphere that is based on friendship Turkey will establish with the Iraqi Kurds may contribute to the solution of the Kurdish problem," he said.

TURKISH DAILY NEWS

May 16, 2008

DTP leader seeks political project to end violence

ANKARA - Turkish Daily News

The parliamentary group leader of Turkey's pro-Kurdish party said Wednesday that his party will help end violence if a political solution is proposed.

"We tell the (outlawed) Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) that armed struggle harms the Kurds. It reinforces the military's hand, Ahmet Türk of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) told reporters, according to the Web site of Iraq's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), PUKmedia.

He said the PKK has communicated to the DTP that it will end violent conflict if a concrete step is



taken in that direction, or a project is proposed.

But we cannot be effective since there is no such proposal," Türk said. "If we insist on it we will anger our people. They have pitted us against our people, he said.

Türk visited Iraqi President Jalal Talabani last week. Türk discussed methods for ending the armed conflict and expressed the necessity of coming up with a project by Turkey so that the PKK can lay down its weapons, according to a statement released by the DTP yesterday. We think that without such a project, impositions are baseless, it said.

The DTP's Şırnak deputy, Hasip Kaplan, said he was with Türk in northern Iraq and confirmed

that Türk said conflict harms Turkey, its people, peace, brotherhood and democracy, in a press meeting at Parliament yesterday.

The DTP's members persistently refuse to condemn the PKK's use of violence in their statements, drawing criticism from other political parties. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan rejected Türk's offer to meet last month, saying that it would be inappropriate for the government's head to meet with people who refuse to declare the PKK a terrorist organization.

Some groups thrive on violence, said Türk in his response to questions. If the state insists on

solving this problem by military means we cannot do anything. If a political project is proposed and the PKK does not stop the war, we will oppose the PKK, he said.

He also accused the Justice and Development Party (AKP) of treating the problem in northern Iraq as if it is a problem of umma, the world's Muslims.

Türk's words misunderstood

Türk's words however, were misunderstood as if to imply that he referred to the PKK's actions as terrorist activities. Türk and other DTP officials refuted such claims.

Türk said Talabani told him that the Kurdish issue should be solved through diplomatic and political means and he told the president the DTP is exerting efforts to end violence, reported daily Milliyet.

The AKP's deputies welcomed Türk's misreported words. The AKP's deputy leader, Necati Çetinkaya, found the DTP leader's statements very positive. I hope we can see its end too, he said.

No dispute is ever solved with arms. We call on everyone to lay down their arms and surrender to the state, Çetinkaya said.

May 17, 2008

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

The Kurds: a ghostly and embarrassing nation

BRENDAN O'LEARY

INVISIBLE NATION

How the Kurds' Quest for Statehood is Shaping Iraq and the Middle East
By Quil Lawrence
Walker & Company,
366 pages, \$28.95

Thinking of Kurds makes two types of North American feel guilty or embarrassed.

Liberals and leftists who oppose the U.S. military presence in Iraq do not like to be reminded that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is a success story, or that its citizens refer to the liberation, not the occupation, of Iraq, and do not want a hasty exit strategy from a new U.S. president to destroy their accomplishments. The region is democratic, peaceful, becoming prosperous and pro-American, and its government is willing to recognize Israel.

The "realist" rightists, the Kissingers, Scowcrofts and Bakers, and others among Washington's basement Machiavellians, do not like to be reminded that they betrayed the Kurds to the genocidal Baathists. In 1975, they did so to cement a deal between the Shah of Iran and Saddam Hussein. In the 1980s, U.S. policy-makers aided Saddam against Ayatollah Khomeini, and Arabs against Kurds - even denying that the Baathists gassed Kurdish civilians. In 1991, president George H. W. Bush called on Kurds and Shia Arabs to revolt against Saddam, but left them to the butcher's mercy when oil-rich Kuwait was freed.

Liberals and leftists would like to forget about the Kurds: They embarrass their simple good-and-evil portrait of the Iraq wars (note my use of the plural). By contrast, the realist rightists

actively want to betray them again, as the Baker-Hamilton Report of 2007 made clear.

The Kurdistan Region is a truly remarkable embarrassment for certain theories and bigots. It is a Muslim-majority democracy in which women have rights, and families drink Christian-made wine at spring picnics outside Sulaimania. In the capital, Erbil, the elected Kurdistan National Assembly zealously protects the co-sovereign rights it won in the negotiation of Iraq's constitution. That was endorsed by four out of five of Iraq's voters in October, 2005, and with the near-unanimous consent of Kurds.

The region's elected president, Masoud Barzani, watches warily for signs of another U.S. betrayal, like that of 1975, which destroyed his father, Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the great guerrilla general. In Baghdad, his coalition partner and long-term rival Jalal Talabani serves as president of Iraq, trying to coax the Arab parties to implement the constitution.

The Kurdistan Region has more autonomy within Iraq than Quebec has in Canada, and more than any member-state in the European Union. It has full control over its security, governs in its own language, has full authority over its natural resources and has a proportional share of Iraq's oil revenues from currently exploited fields. It shares power in one of the formally weakest federal governments in the world; the important exclusive competencies of the federal government can be numbered on less than one set of fingers. Kurdistan's diplomatic missions are entitled to represent the region's interests on all important domestic policy matters.

The Kurds of Iraq have therefore, through their own efforts, won some-

thing better than formal independence and membership of the United Nations. They enjoy the substance of independence without giving their Turkish or Iranian neighbours any reasonable excuse to intervene to block their sovereign rights.

They are, Quil Lawrence says in this well-crafted and elegantly written book, an "invisible nation."

The former BBC correspondent in Iraq draws upon his extensive and valuable interviews with Kurdish leaders, new Arab leaders and former and serving U.S. policy-makers to provide a very effective and generally very accurate contemporary history of the Kurds of Iraq.

He makes only two significant mistakes, one of which may owe most to U.S. editors' misleading style rules. He asserts that "The Kurds are the largest ethnic group on Earth that has no homeland." In fact, most Kurds are living on their homeland; what they have lacked is a genuinely self-governing region, or a sovereign and independent state of their own.

What Lawrence relates, in a compelling narrative, is the accidental means through which the Kurdistan Region has become a state within the federation of Iraq, one that deserves its right to breathe. Those who recommend an immediate U.S. withdrawal from Iraq and a handover to the United Nations need to be asked what that will do for the Kurds, and asked what the 22 Arab majority member-states of the UN have ever done to protect the human, let alone the national, rights of the Kurds.

The other error is Lawrence's assertion that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has ratified its own regional constitution. Having advised on its drafting, I know that the regional

constitution has been neither legislated nor ratified. That is partly because the Kurdistan government and National Assembly want to consult widely, including with the prospective new minorities that should soon join it from Kirkuk and other currently "disputed territories."

Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani has promised that the region's new constitution will contain state-of-the-art provisions to protect non-Kurdish nationalities and other human rights. I expect him to abide by that promise, which will be essential to assist in a calm unification of historic Kurdistan within Iraq.

Lawrence tells a vivid, lucid, "warts and all" account of the Kurdish national liberation movement in Iraq. He is unsparing in his evaluation of internal Kurdish conflicts, especially those of the mid-1990s between the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the KDP, led by Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the PUK, led by Talabani.

He also, rightly, acknowledges the remarkable and mostly uninterrupted run of good luck of the Kurdistan Region since 1998. But if the 21st century is to be kinder to the Kurds of Iraq than the 20th was, if its experiment is not to be crushed by Turks, Iranians and Sunni Arabs, it will need liberals, leftists and rightists within the Western democracies to defend what the Kurds have accomplished under the U.S. umbrella - but not under Uncle Sam's directions.

Brendan O'Leary is Lauder Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania, the lead editor of *The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq* (2006) and editor of *The Kurdistan Region* (2008).

Herald ^{INTERNATIONAL} Tribune
May 16, 2008

Fight rages over Sadr City wall, despite truce

By Michael R. Gordon

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi soldier was watching over the concrete wall Monday when a .50-caliber round ripped into his head.

Soon after the attack was reported on the tactical radio, two U.S. military advisers were on their way to the scene, laser range finder in hand, to call in a Hellfire missile strike on a sniper position on the far side of a desolate no man's land.

This is the war over the wall. It is a daily battle of attrition waged over the large concrete barrier that the Americans have been building across Sadr City in the hope of establishing a safe zone in the southern tier of the Shiite enclave.

The formal truce that was announced in the Green Zone with great fanfare Monday has meant nothing here. Shiite militias have been trying to blast gaps in the wall, firing at the U.S. troops who are completing it and maneuvering to pick off the Iraqi soldiers who have been charged with keeping an eye on the partition.

U.S. forces have answered with tank rounds, helicopter rocket strikes and

even satellite-guided bombs to try to silence the militia fire. On some stretches, the urban landscape has been transformed as the Americans have leveled buildings militia fighters have used as a perch to mount their attacks.

"The enemy kept coming back to some of the same buildings," Colonel John Hort, the commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, said during a recent visit at Thawra II, a joint U.S.-Iraqi outpost that abuts a section of the wall that has been a hotbed of militia resistance.

"We ended up having to use some larger ordnance out of our air force to reduce some of the buildings around here," he said.

Even while U.S. forces deploy reconnaissance drones and satellite-guided rockets, the American strategy in Sadr City is a throwback to a more primitive form of warfare. It depends on concrete — lots of it, which comes in large slabs that are being assembled into an imposing barrier five kilometers long, or three miles.

The Americans began building the wall a month ago, working east to west. The work started at night but soon ex-

tended into the day as U.S. commanders sought to speed up construction of the barrier.

Supporters of Moktada al-Sadr, the anti-American cleric, have denounced the wall as a nefarious effort to divide the city. Militia fighters with rocket-propelled grenades, machine guns and small arms have been trying to halt its construction.

Those efforts have failed, and the barrier is now 80 percent complete. But the fighters have blown a few gaps in the wall and, in one instance, appear to have hitched a truck to a damaged slab to yank it down.

To make it hard for the Americans to fix the holes, the fighters have continued to seed the strip south of the barrier with explosively formed penetrators, a lethal type of roadside bomb. Some have been hidden in cracks or depressions in the wall itself.

Lieutenant Colonel Michael Pemrick, deputy commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, and his security detail headed to Sadr City in armored mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles Monday, when the cease-fire was announced. Iraqi soldiers have a tendency



Robert Nickelsberg for The New York Times

U.S. troops on patrol near the wall that divides Sadr city. One side is controlled by the Iraqi Army; the other by Shiite militias.

Ahmadinejad exploits religion, critics charge

By Nazila Fathi

to defend static positions, and the colonel wanted to see what they were doing to monitor the wall.

Driving to an Iraqi Army position near the barrier, Pemrick pressed First Lieutenant Salwan Abd al-Amer to take some of his soldiers and join the Americans on a patrol through the alleys and streets.

A man who seemed pleased that a security force was finally passing through his otherwise unprotected neighborhood volunteered that militia fighters had hidden a bomb near a local power generator.

An Iraqi soldier entered the compound and emerged triumphantly with a bag full of explosives.

But the patrol also identified a problem: the militias had destroyed one of the slabs in the wall. Although it was just a few blocks from the Iraqi soldiers' position, the opening was undefended.

The explosives were loaded into a truck, which the Americans led to an Iraqi battalion headquarters in the rear so it could be picked up by a U.S. explosive ordnance detachment that day.

On Tuesday, Pemrick went forward again to visit an Iraqi outpost near the wall that was commanded by First Lieutenant Adel Ali.

A small fleet of U.S. armored vehicles was positioned nearby. They were working to extend the wall under the protection of two M1 tanks.

The troops came under fire and one of the tanks answered by firing three rounds into a building just north of the barrier, setting it alight.

As the colonel and his soldiers returned to their base the tactical radio crackled with reports of roadside bombs found, tips about hidden arms caches and enemy fire received.

The Iraqi troops where the soldier had been struck in the head Monday were holding their ground, but they were under attack again.

It was Day Two of the formal ceasefire, and the fighting was still on.

TEHRAN: In his three years as president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been harshly criticized in the West. But he is increasingly drawing fire from Shiite clerics here, who accuse him of using religion to distract attention from his government's failure to deliver on promises of prosperity and political freedoms.

In a news conference last week, the president lashed out at those who were "insulting and mocking" him about a Shiite belief that he said was based on Islamic teachings.

The tensions surround Imam Mahdi, the 12th and last imam, who the Shiite faithful believe will one day emerge from 1,000 years in hiding to save mankind and bring justice to the world. Tens of thousands of pilgrims go each year to the Jamkaran mosque near Qum, 120 kilometers, or 75 miles, south of Tehran, where they believe the imam will one day emerge.

Ahmadinejad, who took office in 2005 declaring his intention to "hasten the emergence" of Mahdi, said in a speech broadcast nationally this month that Mahdi supported the day-to-day workings of his government and was helping him in the face of international pressure.

That was too much for senior clerics, who contend they alone are qualified to speak on the topic.

"Mr. Ahmadinejad's remarks are common beliefs in Shiite Islam, but they were never brought up in politics and for political purposes by a noncleric," said Farid Moddaressi, a religion reporter in Tehran. "Mr. Ahmadinejad's views come from a religion which is defined by its clerics, but they believe that he is not a religious authority to make such remarks."

Ahmadinejad, who has established a well-financed foundation to prepare the nation for the imam's return, was stung by the criticism.

"To deny the help of the imam is very bad," he said in his news conference. "It is very bad to say that the imam will not emerge for another few hundred years; who are you to say that?"

Ahmadinejad is widely viewed in Iran as a deeply religious man. He has maintained a modest way of life, keeping a 30-year-old car and a simple house in the lower-middle-class neighborhood of eastern Tehran.

"He is an absolute believer in the principles of religion and tries to implement them in his work," said Mojtaba Samareh Hashemi, a senior adviser to the president. "When he talks about justice, he means a logical, philosophical justice that leads to religion."

But many in Iran say that Ahmadinejad may not share all the conservative beliefs of Shiite clerics.

He was once shown on television kissing the hand of his childhood teacher, a woman, even though it is deemed inappropriate for Muslims to touch members of the opposite sex to whom they are not married or otherwise related.

He challenged senior clerics in 2006 by defying a ban on women going to stadiums to watch men play soccer, but had to back down.

"He is religious, but he is not traditional," said Saeed Leylaz, a political commentator in Tehran. "He kisses the hands of women, believes women should be allowed to go into stadiums and he truly believes that the ground for the coming of Mahdi should be prepared."

In his speech, which was made last month but not broadcast immediately, Ahmadinejad said that Mahdi was directing his government's policies. He said he had the imam's hidden support when he gave a speech at Columbia University in New York last September and was insulted by the president of the university.

With Mahdi's support, he said, 500 million people watched him on television. Ahmadinejad also said the United States had attacked Iraq because it had found out that "the divine hand" — apparently a reference to Mahdi — was going to emerge there.

The escalation of the dispute in recent days seemed to suggest that Ahmadinejad was challenging Shiite clerics, who are assumed to be the sole interpreters of the faith.

Several of Ahmadinejad's critics said that by linking his government to Mahdi, he was trying to deflect criticism of his economic policies, which have led to double-digit inflation.

A senior conservative cleric, Ayatollah Muhammad Reza Mahdavi Kani, warned him last week against talking about Mahdi and said that even the founder of the 1979 Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, had not claimed any links with the imam.

Another cleric, Mehdi Karroubi, who ran for president when Ahmadinejad was elected in 2005, warned that people could lose their faith in Mahdi.

"People would say that if the current situation is his management before his emergence, what would happen after his emergence," he said, referring to the soaring food prices, the daily newspaper Etemad Melli quoted him as saying.

"We need to talk about realities," said Karroubi, a former speaker of Parliament. "We should not link everything to religious and hidden issues."

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW May 17, 2008

KURDISH LEADER WANTS U.S. TROOPS TO STAY

By Bill Zlatos TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Nechirvan Barzani, prime minister of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, warns against an early exit of American troops from his country.

"Any withdrawal soon will be a disaster for Iraq and for Kurdistan and for everybody," Barzani said Friday during a news conference at Washington & Jefferson College. "Of course, it's true one day they have to come back home. They're not going to stay forever."

Barzani, 42, is receiving an honorary doctorate of public service today from the Washington County college.

"I believe that the Iraqi forces should be ready for this -- army, police, security -- and from a distance the United States can support them," he said. "At that time, the United States can withdraw troops gradually."

Barzani declined to take sides in the U.S. presidential election, even though Democrats Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton have urged for a more rapid withdrawal of troops than John McCain, the presumptive Republican nominee.

"Whatever is good for the United States is good for us," Barzani said.

The prime minister repeatedly took the time to express his gratitude to the United States.

"We highly appreciate the sacrifices the American people have given for Iraq," he said.

Barzani said the political and economic situation is better in Kurdistan than the rest of the country because his region has been a free state since 1991 when it formed its own security force.

The situation in the rest of the country has improved, he said, and Iraqis are fighting al-Qaida.

Barzani credited the improvement to the surge of U.S. troops,

greater training for Iraqi forces, the creation of regional councils similar to planning commissions and the Iraqis' acceptance of



responsibility for their country's security.

Barzani was candid about the cause of deteriorating conditions in Iraq after the early success of the invasion.

"Probably Washington is to be blamed for that," he said. The picture was not clear to Washington at that time."

Barzani has been prime minister of Kurdistan since 1999 and has led the Kurdistan Democratic Party since 1989.

He and his family fled from Iraq to Iran with tens of thousands of Kurds in 1975 to escape the regime of Saddam Hussein.

Barzani said he has been offered other honorary doctorates, but this is the first he has accepted.

"First, because it's a historic place," he explained. "Second, it's in the United States."

THE TIMES May 20, 2008

Iraq could have largest oil reserves in the world

Sonia Verma in Sharm el-Sheikh

Iraq dramatically increased the official size of its oil reserves yesterday after new data suggested that they could exceed Saudi Arabia's and be the largest in the world.

The Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister told *The Times* that new exploration showed that his country has the world's largest proven oil reserves, with as much as 350 billion barrels. The figure is triple the country's present proven reserves and exceeds that of Saudi Arabia's estimated 264 billion barrels of oil. Barham Salih said that the new estimate had been based on recent geological surveys and seismic data compiled by "reputable, international oil companies... This is a serious figure from credible sources."

The Iraqi Government has yet to ap-

prove a national oil law that would allow foreign companies to invest. Mr Salih said that the delay was damaging Iraq's ability to profit from oil output, robbing the country of potentially huge revenues. With oil selling for more than \$125 dollars a barrel and demand rising, Mr Salih is frustrated that Iraq still struggles over the establishment of a regulatory framework. "There is a real debate in the Government and among political leaders about the type of oil management structures we should have. I am for liberalising this sector and allowing the private sector to come in to develop these vast resources."

BP, Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Royal Dutch Shell and Total have been queuing for rights to exploit Iraqi reserves. Mr Salih confirmed that Iraq was negotiating the outlines of two-year deals with some of the companies. He was optimistic that a draft law could be approved in the near future.

"We need to recognise after so many decades of mismanagement of the oil industry that we need to call a spade a spade," he told a group of delegates at the World Economic Forum in Sharm el-Sheikh. "We can regulate it, but we need private investment to develop Iraq's production capacities." He said that Iraq was pumping 2.5 million barrels of oil a day at present, earning about \$70 billion (£35.9 billion) in revenue this year.

The price of oil bounced back to record highs yesterday when Opec refused to increase supplies following Saudi Arabia's promise to the US that it would provide an extra 300,000 barrels a day. In New York, the price of light, sweet crude for June delivery rose from \$125.92 to US\$126.35. In London, Brent crude for July delivery was up 82 cents at \$125.81 per barrel.

OPINION

WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS IN IRAQ

By NECHIRVAN BARZANI

While the media offers mostly images of violence, and many Americans have grown weary of the war in Iraq, I bring hopeful news to Washington this week as I meet with the administration and members of Congress.

Since 2003, we have built the Kurdistan Region as a model for democracy and a gateway for development for all of Iraq. We are willing partners in this transition toward an Iraqi government that is representative of all its people. Through our peshmerga forces, we provide some of the most effective units against al Qaeda and other terrorist groups. We Kurds are committed to a federal, democratic Iraq at peace within its borders and with its neighbors.

We are working with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the Iraqi leadership in Baghdad on the difficult issues facing our country. Our relationship with Iraq's federal government has never been better. And progress is being made on an oil law, the status of disputed territories, the proper role for Iraq's neighbors to play, and on relations between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Turkey.

First, the oil law. We will now start negotiations using a draft drawn up in February of 2007. We'll also establish a process to send the national oil law, the revenue sharing law, and the laws concerning the Iraqi National Oil Company and the Oil Ministry in Baghdad to parliament as one package – to be voted up or down.

New oil contracts will be approved based on agreed-upon guidelines. The oil exploration contracts the KRG has already signed won't present a problem, because they were negotiated based on the highest standards of transparency.



There is also progress in settling the status of Kirkuk and other disputed territories. Previous Iraqi regimes expelled Kurds, Turkmen and Christians from Kirkuk, and gerrymandered provincial borders to change its demography. Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution establishes a legal process to remedy this injustice. We are encouraged that the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General is helping to develop a proposal regarding the implementation of Article 140.

As we resolve internal issues, we also understand the importance of a peaceful relationship with all our neighbors, based on mutual respect and noninterference in internal affairs.

To that end, we will continue reassuring our neighbors that a federal Iraq is not a threat. But we will also continue to encourage our neighbors to do what they can to stop terrorists from infiltrating Iraq.

We think it is imperative that Middle Eastern states send their diplomatic representatives to Iraq, and for these states to proactively prevent terrorists from slipping across their borders. Unprovoked and recurring bombardment of the Kurdistan Region by Turkey and Iran

must stop.

There has also been a historic step forward in KRG-Turkish relations. On May 1, I represented my government in the first high-level, official bilateral meeting with Turkey. Held in Baghdad, the meeting was conducted in a cordial atmosphere, and both sides stressed similar views on a wide range of issues. We reiterated to our Turkish colleagues our commitment to good neighborly relations, which is underscored by the growing Turkish investment in the Kurdistan Region. Our talks also focused on the need for practical steps and continued dialogue on all outstanding issues, including the problem of the PKK.

We Kurds understand and share America's frustration with the pace of political progress in Iraq. We are doing all we can to create security, stability and prosperity. While progress has not come fast enough, Iraq remains a worthy cause.

As Americans debate the future of the U.S. role in Iraq, allow me to say that America's mission remains vital to the stability and security of our region. A precipitous withdrawal of U.S. forces could be calamitous. We welcome a U.S. presence in the Kurdistan Region as part of any redeployment of forces.

The Kurdish people of Iraq suffered under Saddam Hussein. And we fought and died alongside Americans to liberate our country. There is no ambiguity about the depth of gratitude that Kurds feel for America's sacrifices in Iraq. Americans who have been killed or wounded in Iraq are heroes to me and to all of Iraq's Kurds. We will never forget what you have done for us.

Mr. Barzani is prime minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq.

United Press International

Kirkuk : Iraqi Kurds reject partition plan

BAGHDAD, May 22 2008 (UPI) -- Kurdish lawmakers in the Iraqi Parliament Thursday rejected a proposal to divide Kirkuk province into four constituencies for the October elections.

Usama al-Nujaifi with the Iraqi National List led by former Shiite Prime Minister Iyad Allawi said Arab and Turkmen lawmakers backed the measure in session as "one of the political solutions for resolving (the) Kirkuk issue," but Kurdish members rejected the move on principle, Voices of Iraq reported.

The issue pertains to Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, a three-step process that reverses the "Arabization" of Kirkuk when Saddam Hussein tried to influence demographics in the city.

Kurdish lawmaker Alla Talabani said his bloc "categorically rejected the proposal" and called on the United Nations to intervene if the issue remain unsettled.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki said a new Cabinet would make state-building and the rule of law a priority in the coming months.

"Our efforts in the coming stage should concentrate on building the state's institutions, depending on experience and qualification, and reinforcing law superiority, along with the rebuilding efforts and improving services," a statement from Maliki's office read.

The prime minister said recent military operations in Mosul, Basra and Baghdad's Sadr City targeted those who sought to undermine the authority of the Iraqi government and the stability of the state.

"The national agreement was not against anyone, but for the country, people, and law superiority's interest, and we harvested the fruits of combating and facing challenges," he noted.

TheNational

May 21, 2008

- UAE

Kurds and Arabs both lay claim to Kirkuk

Phil Sands and Nizar Latif, Foreign Correspondents

Kirkuk, Iraq // Iraq's Arabs and Kurds remain deeply divided about the future of the northern city of Kirkuk, with each group warning it will violently oppose any attempt by the other to take control. As Staffan de Mistura, the UN's Iraq mediator,

continues this month to draw up compromise proposals for what he called "the mother of all issues", mutual mistrust between the two ethnic groups remains deep-seated and widespread.

Iraqi Arabs accuse the Kurds of wanting to seize Kirkuk as a capital for their autonomous northern region, effectively stealing it from the hands of the central government in Baghdad and the nation's Arab majority. Kurds insist Kirkuk is

historically their city and, subject to a local referendum, should be administered by them as part of a federal Iraq. "If the Kurds insist on holding a referendum, what is already a bad situation will become much worse," said Sheikh Tarik al Abdullah, a senior Sunni Arab leader from Anbar province. "If they try to force the issue there will be violence, blood will be spilled."

Anbar province, Iraq's Sunni Arab heartland, has been a stronghold for the insurgency since the US-led invasion in 2003, with militants using it as a base for attacks in other areas, including Kirkuk. In recent months, tribes have cut back on insurgent activity, instead forming Sahwa – "awakening" – councils to fight against al Qa'eda alongside US and Iraqi forces. Under that alliance, Sunni tribes have grown stronger and critics warn that, if things do not go their way politically, they will have an increased capacity to carry out military strikes on their adversaries. In Kirkuk, that potentially means the Kurds who have their own forces, the 100,000 plus strong Peshmerga, will increasingly be in the firing line.

Sheikh Abdullah, one of five members on the High Council of al Anbar and a member of the Unification of Iraq Effort, a political coalition, rejected Kurdish claims of a majority in Kirkuk. "This is not the time to negotiate over something as sensitive as this," he said. "No one can say who is really the majority there. The former government [under Saddam Hussein] pushed Arabs to live in



An Iraqi Kurd sits outside a small settlement on the outskirts of Kirkuk, Iraq's disputed oil rich northern city. Emma LeBlanc / The National

Kirkuk and now the Kurds are pushing their people into the city. It's impossible to know who is really from Kirkuk. It's all about trying to win an election."

According to Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution, the fate of Kirkuk was supposed to be settled by a referendum last year, with residents voting on whether or not it should be part of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) area, the quasi-independent Kurdish northern zone of Iraq. The referendum was postponed and has still not taken place, officially for technical reasons. However, there are widespread concerns such a vote would reignite Iraq's civil war, shatter the fragile Arab-Kurd coalition government and potentially lead to the disintegration of Iraq as a unified nation state.

During his rule, Saddam Hussein used an Arabisation programme to control Kirkuk, one of Iraq's most strategically important areas and centre of its northern oil industry. Thousands of Kurds were forced from their homes and Arab families from central and southern Iraq were moved in to replace them. After the regime fell, displaced Kurds came flooding back. The Iraqi constitution calls for refugee families to return and the KRG provides financial assistance for rebuilding properties where old villages once stood. However, the influx of Kurds, including those not from the district, has been likened to a land grab, with new homes being quickly thrown up to ensure Kirkuk's population has a clear Kurdish majority.

"These homes are all about the referendum; this is all about getting people in here and making the city Kurdish," a Western official working with a non-government organisation in Kirkuk said, while surveying a series of cement block housing developments. The Kurds insist that Article 140 is still valid although, like the very character of Kirkuk itself, that is disputed. With the original timetable for the referendum having passed, some argue the clause has lapsed.

"This issue of Kirkuk isn't a problem because Article 140 is finished," said Sheikh Sa'ad al Hardan, another tribal leader from Anbar. "Publicly, it's still being discussed but it's finished. Iraqi people don't want Kirkuk to be part of Kurdistan; they want it as part of Iraq.

"Of course the Kurds want Kirkuk, but just because they want it doesn't mean we'll give it to them." In addition to the Kurdish-Arab dispute, Iraq's minority Turkoman community insists that Kirkuk is, in fact, their city. Neighbouring Iran, Turkey and Syria are also wary of the issue, fearing Kirkuk's oil wealth would embolden their own Kurd minorities and make an independent Kurdish state viable.

Mr de Mistura, the UN representative, was drafted in to diffuse this dangerous mixture of oil, ethnicity and national identity. He warned it is one of the most explosive issues facing the country and it is thought he may suggest Kirkuk be given a special stand-alone status, diverting or at least further postponing any referendum. But the extent of suspicion over Kirkuk is clear. A Kurdish Peshmerga commander said he believed the Arab authorities in Baghdad would forcibly try to take over the city.

"If the Iraqi government had a strong enough military I'm sure they would come and try to take Kirkuk by force. If they had the power they would try to push the Kurdish out of Kirkuk," said Major Mohammad Ali Omar, head of the Peshmerga in Shaqlawa. "But if that does happen, the Peshmerga will fight back. If anyone tries to deny the Kurds their rights, we will stand against them."

REUTERS

Iran-Turkey gas flow halted after blast

May 26, 2008 ANKARA (Reuters) - The flow of Iranian natural gas to Turkey was halted early on Monday after an explosion hit a gas pipeline in Turkish territory, a Turkish energy ministry official told Reuters.

"There is a good chance that the cause of the explosion on the pipeline was sabotage. The explosion occurred 13 kilometers (8 miles) inside Turkish territory," said the official, who declined to be named.

Work to repair the pipeline, hit just after midnight, was underway and it should be operational in a few days time, said a source, who declined to be named, at state gas company Botas.

"The first results of the investigation show damage to a 30 meter (98 ft) piece of the pipeline which will need to be replaced," the Botas

source told Reuters.

Sabotage is common on pipelines leading into Turkey from Iran and Iraq, where Kurdish separatist militants are based.

Iran is Turkey's second biggest supplier of natural gas after Russia.

Iran accounts for more than 20 percent of Turkish natural gas imports, though supplies from Tehran are often cut in the winter months as Iran has had difficulty covering its own supply needs.

Gas was cut last winter for nearly three weeks after Turkmenistan turned off the tap to the Islamic Republic, causing a domino effect as Turkey had to stop its gas exports to Greece.

Tarek Aziz

L'ombre du raïs en jugement



L'ex-ministre des Affaires étrangères de Saddam Hussein, complice des exactions du régime, comparaît aujourd'hui devant un tribunal irakien.

Sous Saddam Hussein il était l'homme au double visage. Affable lorsqu'il se trouvait hors d'Irak, donnant l'image d'une certaine modération, incarnant l'homme présentable du régime, celui que l'on pouvait envoyer chez le pape. Dur au contraire à l'intérieur du pays, aligné comme il se devait sur le raïs, serviteur dévoué, docile parmi les dociles, s'abstenant de fumer ses gros havanes quand le maître brandissait le sien lors des réunions du Conseil de commandement de la révolution (CCR). D'un côté, le blazer de bonne coupe pour faire bonne impression. De l'autre, l'uniforme baasiste, avec le béret de rigueur.

Cette fidélité sans faille valut longtemps à Tarek Aziz, âgé de 72 ans, la fonction de ministre des Affaires

étrangères. Il fut aussi l'un des vice-Premiers ministres de Saddam Hussein, poste d'ailleurs sans grande importance. Ombre d'un dictateur chargé d'en gommer les ombres, en se montrant avenant et en exhibant un anglais parfait, il représenta l'Irak pendant des décennies, figure la plus connue de l'Irak baasiste. C'est ce diplomate à tout faire, sans grand pouvoir du fait de son appartenance à la petite minorité chrétienne chaldéenne – lui-même n'était pas croyant –, que l'on juge aujourd'hui à Bagdad devant le Haut Tribunal pénal lors du quatrième procès d'anciens responsables du régime irakien.

Commerçants exécutés. Avec lui comparaissent sept anciens responsables, dont Ali Hassan al-Majid, surnommé «Ali le Chimique», deux demi-frères de Saddam Hussein, Watban et Sabawai, et le directeur de la Banque centrale. Ils sont jugés pour l'exécution en 1992 de 42 commerçants accusés d'avoir spéculé sur les prix des produits alimentaires, alors que l'Irak était soumis à des sanctions internationales effroyables imposées après l'invasion du Koweït en août 1990. Selon l'acte d'accusation, ces commerçants ont été arrêtés sur les marchés de grossistes de Bagdad et exécutés, suivant la mise en scène habituelle, après un simulacre de procès. Leurs biens avaient aussi été saisis.

Tarek Aziz, lui, nie tout lien avec ces exécutions. Son fils Ziad souligne de son côté qu'aucune famille de victimes n'a porté plainte contre son père. «Le commerce n'était pas du ressort de Tarek Aziz et l'ordre d'exé-

cuter la sentence n'a pas été pris à son niveau», souligne Gilles Munier, le président des Amitiés franco-irakiennes, qui se trouvait en visite en Irak à cette époque. A la différence de la plupart des dirigeants baasistes, Tarek Aziz s'était livré presque immédiatement aux troupes américaines après la chute de Bagdad, en avril 2003. Détenu au Camp Cropper, près de la capitale, il a depuis été plusieurs fois hospitalisé. Pour Munier, il ne fait aucun doute que l'ex-ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères va être condamné à mort. «Le

procès étant présidé par le juge Raouf Abdul-Rahman, qui a condamné Saddam Hussein à mort en 2006, il faut s'attendre à une parodie de justice suivie d'exécutions sommaires», ajoute-t-il. Déjà, l'avocat du prévenu, Badie Aref, ne sera pas présent pour le défendre. Ayant reçu des menaces de mort, il s'est réfugié à Amman, en Jordanie, dans la crainte de connaître le même sort que Khamis al-Obeidi, un des avocats de Saddam Hussein, enlevé lors de son procès, torturé et assassiné. **Barbarie établie.** Il n'y a guère dès lors que les Etats-Unis qui pourraient arracher une mesure de clémence du gouvernement irakien. Peu de chances qu'ils le fassent, d'autant plus que Tarek Aziz a fait partie jusqu'au bout du Conseil de commandement

Lors de ses passages à Paris, hommes d'affaires, politiques et diplomates se pressaient à son hôtel, rue de Rivoli. Pétrole oblige, il était l'un des hommes du Moyen-Orient les plus courtisés.

de la révolution, l'organe dirigeant du régime, où furent décidées les pires exactions. Dans le recueil de ses discours, on trouve des passages accablants qui témoignent de son adhésion à la barbarie établie. Dans celui du 17 juillet 1972, il justifiait les pendaisons des juifs et de dizaines d'autres innocents à Bagdad par ces mots: «Il ne faut pas croire que les centaines de milliers de personnes qui ont trouvé bon de sortir regarder les pendus sont des barbares ou des primitifs. Ce serait une injustice et aussi une fausse impression. Cet événement fut un moment élevé à la confiance par la Révolution, sur la place la plus importante de Bagdad, pour prouver au peuple que ce qui avait été impossible dans le passé était maintenant un fait qui parlait lui-même.»

Du temps où Tarek Aziz régnait sur la diplomatie irakienne, il était – pétrole oblige – l'un des hommes les plus courtisés du Moyen-Orient. Lors de ses passages à Paris, hommes d'affaires, politiques et diplomates se pressaient à son hôtel de la rue de Rivoli. Quelques années avant la chute de Saddam, lors d'un colloque international sur l'Irak, Serge Boixdevaix, qui fut secrétaire général du Quai d'Orsay – il est aujourd'hui inculpé dans le cadre du scandale «pétrole contre nourriture» – se présentait même comme le représentant personnel de Tarek Aziz en France. Aujourd'hui, hormis Jean-Pierre Chevènement, ils sont bien rares ceux qui ont signé la pétition en sa faveur.

JEAN-PIERRE PERRIN

LE FIGARO 21 mai 2008

Les islamo-conservateurs jouent leur survie politique à Ankara

TURQUIE

Menacé d'interdiction, le parti du premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, cherche une stratégie pour sortir de la crise.

LE PARTI de la justice et du développement (AKP), au pouvoir, a, pour l'instant, abandonné la tactique de l'attaque frontale pour tenter d'éviter son interdiction par la Cour constitutionnelle. Lundi, Ali Babacan, le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères, a déclaré que le gouvernement renonçait à son projet de modifier la Constitution : « Nous pensions mettre en place des amendements constitutionnels, afin d'élargir les libertés, mais nous avons suspendu ces travaux. (...) Le premier ministre préfère ne rien faire qui puisse aggraver les tensions. »

Malgré le soutien de la Commission européenne, qui a condamné le procès qui les vise, les islamo-conservateurs sont de plus en plus persuadés que la

fermeture de leur formation est inéluctable et que leur leader, le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, sera condamné. Sans attendre le verdict des juges, l'AKP cherche à mettre au point une riposte qui lui permettrait de sortir de la tourmente judiciaire sans être laminé et de rester en place.

De possibles élections législatives anticipées

En mars, une procédure judiciaire a été engagée contre l'AKP, accusé de vouloir saper les fondements laïques de la République et instaurer la charia selon le réquisitoire du procureur général de la Cour de cassation. La décision de la Haute Cour est attendue cet automne mais pourrait être rendue dès l'été. « L'AKP va être dissous, Erdogan devrait être interdit ainsi que d'autres membres du parti », a déclaré, sous couvert d'anonymat, un ministre à l'agence Reuters, en soulignant que le pessimisme était de mise dans les rangs du parti.

Né sur les décombres du Parti de la vertu (Fazilet), islamiste, interdit en 2001, l'AKP se prépare donc à créer un nouveau parti pour lui succéder. Mais le spectre du bannissement de la vie politique pendant cinq ans du président de la République, Abdullah Gül, et de soixante et onze cadres du parti représente la menace la plus dangereuse pour l'AKP. Éviter l'ostracisme de constitue la priorité de sa garde rapprochée pour qu'il échappe au sort qu'a connu l'ancien premier ministre islamiste Necmettin Erbakan : sa condamnation à cinq ans d'inéligibilité en 1998 avait précipité sa marginalisation.

En cas de condamnation de Recep Erdogan, la stratégie privilégiée consiste à organiser une élection législative partielle pour qu'il puisse se présenter en indépendant. Selon le président du Haut Comité électoral, cette candidature serait légale. Mais la perte de son immunité parlementaire pourrait invalider ce scénario. « Dans ce cas, estime l'éditorialiste Murat Yetkin, l'AKP perdrait sans aucun doute de sa force. » Sans leader, il risque d'être gangrené par les luttes intestines.

Car c'est la main de fer du premier ministre qui a jusqu'à présent permis de faire coexister en son sein des tendances concurrentes : religieuse, nationaliste,



Recep Tayyip Erdogan risque une condamnation à plusieurs années d'inéligibilité.

Ates Tumer/Sipa

libérale... Si les onze juges décident de fermer le parti et de décapiter son état-major, tous les observateurs politiques estiment que la tenue d'élections législatives anticipées sera inévitable. Et l'issue, incertaine.

LAURE MARCHAND

Le Monde

Vendredi 23 mai 2008

La Turquie se pose en arbitre régional pour garantir sa stabilité

ISTANBUL

CORRESPONDANCE

Le gouvernement turc a officiellement confirmé, mercredi 21 mai, que des pourparlers « indirects » étaient menés depuis plus d'un an entre Israël et la Syrie, par l'intermédiaire de la Turquie. Alliée stratégique du premier au Proche-Orient et voisine du second, la Turquie compte parmi les rares pays à pouvoir tenir ce rôle. « La Syrie et Israël ont entamé des négociations de paix sous les auspices de la Turquie », a sobrement commenté, mercredi, le ministre turc des affaires étrangères, sans s'étendre sur la nature et la forme des discussions.

Ces négociations israélo-syriennes n'étaient plus un secret : le chef de l'Etat syrien, Bachar Al-Assad, en avait fait part en avril. Elles avaient déjà été évoquées avant la conférence

d'Annapolis (Etats-Unis), en novembre 2007. Ankara avait alors accueilli avec les honneurs les présidents israélien et palestinien, Shimon Pérès et Mahmoud Abbas, qui avaient été applaudis par le Parlement turc. L'initiative turque avait été lancée en février 2007, après une visite du premier ministre israélien, Ehoud Olmert, à Ankara.

Depuis 2002 et l'arrivée au pouvoir du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, islamiste modéré et pro-européen), la Turquie multiplie les missions de ce type dans la région. Elle joue les facilitateurs entre Israël et certains pays comme l'Indonésie ou le Pakistan, sponsorise l'établissement d'une zone franche à Erez, à la lisière de la bande de Gaza... Une délégation des chefs du Hamas avait également été invitée pour une rencontre « officieu-

se » au siège de l'AKP en février 2006, après leur victoire aux élections législatives, afin d'inviter le mouvement islamiste palestinien à négocier avec Israël et, là aussi, de faire passer des messages. Avec la Syrie, la relation est apaisée depuis 1999 et les intérêts convergent sur la question kurde comme sur les projets énergétiques. Les échanges de visites entre Recep Tayyip Erdogan et Bachar Al-Assad ont rapprochés les deux pays.

Ce rôle se manifeste aussi par la présence d'un contingent turc dans les forces des Nations unies au Liban. A Beyrouth, la Turquie est en contact étroit avec le premier ministre libanais, Fouad Siniora, comme avec le Hezbollah, rappelle le ministre des affaires étrangères turc, Ali Babacan. Mais l'homme qui a inspiré cette hyperactivité turque sur la scène

régionale, n'est autre que le conseiller diplomatique de M. Erdogan, Ahmet Davutoglu.

Dans un article publié en 2008, cet universitaire a théorisé la « nouvelle vision de la Turquie en matière de politique étrangère » : une « politique étrangère multidimensionnelle », une diplomatie pragmatique qui permette à la Turquie de « garantir sa propre stabilité et sa sécurité en apportant l'ordre, la stabilité et la sécurité dans ses environs ».

Selon le conseiller du premier ministre, la normalisation des relations avec les voisins directs est prioritaire. L'Irak reste à ce titre un point noir du fait de la question kurde, mais là aussi, en accueillant à Istanbul le dernier sommet de ses pays voisins, la Turquie a tenté de jouer les arbitres. ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER

AFP

TURQUIE: SIX REBELLES KURDES, UN CIVIL TUÉ LORS DE COMBATS AVEC L'ARMÉE

ANKARA, 17 mai 2008 (AFP) - Six rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et un civil enlevé par les rebelles ont été tués dans le sud-est de la Turquie lorsque l'armée a lancé une opération pour secourir l'otage, a rapporté samedi l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Les rebelles ont enlevé un habitant de Güvendik, un village proche de la frontière irakienne, dans la province de Van, affirme l'agence, qui ne cite pas ses sources et ne précise pas quand se sont déroulés les faits.

Informées de cet enlèvement, les forces de sécurité sont intervenues alors que le groupe avait trouvé refuge dans une grotte située dans la zone frontalière

turco-irakienne, poursuit Anatolie, qui indique que l'otage a été tué par ses gardiens lors de l'assaut.

Trois rebelles, blessés, sont parvenus à s'enfuir, ajoute-t-elle, précisant que des cadres du locaux du PKK figuraient parmi les rebelles abattus.

Depuis décembre, l'armée turque a renforcé son action contre le PKK procédant à plusieurs raids aériens contre des bases rebelles. Elle a aussi effectué une incursion terrestre d'une semaine dans le nord de l'Irak où Ankara affirme que plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes ont trouvé refuge.

AFP

TURQUIE: UN SOLDAT TUÉ LORS DE COMBATS AVEC LES REBELLES KURDES

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 18 mai 2008 (AFP) - Un soldat turc a été tué et deux autres ont été blessés dimanche lors de combats avec des rebelles kurdes dans le sud-est de la Turquie, ont affirmé des sources locales.

L'accrochage s'est produit dans une zone rurale proche de la ville de Güçlükönak, dans la province de Sirnak, voisine de l'Irak, alors que l'armée menait une opération contre les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK),

selon ces sources.

Depuis décembre, l'armée turque a renforcé son action contre le PKK procédant à plusieurs raids aériens contre des bases rebelles. Elle a aussi effectué une incursion terrestre d'une semaine dans le nord de l'Irak où Ankara affirme que plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes ont trouvé refuge.

AFP

VIOLENCES SUR DES KURDES: LA TURQUIE CONDAMNÉE À STRASBOURG

STRASBOURG (Conseil Europe), 20 mai 2008 (AFP) - La Turquie a été condamnée mardi par la Cour européenne des droits de l'Homme pour les mauvais traitements infligés par des militaires à trois Kurdes, en violation avec la convention européenne des droits de l'Homme.

Les trois hommes aujourd'hui âgés de 35, 47 et 52 ans ont été arrêtés en juillet 1999 dans leur village de Dereboyu (est de la Turquie) lors d'une opération des forces de sécurité turques venues rechercher des activistes du PKK.

Selon les plaignants, des soldats leur ont bandé les yeux pour ensuite les frapper avec des matraques, et des crosses de fusils. Des contusions, des lèvres éclatées et des dents cassées furent notées dans les examens médi-

caux des trois hommes.

Les militaires tenus responsables de ces violences furent relaxés en 2005 pour "manque de preuves". Le jugement fut ensuite cassé par la cour de cassation en 2007 qui ordonna l'extinction de l'action pénale pour prescription.

La Cour européenne qui souligne que cette dernière circonstance "a définitivement écarté la possibilité de faire la lumière sur l'origine des blessures des intéressés" a conclu à la violation de l'article 3 de la convention (interdiction de traitements dégradants).

Ankara devra verser un total de 30.000 euros de dommages intérêts aux trois plaignants.

AFP

NEUF REBELLES KURDES, DONT CINQ FEMMES, TUÉS DANS L'OUEST DE L'IRAN (PRESSE)

TEHERAN, 24 mai 2008 (AFP) - Neuf rebelles kurdes, dont cinq femmes, ont été tués dans des affrontements avec les forces de l'ordre dans une province de l'ouest de l'Iran, frontalière de la Turquie, a rapporté samedi un journal.

"Des combats ont opposé des gardiens de la révolution à un groupe de dix personnes, et neuf d'entre elles ont été tuées", indique Jomhuri Eslami, décrivant le groupe comme "des membres de la branche armée du groupe terroriste Pejak".

Les heurts ont eu lieu dans le village de Gonbad, près de la ville de Orumieh, dans la province de l'Azerbaïdjan occidental, frontalière de la Turquie et de l'Irak.

"Il y avait cinq femmes et quatre hommes parmi les neuf corps. Sept étaient

turcs et deux iraniens", poursuit le journal, ajoutant que la dixième personne, qui a été blessée, est parvenue à s'enfuir vers la frontière turque.

Le journal Kargozaran a indiqué que les affrontements s'étaient déroulés mercredi soir.

Les provinces du nord-ouest de l'Iran, habitées de Kurdes, sont souvent le théâtre d'accrochages entre les forces de sécurité et les militants du groupe séparatiste kurde du Pejak.

Ce groupe est lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), basé dans le nord de l'Irak.

L'Iran accuse régulièrement les Etats-Unis de chercher à fomenter des troubles ethniques en soutenant des groupes de rebelles dans les provinces iraniennes comportant des minorités.

AFP

IRAN : UN KURDE CONDAMNÉ À MORT POUR "APPARTENANCE À UN GROUPE TERRORISTE"

TEHERAN, 27 mai 2008 (AFP) - Un enseignant kurde iranien, Farzad Kamangar, a été condamné à mort pour "appartenance à un groupe terroriste et possession d'explosifs", a déclaré mardi le porte-parole de la justice, Alireza Jamshidi, dans un point de presse.

"Farzad Kamangar est accusé d'appartenir à un groupe terroriste et d'avoir eu en sa possession des explosifs. Il a été condamné à mort pour appartenance à un groupe terroriste et à dix ans de prison, en compagnie de deux autres personnes, pour possession et transport d'explosifs", a déclaré M. Jamshidi.

Les deux autres personnes, dont l'identité n'a pas été précisée, ont été condamnées à seulement dix ans de prison, mais dans le cas de M. Kamangar c'est la peine capitale qui doit être appliquée.

Les trois hommes ont fait appel, selon M. Jamshidi.

Des associations internationales des droits de l'Homme, notamment Human Rights Watch, ont réclamé l'annulation de ce verdict.

En avril dernier, un tribunal iranien a condamné à mort un autre Kurde, Hivar Botimar, pour lien avec un groupe séparatiste, après l'annulation du premier verdict par la Cour suprême et l'ordre de tenir un nouveau procès.

La Cour suprême a annulé la condamnation à mort d'un autre Kurde, Adnan Hassanpour, 26 ans, emprisonné depuis janvier 2007 sous l'accusation d'espionnage.

Les condamnations à mort de MM. Botimar et Hassanpour avaient été prononcées en juillet 2007, et condamnées par de nombreux pays européens.

L'Iran est confronté aux actions armées du groupe séparatiste kurde iranien du Pejak, implanté dans l'ouest et le nord-ouest du pays et affilié au PKK.

Téhéran a accusé régulièrement les Etats-Unis de fomenter des troubles ethniques dans ses provinces frontalières, en apportant selon lui par exemple un soutien à des mouvements comme le Pejak.



Séance plénière - Avant-Première - 19-22 Mai 2008 - Strasbourg

LA TURQUIE DOIT ACCELERER SES REFORMES

Relations extérieures - 21 mai 2008

Les députés encouragent la Turquie à "transformer les priorités et les délais établis en plans de réforme", dans leur dernier rapport sur les progrès réalisés par ce pays. Adopté ce mercredi à une large majorité, le rapport salue plusieurs initiatives législatives prises récemment tout en soulignant la nécessité d'accélérer le rythme des réformes.

Les négociations d'adhésion avec la Turquie ont été ouvertes le 3 octobre 2005, point de départ d'un processus d'adhésion de longue haleine à l'issue encore ouverte. La Turquie s'est engagée à entreprendre des réformes, à entretenir de bonnes relations de voisinage et à intégrer progressivement l'acquis communautaire.

Le rapport d'initiative de Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE-DE, NL), adopté à une large majorité par 467 voix pour, 62 voix contre et 61 abstentions, se "félicite de l'engagement pris par le Premier Ministre Erdogan de faire de 2008 l'année des réformes" et "pousse le gouvernement turc de tenir ses promesses" à cet égard. Soulignant que "la modernisation est avant tout dans l'intérêt de la Turquie", il relève aussi que "de nouveaux retards affecteront sensiblement le rythme des négociations".

Rôle des juges et des militaires dans la Turquie moderne

Le Parlement "s'inquiète des implications de la demande d'interdiction de l'AKP" et "attend de la Cour constitutionnelle turque qu'elle respecte les principes de l'Etat de droit, les normes européennes et les lignes directrices de la Commission de Venise sur l'interdiction des partis politiques", et invite le parlement turc à mettre la constitution en conformité avec ces normes.

Le rapport considère également les modifications récemment apportées à l'article 301 du code pénal comme une "première étape vers une réforme fondamentale de cet article ainsi que d'autres articles du code pénal", et attend avec intérêt les nouvelles initiatives à cet égard. Le Parlement ajoute qu'à son avis "la meilleure solution consisterait à abroger l'article 301 ainsi que d'autres dispositions juridiques représentant une restriction injustifiable à la liberté d'expression garantie par le droit international".

Le Parlement "se félicite du fait qu'en 2007, la démocratie l'ait emporté sur les tentatives des militaires d'interférer dans le processus politique" et encourage le gouvernement à "poursuivre d'autres efforts systématiques pour garantir que les dirigeants politiques démocratiquement élus assument la pleine responsabilité de la formulation de la politique intérieure, étrangère et de sécurité" et que "les forces armées respectent cette responsabilité en reconnaissant pleinement et sans ambiguïté le contrôle des autorités civiles".

Enfin, les députés ont exprimé leurs inquiétudes au sujet "de l'utilisation excessive de la force par police turque à l'encontre des participants au rassemblement du 1er mai cette année à Istanbul."

Question kurde

Les députés pressent le gouvernement turc de lancer "une initiative politique favorisant un règlement durable de la question kurde", y compris un "plan directeur global pour relancer le développement socio-économique et culturel de la Turquie". Ils demandent aussi que soient prévues des "possibilités réelles d'apprendre le kurde dans les systèmes scolaires public et privés" et de l'utiliser à la radio et à la télévision, dans la vie publique et dans les services publics. Tout en considérant qu'une interdiction du parti DTP serait "contre-productive dans l'optique d'une solution politique", et en déplorant les "nombreuses attaques en justes menées contre des maires élus et d'autres responsables politiques ayant utilisé la langue kurde" ainsi que la récente condamnation de Leyla Zana, le rapport "appelle le DTP, ses membres élus au Parlement et les maires à se distancer clairement du PKK". Il appelle également le PKK à décréter et à faire respecter un cessez-le-feu immédiat.

Génocide arménien

Le Parlement demande au gouvernement de la Turquie de rouvrir sa frontière

avec l'Arménie, de rétablir des relations économiques et politiques entre les deux pays et appelle une nouvelle fois les deux gouvernements à engager, "dans le respect du présent et du passé, un processus de réconciliation permettant un débat franc et ouvert sur les événements passés; demande à la Commission de faciliter ce processus de réconciliation".

Egalité des chances

Le Parlement souligne que le projet de nouvelle constitution turque devra "garantir l'égalité des sexes, éviter de se référer à des critères vagues comme la moralité générale et de considérer les femmes essentiellement en tant que membres d'une famille ou d'une communauté, et réaffirmer les droits humains des femmes". Il relève aussi "la déception et les craintes d'une partie de la population du fait que la levée de l'interdiction du port du foulard dans les écoles et les universités turques ne s'inscrivait pas dans un ensemble plus large de réformes reposant sur une vaste consultation de la société civile".

Religions

Le gouvernement turc est invité à respecter, dans le contexte des réformes, le pluralisme et la diversité "dans une Turquie laïque et démocratique". Suite à la mesure positive que constitue l'adoption de la loi sur les fondations, le gouvernement turc devrait donner suite aux engagements qu'il a pris quant à la liberté de religion en établissant un cadre juridique permettant à toutes les communautés religieuses de fonctionner "sans contraintes excessives", en particulier pour ce qui concerne leur statut juridique, la formation du clergé, l'élection de la hiérarchie, l'éducation religieuse et la construction de lieux de culte.

La Commission devrait, selon les députés, analyser la question de savoir si cette loi résout toutes les questions auxquelles sont confrontées les communautés religieuses non musulmanes pour ce qui concerne la gestion et l'acquisition de biens immeubles, y compris les biens confisqués vendus à des tiers par le gouvernement de la Turquie.

Par ailleurs, les députés sont préoccupés par "l'hostilité témoignée avec force" dans certains secteurs de la société à l'égard des minorités et par les actes de violence motivés par des considérations politiques et religieuses. Les autorités turques sont invitées à mener une enquête approfondie sur l'assassinat de Hrant Dink et de trois chrétiens à Malatya, "de même que sur tous les autres cas de violence motivés par des considérations politiques, religieuses ou raciales".

Vittorio Agnoletto (GUE / NGL, IT) a annoncé que son groupe s'abstiendra lors du vote sur le rapport, car il ne traite pas de manière adéquate à la question kurde".

Débat qui a précédé le vote

"Depuis le dernier rapport, nous avons observé des développements très positifs en Turquie comme la loi sur les fondations et la réforme de l'article 301", a souligné le rapporteur, Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE-DE, NL). Mais le tableau est mitigé et des progrès sont encore nécessaires pour que "la Turquie puisse tenir ses promesses vis-à-vis de l'UE et de son propre peuple". Soulignant que 2008 devrait être l'année de réformes, elle a ajouté qu'"une nouvelle constitution est la seule voie pour le gouvernement d'assurer la séparation de l'Etat et de la religion et tous les représentants de la société civile doivent être impliqués dans ce processus". Et d'ajouter: "Une société qui se fonde sur l'Etat de droit pourra se développer dans la prospérité, j'en suis convaincue". Et de conclure: "Une société qui se fonde sur l'Etat de droit pourra se développer dans la prospérité, j'en suis convaincue".

Vittorio Agnoletto (GUE / NGL, IT) a annoncé que son groupe s'abstiendra lors du vote sur le rapport, "car il ne traite pas de manière adéquate à la question kurde".

Les députés de tous les groupes se sont inquiétés par ailleurs des critiques dont a fait l'objet ces dernières semaines, Joost Lagendijk (Verts/ALE, NL), président de la Délégation à la commission parlementaire mixte UE-Turquie.

Intervention des députés francophones

Selon Jacques Toubon (PPE-DE, FR), ce rapport est fouillé, "honnête et

courageux" (...) mais (...) de plus en plus irréal : "le Parlement européen continue à faire semblant comme si notre inlassable pédagogie pouvait faire changer la Turquie". Il y a une contradiction entre "ce grand pays, ce grand peuple" et l'avancement de l'Union européenne, notamment ses principes d'intégration, de délégation de compétence et de souveraineté. (...). "La Turquie est l'Etat Nation le plus conscient de lui-même, son unité est de type nationaliste; sa volonté d'indépendance est farouche". Son modèle strictement laïc se dégrade et tend vers une politique "sensiblement inspirée par une religion unique". Et d'ajouter : "arrêtons de leur faire croire que nous sommes prêts, soit à accepter leur adhésion sans réaliser véritablement les critères de Copenhague, soit à la leur refuser à cause d'eux, alors qu'il s'agit fondamentalement de ce que nous, nous voulons que devienne le projet européen". En revanche, le député a plaidé pour définir "une structure durable de partenariat qui, dans un esprit gagnant-gagnant, permette à la Turquie d'assumer son rôle de puissance régionale et à l'Union européenne de poursuivre la construction de son identité dans le monde", a conclu le député.

Véronique De Keyser (PSE, BE) a souligné l'importance de l'amendement 14 portant sur la santé reproductive. Il ne s'agit pas, pour les socialistes, d'un

"simple problème de bonne femme", mais du signe d'une claire séparation de l'église et de l'état, symbole de la laïcité. "Dans un pays qui pratique encore les crimes d'honneur, revendiquer pour les femmes des droits sexuels c'est s'opposer à toute dérive fondamentaliste, quelle qu'elle soit", a-t-elle ajouté.

Béatrice Patrie (PSE, FR) s'est félicitée de l'équilibre de ce rapport "qui envoie un signal positif à la Turquie". "Les négociations doivent se poursuivre sous présidence française", a-t-elle déclaré. "C'est parce que le groupe socialiste est en faveur de l'adhésion de la Turquie qu'aucune zone d'ombre ne doit subsister", a-t-elle ajouté dénonçant la banalisation du génocide arménien sous le terme de "grande tragédie".

Pour Pierre Pribetich (PSE, FR), "ce rapport exprime une position favorable à l'adhésion mais nous devons être exigeants sur le respect des principes démocratiques, de laïcité et des droits humains, à l'origine de la construction européenne". "La Turquie doit reconnaître le génocide arménien", a-t-il ajouté. Cette exigence du Parlement européen existe depuis 1987 et 21 ans plus tard, on arrive à une "formulation plate" sur ce génocide, a-t-il regretté.



23 mai 2008

TURQUIE • La justice s'acharne contre le parti au pouvoir

Alors que la Cour constitutionnelle doit se prononcer bientôt sur l'interdiction de l'AKP pour atteintes à la laïcité, le Conseil des présidents de la Cour de cassation et le Conseil d'Etat viennent d'émettre des avis très sévères à son égard. Revue de presse.

Pour l'écrivain Ahmet Altan, corédacteur en chef du quotidien *Taraf*, l'offensive des instances judiciaires contre le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP), au pouvoir, "n'est rien d'autre qu'une déclaration de guerre de la bureaucratie judiciaire contre le peuple". "En effet", poursuit Altan, "que fait la justice turque ? Elle se révolte contre la souveraineté d'un Parlement qui tire sa force de la volonté populaire. Le contenu de l'avis de la Cour de cassation est très éclairant de ce point de vue. On peut ainsi y lire à propos de la loi visant à lever l'interdiction du port du voile : "une loi adoptée à une vitesse qui empêche de l'arrêter". La Cour de cassation se plaint donc de ne pas pouvoir empêcher que soit adoptée une loi votée par trois des quatre partis de l'Assemblée nationale. A noter que ces trois partis représentent 80 % de la société. Quelques dizaines de juges croient donc qu'ils peuvent encore, comme dans le bon vieux temps, dicter à la société la façon dont celle-ci doit se comporter."

Selon Hasan Cemal, de *Milliyet*, en démocratie l'institution judiciaire doit rester indépendante et neutre. Or pourtant, poursuit Cemal, "cette même justice, qui sort donc maintenant de son rôle pour prendre des positions politiques, est restée bien silencieuse face aux préparatifs de coup d'Etat élaborés en 2003 et en 2004. Elle n'a d'ailleurs jamais interrogé les généraux à la retraite qui auraient été mêlés à

ces projets, courbant l'échine lorsque l'armée émet des ultimatums. Quelle est donc cette justice qui va jusqu'à exclure de la profession un procureur dans l'affaire Semdinli [attentat commis en 2005 qui a mis en exergue l'implication de militaires turcs dans des "escadrons de la mort" sur fond de question kurde], l'empêchant même de redevenir un simple avocat ? Quelle est cette justice qui ne réagit pas lorsqu'un juge du Conseil d'Etat va encore récemment jusqu'à approuver publiquement les exécutions commises après le coup d'Etat de 1960 ? Où est le droit là-dedans ? Vous pouvez ne pas apprécier la politique menée par l'AKP, les critiques ne manquent pas, mais si vous devez mener un combat contre l'AKP faites-le sur le terrain démocratique et non pas par des moyens douteux."

Dans le quotidien *Vatan*, Okay Gönensin souligne que l'AKP "s'est ainsi mis à dos les trois plus hautes instances judiciaires du pays". "La Cour de cassation et le Conseil d'Etat ont pris ouvertement position contre l'AKP, alors que la Cour constitutionnelle est déjà en train de gérer le dossier de l'interdiction de l'AKP. Par ailleurs, force est de constater que l'AKP est en conflit, non seulement avec le monde judiciaire, mais aussi avec une bonne partie des médias ainsi qu'avec la Banque centrale qui tente de résister à la politique populiste du gouvernement Erdogan. Ne parlons pas des relations entre les syndicats très détériorées depuis la



Ahmet Altan, Hasan Cemal et Okay Gönensin
DR

répression policière des célébrations du 1er mai. Si l'on ajoute à cela des rapports distants avec l'armée, on mesure l'impasse dans laquelle se trouve le gouvernement dont on se demande ce que, désormais, il dirige vraiment."

Pierre Vanrie

AFP

TURQUIE: DEUX SOLDATS TUÉS LORS DE COMBATS AVEC LES REBELLES KURDES

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 22 mai 2008 (AFP) - Deux soldats turcs ont été tués et un autre blessé mercredi soir lors d'un affrontement avec des rebelles kurdes dans le sud-est de la Turquie, tout près de la frontière irakienne, ont indiqué des sources locales jeudi.

L'accrochage s'est produit dans une zone montagneuse de Beytüşebap, dans la province de Sînak, voisine de l'Irak, alors que l'armée menait une opération de ratissage contre les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), selon ces sources.

Depuis décembre, l'armée turque a renforcé son action contre le PKK procédant à plusieurs raids aériens contre des bases rebelles. Elle a aussi effectué une incursion terrestre d'une semaine dans le nord de l'Irak où Ankara affirme que plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes ont trouvé refuge.

Le PKK est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne. Il a déclenché en 1984 une insurrection en vue d'obtenir l'indépendance du sud-est anatolien, dont la population est majoritairement kurde. Le conflit a fait plus de 37.000 morts.

Turquie : une diplomatie tous azimuts

par Frédérique Misslin

Ankara veut renforcer son rôle au Proche-Orient. Cet intérêt n'est pas nouveau mais la Turquie entend désormais jouer pleinement le rôle que lui confère dans la région son poids économique, sa puissance militaire et son passé historique. Une nouvelle orientation qui risque de froisser Washington mais qui ne remet pas en cause son alliance stratégique avec l'Etat hébreu.

Les diplomates turcs sont formels : « *il ne faut pas considérer la Syrie comme une annexe de l'Iran car Téhéran et Damas divergent sur les questions régionales* ». Ankara estime que les deux pays sont en désaccords sur le dossier palestinien, le Liban et les pourparlers avec Israël. C'est sur la base de cette analyse que les Turcs ont entamé leur mission de bons offices auprès des Syriens et des Israéliens. Pour eux, le règlement du volet israélo-syrien du processus de paix semble aujourd'hui plus réaliste qu'un accord israélo-palestinien puisque le conflit n'a qu'une dimension territoriale. Un raisonnement que ne partagent pas les Américains. Washington a salué, mercredi, du bout des lèvres, l'annonce de négociations israélo-syriennes mais la secrétaire d'Etat américaine, Condoleezza Rice, a rappelé que les pourparlers israélo-palestiniens sont aujourd'hui « *les plus matures* ».

La Turquie laisse parler les Américains et poursuit inlassablement sa stratégie de conciliation qui semble aujourd'hui porter ses fruits. Le dialogue était interrompu depuis l'année 2000 entre Israéliens et Syriens. Mais en coulisses, depuis un an, Ankara mène des discussions secrètes.

Une nouvelle orientation signée AKP

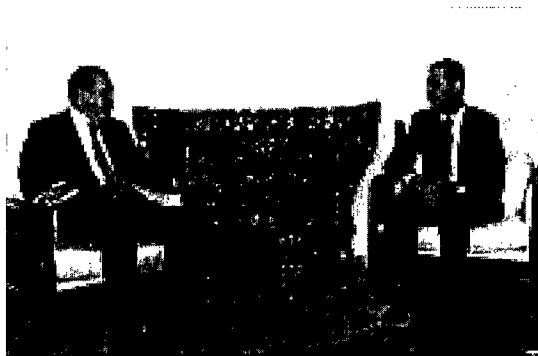
Les Turcs sont aujourd'hui persuadés qu'une discussion israélo-syrienne ne peut pas se limiter au plateau du Golan. Cette revendication syrienne est historique et fondamentale mais d'autres éléments peuvent entrer dans la « corbeille » de négociations. En effet, la Syrie entretient de bonnes relations avec le Hamas puisque Damas accueille les bureaux de l'organisation palestinienne. Le régime de Bachar al-Assad soutient par ailleurs le Hezbollah libanais qui menace la frontière d'Israël au Nord et espère parallèlement réaffirmer son influence au Liban, le tout sur fond de liens étroits entre Damas et Téhéran. La diplomatie turque a donc fait le pari d'un dialogue israélo-syrien pour stabiliser la région. La médiation turque est loin d'être terminée mais Ankara espère bien tirer les bénéfices de ce travail de longue haleine. Les turcs exigent en effet d'être les seuls intermédiaires dans cette affaire, brandissant la menace d'un échec si cette condition n'est



Le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères Ali Babacan (g) avec le ministre israélien de la Défense Ehud Barak à Charm el Cheikh, 19 mai 2008. (Photo : AFP)

pas respectée.

Depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir en Turquie, en 2002, du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) la politique étrangère turque a pris un nouvel élan. Théorisée par Ahmet Davutoglu (le conseiller du président Abdallah Gül), cette doctrine consiste à développer autant d'alliances avec le monde musulman qu'avec les puissances occidentales. Objectif final : la stabilité et la sécurité dans la région. Cette diplomatie multidimensionnelle s'est traduite au Moyen-Orient par des prises de positions parfois étonnantes. En 2002, le Premier ministre turc Ecevit n'avait pas hésité à qualifier ce qui se passait dans les



président Bachar al Assad (d) rencontre le Premier ministre turc Tayyip Erdogan à Damas, le 26 avril 2008. (Photo: Reuters)

territoires palestiniens de « *génocide* », assumant de déplaire à l'Etat hébreu, un allié pourtant solide et traditionnel. Ces dernières années, Ankara a renoué le dialogue avec l'Iran, a invité en 2006 des représentants du Hamas et a tenté un rapprochement avec le régime de Bachar al-Assad. Pour autant, les Turcs n'ont jamais remis en cause le traité de coopération militaire signé avec Israël en 1996. Ils ont également ouvert, en septembre 2007, leur espace aérien aux Israéliens lorsque ces derniers ont bombardé un site syrien suspecté d'abriter des installations nucléaires. Lorsque Yitzhak Mordechai était ministre

de la Défense en Israël, en 1993, il proclamait au sujet de la Turquie : « *Quand nous nous donnons la main, cela forme un poing puissant... notre relation est stratégique* ».

Une diplomatie ajustable aux circonstances

La nouvelle diplomatie d'Ankara évolue donc selon les circonstances et en fonction d'évaluations pragmatiques. La Turquie peut se le permettre : le pays est musulman mais laïc, oriental mais pas arabe. Ankara semble vouloir développer une diplomatie inter-arabe. Cette orientation s'est renforcée avec la confirmation du pouvoir de l'AKP en Turquie lors des législatives de 2007. L'électorat du Parti de la justice et du développement est par exemple très sensible à la cause palestinienne.

Ankara affiche aujourd'hui sa solidarité avec le peuple palestinien, reçoit les représentants du Hamas, apporte son soutien économique en finançant une zone franche à Erez... Dans le même temps, les Turcs demandent aux islamistes au pouvoir à Gaza d'abandonner leur politique basée sur la division inter-palestinienne et la violence.

A Beyrouth, la Turquie est en contact étroit avec le gouvernement de Fouad Siniora mais ne néglige pas de parler avec le Hezbollah. Côté Syrien, le président Bachar al-Assad s'est rendu en visite officielle à Ankara en octobre 2007. L'objectif était de briser

l'isolement de Damas sur la scène internationale puisque les Syriens appartiennent à l'« *axe du mal* », selon la rhétorique américaine. Ils sont également boycottés par les pays arabes comme l'Egypte, la Jordanie et l'Arabie Saoudite. La Syrie avait besoin du soutien turc. En échange, le président Abdallah Gül a fortement conseillé à son homologue syrien de participer à la conférence d'Annapolis, aux Etats-Unis. Des avancées diplomatiques qu'il faut replacer dans le contexte de la crise kurde. La Syrie a en effet obtenu la confiance des Turcs en soutenant le principe d'une intervention armée dans le nord de l'Irak contre les bases-arrières du PKK. Un revirement notable puisque, pendant des années, Damas a accueilli des séparatistes kurdes.

Les nouveaux dirigeants turcs, culturellement plus accessibles au monde arabe, semblent aujourd'hui plus aptes à jouer les médiateurs que leurs prédécesseurs laïcs. Certains y voient un risque de renversement d'alliances dans la région mais les Turcs misent surtout sur un jeu de conciliation dans des aires stratégiques différentes. Aujourd'hui, ils sont les seuls dans la région à discuter avec tout le monde ou presque, une position inhabituelle au Proche-Orient.

AUFRUF ZU EINER FRIEDLICHEN LÖSUNG DER KURDENFRAGE IN DER TÜRKEI

Wir erklären, Kurden zu sein und wollen als solche anerkannt werden, mit unserer kurdischen Identität in Würde in der Heimat unserer Vorfahren leben und unsere Kultur frei zum Ausdruck bringen.

Seit der Gründung der Republik Türkei wird das kurdische Volk, das ca. ein Viertel ihrer Bevölkerung stellt, seiner Identität beraubt, die Verwendung seiner Sprache verboten und als Verbrechen geahndet und seine Kultur verleugnet. Das kurdische Volk wird um seine Grundrechte gebracht.

Heute existieren in der Türkei, die sich um einen Beitritt in die Europäische Union bemüht, über hundert Fernsehsender, Hunderte von nationalen Radiosendern sowie ca. dreißig Universitäten und Hochschulen. Aber kein einziger Fernseh- oder Radiosender sendet auf Kurdisch, keine Grundschule, weiterführende Schule oder Hochschule hat das Recht, in Kurdisch zu lehren.

Die offizielle Verwendung der kurdischen Sprache zu fordern wird als Verbrechen angesehen. Selbst vom Volk gewählte Bürgermeister und Abgeordnete werden für einen solchen „Verstoß“ strafrechtlich verfolgt.

Die Türkei weigert sich nach wie vor, die kurdische Realität anzuerkennen, die sie meist auf die Terrorismusfrage reduziert und versucht, diese durch Militäroperationen außerhalb ihrer Staatsgrenzen zu lösen. Dies verstärkt die Spannungen, von denen die kurdisch-türkischen Beziehungen gekennzeichnet sind und bedroht das regionale Gleichgewicht sowie die Stabilität des irakischen Kurdistan.

Trotz dieser unerbittlichen Vorgehensweise sprechen die politischen Führungskräfte der Türkischen Republik von Zeit zu Zeit die kurdisch-türkische Brüderlichkeit an. Die Kurden, die zu den ältesten Völkern dieses Erdteils gehören, der als eine der Wiegen der Menschheit gilt, teilen jedoch dieses Konzept der Brüderlichkeit nicht.

Wir Kurden fordern dieselben Rechte wie unsere Brüder und Nachbarn. Krieg und Gewalt sollten das Los keiner Gesellschaft sein, auch nicht der unseren. Wir lehnen ein solches Schicksal ab.

Heute beweist die Regierung des irakischen Kurdistan trotz gewisser Mängel durch die Anerkennung

der Rechte religiöser und kultureller Minderheiten, dass auch im Nahen Osten unterschiedliche Kulturen friedlich in Brüderlichkeit und Gleichheit zusammenleben können. Aus diesem Grund ist es unserer Meinung nach höchste Zeit, die seit über zweihundert Jahren andauernde Spirale von Aufstand und Unterdrückung anzuhalten und die Waffen zum Schweigen zu bringen. Wir rufen auf der Grundlage der gemeinsamen Mindestforderungen unseres Volkes zu einer friedlichen Beilegung der Kurdenfrage auf, für die es keine militärische Lösung geben kann

- Die derzeit ausgearbeitete Verfassung darf die Staatsangehörigkeit nicht auf der Grundlage einer türkischen Abstammung definieren. Sie muss der Verleugnung des kurdischen Volkes ein Ende setzen und dessen Existenz anerkennen. Die kurdischen Bürger müssen über ein alle Ebenen umfassendes Bildungssystem in ihrer Sprache verfügen. Ihr Recht auf die Verwendung ihrer Sprache in der Öffentlichkeit, die Gründung und Verbreitung von Medien in kurdischer Sprache, die Gründung von Vereinen, Einrichtungen und Parteien zur Entfaltung ihrer Kultur und politischen Ziele muss garantiert werden.

- Auf dieser Grundlage muss zur Bildung eines von Frieden und Vertrauen geprägten Klimas und einer endgültigen Einstellung der Gewalt und bewaffneten Auseinandersetzungen eine umfassende politische Amnestie erlassen werden. Die PKK muss gemäß einer noch festzulegenden Vorgehensweise die Waffen niederlegen. Des Weiteren müssen die als „Dorfwächter“ bekannten türkischen Milizen aufgelöst werden.

Diese Forderungen stellen die existierenden Grenzen nicht in Frage, sondern bringen die von allen demokratischen Ländern anerkannten und deren Bürgern zugestandenen Mindestgrundrechte zum Ausdruck. Nicht die Einforderung dieser Rechte sollte als Vergehen geahndet werden, sondern deren Verweigerung.

Zahlreiche türkische Intellektuelle, Schriftsteller und Akademiker bemühen sich seit langem ernsthaft

um eine Lösung. Wir drücken ihnen unsere Wertschätzung und Dankbarkeit aus, auch wenn ihre Anstrengungen und Initiativen bisher leider ohne Erfolg geblieben sind. Deshalb fordern wir die europäischen Länder und die USA, die einen Teil der historischen Verantwortung für die menschliche Tragödie und die im 20. Jh. vom kurdischen Volk erlittenen Ungerechtigkeiten tragen, die Politik der Verleugnung und Gewalt nicht zu unterstützen und einen Beitrag zur Vorbereitung einer friedlichen Lösung zu leisten, indem sie für die Einsetzung eines ihrer Staatsmänner – wie Bernard Kouchner, Tony Blair, Marti Ahtisaari oder Felipe González, die sich bereits an der Beilegung des irischen, baskischen, katalanischen und Kosovo-Konflikts beteiligt haben – als Mittelsmann eintreten.

Der Abbau von Ungleichheiten zwischen den Regionen eines Landes gehört zu den Voraussetzungen für einen Beitritt zur Europäischen Union. In diesem Sinne benötigt die kurdische Region der Türkei als Opfer einer Politik der Vernachlässigung und Rückständigkeit für ihre soziale und wirtschaftliche Entwicklung positive Impulse. Für den Wiederaufbau der kurdischen Provinzen und insbesondere der über 3 400 vom türkischen Staat in den 1990er Jahren unter dem Vorwand von Sicherheitsmaßnahmen gewaltsam evakuierten Dörfer müssen entsprechende Mittel bereitgestellt werden. Städte und Dörfer müssen ihren ursprünglichen kurdischen Namen wiedererlangen, der ihnen willkürlich genommen wurde. Die Europäische Union muss es sich zur moralischen Aufgabe machen, ein umfassendes Entwicklungsprojekt ins Leben zu rufen, das den drei Millionen vertriebenen Kurden eine Rückkehr in ihre Heimat ermöglicht.

Für uns ist die Kurdenfrage nicht nur eine türkische Angelegenheit, sondern ein Problem, das den Nahen Osten, Europa und die gesamte Menschheit betrifft. Aus diesem Grund appellieren wir an das türkische öffentliche Bewusstsein und die internationale öffentliche Meinung und bitten sie um ihre dringende Unterstützung für eine demokratische, friedliche Lösung.

DIE ERSTEN 1 000 UNTERZEICHNER

Türkei - abgeordnete: Ayla AKAT ATA, Fırat ANLI, Emine AYNA, Ko-Vorsitzende der DTP, Sevahir BAYINDIR, Ibrahim BİNİCİ, Pervin BÜLDAN, Selahattin DEMİRTAŞ, Hamit DOĞEYLANI, Şerafettin HALİS, Hâsîp KAPLAN, M. Nezir OKARABAŞ, Güllentekin KİŞANAK, Fatma KÜRTÜLAN, Osman ÖZÇELİK, Sîmî ÖSAKİK, Aysel ÖTUĞLUK, Sebhat ÖTUNCEL, Ahmet ÖTÜRK, ehemaliger Vorsitzender der DTP, Özdal ÖZÇER, Nuri ÖYAMAN, Bengi YILDIZ, ehemalige Abgeordnete: Mahmut ALINAK, Zübeyir AYDAR, M. İshak AZIZOĞLU, Kemal BİRLİK, Hatip DİCLE, Ekin DİKMEN, Adnan EKMEK, ehemaliger Minister, Şerafettin ELÇİ, ehemaliger Minister, Vorsitzender des KADEK, Abdullbaki ERDOĞMUŞ, Remzi KARTAL, Salman KAYA, Mahmut KILINÇ, Hüsnü OKÇUOĞLU, Macit PİRÜZBEYOĞLU, Selim SADAK, Mehmet Emin SEVER, Segbetullah SEYDAOĞLU, Nizamettin TOĞUÇ, İbrahim Halil TUTU, Hüseyin YILDIZ, Nurettin YILMAZ, Ali YİĞİT, Sedat YURTTAŞ, Bürgermeister: A. Kerim ADAN, Yahya, A. Kadir AĞAOĞLU, Şenyurt, Abdullah AKENGIN, Dicle, Süleyman AKIN, Dargeçit; Seyfettin ALKAN, Balpınar; Hürşit ALTEKİN, Esendere; Fırat ANLI, Yenisehir; Burhan ARAS, Adana; M. Nasir ARAS, Bulantı; Nüsret ARAS, Hoşhaber; Burhan ARAS, Yakarınar; İsmail ARSLAN, Ceylanpınar; Nuran ATLI, Mazıdağ; Zeyni AYDENİZ, Akarsu; Şükran AYDIN, Bismil; Osman BAYDEMİR, Diyarbakır; Şehmus BEYHAN, Lice; Nadir BİNGÖL, Ergani; Aydın BUDAK, Cizre; Emrullah ÇİN, Viranşehir; Zeki ÇAVAŞ, Kılavuz; Demir ÇELİK, Varto; Resul DENİZ, Elmakaya; Faik DURSUN, Beylüşebir; Ayhan ERKMEN, Dağpınar; Songül EROL ABDİL, Tunceli; Ahmet ERTAÇ, Şırnak; Kerem GÜNDOĞDU, Özgürler; Leyla GUVEN, Adana; Ahmet İNCİ, Kılavuz; Hüseyin KALKAN, Bitman; Zülküf KARATEKİN, Kayapınar; Mehmet KAYA, Kocaköy; Fikret KAYA, Silvan; Mehmet KOYUNCU, Kunalan; Mukaddes KUBLAY, Doğubayazıt; Burhan KÜRHAN, Beşiri; Kazım KURT, Hakkari; Hüseyin ÖĞRETMEN, Yukarıgökülu; Zeyniye ÖNER, Sırgılcı; Ohan ÖZER, Rüstemgedik; Yurdusev ÖZSÖKMENLER, Bağlar, Cihan SINCAR, Kızıltepe; Etem ŞAHİN, Suruç; Gülçihan ŞİMŞEK, Bostancı; Molla ŞİMŞEK, Gölyazı; Mehmet TARHAN, Nusaybin; Kutubtin TAŞKIRAN, Bayrambaş; Hürşit TEKİN, Şemdinli; Esat ÜNER, Gercüş; Ali YILDIZ, Güllükonu; M. Salih YILDIZ, Yüksekova; Muzaffer YÖNDEMELİ, Ovacıyır, ehemaliger Bürgermeister: Abdullah AKIN, Şahabettin ASLANER, M. Remzi AZIZOĞLU, Mehmet Can TEKİN, Murat CEYLAN, Şükrü ÇALLI, Feridun ÇELİK, Abdullah DEMİRBAŞ, Zülküf EMIRHANOĞLU, Fadil ERDEDE, Kazım ERGEN, Nezir GÜLCAN, Abdullah KAYA, Osman KESER, Fadil KILIÇ, Cabbar LEYGARA, Reşat ÖKTEN, Selim

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THE TROUBLE WITH THE KURDISH MANIFESTO

Mehmet Ali Birand

Two days ago, the French newspaper Le Monde and the International Herald Tribune, the world's most widely-read English newspaper, gave room to a full-page ad. This ad had been placed by the Kurdish Institute that is taken quite seriously in France, where it's located. In this ad, some American and European government-members and intellectuals launch an appeal to the international public opinion. Their main objective is to draw attention to the Kurdish issue.

Also drawing attention to the necessity for the PKK to lay down arms, this manifesto requires the new constitution to give legal recognition to the Kurdish entity, to permit the free use of the Kurdish language in communication tools and especially in education, and the government to 1990's and to restore their Kurdish names. The final message of the manifesto briefly says:

"... Many writers, thinkers and intellectuals in Turkey, who make efforts to solve the Kurdish issue, fail to get results... It is also clear that they will continue to fail in the future. Under these conditions, the best step to take would be to appoint a person of international prestige as mediator..."

The manifesto goes one step further to nominate some very-well known and prestigious names for this mission. Bernard Kouchner (former foreign affairs minister of France), Tony Blair (former prime minister of the UK) Martti Ahtisari (former prime minister of Finland), Felipe Gonzales (former prime minister of Spain) are cited as examples. These international celebrities have all successfully acted as mediators in the Irish, Basque, Catalan and Kosova issues.

What really draws attention is the fact that especially three of these four names (Blair, Ahtisari, Gonzales) are also popular in Turkey. Ahtisari is particularly known for the special efforts he's made to get Turkey into the EU, and the group of wise men has been the only establishment to support Turkey in this issue under his leadership.

A danger for Turkey:

In my opinion, such a step would constitute the greatest danger to us in the Kurdish issue. In other words, if the problems are not solved or no effort is made to solve them, we might some day see other sources starting to suggest mediation as a solution. Viewed from this angle, the Kurdish Institute's manifesto looks extremely important in the way that it ignites the first fuse of a development of grave danger to Turkey. Almost imperceptible efforts to resort to mediation come to light whenever there's any bloody strife that affects the neighbouring countries, especially if none of the sides to the conflict lift a finger to solve the issue. There's never any immediate action. There's always a waiting period, after which, it's the turn of the NGO's to come up with the same suggestion. Then, it's taken up at government level. In the end, it's organisations like the UN or the Council or Parliament of Europe that pick up the thread. Neither will you be able to say "No one can mediate unless we allow it." They'll catch you at such a moment that you won't even find the time to say NO. Mediatorship is risky business. Let's not forget that no matter how biased –in your favour -the appointed mediator may be, he/she might still overlook or prefer to overlook some points that are vital to your cause. If we do not wish to be placed in such a situation, we have to finally start

working on the long-awaited package to solve the Kurdish issue. We're about to enter a period that's sure to set off alarm bells.

Let's also remember that we're gradually losing the initiative in the Kurdish issue. Now, the situation in Iraq has also led America to take a close interest in this issue... As for Europe, it's become a natural part of this issue due to Turkey's candidacy and the Kurds, who live in European countries. The best possible approach would be to start taking these developments seriously and to start working on the political-economic-cultural package as soon as possible.

Panel on neighborhood pressure:

It's been exactly 12 months since Prof. Şerif Mardin caused a fuss by mentioning "neighbourhood pressure" during an interview with Ruşen Çakır. He caused a fuss, for the truth of his words were also confirmed by all of us when we said or wrote, "How very true."

What's happened since then? What dimensions has this pressure reached in the meanwhile? The most important fact is that the meaning of Prof. Mardin's words has been so widely discussed.

These three topics will be debated during a conference organized by SORAR next Friday at 2 p.m. at the Cemal Reşit Rey auditorium. Ruşen Çakır will moderate the panel composed of Prof. Toprak, Prof. Sarıbay, Prof. Keyman, Ass. Prof. Subaşı and Dr. Tuksal. The chief guest will naturally be Prof. Şerif Mardin, who will answer questions. Presented to the attention of those who are interested.

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The translation of M.A. Birand's column was provided by Nuran İnanç

TODAYS ZAMAN

May 22, 2008

Kurdish activists call for international mediation of Kurdish issue

Today's Zaman

One thousand Kurds living in Turkey and European countries have urged certain leading figures of the international community to get involved in the Kurdish issue by mediating a peaceful settlement.

The call to the international community was voiced through a declaration titled "Call for a Peaceful Settlement of the Kurdish Question in Turkey," published on Tuesday in the International Herald Tribune and the French daily Le Monde.

Many intellectuals, writers and academics in Turkey have tried for many years to achieve a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue, the 1,000 signatories said in the declaration.

"We express our appreciation and gratitude even though their efforts and initiatives have, unfortunately, not produced conclusive results so far. That is why we are calling on European countries and the United States, who bear part of the historic responsibility for the tragedy experienced by the Kurds throughout the 20th century, not to support policies of negation and

violence. Let them help prepare favorable ground for a peaceful settlement by empowering one of their statesmen to act as mediator -- someone like Bernard Kouchner, Tony Blair, Martti Ahtisaari or Felipe González, who have been involved in the settlement of the Irish, Basque, Catalan and Kosovar questions," the declaration noted.

Certain demands were listed as "a basis for Kurdish people's common minimum demands" in the declaration signed by deputies of the Democratic Society Party (DTP), former members of Parliament, intellectuals and leading Kurdish figures well-known by the European public.

"The constitution that is being drawn up must not define citizenship on the basis of belonging to Turkish stock. It must put an end to the denial of the Kurdish people's existence. Kurdish citizens must have a system of public education in their own language at all levels. Their rights to use their language in public, to create and to develop media in the Kurdish language, to found associations, institutions and political parties to develop their culture must be

guaranteed. On this basis, in order to create a climate of peace and confidence and, once and for all, to turn the page of violence and armed confrontation, an all-inclusive political amnesty must be decreed, and the PKK [Kurdistan Workers' Party] must lay down its arms in accordance with procedures yet to be defined. In the same way, Turkey's so-called 'village guard' militias must be dismantled," the declaration stated.

"These demands do not call into question existing borders. They express fundamental minimum human rights recognized by all democratic countries and possessed by their citizens," it noted.

Back in December 2004, a similar declaration titled "What the Kurds Want in Turkey" appeared in the International Herald Tribune, French daily Le Monde and German daily Allgemeine Zeitung. In a highly controversial demand, it said Turkey should grant the same rights to Kurds that Ankara seeks for the Turkish Cypriots.

TURKISH DAILY NEWS

May 23, 2008

Kurdish institute's ad angers Turkey

ANKARA – Turkish Daily News

An advertisement by the Kurdish Institute of Paris and deputies of Turkey's pro-Kurdish party, or DTP, that appeared in Le Monde calling for an international mediator to help in solving the Kurdish problem sparked angry reaction in Turkey yesterday.

Listed as a terrorist organization by both the United States and the European Union and which puts certain conditions for ending terrorist activities, this group's efforts to regain ground and support it has lost in

Turkey in other countries will be futile, the Foreign Ministry said in a written statement yesterday.

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzales and former Finnish Prime Minister Marti Ahtisaari are cited as names to be possible mediators, the advertisement read. The ad, with the headline A call for a peaceful solution to the Kurdish problem in Turkey, was signed by 1,000 people, including deputies of the DTP.

The ministry said the ad contained wrong and one-sided information adding, The biggest obstacle in front of Turkey's democratization and improvement of human rights is the terrorist organization.

It said some of the signatories of the ad were members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, who were sought by Interpol and drew attention to the fact that no nongovernmental organization which exerts efforts to develop human rights in Turkey had signed the document.

TODAYS ZAMAN

May 23, 2008

Kurds' call for mediation draws ire from Ankara

TODAY'S ZAMAN

The Turkish capital has reacted harshly to a recent call for mediation by a group of Kurdish activists, saying the content of the call was biased and false and highlighting that the call suggests a conditional end to activities of an organization listed as a terrorist organization by a large majority of the international community.

"Biased and false statements concerning our country have been included in a declaration released to the international press by a marginal group which prefers terrorist discourse and tactics to pursuing legitimate

and legal democratic channels in Turkey," the Foreign Ministry said yesterday in a written statement, referring to an advertisement signed by 1,000 Kurds living in Turkey and European countries and published on Tuesday in the International Herald Tribune and the French daily Le Monde.

The declaration, titled "Call for a Peaceful Settlement of the Kurdish Question in Turkey," was signed by deputies of the Democratic Society Party (DTP), former members of Parliament, intellectuals and leading Kurdish figures well known by the European public.

It listed several demands as "a basis for Kurdish people's common minimum demands."

"The constitution that is being drawn up must not define citizenship on the basis of belonging to Turkish stock. It must put an end to the denial of the Kurdish people's existence. Kurdish citizens must have a system of public education in their own language at all levels. Their right to use their language in public, to create and to develop media in the Kurdish language, to found associations, institutions and political parties to develop their culture must be guaranteed. On this basis, in order to create

a climate of peace and confidence and, once and for all, to turn the page of violence and armed confrontation, an all-inclusive political amnesty must be decreed, and the Kurdistan Workers' Party [PKK] must lay down its arms in accordance with procedures yet to be defined. In the same way, Turkey's so-called 'village guard' militias must be dismantled," the declaration stated.

The most significant handicap before the ongoing reform process being conducted by the government for expanding individual rights and freedoms is surely the terrorist organization, which targets Turkey's territorial integrity, constitutional

order and social peace by resorting to violence, the Foreign Ministry said.

"The presence of terrorist organization members who are being sought by Interpol's red notice among signatories of this declaration but the absence of representatives from sincere and independent non-governmental organizations which have been exerting efforts to improve democratization and individual rights and freedoms in our country points to the identities and goals of those who drew up the declaration," it said.

Without citing any names from among the signatories, the ministry was apparently referring to Zübeyir Aydar and Remzi Kartal,

whose names were among the signatories. Both are senior leaders of the PKK, which has been listed as a terrorist organization by the EU, the US and Turkey. The two are among most-wanted terrorists in Turkey who have made use of some European countries' unwillingness to cooperate in Turkey's anti-terrorism efforts. Last year Aydar -- the head of Kongra-Gel, an offshoot of the PKK, and the head of the PKK's European operations -- was arrested in a crackdown in Belgium but was later released, and no legal action could be taken against him by Belgian authorities since he had earlier been granted political asylum.

TURKISH DAILY NEWS

May 27, 2008

US upgrades ties with Iraqi Kurds, albeit invisibly

Local PM Barzani gets top-level reception by Bush administration, but media flashlights are avoided

ÜMİT ENGİNSOY

WASHINGTON - Turkish Daily News

The number two official of the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq was received by top level U.S. officials, including President George W. Bush, in Washington last week, in the latest indication of an increasingly close relationship between the United States and its closest ally in war-torn Iraq.

The talks were carefully concealed from public attention, likely at least in part to avoid evoking Turkey's ire.

Nechirvan Barzani, prime minister of the Kurdish regional government, or KRG, met with President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and a number of top senators and lawmakers throughout the week. The visiting German chancellor will probably meet with the same leaders.

When Massoud Barzani, the KRG president and Nechirvan's uncle, visited Washington three years ago, he went to the White House in a traditional peshmerga outfit and conducted televised talks with Bush.

This ceremonial element was almost completely missing in Nechirvan Barzani's meetings this time, as the two sides talked business. While the Bush administration demonstrated the importance it attaches to its ties with the Kurds, it did this in private, away from the spotlight of the media.

"The reception the prime minister received across the U.S. government and the U.S. business community, and the messages of support we heard from our friends in Washington, show a sincere appreciation for the leadership of the Kurdistan region," said Qubad Talabani, the KRG's Washington representative and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's son.

"The United States has clearly upgraded its ties with Iraqi Kurds," said Bulent Aliriza, director of the Turkey Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Turkish think tank. "But at the same time it has apparently told the



Kurds not to go too far in their demands."

Kurds careful not to annoy Turkey:

Political relations between Ankara and Iraqi Kurds are cool, to say the least, mainly because of the threat posed to Turkey by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party's, or PKK, terrorists based in the Iraqi Kurdish region, and because of the aspiration of Iraqi Kurds for eventual independence.

But since December the United States has been cooperating closely with Ankara against the PKK, providing the Turkish military with actionable intelligence to strike terrorist bases and positions in northern Iraq. Under strong U.S. pressure the KRG has also recently introduced some restrictions against the group.

As a result, although Turkey does not formally recognize the KRG, the two sides conducted a first round of talks between senior officials in Baghdad on May 1.

Reflecting this effort for rapprochement, Barzani was careful to steer clear of references to eventual independence at the meetings last week. He also pledged his government's cooperation against the PKK.

"We Kurds are committed to a democratic and federal Iraq, an Iraq at peace with itself and with its neighbors," he said at the beginning of his trip to the United States.

On the PKK issue, he told Turkish reporters, "First, the KRG is serious about not allowing the

use of its territory against Turkey or other neighboring countries. Second, the measures that have been taken by the KRG to restrict and prevent the activities of the PKK in the Iraqi Kurdistan region, these measures will continue."

Barzani also showed flexibility over the future of Kirkuk, a multi-ethnic and oil-rich area in northern Iraq that the Kurds want included in their territory. A Kurdish-backed referendum was set to be held there before the end of June, but he said, "The important thing is to see progress on the ground. Whether June or some other time is not a big problem."

US messages:

U.S. officials asked the Kurds to do more against the PKK and to cooperate with other Iraqi groups on a natural resource law, a critical issue for Iraq's future.

"On the issue of PKK terrorism emanating from Iraqi Kurdish territory, Secretary Gates commended Prime Minister Barzani for Kurdish initiatives against the PKK and added that more needs to be done," Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell said. "Prime Minister Barzani stated the strong Kurdish interest in developing close and enduring relations with Turkey, which has already invested \$8 billion in Iraqi Kurdistan."

Turkish officials had no complaints over the U.S. messages conveyed to Iraqi Kurds or Barzani's remarks in the United States.

As a further sign of growing U.S.-Iraqi Kurdish ties, a trade mission from the U.S. Commerce Department is expected to visit the Kurdish region soon, the KRG's Washington office said in a statement.

Also during Barzani's visit to Washington, two U.S. congressmen formally created an American-Kurdish caucus in the House of Representatives in an effort to support Kurdish causes and to contribute to improving relations.

Still some analysts suggest that despite Barzani's careful messages, the fundamental Kurdish position on eventual independence has not changed and that the Kurds, in a current tactical move, are choosing to avoid confrontation with Turkey because it would not help them.

TODAYS ZAMAN

26 May 2008.

ICG expert: Kirkuk deal could serve both Turks, Kurds

YONCA POYRAZ DOĞAN İSTANBUL

Joost R. Hiltermann, deputy Middle East and North Africa program director of the International Crisis Group (ICG), a nongovernmental organization dedicated to conflict prevention, said the Iraqi Kurdish administration would be of more help in Turkey's fight against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terrorism if only they could get concessions on Kirkuk; however, this is a "zero-sum game" which could be turned into a "win-win situation."

"Iraqi Kurds want to regain Kirkuk, and they know that the main obstacle to that ambition is Turkey. So why would they help Turkey by presenting them the PKK on a platter?" Hiltermann asked in an interview with Monday Talk.

He said the Iraqi Kurdish administration wants to get Kirkuk because of its oil reserves and historical importance, noting that it wants to develop its own oil resources there. However, disagreements between the Kurds and the central government over the Kurdish rights to develop their own oil fields are also preventing Kurdish ambitions.

"In a potential package deal, the Kurdistan Regional Government [KRG] in Iraq would gain the rights to develop its own oil fields. In exchange they would not incorporate Kirkuk into the Kurdistan region. And it may become a stand-alone region with a power sharing arrangement," he elaborated.

As part of that deal, he said, the Iraqi Kurdish administration would restrain the PKK's freedom to maneuver: "If Turkey then also agrees to an amnesty for lower and mid-level officials [of the PKK] and lets refugees from the Makhmour camp return safely to Turkey, the KRG in exchange will absorb the senior levels of the PKK -- they will be disarmed, of course, and no longer politically active."

According to Hiltermann, this could serve everyone because Turkey could help the land-locked northern Iraq region develop its oil resources and ship the oil out, Turkey would not have to fear Kurdish independence, and the Kurds would not have to fear the strength of the central Iraqi government because they would have international guarantees provided by the deal reached.

For Monday Talk, Hiltermann elaborates more on the fate of the disputed city, Iraq and Turkey's mediating efforts in the region.

Most of the ICG reports from the Middle East concern developments in Iraq. Where is Iraq heading in the post-Saddam era?

The situation in Iraq after 2003 has been serious. There is a growing failure on the part of the United States to keep the country together. It removed the state apparatus, police, army and managerial class, and they were not replaced by anything. There are a lot of non-state actors, such as guerillas, insurgent groups and militias. There is a growing sectarianism and an actual conflict.



So there was a real threat two years ago that the country would fall apart. Then the [George W.] Bush administration got engaged in the so-called "surge" of military forces -- in Baghdad in particular. This was a desperate last attempt to correct the situation. And it has succeeded, somewhat, in stabilizing the situation, especially in Baghdad.

Are these gains sustainable?

This greatly depends on what the new administration in the White House will do. The Bush administration is a lame duck. It will take time for the new president to put a team together and then forge a new strategy. But one positive thing has come out of this; namely, that all of the neighboring states and also the United States all agreed Iraq should not fall apart as this would be very harmful to all neighboring states' interests and to the region. This is one reason that the situation in Iraq has not gotten out of hand. So we will see what the US military will accomplish, considering that there is an offensive in Mosul. The military is also trying to address the problem of Shiite militias. We would have to wait until a new president comes into the White House with a new strategy. We hope the new president will be someone who will include engagement with Iran and Syria because without them, Iraq cannot be stabilized.

Is northern Iraq still the safest area?

By far, yes. Iraqi Kurdistan has been relatively stable and safe for people ever since 2003 and even before, since 1991. This does not mean bombs do not go off -- they do, but not anything compared to the rest of Iraq.

What is the situation in Kirkuk?

Kirkuk has been very tense though it hasn't seen the kind of violence that Baghdad has. The situation there has been contained, maybe against expectations, because of the stakes -- a lot of the oil in the ground, a mix of communities and of course a drive by the Kurdish parties to incorporate Kirkuk into the Kurdistan region. The Kurdish parties and most other communities in Kirkuk have not resorted to violence. The violence [in Kirkuk] has come mostly from al-Qaeda in Iraq and some insurgent groups. We are now waiting for the United Nations to come up with a new initiative to replace the process that was under way under the constitution, the Article 140 process, which did not produce a referendum by the December 2007 deadline.

The referendum has now been delayed until June 30. Do you expect it to be held then?

It's very unlikely and the Kurdish leaders know very well that it won't happen by June 30. That's why the UN initiative is so important because they will have to come up with a process that is accepted by all parties, including the Kurds, and that will lead to progress on settling the issue of disputed territories.

A series of constitutional requirements, including a pre-vote census, have not been fulfilled. Is there a reason to be hopeful that these requirements will be met? After all, aren't the Kurds claiming the same rights over Kirkuk?

Yes, the Kurds are claiming Kirkuk and they had hoped to include Kirkuk into the Kurdistan region through a referendum under Article 140 of the constitution. For the Kurds, two principles matter: One, the status of Kirkuk is based on the will of the people of Kirkuk and, two, that the constitutional framework is adhered to. But Article 140 of the constitution is rather vague on what should happen. It just says there has to be normalization, which is a return to the situation before Arabization took off in 1967 -- when the Baath Party came to power -- a census and a referendum. There is nothing in the constitution that says you cannot negotiate over Kirkuk prior to a referendum which would then ratify the decision taken consensually by various parties in Kirkuk. So what the United Nations is now trying to do is seek points that everybody can agree on so that there can be a basis for negotiation. It will not meet everyone's maximum objectives -- and that is not possible because they are clashing -- but it may meet everyone's minimum requirements.

So Kurds believe Kirkuk is theirs but there is not much American support behind them now compared to 2003, right?

Kurds were expelled from Kirkuk by force in past decades. They now have the opportunity to regain it because they have power in Baghdad. As long as they see that they have the opportunity, they will push. But the window of opportunity -- first opened in 1991 and opened more widely in 2003 -- has started to close because Americans who supported the Kurds started to recalibrate power relations in Iraq because they realized that things were getting out of control and the only way to re-stabilize the situation during the surge was to reach out to the Sunni Arabs who then started to set up these Awakening Councils [armed neighborhood groups that have driven al-Qaeda out of many districts of Baghdad and elsewhere]. This meant the Kurds and the Shiite Islamist parties take a step back and make certain compromises. This is where we are now. It will require some time for the Kurdish parties and the Kurdish people to come to the realization that they will not be able to meet the maximum objectives in Iraq today. And once that happens, we can reach consensus.

As Kurds increase their influence in Iraq, wouldn't they be interested in more?

Jalal Talabani, who was the head of one

Kurdish guerilla party, is now the president of Iraq. There is no doubt that Kurds have expanded their influence in Iraq. But Kurds have no interest in running Iraq. They have an interest in Kurdish independence. This is what they are working toward: trying to expand the territory under their control and their powers within that territory. Of course, with territory also come resources, especially oil, but also water and gas. This is very important to them because they have been massacred in the past by the central governments in Iraq and they don't want that to happen again.

How does that perspective of the Kurds concern Turkey, where most worry about Kurdish independence?

What is most important for Turkey is Iraq's territorial integrity. If Iraq falls apart, if Turkey cannot prevent Iraq's disintegration, then paradoxically Turkey might have an interest in a stable Iraqi Kurdistan that would serve as a buffer between Turkey and the chaos of Iraq. In that case, it would be in Turkey's interest to develop good relations with Iraqi Kurdistan -- economic, political and diplomatic. Both the Turkish leadership and the Kurdish leadership have a strong belief in secularism; they know they need each other because Iraqi Kurdistan has oil even if Kirkuk is not included. Turkey is interested in getting it out from under the ground and shipping it to Turkey, to Ceyhan.

What are the advantages from the Iraqi Kurdish perspective?

It's a land-locked region. It is forever going to be dependant on its neighbors. Turkey has been the main transit country for its goods. There is a potential for a good relationship and the only thing against it is chauvinism on the parts of both, Turkish chauvinism and Kurdish chauvinism, and that's unfortunate. If we can continue to encourage development in Iraqi Kurdistan and relations between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan, then we can overcome these psychological factors.

There is also the PKK's presence in northern Iraq. Do you think chauvinism breeds the PKK violence?

Turkey has an issue with the Kurds in Turkey, and this is an issue to be addressed. Since I'm not an expert on Turkey, I won't go into that. But the PKK is a symptom of that. And to the extent that the PKK is present in Iraqi Kurdistan, it becomes an issue for Iraq as well. And it becomes an issue for Turkish

relations with Iraq and Turkish relations with the KRG. But this is manageable. The KRG supports the PKK up to a point, not because it likes the PKK but because it sees it as a bargaining chip. For Turkey, the PKK's presence in northern Iraq is very important and it tries to address it by putting political pressure on the KRG to take steps against the PKK -- by military means as well, though not very effectively. I'm very pleased to see that we now have the first senior level meeting between the Turkish government and the KRG.

Following the US-led military operation to topple Saddam Hussein, in a report you had written back in 2003 you warned of a threat of large-scale violence centered in Kirkuk erupting in northern Iraq between Kurds and Turks. How do you think such a catastrophe was averted?

One thing that averted an open conflict was the Turkish Parliament's decision on March 1, 2003 not to grant transit rights to the American forces. Because that would have given Turkish forces the opportunity to also go into northern Iraq alongside the American forces, and this would have brought them into direct confrontation with the Kurdish parties and their militias. I don't know how that would have been managed. That could have led to an entirely different situation in Kirkuk than what we see today. Now it's a question of managing the future so that conflict can be avoided in the longer term. As long as we see a clash in Kirkuk, not of two but of three nationalisms -- Kurdish, Arab and Turkish -- there is a huge potential for conflict.

Is there much concern by the international community on the status of Turkmens who have been subject to unfair treatment?

The United Nations wants to find a solution to the status of Kirkuk that is consensual and that builds in protections for communities -- for Kurds, for Arabs, for Turkmens, for everyone -- so they can live peacefully. The Iraqi regime prior to 2003 also expelled the Turkmens from Kirkuk, confiscated their property and labeled them Arabs in national censuses. Turkmens deserve protection in Kirkuk.

Turkey is now mediating between Syria and Israel. Do you think it will open the way for the United States to engage with Syria?

It's very helpful for Turkey to get involved in this because it can talk to both sides and to the Palestinians. Turkey has good relations with all three. But without the United States and its leverage, there isn't going to be progress on either the Israel-Syria track or the Israel-Palestinian track. There is a lame duck administration in the White House, and we may have to wait for the next president.

Do you think Turkey could mediate between Iran and the United States?

The current standoff between Iran and the United States is not helpful to Turkey. Turkey does not want to alienate Iran, but the United States is alienating Iran. In the triangle of the United States, Iran and Turkey, Turkey feels uncomfortable at the moment because of the Bush administration's stance. If that changes -- all the candidates in the United States, John McCain, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, have indicated they are much more multilateral in their approach than the Bush administration -- then Turkey could play a very useful role alongside the European Union in negotiating safeguards in Iran that will prevent the ostensibly peaceful program from being turned into a military one.

Joost R. Hiltermann

Joost R. Hiltermann is the deputy Middle East and North Africa program director of the International Crisis Group (ICG), an independent nongovernmental organization dedicated to conflict prevention and headquartered in Brussels. Most recently he prepared studies on the lack of political progress in Iraq during the surge; the politics of the Supreme Council, one of Iraq's Shiite Islamist parties; and the conflict over Kirkuk. From 1994 to 2002 he served as the executive director of the arms division of Human Rights Watch in Washington. Prior to that, he was a Middle East consultant for international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, conducting investigations in Iran, Iraq, Israel, Palestine and Lebanon. He also worked for the Palestinian human rights organization al-Haq in Ramallah. He holds a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and his dissertation was published by Princeton University Press, titled "Behind the Intifada: Labor and Women's Movements in the Occupied Territories." Hiltermann is also the author of "A Poisonous Affair: America, Iraq, and the Gassing of Halabja," published last year.

REUTERS

Three Iranian Guardsmen die after rebel clash-report

TEHRAN, May 26, 2008 (Reuters) - Three Iranian Revolutionary Guardsmen have died from wounds sustained during a clash with rebels near the Turkish border, an Iranian news agency said on Monday, in an apparent reference to Kurdish guerrillas.

The semi-official Fars News Agency quoted a Guards spokesman as saying the fighting took place on Saturday. Iranian media had earlier said nine Kurdish rebels were killed on that day, but Fars did not make clear if it was during the same clash.

"These three Guardsmen were wounded two days ago in clashes with rebels ... and attained martyrdom after they were transported to hospital," spokesman Reza Rezvani told Fars.

Iranian forces have often clashed in border areas with rebels from the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), an offshoot of the separatist Kurd-

istan Workers Party (PKK) that is fighting for a Kurdish homeland in southeastern Turkey.

Analysts say PJAK, which Tehran brands a terrorist group, has bases in northeastern Iraq from where they operate against Iran.

Iraq's Kurdistan region borders both Turkey and Iran, and includes remote and rugged mountain ranges where Kurdish rebels from both the PKK and PJAK factions are holed up.

Turkey blames the PKK for the deaths of 40,000 people since 1984, when the group took up arms. Ankara, like the European Union and the United States, considers it a terrorist organisation. (Reporting by Hossein Jaseb and Hashem Kalantari; Editing by Giles Elgood)

Kurdish politicians boycott Turkish prime minister's speech to protest government policies

The Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey: Kurdish politicians boycotted a major speech by Turkey's prime minister on Tuesday to protest what they say is the government's refusal to recognize the country's Kurdish minority.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was in Diyarbakir, the largest city in the Kurdish-dominated southeast, to give details of plans he first unveiled in March for economic and cultural initiatives for the region.

He suggested spending some US\$14.5 billion (€9.2 billion) over five years to improve the arid region's agriculture, with most of the money earmarked for building hydroelectric dams and irrigation projects as well as clearing land mines along the border with Syria.

He said the projects would improve farming, help avert a future energy bottleneck and create jobs.

In addition, Erdogan said, a TV channel with Kurdish-language programming would soon be launched. In 1991 Turkey lifted a ban on speaking Kurdish and granted some cultural rights, such as limited TV and radio broadcasts in the language.

But Kurdish politicians said the newest incentives did not go far enough, and they called for the Kurds to be recognized as an official minority with cultural protections and a level of political autonomy. Kurds constitute about 20 percent of Turkey's 70 million population.

Pro-Kurdish Mayor Osman Baydemir and other Kurdish politicians boycotted Erdogan's speech Tuesday to underline those demands. Erdogan responded by saying he was prime minister of the whole country, and that all parties should have attended his speech.

"The people here demand the recognition of Kurdish identity, economic and social plans would not solve the problem of the region," said Nejdet Atalay, the head of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party's branch in Diyarbakir.

Erdogan's latest offer, Atalay said, was aimed only at increasing support for the governing party before next year's local elections.

Specifically, the Kurdish officials said they want to be able to receive education in

their language and more freedom to participate in Turkey's democracy.

The 20 Kurdish legislators in Turkey's parliament campaigned in 2007 as independents to get around a requirement that parties pass a 10-percent vote threshold. Once elected as independents, they regrouped under the Democratic Society Party's banner, but the party now faces closure on charges of ties to Kurdish rebels. It is unclear when the Constitutional Court might rule in the case.

Many Kurds have pinned their hopes for receiving recognition on Turkey's push to join the European Union, which has said Ankara's treatment of the Kurds will be a key factor in its decision on whether to accept the country.

Some Turkish nationalists fear that increasing cultural rights for the minority could lead to the breakup of the country along ethnic lines.

Turkey refuses dialogue with Kurdish rebels, who are fighting for autonomy in the southeast, and the Turkish military this year launched air attacks and one major ground offensive against Kurdish rebel bases across the border into Iraq.

FINANCIAL TIMES May 28 2008

Turkey's £6bn package to woo Kurdish region

By Vincent Boland in Ankara

Turkey's government unveiled a £6bn investment package yesterday for the country's south-eastern provinces, taking a tentative step to counter separatist sentiment and to improve living standards in one of Europe's most impoverished regions.

Most of the money is to be spent on irrigation and hydroelectric schemes under the banner of the South Anatolia Project. This vast state project, initiated in the 1970s, aims to harness the region's rivers, including the Tigris and Euphrates, and to boost farm production and electricity generation.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the prime minister, said the package would also include funding for cultural, educational and landmine-clearance initiatives. The entire investment would create up to 3.8m jobs and would free up for farming some 1.8m hectares of land.

He said TL1bn (\$802m, €509m, £405m) of new funding would be added to the roughly TL15bn earmarked for spending in the region in April, when the government re-



duced some fiscal targets agreed with the International Monetary Fund in order to boost public spending between now and 2012.

The south-eastern provinces are among Turkey's most fertile, but are also its poorest. They are plagued by separatist violence perpetrated by the PKK, a Kurdish rebel group, and by an often heavy-handed response from the Turkish military. Some 35,000 people have been killed in separatist violence since the early 1980s.

Mr Erdogan, speaking in Diyarbakir, Turkey's main Kurdish city, described the package as "a well-defined, scheduled and funded action plan to remove regional differences in economic and social development, unemployment and

migration". He said it would "constitute a social restoration to strengthen our social fabric, unity and integrity".

Diplomats, observers in Ankara and some Kurds were sceptical about such large claims for the initiative, the first from a Turkish government to the region for many years. "We know from experience that packages alone do not address the real Kurdish problem," said Sirri Sakik, a Kurdish MP.

In a sign of the political and ethnic tensions that dominate in south-east Turkey, Mr Erdogan's speech was boycotted by local Kurdish political leaders, including the mayor of Diyarbakir. They accused the prime minister of electioneering on behalf of his Justice and Devel-

opment party (AKP) ahead of local elections in early 2009.

The AKP is popular in the south-east. It won as many votes there as the main Kurdish party in the July 2007 election. Analysts say Mr Erdogan is determined to widen the party's appeal among Kurds in order to capture the mayor's office next year in Diyarbakir.

The European Union has been pushing Turkey to introduce more rights for its ethnic minorities, and will welcome the moves to expand educational opportunities.

Turkey hopes to join the EU and entry negotiations began in 2005, but they have often been stymied by Turkish suspicions of undue European concern for minorities, a status not generally acknowledged by the Turkish state. "Turkey told the European Union yesterday the slow pace of its accession talks was causing public enthusiasm for membership of the bloc to wane, but the EU insisted it was up to Ankara to push harder on reforms."

Promises no longer work for the Kurds

The trip that the prime minister took to the Southeast in order to show that things were normal and completely under his control at a time when both the DTP and the AKP are in danger of being closed down, was very important from almost every point of view.

You'll notice that his timing was very interesting. He chose to travel to the Southeast at a time when Turkey's agenda was bursting at the seams with the court suits on one hand, and the Turkish Armed Forces' (TSK) fight against the PKK on the other. The TSK not only continue to exert incredible pressure on the PKK, but have also practically closed down the Turkish-Iraqi border as they continue to pressure the PKK even more.

Actually, he was right to do so. The package is worth billions of dollars. Then there's the other side of the coin. The people in the region have had enough of promises. Just think of the packages that have been opened during the last 15 years, and all the promises made by all ex-prime ministers. They were going to transform the whole region into a dream land. etc...etc..

Then what happened? Each package was opened with such joy and excitement. After a short while, however, our illustrious bureaucracy

got to them and all those beautiful measures gradually dwindled down to nothing. Some of them were left unfinished, and others were never started at all.

On the other hand, however, huge amounts of money were spent in the fight against the PKK. If half of that budget had been diverted at job-providing investments, today, we would be facing an entirely different situation in the Southeast.

Promises are no longer enough. Our citizens of Kurdish origins no longer have the intention to make do with promises. They have woken up. They are after their rights. They want to be treated as human beings and not to be pushed around. They want to protect their language, conserve their culture and to get their share of the pie that's Turkey.

The only bright side to the this latest package initiated by the prime minister is the general impression in the Southeast that he keeps his word. In other words, they believe that he will actually implement the package and follow up on it.

We'll see if he really keeps his promises. Will the package be implemented in full, or will it be left to rot like all the others once Erdoğan

leaves the region?

This venture is going to be interpreted as an attempt to recover the votes that the AKP has lost after the recent military operations, in readiness for the local elections in 2009, rather than an attempt to develop the region. In fact, that reason is sure to have been among the factors that prompted the preparation of such a grandiose package.

So be it. As long as something is done for the Southeast, be it for the sake of elections, as long as it's followed through, as long as we never dupe our citizens of Kurdish origins again.

There's one last thing I'd like to say on the subject. We must not make the mistake of believing that an economic package will be enough to settle the issue. To bring economic relief to the people is the right approach, but it's not enough. The financial consequences of the steps that we have failed to take at the right times have now grown enormous. In other words, the economic package will help to pay some of those bills, but that's all it will accomplish.

Shake-up in DTP as parliamentary group chief resigns

TODAY'S ZAMAN

The Democratic Society Party (DTP) received a blow from within yesterday as the chairman of the party's parliamentary group, Ahmet Türk, resigned from his post.

The party has been in chaos for some time now after newly elected party chairman Nurettin Demirtaş had to give up his position when he was arrested and sent to the army for evading his obligatory military service.

It has been speculated that Türk's resignation came as a response to pressure from Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The election of Mardin deputy Emine Ayna as the party's deputy chairwoman in the last party assembly was also perceived as a victory for the Öcalan faction within the party.

Ayna will lead the parliamentary group from now on. Asked whether he will be a

candidate for the leadership of the party in the next DTP congress, Türk declined to comment and said he would prefer to discuss the issue when the time comes. The party congress will take place on July 5.

The rivalry in the party between those loyal to Türk and those loyal to Öcalan has been growing for some time now. On Nov. 9, 2007 Türk and his co-chair Aysel Tuğluk were forced to leave their posts to make way for Demirtaş and Ayna, who are both known to hold more radical views on the solution of the Kurdish Problem that are more in line with the PKK's ideology.

During Türk's visit to northern Iraq on May 7 and 8 the Öcalan faction of the DTP



elected Emine Ayna as the new leader of the party and Türk was left with the chairmanship of the parliamentary group. Türk and his group, which includes experienced Kurdish politicians such as Tuğluk, Sırrı Sakık, Nuri Yaman, Hasip Kaplan and Akın Birdal, have argued that the normalization of Kurdish politics will be possible only after breaking all links between the DTP and Öcalan.

REUTERS

Austria's OMV plans Kurdistan oil blocks work

28 May 2008, Reuters

Austria's OMV said it planed to drill two wells next year in its Iraqi Kurdistan exploration blocks.

Austrian oil and gas group OMV AG (OMVV.VI: Quote, Profile, Research) said on Tuesday it planned to drill two wells next year in its Kurdistan region "northern Iraq" exploration blocks.

OMV was awarded two production sharing contracts by Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in the Mala Omar and Shorish blocks in November 2007.

"We have two blocks near Erbil near the Taq Taq and Hawla fields," Ashiq Hussain, OMV's senior vice-president for global exploration and reservoir management, told an energy conference in Dubai. "We

plan to shoot seismic in August and drill two wells next year."



Iraq halted oil supplies to OMV in February in protest over the deal between the company and the KRG.

Thursday, May 29, 2008

TURKISH DAILY NEWS

DTP dismisses GAP initiative as election ploy

ANKARA - TDN with wire dispatches

The government's plan to pour billions into the Southeast to boost the region's economy was dismissed as an election ploy by the country's pro-Kurdish party that dominates the region.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan presented the government's plan for the Southeast that involves channeling YTL 26.7 billion into the region until 2012 in order to complete the huge Southeastern Anatolia Project, or GAP, and generate 3.8 million jobs. GAP is a series of dams to utilize the water of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers for irrigating the regions farmlands.

The government's plan aims to increase the region's per capita income by 209 percent, initiate huge infrastructure projects, clear lands near the border inundated by landmines in order to use them for agriculture and transform the region into Turkey's breadbasket.

The failure of Diyarbakır Mayor Osman Baydemir, who is a member of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP), to turn up at his presentation incurred Erdoğan's wrath, with the prime minister saying: "I wish this city's mayor was present. However, those who go on TV and say, 'It is not the prime minister but a party leader who is coming,' will be taught a lesson by my brothers and sisters in Diyarbakır when the time comes."

Baydemir's response was not long coming. The mayor held a press conference, where he said: "The AKP's lightbulb crashed into Diyarbakır's land walls," alluding to the AKP's logo that features a light bulb.

He dismissed Erdoğan's criticism, noting that no one should expect him to attend an AKP rally. "We are ready to contribute to any plan that is not part of an election campaign. The prime minister's statements did not mean much to the region's people. GAP alone cannot be a solution to the region's problems. We thought this was an opportunity to solve all the problems but we were mistaken."

Baydemir said Erdoğan's statements were contradictory, especially considering plans for



expanding cultural and social rights. "Who fired the elected mayors because they spoke Kurdish? Even today, I received an invitation for a criminal inquiry because of a poster in Kurdish. Half of the region's people live below the poverty line."

Local elections:

The DTP and the AKP were the only two parties that were able to get deputies elected in the southeast of the country in the 2007 national elections.

The two parties, both of which are tried at the Constitutional Court and may face closure, are also expected to be the only parties that will have any political weight in the region in the coming local elections, expected to take place early next year.

DTP Muş deputy Sırrı Sakık, speaking at Parliament on Tuesday, said life had shown them that these periodic visits and programs announced for the region would not amount to much.

"Prime Minister Erdoğan did not go to Diyarbakır to announce an economic package but begin his election campaign," he said.

Speaking at a press conference in Parliament yesterday, another DTP deputy, Hasip Kaplan, said the economic improvement of the region

should come hand in hand with peace, democracy and human rights. He said Erdoğan had not shown the DTP group in Parliament the slightest attention and as a result could not ask why a DTP mayor did not show up at the presentation.

Support by business:

The AKP's Southeast program announced on Tuesday was expected for the past six months and is mainly focused on the economic side of the region's problems.

Industrialists and businessmen in the region welcomed the program, with Diyarbakır Chamber of Trade and Industry President Mehmet Kaya noting that it addressed most of their requests. "However, we hope the incentive plan mentioned will cover only the region," he said. Past incentive plans, which involve tax cuts or investment incentives, covered region's provinces but also other provinces in the north and the west of the country, resulting in most investment diverted elsewhere.

The head of the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey (TUSKON), Mustafa Koca, said the government's plan was a perfectly planned initiative and if implemented correctly, could improve a lot of the region's people immensely.

UN report raises pressure on Iran

Germany leading calls for answers from Tehran about nuclear activity

From news reports

VIENNA: An unusually harsh report by the International Atomic Energy Agency has stoked new concern about the scope and nature of Iran's nuclear program, and has provoked sharp new criticism of Tehran from around the world.

"Open questions remain, where we have to push for an answer with more time pressure," Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany told members of NATO's parliamentary assembly meeting Tuesday in Berlin, referring to the report by the UN agency.

"The ball is in the Iranians' court," he said. "Either it is picked up there, and we're getting reasonable answers to our questions, or the entry into talks with the aim of a diplomatic solution to the conflict is further delayed."

"The alternative would then be an increase of international pressure, also through the UN Security Council," he said.

The nine-page report, released Monday, accused the Iranians of a willful lack of cooperation, particularly in answering allegations that its nuclear program might be intended more for military use than for energy generation.

"There are certain parts of their nuclear program where the military seems to have played a role," said a senior official close to the agency who spoke on the condition of anonymity under normal diplomatic constraints. He added, "We want to understand why."

The United States, France and Israel also criticized Iranian behavior. Gregory Schulte, chief U.S. delegate to the International Atomic Energy Agency, suggested the report was a strong indictment of defiance by Tehran of the international community's efforts to get answers about troubling parts of the Iranian nuclear program, noting it "details a long list of questions that Iran has failed to answer."

At the same time that Iran is "stonewalling" inspectors, "it's moving forward in developing its enrichment capability in violation of Security Council resolutions," Schulte told The Associated Press. He described parts of the report as a "direct rebuttal" of Iranian claims that all nuclear questions had been answered.

The report also makes the allegation that Iran is learning to make faster, more powerful and more efficient centrifuges, the product of robust research and development that have not been fully disclosed to the agency.

That means that Iran may be producing enriched uranium — which can be used to produce electricity or to make bombs — faster than expected at the same time as it replaces its older generation of less reliable centrifuges. Some of the centrifuge components have been produced by the Iranian military, said the report, prepared by Mohamed El-Baradei, director general of the agency, which is the UN nuclear monitor.

"The Iranians are certainly being confronted with some pretty strong evidence of a nuclear weapons program, and they are being petulant and defensive," said David Albright, a former weapons inspector who now runs the Institute for Science and International Security. "The report lays out what the agency knows, and it is very damning. I've never seen it laid out quite like this."

Ali Asghar Soltanieh, the Iranian ambassador to the atomic energy agency, however, said that the report had vindicated Iran's nuclear activities. It "is

another document that shows Iran's entire nuclear activities are peaceful," the semiofficial Fars News Agency quoted him as saying.

The Iranian nuclear program has long been a flash point, with critics fearing that suggestions that Iran is developing weapons could embolden factions within the Bush administration who have been pushing for a confrontation with Iran.

Iran has asserted that its experiments and projects have nothing to do with a nuclear weapons program while refusing to provide documentation and access to its scientists to support its position.

The report makes no effort to disguise the agency's frustration with Iran's lack of openness. It describes, for example, Iran's installation of new centrifuges, known as the IR-2 and IR-3 (for Iranian second and third generations), and other modifications at its site at Natanz as "significant, and as such should have been communicated to the agency."

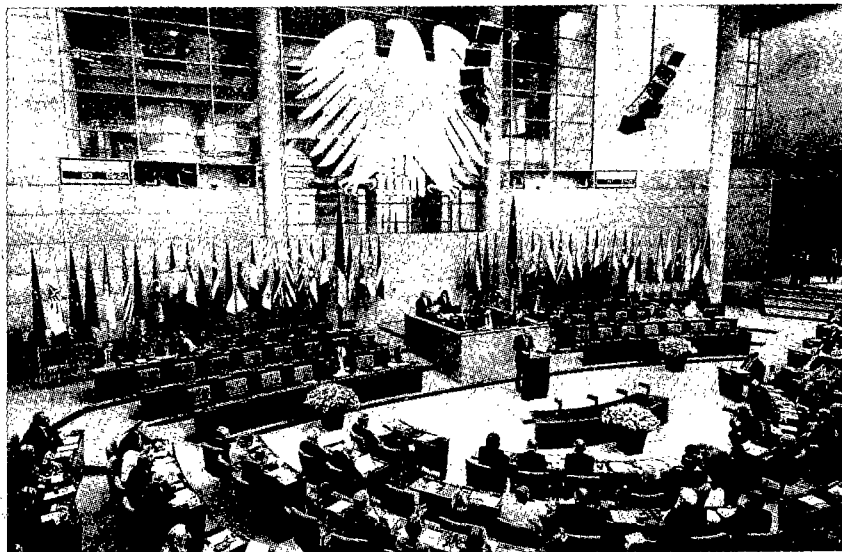
The agency also said that during a visit in April, it was denied access to sites where centrifuge components were being made and where research on uranium enrichment was being conducted.

The report does not say how much enriched uranium the Iranians are producing, but an official connected to the agency said that since December it was slightly less than 150 kilograms, or 330 pounds, about double the amount produced during the same period about 18 months ago.

A National Intelligence Estimate published in December by U.S. intelligence agencies concluded that Iran suspended its work on a weapons design in late 2003, apparently in response to mounting international pressure. That report added that it was uncertain whether the weapons work had resumed.

The Bush administration, in its waning days, seems powerless to modify Iran's behavior. The question seems to have been pushed to the future, with forceful disagreements between Senator John McCain, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, and Senator Barack Obama, contending for the Democratic nomination. They disagree over whether an American president should negotiate with Iran's leadership.

Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy chief, announced in



Axel Schmidt/Agence France-Presse

NATO-nation lawmakers met Tuesday in Berlin, where Iran's stance was addressed.

Brussels on Monday that he would go to Iran soon — possibly “within the month” — to present a new offer of political, technological, security and trade rewards for Iran if it halts its uranium enrichment program.

Solana will travel with senior Foreign Ministry officials from five of the six

countries involved in the initiative: Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany. The sixth nation, the United States, has refused to hold talks with Iran. The incentives, agreed on by the six countries in London this month but still not made public, repackaged and clarified incentives presented to Iran in 2006.

Iran rejected them at the time, saying that relinquishing its uranium enrichment program was non-negotiable. The Iranian foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, has said the new package should not cross Iran’s “red line” — shorthand for its uranium-enrichment program. (IHT, Reuters, AP)

Herald ^{INTERNATIONAL} Tribune May 29, 2008

Rival to president wins Iran parliamentary post

Ex-nuclear negotiator opposed Ahmadinejad

By Nazila Fathi and Graham Bowley

TEHRAN: A political rival to the president of Iran was elected speaker of the Parliament by an overwhelming majority Wednesday. The new speaker, Ali Larijani, a former chief nuclear negotiator for Iran, is viewed by the West as a moderating influence in Tehran.

The role of parliamentary speaker is a powerful position in Iranian politics, and analysts said that Larijani could use his position to challenge the president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, against whom Larijani ran for president in 2005. Larijani won the speaker position by a vote of 232 to 31.

Larijani resigned as chief nuclear negotiator in October. He was among a small group of officials who, while supportive of Iranian nuclear ambitions,

had tried to press back against Ahmadinejad and his more radical approach, which had left Iran increasingly isolated. After Larijani was elected as speaker, he used remarks to Parliament to strongly criticize a report published this week by the International Atomic Energy Agency that had raised concerns about what it called research by Iran into the development of nuclear weapons.

Larijani described the report as “deplorable” and said that in the future Iran might limit its cooperation with the United Nations nuclear agency, The Associated Press reported.

Larijani, a conservative politician and the former head of state-run television, had been appointed to the nuclear post by Ayatollah Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader.

His departure as negotiator suggested that the ayatollah had swung behind Ahmadinejad and his tougher approach on the nuclear issue. Iran has defied the UN Security Council’s demand that it

quit enriching uranium; instead, Iran has accelerated the enrichment process.

Before the vote for speaker, analysts in Iran had speculated that Larijani might use the election as a test of his popularity. If successful, he might resign from his post and run for the presidency, they said.

They said that he was in a stronger position than he was three years ago because of his time as the chief nuclear negotiator for which he won a strong reputation inside Iran.

At the time of his resignation, there was speculation by political Web sites in Iran that Ahmadinejad and Larijani had differences over tactics and how to pursue talks with Europe.

Analysts referred to confrontational talk by Ahmadinejad and how his speeches about the Iranian nuclear program had complicated Larijani’s negotiations with European leaders.

In an unusually blunt and detailed report, the International Atomic Energy Agency said Monday that suspected research by Iran into the development of

nuclear weapons remained “a matter of serious concern” and that Iran continued to owe the agency “substantial explanations.”

Iran insists that its uranium enrichment program is devoted solely to producing fuel for nuclear reactors that generate electricity.

But the United States and some European countries contend that the fuel might be used for a nuclear weapons program.

Graham Bowley reported in New York



Vahid Salemi/The Associated Press

The former Iranian nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, left, listening to Saeed Jalili, the current nuclear negotiator, during the opening ceremony of Parliament in Tehran.

EU and Turkey trade blame on membership talks

The Associated Press

BRUSSELS: The European Union and Turkey blamed each other Tuesday for the slow pace of negotiations about Turkey's entry into the EU.

The Turkish foreign minister, Ali Babacan, in an oblique reference to France, said questions about whether his country should join at all dampened enthusiasm in Turkey for far-reaching changes in politics and other matters related to membership.

He spoke after a session with EU officials that came close to being canceled after France objected to the talks being labeled "accession" negotiations. France relented at the last minute.

Babacan did not name France but stressed that the European Union had agreed in 2004 to "accession" talks and that efforts to retreat on that promise "wear down the enthusiasm to carry forward reforms." He said full membership must remain the goal of the talks, which began in October 2005.

Under President Nicolas Sarkozy, France has cooled to the idea of Turkey,

an overwhelmingly Muslim country, joining the European Union. He has said that after the negotiations are completed, Turkish membership will be put to a French referendum, a condition never before imposed on an EU candidate.

The 35 negotiating "chapters" cover matters ranging from the free movement of people, goods and capital to compliance with EU economic standards as well as those involving, agriculture, justice, food safety and taxation.

Olli Rehn, the EU enlargement commissioner, said Turkey was responsible, for the slow pace of negotiations.

Rehn expressed concern about a legal effort in Turkey to ban the governing Islamic-oriented Justice and Development Party on the ground that it is eroding the country's secular ideals.

"The EU cannot be indifferent" to efforts to ban a legal political party, he said. He said that Turkish foot-dragging on Cyprus was holding up talks on eight chapters and that its refusal to take "purely technical" steps had delayed work on seven others, including EU state-aid rules.

■ Kurds skip Erdogan speech

Kurdish politicians boycotted a major speech by the Turkish prime minister on Tuesday to protest what they say is the government's refusal to recognize the country's Kurdish minority. The Associated Press reported from Ankara.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was in Diyarbakir, the largest city in the Kurdish-dominated south-east, to present details of plans he unveiled in March for economic and cultural initiatives for the region.

He proposed spending the equivalent of \$14.5 billion over five years to improve agriculture in the arid region, with most of the money earmarked for building hydroelectric dams and irrigation projects, as well as clearing land mines along the border with Syria.

Erdogan also said that a television channel with Kurdish-language programming would soon be started.

But the Kurdish politicians called for the Kurds to be officially recognized as a minority with cultural protections and a measure of political autonomy.

Iraqi police fend off Trojan horse attack

By Stephen Farrell

BAGHDAD: Sunni insurgents converted a water tanker into a Trojan horse to mount a surprise attack on a police checkpoint near Saddam Hussein's birthplace of Awja, the police said Thursday. But officers responded with heavy fire and in the end 14 of the attackers were killed, while two officers were seriously wounded.

The attackers hid inside a split-level Mercedes water truck originally built to carry drinking water and cattle, which had been modified to hide more than a dozen gunmen, a police spokesman said in Tikrit.

Meanwhile, two suicide attacks focused on Iraqi security forces in the north killed 19 people Thursday.

The deadliest of the two attacks was in Sinjar, an ethnically mixed Yazidi and Sunni city 100 kilometers west of Mosul near the border with Syria.

The police said a bomber wearing an explosive belt blew himself up outside the town's police station, where volunteers were lined up hoping to join the force, even though recruitment had been halted at the time because of an earlier warning about possible attacks on recruiting stations.

Among the 16 killed in the attack Thursday were two policemen. Fifteen people were wounded, including five police officers.

Dakhil Qassim, an Iraqi official in

Sinjar, said in an interview with The Associated Press that many lives had been saved Thursday because the security services had been tipped off about an attack on police recruiting centers and had issued a notice Wednesday warning people to stay away.

But some had insisted on waiting for recruiting to start again.

"People gathered at the recruiting center anyway hoping that some official might register their names," he told The AP.

The Sinjar police station commander was later dismissed for failing to protect the volunteers, a Ministry of Interior official said in Mosul.

In a separate attack in Mosul, the battalion commander of a police rapid-intervention force said a suicide bomber, driving what appeared to be a police car packed with explosives, had attacked his convoy by steering the car into the line of vehicles and blowing himself up, killing three people.

Nobody claimed immediate responsibility for the attacks. But Sunni insurgents have been responsible for most of the recent violence in and around Mosul, U.S. officials said.

Farther south, in Diyala Province, the police said they were finding an increasing number of leaflets in and around the provincial capital, Baquba, threatening death to the security forces and anyone cooperating with them.

The police officials said that over the last 10 days, they had found leaflets issued by Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, the homegrown Sunni insurgent group that

U.S. intelligence officials say is foreign-led. The officials said they had found similar leaflets over the last month from Shiite militias.



Firefighters guarded by police officers cleaning the site of a suicide attack Thursday in Mosul that left three dead. In Sinjar, west of Mosul, a suicide bomber killed 16 people.

Kurdish interpreters for U.S. Army share experiences

Responsibilities go beyond simply breaking the language barrier.

By Qassim Khidhir
The Kurdish Globe

Living on the edge as interpreters for the U.S. Army in Iraq may not be their first choice of professions, but it certainly provides a better standard of living—assuming they live to talk about it.

They say Iraqi interpreters who work with coalition forces have the deadliest job. Two Kurdish interpreters who worked with American troops in middle and northern Iraq shared their experiences with The Kurdish Globe on condition their names not be revealed.

Hogir Ahmed (not his real name), 29, worked for the U.S. Army as an interpreter for two years in Anbar province, once an al-Qaeda stronghold. Three years ago, when he graduated from university in Kurdistan Region, he couldn't find a job in the private sector. The only job available was to teach, but the salary was low. For that reason, he chose to become an interpreter.

"In the beginning it was very scary, especially when we were outside on a mission or raiding houses in the villages, but gradually it became normal and not as frightening," said Ahmed.

"I always tried to convince U.S. soldiers not to harm people or break people's doors down," he added. Once, a roadside bomb blew up under his armored Humvee, but he was moved to safety.

He said his most miserable day was when a friend of his, an Arab interpreter, who had only been working for three days, was killed by an insurgent sniper while on a mission in a rural area in Anbar province. He believes that interpreters are the most invaluable assistants to the U.S. army.

Ahmed said there were always arguments among Kurdish, Sunni, and Shiite

interpreters, down to which TV channel to watch.

"The Shiite and Kurdish interpreters were friendly, but they disliked Sunni interpreters; also, Sunni interpreters disliked Shiites and Kurds, particularly Shiites," said Ahmed. In the beginning, Ahmed tried to befriend every interpreter and not involve in political quarrel with them. Gradually, however, the situation became unbearable and he decided to take sides.

"Some Sunni interpreters always defended Saddam's actions, and we always argued

insurgents attacked or kidnapped him.

Shortly after he became a U.S. Army interpreter, Ali was very disappointed when he heard that the Americans had allegedly left a translator behind after insurgents attacked them.

"There was a meeting in one of the Arab villages in Mosul province between the Iraqi and American armies on one side and tribal leaders on the other side; then, insurgents started shelling the village with mortars. U.S. troops left their interpreter

and Sunni interpreters, but they always tried to hide it from the Americans by saying they were just joking with each other. "Arab interpreters all the time complained to the Americans that Kurdish authorities won't let Arabs enter Kurdistan Region; we told them that if we let all Arabs enter Kurdistan then the situation in Kurdistan Region would become like Baghdad and Mosul," said Ali.

People in Kurdistan Region do not consider those who work for the American Army "traitors," unlike most Iraqi Arabs, who consider anyone who works for the Americans "A'ameel," which is Arabic for collaborator, or, literally, "agent."

Arab interpreters lead dual lives to avoid being killed, concealing their identities and addresses. On patrol, the men cover their faces with military-issued bandannas that they pull down to the bottom of their sunglasses. But Kurdish interpreters have no such problems.

Washington established a program in 2006 that allows interpreters who have worked with U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq for at least 12 months to move to the United States with their families. The program, however, limits the number of "special immigrant visas," which means only a fraction are granted refuge. In 2008, all 500 visas were issued by April, although a recent law raised the annual quota to 5,000 starting in October. Ali told the Globe that obtaining visa to the U.S. is a priority for Arab interpreters.

Since the war began five years ago, at least 200 Iraqis translating for U.S. troops have been killed, most of them in targeted killings, according to L3 Communications, a New York company that supplies interpreters to the American military.



An Iraqi interpreter walks with American soldiers with his face covered so as not to be recognized by locals. PRESS PHOTO

that Saddam attacked Kurds with chemical weapons and killed hundreds of thousands of Kurds and Shiites," he said. "When Saddam was executed, a Sunni interpreter cried," he added. "In the end, we all decided to divide our container [sleeping room] into two parts, Shiites and Kurds together and Sunnis alone; but this did not stop the arguments," he concluded.

Osman Ali (not his real name), 25, worked as an interpreter for U.S. troops in Q West Base in the Qayara area in the northern Iraqi province of Mosul. He said he always carried a pistol when he traveled between his home in Erbil city and the base in case in-

terpreter behind," Ali told the Globe. He said when he started working

with the U.S. Army that he was terrified of roadside bombs, but after awhile they became not only normal but amusing.

"Sometimes when we were outside on a mission, on the road inside the truck, instead of being careful and watching out for bad guys, we [he and U.S. soldiers] discussed women and social affairs and sometime sang to each other," said Ali. His main topic of discussion with U.S. soldiers was about social differences between U.S. and Kurdish societies.

Ali said there were always quarrels among Kurd, Shiite,

Suicide bombers kill 19 as Nouri al-Maliki urges cancellation of \$60 billion debt

Deborah Haynes in Baghdad

At least 19 people were killed in two suicide bombings in northern Iraq today as Nouri al-Maliki, the Prime Minister, urged his country's creditors to cancel about \$60 billion in debts at an international conference in Sweden.

The twin bombings, which also left more than two dozen people injured, underlined the fragility of security gains made over the past few weeks following major, Iraqi-led operations in Iraq's three main cities of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul.

In the deadlier attack, 14 police recruits and two policemen were killed when a suicide bomber wearing a military uniform detonated an explosive vest near a police recruiting centre at a town called Sinjar, near the northern hub of Mosul. A further ten recruits and five policemen were wounded.

Dakheel Qassim, the mayor of Sinjar, said that town officials had received a tip-off about a potential attack and had warned the police to halt a recruitment drive that had been running for the past three days.

But local people desperate for jobs had queued up regardless.

"They gathered near the gate of the re-

than 400 people died in a multiple bombing.

Only hours before today's carnage, three people were killed and 12 wounded when a suicide bomber drove up to a group of policemen and detonated his explosives in al-Gabat, a village north of Mosul, police said.

In other violence, at least 12 insurgents were killed in clashes with members of a US-backed Iraqi neighbourhood patrol near the city of Tikrit, north of Baghdad, according to police.

The day's unrest occurred despite an offensive launched in Mosul this month by Mr Maliki. US commanders have described the city as the last urban stronghold of al-Qaeda in Iraq after many fighters were driven there from Baghdad and the surrounding belts by a surge of US forces last year.

The Prime Minister was keen to press his country's successes on the security front at the one-day conference in Stockholm attended by Ban Ki Moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Condoleezza Rice, US Secretary of State, along with about 100 delegations.

He recently headed an offensive to reclaim the southern Iraqi city of Basra from Shia militiamen, while Iraqi troops are also fanning out across the streets of Sadr City, a Shia slum in Baghdad, for the first time since



but the debts of Iraq ... which we inherited from the dictator, hamper the reconstruction process," Mr Maliki told delegates.

"We are looking forward to the brother countries writing off its [Iraq's] debts, which are a burden on the Iraqi Government," he said, a reference to states such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, which are Iraq's biggest Arab creditors.

But the two countries sent only junior representatives to the conference, which marks the first annual review of the International Compact with Iraq agreed in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh last year. That committed Baghdad to implement reforms in exchange for greater international support.

Violence in Iraq has fallen to its lowest level in more than four years, according to figures released by the US military. Officials always couch such glowing statistics with the warning that progress is fragile and reversible.

The drop in attacks is enabling the United States to withdraw five "surge" brigades of some 30,000 troops that were deployed last year without replacing them.

As part of this planned redeployment, about 4,000 soldiers from the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, will return home next month, the US military announced today. They have been working in the restive province of Diyala, north of Baghdad, since April last year.

Washington plans to have a 45-day evaluation period after withdrawing all the surge brigades by the end of July, before announcing further reductions.



cruting centre despite the fact that the police told them through loudspeakers that there was no recruiting today and to disperse," Mr Qassim said. "A suicide bomber came and blew himself up among them."

The mountains around Sinjar are home to Iraq's non-Muslim Yazidi community. Two Yazidi villages last year suffered the deadliest attack since the 2003 invasion in which more

the invasion.

Mr Maliki also used the conference to stress the need for countries to cancel Iraq's massive debts (some of which date back almost 30 years) along with compensation payments for Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

"Iraq is not a poor country. It possesses tremendous human and material resources,

United Press International

Kurdish PM pushes reconstruction issues

ERBIL, Iraq, May 29 2008 (UPI) -- Kurdish Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani outlined a series of principles to boost reconstruction in the region at an engineering summit in Erbil.

Barzani kicked off a three-day conference Wednesday that drew more than 350 engineers from the northern provinces of Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah.

"Each one of us, based on our own duties, is responsible for the advancement of our society, and all must play a role in the process of change," the Kurdish premier said.

The goal of the conference was to encourage private firms to embrace

local and foreign investment opportunities in order to bring reconstruction to the region, the Kurdistan Regional Government said in a statement.

Barzani said his government would take a series of initiatives to bring positive developments to the region, including developing higher education opportunities, building research centers and encouraging international cooperation.

"Progress cannot take root when everyone waits for the government to act and no individual initiative is taken. In order to progress, we must all work together," he said.

Iraqi central and Kurdistan governments to resume oil talks

ERBIL, Iraq, May 30, 2008 (UPI) -- The Iraqi central and Kurdistan regional governments will resume negotiations over the oil law and key issues in early June.

Other topics include the disputed territories in the north.

Falah Mustafa Bakir, the head of the Kurdistan Regional Government's Department of Foreign Relations, told United Press International "there is better understanding" after Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki launched the incursion into Basra and the Kurdish leadership backed him.

"It created a positive atmosphere in Baghdad," he said.

KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and Maliki will meet, as will their respective delegations, including KRG Natural Resources Minister Ashti Hawrami and Iraqi Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani.

The two energy ministers have butted heads over the KRG's signing its own exploration and production deals with foreign companies and a dispute as to what the oil law should look like.

"The KRG is determined to go ahead and contribute positively in order to have a hydrocarbon law, based on our belief that the private sector and foreign investment can be a good impetus and good incentive to enhance the economy," Bakir said. "We believe that our approach, which is a free market oriented, market economy approach, would help Iraq at this stage."

Many outside the semiautonomous Kurdish region favor to some extent the continuation of a more centralized and nationalized oil sector.

Bakir said the two prime ministers agreed that the February 2007 draft of the oil law would be under negotiation, and that all of the oil-related laws and issues would be sent to Parliament as a package. These are the hydrocarbons law, the revenue sharing law, the laws re-establishing the Iraq National Oil Co. and reorganizing the Ministry of Oil, and a list of oil fields and exploration blocks that determine whether they are controlled by the central or local governments.

Guardian

May 30 2008

Kurdish politician calls for dialogue with PKK

Owen Bowcott

The prominent Kurdish politician Leyla Zana has called for dialogue to end the quarter century of conflict that has scarred south-eastern Turkey and killed more than 30,000 people.

In a plea for an end to the violence, the former MP - who spent 10 years in prison for using the Kurdish language in the Turkish National Assembly - urged the government to stop bombing rebel bases inside northern Iraq.

Zana, who visited London earlier this month, addressed a meeting on conflict resolution held in Westminster and demanded that the PKK rebel movement, known as the Kurdistan Workers' party, should be included in any peace process.

"I support the peaceful resolution of the problems in order for the PKK to renounce its weapons," the Kurdish politician, speaking through a translator, declared. "The bombs must stop falling out of the sky."

"Kurdish people see the PKK as a kind of assurance. The PKK itself has stated that if the necessary solutions are provided and the attacks on them end and democratic rights [guaranteed] they will be prepared to lay down their weapons. The Kurds are not passionately attached to their weapons.

"If a project is launched ... and both sides are prepared to come to some agreement, then ... there will be no more armed activity. If dialogue and reconciliation are required it's necessary to speak to all Kurds, not just some of them," she said.

Zana's comments come at a period of renewed hostility between the rebel group and the Turkish army. Turkish troops have launched several large-scale assaults on PKK bases in mountains that span the border with Iraq this spring. A unilateral ceasefire declared by the PKK two years ago failed to advance political reconciliation between the two sides.

"We can accept the idea of a single state but not one language," Zana told the meeting in London. "The promises of the 1920s - when [Kemal] Ataturk [the founder of the modern Turkish state] mentioned 'Turks' and 'Kurds' - need to be fulfilled. We need a country in which people can live equally."

Zana called for Turkey to be allowed to enter the EU. "There's no way in which a country can live with its problems without outside help," she said. "Turkey is one of those countries."

"I defend and advocate the EU accession process as a good thing. I believe rights and freedoms should be secured in Turkey. I believe it's time for Turkey to join.

"Turkey can play a role as a bridge between the Middle East and Europe. I want every peace-loving person to encourage Turkey to complete



this process."

Zana, 48, who is seen as a popular figure-head for Kurdish demands for language rights and greater regional autonomy, is still facing up to two years in prison for allegedly praising the jailed leader of the PKK, Abdullah Ocalan.

At the end of her speech, she gave a broad smile but observed: "Whenever the Kurds get their hopes up it seems that the world unites to crush their hopes."



Voices of Iraq

30 /05 /2008

Kurdish MP says differences over Kirkuk caused delay in other laws

Baghdad, May 30 (VOI) – The political powers' differences over the city of Kirkuk have contributed to a great extent to the delayed adoption of other draft laws inside the Iraqi parliament, a Kurdish legislator said on Friday.

"Having the issue of Kirkuk and other disputed areas pending and without radical solutions is not acceptable today. These differences have become a stumbling block before the parliament to pass some laws," Mohsen al-Saadoun, a member of the Iraqi parliament from the Kurdistan Coalition (KC), told *Aswat al-Iraq – Voices of Iraq* – (VOI).

Saadoun, whose KC is the second largest bloc with 55 seats out of the Iraqi parliament's 275, appealed to the UN to intervene to end this dispute peacefully in a way that would guarantee everyone's rights.

"The Kurdish parties do not plan to control the oil-rich city. All groups in the city are full-fledged partners in its riches," stressed Saadoun.

Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution is related to normalization in Kirkuk, an important and mixed city of Kurds, Turcomans, Christians, Arabs and Assyri-

ans.

Kurds seek to include the city into the autonomous Iraq's Kurdistan region, while Sunni Muslims, Turcomans and Shiites oppose the incorporation. The article stipulates that all Arabs in Kirkuk be returned to their original locations in southern and central Iraqi areas, and formerly displaced residents returned to Kirkuk, 250 km northeast of Baghdad.

The article also calls for conducting a census to be followed by a referendum to let the inhabitants decide whether they would like Kirkuk to be annexed to the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region or having it as an independent province.

These stages were supposed to end on December 31, 2007, a deadline that was later extended to six months.

The former regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had forced over 250,000 Kurdish residents to give up their homes to Arabs in the 1970s, to "Arabize" the city and the region's oil industry.

United Press International

Turkish officials weigh ties to Kurdistan

ANKARA, Turkey, May 30, 2008 (UPI) -- Officials from the ruling Justice and Development Party in Turkey said Friday they are considering a diplomatic visit to Iraqi Kurdistan.

The announcement follows a visit by Kurdish delegates to Ankara last week to discuss boosting economic and political ties between Turkey and the semi-autonomous region.

Justice and Development Party Deputy Chairman Dengir Mir Mehmet Fırat said his party was weighing an official invitation from members of the Kurdish delegation to visit the city of Erbil, Today's Zaman reported.

Fırat said his party would weigh the invitation once it received support from the

party's central authority. He noted the proposal grew more attractive when the Turkish National Security Council gave its backing for opening an official dialogue with the Iraqis earlier this year.

The National Security Council made its decision following a visit by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, in March. Turkish officials, however, cautioned that Iraqi Kurds need to take further steps to rein in the militant Kurdistan Workers Party, which several nations, including the United States, consider a terrorist organization.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is planning a visit to Baghdad in early June, though the official date is a closely guarded secret because of security concerns.

United Press International

KRG to create new Energy Ministry

May 31, 2008 UPI

Iraqi Kurdistan's ministries of Electricity and Natural Resources are to be merged and current oil chief Ashti Hawrami is likely to be named minister.

Sources here told UPI that Hawrami is the front-runner for the soon-to-be-established post of KRG minister of energy.

Hawrami, currently minister of natural resources where the hydrocarbons portfolio falls, negotiated and signed nearly all the dozens of deals the Kurdistan Regional Government KRG has inked with international oil firms to explore for and produce oil and gas.

He's often had public disagreements with the federal Oil Ministry over the deals, which Baghdad calls unilateral and illegal. But he's popular here in Iraq's north and is praised for his leadership by oil companies and politicians.

"He has been doing some good work professionally. He's experienced and talented, and we benefit from his experience. He's professional," said Falah Mustafa Bakir, the head of the KRG's Department of Foreign Relations.

Bakir confirmed the new Energy Ministry but deferred comment on Hawrami's post.

"Nothing is final; therefore I don't like to go into the details," he told UPI, adding "most probably" Hawrami would receive the position. "He is the one. From our side, he is the one."

The KRG has more than 40 ministerial posts, including four with two ministers -- one from each of the two main, and rival, parties:

the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

This would be condensed to 23, according to a recent plan approved by political parties but not yet finalized. The PUK and KDP will have eight ministries each. The Kurdistan Islamic Union, Kurdistan Islamic Group, Communist Party, Turkoman Party, a Christian Party, Kurdistan Toilers Party and Kurdistan Democratic Socialist Party each would have one ministry.



REUTERS

French minister's visit shows new stance on Iraq

May 31, 2008 By Adrian Croft

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner discussed investment projects to help rebuild Iraq on Saturday on a visit to the country whose 2003 invasion by U.S.-led troops Paris strongly opposed.

Kouchner began his two-day tour with a visit to the southern city of Nassiriya where he held talks with Shi'ite Vice-President Abel Abdul-Mahdi, a French-educated economist, and provincial governor Aziz Kadhim Alwan.

"The visit represents the re-engagement of France, and through it the European Union and the international community, in Iraq," a French diplomatic official in Paris said.

The official said Kouchner would inaugurate a new French embassy office in Arbil in northern Iraq.

France, which takes over the EU's rotating presidency in July, has said it will lead a drive for greater EU involvement in rebuilding Iraq and has offered to host reconciliation talks.

It was Kouchner's second visit to Iraq, nine months after he made the first visit to the country by a top French official since the beginning of the U.S.-led war.

Kouchner discussed the possibility of French companies investing in Iraq at the meeting with the Iraqi officials in Nassiriya, said Abdul Hussein Dawod, spokesman for the provincial governor.

He also visited a nearby archaeological site.

Kouchner told reporters in Nassiriya he wanted to encourage tourism to Nassiriya and that France was ready to invest in projects there if the Baghdad government agreed.

Kouchner was due in Baghdad later on Saturday where he was expected to hold talks with President Jalal Talabani and parliament speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadani.

APOLOGY TO MALIKI

Former French President Jacques Chirac led international opposition to the invasion of Iraq, but new President Nicolas Sarkozy has sought warm relations with Washington since his election a year ago.

Kouchner, one of the few French politicians who backed military intervention in Iraq, was due to hold talks on Sunday with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

Kouchner was forced to apologize last August for having said that Maliki should be replaced.

Maliki demanded the apology after Kouchner was quoted by Newsweek magazine as saying the Iraqi government was not working and that Maliki should be replaced, possibly with Abdul-Mahdi.

Kouchner, a co-founder of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning aid agency Medecins Sans Frontieres, will also meet humanitarian groups and the Chaldean patriarch of Baghdad, Cardinal Emmanuel III Delly. Chaldeans belong to a branch of the Roman Catholic Church practising an ancient Eastern rite and form Iraq's biggest Christian group.

Earlier this year, Kouchner proposed granting 500 visas to Iraqi Christians whom he said suffered particularly in the country's sectarian violence. However, Roman Catholic Cardinal Leonardo Sandri has said Iraqi Christians seeking asylum in the West should not receive special treatment based on religion.

A diplomatic source in Paris said on Friday not all Iraqi refugee families granted visas for France would be Christians.



AFP

TURQUIE : UN REBELLE KURDE, UN SUPPLÉTIF DE L'ARMÉE TUÉS DANS DES COMBATS

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 23 mai 2008 (AFP) - Un rebelle kurde du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et un supplétif de l'armée turque ont été tués dans des combats se poursuivant depuis jeudi soir dans le sud-est de la Turquie, ont affirmé vendredi des sources locales de sécurité.

Les combats ont lieu dans une zone montagneuse près du village d'Övecek, dans la province de Van.

Un rebelle a été tué et deux soldats blessés jeudi soir. Vendredi, un "gardien de village" -nom donné à des miliciens kurdes soutenant Ankara dans sa lutte

contre le PKK- a été tué et trois autres ont été blessés, selon ces sources.

L'armée poursuivait vendredi soir son opération avec un soutien aérien, ont-elles ajouté.

Depuis décembre, l'armée turque a renforcé son action contre le PKK, procédant à plusieurs raids aériens contre des bases rebelles. Elle a aussi effectué une incursion terrestre d'une semaine dans le nord de l'Irak où Ankara affirme que plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes ont trouvé refuge.

AFP

DEUX REBELLES KURDES TUÉS EN TURQUIE (PRESSE)

ANKARA, 28 mai 2008 (AFP) - Deux rebelles séparatistes kurdes ont été tués dans la nuit de mardi à mercredi au cours d'affrontements avec les forces de sécurité dans l'est de la Turquie, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Les combats sont survenus dans une région montagneuse près de la frontière avec l'Iran alors qu'un groupe de militants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) était poursuivi, a indiqué l'agence.

Une opération de sécurité était en cours pour pourchasser les rebelles qui

avaient pu s'échapper, a précisé la même source.

L'armée turque a renforcé son action contre le PKK depuis décembre, procédant à plusieurs raids aériens contre des bases rebelles. Elle a aussi effectué une incursion terrestre d'une semaine dans le nord de l'Irak où Ankara affirme que plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes ont trouvé refuge.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a entamé en 1984 une lutte pour obtenir l'indépendance du sud-est anatolien qui a fait plus de 37.000 morts.



29.05.2008

KURDISTAN

L'ARMÉE TURQUE BOMBARDE DE NOUVEAU LE PKK

L'armée turque annonce avoir bombardé des positions de rebelles kurdes du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (séparatistes kurdes de Turquie) dans le nord de l'Irak. L'état-major, qui décrit les frappes comme intensives, n'a fourni aucune précision sur le nombre de tués.

Des chasseurs de l'aviation turque ont bombardé jeudi 29 mai des positions de rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatistes kurdes de Turquie) dans le nord de l'Irak, a annoncé l'armée turque.

Les frappes décrites comme "intensives" ont été lancées à partir de 11h00 (heure locale) et ont visé "16 cibles situées dans la région de Hakourk", a indiqué un communiqué mis en ligne sur le site de l'état-major turc. Le document souligne que l'opération s'est achevée avec "succès".

Le dernier raid aérien de l'aviation turque contre le PKK en Irak remonte au 11 mai.

L'armée turque n'a fourni aucune précision sur le nombre de tués tout en soulignant qu'un "soin extrême a été mis en oeuvre comme d'habitude pour ne pas nuire à la population locale" kurde.

Depuis la mi-décembre, recevant des renseignements à temps réel des Etats-Unis, l'armée turque a bombardé à plusieurs reprises des positions du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak où sont retranchés depuis plusieurs années, selon Ankara, plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes dans plusieurs camps.

La Turquie a également lancé une opération terrestre d'une semaine en février dans cette région, une initiative critiquée par Bagdad et les Kurdes d'Irak.

Un rebelle présumé arrêté

Plusieurs centaines de rebelles ont été tués lors de ces opérations, selon l'armée turque.

D'autre part, la police d'Izmir (ouest de la Turquie) a arrêté un rebelle présumé du PKK qui s'apprêtait à commettre un attentat dans cette grande ville, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Un demi-kilo d'explosif plastique a été saisi dans l'appartement du suspect âgé de 29 ans, précise l'agence.

Cinq autres suspects ont été arrêtés dans le cadre de cette affaire, ajoute l'agence.



Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, se bat depuis 1984 pour l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie. Le conflit a fait plus de 37.000 morts.

AFP

IRAN: HUIT MILITAIRES TUÉS PAR DES REBELLES KURDES

TEHERAN, 29 mai 2008 (AFP) - Six membres de l'armée d'élite des Gardiens de la révolution ont été tués dans des combats avec des rebelles kurdes et deux gardes-frontières sont morts dans l'explosion de mines dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran, a rapporté jeudi l'agence Mehr.

"Six membres des Gardiens de la révolution ont été tués lors d'affrontements armés avec les rebelles du (groupe séparatiste kurde) Pejak dans la région de Sardasht", située en Azerbaïdjan occidental, à la frontière avec l'Irak, selon Mehr qui ne donne pas d'autres précisions.

Selon l'agence, deux autres militaires, des gardes-frontières, ont été tués dans la même région lorsqu'ils ont marché sur des mines "posées par les contre-révolutionnaires".

La presse iranienne avait fait état mardi de la mort de trois Gardiens de la révolution dans des affrontements dimanche dans le nord-ouest du pays.

Samedi, elle avait rapporté la mort de neuf rebelles kurdes, dont cinq femmes, membres du Pejak lors d'affrontements avec les forces de l'ordre dans le village de Gonbad, près de la ville d'Orumieh, située dans la province d'Azerbaïdjan occidental.

Les provinces du nord-ouest de l'Iran, habitées de Kurdes, sont souvent le



théâtre d'accrochages entre les forces de sécurité et les militants du Pejak.

Ce groupe est lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), basé en Turquie et dans le nord de l'Irak.

L'Iran accuse régulièrement les Etats-Unis de chercher à fomenter des troubles ethniques en soutenant des groupes de rebelles dans les provinces iraniennes comportant des minorités.



TURQUIE: ERDOGAN DÉVOILE UN PROJET D'INVESTISSEMENTS POUR LA ZONE KURDE

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 27 mai 2008 (AFP)

- Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a dévoilé mardi un projet d'investissements pour le sud-est du pays, à majorité kurde, qui vise à réduire les disparités entre cette zone et l'ouest industrialisé de la Turquie. Lors d'un long discours à Diyarbakir, la principale ville du sud-est turc, M. Erdogan a expliqué que de nouveaux fonds, 800 millions de dollars (507 millions d'euros) pour la seule année de 2008, seront consacrés à des projets d'infrastructures.

Ces investissements auront pour objectif de raviver le projet d'Anatolie du Sud-Est, un gigantesque programme de développement (barrages, irrigation, développement social) lancé dans les années 1980, a dit M. Erdogan.

M. Erdogan avait annoncé en mars que son gouvernement envisageait d'investir jusqu'à 15 milliards de dollars (9,5 mds d'euros) sur cinq ans dans cet immense projet.

Les subventions seront augmentées, surtout au petites et moyennes entreprises (PME) de la zone, théâtre depuis 1984 de la rébellion séparatiste des parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Plus de 30.000 hectares de terre déminés à la frontière syrienne seront rendus à l'agriculture, a-t-il aussi précisé.

Le Premier ministre a indiqué en outre que le groupe public de radio et télévision TRT allait lancer une chaîne qui diffuserait essentiellement dans les "langues natales" de cette région frontalière avec la Syrie, l'Irak et l'Irak, c'est-à-dire en kurde mais aussi en farsi et arabe.

La TRT diffuse depuis 2004 certains programmes en kurde, une décision qui à l'époque avait favorisé l'ouverture des négociations d'adhésion d'Ankara à l'Union européenne.

M. Erdogan est soumis aux pressions dans son pays et des Etats-Unis pour accompagner les mesures militaires contre le PKK par des initiatives politiques et économiques en faveur de la communauté kurde, afin d'éroder le soutien populaire au PKK.

Les Etats-Unis, comme la Turquie, considèrent le PKK comme une organisation terroriste. Washington fournit des renseignements à l'armée turque pour les raids aériens qui visent depuis la fin de l'an dernier les bases du PKK dans le Kurdistan irakien.

LE TEMPS 29 mai 2008 ▶

Ankara promet aux Kurdes la prospérité

Le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a dévoilé un projet d'investissement pour le sud-est de 20 milliards de dollars.

Delphine Nerbollier

Recep Tayyip Erdogan a voulu faire les choses en grand. C'est avec 12 ministres et 50 de ses députés originaires de la région du sud-est qu'il a dévoilé, mardi à Diyarbakir, les grandes lignes de son projet de « restauration sociale ». Sous haute protection policière, le premier ministre turc a confirmé vouloir finaliser le projet d'irrigation et de production d'électricité GAP (projet du sud anatolien).

Ce projet faramineux, lancé en 1981, prévoyait à l'origine la construction de 22 barrages et de 19 centrales hydroélectriques, sur le Tigre et l'Euphrate, dans une région à majorité kurde, troublée depuis par quinze ans de guerre. Or, par manque de financement, le GAP n'a jamais atteint ses objectifs. Certes, il fournit 48% de l'hydroélectricité du pays, mais seules 14% des terres visées sont aujourd'hui irriguées.

« Projet salvateur »

C'est donc en grande pompe que Recep Tayyip Erdogan a promis de finaliser ce projet d'ici à 2012. Sur cinq ans, 11,6 milliards de dollars devraient être investis et financés par l'Etat. Dix milliards supplémentaires, hors budget de l'Etat, ont également été annoncés. L'essentiel de ces fonds sera alloué aux projets d'irrigation et à la construction et la finalisation de cinq barrages.

« Ce que nous annonçons n'est pas un simple rapport, mais une action financée et au calendrier défini qui permettra d'enrayer le chômage

et les migrations, les différences économiques et sociales de nos régions », a lancé le premier ministre devant une salle de sport bondée. « Ce projet doit être vu comme un projet salvateur, un projet de restauration sociale qui permettra d'améliorer l'unité et l'intégrité du pays. » Les chiffres révélés par le gouvernement font frémir. La finalisation du GAP devrait officiellement faire accroître de 209% le revenu par habitant de la région et créer 3,8 millions d'emplois, des chiffres accueillis avec scepticisme par de nombreux observateurs.

En se déplaçant à Diyarbakir, Recep Tayyip Erdogan a voulu reprendre la main dans cette région à majorité kurde, la plus pauvre du pays, où son parti, l'AKP, a raflé plus de 70 députés lors des élections de juillet dernier. Or, les interventions militaires répétées contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) en territoire turc et irakien, de même que le procès en dissolution ouvert contre son parti islamiste modéré, ont ébranlé cette domination. A moins d'un an des élections municipales, il s'est donc voulu en pointe sur la question kurde, confirmant même la création d'une chaîne de télévision publique en langue kurde. « Lorsque le plein-emploi et la liberté se renforcent, l'organisation terroriste [du PKK] perd », a-t-il asséné devant la foule.

Scepticisme kurde

Les grands absents de cette grand-messe étaient les représentants du Parti pour une société démocratique

(DTP, pro-kurde) et notamment le maire de Diyarbakir, Osman Baydemir. Lui qui regrette régulièrement de n'être jamais invité par les autorités d'Ankara a décliné l'invitation, pour ne pas participer à un « hold-up électoraliste ». Emine Ayna, la présidente du DTP, a de son côté minimisé l'annonce gouvernementale. « Votre paquet ne sert à rien. Le peuple de Diyarbakir et les Kurdes en sont rassasiés. » Pour le DTP, les racines du problème kurde ne sont pas économiques mais culturelles et politiques. Il a ainsi de nouveau appelé à un arrêt des opérations contre le PKK.

L'éditorialiste Mehmet Ali Birand met lui aussi en garde contre de telles annonces. « Les promesses ne suffisent plus. Nos citoyens d'origine kurde veulent protéger leur langue, conserver leur culture et avoir leur part du gâteau. Nous verrons si le gouvernement tient sa promesse. » Et d'ajouter que, si la moitié du budget alloué à la lutte contre le PKK avait été utilisée pour l'emploi, « nous serions face à une situation très différente dans le sud-est ».

La Syrie et l'Irak regardent eux aussi avec inquiétude la multiplication de barrages sur le Tigre et l'Euphrate car, à terme, le GAP devrait réduire le débit de l'Euphrate de 40% pour la Syrie et de 90% pour l'Irak. En début de semaine, Bagdad a demandé à Ankara d'augmenter le débit pour contrer la sécheresse.

Les députés UMP amendent la Constitution pour faire barrage à la Turquie

Lors du débat sur les institutions, un amendement prévoyant un référendum sur certaines adhésions à l'UE a été adopté

Nicolas Sarkozy l'a répété jeudi 29 mai aux sénateurs de l'UMP qu'il avait conviés à l'Élysée, le Congrès pour la révision de la Constitution sur les institutions « sera maintenu quoi qu'il arrive ». Mais, compte tenu du retard qu'a pris la discussion du texte en première lecture, certainement pas le lundi 7 juillet, comme il l'avait envisagé initialement. Le Congrès pourrait n'être convoqué que le 21 juillet.

Les députés ont achevé jeudi soir l'examen des articles, au terme de 47 heures de débat. Avec un dernier long échange sur l'article proposant la suppression d'un référendum obligatoire pour la ratification de toute nouvelle adhésion à l'Union européenne. Ce « verrou » avait été introduit en 2005 par Jacques Chirac afin de rassurer les opposants à l'ouverture des négociations avec la Turquie. Ceux-ci ont de nouveau fait entendre leur voix, parvenant, avec l'aval de

M. Sarkozy, à faire inscrire dans la Constitution une clause qui prévoit que le référendum restera une obligation dès lors que la population du nouvel adhérent représente plus de 5 % de celle de l'Union.

Richard Mallié (UMP, Bouches-du-Rhône), principal porte-voix des 43 signataires de l'amendement de l'UMP portant cette demande, s'est défendu que celle-ci vise spécifiquement la Turquie. Sans que cela trompe qui que ce soit. Invoquant les principes d'universalité de la Constitution, Bruno Le Maire (UMP, Eure), a estimé que ceux-ci étaient « remis en cause par une disposition ne visant qu'un seul pays » qu'il a jugée « choquante ».

L'intervention de l'ancien directeur du cabinet de Dominique de Villepin a été saluée sur les bancs de la gauche. Serge Blisko (PS, Paris) a quant à lui dénoncé « une lâcheté ». Manuel Valls (PS, Essonne), s'est indigné que « l'on se serve de la Constitution pour régler des problèmes politiques au sein de l'UMP ». René Dosière (app. PS, Aisne) a fustigé « une disposition hypocrite, indigne et honteuse » que Patrick Braouezec (PCF, Seine-Saint-Denis) a considérée comme « une faute politique ». Jean-Christophe Lagarde (Nouveau Centre,

Seine-Saint-Denis) a relevé que cette disposition était doublement « inutile » dès lors que le « référendum d'initiative populaire » adopté dans ce même texte permet en tout état de cause d'en prévoir l'organisation quand la question se posera.

« Soupçon »

La ministre de la justice, Rachida Dati, exprimant la position du gouvernement, n'en a pas moins donné un avis favorable à cet amendement, adopté par 48 voix contre 21.

Plus tôt dans l'après-midi, les députés avaient adopté la réforme du Conseil supérieur de la magistrature (CSM). Le projet présenté par le gouvernement avait soulevé de nombreuses objections. Il a présenté en séance une nouvelle proposition reprenant en partie celles de la commission des lois. Ainsi reconnaît-il le CSM en formation plénière et non plus seulement dans ses deux formations compétentes respectivement pour les magistrats du siège et ceux du parquet.

Le gouvernement n'a pas cédé, en revanche, sur la parité entre magistrats et non-magistrats dans la composition du CSM réclamée, « au minimum », par de nombreux intervenants. « Il n'est pas sain que les magistrats donnent l'impression de s'autogérer », a soutenu M^{me} Dati. « Connaissez-vous un seul corps dans lequel les carrières et les procédures ne sont pas gérées au moins à parité par ses membres ? », l'a interpellé François Bayrou (non-inscrit, Pyrénées-Atlantiques), estimant que cette disparité aurait pour effet de jeter le « soupçon » sur les magistrats. Huit personnalités extérieures siègeront aux côtés de sept magistrats de l'ordre judiciaire dans le futur CSM, présidé par le premier président de la Cour de cassation.

Le vote solennel de l'ensemble du projet de loi aura lieu mardi 3 à l'Assemblée nationale. Le début de la discussion au Sénat, prévu mardi 10 juin, pourrait, selon nos informations, être reporté d'une semaine. ■

PATRICK ROGER

DIPLOMATIE CONFÉRENCE DE STOCKHOLM SUR L'IRAK

Le gouvernement irakien réclame « moins d'aide » et plus de « partenariat »

STOCKHOLM
CORRESPONDANCE

Fini le temps des plaintes. A la surprise de nombreux diplomates présents à Stockholm, jeudi 29 mai, pour la première conférence d'évaluation sur la situation en Irak après celle de Charm El-Cheikh, en 2007, le gouvernement irakien a présenté un visage résolument volontariste devant le secrétaire général de l'ONU, Ban Ki-moon, la secrétaire d'Etat américaine, Condoleezza Rice, et les représentants d'une centaine de pays et d'organisations.

A la tribune, le premier ministre

irakien, Nouri Al-Maliki, a donné le ton en déclarant : « L'Irak n'est pas un pays pauvre. Nous ne voulons pas d'aide. Nous voulons du partenariat. » Même si la situation sécuritaire demeure fragile, les améliorations sont palpables depuis un an, ont noté les intervenants. La manne pétrolière met l'Irak à l'abri du besoin, mais le gouvernement doit maintenant persuader les compagnies étrangères d'apporter leur expertise. Pour cela, il faut des garanties, aussi bien sur le plan physique que juridique. Tant que la loi sur les hydrocarbures, qui doit partager les

d'accueillir une réunion avec les différents groupes, sur le modèle de celle organisée en juillet 2007 à La Celle-Saint-Cloud pour le Liban.

Sur le plan extérieur, l'objectif de M. Maliki était d'obtenir une annulation de la dette extérieure et une réduction des réparations de guerre. Ses attentes ont été déçues. En revanche, plusieurs pays ont estimé que l'ampleur de la conférence marquait le retour de l'Irak dans le concert des nations et ont remarqué que les autorités irakiennes, à commencer par M. Maliki, qui se laissaient, disent-ils, parfois aller à

bénéfices entre les différentes communautés présentes en Irak et favoriser la réconciliation nationale, n'est pas votée, rien de sérieux ne peut être envisagé. Or le dialogue est toujours perturbé depuis que la plupart des sunnites ont quitté le gouvernement.

Proposition française

Indice de cette déception : l'Arabie saoudite et le Koweït, pays voisins à majorité sunnite, n'avaient envoyé qu'un modeste représentant tandis que l'Iran était représenté par son ministre des affaires étrangères. La France a proposé l'autosatisfaction, avaient beaucoup gagné en assurance. ■

OLIVIER TRUC

IRAN UN AN AVANT L'ÉLECTION PRÉSIDENTIELLE

A la tête du Majlis iranien, M. Larijani se pose en anti-Ahmadinejad

LA BATAILLE pour l'élection présidentielle de 2009 en Iran est-elle déjà lancée ? En tout cas, pour les derniers mois de son mandat, le président iranien, le fondamentaliste Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, va devoir affronter une fronde aussi inédite que généralisée face au nouveau Parlement (Majlis) issu des élections législatives de mars, remportées pourtant à plus de 60 % par les conservateurs.

Pénalisé par sa gestion populiste de l'économie qui se traduit par une inflation à 24 % et par un certain mécontentement devant ses diatribes jusqu'au-boutistes sur le nucléaire qui ont isolé le pays et lui ont valu trois séries de sanctions internationales, le président est critiqué dans son propre camp.

Son parti (« La Bonne odeur de servir ») n'a obtenu qu'un faible score aux élections (10 %). De plus, les différents courants qui composent la majorité conservatrice viennent d'infliger un camouflet à M. Ahmadinejad en s'unissant pour écarter le candidat qu'il proposait et faire élire à la tête du Parlement son ancien rival à la présidentielle de 2005, l'ex-négociateur en chef du dossier nucléaire, Ali Larijani.

Dès son premier discours, devant les députés, mercredi

28 mai, M. Larijani a marqué son terrain : « Il faut une gestion saine de l'économie car c'est le principal problème dont souffre la population », a-t-il déclaré, exprimant son souhait de voir s'opérer une « mise en ordre économique » dans laquelle « le Parlement doit être actif et guider l'action du gouvernement ». « Le nouveau président du Majlis s'est clairement positionné en contre-poids politique au populisme de M. Ahmadinejad dans la perspective de l'élection de 2009, explique Ahmad Salamatian, ancien député démocrate d'Ispahan. Il va tenter, en quelque sorte, de mettre la gestion du gouvernement sous tutelle parlementaire. »

Recentrage parlementaire

Peut-il y arriver, dans un système où le Parlement a longtemps servi, comme le confie un diplomate iranien, « d'alibi républicain et démocratique plus que de centre réel de décision » ? « Ce n'est pas impossible, dit encore M. Salamatian, le mécontentement est tel, en tout cas sur l'économie, que M. Larijani peut compter sur l'appui des députés conservateurs critiques, le soutien tactique des partisans de l'ancien président Rafsandjani et la neutralité, pour l'instant, bienveillante des réformateurs. »

De plus, dans son premier dis-

cours, M. Larijani a pesé ses mots. Ils faisaient référence à une intervention, quelques heures plus tôt, du guide suprême, l'ayatollah Khamenei, arbitre par excellence de la politique iranienne, qui incitait le gouvernement à « ne pas violer les règles et les lois du Parlement ».

Ce « recentrage parlementaire » de la politique iranienne, M. Larijani l'a également amorcé sur le si sensible dossier nucléaire. Il s'est livré, mercredi, à une critique en règle du dernier rapport de l'Agence internationale pour l'énergie atomique (AIEA). Menaçant même de revoir la coopération avec l'agence qui a introduit des articles « ambigus » dans son rapport accusant l'Iran de refuser de s'expliquer sur ses éventuelles visées nucléaires militaires.

« Le Parlement, insistait M. Larijani, ne permettra pas de telles tromperies. » Une façon de lancer un message « interne » pour montrer que dans ce domaine aussi, qui est son champ d'expertise, le président du Majlis s'interposera pour éviter de nouveaux dérapages de M. Ahmadinejad. Même si, sur le fond, M. Larijani, qui a démissionné de son poste de négociateur nucléaire fin 2007, car, plus pragmatique, il critiquait la gestion agressive de M. Ahmadinejad, est tout aussi

orthodoxe sur le dossier.

« C'est un changement très significatif qui s'est opéré dans le clan conservateur, explique l'économiste iranien Saeed Leylaz. Tous prennent leurs distances par rapport au désastre économique du pays et ne veulent pas en endosser la responsabilité. Il n'est pas exclu que s'il se heurte trop au Parlement, M. Ahmadinejad décide même de ne pas briguer un second mandat en 2009. »

Dans la bataille présidentielle, ajoute Ahmad Salamatian, « le guide a deux cartes conservatrices en main, Larijani et Ahmadinejad. Il jouera la moins impopulaire et, pour l'instant, M. Ahmadinejad devient un handicap ».

A 50 ans, fils d'un grand ayatollah et ancien haut dirigeant des gardiens de la révolution, Ali Larijani ne manque pas d'atouts. Il est très proche du guide qui apprécie sa rigueur intellectuelle et son idéologie sans faille qu'il a montrée entre 1994 et 2004 à la tête de la télévision d'Etat, autorisant des films étrangers mais les censurant. Il a aussi l'écoute des dignitaires religieux de Qom, la ville sainte, où il a été plébiscité lors des élections et enfin un réseau influent d'amitiés. ■

MARIE-CLAUDE DECAMPS

TURKISH DAILY NEWS

May 31, 2008

State TV given right to broadcast in Kurdish

ANKARA – TDN with wire dispatches

Parliament approved a law late Thursday that allows the state-owned Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) to broadcast one of its channels solely in Kurdish.

We remember how we hid a cassette just to listen to our people's songs when we were alone," said Justice and Development Party (AKP) Diyarbakir deputy Abdurrahman Kurt, speaking at the assembly in support of the law.

"We still recall how we sang songs at weddings when no one else was around. We remember the prisons and torture.

He said the Kurdish problem would be solved through political, social and cultural policies.

The right-wing Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) opposed the law, arguing that it violates the Constitution. MHP parliamentary group deputy leader Oktay Vural, speaking against the law, said that if a state institution was encouraged to use the Kurdish language, it would soon spread to education.

Responding to criticism, Deputy Parliament Speaker Nevzat Pakdil said the broadcasts would be inspected by the Supreme Board of Radio and Television (RTÜK).

AKP's Mustafa Elitaş, one of the supporters of the law, said the law was necessary in order to show Turkey's angle in the fight against terrorism. As a deputy proud of his Turkishness, I gladly backed this law, he said.

The pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party's (DTP) deputy from Şırnak, Hasip Kaplan, said they support the law. "It is the right of 20 million Kurdish citizens who serve in the military and pay their taxes to expect TRT to broadcast in their language. Singing songs will not divided the country," he said, "it will unite it.

The law was eventually passed with the approval of 179 deputies, with 42 voting against it. A TRT channel solely dedicated to broadcasts in Kurdish was one of the main pledges Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made in Diyarbakir last week as part of the government's Southeastern Anatolia project, or GAP.