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TURKEY: THE START OF THE TRIAL OF 152 KURDISH MEMBERS OF THE KNC

On 18 October the Diyarbekir High Criminal Court began proceedings against 152 Kurds (104 of who are in detention), political figures or members of Human Rights Defence organisations. They are charged with being members of the PKK, in the grounds of membership of the Kurdistan Democratic Confederation (KNC). Some European intellectuals and defenders have come to attend the trial, which is being held under strict police supervision.

The 7,500-page charge sheet could lead the sentences of between 5 years and life for membership of “a terrorist organisation”, “endangering the unity of the State”, “terrorist propaganda” and even “supporting a terrorist organisation”. Among the accused, the Mayor of Diyarbekir, Osman Baydemir, faces 36 years imprisonment. Eleven other Kurdish mayors are being tried with him. All are members of the BDP.

However, from the opening of the trial, discussion has moved from the charge sheet itself to

what language could be used by the defence. Indeed, the lawyers have demanded the right to express themselves in Kurdish, as have their clients, claiming the right to be heard and tried in one’s mother tongue. The demand has been rejected out of hand by the court, which thus refused to record remarks made “in a language that does not exist”, arguing that the interrogations and statements had all been conducted in Turkish and that having recourse to interpreters would only prolong the proceedings. Indeed, reading the long

charge sheet had already taken three weeks.

Sezgin Tanrikulu, one of the lawyers, compared this negation of the Kurdish language to that which had occurred during the trial of former mayor of Diyarbakir, Mehdi Zana, who had also wanted to defend himself in Kurdish. At that time the Court had refused to take his defence speech into account, declaring that the accused had simply used his "right to remain silent".

The defence had invited Professor Baskin Oran, to speak before the court, as an expert in law and politics, regarding the right to use Kurdish in Court. He based himself on the Treaty of Lausanne, signed between Turkey and the League of Nations, which forms the legal basis of the Turkish State in International Law. Indeed, Article 39/5 of this Treaty declares that, notwithstanding the existence of an official language, the appropriate facilities should be given to non-Turkish speaking citizens of Turkey to use their own language before the Courts. Thus this includes the use of interpreters.

Since the Court refused to hear Baskin Oran, the latter stated that this would lead to the possibility of invalidating the whole trial: *"The refusal to hear an expert is grounds for the Appeal Courts to quash a verdict. Even the fact that I was not heard as a single person is grounds for the Court of Appeal to quash the verdict"*.

Thus tension increased and the lawyers complained of the presence of policemen (some plainclothes officers of the Anti-Terrorist Section) at the hearing as well as the security cordon separating them from their clients. However, the Court refused to raise the cordon and the whole day of the 20th October was spent

in reading a 990-page summary of the charge sheet.

Two days later, on 22 October, 47 members of the KNC, 22 of whom were detainees, were brought before the 8th Chamber of the Adana Criminal Court. The same request to express themselves in Kurdish was made by their lawyer, Vedat Ozkan, who called on the court to make a courageous decision, raising the issue of his clients' right to present their defence in Kurdish.

Amongst those arrested in the 8 August 2008 wave of mass arrests, was the mayor of Misis, Burhan Aras, former Adana branch President of the banned DTP party, the mayor of Seyhan, Mehmet Nardan, and the mayor of Yoregit, Durmaz Ozmen.

Also on the dock, with the same charges, was Kenan Karavil, director of publicity of Adana's *Radio Dunya*. He had been arrested a year later, on 19 December 2009, and is still in detention. He is charged with "crimes in support of an illegal organisation" and of "propaganda" for that organisation and faces a 22-and a half-year prison sentence.

Amongst the representatives of associations for defending Human Rights, the FIDH, present at the Diyarbakir trial, called on the government to release all those still in detention. Thus its President, Souhayr Belhassan, declared at meeting held on 22 October, in the Istanbul offices of the IHD (Association for Human Rights): *"Some of the accused in this trial have been in detention for 18 months and their lawyers have been unable to secure copies of the case against them. These detentions are a denial of the presumption of innocence before trial. This trial is completely unbalanced"*.

Be Hassan also recalled the gener-

ally bad conditions in Turkish prisons: with a capacity of 65,000 detainees, they contain at present 122,000 prisoners, which leads to health problems and ill treatment. Of these, 13 were suffering from cancer in its terminal stage. Pointing out that he had spoken about those dying to the Minister of Justice, Sadullah Ergin, the FTDH President added that he had been promised to be allowed to visit these prisoners, without this having been followed through.

Finally, it seems that the use of torture has increased since 2005, although its complete suppression was one of Turkey's main commitments to the European Union to ease its joining.

Questioned by a journalist from *Bianet*, about the case of children imprisoned for "terrorism", Souheyra Belhassan said he considered this situation "unacceptable".

Finally, on 8 October, after having cut off the defence's microphone whenever it tried to speak in Kurdish, the 6th Diyarbakir Chamber decided to send the case to the 4th Criminal Court Chamber, which will have to rule on the whether of not there was any right to use a language other than Turkish in a trial.

However, this issue has hit home and other trials in which Kurds are involved have been faced with the same demands, and met with the same refusal: thus the Istanbul 11th Criminal Chamber has refused a lawyer Songul Sicakyz to speak in Kurdish since she is also able to speak in Turkish. It should be noted, however, that this court's ruling clearly mentions the Kurdish language, unlike Diyarbakir's 6th Chamber, which described it as "unknown" when justifying the refusal on the grounds that the

magistrates only understood Turkish (without envisaging the use of interpreters).

Since then, street demonstrations have taken place in towns like Sirnak or Kars, to demand the right of Kurds to defend themselves in their, other tongue before the courts and be defended in the same language.

Moreover, the sociologist Ismail Besikci, who has several times been sentenced throughout his career for having dared affirm the existence of a Kurdish people, is now being accused, together with

Zeycan Balci Simsek, a lawyer, of propaganda for the PKK. The evidence being used against him is the use of the letter Q, which does not exist in the Turkish alphabet. Once again, it is the Istanbul 11th chamber that is due to rule on this.

Zeycan Balci Simsek, editorial director of periodical "*Law and contemporary Society*" published by a lawyers association, is being sued for having allowed an article to appear written by this famous sociologist: "*The Kurds and the right of nations to Self-Determination*". According to the

Public Prosecutor, Besikci's most aggravating offence was that he spelt the mountain in Iraqi Kurdistan where the PKK has installed its bases, "Qandil", instead of Kandil, which is its Turkish form. The Prosecution is calling for 7 and a half years jail for this offence ...

Their lawyer, Taylan Tanay, has the Prosecution whether they spelt "New York" with a w or with a v and whether they intended to seize all computers throughout Turkey whose keyboards contained the letter Q. So far, there has been no reply.

IRAQ: TARIQ AZIZ IS SENTENCED TO DEATH

On 28 October, the Iraqi High Criminal Court sentenced three high-ranking dignitaries of the old regime to death. They were the former Minister of the Interior, Saadun Saker, Saddam Hussein's Chief of Staff, Abed Hamid Hmud, and the former Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, now 74 years of age.

The only Christian among in the leadership of the Baath government, Tariq Aziz had given himself up to the Americans in April 2003. So far he has been one of the few people close to the former Raïs to escape hanging. Deputy Prime Minister since 1991, he had long been the Foreign Minister and acted as spokesman for the old regime. This made him well known to the public internationally, through his televised performances in both the Gulf Wars.

Tariq Aziz had already been twice sentenced to prison: once in 1992 to 15 years, for having taken part in the execution of 42 Iraqi businessmen, and once to 7 years for his role in the forcible mass displacement of Kurds from Kirkuk in the 80s.

Very quickly, many leading political figures and Heads of State (including that of the Vatican) and NGOs raised their voices to call for the commuting of his death sentence either on the grounds of his age and state of health or because of his religion or again because his role in the criminal exactions of the Saddam Hussein regime was considered fairly minor.

The Director of the Iraqi Human Rights and Democracy Commission, Hassan Shaban, stated on the Kurdish News Channel, *Aknews*, that this sentence was "severe and contrary to the principles of human rights". "The Iraqi Penal Code states that anyone over 70 years of age should be spared capital punishment. The decision of the Federal Court contains serious errors".

Tariq Aziz's son stated on the BBC that this verdict did not surprise him, although he considered his father was innocent. "They want to kill all those who took any part in the former government (...) He was a politician, he had nothing to do with security".

Amnesty International has also called on the Iraqi authorities not to carry out these three executions. "*Saddam Hussein's government was synonymous with executions, torture and other serious violations of Human Rights and it is fair that those who committed such crimes be brought before the courts*", explained Malcolm Stuart, head of Amnesty's department for the Middle East and North Africa. "It is, however, vital that the death sentence, which is the ultimate denial of human rights be never more used, however serious the crime. It is also time for the Iraqi government to turn the page on this funeral cycle. It would be a step forward if there were an end to all these executions and if the sentences on all those waiting in death row were commuted. By our estimate, there are several hundreds of them".

Amnesty International also expressed concern regarding courts' independence of political pressure. "*Trials in conformity with international criteria are essential. Political pressures should, in general, not be allowed for any trials. But especially for those that could carry the death sentence*".

TURKEY: THE RESTORATION OF THE ARMENIAN SOURP GIRAGOS CHURCH IN DIYARBEKIR.

On 19 September, a religious service took place in the former Armenian Church of Aktamar. However, as this church had been converted into a museum and was no longer a mainly used for services, there was little Armenian reaction to the event. On the other hand, the renewal of the roof of the Sourp Giragos Church, which had collapsed over ten years ago, was the occasion for a reception organised by the Town Hall, and the building is due to remain a place of worship of the Armenian Church.

The Mayor of Diyarbekir, Osman Baydemir, stated to the few

Armenians still living in the town, as well as to Archbishop Aram Atesian from the Istanbul Patriarchy and so some Armenians from Istanbul who had come for the occasion: *"This town is yours as well as mine. You have as much right to this town as I"*.

This declaration had the effect of setting the teeth on edge of the Turkish ultra-nationalists, for whom there is no *Vatan* (nation) outside an intransigent Turkishness and who consider the Christians (Greek, Armenian or Syriac) are, and should remain *"Turkish citizens of foreign nationality"*, (as defined by Ruling N°2 of the Istanbul Administrative Court on 17

April 1996). This could raise the spectre of Armenian "territorial claims" in the eastern regions by way of compensation, should Turkey's genocide be generally recognised.

However, from the Kurdish viewpoint, this re-establishes the historic rehabilitation of Diyarbekir as a multi-ethnic and multi-faith city, affirming its struggle for the recognition of the country's cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.

Sourp Giragos, once the restoration is finally completed, will be run by the Armenian Patriarchy of Istanbul. The total cost is estimated at \$2.5 million.

IRAN: THE TRAGIC DRYING UP OF LAKE URMIA.

In surface area, Lake Urmia is the second biggest salt lake in the World (after that near Salt Lake City, in the USA). Its area is 464,000 hectares (1.25 million acres) and it contains 17 billion cubic metres of water. It is 135 Km long and its width varies between 18 and 55 km. Its depth, at its deepest point, was between 12 and 16 m prior to 1995. It contains 105 islands, natural niches for a number of species of birds and animals, sedentary and migratory.

Yet this salt lake, that is straddles Iranian Kurdistan and Azerbaijan, has dried up by 60% and experts consider that it might completely disappear in the next three years of so, according to the alarming reports of the Urmia Agency for the Environmental Protection. Already its degree of salinity is a threat to the health of the popu-

lation living on its banks as well, obviously as the natural fauna.

The major factors responsible for this are the increasingly numerous dams on the various water-courses that feed the lake, as well as the industrial waste poured into it. In 1976, UNESCO has classed it banks as a biosphere reserve. However, for the last 15 years, the water level has been dropping continuously and the drought hat has been ravaging the Middle East for the last 2 years has not improved matters. The depth has dropped by 6 m since 1995, and is continuing to drop.

Its salinity is now 340 grs/litres (previously it was between 180 and 200), which is threatening the local fauna and flora, not to mention the many species of migratory birds: pink flamingos, pelicans, ibis, cranes, avocets and gulls. Some mammalian

species like deer (the Iranian yellow deer) could completely disappear from the region. In all the area round the lake shelters 212 bird species, 41 reptiles, 7 amphibians, and 27 species of mammals. It is also the natural habitat of *artemia salina*, a variety of brine shrimp that constitutes the main nourishment of flamingos and other migrating birds. As agriculture and tourism are also threatened, hundreds of villages are likely to become deserted.

The Iranian government admits the tragic development that Lake Urmia is experiencing but the official commission is more inclined to blame the changes in climate or the alleged presence of algae to explain the reddish colour of its waters. Other experts insist on the harmful effect of human activity. They cite the building of a 130 Km long highway, part of which crosses the lake over a one and a

half Km bridge as well as the building of a dam on the lake itself. Building this required banking up with several million ton of earth and stone extracted from the adjoining mountains, which has blocked the natural water flows.

Officially opened in 2008, this bridge cost 120 million dollars. It enables more rapid travelling from Urmia to Tabriz, the capital of Azerbaijan. There are, moreover, plans to widen this road as well as build a railway along it.

Over 2 million dollars have been allocated to saving the lake. Among the projected measures are seeding clouds to encourage rainfall, a better use of sub-soil waters near the lake and a whole scale revision of the irrigation system for agricultural land.

CULTURE:

THE DEATH OF THE SINGER HAMA JAZA.

30 September, the Kurdish singer, Hama Jaza, who was very popular in Iraqi Kurdistan, died at Suleimaniyah. He was 61 years of age and a former Peshmerga.

Born in 1949, Mohammad Hama Jaza became famous in the 70s

through his patriotic songs that supported the Kurdish resistance. He continued his activity as both fighter and artist throughout the 80s and 90s, before emigrating with his family to Denmark, where he continued singing. He then performed in several European countries, in Canada and the USA.

After returning to his homeland a few years ago, he finally died of the cancer, of which he had been suffering for several years, in Suleimaniyah. He was buried surrounded by a crowd of admirers, who had come specially to pay tribute to him as well as by government and NGO officials.

Les Kurdes, la constance de Kouchner

L'histoire de Bernard Kouchner et des Kurdes débute en septembre 1974. Une histoire de fidélité à peine écornée par son passage au Quai d'Orsay.

par Ariane Bonzon

Dernière mission du ministre français des Affaires étrangères? Il était en début de semaine à Ankara pour y préparer la présidence française du G20. Aux yeux des Turcs, Bernard Kouchner a deux défauts: il est l'ami des Kurdes et il s'est dédit en se ralliant à la position de Nicolas Sarkozy contre l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne.

A un ami qui lui demandait récemment d'intervenir auprès des autorités turques sur le dossier kurde, Bernard Kouchner répondit à peu près ceci:

«Je ne suis sans doute pas le mieux placé pour cela. Les Turcs connaissent mon engagement auprès des Kurdes; et puis difficile de se faire entendre d'eux alors qu'actuellement les relations entre la Turquie et la France sont loin d'être au beau fixe!»

Voilà sans doute l'un des rendez-vous manqué du ministre français des Affaires étrangères. En 2008, Bernard Kouchner a opéré un virage à 180° en s'alignant sur la position du président Nicolas Sarkozy. Lui qui quatre ans plus tôt affirmait qu'il «faudrait être fou pour éconduire le seul grand pays musulman qui a séparé la religion de l'Etat et qui nous tend la main» s'opposait à son tour à l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne.

Aujourd'hui, alors que l'hallali sonne pour Bernard Kouchner et que les Turcs lui reprochent ce virage, c'est pourtant de ce côté-là du monde qu'une petite musique plus douce se fait entendre. Elle provient des montagnes kurdes d'Irak du Nord. «Quand les Kurdes regardent de leur fenêtre, ils voient que Bernard Kouchner a été d'une grande constance et d'une longue fidélité. Qu'il ait été médecin, président de Médecins du Monde, secrétaire d'Etat ou ministre de l'action humanitaire, député européen ou ministre des Affaires étrangères, jamais il n'a failli à notre égard», explique le directeur de l'Institut kurde de Paris, Kendal Nezan, qui se fait l'écho à Paris de cette petite musique.

L'histoire de Bernard Kouchner et des Kurdes débute en septembre 1974. Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) l'envoie évaluer les besoins médicaux de la résistance kurde à Saddam Hussein. Pour rejoindre les maquis kurdes, il doit passer par l'Iran. A l'époque, nombre de gens de gauche refusent tout contact avec le régime autoritaire du Shah. Le «french doctor» Kouchner n'en a cure. Il passera par l'Iran, puisque c'est le seul moyen d'avoir accès à l'enclave contrôlée par Moustafa Barzani et ses hommes. A droite, Jacques Chirac en tête, on soutient le régime de Saddam Hussein. Et on regarde cette initiative pro-kurde d'un mauvais œil. Même MSF est divisée: aider les Kurdes, objectent certains, c'est s'aligner sur les positions israéliennes et américaines. Autant dire que Bernard Kouchner n'a pas grand monde avec lui. Déjà, la «marque Kouchner». L'électron libre qui agace tant politiques et diplomates de carrière.



- Bernard Kouchner à l'Assemblée nationale en 2009. REUTERS/Philippe Wojazer -

Le déclic

Ce voyage clandestin, un déclic, est le premier d'une longue série: «De toutes mes tribulations dans le Tiers monde, l'homme qui m'a le plus impressionné, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, était kurde», confie-t-il à Daniel Cohn Bendit dans le dialogue qu'ils mènent en 2004 (Quand tu seras président..., Robert Laffont). Au fil des années, le french doctor tisse de solides liens avec certains de ceux qui dirigeront l'Irak d'après Saddam. «Docteur Kouchner, vous êtes au Kurdistan, chez vous», lui précise récemment le président du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan irakien, Moustafa Barzani, trente-six ans après leur première rencontre. Il bénéficie également d'un accès privilégié à l'ancien frère ennemi de Barzani: le président d'Irak, le Kurde Jalal Talabani, que Bernard Kouchner a rencontré en 1983 en pleine guerre Iran-Irak.

Sous François Mitterrand, il avait d'ailleurs tenté sans succès de réconcilier Talabani et Barzani. Ces liens exceptionnels ont donc, très certainement aussi, joué leur rôle dans la nomination de Bernard Kouchner au Quai d'Orsay en 2007: «Les Etats-Unis veulent (...) que la France soutienne la création d'un Etat kurde. Pour cela, Bernard Kouchner, ami des chefs féodaux kurdes depuis plus de trente ans, est l'«homme qu'il faut à la place qu'il faut»», avançait alors un homme de l'autre bord, Gilles Munier, secrétaire général des Amitiés franco-irakiennes.

Durant neuf mois, en 1988, le régime irakien va bombarder sans répit les zones kurdes, faisant des dizaines de milliers de victimes. A Halabja, le 16 mars 1988, les Mig et les mirages irakiens sont relayés par des hélicoptères vendus aux Irakiens par la France et les Etats-Unis. Après les bombes, Saddam Hussein monte d'un cran, et utilise l'arme chimique. 5.000 morts, gazés. «L'horreur», se souvient Bernard Kouchner qui s'est rendu deux fois à Halabja. Ce qu'il y a vu l'a certainement influencé lors de sa décision de soutenir trente ans plus tard l'intervention américaine contre le dictateur irakien alors que «nous avons été si longtemps assez lâches pour ne pas libérer les Irakiens et d'abord les Kurdes de Saddam Hussein», argumente-t-il souvent.

Après Halabja, 32 pays sont prêts à envoyer des représen-

tants à Paris pour la tenue d'une Conférence internationale sur le sujet. La délégation kurde est déjà sur place, mais le Quai d'Orsay fait demi-tour et annule à la dernière minute la tenue de cette assemblée: par crainte de déplaire à la Turquie et à l'Irak. Saddam Hussein ne manque pas de moyens de pressions, financiers et politiques. La délégation kurde ne trouvera même pas un seul interlocuteur à qui parler au Quai d'Orsay. C'est Bernard Kouchner, alors secrétaire à l'action humanitaire qui la recevra.

Résolution 688

Trois ans plus tard, au lendemain de la guerre du Golfe, l'exode massif des Kurdes d'Irak permet une avancée sans précédent du «droit d'ingérence», dont le french doctor rêve depuis le début des années 1980. Mario Bettati donne à la chose sa tournure juridique. «Si l'ONU n'intervient pas militairement en Irak du nord pour protéger les populations civiles kurdes exposées aux représailles de Bagdad, elle perd sa raison d'être», défend en substance François Mitterrand, enfin convaincu par les arguments de son épouse Danielle, de Bernard Kouchner et de quelques autres encore. La bataille diplomatique est rude, dix jours de débat, face aux Américains. Mais le camp du «oui» l'emporte et le Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies vote la résolution 688. C'est l'un des moments forts de la carrière de Bernard Kouchner. Il le rappelait encore le 27 septembre dernier, devant l'assemblée des Nations Unies.

Désormais, les aviations américaine et britannique protègent l'enclave kurde en territoire irakien. En 1992, Bernard Kouchner veut s'y rendre. Trois ans auparavant, Roland Dumas, le patron du Quai d'Orsay, était bien parvenu à empêcher «l'incontrôlable Kouchner» de venir clandestinement en Afrique du sud afin d'y prendre langue avec les mouvements anti-apartheid. Cette fois-ci, il ne peut s'y opposer: Bernard Kouchner accompagne Danielle Mitterrand à Erbil. Pour les Kurdes, Bernard Kouchner a une alliée de poids en la personne de l'épouse du président de la République, à la grande colère des autorités civiles et militaires turques. Celles-ci redoutent qu'un Kurdistan indépendant ne voit le jour en Irak du nord et que le séparatisme turc en soit renforcé en Turquie. La délégation de Danielle Mitterrand fait escale à la frontière turco-irakienne.

Signe de leur mécontentement: les Turcs la feront attendre plusieurs heures dans le lugubre aéroport de Diyarbakir, avant qu'elle ne puisse prendre sa correspondance. En Irak du nord, elle est ensuite la cible d'un attentat. Il y plusieurs morts dans le convoi. Danielle Mitterrand et Bernard Kouchner en réchappent de justesse. «Je me souviens très bien de la visite de Madame Mitterrand, raconte le journaliste turc Ragip Duran, qui été emprisonné quelques mois pour s'être rendu en Syrie interviewer l'ennemi numéro 1 d'Ankara, Öcalan. Tout le monde ici s'en souvient. Aux yeux des Kurdes de Turquie, Madame Mitterrand représente quelque chose! Quant aux politiques turcs, ils n'ont toujours pas digéré ce voyage! Même s'ils ne le diront jamais à Bernard Kouchner.»

Député européen, Bernard Kouchner n'oublie toujours pas les Kurdes. Il va en Turquie réclamer la libération des députés emprisonnés. Organise également deux auditions au Parlement de Strasbourg pour attirer l'attention des députés européens sur la situation des Kurdes de Turquie et d'ailleurs. Daniel Cohn-Bendit et Michel Rocard sont à ses côtés. Les trois hommes soutiennent la candidature turque à l'Union européenne même si Bernard Kouchner

confie au député vert que son «expérience personnelle des Turcs est extrêmement négative. Je les ai d'abord vus à travers le regard des Kurdes persécutés, dans ces misérables villages raziés et bombardés».

Les parias de l'histoire

«Oui, Kouchner a fait preuve d'une fidélité infaillible à l'égard des Kurdes», confirme le journaliste Chris Kutschera, ami du ministre et spécialiste de l'histoire des Kurdes. Pourtant, les Kurdes ne représentent pas grand-chose, ce sont des parias de l'histoire. Kouchner n'a jamais eu rien à gagner de ce côté-là, ni stratégiquement, ni diplomatiquement.» Ce n'est pas l'avis du site Bakchich.com qui, début 2009, accuse le ministre des Affaires étrangères de conflit d'intérêt. Il aurait permis à plusieurs de ses proches, des experts ou d'anciens compagnons de route du temps de MDM de mener une mission d'expertise sur le système médical du Kurdistan irakien, le tout grassement payé. «Ça ne me scandalise pas que Kouchner joue les intermédiaires entre les autorités kurdes d'Irak du nord et des spécialistes qu'il connaît, qu'il apprécie et dont il sait qu'ils feront bien le boulot, analyse un ancien attaché français de coopération au Proche-Orient. A la différence de ce qui s'est passé en Birmanie et en Afrique, ni Kouchner ni sa société de conseil ne semblent avoir touché de l'argent. La France n'a pas mis un euro, tout était à la charge des Kurdes. Mais il est vrai que les rémunérations évoquées par Backchih paraissent largement au-dessus de ce qui se fait habituellement.»

Malgré son peu de moyens, le Quai d'Orsay a ouvert en 2008 une représentation à Erbil, «capitale» de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, confiée par Bernard Kouchner à l'ami du temps du maquis, un médecin français kurdophone, Frédéric Tissot (pdf). Et ce dernier, comme son patron du Quai d'Orsay, tente de convaincre les entreprises françaises, prudentes pour ne pas dire frileuses, d'investir dans la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien. .

En revanche, au Quai d'Orsay, Bernard Kouchner n'aura sans doute pas donné sa pleine mesure pour les Kurdes de Turquie. Peut-être est-il mal à l'aise avec le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dont le conflit avec l'armée turque dure depuis plus de trente ans et n'a pas épargné la population civile. Les pratiques du PKK lui rappellent de mauvais souvenirs. Ce sont, raconte-t-il, toujours à Daniel Cohn-Bendit, de «beaux salauds polpotiens qui pressuraient la population. Lorsque j'étais secrétaire d'Etat à l'action humanitaire, ils ont débarqué en commando dans mon ministère. Ils ont pris les membres de mon cabinet en otages pendant quelques heures et les ont un peu malmenés. J'étais à l'extérieur, je suis revenu pour négocier. Ces faux révolutionnaires étaient de vraies brutes». Un jugement sévère que ne démentiraient pas les autorités et la majorité de la population turques. Tandis que le PKK, inscrit sur la liste noire des organisations terroristes par l'UE, rencontre encore un fort soutien dans le sud-est de la Turquie: il n'est pas une famille qui n'y ait un frère, un fils ou un cousin parti rejoindre les rangs de ce mouvement avec lequel le gouvernement turc devra bien un jour ou l'autre s'asseoir à la table de négociations. Quoiqu'il en soit, en rejetant la candidature turque à l'Union européenne, Bernard Kouchner a du même coup manqué aux Kurdes de Turquie. Car c'est principalement grâce à l'aiguillon européen que la situation de ceux-ci s'est un peu améliorée ces dernières années.

★ ★ ★



OCTOBER 1, 2010

IN NORTHERN IRAQ, A CENSUS RAISES TENSIONS

Kirkuk

By Charles McDermid

The ancient Iraqi city of Kirkuk has been called a ticking time bomb. Its stark ethno-sectarian divisions have drawn comparisons to Bosnia and the West Bank. The oil in the ground has petro-vultures circling, while an occupying American army tries to "advise and assist" locals on keeping their weapons on safety and tempers in check. Now, a whole new challenge is upon the conflicted city; and its painful past, chaotic present and oil-rich future seem ready to collide because of a census scheduled for Oct. 24.

A population census would seem a simple thing, but in Kirkuk things don't roll that way. The city is claimed as an ancestral homeland by the Kurds, Sunni Arabs and Turkmen as well as a dwindling population of Christians whose stake in the city goes back 2,000 years. The 10 billion barrels of proven oil reserves buried just outside the city have only raised the stakes and sparked the interest of regional power players. There hasn't been a census of Kirkuk's Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen since 1956 and a fresh survey will only add rhetorical and statistical punch to the claims to the city and its surroundings of the newly established majority. Indeed, Arabs and Turkmen are threatening to boycott the census.

Already, accusations of demographic tampering are rampant. The Arabs accuse the Kurds, who swooped into the city in force after the 2003 United States-led invasion, of "re-Kurdifying" the city and province by bringing in and subsidizing hundreds of thousands of Kurds in recent years as well as monopolizing all the powerful positions. "The biggest threat to the future of Kirkuk is this census.



Iraqi men, Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen sit at a local coffee house in northern oil-rich city of Kirkuk, Iraq.

Marwan Ibrahim / AFP / Getty Images

We represent Arabs and Turkmen and we are calling on people not take part in it. Since 2003, the Kurds have had all the power and control. We are calling for a delay until the situation is better," says Shiek Abdul-Rahman Munshid al-Assi, 58, founder of the Arab Political Council to represent the area's Sunni population. Munshid, who spent a year in a U.S.-run prison on charges of aiding insurgents, said the Arab council has appealed to the United Nations, regional neighbors and the US to help postpone the census.

The Kurds deny allegations of a power-grab, and counter that Saddam Hussein's "Arabization" policies and ethnic cleansing campaigns displaced thousands of Kurds and Turkmen who were soon replaced with Arabs from southern Iraq. After decades of mountainous guerrilla warfare against Saddam's Iraqi army, the Kurds look at Kirkuk and its oil in terms of honor and lifeblood. "Kurds view Kirkuk as an integral part of Kurdistan. It is in an embodiment of the plight of the Kurds. It is symbolic of the most brutal suffering under Saddam.

Resolution is important and profound for the Kurdish people and all Kurds want to see it resolved. The KRG [Kurdistan Regional Government] has accepted a constitutional arrangement, but we have not abandoned our claim," says Barham Salih, the prime minister of Kurdistan in interview at his residence in Erbil.

The Turkmen, who have aligned politically with the Sunni Arabs, feel marginalized by the Kurds despite remaining entrenched in the city's commercial district and retaining strong backers in Turkey, where most of Kirkuk's oil ends up. "If you ask an Arab or a Turkman about the census, they say we'll boycott and make sure it can't happen. If you ask a Kurd they say it will happen and we're going to make it happen," said Najim al-Alden Omer, 36, a Turkmen member of the Kirkuk police. "This city is like a leaking gas pipe, just waiting for someone to light it off," he adds.

The controversial census was mandated in the 2005 Iraq constitution as a precursor for a referendum on

whether Kirkuk will become part of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region, Iraq or an independent city-state. The poll aims to determine who can vote in the referendum. It was meant to be held in 2007, but sectarian violence and threats of civil war from the Kurds have postponed it time and time again. The Kurds, believing the numbers will buttress their claims, are intent on pushing the census through and claim the central government in Baghdad is behind them. "What I have heard from Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and the Minister of Planning is that the census is on track. I have been assured it will proceed and I hope all the residents of Kirkuk participate in what is a scientific, rather than political process," says Abdul Rahman Mustafa, the Kurdish governor of Kirkuk.

Colonel Larry Swift, the comman-

ding officer at Forward Operating Base Warrior in Kirkuk whose some 2,500 troops will be charged with security for the census, believes that local politicians are revving up social rivalries with what he calls "inaximalist demands." "What's sad and frustrating is that the politicians are not just not helping — they are actively trying to exacerbate the ethnic issues." Swift, however, doesn't think chaos is imminent. "For this place to explode," he says, "you'd need congenital hatred on the street level — and it's just not there. The drivers of instability reside in the government building."

Archbishop Louis Sako, leader of the millennia-old Chaldean Christian community in Kirkuk, takes it all in with a sigh. He earned a Masters degree in Islamic studies in Rome and a doctorate in Iraqi history from the Sorbonne. Sako

has seen the Christian community in Kirkuk fall from 30,000 to about 11,000, many of his flock fleeing in fear of killings and kidnappings. He is known as a mediator between Kirkuk's divergent groups. Unlike Swift, what the archbishop hears troubles him. "Everybody here is waiting and they are afraid. People don't know if next year their house will belong to the Kurds or Baghdad. People are worried because they have no clear vision of the future. Even the church has no vision." Says Sako, "We are all vulnerable and it is no way to live."

□□□

Radical Islamic Scholar Accuses Kurds of Being Infidels

By RUDAW

ERBIL, Iraqi Kurdistan: An extremist Islamic scholar threatens Kurds that they no longer be tolerated in the Arab and Muslim world, accusing them of being "infidels who encourage hostility against Islam and its followers."

"There is no life for you to live here with and among us. You should not expect anything from Muslims but war and hostility," said Abu Basir Al-Tartusi, who has been described as "primary Salafi opinion-makers guiding the jihadi movement"

Al-Tartusi's letter comes at a time when the US has reduced the size of its troops into almost 50,000 and is preparing for a full withdrawal scheduled to happen by the end of 2011.

The Kurds, who have always seen the Americans and West as their friends and allies, have been subjected to genocide and ethnic cleansing by the Arab, Turkish and Persian regimes of the Middle East.

Al-Tartusi, whose real name Abd-al

Mun'em Mustafa Halima Abu Basir, is originally from Syria. His wife is a Palestinian. He now lives in London.

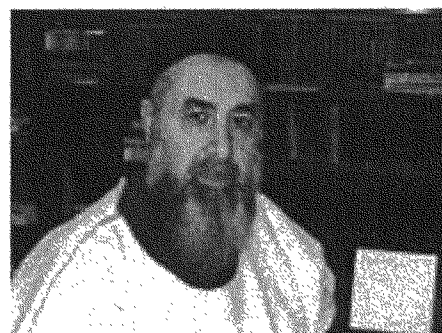
"You have fought against Arabs and other nationals. For the ascendancy of your ignorant cause of nationalism, you have fought against Islam and its followers," said Al-Tartusi, in a recent open letter in reference to the Kurds of Iraq and Syria.

"You have become allies with crusades and relied on them against Islam and the Muslims," said Al-Tartusi adding that the Kurds had helped the US and Western powers to occupy Iraq.

Dr. Arafat Karim, an Iraqi expert in Islamism, said that Tartusi "is a person psychologically extremist. He has no knowledge about the religion and Kurds."

"There are a number of extremist Muslims here in Kurdistan who misinform Tartusi about the situation of the Kurdistan Region," said Karim.

"He issues bad fatwas [verdicts] attacking Kurds based on disinformation. This man has no knowledge about the history of the Kurds."



Abu Basir Al-Tartusi

Tartusi has considered Saddam Hussein a Muslim and prayed for him to be in the heaven.

"Without Islam, you will never enjoy your life," said Al-Tartusi.

Iraqi Kurds promise to fill Nabucco pipeline

FATMA DEMIRELLI

Northern Iraq's vast gas fields may have enough reserves to provide the entire supply for the Nabucco pipeline, a Kurdish minister said Friday, raising more hopes that enough supplies could be found to fill the ambitious pipeline project once Iraq resolves its post-war internal disputes on power and revenue sharing.

Ashti Hawrami, the natural resources minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), said Kurdish oil fields in northern Iraq were estimated to have 100 to 200 trillion cubic feet (tcf), or 3 to 6 trillion cubic meters (tcm) of natural gas. This is more than adequate for internal use, the domestic supply of Turkey as well as to satisfy the requirements of Nabucco. We are confident, if we can prove the full 200 tcf, we can supply the entire needs of Nabucco, Hawrami told a small group of journalists on the sidelines of a high-profile international energy forum.

Iraq is one of the key potential suppliers to the Nabucco, which is backed by the US and the European Union as a way of reducing European dependence on Russia for energy, but still has unresolved problems as to guaranteeing sufficient supply.

Russia, whose planned South Stream pipeline competes with Nabucco, and Iran, which is locked in a deep dispute with the West over its nuclear program, are not considered among potential suppliers, while a third option, Turkmenistan, is still undecided whether to contribute to the Nabucco project. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki said last year that Iraq was ready to contribute 15 billion cubic meters to the project, which is expected to bring about 30 billion cubic meters of gas each year from Azerbaijan and other eastern suppliers when it becomes operational in 2015.

But deep disputes between the Kurdish government and the central government in Baghdad hinder any energy exports from the area

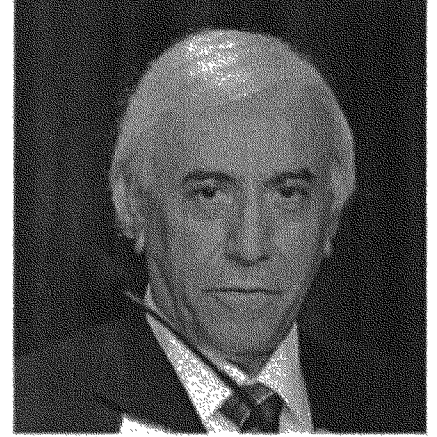
administered by the KRG. Hawrami, who attended the Black Sea Energy and Economic Forum organized by the Atlantic Council in Istanbul, said he was optimistic that disputes could be resolved but insisted during an address to the forum that Kurds' concerns on revenue and power sharing must be addressed.

Iraqi Kurds say the Iraqi constitution provides principles for sharing political power and revenue from energy exports, but complain that these principles are not being implemented. Hawrami complained that some people in Baghdad are still dreaming of concentrating power in one hand -- although there was an agreement among Iraqi groups prior to a US-led war on Iraq that federalism was the best system in the post-Saddam era. And without a working agreement that would sufficiently address the Kurdish demands for a share in power and revenues, energy exports from northern Iraqi fields are hard to initiate.

Please be mindful of our concerns, Hawrami told the forum -- which brought together policy makers, investors and experts from the US, Europe, Turkey, the Caspian region and Iraq, -- while urging for steps to be taken that would guarantee that Kurds' constitutional rights are protected. In the meantime, the Iraqi central government's oil minister, Hussain al-Shahristani, did not take part in the three-day forum in Istanbul, despite his name being listed among the participants by the organizer Atlantic Council.

The Iraqi government and the KRG have for years been unable to resolve their disputes, thus blocking the passage of necessary legislation on hydrocarbon development and revenue sharing. In the absence of relevant laws, the Iraqi government says it will not recognize contracts signed by the KRG for energy exports, effectively keeping northern Iraqi reserves out of the global energy market.

Hawrami said the KRG wanted autonomy on development activities, planning and exporting as long as the revenue went to Baghdad. We are not after the revenues. Revenue can go to



Kurdistan Minister of Natural Resources Dr. Ashti Hawram

Baghdad to be distributed to all of Iraq, he said. But they say give us all the revenue and we promise to share it.

Hawrami said he was still optimistic that a solution could be found in a near future because Iraqis are tired of lingering indecision and are looking for new revenues to rebuild the country. But in a sign that Iraq's internal disputes might be too deep to resolve anytime soon, Joost Hiltermann of the International Crisis Group, an expert on Iraq, told the same forum that the Iraqi constitution could not be implemented because it is not implementable, given the vague language of the constitution and disagreements among Iraqi groups as to what is meant by sharing power.

Hiltermann said Turkey could play a positive role in helping resolve disagreements within Iraq, while Hawrami praised Turkey as the biggest trade partner of the Kurdish administration. We are partners in energy and trade. Our relationship with Turkey is fantastic and it continues to expand, he told reporters. Turkey is a key energy investor in Iraq but it does not export energy from Iraq because of the central government's refusal to recognize KRG's energy export contracts. Turkey does not want to get involved in Iraq's internal disputes, Hawrami said.



Iraq delays first census since 1987 over land row

BAGHDAD , October 3 2010 (Reuters) -By Aseel Kami

IRAQ POSTPONED its first full census in more than two decades until December on Sunday to avoid triggering open conflict between Arabs and Kurds locked in a row over a swathe of oil-rich land in the north.

The census is a keenly awaited event because it will answer questions key to the future of northern oilfields -- areas in Nineveh and Kirkuk disputed by Arabs and Kurds.

The United States has warned against rushing into the count, previously slated for October 24, at a time when Iraq is struggling to contain insurgent violence after years of sectarian war.

Environment Minister Nermeen Othman, who attended a cabinet meeting that took the census decision on Sunday, said the survey would now be held on December 5.

She said the government wanted to "reassure all sides the census is focused only on development issues and not politics."

Mehdi al-Alak, a deputy planning minister and head of the statistics office, said the government wanted to give Kirkuk and Nineveh more time to settle tensions before holding the sensitive count.

"They (Arabs) have some demands concerning the disputed areas," Alak, who attended the same meeting, told Reuters. He gave no details on what exactly was being discussed.

Iraq has been locked in months of political uncertainty after an inconclusive parliamentary election in March produced no outright winner.

The protracted disagreement has cast the Kurds in the role of kingmakers, with their lawmakers pressuring incumbent Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to meet their demands in exchange for Kurdish support in forming a new government.

Iraq had already postponed plans to hold a census when the country was at the peak of sectarian violence in 2007.

The survey is crucial because it will determine if Kurds are the biggest ethnic bloc in Kirkuk, a northern city lying on vast oil reserves, and can therefore claim it as its own.

If the census finds they are a greater percentage of the total population than previously believed, the constitution says the region must get a larger slice of the federal budget than its current 17 percent, and retroactive payments.

There are also worries that the census could further fuel sectarian discord between Shi'ites, Sunnis and minority Kurds although the government has specifically decided to avoid asking Iraqis to say whether they are Shi'ite or Sunni.

The first complete census since 1987, it will seek answers to many other questions as well, such as how many widows, orphans and disabled people there are after decades of war.

AP Associated Press

Emirati firms to boost Kurdish Iraqi gas capacity

October 5, 2010 ASSOCIATED PRESS , By Adam Schreck

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) - A pair of Emirati energy companies producing natural gas in Iraq's northern Kurdish region said Tuesday they expect to boost the output capacity there by 50 percent within two years.

In an update marking two years of production in the self-rule Kurdish region, Dana Gas and Crescent Petroleum said they are currently able to pump 200 million cubic feet of gas per day. They expect that level to rise to 300 million cubic feet daily by 2012.

Existing production of between 160 million to 180 million cubic feet daily is used to power two regional electricity plants, in Irbil and Chemchamal, according to the firms.

They say they have invested \$850 million in the project so far. That included building a 110-mile (180-kilometer) pipeline

across mountainous terrain, which at times required them to clear areas riddled with land mines.

The Sharjah-based companies highlighted the support provided by the regional Kurdish government, which has been successful in attracting foreign business to its region. But many of those deals have caused friction with Baghdad because they often bypass the oversight of national ministries.

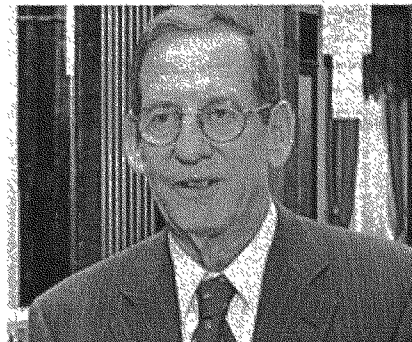
Crescent's executive director, Majid Jafar, said the Emirati companies' projects have delivered tangible benefits to the country by boosting the north's electricity supply - a service that remains spotty and scarce in much of the rest of Iraq.

"This shows what can be achieved by the private sector, even under difficult circumstances, when the right policies and investment framework are adopted," he said in a statement.

Dana Gas and Crescent hope to eventually produce enough gas for export. The companies last year signed a deal with Austria's OMV AG and Hungary's MOL to export gas from the Kurdish region as part of an \$8 billion project. Some of the gas would be directed to the planned Nabucco pipeline linking Turkey to central Europe, expanding the continent's energy supply options.

Iraq's Oil Ministry has called that deal illegal because it doesn't carry Baghdad's approval.

US welcomes Kurdish gas in Europe-bound energy projects



Richard Morningstar, who had talks with Energy Minister Taner Yıldız in Istanbul, praised energy cooperation between Turkey and US.

FATMA DEMIRELLI

A SENIOR US official has welcomed possible Iraqi Kurdish participation in planned Europe-bound pipelines, saying, however, that the Kurdish regional administration and the central government in Baghdad must first resolve their disputes on power and revenue sharing.

If we could get the Kurdish gas, that would be a very positive thing, Richard Morningstar, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's special envoy for Eurasian energy, told a group of journalists on Friday at the end of the three-day Black Sea Energy and Economic Forum, a high-profile conference that was organized by the Atlantic Council and brought together decision makers, investors and experts from the US, Turkey, Europe, Iraq, Azerbaijan and others in Istanbul. We believe it is important and Turkey believes it is important that the Kurdish gas will ultimately be able to go to north and to the southern corridor, said Morningstar, referring to planned pipelines that will carry gas from the Caspian region to Europe.

The US and EU-backed Nabucco and two smaller projects, the Interconnection Turkey-Greece-Italy (ITGI) and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), all aspire to ship natural gas from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz gas fields to Europe, forming a web of pipelines -- the southern gas corridor -- that will link Caspian gas reserves with European markets without transiting Russia. Iraq has lately emerged as a significant potential contributor to Nabucco, which looks to gas from outside the Caspian region as well to fill its planned capacity of 30 billion cubic meters of gas a year, following the discovery of vast gas reserves particularly in the Kurdish-run north.

But Iraq has yet to join the global energy plans due to its unresolved internal disputes over

power and revenue sharing. The country has yet to adopt necessary legislation that would pave the way for energy exports from the north amid Kurdish demands for recognition of more federal rights on power and revenue sharing. Earlier on Friday, the Kurdish minister for natural resources, Ashti Hawrami, said the gas from Kurdish fields could be proven enough to meet Nabucco's requirements alone but insisted that any deal that would unblock the current stalemate should guarantee Kurds constitutional rights.

Morningstar appeared to acknowledge that Iraq will remain excluded from the Europe-bound energy plans unless a deal is reached between Kurds and the Baghdad government. We recognize that this [Kurdish participation in the southern corridor] cannot and should not happen without an agreement between Baghdad and Arbil. We hope that this will occur. We hope a compromise can be found, he said.

Turkey, a key transit country in the southern gas corridor, is a prime energy investor in northern Iraq but does not import gas from the Kurdish region since export contracts signed by the Kurdish administration and foreign partners are not recognized by Baghdad.

The US envoy also lamented that Armenia is not part of any energy projects in the region amid a territorial dispute with neighboring Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. I think that the failure to achieve a settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh and therefore to improve the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan has made it difficult, if not impossible, for Armenia to participate in the southern corridor. I think that's really a shame, Morningstar said. If somehow an agreement could finally be reached and Armenia could become a full participant in the region's economic and energy projects, I think that would be to benefit of everyone in the region.

Although Washington is convinced that the future of Europe-bound gas projects will be decided on the basis of commercial considerations, Morningstar said political factors were also always involved, as manifested in the US and European reluctance to include Iranian gas in Nabucco or other projects due to a dispute between the West and Iran over the Islamic republic's nuclear program.

With respect to Iranian participation in southern corridor, that is clearly a political issue. One can make the argument for Nabucco on political grounds because it is a larger pipeline and it would do so much for Europe, Morningstar said, although he appeared to leave the door open for a different policy in the future, saying: Having said that, any pipeline project has to be a commercially reasonable project. You cannot separate politics but as a necessary condition, the project has to be commercially viable.

Russia welcome to join Nabucco, but as a minority supplier

The top US official left the door open on participation in Nabucco of another unlikely participant, Russia -- the very gas supplier that Nabucco was originally designed to bypass because Europe is already too dependent on Russia for energy. But that participation, he said, would be on certain terms, something that Moscow is likely to balk at.

According to Morningstar, Russia is welcomed to participate in Nabucco provided that it will be a minority supplier without a controlling stake. Up to 50 percent of the gas that will go into

Nabucco is up for competition. That means anybody can bid to provide up to 50 percent of gas to the Nabucco pipeline. There is no reason why Russia cannot bid on that, he said. But he added: I want to be clear: I don't think it would be healthy to see Russia in a controlling position with respect to the Nabucco pipeline, but if it could contribute and create a win-win situation as a minority supplier that would seem to be a normal business.

Asked whether he has received any signals from Russia indicating that it might be interested, Morningstar said, No.

Turkey, US in sync over

energy

Morningstar, who also had talks with Turkey's energy minister, Taner Yildiz, while in Istanbul, praised Turkish-US cooperation on energy policies and said the strong ties in this particular field will remain strong in spite of whatever ups and downs the two NATO allies might have in their political relationship.

Many in Washington began to question whether Turkey is abandoning its role as a reliable ally of the West as Ankara moves to build close ties with its eastern neighbors, including Iran, and directs severe criticism against Israel on its Gaza policies.

Both Turkey and the US have

been very careful not to let other issues interfere with those issues where we can cooperate very closely, said Morningstar. I think it is extremely important that we continue to have strong cooperation on issues where we can agree and I think energy is one of those issues. Turkey and the US have done a very good job in maintaining that very strong relationship in spite of what other issues there might be.

Morningstar said he had extremely good discussions with Yildiz about the southern corridor, Iraq and other issues. We are very much in synchronization, he said.



OCTOBER 6, 2010

BDP files complaints against 'anti-Kurdish' shows on Turkish TV

ISTANBUL - Daily News with wires

The co-chair of Turkey's most prominent pro-Kurdish party has filed a complaint with the country's media watchdog over four TV series he considers anti-Kurdish.

There are some series running on some channels that make it impossible for their viewers to develop a culture of empathy and fraternity, said Selahattin Demirtas, co-chairman of the Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP.

Demirtas has called for the public to follow his example and file complaints with the Supreme Board of Radio and Television, or RTUK, against the shows *Sakarya Firat* (*Sakarya Euphrates*), *Tek Türkiye* (*One Turkey*), *Ölümsüz Kahramanlar* (*Immortal Heroes*) and *Kurtlar Vadisi: Pusu* (*Valley of Wolves: Ambush*).

Demirtas mentioned the issue at his party's parliamentary group meeting on Tuesday, noting that the four series fostered an atmosphere of hostility among the public.

I guess the people who watch those series desire to go out to the street after the end of the episode and strangle the first Kurdish citizen to cross their path. We are asking [these TV series] to be careful during this period of peace, he said.

Bahadır Ozdener, a scriptwriter for *Kurtlar Vadisi: Pusu*, denied the accusations during an interview on the private NTV, noting that one of the leading characters in their series is Kurdish.

Kurdish character Muro, played by

actor Mustafa Ustünda, is loved by millions, according to Ozdener, who added that their stance was not racist at all.

We, as *Pena Film*, are a team which loves each part of this country very much, he said.

BDP deputy Sirri Sakik, on the same NTV show with Ozdener, said the TV series could not be defended in any way, arguing that Kurds were being presented as terrorists in their scripts.

Sakik gave some examples of urban violence against citizens of Kurdish origin and said, We know these types of series trigger street crime.

The series in question

Sakarya Firat is a series on the state-run channel TRT that features stories of soldiers fighting terrorism over the last 25 years at a military border post in eastern Anatolia. Its producer, Osman Sinav, described it as a 71-minute salute to our nameless heroes. The show, meanwhile, is also known for its scenes of violent combat.

Tek Türkiye is on the private STV channel and is a fictional story about the sale of a recently discovered secret document from the Lausanne Treaty about southeastern Anatolia. A Turkish doctor is the hero of the series, competing with foreign powers and the deep state to obtain the document.

Ölümsüz Kahramanlar is a documentary-type series that operates on the premise that fallen soldiers never die. Airing on the private Samanyolu TV, each episode features the story of the death of a soldier as told by their family, friends and comrades in arms.

Kurtlar Vadisi is a television phe-



BDP leader Selahattin Demirtas addresses his party at a parliamentary group meeting. AA photo

nomenon in Turkey and has aired on different channels since 2003 with high ratings. The show has aired under different season titles and with different focuses, while there is also a highly successful movie version to the franchise's name. A sequel, meanwhile, is also in the works.

The extremely violent action series deals with current events involving Turkey, presenting imaginary behind-the-curtains subplots regarding the deep state, the mafia, foreign powers acting against Turkey and other intrigues.

Main character Polat Alemdar, played by actor Necati Sasmaz, is an iconic figure, especially among Turkish youth.

M. Maliki sur le point d'être reconduit comme premier ministre en Irak

Les partis représentant les chiites, majoritaires dans le pays, sont parvenus à un accord en sa faveur

Bagdad
Envoyé spécial

La « jeune démocratie » que les Etats-Unis assurent avoir mise en place en Irak a battu, le 2 octobre, son premier record mondial : 209 jours après les élections, le pays est toujours sans gouvernement élu. Les précédents champions de la catégorie, dans l'histoire des Parlements de type Westminster, étaient les Pays-Bas avec une crise gouvernementale qui avait duré 208 jours en 1977.

Jusqu'où ira le « record » irakien ? Impossible de le dire, mais un tournant, plutôt défavorable aux Américains et favorable au premier ministre sortant, Nouri Al-Maliki, semble bien avoir été franchi en fin de semaine. Lors d'une réunion, vendredi, entre les principaux partis qui incarnent l'électorat majoritaire chiite du pays (l'Alliance nationale irakienne, ANI), un « consensus » a émergé en faveur de la reconduction de M. Maliki.

Avec l'accord des 39 députés du prêcheur chiite anti-américain Moqtada Al-Sadr, qui fait ainsi volte-face, et l'appui déclaré d'autres élus chiites de petites formations, M. Maliki, dont la propre liste, dite de l'Etat de droit, avait obtenu 89 mandats, disposerait dorénavant d'au moins 132 élus. Pour atteindre la majorité de 163 voix sur les 325 du Parlement, le premier ministre, qui expédie les affaires courantes depuis les élections du 7 mars, devrait pouvoir compter, après de rudes négociations en cours, sur les 43 députés du Bloc kurde.

Les querelles entre chiites qui empêchent la formation d'un gouvernement ne sont cependant pas terminées puisque deux forma-

tions importantes de l'ANI, le Conseil suprême islamique d'Irak (CSII) et le Parti de la vertu (Fadhila), ne participaient pas à la réunion de vendredi. Début septembre, ces deux formations, qui rejettent « l'autoritarisme » de M. Maliki, avaient élu l'actuel vice-président de la République, le francophone Adel Abdel Mahdi, (un dirigeant du CSII), comme leur candidat.

Dans le vaste salon de réception de la demeure qu'il occupe à l'intérieur de la fameuse « zone verte » où sont concentrées les institutions de l'Etat, Ali Al-Dabbagh,

M. Maliki se serait engagé à « consulter » ses partenaires sur les « grandes » questions nationales

député, conseiller et porte-parole de M. Maliki, nous confirme avoir « mis au point », avec son patron, « dix engagements » qui auraient permis de l'emporter. La plupart de ces engagements portent sur les limitations que M. Maliki s'imposerait, ainsi que sur l'obligation qu'il se ferait de « consulter » ses partenaires, voire d'obtenir leur accord préalable sur les « grandes » questions nationales.

D'un tempérament plus centralisateur et personnel que la Constitution fédérale ne l'y autorise, M. Maliki, qui se plaint de ne pas pouvoir gouverner efficacement avec les multiples partenaires de la coalition qui l'avait nommé en 2006, a créé autour de lui, dénoncent ses opposants, « un gouvernement parallèle » de conseillers et de technocrates ne répondant qu'à lui. Beaucoup lui reprochent aussi

d'avoir discrètement nommé, fort de son titre de commandant en chef des armées d'Irak, « au moins cent quarante » officiers supérieurs « à sa dévotion » à la tête des services de police, de l'armée, des unités d'élite, ainsi que dans les services de renseignements, extérieurs et intérieurs.

« Méfions-nous des nouveaux Saddam au petit pied », répète depuis des mois le chef de la liste arrivée en tête aux élections avec 91 mandats, Iyad Allaoui. Chiite lui-même, mais complètement laïque, M. Allaoui, dont 80 % des élus sont de confession sunnite, fut longtemps soutenu par la CIA pour remplacer Saddam Hussein à la tête de l'Irak. Ancien membre du Baas de l'ex-dictateur avec qui il avait finalement rompu, M. Allaoui, que le vice-président américain Joseph Biden recommandait le mois dernier à la tête d'un Conseil national de sécurité qui aurait eu la haute main sur les affaires de sécurité irakienne, -option rejetée par M. Maliki -, a récemment dénoncé « les

ingérences de l'Iran » dans les affaires intérieures de son pays.

Soutenu par l'Arabie saoudite, M. Allaoui a fait, lui aussi, le voyage à Téhéran cet été, mais sa tournée, qui le mena à Damas, Amman, Le Caire, Beyrouth et Doha, ne semble pas avoir débouché.

Du coup, les Américains eux-mêmes auraient fini par jeter l'éponge et seraient prêts à accepter un second gouvernement Maliki. Les Iraniens, qui auraient préféré M. Abdel Mahdi, se sont également ralliés à cette option et ont exercé, pour qu'il en fasse autant, une « amicale » pression sur Moqtada Al-Sadr, lequel, menacé d'une arrestation américaine en 2007, s'était, depuis, replié en Iran.

Au-delà de l'élargissement des centaines de ses miliciens, emprisonnés par M. Maliki pour « rébellion armée » en 2008, la condition posée par le prêcheur chiite pour prix de son ralliement est qu'en aucun cas M. Maliki ne puisse « proroger d'un seul jour » l'accord gouvernemental qui oblige « tous les soldats américains à quitter l'Irak » au 31 décembre 2011.

En attendant, un groupe clandestin chiite, qui se réclame de Moqtada Al-Sadr, tire presque quotidiennement des obus sur la « zone verte » en visant d'abord la vaste ambassade des Etats-Unis. « Ils veulent faire croire que nous partons à cause de leurs obus », ironise-t-on à la chancellerie concernée. ■

Patrice Claude

Plus de sept mois de crise politique

7 mars Elections générales. La participation atteint 62,4 %.

26 mars Résultats définitifs : 91 élus pour le Bloc irakien d'Iyad Allaoui, 89 pour l'Alliance de l'Etat de droit (AED) de Nouri Al-Maliki. Celui-ci refuse la défaite et exige un recomptage des bulletins.

4 mai L'AED trouve un premier accord avec l'Alliance nationale irakienne (ANI), des chiites conservateurs.

12 et 29 juin Rencontres Allaoui-Maliki voulues par Washington. Aucun accord.

16 août M. Allaoui rompt ses discussions avec M. Maliki.

31 août Fin de la « mission de combat » américaine. Ne restent plus que 49 700 soldats jusqu'au 31 décembre 2011.

25 septembre Le bloc de M. Allaoui exclut de participer à un gouvernement mené par M. Maliki.

1^{er} octobre L'Alliance nationale irakienne, hors Fadhila (Parti de la vertu) et le Conseil suprême islamique d'Irak, choisit M. Maliki comme son candidat au poste de premier ministre.

Les Kurdes se disent proches d'un accord avec Maliki en Irak

par Walid Ibrahim (Reuters)

BAGDAD - Les députés kurdes sont proches d'un accord avec le Premier ministre Nouri al Maliki pour permettre à ce dernier de former un cabinet majoritaire, mais l'Irak ne devrait pas disposer d'un nouveau gouvernement avant la fin de l'année, a déclaré mercredi le principal négociateur kurde

Les dirigeants politiques irakiens ne sont toujours pas parvenus à s'entendre sur la formation d'un nouveau gouvernement depuis les élections législatives du 7 mars dernier, les crispations confessionnelles s'ajoutant à des querelles de personnes, notamment autour de Nouri al Maliki.

Vice-Premier ministre, Ross Nouri Chaouis a déclaré que les négociateurs kurdes avaient rencontré à deux reprises le chef du gouvernement sortant et que ce dernier, qui vient d'obtenir le soutien des plus importantes formations chiïtes du pays, avait donné son accord verbal à plusieurs de leurs requêtes.

"Nous avons examiné en détail les exigences kurdes (...) et nous avons relevé que nos points de vue étaient très proches", a déclaré le responsable kurde à Reuters.

"Je puis dire que nous sommes à 90% d'accord les uns avec les autres", a-t-il ajouté. "Mais il s'agissait de discussions orales. Désormais et avant de donner l'accord définitif des blocs kurdes, ces pourparlers doivent être couchés sur papier, il s'agit de les transformer en garanties écrites."

DIVERGENCES PERSISTANTES

Coalition rassemblant les principales formations chiïtes, l'Alliance nationale a désigné la semaine dernière Nouri al Maliki comme son candidat au poste de Premier ministre.



Les députés kurdes du parlement irakien ont déclaré qu'ils allaient tenter dès lundi de peser sur la formation du nouveau gouvernement irakien, soulignant que la recherche d'une alliance avec le Premier ministre sortant Nouri al Maliki (photo) était leur priorité. /Photo prise le 1er octobre 2010/ REUTERS

Outre son propre parti, Etat de droit, qui figure au sein de cette Alliance nationale, Nouri al Maliki a obtenu le soutien décisif de la faction dirigée par l'imam radical anti-américain Moktada Sadr.

Ce dernier s'opposait auparavant à un second mandat du Premier ministre sortant en raison de sa décision d'envoyer l'armée mater l'Armée du Mahdi, la milice de Sadr, en 2008.

Avec les 89 sièges d'Etat de droit et les 39 des alliés de Moktada Sadr, Nouri al Maliki serait encore loin de la majorité de 163 sièges au parlement, qui compte 325 députés.

L'appoint pourrait être fourni par les Kurdes, qui occupent 56 sièges.

Outre l'accord écrit à formuler avec les Kurdes, Nouri al Maliki doit encore apaiser certaines divergences persistantes au sein de sa propre Alliance nationale mais aussi avec d'autres formations rivales.

Prié de dire si l'Irak serait doté d'un nouveau gouvernement d'ici la fin de l'année, Ross Nouri Chaouis a répondu: "Je ne le pense pas."

LES KURDES POUR UN ACCORD

AVEC ALLAoui

Les Kurdes qui disposent d'une région semi-autonome dans le nord du pays ont eu des différends avec Maliki lors de son premier mandat.

Les exportations de pétrole en provenance du Kurdistan sont ainsi suspendues depuis 2009 en raison d'un contentieux entre les autorités kurdes et le gouvernement de Bagdad. Ce dernier juge illégaux des contrats de développement de gisements pétroliers signés par le Kurdistan avec des compagnies étrangères.

Dans le cadre des négociations avec Maliki, les Kurdes réclament de pouvoir conclure eux-mêmes des contrats d'exploitation des gisements pétroliers.

Ils revendiquent également le contrôle de Kirkouk, située au coeur de la zone de production pétrolière dans le nord de l'Irak, et d'autres territoires.

Les Kurdes prônent aussi la formation d'un gouvernement large qui comprendrait notamment Irakia. Cette coalition multiconfessionnelle dirigée par l'ancien Premier ministre Iyad Allaoui est arrivée en tête des élections avec 91 sièges. Or, elle exclut de participer à un gouvernement dirigé par Maliki.

"Si (Irakia) insiste sur des exigences que les autres formations ne peuvent accepter et que nous nous retrouvons dans une impasse, alors nous n'aurons d'autre choix que de former un gouvernement majoritaire", a cependant prévenu Chaouis.

Allaoui a mis en garde contre toute reprise des violences confessionnelles entre chiïtes et sunnites, représentés au sein d'Irakia, si sa coalition est exclue du prochain gouvernement.

En pleine impasse politique, l'Irak reste gouverné

Bien placé pour conserver son poste grâce au soutien de la mouvance de Moqtada al-Sadr, le premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki gère le pays comme si de rien n'était.

GEORGES MALBRUNOT

MOYEN-ORIENT Ce n'est pas le moindre des paradoxes. L'Irak est théoriquement sans premier ministre depuis sept mois. Les délais constitutionnels pour que le Parlement investisse un gouvernement issu des élections législatives de mars sont largement dépassés. Et pourtant, le pays continue d'être géré, presque comme si de rien n'était.

Loin de se contenter d'expédier les affaires courantes, le premier ministre sortant, Nouri al-Maliki, prend des décisions politiques engageant l'avenir. Il s'apprête à signer d'importants contrats gaziers. En matière de sécurité, il n'a pas hésité à retirer les ports d'armes aux rebelles des zones mixtes arabo-kurdes, passés du côté du gouvernement contre al-Qaïda. Et dans le domaine économique, al-Maliki a récemment signé le décret réformant le tout-puissant secteur public, en vue de sa juteuse privatisation.

Fort de l'appui que vient de lui apporter la mouvance sadriste, le leader chiite apparaît comme le mieux placé pour conserver son poste face à Iyad Allaoui, dont la liste est pourtant arrivée en tête des législatives. « L'impasse politique a désormais sa propre dynamique », constate un diplomate européen à Bagdad, qui table encore sur « un mois ou deux » de délai avant la fin des tractations et la formation du prochain gouvernement. Mais sans risque d'effondrement du système, « al-Maliki n'est pas particulièrement pressé », ajoute cet observateur, au fait des discussions en coulisses.

Derrière le premier ministre, la lourde machinerie des ministères fonctionne également. « Nos dossiers, même lentement, continuent d'avancer au

ministère de l'Électricité », se réjouit un homme d'affaires français à Bagdad. De son côté, le ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports vient de lancer un appel d'of-

Derrière ce bras de fer politique se cache « une lutte très crue pour le pouvoir ».

fres pour la construction d'un stade de 80 000 places dans la capitale. Quant aux gouvernorats de province, le fédéralisme leur offre une réelle autonomie budgétaire. « Nous sommes venus à Paris rencontrer les entreprises qui souhaitent répondre à nos besoins en termes de traitement des eaux et des déchets ainsi que dans le domaine hospitalier », nous déclarait récemment Mohammed al-Shamari, le vice-gouverneur de Bagdad de passage en France.

Des assassinats politiques en hausse

Plusieurs facteurs expliquent cet apparent paradoxe. La lutte pour le pouvoir se déroule dans le cadre des institutions. Aucune force politique acceptant de jouer ce jeu-là ne veut sortir d'un système qui la fait bénéficier d'une part de la très importante corruption qui gangrène les rouages de l'État. D'autre part, l'impasse politique ne se traduit pas par un vide sécuritaire. « Al-Maliki garde le contrôle de l'armée », souligne un expert irakien. Un coup d'État est inenvisageable. » Enfin, contrairement à 2006, les pays voisins jouent, cette fois, la carte de la stabilisation de l'Irak. Y compris les Iraniens. « Les Américains nous disent que les appuis logistiques iraniens à la guérilla ont même baissé ces derniers mois », relève ce diplomate occidental,



Nouri al-Maliki, le premier ministre irakien, le 1^{er} octobre à Bagdad. REUTERS

qui juge probables des contacts secrets irano-américains - sans doute en Turquie - pour former le gouvernement irakien.

Mais ce semblant de jeu démocratique a tout de même ses limites. Il laisse en suspens les épineux problèmes institutionnels, qui empêchent une véritable stabilisation du pays (partage de la rente pétrolière entre communautés, sort des zones mixtes arabo-kurdes où la violence reste explosive). Enfin, derrière ce bras de fer politique, se joue en fait « une lutte très crue pour le pouvoir ». La preuve : l'inquiétante augmentation des assassinats politiques grâce à des armes munies de silencieux (200 en 2009, plus de 800 depuis le début de cette année). Conséquence : un certain nombre de proches d'Allaoui sont aujourd'hui réfugiés en Jordanie ou au Koweït. « Al-Maliki et Allaoui finiront sans doute par coopérer dans un gouvernement élargi, admet le diplomate. Mais aujourd'hui, chacun cherche à obtenir des garanties de sécurité sur sa personne et l'assurance qu'aucune enquête ne sera lancée sur les pots-de-vin que l'un et l'autre ont touchés ces dernières années sur les contrats signés. » ■

Les Français veulent des badges bleus

Les entreprises françaises se plaignent de ne pas disposer des badges bleus leur permettant d'entrer sans être fouillées dans la zone verte, le centre du pouvoir à Bagdad. L'accès à ce vaste périmètre, abritant des ministères irakiens et l'ambassade américaine, est qualifié par une couleur (bleu, marron, jaune, orange), qui indique le degré de

fouille imposé à son titulaire. Le précieux sésame est attribué par le « bureau des badges », contrôlé par les Américains. « Nous serons pleinement acceptés le jour où nous disposerons de ces badges bleus », affirme un homme d'affaires. L'ambassade de France a transmis une requête en ce sens auprès du bureau de Nouri al-Maliki. G. M.

L'Iran confronté à des cyberattaques

Un mystérieux virus informatique aurait infecté des centaines de ses ordinateurs industriels. Téhéran affirme en être venu rapidement à bout.

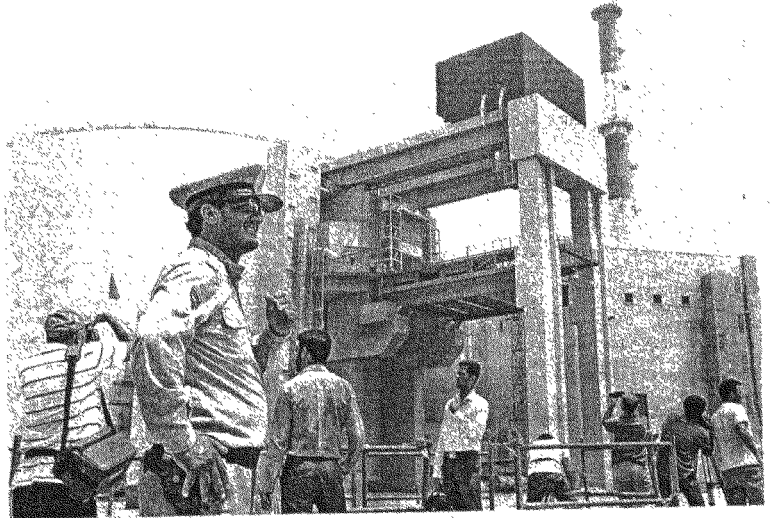
DELPHINE MINOUI
CORRESPONDANTE AU MOYEN-ORIENT

ESPIONNAGE Le mystérieux virus Stuxnet aurait-il été neutralisé ? À en croire Téhéran, les dégâts causés par le fameux ver informatique font déjà partie du passé. « Une solution a été trouvée pour faire face au virus et elle va être appliquée », indiquait dès dimanche Heidar Moslehi, le ministre iranien des Renseignements, cité par la télévision d'État. « Je tiens à assurer à tous les citoyens que l'appareil de renseignement a actuellement une supervision complète sur le cyberspace et ne permettra pas une fuite ou une destruction des activités nucléaires de notre pays », s'est-il empressé de préciser pour mettre fin aux rumeurs selon lesquelles la centrale de Buchehr - dont le lancement a été retardé - aurait été particulièrement affectée. La veille, le ministère des Renseignements annonçait même l'arrestation de plusieurs « espions » accusés d'avoir voulu « mener une action destructrice » par Internet.

Pourtant, cette série d'affirmations laisse perplexes les experts en la question qui y voient, a contrario, l'obstination de la République islamique à vouloir sauver la face dans une situation qui pourrait la dépasser complètement. « Par manque de transparence, il est difficile de distinguer la propagande de la réalité », relève un informaticien iranien qui s'avoue « bluffé par les méfaits potentiels de ce virus d'un nouveau genre ». La semaine dernière, Mahmoud Liayi, responsable des technologies de l'information au ministère de l'Industrie, avait admis en personne que quelque 30 000 adresses IP - identifiant un ordinateur - auraient été contaminées. Tout en s'empressant de préciser : « Le virus n'a pas été capable de pénétrer ou de causer des dégâts sérieux dans l'appareil gouvernemental. »

Découvert en juin dernier, Stuxnet s'introduit malicieusement dans les ordinateurs grâce à des clés USB et aurait pour spécificité de reconnaître et d'endommager des programmes de Sie-

La centrale nucléaire de Buchehr fait partie des édifices que le virus aurait beaucoup affectés.
ATTA
KENARE/AFP



30 000
adresses IP
contaminées

mens, principalement utilisés dans le contrôle d'oléoducs, de plates-formes pétrolières ou de centrales électriques. Si l'Iran fait partie des principaux pays touchés, le ver informatique sévit également en Inde, au Pakistan, en Indonésie, ou encore en Chine, où il a contaminé des millions d'ordinateurs.

Un travail de plusieurs mois

Sa rapidité de propagation et la sophistication des dégâts causés portent à croire qu'il est le fruit d'un travail professionnel de plusieurs mois, ayant requis des compétences informatiques très pointues. « Dans le passé, il n'y avait que les cybercriminels, mais maintenant je crains que l'heure du cyberterrorisme, des cyberarmes et de la cyberguerre soit arrivée », concédait récemment Eugène Kaspersky, fondateur des antivirus du même nom.

Mais si le scénario d'une attaque ciblée, organisée par certains États « ennemis » de l'Iran pour saboter son programme nucléaire, semble tenir la route, aucune preuve suffisante ne permet, à ce jour, d'en conclure à une guerre cybernétique pleinement commanditée.

Pour l'heure, les hypothèses qui cir-

Plusieurs experts estiment que ce virus a été créé par ou à la demande d'un État.

culent dans les milieux de l'intelligence informatique ont d'étranges allures de science-fiction. Parmi les plus répan- dues, celle retenue, la semaine dernière par le *New York Times*, et selon laquelle le virus disposerait d'un indice impliquant directement... Israël. Il contiendrait, en effet, une référence au Livre d'Esther, récit de l'Ancien Testament qui raconte comment les Juifs de Perse

déjouèrent un complot visant à les éliminer... C'est le nom d'un fichier, baptisé « Mytrus » - une allusion au mot Esther - inscrit dans le code du virus - qui aurait mis la puce à l'oreille de certains informaticiens. « Si vous lisez la Bible, vous pouvez faire cette supposition », précise au quotidien américain le consultant informatique Ralph Lan- gner. ■

Kurdish support for Al Maliki tied to future of oil-rich Kirkuk

Ethnic group's lawmakers discuss price for backing PM's second term.

Sulaimaniyah, Iraq (AP) Kurdish lawmakers began on Saturday to plot their course as Iraq's kingmakers with enough seats to secure a second term for Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki and press key demands, including a greater say over the oil riches in the country's north.

The Kurds, who control a semiautonomous northern enclave, emerged as the pivotal votes after Al Maliki's Shiite-led coalition received a major boost on Friday from a powerful Shiite cleric, Moqtada Al Sadr, who once opposed him. The support pushed Al Maliki close to a majority grip in the 325-seat parliament, but he needs help from other factions to break a nearly seven-month impasse.

A Sunni-backed coalition led by a former prime minister, Eyad Allawi, narrowly won the March elections, yet without enough clout to control parliament and oust Al Maliki, leaving the country in political limbo.

Eventual Kurdish support for Al Maliki is anticipated. But first the Kurds are expected to lobby for their long list of issues, topped by a call for a referendum to decide control of the oil-rich Kirkuk region that is now under Baghdad's sway.

A senior Kurdish official said lawmakers from across the Kurds' three northern provinces gathered on Saturday for a preliminary strategy session with a larger meeting planned later. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to brief media. Latif Mustafa Ameen, a Kurdish lawmaker, said the Kurds waited in the wings as Al Maliki and Allawi battled after the election. But now the Kurds "see themselves as part of the solution" to settle the political bind by opening talks with Al Maliki's bloc, he said.

The chain of events in the past days has left Al Maliki on the verge of holding onto power after the humbling election loss.

Will of the voters

Even with Allawi's hopes fading, his party remained defiant and said they would not join in any coalition



* Kurdish regional President Massoud Barzani shakes hands with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki when the two met in August at the Dokan resort west of Sulaimaniyah, 260km northeast of Baghdad. Kurdish lawmakers are meeting to plot their course as Iraq's kingmakers with enough seats to secure a second term for Al Maliki and press key demands, including a greater say over the oil riches in the country's north.

with Al Maliki. In a statement on the party website, spokesman Haider Al Mulla said a Shiite-dominated government led by Al Maliki would violate the will of the voters who seek "a genuine partnership" of Iraq's groups.

Later, Al Maliki cast himself as the apparent victor and tried to reach out to Allawi's bloc.

"Boycotting does not serve anyone," he said in an interview on state-run Iraqiya television. "I ask them to return to the bargaining table."

Yet Al Maliki will be under pressure for big concessions in exchange for the support that has put close to his goal of staying in office. And it comes from two very different directions — the pro-Western Kurds and the staunchly anti-American Al Sadr, who once led one of the most formidable Shiite militias in Iraq.

A leading member of Al Sadr's movement said their demands include as many as six of the 34 Cabinet-level ministry posts, possibly the trade ministry and one post linked to security operations. Both outcomes would alarm Washington by giving Al Sadr's allies a role over vital foreign investment policies and efforts to build up

Iraq's police and military as US forces depart.

Close ties

Al Sadr has been in self-exile in Iran since 2007 and there are Western concerns about how much influence Tehran now carries over his decisions.

The Kurds, meanwhile, have been closely tied to the West. After the 1991 war to drive Iraq from Kuwait, American warplanes protected the Kurdish region — which allowed the Kurds to develop their economy and policies virtually independently from Saddam Hussain's control. Now, the Kurdish region is experiencing an economic boom that has raised living standards well above much of the rest of Iraq.

The Kurds also are trying to exert their influence beyond their semiautonomous zone.

They have demanded Iraq follow through with a constitutionally mandated referendum to decide the fate of Kirkuk, which is contested between Kurds, Sunni Arabs and a group with ethnic ties to Turkey.

dpa..... Deutsche Presse-Agentur

US, Iraqi forces in joint operation to protect Kirkuk residents

October 3, 2010 - Deutsche Presse-Agentur

Kirkuk, Iraq - Iraqi forces in Kirkuk said Sunday they were working closely with US forces to protect Arab Sunni and Shiite residents reportedly facing intimidation and threats ahead of a contentious planned national census.

Kirkuk police director Jamal Taher dismissed accusations from residents that Kurdish police and members of Kurdish political parties were carrying out death threats.

'We are neutral and independent and will work to protect all the people in the city of Kirkuk, without any distinction whether they are Arabs or Kurds or Turkmen or Chaldo-Assyrians,' said Kirkuk police director Jamal Taher.

Taher said criminals infiltrating the city from the turbulent areas of Mosul, Tal Afar and the capital Baghdad were to blame for the instability.

In a joint press conference with Taher, US military commander Larry

Swift said that his forces were providing tactical support to Kirkuk police and monitoring the situation.

Taher and Swift were speaking two days after Iraqi officials told the German Press Agency dpa that Arab Sunnis and Shiites in the city were asked to leave under the pretext that they were not native residents of Kirkuk. When they refused to do so, they were reportedly threatened.

'Dozens of Arabs have been threatened with death and displacement for the past three days,' said Rakan al-Joubouri, the deputy governor of Kirkuk.

Abdullah Rifaat, a leading official of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, denied the allegations. He said the police and the Kurdish security forces had only tried to encourage Arabs to register with the authorities.

Al-Joubouri nevertheless called on the Iraqi government to intervene immediately and send troops to protect people in Kirkuk.

Some officials believe the attempted evictions were meant to coincide with the census, which is to be conducted October 24.

The census had previously been postponed for a year due to concerns that it would fuel sectarian and ethnic tensions in the northern cities of Kirkuk and Mosul. The last Iraqi general census was conducted 23 years ago.

Opponents of the census fear that its numbers could be politicised in oil-rich areas like Kirkuk where Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen reside.

IRAQI Kurds say close to pact with Maliki

BAGHDAD , October 6, 2010 (Reuters) -By Waleed Ibrahim

IRAQ'S KURDISH lawmakers are close to allying themselves with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki but Iraq may not have a new government this year, the leader of the Kurdish negotiating team said on Wednesday.

Deputy Prime Minister Ross Nouri Shawis said the Kurds, who are potential kingmakers now that Maliki has won the nomination of the major Shi'ite parties, have met twice with the incumbent and have verbal agreements on many of their demands.

Iraq has been without a new government for seven months since a March 7 election that failed to produce a clear winner, leaving Shi'ite, Sunni and Kurdish politicians jockeying for power and position.

"We went through details of the Kurdish demands ... and we noticed that our point of views are very close," Shawis told Reuters following a meeting with a small Shi'ite party, Fadhila. "I can say that we are 90 percent in agreement with each other."

"But these were oral talks. Now, and before giving the final stand (approval) of the Kurdish blocs, these talks are to be put on paper, to turn them into written guarantees," Shawis said.

The National Alliance, a merger of major Shi'ite blocs, named Maliki its nominee for a second term last week despite dissent within the coalition. Maliki won support from his own State of Law bloc and the Sadrism movement of anti-American cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

Support from the Sadrists was critical. They had previously opposed him for a second term, harbouring bitterness since he sent troops to crush Sadr's Mehdi Army militia in 2008.

With State of Law's 89 seats and Sadr's 39, Maliki would still be dozens of seats short of the 163 needed for a governing majority in Iraq's 325-seat parliament.

The Kurds' 56 seats could bridge the gap.

Iraqis had hoped the March election would provide more stable governance after years of dictatorship and war but so far it has meant seven months of political wrangling and renewed fears of rising violence from a stubborn Islamist insurgency as U.S. troops prepare to leave next year.

Asked if Iraq would have a new government by year's end, Shawis said: "I don't think so."

OIL ROW

In addition to reaching a written agreement with the Kurds, Maliki still has to settle differences within his own National Alliance and with other rival blocs.

The semi-autonomous northern Kurdish region has had serious differences with Maliki's government.

A row between Arbil, the Kurdish capital, and Baghdad halted oil exports from the region last year and they remain suspended.

The Kurdistan Regional Government signed contracts with foreign companies to develop oilfields in its territory. Baghdad considers the deals illegal.

As part of their negotiation with Maliki, the Kurds want the right to negotiate oilfield contracts. They also lay claim to oil-rich Kirkuk and other disputed northern territories.

The Kurds said they are also insisting on a national partnership government that includes Iraqiya, the Sunni-backed cross-sectarian political alliance headed by former Premier Iyad Allawi that won 91 seats, more than any other bloc.

But Shawis said there are limits.

"If they insists on demands that other blocs can't comply with, and we reach a dead end, then there will be no choice but to go with a majority government," he said.

Allawi has warned that excluding his alliance could spark renewed bloodshed. Sunnis have felt marginalised in politics since the 2003 U.S. invasion that ousted Sunni Saddam Hussein.

Iraqiya says it will not participate in a Maliki government.

Washington has urged Iraqi politicians to include all of the winning blocs in the government, and Maliki said late on Tuesday he was open to alliances with all coalitions.

"The political process will not stop. Forming a government should go ahead. Iraqiya must get a majority to form government," he said. "If it does, we would go with it. Otherwise it must join us if we succeed in getting the majority."



At War

Notes From the Front Lines

Baghdad
Bureau

Who Killed Zardasht Osman?

By NAMO ABDULLA

ERBIL, Iraq — Recently, Iraq's Kurdish authorities accused an Islamic militant group of responsibility for the abduction and murder of a campaigning journalist, Zardasht Osman.

Mr. Osman was a young freelance journalist who leveled harsh criticisms at the leadership of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region, writing about allegations of nepotism and corruption.

In a televised confession, a man identified by the Kurdish security forces as Hisham Mahmoud Ismaeel, said to be a member of the radical Sunni group Ansar al-Islam, said last week that he was the driver of the mini-bus in which Mr. Osman was kidnapped outside his college here in Erbil on May 4.

Mr. Ismaeel accused Mr. Osman of having ties with Ansar al-Islam, and said that he was taken to Mosul and killed because he had not kept a promise to do — unspecified — work for the radical group. But he was not specific about the nature of the alleged ties that Mr. Osman had with the militants.

The announcement was the preliminary result of a secret inquiry set up by the region's president, Massoud Barzani, about four months ago. But it has failed to convince many people, who believe rather that Mr. Osman was a secular journalist who was killed for the scathing

Web posts that he had written against the Kurdish authorities.

Public skepticism about the official version increased after Ansar al-Islam itself denied that it was behind Mr. Osman's murder.

"If we kill or kidnap someone, we will announce it ourselves. We don't need anybody to lie for us," the group said in a statement that was published in Kurdish newspapers. "We consider the kidnappings and killings we may carry out a prayer for which we shall get rewarded by God."

Ansar al-Islam is a Kurdish offshoot of Al-Qaeda. It has been defunct since the outbreak of the 2003 war, when the United States bombed its bases in the Hawraman region near Sulaimaniya. Its leader, Mullah Krekar, now lives in Norway.

Mr. Osman's family said they were "shocked" by the findings, describing them as nothing but a "scenario" set up by Mr. Barzani's ruling Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) to defame the character of Mr. Osman. He was particularly critical of Mr. Barzani.

"The truth is that Zardasht was a journalist and that he was assassinated because of his journalistic work and criticism of the injustice of Kurdish society," said Mr. Osman's brother, Bakir Osman. He insisted that his brother was secular, not a religious fanatic.

However Nerwan Azhee, a spokesman for the Kurdish security forces in Erbil, dismissed criticism of the investigation.

"They are all illegitimate and baseless accusations," said Mr. Azhee, who said that Mr. Osman himself was not suspected of being a terrorist. "We have hard evidence to prove that he was killed by Ansar al-Islam." He added, "We are going to publish more detailed evidence about Mr. Osman's link to the group."

Independent and opposition newspapers have started a campaign raising questions about the inquiry. While his killing is the most serious incident so far, Kurdish journalists have long complained of harassment, intimidation, assaults and arrests by the Kurdish authorities. In 2009, 357 such cases were recorded by the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate.

The findings seem to have actually fueled rather than soothed the anger of the people, who staged demonstrations.

Kamal Rauf, editor in chief of Hawlati, the first independent newspaper in the Kurdish region, says the committee that carried out the investigation was not impartial.

"I cannot say the findings are untrue. This needs a backup," said Mr. Rauf. "But they are not persuasive."

Even those who believe in the results of the investigation fear that the abduction of a writer during rush hour in Erbil indicates a resurgence of Ansar al-Islam in what has until now been the safest region of Iraq.

As the United States prepares for next year's full withdrawal after it has reduced the size of its troops to an almost 50,000, one question remains to be posed: Is Kurdistan, which has portrayed itself as democratic secular, secure, going to survive?

Gunmen attack patrol in Iran's Kurdish area, killing 4 policemen and bystander

AP Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran - October 7, 2010 - Associated Press

A PAIR of gunmen opened fire on a police patrol in Iran's Kurdish region on Thursday, killing four officers and a bystander, the Iranian official news agency reported.

The attack took place in Sanandaj, the capital of Iran's Kurdistan province some 310 miles (500 kilometers) west of Tehran, where authorities have been battling a separatist Kurdish movement for years.

"In this terrorist incident five were killed including four policemen and a pedestrian," Col. Ebrahim Kazeminejad, the provincial deputy police chief told the IRNA news agency.

The two gunmen were members of "counterrevolutionary

groups" he said and added that they were using Kalashnikov rifles.

Five other policemen and four civilians were wounded in the attack, one of them in serious condition.

Efforts were under way to apprehend the gunmen, he said.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

In September, a deadly bombing killed 12 and injured scores of civilians at a military parade in the Kurdish city of Mahabad. Iranian forces later crossed into neighboring Iraq and killed 30 Kurdish fighters in retaliation.

Iran has long fought Kurdish separatist groups who say they are struggling for more rights for the minority, which makes up 7 percent of Iran's 75 million people.



Turkish Government and PKK Warming Up to Peaceful Solution

Voice of America

Dorian Jones | Istanbul

After more than a quarter of a century of fighting between the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, and the Turkish state, major efforts are in place to end the conflict. Last week the PKK announced a one month extension to its ceasefire and senior Turkish ministers have been in talks with the Iraqi Kurdish leadership. But a long and difficult road remains to achieving peace.

Looking for a Solution

The Kurdish rebel group has been fighting the Turkish state for increased rights for Kurds for nearly 30 years. The conflict has claimed nearly 40,000 lives. But observers say leaders on both sides now seem increasingly eager to resolve the conflict peacefully.

Last week, in his address to the opening of parliament, the Turkish President Abdullah Gul called on deputies to find a solution.

"What we should do today is to develop a civilian will," he said. "We should confront our mistakes in the past and solve the question in a democratic way rather than discussing whether such a question really exists or how it should be defined."

Cease-fire initiated momentum for peace, talks

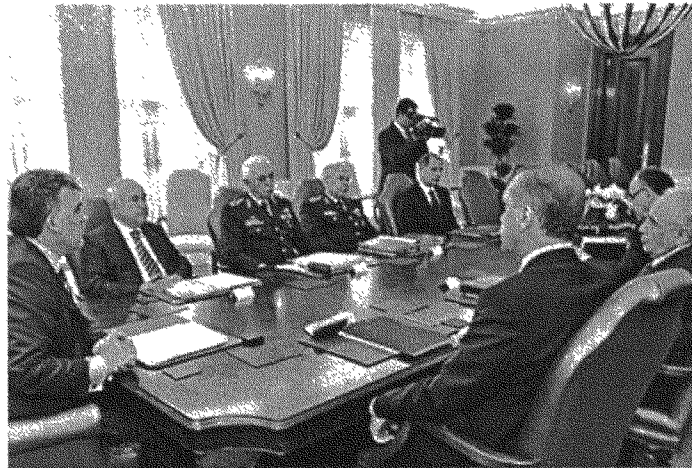
The momentum for peace has accelerated since the PKK announced a cease-fire in August, a month before a referendum on government reforms to Turkey's constitution.

The government responded by sending state officials to meet with the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Ocalan, who is being held in a Turkish jail.

Meanwhile senior government members held talks with the Kurdish leadership in neighboring Iraq.

One of the leading members of Turkey's legal Kurdish movement, Ahmet Turk, says there is a unique opportunity for peace.

"If you ask both Kurds and Turks, this is the time for a solution. If there is no resolution there will be more pain," he said. "We need a road map for the process for peace for which steps should be taken;



Turkish Presidential Press Service shows President Abdullah Gul (L) chairing a security meeting in Ankara with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan (R), army commanders and ministers to discuss ways to respond a surge in Kurdish rebel attacks (file photo - 21 Jun 2010)Photo: AFP

what policies should be followed." He says the key demands of the Kurdish movement include "local autonomy, constitutional recognition for Kurdish identity, and Kurdish education in schools."

But political scientist Cengiz Aktar of Bahcesehir University says even though many demands are in the interest of the whole country there is little political movement.

"Even for a better administrative efficiency we need to have a sort of decentralized system now and there is hardly any debate about it," Aktar said. "The debate was started by the Kurds and I hope it won't remain there and it will become a national debate. You know the definition of citizenship, the Turkishness, Kurds challenge this. And the definition of the language the unique language of Turkey is Turkish, so it can't be so."

Erdogan dismisses out of hand idea

In fact, last week Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan dismissed out of hand the idea of Kurdish education and on Monday he ruled out a new constitution until after next year's general election. Yasmin Congar, deputy editor of the Turkish daily Taraf, explains the connection between the constitution and the election.

"They have among their voters Turkish nationalists who are not very much supporting the democratic efforts in the southeast in the Kurdish region," said Congar. "But they also have votes from the Kurds, so its a very fine line they have to walk. I don't think there can be a

full solution before the general election." The prime minister's tough stance is seen by some as a possible reason the PKK only extended its ceasefire by a month instead of the widely expected eight months.

But Ahmet Turk warns that the continuation of the ceasefire will depend partly on the reaction of the Turkish army.

"If the army operations continue and the ceasefire is ignored," he says, "it will not only cause grave harm to Kurds but to the whole Turkish public."

Military operations avoided

For the last few weeks the army appears to have avoided any major operations against the separatists.

But analysts say its not only the army that poses a threat. Last week 25 leading members of the main legal Kurdish party, the Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP, were arrested and accused of having links to the PKK. Nearly 2,000 BDP members are currently being held.

Critics claim the arrests benefit the prime minister and his Justice and Development Party ahead of the general election, as its weakens the BDP - the ruling party's main rival in the predominantly Kurdish southeast.

While observers say there is a feeling Turkey has its best opportunity for peace in decades, with the country going to the polls in less than a year, there's also a fear that election politics could yet destroy those hopes.

Progress doesn't end Iraq's paralysis

Nouri al-Maliki has been backed as PM, but the 'national unity' government will remain a collection of fiefdoms



Ranj Alaaldin

Iraq remains without a government seven months on from the elections last March, a record-breaking impasse beating the previous record held by the Dutch in 1977. On Friday, however, progress was finally made after the Iraqi National Alliance (INA) – a Shia coalition – backed Nouri al-Maliki for the position of prime minister.

This had always been the likely outcome but the fact that Ayad Allawi and his Iraqi National Movement (INM) won 91 seats out of 325 – two more than Maliki's State of Law coalition – provided an opportunity for others, particularly the Kurds and elements inside the INA, to engage in a series of strategic bluffs and manoeuvring that sought to pressure Maliki.

These manoeuvres, aimed at maximising concessions from Maliki in return for backing him, included various "talks" and "dialogues" with Allawi and his party, visits to neighbouring Sunni Arab states, and the Sadrist referendum that backed Maliki's INA rival, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, as leader.

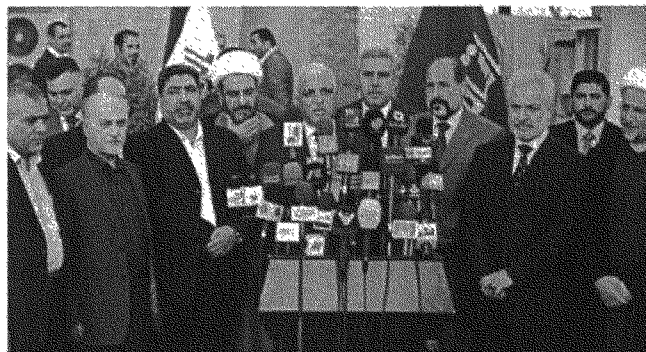
Where Iraq goes from here is still not certain. Iraq being Iraq, the whole thing could fall through – but that is unlikely. The major challenge for Maliki was getting the Sadrist movement of Muqtada al-Sadr on board: they detest Maliki, who used the Iraqi army against them in Basra in 2008 and arrested hundreds of Sadrists throughout the country during his tenure.

Muqtada al-Sadr, whose movement has almost 40 seats in the Iraqi parliament and dominates the INA, is currently in Iran pursuing religious studies. Also in Iran is Ayatollah Kazem al-Haeri, a historically dominant force within the Dawa party and a mentor to Muqtada. Haeri was at one point considered the successor to the ideological founder of Dawa, Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr, Muqtada's father-in-law. Haeri is a close confidante of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, and has great influence over Muqtada. Hence, Muqtada's change in direction will have been influenced to a significant degree by Haeri and, therefore, by Iran also.

All eyes, particularly those of the west, will be closely fixed on what Maliki offers the Sadrists in return and especially whether he gives them the security and defence ministries they have desperately coveted. Sources suggest they will instead get a total of six service ministries, crucial still for the Sadrists since this will allow them to expand their grassroots political base. Maliki may also appease them by releasing some Sadrist prisoners, if not all of them. The west will be concerned, however, about suggestions the Sadrists could get one of the deputy prime minister positions that includes with it the defence and security files.

Allawi's refusal to be part of any Maliki-led government means the Kurds are also strengthened. They have already submitted their list of demands, principally focused on the disputed territories, oil and power-sharing. The Kurds want the presidency and either the oil ministry (which they are unlikely to get) or the finance ministry.

If ever there was a time for the Kurds to go for broke on oil and Kirkuk, this is it – and as a result their potentially high demands could slow the entire process down, depending of course on how easily Maliki is swayed and whether he sees it



Iraq press conference Various members of Muqtada al-Sadr's political bloc and those of Nouri al-Maliki hold a joint news conference in Baghdad, on 1 Oct 2010. Photograph: Karim Kadim/AP

likely that an alternative coalition between the Kurds, Allawi and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) could materialise. ISCI has so far been out of the loop and could end up the biggest of losers.

The foreign ministry, currently held by a Kurd, is likely to go to a Sunni Arab. Even if Allawi does not end up joining the government, elements within his bloc may still be included and, as I have maintained from the outset here on Cif, this has always been the more likely scenario than Allawi actually becoming prime minister. If anything, senior elements within the INM will have always, privately, been against an Allawi premiership, not least since this would have deprived them of the numerous ministries they could get instead.

There will be no comfortable winner should Maliki become prime minister. The US wins because it gets continuity; it has enjoyed dealing with Maliki over the years and recognises that there is probably no other viable and better alternative. It will be wary of the Sadrist position in the new government but could see it as manageable and contained by others.

The Sadrists' prominence, however, does mean that Iran is also a winner. Other pro-Iranian elements including ISCI and its armed wing, the Badr organisation, will also retain their influence in Iraqi politics (Maliki and his Dawa party are also sympathetic towards Iran but judged to be more independent than the others).

Commentators may be quick to judge the Sunni Arabs as losers but senior Sunni Arab representatives should get top positions. That will appease the Sunni Arab world, which will accept that, like the US, they have in Maliki the more acceptable choice.

The ultimate loser could be the Iraqi people. They have, literally, paid the price by paying an astonishing \$25m in MPs' salaries since the elections. Their country's oil reserves, at 143bn barrels, have increased by 24% – more than Iran's and the third largest in the world. Yet, what Iraq really needs is not more oil money but better government spending, efficiency and less corruption.

These, however, are problems among many that will remain unresolved, particularly now that ministries will continue as fiefdoms of the various groups. The forthcoming multi-party coalition government will ensure the politics will be paralysed and the disputes remain unresolved. The forthcoming government of "national unity" is better defined as a national government of futility.

LE PARQUET DANOIS DEMANDE L'INTERDICTION DE LA TÉLÉVISION KURDE ROJ TV

AFP

COPENHAGUE, 7 octobre 2010 (AFP)

LE PARQUET danois a demandé jeudi l'interdiction de la télévision kurde controversée Roj TV, basée à Copenhague, estimant qu'elle soutenait le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) qui figure sur la liste des organisations terroristes de l'UE.

"Nous avons envoyé l'acte d'accusation au tribunal de première instance de Copenhague, dans lequel nous demandons le retrait de la licence de diffusion de Roj TV pour avoir violé l'article 144 E sur le soutien à des organisations terroristes", a déclaré à l'AFP le procureur du Royaume Lise-Lotte Nilas, chargée de ce dossier.

Mme Nilas avait inculpé en août Roj TV à la suite d'une longue enquête entamée en 2005 sur les activités de cette télévision, en estimant qu'elle enfreignait, dans certaines de ses émissions, la législation antiterroriste.

"Nous avons examiné de très près une série d'émissions de Roj TV et nous avons conclu qu'elles avaient un caractère de propagande pour le PKK qui est une organisation terroriste", selon Mme Nilas.

La date du procès de Roj TV n'a pas encore été fixée, a précisé le procureur. La police danoise a par ailleurs "confisqué" les fonds bancaires de Roj TV en attendant le procès, a-t-elle souligné.

L'avocat de Roj TV, Bjoern Elmquist, a déclaré à l'AFP qu'il avait fait appel de cette saisie et que le tribunal de Copenhague allait se prononcer sur cet appel le 19 octobre.

Le directeur de Roj TV, Imdat Yilmaz, s'est déclaré "surpris", affirmant à l'AFP que sa chaîne "n'a rien commis d'illégal et ne soutient pas le terrorisme".

La commission danoise de surveillance de radio-télévision a conclu que "nos émissions respectent le cadre de la loi", a-t-il rappelé.

Roj TV, qui a commencé à diffuser en 2004 depuis la Belgique vers 68 pays en Europe, au Proche et Moyen-Orient, est accusée de donner des temps d'antenne à des sympathisants du PKK.

"Nous donnons la parole aussi à ceux dans la rue qui expriment leur sympathie pour le PKK et ne pouvons bâillonner leur liberté de parole dont le Danemark est un ardent défenseur", selon M. Yilmaz.

Le directeur de l'antenne s'est dit "très préoccupé" par le gel des fonds par la police avant même la décision judiciaire.

"C'est comme si on nous condamnait d'avance, et cette manière de procéder nous met dos au mur", dit-il, car "la situation financière est critique, et si cela continue nous ne pourrions pas payer le loyer et la centaine de nos employés".

M. Yilmaz espère que la Cour le 19 octobre "tranchera en notre faveur sinon il faudrait envisager d'autres solutions afin d'éviter la fermeture" de Roj TV.

La Turquie exhorte depuis des années le gouvernement danois de fermer cette télévision considérée comme un porte-parole du PKK et les Etats-Unis se sont joints plusieurs fois à cet appel, dernièrement en 2009.

AP Associated Press

Cinq personnes dont quatre policiers tuées au Kurdistan iranien

TEHERAN - 7 octobre 2010 - (AP)

Quatre policiers et un passant ont été tués jeudi par deux hommes armés qui ont ouvert le feu sur une patrouille des forces de l'ordre au Kurdistan iranien, a rapporté l'agence de presse semi-officielle iranienne Mehr.

Cinq autres policiers et quatre civils ont été blessés dans les tirs,

dont un se trouve dans un état sérieux.

L'attaque a été commise à Sanandaj, à quelque 500km à l'ouest de Téhéran, dans une région où les autorités sont en lutte depuis des années contre un mouvement séparatiste kurde.

Les deux hommes armés appartenaient à des "groupes contre-révolutionnaires", a déclaré Ebrahim Kazeminejad, chef adjoint de la police de la province.

En septembre, un attentat à la bombe avait fait 12 morts et des dizaines de blessés lors d'une parade militaire dans la ville kurde de Mahabad. Les forces iraniennes avaient franchi la frontière avec l'Irak, tuant en représailles 30 combattants kurdes.

Les Kurdes représentent 7% de la population de l'Iran, qui compte 75 millions d'habitants. AP

AFP

IRAK: LE VICE-PRÉSIDENT AMÉRICAIN JOE BIDEN APPELLE LE CHEF KURDE BARZANI

WASHINGTON, 8 octobre 2010 (AFP)

LE VICE-PRÉSIDENT américain Joe Biden a téléphoné vendredi au dirigeant kurde irakien Massoud Barzani, alors que les efforts se poursuivent dans le pays pour former un gouvernement sept mois après les élections.

M. Biden a répété le soutien des autorités américaines à la formation d'un "gouvernement irakien rassembleur qui soit le reflet du résultat des élections", a indiqué la Maison Blanche dans un communiqué.

Le vice-président qui chapeaute la politique irakienne au nom du président Barack Obama et M. Barzani, président de la région autonome kurde d'Irak, se sont accordés sur le fait



que les coalitions victorieuses lors du scrutin du 7 mars devraient figurer dans le gouvernement, a précisé la Maison Blanche.

"Le vice-président a exprimé son soutien à l'organisation d'une rencontre entre les dirigeants de ces coalitions pour insister sur des accords de partage du pouvoir dans le respect de la Constitution", indique le communiqué.

"Le vice-président a répété que les Etats-Unis ne soutiennent aucun candidat en particulier et a exhorté M. Barzani, comme tous les autres dirigeants irakiens, à accélérer les efforts en vue de former un gouvernement rassembleur et légitime", a ajouté la Maison Blanche.

Kurdistan, crépuscule d'un rêve

Dans un webdocumentaire diffusé sur Géo.fr, les reporters Julien Goldstein et Olivier Piot présentent, sous forme de photographies, sons et vidéos, la plus grande communauté apatride au monde



UN PEUPLE, quatre nations. Un territoire, le Kurdistan, quadrillé de frontières. Ainsi vivent les 30 millions de Kurdes du Moyen-Orient. Dans un webdocumentaire diffusé sur Géo.fr, les reporters Julien Goldstein et Olivier Piot présentent, sous forme de photographies, sons et vidéos, la plus grande communauté apatride au monde.

Répartis entre l'Irak, l'Iran, la Turquie et la Syrie, 30 millions de Kurdes se battent pour leurs droits démocratiques, culturels et politiques. Sans cesse, ils revendiquent leur

appartenance à une identité, mènent une lutte opiniâtre pour exister.

Parfois, celle-ci aboutit à une avancée. En Irak notamment, où il leur est accordé une autonomie politique. Marginalisé, privé de liberté, interdit de parler sa langue, torturé, voilà le destin tragique de ce peuple malmené.

« Transjournalisme »

Le photographe Julien Goldstein ne se faisait pas d'illusions : « On savait ce qu'on allait trouver. Il n'y a aucun espoir, à court ou à moyen terme, pour ces gens. On constate un éclatement des volontés. Mais on voulait faire un point sur ce qu'avait été leur grand rêve – l'émergence du Kurdistan – et voir pourquoi il avait échoué. »

Des témoignages permettent ainsi de présenter « la petite histoire dans la grande ». Inscrite dans un projet d'enquête destiné au magazine Géo et menée depuis près de deux ans, la réalisation du documentaire s'est faite en marge du reportage. « Sur les trois semaines que duraient les séjours dans chaque pays, nous consacrons cinq jours à ce travail », précise Julien Goldstein.

Le concepteur du documentaire, Jean-Luc Marty, qualifie l'œuvre de « transjournalisme » : à la différence d'un webdocumentaire se suffisant à lui-même, il est complémentaire du reportage « papier », lui apportant précisions, éclairages et éléments d'analyse supplémentaires. Quoi qu'il en soit, au-delà même de sa forme, le document révèle une éclipse. Celle du Kurdistan.

Élodie CREZE



LE PARLEMENT TURC PROLONGE LE MANDAT POUR DES FRAPPES AU KURDISTAN IRAKIEN

ANKARA, 12 octobre 2010 (AFP)

LE PARLEMENT TURC a prolongé mardi le mandat permettant au gouvernement d'ordonner des frappes militaires contre les rebelles kurdes basés au Kurdistan irakien, a annoncé l'agence de presse Anatolie.

La décision a été prise lors d'une session à huis-clos au cours de laquelle le gouvernement a informé de ses efforts pour parvenir à régler le conflit avec les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) qui dure depuis 26 ans.

Selon la loi, les minutes des sessions à huis clos sont conservées dans des archives secrètes pendant dix ans et les médias ont l'interdiction de rendre compte des discussions.

Lors de la session de mardi, 428 parlementaires, sur un total de 550, ont voté en faveur de l'extension du mandat, tandis que 18 ont voté contre et un s'est

abstenu, selon Anatolie.

L'actuel mandat d'un an expire le 17 octobre. Le parlement l'a déjà prolongé à deux reprises depuis la première approbation en 2007.

L'armée turque, sur la base de renseignements fournis par les Etats-Unis, a mené depuis décembre 2007 des raids aériens et des opérations terrestres contre les rebelles kurdes.

Selon Ankara, quelque 2.000 rebelles du PKK sont installés au Kurdistan irakien, une région autonome qu'ils utilisent comme base pour des attaques sur le territoire turc.

Le PKK est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et de nombreux pays. Le conflit kurde en Turquie a fait quelque 45.000 morts, selon l'armée turque.



TURQUIE: TROIS REBELLES KURDES TUÉS PAR L'ARMÉE (SERVICES DE SÉCURITÉ)

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 14 octobre 2010 (AFP)

TROIS REBELLES kurdes ont été tués jeudi par l'armée dans l'est de la Turquie au cours d'une opération qui faisait suite à un accrochage survenu la veille, a-t-on appris de sources locales de sécurité.

L'opération près de la ville d'Ovacik, dans la province de Tunceli, a été lancée après la mort mercredi de deux soldats turcs et d'un militant du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) dans un affrontement, selon la même source.

Ces heurts interviennent alors que le PKK applique depuis août une trêve unilatérale, reconduite début octobre pour un mois, affirmant vouloir établir la "confiance" en vue d'un règlement du conflit kurde en Turquie, qui dure depuis 1984.

De son côté, le gouvernement turc poursuit depuis août 2009 une stratégie double de maintien de la pression militaire sur le PKK et d'octroi de davantage de droits à la minorité kurde pour inciter les rebelles à déposer les armes.

Le PKK est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et de nombreux pays. Le conflit a fait quelque 45.000 morts, selon l'armée turque.

Top Army Commander Says Iraq Can't Fight Kurdish Guerrillas

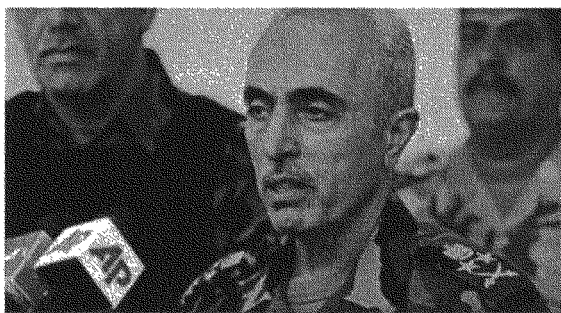
By RUDAW

Top military commander of Iraq says that Iraq's armed forces do not have the capability to fight against guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), who seek autonomy in Turkey from their bases in the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan.

"In the meantime, the Iraqi Army has no capability and readiness to fight the PKK," said Babakir Zebary, Iraq's Army Chief of Staff, in an exclusive interview with Rudaw in Baghdad.

"There are a lot of terrorist activities in Iraq. Iraq's situation is not stable."

He said that any attempt to stop PKK's activities would require Turkey to seek cooperation from the authorities of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).



Babakir Zebary, Iraq's Army Chief of Staff, says Iraqi Army has no capability to fight with PKK militants.--- Photo/apa.

"I believe any move against PKK without coordination with the Kurdistan region is going to fail," added Zebary.

About a week ago, Basir Atalai visited Kurdistan and met with the region's President Massoud Barzani, discussing security issues including PKK, according to officials from both sides.

The authorities of KRG have kept supporting a peaceful solution for the Kurdish issue in Turkey. President Barzani expressed hopes following the approval of a recent constitutional amendment in Turkey, hoping that it would pave the way for more reforms regarding Kurdish question in Turkey.

However, Kurdish leadership has also often called on PKK leaders to stop activities.

PKK has unilaterally issued two consecutive ceasefires against Turkey following calls from Barzani. PKK is

now in a defensive position and launches no attacks on Turkey.

Zebary said that the PKK's problem would not be solved if Turkey does not negotiate with the rebels.

"One of the problems of Turkey is that it's yet to realize that it should sit down with the PKK," said Zebary. "It still views the group as a terrorist and has not granted a general amnesty for PKK members."

He also said that the ruling party of Prime Minister Tayip Erdogan, Justice and Development Party (AKP), which is an Islamic-oriented party, is not able to solve the problem due to domestic pressure and the view the party has about the group.

"Given the strong pressure the opposition parties put on Erdogan's government, I believe it's early to expect an ultimate solution," added Zebary.

EDITORIAL

Iraq: Loser takes all

Nouri al-Maliki, the prime minister, who has clung tenaciously on to power, was all but assured a second term

IRAQ has broken a new record for a parliamentary democracy: 213 days without a government. On Friday Nouri al-Maliki, the prime minister, who has clung tenaciously on to power, was all but assured a second term in office by securing the support of his former enemy – the cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, whose followers once fought the Iraqi army for control of Baghdad and Basra. Several weeks of haggling lie ahead, but if the complexion of the future government remains as it is now, almost wholly Shia, with Kurdish support, the few political achievements of the last two years could start to unwind.

The electoral map of Iraq is split wholly on sectarian lines. The secular and largely Sunni coalition of Ayad Allawi won all the seats, bar one, in the three provinces of Nineveh, Anbar and Salahuddin. This was the cockpit of the insurgency and al-Qaida in Mesopotamia, and the participation of Sunni tribal chiefs in the election was seized upon as a sign that they had turned their back irrevocably on political violence. By contrast,

Maliki and his main Shia rivals won in all the provinces of the south, with only a handful of seats going to Allawi. Squeezed between the Kurds in the north, who are demanding territorial concessions in return for their support of Maliki's coalition, and the Shias in the south, who are reluctant to send their money north, the disfranchised Sunnis must be asking themselves what their votes were worth. Just to ram home the point, Maliki sent troop reinforcements to Anbar over the weekend.

There are concerns, too, about the Sadrists. The last time they entered government they purged the three ministries they controlled – transport, agriculture and health – and used the resources of those ministries in the sectarian war. Which ministries will Moqtada al-Sadr get this time round, in return for his support? There is also the fact that the Sadrists are supported by Iran – an increase in Iranian influence in Iraq is the last thing the US wants.

The negotiations over the next government have been motivated by two opposing fears: that Maliki could become a dictator, or that Allawi could destroy the postwar settlement which gave Shias power, wealth and political dominance. Maliki appears to be prevailing and is currently impervious to US pressure to include Sunnis in his government, although the US is not an innocent party when it comes to playing sectarian politics in Iraq. Trading government posts for political support also has its problems, as it is one of the causes of Iraq's rampant corruption. But this is a question of the lesser of two evils. Nothing could be worse than for Maliki to believe his own propaganda, that only a strongman can keep the uneasy peace.

TIME
October 6, 2010

Iraq's Next Government: What Do the Kurds Want?

By Charles McDermid/Erbil

When the announcement came late last week that Nouri al-Maliki had won the endorsement of radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr for a second term as Iraq's Prime Minister, it thrust the Kurds back into a familiar role as kingmaker. Maliki now has broad support from Iraq's Shi'ite parties, but still needs an alliance with either rival Sunni politicians or his former Kurdish allies to gain the parliamentary majority needed to form the next government. This means a heated round of concessions and compromises, with the Kurds retaining some powerful leverage.

But the chief negotiator of the Kurds this time is not some member of the legendary Barzani clan, or even elder Kurdish statesman and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani. It is Barham Salih, 50, a twinkly-eyed technocrat with a doctorate in computer modeling. Even so, Salih is no stranger to the cutthroat arena of Baghdad politics. He was Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister under Prime Minister Ayed Allawi and, later, Minister of Planning. In 2009, he resigned from a second term as deputy prime minister, this time under Maliki, to become the head of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) which governs Iraq's roughly four million ethnic Kurds. Salih spoke with TIME's Charles McDermid on two occasions about the new government, old rivalries and the future of Iraq. Excerpts from the interviews.

TIME: What does mean to be Kurdish?

Salih: I think the view of the new generation might be different, but to my generation being Kurdish means standing up to genocide, ethnic cleansing and the denial of identity. You feel Kurdish when you are told you're not. I look around at other peoples and they have their own state, their own flag, their own seat at the UN. I ask, "why not me?" It's because I am Kurdish.

Do the Kurds in Iraq want independence?

Yes. Every Kurd dreams of indepen-



Prime Minister Barham Salih of Iraq's Kurdistan region

dence. But life is not about what you want; it's about doing what you can do with what you have. I believe we made the right choice to work for a democratic and federal Iraq — one that guarantees Kurdish identity. Had we pursued our own state it could have been an arduous journey with uncertain consequences. Working for a federal Iraq could have more tangible gains, and I genuinely believe most of the Kurdish people are with us. We have to see if Iraq ends up being truly democratic and federal.

How long, in your opinion, before a new central government is formed in Baghdad? I don't know, but I hope not long. This has gone on for far too long — while the country is plagued by violence and collapse of basic services. It is embarrassing and shameful.

When you went to Baghdad to meet with Prime Minister Maliki, were you carrying any specific demands from the KRG, in exchange for supporting him?

I did meet with Prime Minister Maliki. Our conversation was informal, and as expected government formation was the main focus. While affirming the need to address the Kurdish proposals, I emphasized the imperative of an inclusive government and a real power-sharing arrangement among the main political blocks.

How did Muqtada al-Sadr's recent backing of Maliki affect the Kurds position with regards to their role in the next government?

Regardless, we are seeking guarantees that new government is bound by the constitution and based on rule

of law. We must be an integral part of decision making; we cannot afford to allow any single group or person to hijack the government. We will insist on collective leadership and cabinet government.

Are there fears in Baghdad of a Sunni backlash for what appears to be another Shi'ite-Kurd government?

Iraq's stability is contingent upon a meaningful power-sharing arrangement among the main Iraqi constituencies. Excluding the Sunnis will have serious ramifications to the security dynamics and could well take us back to the sectarian conflict.

Is the Kurdistan Regional Government seeking any concession on the disputed areas, namely the control of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk?

We insist the new government discharge its constitutional obligations by reversing the ethnic cleansing that the Saddam regime pursued in Kirkuk. You may call it concessions, but I call it applying the constitution and redressing the injustice afflicted against the inhabitants of these areas.

Oil has been a bone of contention between the KRG and central government. Was oil sharing or smuggling discussed, or any mention of the impending oil revenue law [to disburse profits among Iraq's various regions and ethnicities] that has been stuck in parliament for some time?

Iraq is losing badly needed revenues because of a failed oil policy. The new government must be committed to adopting the oil and revenue sharing laws soon to regulate the oil sector in the whole country. We have taken a series of measures to curb any illegal trading in oil — but this also needs the cooperation from Baghdad to ensure this is applied across all the borders of Iraq, and not just in Kurdistan. We are committed to working with Baghdad on these issues — but on the premise of respecting our constitutional rights that allow us to develop our natural resources.

AP Associated Press

Turkey's Kurds: a peace role for rebel chief?

ISTANBUL –October 8, 2010

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA, Associated Press Writer

MANIAC, terrorist, baby-killer, traitor. The Turkish state vilified Abdullah Ocalan, the imprisoned chief of Kurdish rebels, for his deadly attacks on soldiers and civilians in the 1990s. Today, it is a crime to praise him. Now come reports that Turkish officials have held secretive talks with Ocalan, possibly in recognition that he cannot be ignored in any deal to end the long conflict.

Turkey says it does not negotiate with illegal groups, which would confer political legitimacy on them, but acknowledges that intelligence agents have talked to Ocalan on his prison island for years. Ocalan does not run rebel operations, but he retains considerable sway over militants who have largely preserved the personality cult with which he imposed control as a free man.

Reports of Ocalan's most recent dialogue with his captors coincide with a government campaign to secure peace and appear to have a broader scope than much of the contact since his arrest in 1999. It is a sensitive undertaking, but the government is buoyant after passage of constitutional amendments in a Sept. 12 referendum that was seen as a vote of confidence on its stewardship.

"Within the past two months, there have been contacts on Imrali island that were carried out in the name of the state and within the government's knowledge," said Dogan Erbas, Ocalan's lawyer.

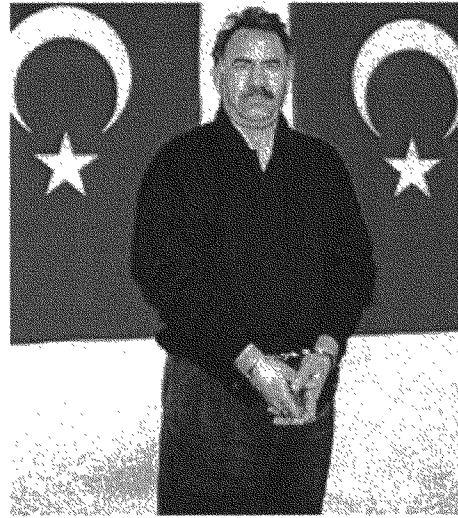
"We cannot say that the dialogue is ongoing or that it yielded extensive results. I do not think that we have reached the stage of negotiations. It is too early to say that the peace process has begun," Erbas said.

The fighting, though diminished in intensity, is a drag on Turkey's evolution as a regional power and its aim to join the European Union. The grievances of its ethnic Kurd minority imply that a country with deep fissures is a flawed model or voice for its neighbors.

Tens of thousands, many of them civilians, have died since the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party took up arms in 1984; rebels this year have killed at least 93 people, mostly soldiers, according to the military.

John Bew, co-author of "Talking to Terrorists: Making Peace in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country," said there was good reason to be skeptical about the talks with Ocalan and he drew a distinction between exploratory contact and direct negotiations. The political impact from revelations of secret talks between a government and an armed group can also affect the process, he said.

According to Erbas, Ocalan's proposals for the resolution of the conflict were discussed in recent meetings. Those have included autonomy, an option rejected by Turkey, and more cultural and economic rights for Kurds who comprise up to 20 percent of the country's 75 million people. The rebel force, known by its Kurdish acronym PKK, has at least 5,000 fighters, and Turkey alleges that the main Kurdish political group, the Peace and Democracy Party, acts as the political wing for militants whose commanders are based in northern Iraq.



AP – FILE - In this Feb.18, 1999 file photo provided by the Turkish Intelligence Service, Kurdish rebel leader ...

The Kurdish party denies that, but maintains Ocalan, 62, must be involved in any solution. Though many Kurds view his bloody record with distaste, he is an idol to young men who illegally brandish his image and chant his name during periodic protests in Kurdish areas.

A rebel statement sent to media by email on Oct. 1 referred to "the state's development of dialogue" with Ocalan as well as the "increasing quality" of the communication. It said the dialogue prompted Ocalan, who sends messages through his lawyers, to recommend an extension of the PKK's unilateral cease-fire, which was duly extended until the end of October.

In a Sept. 29 statement, rebels quoted Ocalan as predicting the creation of parliamentary commissions to prepare a new constitution and to investigate human rights abuses after Turkey holds elections next year.

Opposition lawmakers said a senior official from Turkey's National Intelligence Organization held a meeting with Ocalan in the summer, but Turkey has not confirmed the allegation. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said last month that the government has no "fantasy" about talking to "the terrorist organization" — the official term for the PKK — but he and other leaders have said many channels are possible on the long road to peace.

"The method is up to the experts," President Abdullah Gul said last month in response to a Turkish journalist's question about reports of government contacts with Ocalan. "How it is done, what needs to be done. The experts are at times the commanders, the security forces. At times it is the intelligence officers, at times it is economic, socio-cultural activities."

Roj Welat, a PKK spokesman in northern Iraq, said by telephone that Ocalan is the group's representative in any talks with the Turkish government. The group is not entirely cohesive, and some militants are believed to have conducted attacks without approval from the command. State arrests and prosecutions of Kurdish activists and politicians have also contributed to the fragility of settlement efforts.

The turmoil goes back to the 1923 foundation of modern Turkey, when Kurds were thwarted in their aim to become independent. Today's Islamic-oriented government, which won election after the worst rebel violence and stripped the military of political clout as part of a reform process, says force alone is not a solution.

"In order to solve the Kurdish problem in a permanent manner, one needs to be in dialogue with everyone," said Cengiz Aktar, a political science professor at Bahcesehir University in Istanbul. "Since the election is only eight months away, these talks will probably continue below the surface so as not spark any controversy."

Thank Goodness for Iraq's Census Disaster

It's been postponed three times due to tension over disputed territories in the north. But unlike most of Iraq's bureaucratic messes, this one could save lives.

BY JOOST HILTERMANN
Foreign Policy

One of the silent victims of Iraq's political paralysis has been the country's long-delayed census. On Oct. 3, the census was postponed for the third time since 2007, when the cabinet pushed it back from Oct. 24 to Dec. 5. The main reason for the latest delay was the concern of some Iraqi politicians, neighboring states such as Turkey, and the United States that going ahead with the census now could just foment unrest in the disputed territories that border the federal Kurdistan region in northern Iraq.

Given the current configuration of the census, however, a delay is not such a bad thing. If anything, Iraq's caretaker government should give serious consideration to delaying the census even further, until the new government can correct its flaws and turn it into something that will be truly useful for the whole country.

The Iraqi census stands to play a critical role in the country's development. Its data will help in drawing electoral districts, allocating funds, projecting future population growth, and planning education, public health, housing, transportation, and other essential elements of a well-regulated state. Particularly in Iraq, which has witnessed several false starts in reconstruction following the 2003 invasion, having accurate socioeconomic data will be indispensable to sound economic planning.

But there's reason to believe that this census, as it is currently designed, will polarize rather than unify Iraqi society. The problem lies in a question that asks Iraqis to define their ethnicity, aiming to get a sense of how big the country's various ethnic groups are. Although such a question will no doubt provide interesting information for academics and analysts, it is not in Iraq's national interest and risks destabilizing some of Iraq's most sensitive hot spots.



The ethnicity question is particularly likely to inflame passions in areas that Kurdish leaders have said they want to incorporate into the federal Kurdistan region in northern Iraq. Along with Kurds, these areas are home to a diverse population of Arabs, Turkmens, and smaller minorities, all of which have been engaged in a tense standoff over Kurdish aspirations, which they resist almost unanimously. The situation holds the potential for violent conflict. Several incidents in these disputed areas over the past two years required U.S. commanders to establish joint military checkpoints along the so-called trigger line dividing Iraqi Army troops from Kurdish regional guards. Finding a negotiated solution to the tug of war over these areas, with the city of Kirkuk at their center, will be critical for Iraq's future.

All sides see the census's ethnicity question as a proto-referendum on these areas status. Everyone assumes that in a referendum Kurds would vote in favor of accession to the Kurdistan region while the vast majority of non-Kurds would vote against. If the population in a given area is found to be majority Kurdish, the political case for linking this area to the Kurdistan region will be greatly strengthened - regardless of the wishes of the area's non-Kurdish population, whatever its size. The census, in

other words, would increase the momentum toward a non-negotiated solution of these areas' status via an ethnically driven, zero-sum-game plebiscite. Going forward with the ethnicity question intact, then, would almost certainly lead to an Arab and Turkmen boycott, as well as popular protests in disputed territories, likely culminating in violence.

Some of the analysts most familiar with the tensions along the Arab-Kurdish fault line have also lent their support to efforts to cut the ethnicity question from the census. Emma Sky, who served for three years as a senior political advisor to Gen. Ray Odierno, the former U.S. commander in Iraq, argues that asking the citizens of Kirkuk and other disputed areas will only increase the divisions among the population.

"Many of the people have intermarried over generations and speak each other's languages. Including the ethnicity question in the census will force people to identify themselves in narrow terms when they often have many different aspects to their identity," she said. "You are making people define themselves in a way that is not conducive to the healing process at a time when there is a desperate need to focus on issues which bring people together."

In Iraq, the census is designed, pre-

pared, and implemented by the Ministry of Planning and carried out by schoolteachers. They, as well as members of the security forces, have already received the census form for them to fill out individually and soon will be given the forms for the general population. Clearly, the train has been set in motion. It is not too late, however, to slow it down or put it on a slightly different track.

As a first step, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's caretaker government should delay the census until the new government comes to power, lest ethnic conflict erupt during troubled negotiations over government formation. The tensions created by the census could also represent the breaking point for former interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's al-Iraqiya list, which won a

plurality of seats in the new parliament, as many of its Sunni Arab members hail from precisely these disputed areas. Al-Iraqiya, or at least a significant number of its most prominent Sunni leaders, might turn their backs on the political process altogether.

Moreover, if a U.N. compromise proposal over the ethnicity question, currently under discussion by Iraqi political leaders, should fail, the Maliki government should remove that question from the census. It should also remove for now a question that inquires about the respondents' mother tongue. Although this question could provide useful information for the education system, it will also be interpreted as using the same ethnic logic and thus will have the same pernicious effect.

The challenge of launching negotiations over Kirkuk and the other disputed areas that produce a final, peaceful, and durable status settlement still remains. Kurdish leaders have been rightly impatient over lack of progress. The new Iraqi government, with the full support of the international community and with the United Nations as a facilitator, should make a strong commitment to getting talks under way. A referendum, as outlined in the Iraqi Constitution, should only be held based on agreement reached between political leaders. Ethnically driven shortcuts, which the format of the census currently promotes, will only undermine this effort -- and endanger Iraq's fragile stability.

Kurdish Bloc in Baghdad May Split Wednesday

By RUDAW

ERBIL, Iraqi Kurdistan: Iraqi Kurdish opposition parties have threatened to withdraw from the united bloc of the Kurdish parties in Baghdad, if the two ruling parties pass an election draft law that would allow the regional government to monitor Kurdistan elections independent of the federal government.

The lawmakers of Gorran (Change), which is the major opposition party in the northern region of Iraq, have been in a tough battle here with the parliamentarians from the coalition of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) over a possible bill that would the ruling parties to have more control over the elections.

They say the prospective law would help the KDP and PUK to do more "fraud and forgery" in the provincial elections expected to be held in March.

"We are suspicious about the commission that the KDP and PUK want to hastily create. They want to set up a commission dominated by their own men," said Osman Bani Marani, a senior leader of the Gorran. "We will not vote for it."

On Saturday afternoon, Gorran had a meeting with other two Islamic opposition parties to discuss a possible withdrawal from the Kurdistan Alliance, a coalition that is made up of all Kurdish parties including ruling and opposition ones in the Iraqi Parliament.

The meeting led to a walkout by the legislators of the three opposition parties



The lawmakers of the opposition party, Gorran, walked out from one of the sessions of the Kurdistan Parliament. ---
--Photo by Rudaw.

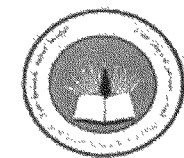
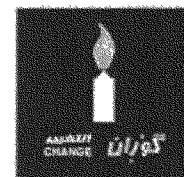
from a session of the regional parliament that was held on Sunday to pass the drafted bill. But it was not approved and the session was delayed for Wednesday.

"Wednesday's session will be decisive," said Aram Qadir, a member of parliament and head of the legislators of the Kurdistan Islamic Group. "If they pass the bill in our absence, we will declare independence from the Kurdistan Alliance."

Salahuddin Babakir, spokesman for the Kurdistan Islamic Union, said that such a bill should not be approved by a simple majority but rather by a two-third majority which the two ruling lack.

The possible separation of the opposition parties from a united Kurdish bloc could have great consequences not only for Kurdistan but for the whole Iraqi political process.

It would split Kurdish view into at least two probably opposing fronts in the discussions over the formation of a new government in an already months-long stalemate.



The three opposition parties have 14 seats in the Iraqi parliament.

Sozan Khala Shihab, a PUK lawmaker and head of the KDP-PUK coalition in the region's parliament, said Sunday that they were still insistent to pass the law even if the opposition walkout.

Shihab said: "They just look for excuses. If not, why do they link a local matter with remaining in or withdrawing from the Kurdistan Alliance in Baghdad?"

LE FIGARO

13 Octobre 2010

Hakkari, fief kurde de Turquie, sous la coupe du PKK

Le bastion de la guérilla réclame des négociations avec le gouvernement.

Envoyée spéciale à Hakkari
Par Laure Marchand

Les montagnes majestueuses et les eaux généreuses de la rivière feraient le bonheur des randonneurs. Le tourisme attendra. De loin, on dirait une gigantesque cordée. En ce petit matin de septembre, des dizaines d'hommes progressent vers un col lointain. Ce sont des militaires qui partent «en opération antiterroriste» - selon la terminologie en vigueur en Turquie -, traquer les rebelles du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) cachés dans les hauteurs. Banale scène de guerre dans la province la plus orientale de l'Irak et de l'Iran. Hakkari est le fief de la guérilla kurde en Turquie. «Les habitants d'ici donnent tout à l'organisation (PKK, NDLR) : leurs enfants, leur argent, leurs votes », résume un militant. Meurtrie par un quart de siècle de conflit, la région est aujourd'hui en état de quasi-insurrection et multiplie les signes d'autonomisation vis-à-vis de l'État.

Portraits d'Öcalan

Il y a quinze jours, un minibus a sauté sur une mine antichar, à la sortie d'un village. Neuf passagers sont morts. Ankara a aussitôt accusé la guérilla, qui a nié. Cette mise en cause a fait monter d'un cran le ressentiment contre le pouvoir

central. «Ça vient de l'oppressé, on veut une vraie enquête», lance Iskender Gör, qui a perdu un frère de 33 ans dans ce carnage. Le salon familial est rempli du matin au soir de voisins venus présenter leurs condoléances. Personne ne doute que l'attentat est l'œuvre d'un groupe proche de la «contre-guérilla», afin de «provoquer le chaos». Le mois de septembre avait déjà été rythmé par les enterrements : quelques jours auparavant, neuf combattants kurdes ont été tués par l'armée. À Hakkari, les funérailles se sont transformées en manifestation pro-guérilla. 50.000 personnes ont suivi le cercueil de Cesur, 22 ans. Des adolescents encagoulés criaient vengeance. La foule brandissait des portraits d'Abdullah Öcalan, le leader emprisonné du PKK. «Un tel soutien pour la lutte des Kurdes montre que Cesur n'est pas parti dans la montagne pour rien », se console Selman, son père, les traits tirés par la douleur.

Un bâtiment à la couleur indéterminée dans une ruelle défoncée : le local du Parti pour la paix et la démocratie (BDP), la vitrine légale du PKK, ressemble à celui d'une association de quartier. Son allure extérieure est inversement proportionnelle à son influence. «Le gouvernement doit comprendre le message : il sera obligé d'accepter de négocier avec notre parti, il n'y a pas d'autre voie pour la paix, assène Orhan Koparan, le tout nouveau président de la pro-



Il y a quinze jours, dans un attentat attribué au PKK par Ankara, un minibus a sauté sur une mine antichar, à la sortie d'un village dans la province d'Hakkari, tuant neuf passagers.

vince - le précédent est derrière les barreaux, accusé d'appartenance à l'organisation rebelle. À cause de la guerre, des enfants en prison, des meurtres, des droits non reconnus, notre société en est arrivée à un tel point qu'elle est entièrement derrière nous.» À Hakkari, le 12 septembre dernier, 93 % des électeurs ont suivi les consignes du BDP et ont boycotté le référendum sur la Constitution.

L'appel à ne pas envoyer ses enfants dans les écoles turques pour réclamer un enseignement dans la «langue maternelle», le kurde a eu encore plus de succès. Les parents ont suivi les consignes du parti. Omniprésente, la formation pro-kurde a mis en place une justice parallèle et propose même ses propres imams. «Son emprise tourne à l'autoritarisme, l'intolérance pour les voix discordantes augmente », s'inquiète un ancien, sous couvert d'anonymat.

La révolte contre l'État et la perte de confiance envers les institutions sont si profondes qu'on la retrouve même au siège local du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP), la formation islamo-conservatrice au pouvoir. On y reconnaît qu'il est désormais bien difficile de faire la promotion du gouvernement et de son «ouverture démocratique» envers les Kurdes promise l'an dernier. Le bâtiment est mal placé, à un jet de pierre de la rue principale d'Hakkari. Depuis des mois, les jeunes y affrontent, avec la régularité d'un métronome, les forces de l'ordre, nourrissant «l'Intifada kurde». «La Turquie doit comprendre la colère et la douleur des gens, ce sont les vraies victimes de la guerre, leurs villages ont été rasés », y dit-on. «Le PKK est l'enfant de cette société, le BDP est son représentant légal au Parlement, les autres partis turcs doivent accepter de s'asseoir autour de la table avec eux.»



TURQUIE: DEUX SOLDATS ET UN REBELLES KURDE TUÉS LORS DE COMBATS DANS L'EST

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 13 octobre 2010 (AFP)

DEUX SOLDATS turcs et un rebelle kurde ont été tués mercredi lors de combats dans l'est de la Turquie, ont affirmé des sources locales de sécurité.

L'accrochage entre un groupe de rebelles du parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et une unité de militaires qui effectuait une opération DE ratissage est survenu dans une zone rurale proche de la localité d'Ovacik, dans la province de

Tunceli, selon ces sources.

Un soldat a également été blessé, ont-elles indiqué, précisant que les opérations de l'armée se poursuivaient dans la région.

L'incident survient alors que le PKK applique depuis août une trêve unilatérale, affirmant vouloir établir la "confiance" en vue d'un règlement du conflit kurde.

Le Parlement turc a cependant prolongé mardi d'un an le mandat permettant au gouvernement d'ordonner des frappes militaires contre les camps du PKK situés au Kurdistan irakien.

L'armée turque, sur la base de renseignements fournis par les Etats-Unis, a mené depuis décembre 2007 des raids aériens et des opérations terrestres contre les rebelles kurdes.

Selon Ankara, quelque 2.000 rebelles du PKK sont installés au Kurdistan irakien, une région autonome qu'ils utilisent comme base pour des attaques sur le territoire turc.

Le Monde
16 octobre 2010

La Turquie veut accroître le commerce avec l'Iran, malgré les pressions internationales

Istanbul
Correspondance

Nous devrions considérer la Turquie et l'Iran comme si c'était la France et l'Allemagne», estime Samet Inanir, un membre du conseil pour les relations économiques extérieures (DEIK), qui porte la voix des milieux d'affaires turcs. En dépit des pressions internationales pour réduire les relations commerciales avec l'Iran, soupçonné de développer un programme nucléaire militaire, le gouvernement, d'Ankara veut accroître la coopération avec son voisin oriental, avec pour but de tripler le volume des échanges, de 2,16 milliards d'euros à 6,5 milliards d'ici à 2015.

«L'Iran est un partenaire commercial naturel pour nous, a réagi le président du DEIK, Haluk Dinçer. Un embargo ne pourra jamais être une solution.» Le président de la République, Abdullah Gül, a lui aussi encouragé les enseignements nationaux à investir en Iran.

Pour le moment, les exportations iraniennes, principalement du gaz naturel, constituent 75% des échanges entre les deux pays. L'Iran fournit un tiers des ressources énergétiques de la Turquie. Mais les compagnies turques veulent pouvoir s'étendre sur le marché iranien et s'intéressent de près

aux séries de privatisations programmées par Téhéran.

Certains commencent pourtant à souffrir des menaces américaines de sanctions, affirme le DEIK. Tüpras, spécialisé dans la raffinerie de produits pétroliers et qui exportait de l'essence vers l'Iran, a ainsi dû cesser de le faire, comme l'a annoncé sa direction en septembre. Les contrats ont été révoqués.

Tüpras figurait sur une liste du département d'Etat américain avec une douzaine d'autres compagnies étrangères menacées de mesures de rétorsion commerciales par Washington. «C'est la propre décision de Tüpras, a concédé le ministre de l'énergie, Taner Yildiz, embarrassé. Le secteur privé peut continuer à faire du commerce ou non. La Turquie n'a aucune sanction ou remarque à apporter.»

Les ministres du gouvernement insistent sur le fait que la Turquie se conformera sans rechigner aux décisions des Nations unies, qui imposent un embargo sur les ventes d'armes à l'Iran. «En revanche, les sanctions supplémentaires décrétées unilatéralement par les Etats-Unis ou par les pays européens ne nous engagent pas», a martelé le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Au contraire, M. Erdogan veut renforcer le partenariat commer-

cial avec son voisin perse. Quelque 1300 sociétés iraniennes sont déjà présentes en Turquie et tous deux étudient le moyen de lever les barrières douanières. Une zone franche, à la frontière entre les deux pays, doit voir le jour.

Les deux pays étudient le moyen de lever les barrières douanières. Une zone franche doit voir le jour à la frontière

La Turquie dément tout revirement d'alliances, mais entend défendre ses propres intérêts commerciaux : les échanges avec l'Iran, mais aussi la Russie ou la Chine, se multiplient. En accueillant le premier ministre chinois, Wen Jiabao, samedi, M. Erdogan a annoncé vouloir tripler les échanges avec Pékin d'ici à 2015.

Plusieurs compagnies turques

sont sous surveillance américaine, soupçonnées d'éventuels liens avec l'Iran. Le secteur bancaire a été averti en septembre. Selon un rapport confidentiel publié par Reuters, «la Turquie offre à l'Iran une porte d'entrée vers le système financier européen», en abritant des avoirs iraniens dans certaines de ses banques.

Les responsables turcs du secteur ont démenti. «Le risque est trop grand, on ne peut pas jouer avec le feu, les marchés sont contrôlés», estimait fin septembre Jean Lemierre, ancien patron de la Banque européenne de reconstruction et de développement (BERD) et conseiller de BNP Paribas, qui contrôle la Türk Ekonomi Bankasi.

Les grandes banques privées, telles que Garanti, détenue à 21% par General Electric, ou Akbank, ont développé des partenariats avec les Etats-Unis. Le géant turc de la téléphonie, Turkcell, est coté à la Bourse de New York. La plupart des grands groupes privés se montrent donc réticents à s'aventurer en Iran. ■

Guillaume Perrier

L'économie iranienne menacée d'« effondrement »

Les sanctions de l'ONU, des Etats-Unis et de l'Union européenne à l'encontre de l'Iran pourraient aboutir à «un effondrement économique d'ici à moins d'un an» si des «mesures drastiques» ne sont pas prises par le régime. Ce sont les conclusions d'un rapport confidentiel adressé au Guide suprême, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, et révélé mardi 12 octobre par Les Echos. Rédigé par des économistes de la banque centrale iranienne et des ministères de l'économie et du pétrole, le rapport indique entre autres que le secteur pétrolier, qui constitue les deux tiers des recettes de l'Etat, souffre du départ des groupes occidentaux. La production est passée

de 4,2 millions de barils par jour mi-2009 à 3,5 millions cet été. Plusieurs grands industriels ont suspendu leurs activités dans le pays (Thyssen, Toyota, Daimler, Hewlett-Packard...), tout comme les banques occidentales et des Emirats arabes unis. Le rapport chiffre les conséquences potentielles des sanctions à plusieurs dizaines de milliards de dollars en année pleine et recommande de «reconvertir d'urgence le commerce extérieur» vers la Chine, la Russie et l'Inde, «d'augmenter les réserves en produits alimentaires et carburant» et de «convertir dans d'autres monnaies» les réserves de la banque centrale iranienne en dollars et en euros.

A 4 km d'Israël, M. Ahmadinejad prédit la disparition des « sionistes »



Le président iranien Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a prédit, jeudi 14 octobre que «les sionistes allaient disparaître», sous les applaudissements de milliers de chiites partisans du Hezbollah au stade de Bint Jbeil, à quatre kilomètres de la frontière avec Israël, lors d'un déplacement très symbolique dans le sud du Liban. Ce déplacement était le moment fort de la visite de M. Ahmadinejad qui ne s'était jamais rendu aussi près d'Israël, physiquement. Cette visite est critiquée par la majorité parlementaire pro-occidentale libanaise, de même que par les Etats-Unis et Israël qui accusent l'Iran d'armer le Hezbollah, mouvement politique et militaire le plus puissant du pays. Dans la soirée, M. Ahmadinejad s'est rendu à Cana, village «martyr» cible de raids israéliens qui ont tué 105 civils en 1996 et 29 personnes, dont 16 enfants, en 2006. (PHOTO AP)

U.S. pushes Iraqi deal to sideline enemy

WASHINGTON

Coalition government, despite faults, would be intended to bar Sadrists

BY THOM SHANKER
AND STEVEN LEE MYERS

Faced with a shifting political landscape in Iraq after months of impasse, the Obama administration has intensified pressure on the country's political leaders to form a broad coalition government that, while unwieldy, would marginalize a fiercely anti-American party now poised to wield more influence than ever.

The administration has sought and received assurances that Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki will not offer the followers of the Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr positions in charge of Iraq's security forces in exchange for supporting his bid for a second term in office, according to officials familiar with continuing negotiations.

Mr. Sadr's followers for years fought American and Iraqi troops in Baghdad and elsewhere, and while they have embraced the political process, they remain hostile to an enduring American role in Iraq.

The Sadrists' surprising support of Mr. Maliki, only weeks after opposing his nomination, raised alarms in Washington and gave new urgency to the efforts to persuade Mr. Maliki to include the country's other main factions in a new government.

Ambassador James F. Jeffrey told reporters in Baghdad last week: "The problem that we see and that others see here — and I want to underline others see here — is that there is not clarity on whether the Sadrist movement is a political movement or it is an armed militia which carries out political objectives through violent means. And a democracy can't tolerate that."

American officials have grown increasingly impatient with Iraq's political impasse, which has stalled the election of a new prime minister and the formation of a new government more than seven months after the country's parliamentary elections.

The delay has affected much of the American strategy in Iraq — from trade deals to talks over what, if any, military role the United States will have after a deadline to remove the remaining 50,000 American troops by the end of 2011.

The Sadrists vehemently oppose any long-term American military relationship with Iraq. And they have complained about the U.S. pressure to form



Supporters of the Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr rallying in the Sadr City district of Baghdad to endorse his political alliance with Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki.

a broader alliance that would diminish their role.

In Washington, administration officials are also resisting efforts by Congress to cut \$1.5 billion from the State Department's budget for operations in Iraq.

"I worry that having invested hundreds of billions of dollars and thousands of lives in Iraq — that now that we're at the endgame — we'll stint on the resources that are needed," Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates told an audience at Duke University.

Administration officials said the budget cuts had already prompted the State Department to trim its program for training Iraqi police officers and restrict its diplomatic presence outside of Baghdad.

In Baghdad and in Washington, American officials were taken by surprise when the Sadrists joined Mr. Maliki's coalition on Oct. 1 to nominate him as prime minister. That put Mr. Maliki in reach of a majority of seats in a new 325-member Parliament, raising fears that a Shiite-dominated majority, potentially beholden to Iran, would alienate the country's Sunnis.

The U.S. push for a broader coalition was also seen as an effort to check the influence of Iran, which favors a Shiite-led government. Reflecting the administration's newest analysis, senior officials say they believe that the Iraqis have developed what one called "a healthy sense of sovereignty" to balance their powerful neighbors, and are increasingly reluctant to accept outside

meddling, including from Iran.

Most Sunnis voted for a coalition called Iraqiya, led by Ayad Allawi, a secular Shiite who served as an interim prime minister in 2004. Mr. Allawi's coalition narrowly defeated Mr. Maliki's — winning 91 seats to 89 — but has been unable to build a broader coalition. Mr. Allawi continues to insist that he has the right to form a governing coalition.

The Obama administration has not publicly supported any candidate for prime minister, but U.S. officials, led by Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., have pressed the Iraqis to consider a power-

"There is not clarity on whether the Sadrist movement is a political movement or it is an armed militia."

sharing arrangement that would return Mr. Maliki to office but in a coalition that would curb his powers.

Mr. Maliki has said he does not support changing the constitutional powers to lessen the influence of the prime minister. But with his nomination by most Shiite lawmakers now in hand, he has indicated a greater willingness to accommodate Iraqiya in a new government, U.S. and Iraqi officials said.

One possible outcome would allow Mr. Allawi to become president, an important but less powerful post. That post has been held by Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, who has made clear his intention to stay.

Senior administration officials in Washington and Baghdad welcomed signs of movement after months of deadlock. Mr. Maliki and others have begun lobbying for support from the Kurds, who have a series of demands on disputed territories and control of oil in their semiautonomous northern region.

In recent days, Mr. Allawi and his supporters have sent mixed signals, first ruling out negotiations with Mr. Maliki, then suggesting they were open to his return as prime minister. Mr. Maliki told a group of tribal leaders on Saturday, "We want to form a government based on the national interest first of all, but one that achieves the principle of partnership without excluding anyone."

Senior administration officials expressed wary confidence that Iraq's deeply divided leaders understood the wisdom of a broad-based government that shared power among Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds, even if it would be less efficient than a government led by a more unified bloc of only Shiites.

"If a majority of each community is represented in the government, it makes it much less likely that Iraq would revert to sectarian violence or lurch into ethnic tension or ethnic violence," said Antony J. Blinken, national security adviser to Mr. Biden. "That's a principle that the Iraqis themselves recognize."

From the American perspective, a broader coalition would also limit the in-

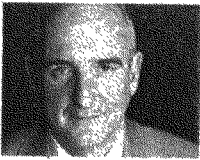
fluence of the Sadrists, who won 40 seats. American officials have urged Iraq's politicians to make sure that the numbers of a Sadr bloc within the overall majority are too small to bring down the government with threats of bolting the coalition.

So far, there has been only speculation about how Mr. Maliki would appoint ministers and other government officials, should he win the nomination. Much political bargaining remains ahead. The Sadrists are said to have asked Mr. Maliki for control of either the Defense Ministry or the Interior Ministry, both bases of considerable power and patronage.

Steven Lee Myers reported from Baghdad.

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
OCTOBER 12, 2010

Iran, the paper tiger



Roger Cohen

Ahmadinejad is odious, but not dangerous. He's all hat and no cattle.

GLOBALIST

LONDON I had breakfast last month in New York with the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Other journalists had lunch or dinner. Ahmadinejad's passion for the hidden Imam, whose imminent return he expects, is matched only by his passion for Western media.

At the time I chose not to write about the meeting. I was too disgusted — by the media merry-go-round, by more incendiary provocations from Ahmadinejad, and by the sterility of an Iran debate that turns in the tight circle formed by fear-mongering, ignorance and the ghastly stew of Western carrots and sticks.

Ahmadinejad is a one-trick pony. His thing is double standards. Ask about the Iranian nuclear program, he'll retort with Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal. Ask about Iran's economic difficulties, he'll see you with September 2008. Ask about rampant capital punishment, he'll raise you a Texas. Ask about Iranian lying, he'll counter with human rights and Abu Ghraib.

Not surprisingly, in Fareed Zakaria's "post-American world," he has an audience. He's adept enough, with a touch of Tony Curtis in "The Boston Strangler," switching personalities with eerie ease.

Throw in some headline-grabbing lunacy — 9/11 as self-inflicted, or the Holocaust as invention, or "Iran is the freest country in the world" — and you have a post-modern media star and villain.

And what do all his words amount to? I'd say not a whole lot beyond unnecessary misery for 71 million isolated Iranians. This guy is all hat and no cattle.

Ahmadinejad is odious but I don't think he's dangerous. Some people do

of course find him dangerous, especially in the Israel he gratuitously insults and threatens, and yet others — many more I'd say — find it convenient to find him dangerous.

The Iranian president is into his sixth year in office, the Islamic Republic is more divided than ever, Iranian youth have been brutalized, and there's a nuclear program that, a bit like the Middle East "peace process," goes on and on and on, defying definition even as it defies termination.

I read with interest in a recent piece by my colleagues John Markoff and David Sanger that "in the past year Israeli estimates of when Iran will have a nuclear weapon had been extended to 2014." Given that various Israeli leaders have predicted that Iran would have a bomb in 1999 or 2004 or just about every year since 2005, that's a decade and a half of the non-appearing wolf at the door.

Sure, such predications are necessarily haphazard, the Natanz centrifuges may now be Stuxnetted by computer worms, and Iranian scientists have resembled Iranian pistachios: up for sale. Still there is a dangerous pattern here of Israeli and U.S. alarmism.

Cool heads are needed. Untenable Nazi allusions, rampant in the case of

The Islamic Republic is devoted to a single goal: self-preservation.

Iran, demean victims of the Holocaust and lead to disastrous wars. A bloody war has been fought in Iran's western neighbor. So let's recall that Saddam Hussein told his captors he had cultivated nuclear ambiguity as a deterrent even though his program was precisely zilch.

And what of Iran's program? Iran remains a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors are at Natanz; the number of centrifuges being used to make low-enriched uranium (far from weapons grade) has dropped 23 percent since May 2009 and

production has stagnated; U.S. intelligence agencies hold that Iran has not made the decision to build a bomb; any "breakout" decision would be advertised because the I.A.E.A. would be thrown out; the time from "breakout" to deliverable weapon is significant.

I'm with Mark Fitzpatrick of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, who this year told the Washington

Post: "Iran will muddle along building its stockpile but never making a nuclear bomb because it knows that crossing that line would provoke an immediate military attack." The Islamic Republic is a study in muddle but lucid over a single goal: self-preservation.

So there's time. Yet the foreboding industry is in overdrive, with Jeffrey Goldberg of The Atlantic declaring that the Obama administration "knows it is a near-certainty that Israel will act against Iran soon if nothing or no one else stops the nuclear program" and setting "a better than 50 percent chance" Israel will strike by next July.

Michael Oren, the Israeli ambassador to the United States, used Yom Kippur to deliver a speech of ominous prophecy in synagogues, warning of the fateful choices presented Israel by "a radical, genocidal Iran." (Oren had less to say — and most of that dismissive — about direct Israeli-Palestinian peace talks inaugurated two weeks earlier with White House pomp and now all eady on hold.)

Yes, Ahmadinejad is the bogeyman from Central Casting. One of the things there's time for, if you're not playing games with the Iran specter, is a serious push for an Israeli-Palestinian breakthrough that would further undermine the Iranian president.

I don't expect that, however. And here are two more predictions: Obama won't attack Iran and nor will Israel, not by next July or ever. Iran is a paper tiger, a postmodern threat: It has many uses but a third Western war against a Muslim country is a bridge too far.

TURKEY, SYRIA: Former enemies find common ground on Kurdish rebels

Meris Lutz in Beirut

Turkey, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and an American ally, appears to be developing a synchronized security strategy with Syria, a partner of Iran and the Shiite militia Hezbollah, in a development that is likely to increase Western anxieties over Turkey's shift eastward.

Just a decade after Turkey and Syria nearly went to war over Syrian support for Kurdish militants, the two neighbors are working together to stamp out the most powerful rebel Kurd group, the Kurdish Workers Party, known by the Turkish acronym PKK.

On Monday, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was in Damascus to discuss a joint Syrian-Turkish security crackdown on the PKK, which maintains a strong presence in northern Syrian and southeastern Turkey. The Turkish press also reported on efforts to step up cooperation with Iraq and Iran in an effort to wipe out the PKK completely.

Even Syrian President Bashar Assad expressed surprise at the speed with which Turkish-Syrian relations have improved, according to an official Syrian report based on an interview the president gave last week to Arabic-language Turkish channel TRT TV.

"There is very great momentum and acceleration ... so we can say that yes, we expected this, but we're very glad that the time was less than expected," Assad said.

Back in July, Turkish media reported that Syria had arrested over 400 Kurds thought to have links to the PKK, which is on both the American and European Union's list of terrorist organizations.

The PKK has been officially maintaining a unilateral cease-fire since September, but the Turkish govern-



Syrian President Bashar Assad and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Damascus on Monday. Credit: Syrian Arab News Agency

ment says it will continue operations against the group. Doing so requires extending a Turkish parliamentary mandate to continue cross-border raids on PKK sites in Iraq's northern Kurdish region, a strategy that has caused tension between Turkey and the semi-autonomous government in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The ancestral homeland of the Kurds stretches from southeast Turkey through Syria and Iraq to northwest Iran. Most Kurds consider themselves ethnically distinct from the majority populations of those countries and live with varying degrees of tension with the ruling governments.

The PKK was established in 1978 as a Kurdish nationalist party that drew heavily from revolutionary socialist ideology. From the early 1980s until the late 1990s, Syria allowed the PKK to establish a base of operations in the north of the country, but eventually ended its support for the group under Turkish pressure. Since then, Damascus has become increasingly suspicious of its Kurdish minority, cracking down violently on expressions of Kurdish identity.

Meanwhile, trade, tourism and politics have brought Turkey and Syria even closer. The two countries

have signed a number of trade agreements, done away with visa requirements, and have both been known to seek political gains by playing East and West against each other.

Assad has credited Turkey's support for Syria despite Western hostility for the rapprochement, in addition to historical and cultural ties.

Turkey, which has long sought membership in the European Union, also benefits from showing the West that it can find other friends, thank you very much. A recent article in the Israeli press voiced anxieties over Turkey's ties with China and Iran, two allies of Syria.

"When a number of countries were attempting to isolate Syria ... most of these countries were participating in this isolation in fear of or in compliance with external pressure ... but Turkey maintained [steady relations with Syria]," Assad told TRT.

"We move towards any people that proved their independence and motivated their state to be independent like the Turkish people," he added. "I believe that these are the main factors that led to this fast launch in relations."



October 10, 2010

Iraq's Kurdish Alliance Continues Coalition

BAGHDAD -- A top Iraqi Kurdish politician says the Kurds will join forces with whichever national political bloc proves "most responsive" to their demands, RFE/RL's Radio Free Iraq (RFI) reports.

Adel Barwari, a leading member of the Kurdistan Alliance, told RFI that former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's Al-Iraqiyah list is the furthest from meeting these demands, while current Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's State of Law (SoL) bloc is the most accommodating.

He added that out of 19 demands presented by the Kurds to the major factions, the SoL has already agreed to 17, and the remaining two are being negotiated.

Barwari said the two demands still under discussion are Article 140 of the constitution providing for resolving the issue of oil-rich, multiethnic Kirkuk and other disputed areas, and the national census.

Meanwhile, Muhammad al-Bayati, a leading member of the Shi'ite Supreme Islamic Council of Iraq (SICI), told RFI that while the SICI may be opposed to nominating al-Maliki for a second term, they will remain a member of the National Alliance with SoL, the second major Shi'ite bloc.

He said the SICI will support whichever prime ministerial candidate wins a majority of votes in parliament when it convenes.

The March 7 parliamentary elections were inconclusive, with Al-Iraqiyah,



SoL, and the Iraqi National Alliance winning 91, 89, and 70 seats, respectively, in the 325-seat parliament.

The Kurdish factions have 57 seats between them, including 43 held by the Kurdistan Alliance that comprises the two major Kurdish parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan led by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party led by the Kurdish region's president, Masud Barzani.

San Francisco Chronicle OCTOBER 14, 2010

Ammo dump blast kills 18 of Iran's elite force

Tehran -Ali Akbar Dareini, Associated Press

Iran on Wednesday said 18 members of the powerful Revolutionary Guard were killed in an explosion that struck the force's base in the country's west a day earlier.

The state IRNA news agency said 14 other Guard troops were wounded in Tuesday's blast in the city of Khoramabad, about 300 miles southwest of the capital, Tehran. The injured were taken to hospitals in Khoramabad.

The report said the blast was caused by a fire that had reached the ammunition storage area, but there was no word on what had ignited the blaze. In their first reports of the blast late Tuesday, most Iranian media said the explosion was an accident.

Although Khoramabad has not seen violence recently, it is geographically close to Kurdish-populated areas that have been the scene in recent months of several attacks by Kurds disgruntled with the central government.

Iran is battling armed militant and separatist movements in the remote southeast along the border with Pakistan and in the far northwest along the border with Iraq.

On Sept. 12, a blast at a military parade in Mahabad, near Iraq, killed 12 people and prompted a cross-border retaliatory raid by Iranian forces. They blamed the attack on Kurdish separatists and followers of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Tehran has accused the United States and Britain of provoking ethnic unrest to undermine Iran's security, charges both Washington and London have denied.

The Guard - Iran's most powerful military force, created after the 1979 Islamic Revolution as an ideological bulwark to defend the clerical rule - has been at the helm of the government's efforts to battle ethnic and religious insurgencies, as

well as opposition groups.

Under President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Guard has expanded into a vast military-economic conglomerate with growing political ambitions. It is widely thought to have been instrumental in the violent crackdown on Iran's political opposition after last year's disputed presidential election and to be leading Iran's nuclear program. Its economic and political



Revolutionary Guard is the Iran government's arm for suppressing opposition.

power extends to virtually every aspect of life in Iran.

The force has been targeted by the latest U.N. sanctions imposed on Iran over its refusal to halt nuclear enrichment - a program the West fears could lead to an atomic weapon. Iran denies ambitions to build nuclear weapons, and insists its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only, such as electricity generation.

The Guard has had large number of casualties in the past.

Last October, a suicide bomber killed at least 42 people, including five senior Guard commanders and more than a dozen other troops, near the Pakistani border in the heartland of a potentially escalating Sunni insurgency. It was the most high-profile strike against the force in the outlaw region of armed tribal groups, drug smugglers and Sunni rebels known as Jundallah, or Soldiers of God.



France opens research institute in Erbil Citadel

KRG.org 12 October 2010

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) – Prime Minister Barham Salih and France’s Ambassador to Iraq today opened a French centre for research inside Erbil Citadel, the world’s oldest continuously inhabited settlement.

As well as launching the Iraq office of l’Institut Francais du Proche-Orient (IFPO - the French Institute for the Near East), Prime Minister Salih and Ambassador Boris Bouillon also launched the restoration of two historic houses in the citadel, which is estimated to be more than 7,000 years old.

In his speech, Prime Minister Salih said, “We are privileged to be here in the shadow of living history. This project affirms the relationship between France and the Kurdistan Regional Government [KRG] as part of Iraq, under the framework agreement signed this year by President Masoud Barzani.”

He added, “France has always been a beacon of hope and a symbol of liberty. Engagement with the French government and French companies is important for the Kurdistan Region and all Iraq. This kind of project brings out the best in our cultures. I wish you all success.”

France and the KRG decided to open



the centre following President Barzani’s visit to Paris in June, when he met President Sarkozy and a protocol agreement was signed which created a framework for partnerships in several fields.

Ambassador Bouillon said that this is a concrete step towards building ever stronger relations between France and Iraq, which already have historic ties.

Lafarge, a French multinational cement company, is contributing 250,000 euros towards the restoration of the two houses, which will be undertaken by IFPO, IFPO promotes academic and scientific links between France and the Middle East.

Mr Bruno Laffont, Chief Executive Officer of Lafarge, said, “Lafarge is

honoured to be associated with this project. We have been in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region for three years, and are very proud to employ more than 3,000 Iraqis. We are very happy to be the local supplier for this wonderful project, in partnership with IFPO and the High Commission for the Erbil Citadel Revitalization.”

The ceremony was also attended by several KRG ministers, the Governor of Erbil Nawzad Hadi, Francois Burjot of IFPO; and Dara Yacubi, Head of the High Commission for the Erbil Citadel Revitalisation (HCECR). Representatives of universities, cultural institutions and civil society also participated in the ceremony.

Newsweek OCTOBER 11, 2010

The End to a Long Conflict

by Owen Matthews

After 36 years and more than 40,000 deaths, one of the world’s bloodiest and longest-running insurgencies—the separatist struggle of Turkey’s Kurds—could soon be over. Last week Turkey’s Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan hinted that his government was finally negotiating with Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK, imprisoned since 1999. Not long ago, such talks would have been political suicide. But Erdogan is riding high after a victory last month in which voters backed his party as it introduced a new constitution pushing the military out of politics. With the Army, traditionally the fiercest opponents of any deals with Kurdish terrorists, on the back foot, Erdogan is now freer to strike a grand bargain with the remains of the PKK.

More important, the militants know they’ve lost the battle for secession from Turkey both politically and militarily. PKK strongholds in north Iraq have been hammered by a series of air and commando raids since 2007. Inside

Turkey, too, the organization is losing its grip. A longstanding taboo on speaking out against the PKK was broken last month by the mayor of Diyarbakir, the Kurdish region’s biggest city, who blasted the rebels for a raid on a local stone-cutting factory. Thousands also turned out for the funerals of two popular imams apparently murdered by the PKK, another first in a region where the rebels used to keep the local population in firm check by killing teachers and village elders and forcibly conscripting sons.

Any deal will have to involve amnesty for the remaining rebels—something that has roused the ire of nationalists and many military officers. But Erdogan has found support in surprising places. Former hardliner Cevat Önes, has said any deal “could, and should, include issuing an amnesty for the terrorists.”

Trickier for Erdogan will be how far to go with the Kurds’ demands for local autonomy. Still, for most Kurds the dream has changed: instead of independence, they now want merely to keep their language and traditions alive, while benefiting from Turkey’s newfound prosperity. Some Turks still worry that granting such unprecedented freedom to the Kurds will pose a threat to national unity. But others have come to see that ethnic diversity in their country is a small price to pay for ending decades of bloodshed.

A Paris, avec des chrétiens d'Irak qui ont « trouvé la paix » en s'exilant

Un programme d'accueil d'Irakiens persécutés, pour la plupart chrétiens, a été mis en place en 2008

Reportage

Plusieurs reprises, elle coupe la parole à son mari, pressée de dire. Dire pourquoi, à 62 et 52 ans, ils ont quitté leur pays, une partie de leur famille, leur maison, leurs amis, leur vie. Ce couple de Mossoul, qui ne veut pas dévoiler son identité par peur de représailles contre leurs filles encore sur place, est arrivé en France début septembre, dans le cadre du programme d'accueil des Irakiens (en grande majorité chrétiens) mis en place par le ministère des affaires étrangères en 2008.

En attente de leur statut de réfugiés, qu'ils obtiendront dans un délai relativement court de trois mois, et d'un logement, ils partagent avec leur fils de 22 ans un appartement dans les locaux de l'église. Notre-Dame-de-Chaldée, dans le 18^e arrondissement de Paris, l'un des lieux de culte de la communauté en région parisienne. Comme beaucoup des 1200 Irakiens arrivés ces derniers mois, ils ont retrouvé en France un membre de leur famille. En l'occurrence leur fils aîné, l'un des sept prêtres chaldéens présents en France.

Eux ne parlent ni français ni anglais. L'un de leurs coreligionnaires, Louis, ancien steward arrivé il y a un an et demi par le même programme, sert d'interprète. « On voulait partir depuis quatre ans, affirme le père de famille, instituteur à la retraite. Dans notre ville, tous les chrétiens sont menacés, mais, pour les parents de prêtre, c'est pire. On s'est fait racketter; on a reçu des menaces par téléphone. Des voitures avec haut-parleurs passaient dans les rues où vivent des chrétiens et leur disaient de quitter le quartier. Un ami a été brûlé devant son église qui venait d'être attaquée. »

« On ne quittait presque plus la maison », ajoute son épouse, qui, depuis quelques années, face « à la pression des milices islamistes », devait se voiler les cheveux pour sortir. « On avait tout le temps peur

pour notre fils. Il y a eu des enlèvements, et, même lorsque les parents paient la rançon, certains se font tuer. »

Une grande lassitude se dégage de son regard vert clair. « Nous sommes psychologiquement épuisés, confie-t-elle. Ici, on a trouvé la paix. On va apprendre le français. On fera comme on pourra. Notre-fils va reprendre des études d'informatique. Pour l'instant, il nous est impossible de retourner en Irak. »

Louis partage ce constat. Inscrit à Pôle emploi, cet homme de 56 ans sait qu'il a peu de chances de retrouver un emploi. Sa fille cadette est au collège. Les deux grands sont suivis par la mission locale. Leur vie se fera en France.

« Emigration de survie »

Plus d'un million de chrétiens auraient quitté l'Irak en vingt ans. Cet exode est l'un des sujets abordés lors du synode du Moyen-Orient qui se tient actuellement au Vatican. Le clergé local s'émeut

d'un amenuisement des communautés chrétiennes. « C'est vrai que, sur le principe, on ne souhaite pas que l'Irak se vide de ses chrétiens, car ils apportent une contribution importante à la société », reconnaît le Père Petrus Yousif, prêtre de Notre-Dame-de-Chaldée. « Mais la situation là-bas est telle... », soupire-t-il. L'émigration d'Irak est une émigration de survie, une fuite, pas une émigration économique. On ne peut pas leur dire : « Restez là-bas. » A sa connaissance, seules deux familles sont rentrées au pays.

Quand ils débarquent, tous comptent sur le soutien de la communauté chaldéenne de France. Une entraide qui, pour beaucoup de ces croyants, passe par l'Église. Dans les locaux de Notre-Dame-de-Chaldée, l'association d'aide aux minorités d'Orient (AEMO) organise l'assistance administrative aux nouveaux venus. Chaque dimanche, après une messe saturée d'encens, célébrée en arabe, en araméen et en français, les fidèles se

retrouvent autour d'un café, échangent des nouvelles du pays, font le point sur leur intégration ou l'obtention des papiers.

« Les gens qui arrivent doivent prouver qu'ils étaient bien en danger », précise le responsable de l'AEMO, Elish Yako. « Cela peut être une lettre de menace, l'acte de décès d'un membre de la famille, une blessure. » Face aux critiques sur la dimension confessionnelle du programme d'accueil porté par son association, il assure que « quelques familles musulmanes » ont aussi été accueillies.

Chaque jour, l'AEMO reçoit « des appels au secours ». « Mais en ce moment, l'accueil est ralenti », assure M. Yako. « On se concentre sur les cas les plus graves », reconnaît-on au ministère des affaires étrangères. Dans une allusion aux polémiques sur les Roms, d'autres estiment que le contexte actuel n'est plus très favorable à l'accueil de migrants. ■

Stéphanie Le Bars



Des chrétiens assyro-chaldéens à l'église Saint-Thomas-Apôtre de Sarcelles (Val-d'Oise). W. ALIX/CIRIC

LE FIGARO

18 octobre 2010

En Turquie, le voile islamique fait sa rentrée universitaire

Bien qu'interdit par la loi, le port du foulard est de plus en plus toléré dans les facultés.

LAURE MARCHAND
ISTANBUL

LAÏCITÉ De-ci, de-là, quelques touches fuchsia, turquoise ou d'imprimé fleuri se détachent dans les amphis de l'université d'Istanbul. Le foulard islamique y a effectué sa première rentrée. Pas une mèche ne s'échappe de l'élégant fichu en camaïeu noir et blanc d'Aysegül. « L'an dernier, j'étais obligée de me découvrir à la porte, raconte cette étudiante en sciences sociales. Maintenant, je peux assister aux cours avec ma vraie identité, c'est tout simplement génial. » Cette année, l'interdiction du foulard dans les universités du pays a été nettement assouplie, quand elle n'a pas tout bonnement disparu. Au fil des ans, le port du voile était devenu un tabou idéologique quasiment indépassable, et la société turque s'était divisée entre pro et anti-foulard. Il semble désormais que la Turquie mise sur la normalisation silencieuse et le fait accompli pour venir à bout de ce problème qui a déclenché plus d'une crise politique.

Il y a deux ans encore, la formation islamo-conservatrice au pouvoir avait payé cher une loi qui visait à libéraliser le port du voile à la fac. À peine votée par le Parlement, la réforme avait été déclarée anticonstitutionnelle. Cette audace législative avait ensuite valu au Parti pour la justice et le développement (AKP) une condamnation pour violation de la laïcité, et la formation avait échappé de justesse à une dissolution par la Cour constitutionnelle.

« La solution est législative, un consensus doit émerger »

Dans les sondages, la majorité des personnes se déclare pourtant favorable à une autorisation du foulard, jugeant que son bannissement représente une interprétation trop rigide de la laïcité. Dans une allée du campus battue par la pluie d'automne, Ipek Ekmen, étudiante en droit, enlève les écouteurs de son iPod calés sous son *türban*. « Le droit au voile renvoie à la liberté individuelle, il ne questionne pas la laïcité. On se trompe de débat. » Son interdiction a été entérinée par plusieurs décisions de justice et a été



L'interdiction du foulard dans les universités du pays a été nettement assouplie par le Conseil de l'enseignement supérieur.

ZACOURAR/AFP

strictement observée à partir de 1997, après la destitution par l'armée du gouvernement islamiste d'Erbakan. Mais, cette année, le recteur de l'université d'Istanbul a reçu une lettre du YOK, le Conseil de l'enseignement supérieur, prohibant le renvoi d'élèves de cours en raison de leur tenue vestimentaire. Longtemps bastion ultrakémaliste proche des militaires, la puissante institution est désormais dirigée par un fidèle du premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

« Levée de la prohibition »

« Il semble que la levée de la prohibition se fait graduellement un peu partout, mais il existe encore des lieux où les filles sont discriminées et subissent une forte pression, déclare Ozge Genç, chargée des études sur la religion et la société à la Tesev, un think-tank libéral. L'intervention du YOK crée une zone grise qui ouvre la voie à l'arbitraire des recteurs. La solution est législative, un consensus doit émerger. » Les partis en sont-ils capables ? À première vue, oui, et c'est une grande première en Turquie. Curieusement, c'est Kemal Kılıçdaroglu, le nouveau leader du CHP, le parti d'Atatürk - le fondateur de la République turque -, et le plus tatonnant sur l'interprétation de la laïcité, qui a consacré le retour du voile dans le débat public cet été au cours de la campagne sur la réforme de la Constitution.

Lancé dans une tentative de reconquête de l'électorat populaire et conservateur, il a déclaré qu'il était « déterminé » à régler ce problème et a délaissé le discours classique d'un risque de pre-

mier pas vers une islamisation de la société. Mais, depuis, il tergiverse, a proposé de ne laisser entrer dans les universités que les voiles « sur le modèle iranien », c'est-à-dire ceux laissant dépasser des cheveux, une façon de recaler le *türban*, porté serré et jugé plus religieux.

À dix mois de législatives qui s'annoncent en sa faveur, Erdogan n'a pas raté l'occasion d'engranger des points supplémentaires contre son adversaire. Il a déclaré qu'il n'était pas plus question de demander à des étudiantes de se justifier sur le style de leur foulard que sur le port de pantalons slims.

Dans ce contexte, le voile à l'université n'est toujours pas à l'ordre du jour du Parlement. Il ne s'agit pourtant que du contentieux autour du foulard le moins ardu. Un autre débat couve, beaucoup plus houleux, celui sur le port du couvre-chef islamique dans les administrations. Les plus conservateurs réclament la levée de l'interdiction. Cette position est loin de faire l'unanimité dans la population. Et d'autres foulards assurent la polémique. Kemal Kılıçdaroglu a annoncé qu'il boycotterait la traditionnelle réception présidentielle organisée le 29 octobre pour la fête de la République turque, car Hayrünnisa Gül, l'épouse du chef de l'État, y accueillera les invités voilée. ■



Lundi, plus de 5000 personnes étaient réunies à Diyarbakir. PHOTO AFP

En Turquie, procès test pour l'ouverture kurde

RÉBELLION Depuis lundi, 151 élus ou responsables proches du PKK sont jugés à Diyarbakir.

«**C**est le procès de vie ou de mort de la démocratie en Turquie. C'est le procès qui déterminera enfin si le pouvoir de la République partagera ou non ses richesses avec les Kurdes», martelait lundi l'avocate Meral Danis Bestas, devant le palais de justice de Diyarbakir, la capitale du sud-est anatolien à majorité kurde. Plus de 5000 personnes, dont 2000 membres des forces de sécurité, étaient rassemblées pour la première audience du procès du KCK (l'Union des communautés du Kurdistan), considérée comme une organisation politique paravent du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui mène la lutte armée contre Ankara depuis vingt-six ans. Les 151 dirigeants et élus kurdes – dont Osman Baydemir, le maire de Diyarbakir – sont tous

accusés de «saboter l'unité et l'intégrité de l'Etat». Le ministère public requiert entre quinze ans et la perpétuité aggravée.

Les prévenus ont demandé à la cour de plaider en kurde. Requête refusée. «Ils parlent bien le turc, et ils ont déjà parlé en turc devant les procureurs», affirment les juges. «Nous reconnaissons le turc comme langue officielle et nous aimons bien notre langue sœur. Mais nous avons quand même le droit de nous servir de notre langue maternelle», rétorque Hatip Dicle, un ex-député sur le banc des accu-

sés. La cour a systématiquement refusé les demandes de libération des 104 prévenus emprisonnés. «L'acte d'accusation se base essentiellement sur les écoutes téléphoniques et sur les aveux de

quelques témoins anonymes comme c'est malheureusement de plus en plus souvent le cas», s'indigne un des avo-

Dans ses 7578 pages, l'acte d'accusation ne mentionne aucun acte violent du KCK, décrit comme «la branche légale du PKK».

cats, Me Sezgin Tanrikulu, se plaignant des juges qui «limitent les droits de la défense». Alors que le gouvernement islamo-conservateur de Recep Tayyip Erdogan a lancé une nouvelle initiative pour tenter de régler ce conflit de plus de vingt ans, ce procès est considéré comme un test politique majeur. Plusieurs dizaines d'observateurs étrangers sont d'ailleurs présents.

Dans ses 7578 pages (sur

130 000 pour l'ensemble du dossier avec les annexes), l'acte d'accusation ne mentionne aucun acte violent du KCK, décrit comme «la branche légale du PKK». Le conflit a déjà fait près de 40 000 morts. De 12 à 15 millions de Kurdes vivent en Turquie, sur une population de 73 millions d'habitants. Chapeautant les diverses structures politiques kurdes,

le KCK est accusé d'avoir organisé des actes de désobéissance civile, comme des fermetures de magasins lors de la visite du Premier ministre turc à Diyarbakir ou des appels au boycott des écoles. A la veille de l'ouverture du procès, Recep Tayyip Erdogan a déclaré que les Kurdes

«avaient les mêmes droits que les Turcs», et que le KCK impose par la force des armes aux électeurs de voter pour le BDP, le principal parti kurde. «Ces voix n'ont pas de valeur», a-t-il insisté. Pour les partisans de la cause kurde, il s'agit d'une évidente tentative d'influencer le cours de la justice.

Un an après un premier échec dans l'«ouverture kurde», le gouvernement a malgré tout repris des négociations indirectes avec le leader historique du PKK, Abdullah Ocalan, emprisonné sur l'île d'Imrali depuis 1999, et avec les 20 députés du BDP. Mais ce processus est encore fragile. «Il s'agit de savoir si la cour d'assises élargira ou rétrécira les routes vers la montagne (c'est-à-dire vers la guérilla)», écrivait en début de semaine Hasan Cemal, chroniqueur du quotidien libéral *Milliyet*. Le procès devrait se prolonger jusqu'au 12 novembre.

De notre correspondant à Istanbul **RAGIP DURAN**

REUTERS

Threats, tension in Kirkuk as Iraq census delayed

KIRKUK, October 12 2010 (Reuters) By Mustafa Mahmoud

ABU MOHAMMED, an Arab, moved to the Iraqi oil city of Kirkuk four years ago to escape rising violence in neighbouring Diyala province. Recently, he says, he was ordered by Kurds to get out.

"They were armed. They told me: 'You have 48 hours to leave Kirkuk. Otherwise don't blame anyone but yourself for what will happen to you,'" said Abu Mohammed, who asked that his real name not be used.

Turf battles and tensions between Arabs and Kurds are resurfacing in oil-rich Kirkuk as Iraq's central government delays a national census that was supposed to help resolve long-standing disputes in restive areas of northern Iraq.

U.S. military officials consider Arab-Kurd tensions a potential flashpoint for a future conflict in Iraq, still suffering deep wounds from the sectarian warfare unleashed by the 2003 invasion that ousted Saddam Hussein.

Some Arab families say they are being ordered to leave before the census, Iraq's first full population count in more than two decades. The threats are vaguely blamed on Kurdish armed groups.

The census is critical to the future of Iraq's disputed territories, which Baghdad wants to keep and the Kurds want to fold into their semi-autonomous northern enclave.

The centerpiece of the dispute is Kirkuk, a volatile ethnic stew of Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and others. U.S. officials say the province may sit atop 4 percent of the world's oil reserves.

"We have received dozens of claims from Arab families talking about gunmen storming their houses and ordering them to leave the province and go back to their original provinces, otherwise they will suffer bad consequences," said Rakan Sayied, an Arab who serves as a deputy governor of Kirkuk.

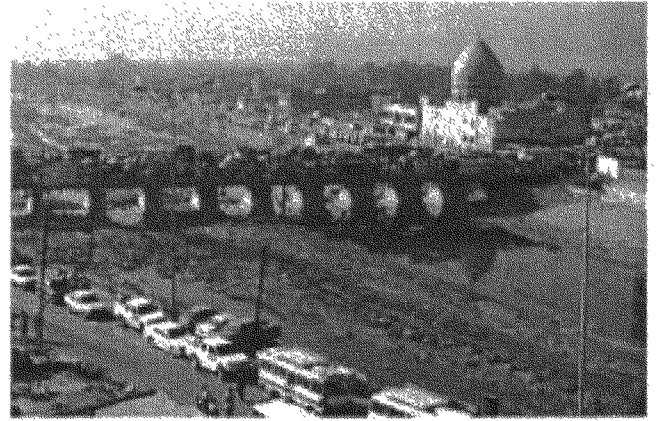
"Leaflets were distributed recently in Arab neighbourhoods in the province carrying the signature of the 'Revolutionary Youth', threatening people if they don't leave Kirkuk," he said.

Locals said they had never heard of Revolutionary Youth, nor another group named on some leaflets, "Original Sons of Kirkuk".

DOMINANT KURDS?

The census was expected to determine if Kurds are the dominant ethnicity, which would enhance their claim to Kirkuk and its oil riches.

But last week Baghdad delayed the count, which had been set for



Oct. 24, until Dec. 5. The government said it wanted to give Kirkuk and Nineveh provinces time to settle their differences.

A referendum on Kirkuk's status was supposed to have been held no later than December 2007 but was shelved after Arabs and Turkmen accused Kurds of flooding the city with their kin. Kurds had similarly accused Saddam of "Arabising" the province by encouraging Arabs to move to Kirkuk in the '80s and '90s.

The renewed tensions in northern Iraq come amid political uncertainty after a March election that offered no clear winner.

The protracted brawl over a new government has cast Kurds as kingmakers, with their lawmakers pressing Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to meet their demands in exchange for Kurdish support.

Some Kirkuk Arabs suggest the threats come from Kurdish security forces -- the peshmerga (army) or the ashaees (police).

Colonel Salar Khalid, a police official, said the accusations were baseless.

"The ashaees aim to preserve security in Kirkuk. Our duty is to chase terrorists and armed groups, those who destabilise security in Kirkuk. We don't force people to leave Kirkuk."

Repwar Talabani, the deputy head of the provincial council, also denied that security forces were involved.

"There is no doubt that what is happening in Kirkuk and the threat that some Arab families received is made by hidden hands who want to provoke sedition in the province and delay the count," said Talabani, a Kurd.

Iraqi Kurdistan's two main political parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, headed by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party, led by regional President Masoud Barzani, issued a joint statement last week criticising Baghdad for neglecting a solution for Kirkuk's conflicts.

They said the repeated postponement of the census was "opening the way for the enemies of Iraq".

"Those who know they will lose when the count happens and those who are afraid of disclosing the actual facts of Kirkuk's entities are hindering the census under various pretexts," Repwar Talabani said.

REUTERS

Three Kurdish rebels killed as fighting continues

TUNCELI, Turkey-- October 14,2010 (Reuters)

Three more members of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) were killed in a second day of fighting Thursday in southeast Turkey, and operations against the guerrillas continued, security sources said.

Wednesday, two soldiers and one PKK rebel were killed in clashes near the village of Bogacik in Tunceli province.

The fighting comes despite a one-sided ceasefire the PKK first declared in August.

Fighting Thursday continued in a mountainous area near

Bogacik, the sources said. Poor weather conditions, especially heavy rain and fog, have prevented the military from deploying more troops, the sources said.

The PKK on August 13 declared a one-month, unilateral truce that it then extended for an indefinite period on September 30, saying it wanted to encourage efforts to end a war that has killed more than 40,000 people since 1984.

But the PKK has also threatened to renew its fight if Turkey steps up military operations against the group, based mainly in northern Iraq.

Kurds in the Middle

Caught between Iran and Turkey, with nowhere to hide.

By **JONATHAN SPYER**
The Weekly Standard

Iraqi Kurdistan

"**THERE** is today a strategic alliance between Iran and Turkey's [ruling AKP party]," says Murat Karayilan, the de facto leader of the PKK. The Kurdistan Workers' party's actual number one, Abdullah Ocalan, has been imprisoned in Turkey since 1999 for his war against Ankara dating back to 1984, a conflict that has cost around 40,000 lives. Here in the heart of the Qandil mountains of northern Iraq where I've come to meet Karayilan, this war shows no sign of ending.

The PKK, said George W. Bush in 2007, "is a terrorist organization. They're an enemy of Turkey, they're an enemy of Iraq, and they're an enemy of the United States." The previous administration had hoped to secure Washington's alliance with Ankara by supplying "actionable intelligence" that the Turks used in cross-border raids against the PKK. Nonetheless, the AKP moved closer to the Islamic Republic of Iran, an alliance cemented by mutual interest—the strategic threat that Kurdish rebels pose to both Muslim states.

The PKK then are in search of new alliances of their own, which is why they arranged for an Israeli journalist to meet the leadership of an outfit that was once closely aligned with Israel's Syrian enemy. Of course, Jerusalem once counted Turkey as a key strategic ally.

"Erdogan is a double-dealer," Karayilan told me. "He shows sympathy for the children of Palestine, but under his command Kurdish children are killed and imprisoned."

The Turkish prime minister, according to Karayilan, is no

less hypocritical in his dealings with regional and international actors, sidling up to both Washington and Tehran. "Turkey has relations with the USA, and also with Iran," said Karayilan, "and both are used against the Kurds. In Qandil, U.S.-made drones fly over the zone. They collect intelligence and bring it back to Turkey. Turkey then comes and bombs the area. But Turkey also passes the information on to Iran, which also bombards us."

Karayilan called on the United States, Israel, and the EU to change their policy toward Turkey. He contended that Ankara is seeking to lay the diplomatic groundwork for a major operation to crush the PKK in Qandil. "They are trying to get international support—and regional support from Iran and Syria—to mount a big military operation, in the 'Sri Lankan' style."

The PKK has just extended for the second time a monthlong ceasefire. The movement is clearly trying to walk a narrow line between avoiding the major Turkish operation into Qandil they fear, and allowing the Kurdish issue to drift even further from international attention.

Around 6,500 people have fled their homes in the mountains since May. Even as the international media and Western governments have been nearly silent, the Turkish air force and Iranian artillery are engaged in the regular bombing of civilian areas. The Kurds—Turkish and Iranian—find themselves in the way of what Karayilan called the common Iranian/AKP project to use the "ideology of Islam to control and dominate the Islamic world."

So far, the PKK has had little success finding new allies in the rapidly shifting strategic topography of the Middle East. Neither Washington nor Europe is inclined right now to remove the group from its list of terrorist organizations.



Moreover, the PKK's old-fashioned, leftist ideology makes it an odd man out in the clash that defines today's Middle East, where pro-Western forces are squared off against Iranian-backed, usually Islamist, assets. The Kurdish Regional Government in Erbil tolerates the presence of the PKK in the mountains, out of a core Kurdish solidarity. But there is little natural common ground between the KRG and the guerrillas in Qandil. Still, there are rumors that the PKK's Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) ally has enjoyed behind the scenes Western and Israeli support for its fight against the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. But even if there's anything to the stories, it's hard to imagine Turkey drifting so far from the U.S. orbit that the PKK would enjoy similar Western and Israeli backing.

The alliance between the AKP and Tehran is only strengthening. The Daily Telegraph recently reported that Iran is in the process of donating \$25 million to the AKP's coffers. The money is intended to help produce an AKP victory in crucial general elections next year.

The volume of trade between Turkey and Iran has increased from \$1.2 billion in 2002, when the AKP took power, to \$10 billion in 2010, a figure

Turkey aims to triple over the next five years. Ankara opposed the latest round of sanctions against Iran at the U.N. Security Council, and appears poised to play an active role in subverting additional EU and U.S. measures.

Whether or not Turkey and Iran's budding relationship represents a new strategic alliance with ambitions stretching beyond the scope of rocky, blighted Qandil, its most vivid expression currently is the coordinated threat of Iranian cannons and Turkish bombers, laying waste to a bleak mountain region of northern Iraq. Here the Kurds are looking down from their strong places in the mountains at two powerful regimes with a common desire to see them subjugated.

*Jonathan Spyer is a senior researcher at the Global Research in International Affairs Center in Israel. His book *The Transforming Fire: The Rise of the Israel-Islamist Conflict* will be published in November*

Iraq's Kurds set to be kingmakers again

By Leila Fadel

Washington Post Foreign Service

BAGHDAD - Iraq's Kurds have once again emerged as kingmakers in this nation's complex political game, as incumbent Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki strives to get the support of a majority of the country's lawmakers to stay in power.

For the moment, the Kurds appear to be leaning toward backing Maliki, a Shiite. But they have yet to endorse him publicly and are also negotiating with his rivals, trying to leverage their power in parliament to win key government positions and promises that would resolve Kurdish and Arab land disputes in the north.

The Kurds have long been a strong U.S. ally in Iraq, and U.S. officials, who have a good deal of influence over the sizable ethnic minority, are hopeful that Kurds will use their political heft to force a broader, more inclusive government between the country's largest political blocs. U.S. officials worry that if Iraq forms a government that is not seen as representative of its ethnic and religious mix, that will eat away at security gains and hurt their future dealings in the country.

Following inconclusive elections on March 7, Iraqis have lived in political limbo for more than seven months. But Maliki took a significant step toward becoming Iraq's next premier this month when he won the support of the Sadrists, followers of fiery Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, who staunchly oppose the U.S. presence here. Maliki still needs more support to achieve the simple majority in parliament that would allow him to form the country's next government.

Others from within the Shiite coalition that nominated Maliki have said they will not vote for him or his cabinet, fearing that another four years of Maliki rule will further mar-

ginalize them politically.

Instead, these smaller groups of Shiites hope to join with Maliki's biggest rival, secular Shiite Ayad Allawi, whose political bloc won the most seats in Iraq's parliament by a slim margin, and offer an alternate candidate. Allawi and his allies are also trying to woo Kurdish support, but are having less success.

"The Kurds are the determining factor now," said a leading Kurdish official on the condition of anonymity so he could be candid.

Maliki's State of Law bloc and the Kurds have met several times, and Maliki has agreed to some Kurdish demands, according to officials from both groups. But as they attempt to pull one side against the other to force concessions, Kurdish leaders are just beginning negotiations with Allawi.

Members of Allawi's largely Sunni-backed Iraqiya bloc have suggested that they would be open to the prime minister job going to Adil Abdul Mahdi of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, a Shiite and longtime U.S. favorite. Under that power-sharing scenario, Iraqiya would give up its claim to the job of prime minister, and Allawi would receive another federal position with comparable powers.

A government led by Abdul Mahdi and Allawi may now be the preference of U.S. officials alarmed by the Sadrist backing of Maliki and his souring relationship with Iraqiya.

"If this happens, the battle lines will be drawn," the Kurdish official said. "They will each have about the same numbers and they will need us."

A decision by the Kurds, who have 57 seats in Iraq's 325-member parliament, about which contender to support would push forward a government formation process that has been dogged by accusations of fraud and heated arguments over who has the right to form the government, with politicians flying to neighboring countries to seek regional support.

The Kurds have played the role of kingmaker before. In 2006, it was their parliamentary backing that allowed the Shiite coalition and its nominee, Maliki, to take power. Now, as Kurdish officials say they are still considering their options, the process could spill into next year.

They have drafted a list of 19 demands, one of which is allowing the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan in the north of Iraq to administer its own oil fields. They also seek the settlement of property claims and a referendum on the status of disputed territories that both Arabs and Kurds lay claim to, which could be a flashpoint for violence. And they have demanded that both Iraqiya and the Shiite Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, who opposed Maliki's nomination, participate in the next government.

The Kurds have little trust for their potential allies. One of the 19 demands states that if the Kurds were to pull out of the government, a new government would have to form.

The top four elected political blocs - Maliki's State of Law, Allawi's Iraqiya, the Shiite Iraqi National Alliance and the Kurdish alliance - have not met as a group since the election. U.S. officials have been passing messages between State of Law and Iraqiya to try to forge an agreement, Iraqi officials said. The president of Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani, is advocating a meeting between all four blocs.

But an end to the impasse is far from guaranteed.

"It's difficult for anyone to decide what time this crisis will end," said Sami Shorish, a member of the Kurdish negotiation team. "We don't want to announce who we support and then realize it's not the right choice for us. It will put an end to our role."

Prominent Kurdish Figure Says Kurdish Future is Not Optimistic in Iraq

By RUDAW

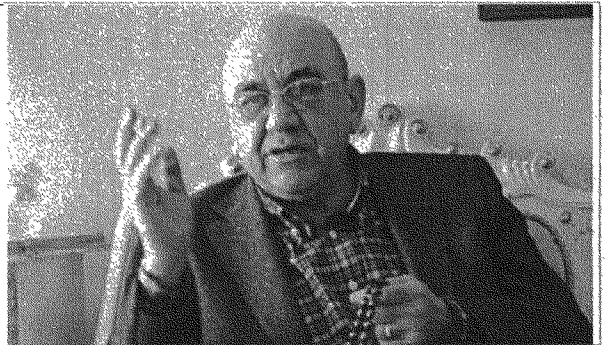
ERBIL, Iraqi Kurdistan: A prominent retired Kurdish politician and intellectual says that Kurds could face tougher times in the future, their issue is yet far away from resolution, and their preference should be the Shiite parties to form a new government.

Jawher Namiq Salim, the first speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament that was elected in 1992-following the mass uprising of the Kurds against former Saddam Hussein's regime- warned that the future for Kurds is increasingly looking not optimistic.

"Looking at the past of Maliki would not make us feel optimistic, but looking at [Iyad] Allawi, the people in his coalition and the positions that they take would disappoint us," said Salim in an exclusive interview with Rudaw in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan region.

"With all the negative aspects Maliki, his coalition or [the Shiite] National Alliance have, they are incomparable to Iraqiya, its parties and figures," said Salim adding "In reality, Iraqiya is a base for the Sunni Arab chauvinists and racists who are all former Ba'athists."

Jawher Namiq Salim, the first speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament that was established in 1992.--
--- Photo by Rudaw.



Seven months have passed since elections were held; Iraqi political parties are yet to agree form a coalition government.

Though, Maliki looks to be able to form a government with the support of the Kurds after he has reached an agreement with the Sadr Movement, he does not seem to want that without the backing of Sunni Arabs fearing the resurgence of a sectarian conflict Iraq suffered following 2003-US-led invasion.

The Kurds, for their part, have not openly preferred any Arab candidate to others. They rather say that anyone could win their backing if they support a 19-demand paper that they have sent to the Arab winning parties.

But Salim says this way of politics

Kurdish leadership does is wrong.

"They are spectators not players," he said adding, "They say they are not part of the problem but of part of the solution."

"On of the major problems of Today's Iraq is Kurdish issue, though."

As Salim prefers Maliki's State of Law to Allawi's Iraqiya, spokesperson of Iraqiya threatens Kurds that their support to Maliki would make Iraqiya not help resolve the issue of the disputed regions where it enjoy a strong support from Arabs and Turcomans.

"If they [Kurds] form an alliance with Maliki, they will lose, in particular, the issue of the disputed regions," said Mayson Damalochi, spokeswoman for Iraqiya.



PROCÈS DE 151 KURDES EN TURQUIE, ACCUSÉS DE LIENS AVEC LA RÉBELLION

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 18 octobre 2010 (AFP)

LE PROCÈS de 151 Kurdes, dont de nombreux élus, accusés de liens avec la rébellion et qui risquent de lourdes de peines de prison, s'est ouvert lundi à Diyarbakir (sud-est de la Turquie), a constaté l'AFP.

Les prévenus sont poursuivis dans un acte d'accusation de 7.500 pages pour liens avec l'Union des associations du Kurdistan (KCK), organisation accusée de terrorisme et de complicité avec le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), mouvement en lutte armée contre l'autorité centrale en Turquie.

Ce procès est considéré comme un test majeur par les militants de la cause kurde, alors que le gouvernement islamo-conservateur à Ankara a lancé une nouvelle initiative en vue d'un règlement du conflit, qui se poursuit depuis 26 ans.

Le ministère public demande des peines allant de cinq ans à la prison à vie,

pour des chefs d'accusations tels que "direction ou appartenance à une organisation terroriste", "atteinte à l'unité de l'Etat", ou "diffusion de propagande terroriste".

Parmi les accusés figure Osman Baydemir, maire de la grande ville de Diyarbakir et personnalité populaire dans le sud-est de la Turquie, région peuplée en majorité de Kurdes.

Onze autres maires appartenant au principal parti kurde, le Parti de la paix et de la démocratie (BDP), figurent parmi les accusés.

D'importantes mesures de sécurité ont été prises à l'ouverture de ce procès, qui est suivi par des observateurs étrangers, dont Amnesty International.

Les avocats des prévenus ont dénoncé ce procès comme une tentative de "réduire les Kurdes au silence".

Le PKK, qui est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par de nombreux pays, a pris les armes en 1984 pour la défense des droits des 12 à 15 millions de Kurdes de Turquie, sur une population de 73 millions.

Les rebelles disposent de bases arrière dans le nord de l'Irak et mènent régulièrement des attaques meurtrières en Turquie. Le conflit a fait 45.000 morts, selon l'armée turque.

Depuis août 2009, le gouvernement a lancé une nouvelle tentative pour trouver une solution au conflit: il a accentué la pression militaire sur les rebelles, tout en prenant des mesures pour accorder plus de droits à la minorité kurde.

Defense in Kurdish marks first day of KCK trial

AYSE KARABAT

The trial of the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), the alleged urban extension of the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), began on Monday in Diyarbakir with many local and foreign observers closely following the trial.

The 151 suspects, including 12 mayors and some politicians, are accused of wide-ranging crimes such as membership in an illegal armed group, spreading propaganda for an illegal group, threatening Turkey's territorial integrity and violating laws on public demonstrations, according to a 7,500-page indictment. A total of 103 of the suspects are under arrest; however, some of them, including Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir, were not required to remain in police custody although they participated in the first hearing.

The primary suspect in the case is Sabri Ok, the PKK's European representative. Ok is accused of leading the KCK and is a person with extensive connections. Security experts say he is responsible for the close ties between the KCK and the Ergenekon terrorist organization, a clandestine gang that had planned to overthrow the government. Amidst internal conflict in Ergenekon, it has maintained direct communication with the KCK regarding attacks -- and this is mentioned in the case indictments for both the Ergenekon and KCK cases.

Jailed leader of the PKK Abdullah Ocalan is the KCK's honorary leader, while PKK member Zubeyir Aydar heads the group's legislative arm and Ocalan's right-hand man Murat Karayilan leads the executive branch. Some of the



The new operations come amid a key case against the alleged urban branch of the PKK.
DHA photo

group's cabinet members within the executive arm who are in Kandil are also top PKK leaders.

Since April 2009, security forces have arrested more than 1,500 people, including pro-Kurdish politicians, claiming that they are members of the KCK. The government claims the KCK suppresses the freedoms and rights of Kurds by using methods that range from intimidation to violence. However, pro-Kurdish circles argue that there are political motives behind the KCK's activities and that they are intended to pressure pro-Kurdish politicians.

The KCK was established in 2005 upon the orders of Ocalan. It has since been learned that the organization's goal was to bring the Kurds of Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq together as part of greater Kurdistan. Despite the group's claim in recent years that they have no intentions of establishing an independent Kurdish state, it has become clear that Peace and Democracy (BDP) members who are part of the KCK would indeed like to create such a state. Information in the indictment suggests that the KCK is not the civil society arm of the PKK, but rather an umbrella political organization that includes the PKK.

Unlike the PKK, which committed acts of terrorism first in rural areas and then in cities, the KCK has a well-organized structure that oversees activities in several areas. The KCK has developed its own legislature and executive and judiciary arms in which the PKK's role is to conduct armed maneuvers.

All the deputies of the pro-Kurdish BDP came to Diyarbakir to follow the trial. BDP Chairman Selahattin Demirtas said only after 18 months in prison have their

friends been brought to trial. Demirtas criticized the length of their arrest and said that they are hoping that their friends will be released.

BDP Van deputy Ozdal Aker claimed that the trial is a political one and that if it is a trial in which justice is sought, then their friends will be set free. The long period of arrest has already delivered a form of punishment, he said.

The former chairman of the now-defunct Democratic Society Party (DTP) Ahmet Turk, who was banned from participating in politics by the Constitutional Court, said the trial is intended to suppress pro-Kurdish politicians. The military coup perpetrators are released, but our friends have been in prison for 18 months just because they voiced the demands of the people. We are struggling for peace, and this trial will be a turning point, he added.

In the courtroom -- which is too small to hold the many observers, including foreign observers, and the almost 300 lawyers working on the case -- the suspects spoke in Kurdish and asked the court if they could deliver their testimonies in Kurdish. But sources close to the suspects underlined that even if the court will not allow them to speak in Kurdish, the suspects will do so anyway.

During the first hearing, before the suspects were officially identified, the court told the suspects that they could say I am here when their names were read. The suspects said, Ez li virim, ez amademe, which means I am here and ready in Kurdish.

The chairman of the Diyarbakir Bar Association, Mehmet Emin Aktar, said, while speaking in the name of the defendants' lawyers,

that the trial is a historic one and added that the suspects will defend themselves in accordance with their political identities. He also added that in order to save time there is no need to read the indictment, which is 7,500 pages, in court.

On behalf of the suspects, former deputy Hatip Dicle delivered a short statement and said the suspects are representing the people. He added that in democratic countries representatives of the people

are not arrested. At the center of this trial stands the Kurdish question. In a period during which the laying down of arms is under discussion and the search for a democratic solution to the problem has accelerated, this trial should never have existed, he said in court.

The suspects are expected to stand trial in rotation. Because of this, the trial may run for several days. The Diyarbakir 6th High Criminal Court will not hear any

other cases until Nov. 12.

The suspects, apart from some politicians, include PKK operatives, 28 managers of the now-defunct DTP, 12 mayors, including Diyarbakir Mayor Baydemir, two provincial council heads and two municipal council members. The Human Rights Association (OHD) Diyarbakir branch President Muharrem Erbey is also among the suspects.

Guardian

18 OCTOBER 2010

KURDS ARE IRAQ'S KINGMAKERS

In Iraq's current political stalemate, it is the Kurds that hold the power to determine the country's direction



*
Ranj Alaaldin

A report published in the Guardian suggests that the long drawn-out process of forming a new government in Iraq has taken a new twist. It tells not just of the usual overtures by Iran towards Iraq's major Shia parties, but also of a region-wide, collaborative effort that brings together Syria and the Lebanese Hezbollah movement for the purposes of installing a government led by Nouri al-Maliki and supported by Moqtada al-Sadr, the anti-US Shia cleric who is currently exiled in Iran.

That would essentially establish a formidable anti-US union in the region comprising Iran, Iraq, Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon. As the US prepares to withdraw from Iraq completely at the end of 2011, it could see itself embarrassingly sidelined as a result, with its Gulf allies left vulnerable.

The US is therefore working with its long-time Iraqi ally, Ayad Allawi, in a desperate effort to assemble an alternative coalition that would keep out Iran and the Sadrists as much as possible.

Allawi and his Iraqi National Movement (INM), who won 91 seats in the elections last March (two more than Maliki's State of Law coalition), are tenaciously working on a coalition plan that includes the Kurds (57 seats) and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) – with 18 seats – which historically has been supported by Iran but is now politically weak. That proposal includes reluctantly putting forward Adel Abdul Mahdi of the ISCI as prime minister – an idea that has the backing of the US.

These developments mean that the Kurds have emerged as kingmakers. Iraq's Sunni Arab representatives, in the form of Allawi's INM and notable ultra-nationalists with alleged links to Baathists, will have to choose between making concessions to the Kurds – over Kirkuk,

oil and power-sharing – and paving the way for an Iraqi state and government heavily coloured by Sadrism and Iranian interests.

The next few weeks will also be a test of US influence as well as Kurdish leadership and foresight. The Kurds in Iraq are arguably the last remaining viable entity over which the US has some respectable degree of influence. Their demand for a referendum to determine control of Kirkuk has been largely pushed aside – not just because of reluctance in Baghdad but also as a result of US pressure.

Beyond US concerns that a referendum will ignite civil war, Washington in this respect has also played to the interests of Turkey and other allies in the region. However, the time may have come to finally give the Kurds Kirkuk, not least since Maliki is reportedly accepting almost every other Kurdish demand.

With provincial elections in Kurdistan looming across the horizon and the Kurdish opposition party Change criticising the Kurdish leadership for putting self-interest (power, money and influence) ahead of Kurdish interests, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by Massoud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Jalal Talabani should be acutely aware that this is their opportunity to shine.

The current political stalemate in Iraq is, therefore, a litmus test for the Kurds. They hold the power to determine the future of Iraq's other groupings, the future of the country itself as well as that of the US role in Iraq as it prepares to withdraw completely at the end of 2011.

Crucially, therefore, the Kurds must decide whether to pursue the interests of Kurdistan or those of Iraq. The US may attempt to persuade the Kurds to hold off making any decision and slow down the momentum generated by the unlikely Maliki/Sadrism alliance, one that it hopes, in time, will eventually be dismantled. Yet, with delay and compromise marking the Kurdish role in Iraq, at least in the eyes of the Kurdish population, the time may have come to exercise leadership and decisiveness.

Turquie

Courrier
INTERNATIONAL

n° 1042 | du 21 au 27 octobre 2010

Les Kurdes, cette minorité qui n'en est pas une

Comme la Constitution refuse aux Kurdes le statut de minorité nationale, l'enseignement de leur langue est interdit dans les écoles publiques. Une situation absurde.

Radikal Istanbul

En Turquie, dès qu'un droit fondamental réclamé par les Kurdes n'est pas satisfait, on tente de minimiser les choses en expliquant que les Kurdes sont traités comme des "citoyens de première classe". Il s'agit là d'une catégorisation qui pose problème, car cela signifie du même coup qu'il y a dans ce pays des "citoyens de seconde classe". Mais quand donc les Kurdes sont-ils considérés comme des "citoyens de première classe"? Eh bien par exemple lorsqu'ils demandent à pouvoir bénéficier du droit à l'enseignement dans la langue maternelle qui est accordé aux minorités. Pourquoi ce droit leur est-il refusé? Parce que les Kurdes ne sont pas reconnus en tant que minorité. En Turquie, le terme de "minorité" se limite à désigner les non-musulmans [Arméniens, Grecs et Juifs]. Les Kurdes, qui sont musulmans, ne sont donc pas concernés. Drôle de "citoyenneté de première classe" qui s'avère être une punition pour ceux qui en bénéficient. Et l'absurdité ne s'arrête pas là. En effet, à la question de savoir si en Turquie les non-musulmans sont des citoyens de seconde zone, on se voit répondre: "Mais qu'est ce que vous nous chantez là? Bien sûr que non!" Ils seraient donc finalement eux aussi des citoyens de première classe.

Le débat qui se déroule actuellement dans un contexte sain sur l'enseignement de la langue kurde est bloqué par un obstacle constitutionnel de taille: l'article 42 de la Constitution, qui stipule qu'"aucune autre langue que le turc ne peut être enseignée dans les institutions d'enseignement en tant que langue maternelle à des citoyens turcs. Les règles régissant l'enseignement des langues étrangères sont déterminées par la loi".

Dans ces conditions, l'enseignement du kurde pourrait donc être organisé

L'arménien et le grec sont enseignés dans des écoles communautaires qui dépendent pour leur programme du ministère de l'Education nationale turc. Depuis quelques années,

l'enseignement du kurde à titre privé est autorisé sous certaines conditions; mais celles-ci laissent toutefois la porte ouverte à toutes sortes de tracasseries administratives.

moyennant des adaptations juridiques. Oui, mais la langue maternelle de millions de gens de ce pays est-elle une langue étrangère? De toute façon, dans le cadre de la définition de la citoyenneté telle qu'elle est reprise dans la Constitution actuelle, il est impossible d'évoquer les Kurdes de Turquie. L'article 66 de cette Constitution stipule qu'"est turc toute personne liée par un lien de citoyenneté à l'Etat turc". Dans ce contexte, outre les Kurdes, qui n'ont de toute façon pas d'existence légale, il n'y a pas non plus de Grecs ou d'Arméniens, ils sont tous turcs.

Face à une telle tautologie constitutionnelle, l'enseignement d'une langue maternelle, excepté le turc, devient impossible tant pour les Kurdes que pour les Grecs et les Arméniens. Si l'on suit cette logique, les points relatifs aux droits des minorités [non musulmanes] deviennent inapplicables. Les articles 42 et 66 s'articulent donc tous les deux de façon très cohérente: dans un pays où tout le monde est turc, pas d'autre enseignement d'une langue maternelle que le turc! Mais que fait-on alors de

l'article 17 de cette Constitution, qui affirme que "tout citoyen doit avoir le droit de développer son identité matérielle et spirituelle"?

Le débat sur l'enseignement des langues maternelles montre à quel point la Constitution de 1982 [dictée par la junte de 1980] est devenue caduque. L'adoption d'une nouvelle Constitution est devenue une obligation. Ce nouveau texte doit absolument intégrer en tant que droit fondamental la notion d'enseignement dans la langue maternelle et définir la citoyenneté en excluant toute référence ethnique. Bien entendu, la concrétisation du droit d'enseigner le kurde s'inscrit dans un processus qui prendra du temps. Il faut réfléchir à des périodes de transition au cours desquelles on ouvrirait des sections de langue et littérature kurdes pour former des enseignants. En Turquie, près d'un quart de la population est kurde. La moitié des Kurdes de par le monde sont des citoyens turcs. En Irak, pays voisin de la Turquie, le kurde bénéficie du statut de langue officielle à côté de l'arabe. Et pas seulement dans le Kurdistan irakien. **Cengiz Candar**

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Le Moyen-Orient et le repli occidental

Hazem Al-Amin, Al-Hayat (extraits) Londres

Au moment où le président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, était à Beyrouth [13-15 octobre], le Premier ministre irakien, Nouri Al-Maliki, était à Damas. Le premier a officialisé l'intégration du Liban dans le cordon sanitaire que l'Iran tente de mettre en place pour défendre son programme nucléaire; le second est venu légitimer la formation de son gouvernement

pro-iranien à Bagdad. La concomitance de ces deux visites illustre la mainmise que l'Iran a réussi à établir sur la scène moyen-orientale. Même si Maliki représente en quelque sorte le plus petit dénominateur commun entre Américains et Iraniens en Irak, Téhéran y a le bras plus long que Washington, en termes de politique intérieure et extérieure.

L'accueil triomphal réservé à Ahmadinejad à Beyrouth a montré la mollesse du camp pro-occidental au Liban. Mais cela a également prouvé que l'emprise de l'Iran sur le Liban était plus solide que celle de la Syrie. Cette dernière joue sur une combinaison d'influences et d'intérêts où se mêlent pragmatisme et opportunisme, mais où la peur de l'arbitraire joue également un rôle indéniable. Quant à l'emprise iranienne, elle repose sur l'idéologie, sur l'argent et sur l'allégeance confessionnelle pure et simple, sans parler de la mythologie de la lutte contre Israël.

Cette situation est le fruit du repli américain dans le monde. Le vide que cela laisse dans la région est comblé par des acteurs tels que Mahmoud Ahmadinejad et Benyamin Nétanyahou. Certains voudraient croire que de nouveaux facteurs sont en train d'émerger. Ils pensent au Premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, au rapprochement syro-saoudien ou à l'Union européenne. Ce ne sont que des vœux pieux. Rien dans les événements de ces der-

niers mois ne confirme cette analyse. En Irak comme au Liban, la légère avance des candidats anti-iraniens aux élections législatives n'a servi à rien. En 2009, les élections en Iran [qui ont abouti à un deuxième mandat pour Ahmadinejad] ont été entachées de suspicions de fraude. Cela montre l'inefficacité du vote face à un régime du type de celui d'Ahmadinejad.

D'autres pays tentent bien d'offrir une alternative et cherchent eux aussi à combler le vide laissé par les Américains, mais en vain. Il est peut-être vrai que Recep Tayyip Erdogan a dit à Bachar El-Assad que la Syrie devrait assumer les conséquences de tout changement "sur le terrain" au Liban. Il est peut-être vrai également que ce message turc a été assorti de mises en garde américaines et européennes. Mais, à ce moment-là, le changement était déjà engagé. Pour preuve, l'éclatante visite du président iranien à Beyrouth, au cours de laquelle l'Etat et les institutions libanaises semblaient effondrés.

En Irak, l'influence turque n'est pas plus efficace. Les Turcs ont décidé d'avoir une attitude pragmatique face à la mainmise iranienne. Ils se contentent d'être aujourd'hui commerçants à Erbil, intermédiaires à Bagdad et protecteurs des veuves et des orphelins à Mossoul. C'est moins bien que les Iraniens. Eux en sont à installer leur allié Nouri Al-Maliki comme chef de gouvernement. ♦

LE FIGARO samedi 23 - dimanche 24 octobre 2010

Mystérieuse explosion sur une base secrète iranienne

La responsabilité du Mossad est évoquée dans ce nouvel « accident » touchant une installation ultraprotégée des pasdarans.

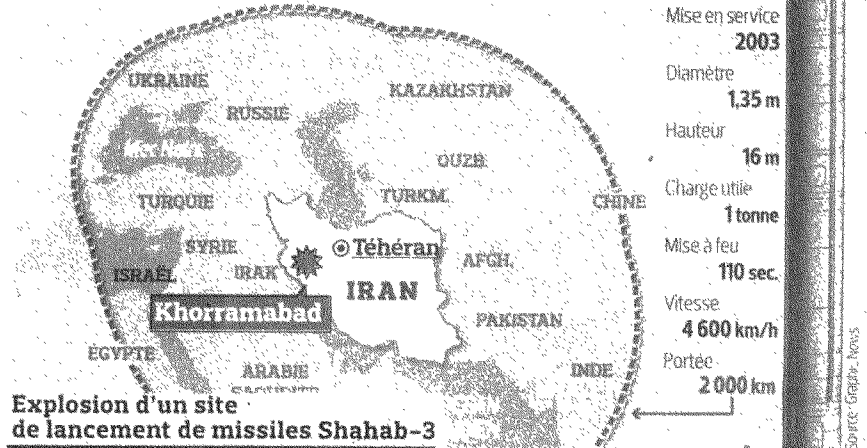
MOYEN-ORIENT Disparitions ou morts inexplicables de scientifiques, défaillances techniques en tous genres, mystérieux virus informatiques, les programmes militaires et nucléaires iraniens subissent régulièrement des accidents qu'il n'est guère vraisemblable d'attribuer au seul hasard.

La triple explosion survenue le 12 octobre dans une base secrète de missiles des pasdarans, les gardiens de la révolution, est la dernière d'une longue série de revers et d'accidents, qui ont tous en commun de toucher les capacités de frappe stratégiques et les programmes nucléaires de l'Iran.

Située près de Khorramabad, dans la province du Lorestan, dans l'ouest de l'Iran, la base Imam Ali est un vaste complexe souterrain de galeries abritant des rampes de lancement de missiles Shahab-3. Dispersés dans des tunnels creusés sous les montagnes de Zagros, les missiles sont ainsi protégés d'une éventuelle attaque aérienne pendant le remplissage de leurs réservoirs en carburant liquide, phase la plus délicate précédant le tir.

Missiles à portée de Tel-Aviv

Le relief escarpé, les difficultés d'accès, et sa proximité avec la frontière occidentale de l'Iran en font un site idéal. La base Imam Ali dépend des brigades al-Hadid, unités chargées des armes balistiques stratégiques au sein des pasdarans, qui forment une véritable armée parallèle, chargée notamment des programmes militaires les plus avancés.



Explosion d'un site de lancement de missiles Shahab-3

Des batteries de DCA et de missiles SAM défendent ce site ultrasecret, dont les missiles, d'une portée d'environ 2 000 kilomètres, sont accessibles au tir d'Israël, mais aussi des bases américaines d'Irak. Selon les spécialistes, les missiles Shahab-3 auraient pu avoir été modifiés pour emporter plusieurs ogives, technique typiquement utilisée pour l'emploi éventuel de charges nucléaires afin de multiplier les cibles.

Selon le site Menapress, une série d'explosions auraient été entendues par les habitants des villages voisins, qui ont cru à un raid aérien israélien.

Guerre de l'ombre

Les autorités iraniennes ont nié qu'il puisse s'agir d'une audacieuse opération secrète, et ont expliqué que l'explosion avait été causée par « un feu survenu dans un dépôt de munitions voisin ». Le bilan officiel de 18 morts et

d'une dizaine de blessés pourrait cependant être beaucoup plus lourd.

La responsabilité du Mossad, les services secrets israéliens, est de nouveau envisagée. D'autres analystes parlent d'un raid aérien. Mais, comme il est d'usage dans la guerre de l'ombre que se livrent israéliens et iraniens, personne n'a évidemment revendiqué quoi que ce soit.

Quels qu'en soient les responsables, cette dernière série d'explosions dans l'une des installations les plus secrètes et les mieux protégées d'Iran, est un coup sérieux porté à Téhéran. Elle affaiblit les capacités de riposte à longue portée de l'Iran dans l'éventualité d'une attaque contre ses sites nucléaires. ■

A. J. (A JÉRUSALEM)

Une junte, un peuple et M. Ahmadinejad



International

Alain Frachon

Il aime la pompe, les honneurs, le bain de foule – tout ce qui laisse entendre qu'il est un dirigeant « normal », pas un paria. Il affectionne la parade militaire, le tapis rouge, les flonflons – tout ce qui signale qu'il est là pour durer, à la tête d'un régime « solide », un régime « comme les autres ». La semaine dernière, le président iranien se faisait acclamer par les chiites du sud du Liban ; cette semaine, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reçoit en fanfare à Téhéran son homologue vénézuélien, Hugo Chavez.

A destination de la communauté internationale, le message est le même : la situation a été normalisée en Iran. La contestation de la réélection du président iranien en juin 2009 appartiendrait au passé. Le « mouvement vert », cette opposition légale et légaliste surgie alors et sans doute privée par la force de sa victoire électorale, a été écrasé. Bref, mieux vaudrait s'y faire à Washington, Londres, Paris ou Berlin, la République islamique est un régime bien installé, à l'abri de tous remous intérieurs. Rien n'est plus faux.

M. Ahmadinejad est un dictateur comme les autres : le bain de foule spontané, il ne peut le pratiquer qu'à l'étranger (et encore en de très rares endroits). A l'intérieur, toute manifestation populaire en sa faveur est organisée, encadrée, par une armée de nervis à son service. Dans l'Iran qu'il a regagné de retour du Liban, les grandes villes, la nuit, sont quadrillées par les milices du régime, les *bassidji*, et sa garde prétorienne, les Gardiens de la révolution. Dans ce pays-là, des milliers d'opposants politiques sont en prison.

On embastille – à l'occasion, on torture, on viole, on fait disparaître – non seulement celle ou celui qui ose élever la voix mais ses proches, enfants, neveux, cousins.

Dans ce pays-là, le régime est si peu sûr de lui-même qu'il fait emprisonner Sajjad, le fils de Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, cette femme un temps condamnée à mort par lapidation. Son crime ? Sajjad aurait parlé de la situation de sa mère à deux journalistes allemands, eux aussi arrêtés. La République islamique, née du renversement de la monarchie en 1979, passe le cap de la trentaine malade, minée de l'intérieur.

C'est un régime qui fait surveiller les campus universitaires par des bandes de petites frappes armées de planches à clous et de gourdins ; un régime où l'une des principales activités de l'Etat est de surveiller, contrôler, intimider, terroriser la population. Le pays qui reçoit en grande pompe le « frère » Chavez, en ce triste automne 2010, vit en état de siège, à l'heure d'une loi martiale non déclarée. Pourquoi ?

Parce qu'il a peur d'une société civile qui lui échappe, expliquent admirablement Ahmad Salamatian et Sara Daniel dans un livre-clé pour comprendre l'Iran d'aujourd'hui : *Iran, la révolution verte, la fin de l'islam politique* (éditions Delavilla, 260 p., 17 euros).

Le désaveu est, très largement, économique. Chômage de masse et inflation y sont la résultante d'une économie où la rente pétrolière et gazière part en subventions – souvent en faveur des plus pauvres, c'est vrai –, au lieu d'irriguer les investissements de l'ave-

nir.

Mais la crise que vit la République islamique est plus profonde. En Iran, ce qui frappe, et qui est explosif, c'est le décalage croissant entre la nature du régime et celle de la société. D'un côté, une population jeune, 70 millions d'habitants, pour plus de la moitié née après la révolution de 1979 et très largement constituée d'une classe moyenne éduquée.

Le pays qui reçoit en grande pompe le « frère » Chavez vit en état de siège, à l'heure d'une loi martiale non déclarée

Ces Iraniens, et surtout ces Iraniennes, sont ouverts sur l'étranger : le pays compte 28 millions d'internautes, rapportent Ahmad Salamatian et Sara Daniel.

La population étudiante est nombreuse, majoritairement féminine : près de quatre millions de jeunes sur les campus universitaires. « C'est une nouvelle société iranienne en gestation depuis la fin des épreuves de la terre révolutionnaire et de la guerre [les années 1980], une société en recherche d'une représentation politique », dit Salamatian – et qui l'a peut-être trouvée dans le « mouvement vert ».

Le régime ne s'y est pas trompé. Depuis plusieurs années déjà, il sait qu'une bonne partie de ladite société est en passe de lui échapper ; elle se dégage du « contrôle idéologique de l'Etat islamique », observent les auteurs. Le premier, ancien élu d'Ispahan, exilé en

France, est l'un des plus fins analystes de l'Iran ; la seconde, qui l'interroge dans le livre, est rédactrice en chef au *Nouvel Observateur* et spécialiste du Proche-Orient.

Tous les régimes totalitaires connaissent ce moment postrévolutionnaire, quand s'émancipe une partie de la société civile. Moment dangereux pour eux. En Iran, face au péril, un camp, celui des durs, s'est emparé d'un pouvoir jusqu'alors protéiforme. Autour du couple que forment le Guide, Ali Khamenei, et le président, s'est structurée une sorte de dictature militaire qui repose sur le corps des Gardiens de la révolution (une armée de 170 000 hommes). Elle a deux objets : préserver le pouvoir politique à l'aide d'un appareil répressif tentaculaire ; préserver le pouvoir économique, au travers de plusieurs centaines de sociétés contrôlées par les Gardiens.

Face à cette junte, tout le monde ou à peu près : les religieux, aujourd'hui en passe d'être évincés du pouvoir ; les laïques ; les progressistes, les conservateurs, etc. C'est cette opposition multiforme, à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur du régime, que veulent incarner les trois chefs de file du « mouvement vert » : Mohammad Khatami, Mir Hussein Moussavi et Mehdi Karubi. Harcelés par les services et leurs nervis, ils n'en jouent pas moins la carte légaliste. Ils savent qu'il y a un consensus contre la violence dans une société iranienne qui en a trop connu depuis trente ans.

Anciens du sérail, ils veulent exploiter les failles d'un pouvoir de plus en plus isolé. Ils posent une question qui taraude une partie de l'équipe dirigeante : quelle est la durée de vie moyenne d'une junte militaro-affairiste de plus en plus dépourvue de base sociale ? ■

Iraqis allied with U.S. are lured back to insurgency

BAQUBA, IRAQ

Awakening Councils lose members to coaxing and coercion from Al Qaeda

BY TIMOTHY WILLIAMS
AND DURAJD ADNAN

Members of the U.S.-allied Awakening Councils have quit or been dismissed from their positions in significant numbers in recent months, prey to an intensive recruitment campaign by the Sunni insurgency, according to government officials, current and former members of the Awakening and insurgents.

Although there are no firm figures, security and political officials say hundreds of the well-disciplined fighters — many of whom have gained extensive knowledge about the U.S. military — appear to have rejoined Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia. Beyond that, officials say that even many of the Awakening fighters still on the Iraqi government payroll, possibly thousands of them, covertly aid the insurgency.

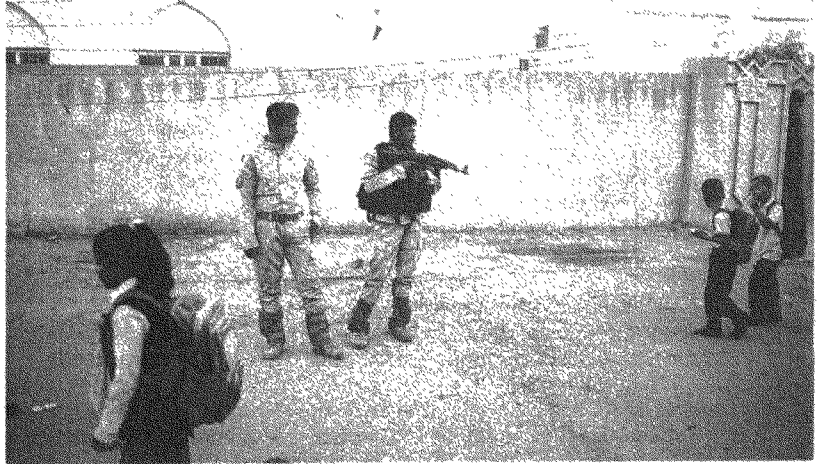
The defections have been driven in part by frustration with the Shiite-led government, which Awakening members say is intent on destroying them, as well as by pressure from Al Qaeda. The exodus has accelerated since the inconclusive Iraqi parliamentary elections in March, which have left Sunnis uncertain of retaining what little political influence they have and which appear to have provided Al Qaeda new opportunities to lure back fighters.

The Awakening members' switch in loyalties poses a new threat to the tenuous social and political balance in Iraq during the country's ongoing political crisis and as the U.S. military prepares to withdraw next year.

"The Awakening doesn't know what the future holds because it is not clear what the government intends for them," said Nathum al-Jubouri, a former Awakening Council leader in Salahuddin Province who recently quit the organization.

"At this point, Awakening members have two options: Stay with the government, which would be a threat to their lives, or help Al Qaeda by being a double agent," he said. "The Awakening is like a database for Al Qaeda that can be used to target places that had been out of reach before."

The Awakening began in 2006, when Sunni insurgents and tribal leaders began turning against Al Qaeda and other extremists — a change that played a major role in pulling Iraq back from



AYMAN OGHANNA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Lured by insurgency An Awakening Council checkpoint in Baghdad. Some council members appear to have rejoined Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia.

deadly sectarian warfare. The former insurgents were initially paid by the U.S. military, with promises that they would eventually get jobs with the government.

But Awakening leaders and security officials say that since the spring, as many as several thousand Awakening fighters have quit, been fired, stopped showing up for duty or ceased picking up paychecks.

During the past four months, the atmosphere has become particularly charged as the Awakening members find themselves squeezed between Iraqi security forces, who have arrested hundreds of current and former members accused of acts of recent terrorism, and Al Qaeda's brutal recruitment techniques.

As part of the militants' unusual, but often convincing, strategy, Awakening members whom Al Qaeda fails to kill are then sought out to rejoin the insurgency. They are offered larger paychecks than their \$300 a month government pay and told they would be far safer.

The government, which says it is trying to integrate the Awakening into broader Iraqi society, has further angered the group recently by confiscating its weapons, saying Awakening fighters lack proper permits, and stripping some fighters of their ranks, which the government says were not properly earned. The pay of some Awakening leaders has also been reduced.

Iraqi officials in Baghdad say they are aware of only a handful of Awakening members who have quit recently, and they are unapologetic about the government's treatment of the fighters.

"Fighting the Al Qaeda organization does not mean you are giving service to the government or to the people, and

that you deserve gifts, rank, presents or benefits," said Zuhair al-Chalabi, head of the National Reconciliation Committee, set up to heal the country's sectarian divides. "It is a national duty."

The Awakening has long complained about Iraq's reluctance to hire more of its members into the army and the police, and about receiving salaries late.

As of July, less than half — 41,000 of 94,000 — of the Awakening's fighters had been offered jobs by the government, according to the U.S. Defense Department. Much of the employment has been temporary and involved menial labor. The government has hired only about 9,000 Awakening members for the security forces, with officials blaming budget constraints.

Leaders of the Awakening, who so far do not appear to be among those leaving, say they are not surprised about the defections given what they call the group's marginalization by the government and its abandonment by the U.S. military.

U.S. forces oversaw the Awakening in some areas of Iraq as recently as last year, including in Diyala Province, the violent area northeast of Baghdad that is one of Al Qaeda's remaining strongholds. The United States relinquished control of the group as it began ceding more oversight of security to the Iraqi government. The U.S. military declined to comment on the troubles.

One Awakening leader in Diyala, Bakr Karkhi, said during an interview that nearly two dozen of his fighters had rejoined Al Qaeda during the past few weeks, a process that he said had been occurring throughout Sunni areas of Iraq. Other fighters, he said, had ab-

ruptly stopped reporting for duty.

"I became suspicious when some of them started making questionable comments, so I expelled them," he said. "Others left the Awakening on their own and then disappeared from their villages. We found out they were conducting illegal operations and cooperating with armed groups, including Al Qaeda."

Awakening fighters say recent entreaties by Al Qaeda — messages that have been passed along by relatives or posted on Web sites — have included pledges not to disrupt tribal traditions, one of the issues that drove a wedge between the majority of Sunni tribes and the insurgency.

A man who identified himself as a member of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia said recently that the recruitment of dis-

affected Awakening members had been successful in Baquba, capital of Diyala.

"Many of those who called themselves the Awakening felt remorse," said the man, who used the nom de guerre Abu Mohammed al-Daeni. "They believed they were making a mistake by helping the occupiers and have now returned to Al Qaeda."

Diyala has also witnessed a number of events in which police say Awakening fighters have helped Al Qaeda detonate bombs and commit other violent acts.

Muthana al-Tamimi, head of the provincial council's security committee, said that Awakening members were clearly returning to the insurgency, but that Baghdad should share the blame.

"The Awakening needs government support," he said. "They're not getting

it, so they're an easy bite for terrorists."

Since January, more than 90 Awakening fighters in Diyala have been arrested on suspicion of terrorism, the authorities said. During that same period, about 100 Awakening members have been killed or wounded by Al Qaeda, according to the Awakening. The police acknowledge that almost half of those arrested were later released for lack of evidence, bolstering the Awakening's claims of harassment.

Yasir Ghazi contributed reporting from Baghdad, and Iraqi employees of The New York Times from Baghdad, Diyala, Salahuddin, Kirkuk, Babil and Anbar Provinces.

Rudaw.Net 17 October 2010

Arabs and Turcomans Speak out Against Kurdish Demands in Kirkuk

By NAMO ABDULLA
Rudaw

ERBIL, Iraqi Kurdistan: Most Sunni Arab and Turcoman parties in the oil-rich disputed city of Kirkuk threatened yesterday that they would give up backing Iyad Allawi, a secular-shitte candidate, if he does not make a clear stance against some demands of ethnic Kurds in the north.

Their possible withdrawal would complicate the already-months-long political stalemate that was caused by the failure of elections to produce a clear winner in March.

In a press conference in Kirkuk, they especially insisted on their objection to the annexation of the multi-ethnic city to the federal region of Kurdistan, a result that could be drawn, if Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution—which calls for the conduction of a referendum to determine the fate of the disputed regions— is implemented.

"We all agree that we will not recognize any government that is formed on a deal made about Kirkuk," said Hussein Ali Salih Jbwri, a senior leader at Arab's Political Council in Kirkuk, after a meeting he said he had with representatives of Arabs and Turcomans in Kirkuk.

Jbwri added that "if Iraqiya slate doesn't make a clear position [regarding Kurdish demands], we would ask our lawmakers in Kirkuk to ally with other coalitions rather than Iraqiya."



Residents buy CD at a market in Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad October 12, 2010.----
Photo/Reuters

"We believe Kirkuk is a key to divide Iraq."

Kirkuk is a multi-ethnic city where the Kurds and Iraqiya equally gained 6 seats in Parliamentary elections more than seven months ago. But the Kurds say the election results did not tell their real number, which they estimate to be 60 percent, a possible percentage enough to allow Kirkuk join Kurdistan.

"It is better just to have the caretaker government led by Maliki than having a government that is formed after concessions on Kirkuk," said Jbwri, adding that they have collected 110 signatures to prevent a census—which that would pave the way for the implementation of Article 140— from happening.

"The Kurdish agenda is the most dangerous card they use in negotiations," said Munir al-Qafli, a Turcoman senior leader, in an interview with Kurdish-language newspaper Aso.

But Khalid Shwani, a Kurdish legis-

lator in Kirkuk, said that the 19 demands of Kurds "represent their constitutional entitlement", adding that they are in the interest of the Iraqi nation in general.

Shwani urged Arab and Turcoman politicians to "give up any kind of adversarial positions" against Kurds who merely ask for a constitutional resolution of one of the most serious problems of the country.

The call of the Arab and Turcoman parties came after they had forced Kurds to back down and delay a census, which was supposed to be held on October 24, to December 5.

Though the Kurds say that they would not accept any further delay, many still believe that the census would be held by the end of 2010.

Kurdish rebels tell Turkey: keep your promises or ceasefire is over

By Catrina Stewart in the Qandil mountains, northern Iraq

Kurdish rebels will end their military ceasefire at the end of the month if Turkey hounds its supporters and prepares for an attempt to rout the group after 26 years of conflict, their leader told The Independent from his mountain hideout in northern Iraq.

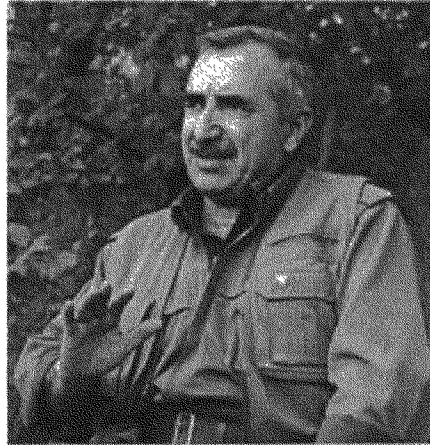
Murat Karayilan said time was running out for the Turkish authorities to pursue a peaceful solution amid suspicions that Turkey was drumming up support from Syria and Iran to rout the guerrilla group, which has entrenched itself in the mountains along Iraq's border with Turkey and Iran.

"During all of [our] ceasefires, the Turkish state has used these periods to try to surround and destroy us," Mr Karayilan, the de facto leader of the 5,000-strong Kurdish Workers' Party, or PKK, said from a secret location in the Qandil mountains in northern Iraq.

"We will wait another 15 days," Mr Karayilan said at the weekend. "If something positive develops, we will extend the unilateral ceasefire. If there are no concrete steps, we will evaluate developments and do what we have to do to defend ourselves."

The PKK has fought since the 1980s to establish an independent Kurdish state separate from Turkey, but in the face of punishing Turkish attacks has rowed back on its demands and will now settle for cultural and political freedoms in Kurdish-majority areas. The conflict has cost tens of thousands of lives, most of them Kurdish.

The PKK had held to a 14-month ceasefire until a suspected PKK proxy blew up a military bus in Istanbul in June. The PKK agreed to renew its ceasefire after Turkish officials promised the movement's jailed leader,



Abdullah Ocalan, that it would seek peaceful solutions to end the conflict, the movement's leaders say. The PKK recently extended its ceasefire to 30 October to give the two sides time to pursue a peaceful solution.

But the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has backtracked on promised reforms for the Kurds, including a de facto amnesty for PKK fighters who gave themselves up, in part because of fears that the army and opposition parties will seize on any concessions as a sign of weakness.

Instead, the state has continued with military operations against the Kurdish guerrillas, has rounded up elected pro-Kurdish politicians and human rights defenders accused of supporting the movement's ideology, and has sought Iranian and Syrian assistance to destroy the group. Mr Erdogan has pledged to "annihilate" the PKK, promising that they will "drown in their own blood".

The PKK's leaders have been forced to take elaborate precautions to survive. Reaching the PKK's base in the Qandil mountains involves a four-hour drive from Erbil, the capital of the Kurdish Autonomous Region. Flanked by a dozen guerrillas, Mr Karayilan arrives for the meeting at a tent hidden to the casual observer, and any electronic device that might pinpoint his location is surrendered to a PKK checkpoint.

Bands of fast-moving guerrillas have been able to outrun Turkish offensives, as well as to fend off assaults by their Kurdish brethren in Iraqi Kurdistan. But the movement now fears that Ankara is planning a more sophisticated operation targeting the PKK's leaders with the help of surveillance technology from the US and special forces.

While Turkey may have enlisted regional support in its fight with the PKK, it remains unclear if Ankara would get the necessary support from the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq, which has long tolerated the PKK's presence along its borders. Moreover, some observers fear such a strategy could prompt an even bloodier response.

"If attacks are carried out, all the Kurdish people will be part of the defence strategy," says Mr Karayilan, in a reference to uprisings in Turkish cities, where the PKK has many supporters. "The issue is not between the Turkish state and the PKK. It is between the Turkish state and the Kurdish people." Many Kurds believe the PKK played a critical role in drawing attention to the Kurdish question, but its attacks on Turkish military targets have prompted the US and the European Union, among others, to list it as a terrorist organisation.

A product of socialist ideology, the PKK was formed by a group of Kurdish and Turkish students in the late 1970s, emerging only later as a military movement in response to repressive policies against the Kurds.



In Iraq, Counting Heads Is A Political Headache

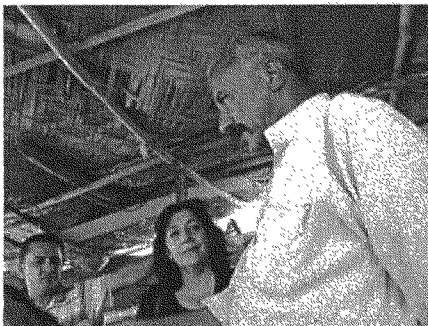
by Peter Kenyon

NPR : National Public Radio

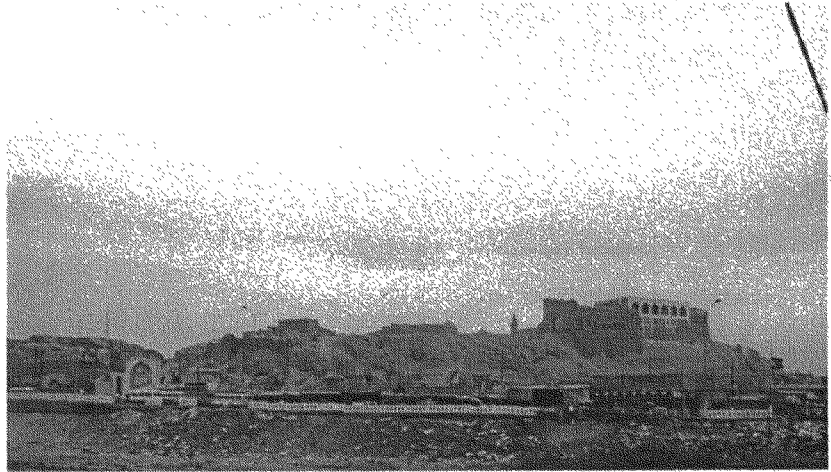
Iraq hasn't had a full census since 1987, and shortly before it was due to launch one this fall, the government postponed it until December.

Besides providing baseline data for all kinds of urgently needed programs, the census is one part of a plan to ease Kurdish-Arab tensions in the northern part of the country, where the mixed-population city of Kirkuk has become a flash point for the country's ethnic, religious and sectarian divisions.

In a poor, mostly Arab neighborhood of Kirkuk, a slender, elderly man who gives his name as Abu Adel sells potato chips and soft drinks in a reed-covered lean-to fronting a mud shack. He's embarrassed by his family's tiny, dirty home, but his biggest fear is that the plainclothed men who have been



Abu Adel, originally from Nassariya in southern Iraq, has lived in Kirkuk since the 1980s. He says plainclothed men have harassed him, demanding his papers and asking why he hasn't left Kirkuk. Arabs like Abu Adel, lured north in the 1980s with promises of housing and jobs, are now under intense pressure to move back as Kurds repopulate the area.



Kirkuk's ancient citadel is seen from a distance. The city is a polyglot mix of Kurds, Arabs, Christians and Turkmen, and also has the largest oil fields in northern Iraq. Kurds complain that Christians and Turkomen are behind the recent delay in a national census. Critics say that's because huge numbers of Kurds have been imported in recent years, far more than were expelled by Saddam Hussein decades ago.

harassing him — he suspects they're Kurdish security men — will return and force them to leave.

"About three weeks ago, they came and questioned me," he says. "They said, 'Where are your papers? Where are you from? Why are you living here?'"

Abu Adel says he would leave if the government would give him the roughly \$15,000 it promised to help him relocate. He says one of his sons got the payment and returned to their native Nassariya in the south. But without the cash, he can't afford to follow.

An Ancient, Polyglot City — With Oil

Kirkuk has thrived along the banks of the Khasa River for a long time. It's one of several places that claim to be the oldest continuously inhabited city on Earth. Assyrians, Kurds, Turkmen and Arabs all have historical ties to Kirkuk, but over the centuries the demographics have been dramatically — and sometimes brutally — transformed, both before and after large quantities of oil were discovered in 1927.

In the 1980s, Saddam Hussein's forces uprooted thousands of Kurdish families and leveled their villages. Arab families were moved up to Kirkuk from the south, often lured, like Abu Adel's family, by promises of jobs and inexpensive housing.

After Saddam was toppled in 2003, the fate of Kirkuk became a sensitive issue. A three-step mechanism was

devised. First, the "Arabization" of Kirkuk would be reversed, then a census would measure the relative sizes of the various communities, and finally a referendum would determine whether Kirkuk residents want to be part of the Kurdish-controlled north.

Allegations Of Fraud

Mahmoud Mohammed Majid, a Kurdish member of the provincial council, says waiting until December for the census is one thing, but he worries that those behind the delay are actually seeking to block it altogether.

"You know," he says, "we have no problem with the Turkmen here. The problem is the Arabs — those who still follow this Saddam policy of Arabizing the Kurdish areas."

At the headquarters of the Asaish, the Kurdish security force in Kirkuk, spokesman Farhat Mohammed Ali denies that his men are harassing Arabs and pressuring them to leave. But he says too many of them are taking the relocation money under false pretenses.

"According to the law, once they get the money they have one month to leave," Ali says. "But many of them take the money and move to another neighborhood in Kirkuk, and bribe the local mayor to let them stay there illegally."

Fear Of Kurdish Domination

But Kirkuk's Arabs and Turkmen say past injustices against the Kurds, real as they may have been, are only part

of the story. Najat Hussein Hassan, a Turkman member of the provincial council, says since the fall of the old regime, the Kurds have been busy repopulating Kirkuk — with staggering success.

"It's true that Saddam displaced thousands of Kurds," he says. "But after the fall of the regime, the number of Kurds who were brought in here, it's something like 500,000. This number is huge; it's illogical."

Kurds dispute that figure. But Nermeen al-Mufti, a spokeswoman for the Iraqi Turkmen Front, says if the government tries to force the census on Kirkuk now,

it will trigger resistance well beyond Kirkuk.

"The first thing is, Turkmen and Arabs, not only in Kirkuk — in Kirkuk, Diyala, Salahudeen, Mosul and Anbar — they are going to boycott it," she insists.

The Burden Of Diversity

Majid, the Kurdish council member, smiles wearily at the heightened tensions that have greeted this latest attempt to unravel the Kirkukian Knot. He says his city is proud of its diverse heritage, and he believes most people would be happy just to get along. But that, it seems, is not Kirkuk's fate, he

says.

"This kind of cultural and ethnic diversity — in a place like America it's a blessing, a source of richness. But here it's a curse," he says. "It's the same with the oil. For some it's a blessing, but here in Kirkuk it's a curse."

For now, Iraq's first full census since 1987 is set for early December. But some Iraqis wonder if they will someday be seen as following in the footsteps of Lebanon, where political and religious divisions have prevented a national headcount since 1932.



U.S. confirms commitment to PKK fight

WASHINGTON, October 19, 2010 (UPI) -

Washington has increased its intelligence sharing with Turkey to help with its efforts to take on Kurdish militants, the U.S. defense secretary said.

Turkish lawmakers last week approved a mandate that allows the military to cross the border with Iraq to take on militants with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK.

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates told members of the American Turkish Council in Washington that the United States was a strong strategic ally with Ankara when it comes to Kurdish militants.

"In response to the rise in PKK terrorist attacks against Turkish military forces and civilians over the past year, the U.S. has increased its efforts to crack down on PKK criminal enterprises, enhanced its intelligence

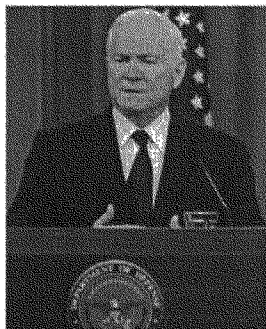
support, and reached out to our European allies to encourage them to freeze PKK assets in Europe," he was quoted by the Pentagon as saying.

The European Union, Iraq, the United States and several others list the PKK as a terrorist organization. German, Italian and Belgian authorities rounded up scores of suspected PKK militants during the spring because of recruitment efforts at alleged training camps.

Washington froze the assets of several alleged PKK leaders for their role in drug trafficking.

Turkish authorities estimate there are around 4,000 militants with the PKK operating from the mountainous border region along the Turkish border with Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Ankara last year tried to find a diplomatic solution to the PKK issue, though that effort was upended when a court decided to disband a pro-Kurdish political party.



San Francisco Chronicle

OCTOBER 20, 2010

Marathon Signs Deals to Enter Iraq's Kurdish Region

(Bloomberg) -- Marathon Oil Corp. signed its first agreements to explore for petroleum in Iraq's Kurdistan region, acquiring positions in four exploration blocks as the company seeks to boost crude production.

Under contracts signed with the Kurdistan Regional Government, Marathon will have an 80 percent ownership and operate two blocks nor-

theast of Erbil, the Houston-based company said in a statement today. The Kurdistan government will hold the remaining 20 percent stake. Financial terms weren't disclosed.

The company also said it will have a 20 percent working interest in the Atrush block and 25 percent in the Sarsang block north-northwest of Erbil, Kurdistan's capital. Oil producers in northern Iraq were forced to halt exports last year after a dispute involving Kurdish authorities and Iraq's central government.

"There's obviously potential pitfalls associated with being there, but I think that it's worth trying it and seeing what happens," said Philip Weiss, an analyst at Argus Research in New York who has a "buy" rating on Marathon shares and owns none.

Marathon sees "a good, high-potential exploration opportunity" that is in the early stages, said Lee Warren, a



company spokeswoman. She declined to comment on a timeline for exploration.

Iraq has the second-largest oil reserves in the Middle East, after Saudi Arabia, and wants to more than double its current crude output of 2.4 million barrels a day. To raise oil production, the government awarded a dozen service contracts to international oil companies including Exxon Mobil Corp. and OAO Lukoil in two licensing rounds last year.

Marathon rose 58 cents, or 1.7 percent, to \$35.68 at 4 p.m. in New York Stock Exchange composite trading. The shares have risen 14 percent this year.

Turkey s paradigm shift on Kurdish question and KCK trial



LALE KEMAL
Columnists

Turkey has only recently reached a point of political maturity in using nonmilitary means in the 26-year-long fight against terror. It was little more than a year ago that a democratic opening process has been launched in an attempt to deal with the difficult question of addressing the Kurdish problem politically, thus, lessening the violent activities of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The democratic opening process has, however, so far failed to yield tangible legal arrangements to ease Kurdish grievances such as education in one s mother tongue. We have to bear in mind that the basic cause of the Kurdish question is the denial of education in the mother tongue.

The democratic opening process was crippled in the very beginning, let alone being able to address, at least gradually, Kurdish demands. Those -- mainly PKK members -- who returned home from the mountains as part of state efforts to reconcile with the Kurds, for example, were later put in jail.

Before the democratic opening process, more than 150 Kurds, including several elected mayors, were put in jail for alleged links with the PKK, and their trial began at the start of this week. The suspects demand to deliver their defense in Kurdish was denied by the court. Their lawyers, in the meantime, argued that the indictment of about 7,500 pages does not contain any serious evidence of their alleged subversive activities.

The trial of about 150 Kurds suspected of membership in the urban extension of the PKK, the Kurdish Communities Union (KCK), appears to be more of a political case rather than being

based purely on legal grounds. It has had the potential to seriously spoil the already fragile process of resorting to nonmilitary means in finding a solution to the Kurdish question.

Added to the problem is the atmosphere created by the general election due to take place in June of next year and that would make it difficult to meet Kurdish demands such as education in one s mother tongue. Murat Karayilan, a senior member of the PKK in the organization s main camp in the Kandil Mountains in northern Iraq, referred to the Kurdish-language education courses provided for the residents of Makhmour camp in northern Iraq, saying it could be an example for teaching Kurds in their mother tongue.

There are around 13,000 of Turkey s Kurds, including children and women, living in the Makhmour camp since they were forced to leave their villages in the mid-1990s. The camp is also renowned as a recruitment base for the PKK.

Despite many shortcomings, including those that I mentioned above, Turkey has for the first time in its 26 year-long struggle against the PKK and in general with the Kurdish question made a paradigm shift by adopting non-military means. State contacts with the imprisoned leader of the PKK, Abdullah Ocalan, on supposedly broader issues and visits by former Kurdish deputies such as Aysel Tuluk, who is also the former lawyer for Abdullah Ocalan, have been all part of this paradigm shift, which luckily has not created the negative public reaction that people have long been conditioned to give by being brainwashed into associating Kurds with terrorist activities.

According to the known figures, more than 50,000 people -- including Kurds, Turkish security forces as well as civilians -- have died as a result of Turkey s counter-insurgency campaign against

the PKK, which started the violence in 1984 in attempt to push for the creation of an independent state. Now it has been demanding autonomy.

The state, in the meantime, has never bothered to stay within the rule of law during the fight against the PKK. Respecting the rule of law during the fight against the PKK is also a new phenomenon. The fight against terror has also led to about 17,000 extrajudicial killings of mostly Kurds. A Turkish colonel who is now retired, Col. Cemal Temiz^z, has been charged with 20 killings mainly in the Kurdish-dominated Southeast and which took place during his time as a paramilitary commander in Cizre, a town in ^1rnak province on the Syrian border, between 1993 and 1995.

The fact that those allegedly responsible for extrajudicial killings are being tried is a step in the right direction towards the justice that may finally be served.

Dilek Kurban, an academic and a columnist for the Radikal daily, recalls that the blame belongs with politicians concerning the KCK trial since it is a weak Parliament that has failed to adopt laws that clearly differentiate between crimes and acts that fall under the freedom of expression.

There is no question of Turkey s desperate need to have a strong Parliament that is filled by more democratic-minded deputies. Whatever the current weaknesses are the paradigm shift within the state and, in particular, within the government in dealing with the Kurdish question through nonmilitary means is a positive step that deserves some credit.



OCTOBER 21, 2010

Iraq's Kurds Emerge As Kingmakers As Iran Tries To Flex Its Muscle

by Robert Tait

RFE/RL's Radio Free Iraq contributed to this report

The leader of Iraq's Kurds has invited the heads of rival political groupings to a summit aimed at reaching a deal to give the rudderless country a power-sharing government after a seven-month impasse.

The move by Masud Barzani, president of Iraqi Kurdistan, is intended to create an administration representing the country's main religious and ethnic groups, according to his chief of staff, Fuad Hussein.

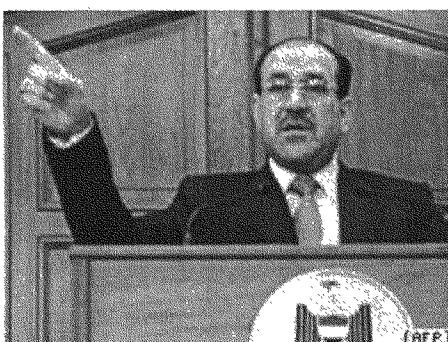
"He is going to try to bring the leaders of the four lists together in a roundtable meeting, we hope, in the near future, so that they can discuss this matter seriously," Hussein says. "Otherwise the Iraqi society will be very much divided and it is very dangerous to marginalize the Sunni or, the Shi'a, or the Kurds. [The] Iraqi government, we think, must be based on an agreement of consensus."

The initiative comes as a Kurdish delegation prepares to report back on the outcome of one-on-one discussions with the various blocs in Baghdad.

It reflects the Kurds' pivotal role as kingmakers, a status that could affect the outcome of an Iran-brokered deal among Shi'ite factions intended to pave the way for a new Tehran-backed government under Nuri al-Maliki, the current prime minister.

Maliki Receptive

Maliki was endorsed by Tehran for a second term this week when he traveled to Qom, home of the Iranian



Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki

religious establishment. He is believed to have met there with the self-exiled radical Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and won their approval to form a new government.

But that agreement, involving an alliance between Maliki and Sadr, is widely thought to be untenable without the support of the Kurdish bloc, which won 57 seats in March's inconclusive parliamentary elections.

Now Maliki, whose pro-Shi'ite State of Law coalition finished second in the elections behind Iyad Allawi's Sunni-based Al-Iraqiyah grouping, is trying to woo the Kurds by agreeing to most of the conditions spelled out in a paper setting out their terms for a new government.

Kurdish officials say he has appeared receptive to a list of demands that includes a broad-based government and the implementation of constitutional measures that the Kurds hope would give them control of the disputed oil-rich area around the city of Kirkuk.

However, Joost Hiltermann, deputy Middle East and North Africa program director at the International Crisis Group, says the Kurds would be unlikely to agree to a Maliki government that excluded Allawi's faction. And, he adds, no government can be formed at this stage without Kurdish support.

"This makes the Kurds kingmakers and that's a role they very much like to play because that affords them an opportunity to press for their key demands," Hiltermann says. "No government can be formed without that, and so some accommodation has to be found to bring in the Kurds. But the Kurds have both demands on issues that they deeply care about -- such as Kirkuk -- and also about their own long-term security. And for that they need to be in government and they need their friends to be in government, and they cannot afford to go in bed with Mr. Maliki alone because that will not give them any long-term security."

U.S. Just A Bystander?

The formation of a pro-Iranian government would be a blow to the United States, which -- having pre-



Masud Barzani, president of Iraqi Kurdistan

viously urged an end to Iraq's political stalemate -- has reportedly changed tack by appealing to the Kurds to avoid rushing into any political deals that might favor Tehran.

On a visit to Anbar province on October 16, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq James Jeffrey called for the formation of the "right" government without "outside interference," an apparent reference to Iran. He also said any new arrangement must include Allawi, who has accused Tehran of trying to impose its will in Iraq.

"We want to see an inclusive, representative, accountable government set up as quickly as possible. 'Inclusive' means representing all the main political groupings in Iraq including the Iraqiyah grouping that did so well in this province," Jeffrey said.

He added that while "everybody wants to see a government as soon as possible,... it is important we see the right government carried out in a process that will not see interference from outside and that will represent the will of the Iraqi people."

"We, as non-Iraqis, of course, have no right to -- nor do we -- support any particular individual for any position," Jeffrey said. "But we urge all Iraqis and all your neighbors to respect this independent and democratic process."

But Mahmud Othman, a prominent Kurdish parliament member, is dismissive of such appeals and says U.S. influence has waned dramatically in favor of Iran since the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraq in August.

"I don't care what they [the Americans]

say. I don't depend on the role of the Americans. The Americans are giving in to Iran inside Iraq. They have no role. They are not important," Othman says. The U.S. role in Iraq, he adds, is "decreasing by the day."

"Iran has the upper hand and Iran is winning. I think the Obama administration, they want to get out of Iraq. They want to have less and less obligation to Iraq and they don't care what happens in Iraq. They always say Iraqis should form their government, they don't interfere. So nobody cares much [about] their role."

'Iraqi Agenda'

However, Hussein, Barzani's chief of staff, insists the Kurdish leader's roundtable proposal has U.S. backing and the Kurds are in contact "on a daily basis with the Americans."

"In fact, this evening we will receive the ambassador here. Yesterday, Vice President [Joe] Biden phoned President Barzani," Hussein says to underscore the point. "So we are in contact with the Americans, Americans who are in Baghdad but also the administration in Washington, D.C., and I think they are

supporting the idea of President Barzani to invite the leaders of the four lists for discussion in Kurdistan."

Hussein says the Kurds are determined to use their key role to ensure that Al-Iraqiyah -- widely seen as allies of the Kurdish bloc -- is included. "We will stay part of the solution," he says. "We are not going to be part of a conflict between the Shi'a and the Sunni. We don't want that, and, in fact, we will try to bring them together."

Meanwhile, Al-Iraqiyah, says it too is reaching out to Maliki and Sadr. The bloc's spokesman, Maysoun al-Damaloogi, denies it is following a U.S. game plan.

"We are working according to the Iraqi agenda, not the American one," Damaloogi says. "Our goal is not to satisfy the Americans. Our goal is to build Iraq. In any case, we are going to meet with all the other parties, including the State of Law and the Sadrist. Our goal is not to exclude any party or bloc but to form a government with the participation of all in the process of decision making."

In the end, an all-inclusive coalition

with ties to the United States may suit Maliki by providing a counterweight to Iranian dominance, believes Paul Rogers of the Institute of Peace Studies at Bradford University in England.

"Mr. Maliki does not want to see the country completely overshadowed by Iran, and from his perspective, even though he may be beholden to the Iranians to ensure a reasonably secure government, he will also want to try and retain some American involvement," Rogers says. "It would be a setback for the United States, but the nature of the public politics in Iraq is that it's not at all clear that the United States would be completely excluded. In fact, I would really strongly doubt that."

Rogers predicts that "the Iranians will continue to play it very strong in terms of trying to maintain their influence." But he adds: "Maliki is a very street-wise politician. He will want to have more than one source of potential power and for that reason alone, I think he will continue to want to deal with the United States."

INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND CONFLICT.....OCTOBER 11, 2010

Noam Chomsky points North Ireland model for Kurdish problem

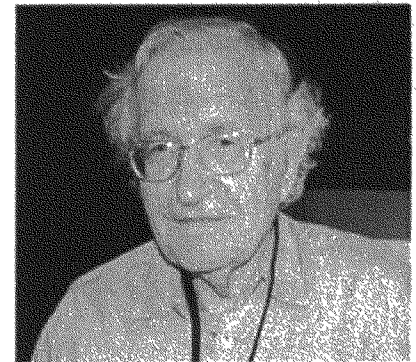
By Patrick Mac Manus-
International Peace and Conflict

Noam Chomsky says the North Ireland peace process can be a model for solution of the Kurdish problem. Chomsky — a world-renowned linguist and professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology — Richard Falk and other academics, intellectuals and journalists met this weekend at Istanbul Bilgi University for the 7th annual "Gathering in Istanbul for Freedom of Expression."

In an interview for ANF Turkish Service Chomsky said the success of North Ireland peace process can be a model for the solution of the Kurdish problem. He pointed out some recent positive developments on Kurdish issue but warned that more needed to be done. He said that he supports the process and called for support of political and

civil powers. Chomsky said that Kurdish problem can be solved by carefully examining Irish and Spanish models. He said that all sides should listen to each other, understand their needs and show every effort to reach to a satisfying solution for both sides. Chomsky also said that he supports a general amnesty for Kurdish guerillas.

One of the prominent linguistics of the world Chomsky said the Turkish governments denial of education in mother language is a sign of insincerity. "There are television and radio channels in Kurdish but the prohibition of education in Kurdish is totally unacceptable" he said. Chomsky criticized U.S. for its role in the war between Turkey and the PKK reminding that Washington was the leading provider of arms to Turkey during the war. He also accused U.S. press institutions which has offices in Turkey of auto-censorship saying the events in Turkey is not covered in a neutral manner by the U.S. press. He



Chomsky — a world-renowned linguist and professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Chomsky says the North Ireland peace process can be a model for solution of the Kurdish problem.

said that U.S. is an ally to Turkey and supports Ankara in every manner. He reminded the support of Washington regime during Saddam era when Kurds were massacred with chemical weapons and called Kurds to always remember what happened. "U.S. was never a friend to Kurdish people. Kurds should understand this. Kurds has no friends but the mountains. They should remember this," he said.

La guerre d'Irak, au jour le jour

Patrice Claude
et Rémy Ourdan
(avec Damien Leloup)

Environ 400 000 documents militaires américains sur la guerre d'Irak, obtenus par WikiLeaks, ont été transmis avant leur diffusion à quatre journaux, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel* et *Le Monde*, ainsi qu'au Bureau of Investigative Journalism, une ONG basée à Londres, qui a effectué en amont un travail de synthèse et de décryptage de l'ensemble des rapports.

Les rapports rédigés au quotidien par l'armée américaine couvrent six années de guerre, de 2004 à fin 2009. Ils racontent, dans des dépêches succinctes rédigées à chaque retour de patrouille, lors de chaque incident, le quotidien d'un conflit. C'est la guerre au jour le jour, vue du Humvee, de la rue, du check-point, et rapportée, de manière lapidaire, sans états d'âme, par le soldat rédacteur. C'est le compte-rendu de la banalité de la violence en temps de guerre et d'occupation militaire.

L'informateur de WikiLeaks n'ayant eu accès ni aux rapports du commandement ni à ceux des forces spéciales ou des services de renseignement, l'ensemble ne recèle pas de révélations spectaculaires sur les principaux épisodes de la guerre. Rien sur l'arrestation du dictateur renversé, Saddam Hussein. Rien sur la mort du chef d'Al-Qaïda en Irak, le Jordanien Abou Moussab Al-Zarqoui. Presque rien sur les deux batailles de Fallouja, bastion de l'insurrection sunnite. Il n'y a rien non plus sur l'état d'esprit des commandants et leur réflexion stratégique. Apparaissent en revanche leurs craintes d'une implication iranienne en Irak, avec des arrestations d'insurgés chiites « *formés en Iran* », ainsi que des découvertes de caches d'armes.

Les rapports ne traduisent qu'une vérité parcellaire. D'abord, parce qu'un soldat n'a, dans le feu de l'action, qu'une vue partielle de la situation. Ensuite, parce qu'un soldat qui a été mêlé à un incident peu glorieux pour lui ou son unité peut être tenté de travestir les faits pour éviter de rapporter une réalité déplaisante, voire de s'exposer à une sanction.

Le rapport sur le « massacre d'Haditha », un village à 260 km à l'ouest de Bagdad, au cours duquel 24 civils ont été tués en 2005, est révélateur de ces limites. Daté

du jour du drame, le 19 novembre, il indique en quinze lignes qu'un véhicule blindé américain saute d'abord sur un engin explosif improvisé avec une bouteille de propane et commandé à distance. Le pilote du blindé est tué. Simultanément, écrit le rédacteur, « *la patrouille est prise sous le feu d'éléments ennemis à partir de structures résidentielles, et riposte* ». A la suite des plaintes des témoins et survivants irakiens du village, un procès en Cour martiale a eu lieu en août 2007 aux Etats-Unis.

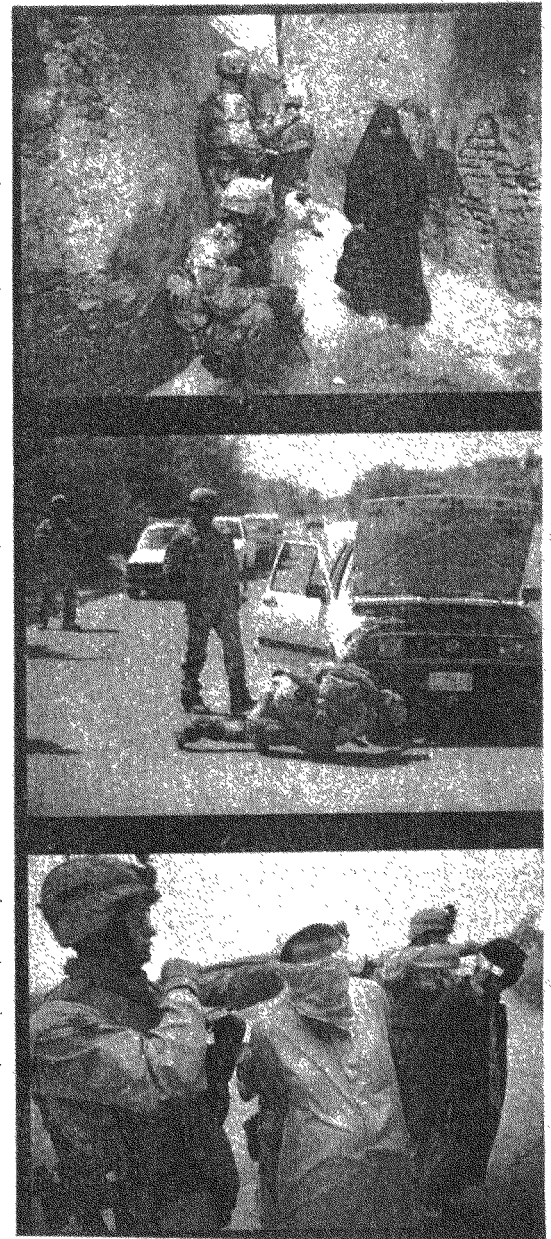
Crimes de guerre

Il s'est alors avéré que, rendus furieux par la mort de leur ami, les huit marines, qui n'étaient pris sous aucun tir, ont ouvert le feu tous azimuts. Ils se sont ensuite rués à l'intérieur des maisons voisines et ont tué tous ceux qu'ils y ont trouvés, parfois au fusil d'assaut, parfois en jetant des grenades à fragmentation. On relèvera 24 morts, dont dix femmes et enfants tués à bout portant. Le « massacre d'Haditha » entrera dans l'histoire du conflit d'Irak comme le pire crime de guerre répertorié.

Sur les huit marines en cause, un seul, le chef de la patrouille, sera condamné. Aucune enquête n'avait d'abord été diligentée, parce que, affirmera l'avocat du lieutenant-colonel Jeffrey Chissani, responsable des marines, « *à cette époque, aucune procédure n'était prévue pour enquêter sur la mort de civils dans les combats* ». Cela ne changera qu'à partir d'avril 2006, après l'émotion suscitée par la tuerie.

Juste avant, le 12 mars 2006, près de Mahmoudiya, une petite ville dans la banlieue sud de Bagdad, des soldats rapportent avoir trouvé dans une maison « *quatre civils tués par des forces anti-irakiennes* [l'appellation d'usage dans l'armée américaine pour qualifier leurs ennemis]. *Il y a un homme et trois femmes chiites dont les corps portent des blessures infligées par un AK47* ». Huit lignes de rapport concluent que les cadavres ont été emmenés à la morgue locale.

Il s'agit en fait d'un nouveau crime de guerre caractérisé. Grâce aux témoins irakiens qui osent protester, on apprendra huit mois plus tard, lors d'un procès en Cour martiale aux Etats-Unis, que quatre soldats en patrouille dans le secteur avaient repéré une jeune fille de 14 ans qui leur plaisait. A la nuit tombée, les soldats ont forcé sa porte, bousculé son père, sa mère et sa sœur de 7 ans. Menacés et isolés



dans une pièce de la maison, les trois membres de la famille entendront les cris de leur fille, Abir, violée, chacun leur tour, par trois des soldats. Leur méfait accompli, les quatre hommes tuent toute la famille Al-Janabi. Steven Dale Green, un jeune soldat texan de 24 ans, qui semble avoir entraîné les autres, recevra cinq condamnations à perpétuité, ses deux complices violeurs entre 90 et 110 ans de détention, chacun avec possibilité de libération sur parole sept ans après leur emprisonnement.

ment. Tous appartenait à la célèbre 101^e division aéroportée.

« L'escalade de la force »

Dans presque tous les rapports consultés, les soldats affirment, en rendant compte que des civils ont été tués ou blessés, avoir « respecté les procédures », notamment celles concernant « l'escalade de la force », selon le jargon militaire. Hormis quelques cas où un chef d'unité recommande l'ouverture d'enquêtes, les rapports comportent toujours des éléments de justification permettant à la hiérarchie, et aux juristes de l'armée, de considérer l'action comme étant légitime et régulière.

« L'escalade de la force », telle que notée dans près de 14 000 rapports du dossier WikiLeaks, ce sont d'abord des avertissements, gestuels, lumineux ou sonores, puis des tirs de sommation. La plupart des rapports témoignent minutieusement de ces étapes dans l'usage de la force, surtout lorsqu'ils concluent que des civils ont été

tués par erreur. Dans un rapport du 14 juin 2005 à 15 h 30, on lit le récit suivant : « Le poste Hurricane a tenté de stopper un véhicule avec des signes des mains et des bras. Une Opel a continué à rouler à grande vitesse. Le poste Hurricane a effectué des tirs de sommation. Le véhicule a accéléré. (...) Le véhicule ne s'arrêtant pas, le cordon [de sécurité] a tiré sur le capot du véhicule, qui était à environ 100 mètres. Le véhicule ne s'arrêtant toujours pas après tous ces tirs de sommation, les marines ont tiré sur le chauffeur. (...) Il y avait un total de 11 civils dans le véhicule. L'opération a provoqué la mort de 7 civils (dont 2 enfants). »

Le récit témoigne de la hantise qu'avaient les soldats américains de la voiture piégée conduite par un kamikaze, et de la facilité avec laquelle ils ouvrent le feu. Il faudra attendre l'arrivée du général David Petraeus à Bagdad, et de nouvelles consignes sur l'ouverture du feu, en 2007, pour que le nombre de civils tués commence à décliner.

« La famille a apprécié... »

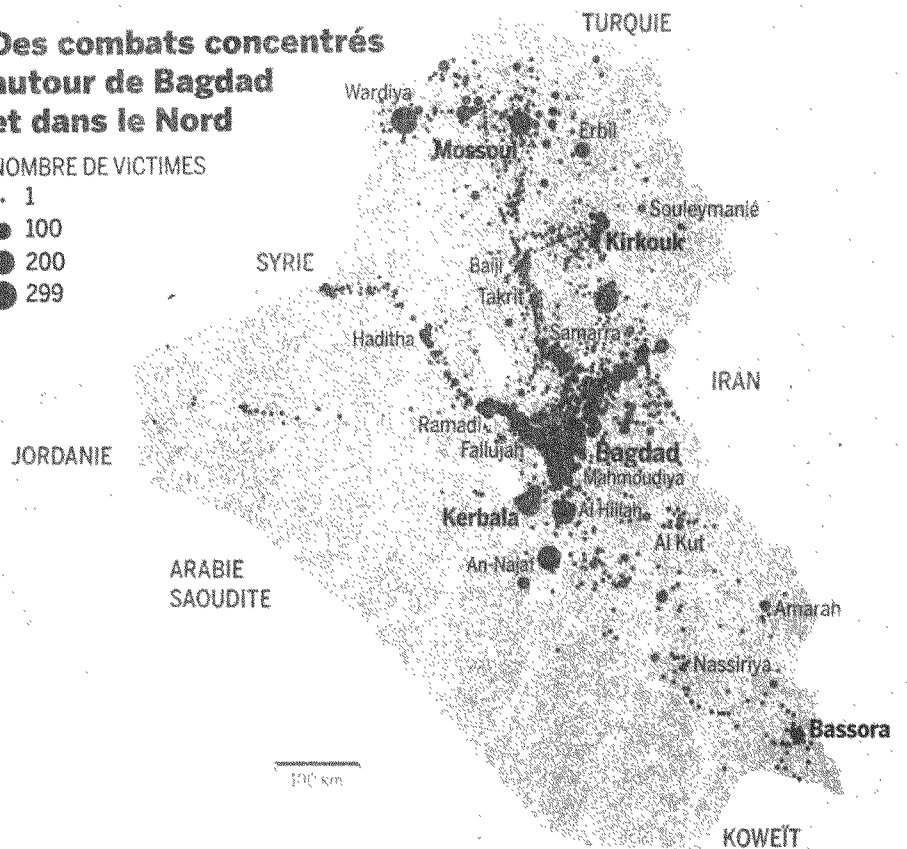
Rien ne prouve par ailleurs que ces rapports soient fidèles à la réalité, et qu'autant de tirs de sommation aient bien été tirés. Beaucoup d'Irakiens ont raconté, notamment pendant les premières années de l'intervention militaire américaine, avoir été pris pour cible alors qu'ils approchaient d'un check-point ou d'un convoi sans aucun avertissement préalable. Le dossier WikiLeaks fait aussi état de nombreux automobilistes n'entendant pas les tirs de sommation. Plusieurs malvoyants, sourds et handicapés mentaux ont ainsi été tués parce qu'ils n'avaient pas réagi aux signaux d'alerte.

Certains soldats ne se donnent d'ailleurs pas la peine de détailler « l'escalade de la force », sûrs d'être dans leur bon droit. Ainsi, dans ce rapport du 7 septembre 2006 : « La patrouille était en route lorsqu'un break blanc est entré sur la file. L'unité a estimé que l'intention était hostile et a ouvert le feu avec un nombre indéterminé

Des combats concentrés autour de Bagdad et dans le Nord

NOMBRE DE VICTIMES

- 1
- 100
- 200
- 299



de balles de 7,62 mm. Le véhicule a pris feu et la patrouille n'a pas pu venir en aide à ses occupants. (...) La famille du mort a expliqué qu'elle comprenait qu'il ne s'agissait pas d'un meurtre intentionnel. » Et le rapport conclut : « La famille a apprécié que les soldats surveillent les cadavres. »

Civils tués du ciel

Cet usage indiscriminé de la force létale prend des proportions considérables lorsque les tirs proviennent du ciel. Les hélicoptères effectuent encore moins que les patrouilles au sol des tirs de sommation dès qu'ils pensent avoir repéré une cible.

Un rapport du 28 février 2008 à 17 h 30,

rédigé par le chef de l'unité B/3-69, rend compte d'un « incident » : « L'unité B/3-69 a effectué une reconnaissance (...) pour enquêter sur six insurgés posant un engin explosif improvisé (ils creusaient frénétiquement) sur la route Golden. (...) A 11 h 15, Carnage 27 (2 hélicoptères Apache AH-64) avait engagé les poseurs de bombes et rapporté avoir tué un insurgé et mis cinq autres en fuite vers un bâtiment à proximité. (...) La force de réaction rapide a identifié le mort comme un garçon de 13 ans, et a appris auprès des civils sur site qu'ils s'agissait de six enfants cherchant des racines pour allumer un feu. (...) Aucune trace d'engin explosif improvisé n'a été trouvée. » Un autre épisode tragiquement banal de la guerre d'Irak.

Paradoxalement, alors que la prise de commandement par le général Petraeus et la mise en œuvre de la stratégie de contre-insurrection a eu pour effet de faire baisser, à partir de 2007, le nombre de civils tués par l'armée américaine, le bilan s'aggrave en ce qui concerne la force

aérienne. Soucieux d'épargner des vies américaines, l'état-major restreint les patrouilles au sol et fait voler ses hélicoptères de combat. 80 % des tirs de missiles Hellfire évoqués dans le dossier WikiLeaks concernent les trois dernières années. Plus question, dès lors, de tirs de sommation ou d'« escalade de la force ».

Sur les 14 000 rapports évoquant des incidents liés à « l'escalade de la force », 681 civils ont été tués par l'armée américaine, soit environ six fois plus que d'insurgés (120). 103 autres civils ont été tués par l'emploi de la force aérienne. Au total, le dossier WikiLeaks dénombre 66 081 civils tués (et 99 163 autres blessés), l'écrasante majorité dans des attentats ou des assassinats anonymes. Beaucoup sont morts lors des heures les plus noires de la guerre civile entre sunnites et chiites.

Détentions

Sur la période couverte, le détail des rapports additionnés permet d'établir que, en six ans, 183 991 Irakiens ont été arrêtés et détenus par les forces de la coalition. L'élargissement, quelquefois rapide, de ceux qui ont pu prouver leur innocence ne figurant pas dans ces rapports, il est impossible d'établir le nombre exact de ceux qui sont restés prisonniers pendant de longues périodes, la plupart sans aucun mandat ni procédure judiciaire appropriée.

A partir de juin 2004, Washington ayant « transféré » une partie de la souveraineté irakienne à un « gouvernement intérimaire », policiers et militaires irakiens ont repris progressivement leurs postes dans les commissariats et les neuf



centres pénitentiaires du pays. Après le scandale de la prison d'Abou Ghraib, qui éclate en avril 2004, les Américains cèdent le contrôle de l'établissement aux Irakiens en 2006. Mais ce n'est qu'à l'été 2010 qu'ils fermeront définitivement les deux centres de détention établis par eux au début de l'occupation, à savoir Camp Bucca, dans l'extrême sud du pays, et Camp Cropper, près de l'aéroport de Bagdad.

On ignore combien de détenus sont passés par l'une et l'autre de ces prisons. « Au moins 100 000 », avance Amnesty International. A l'été 2007, pic d'occupation des lieux, le premier « camp » abritait environ 27 000 prisonniers et le second, 22 000. Ces chiffres ne tiennent évidemment pas compte des dizaines de milliers d'hommes qui ont été détenus et interrogés par les Irakiens et par les services américains dits « spéciaux », comme la CIA, qui disposaient de leurs propres cellules.

Tortures

En août 2009, l'agence de renseignement a été contrainte de révéler que le chef de sa station à Bagdad avait dû être transféré en novembre 2003, à la suite de la mort, au cours d'interrogatoires musclés, de deux Irakiens, dont le général Abed Ahmed Mowhoush. Selon le groupe américain de médias McClatchy, « au moins cinq détenus » sont morts dans des conditions similaires et « nul ne sait ce qu'il est advenu des dizaines d'autres "prisonniers fantômes" » de la station en Irak.

Grâce aux fuites de WikiLeaks, on sait en revanche qu'au moins 303 plaintes pour torture ou mauvais traitements ont été enregistrées. Selon le BIJ, une quarantaine de cas sont des atteintes « graves » à l'intégrité des victimes.

Quelques exemples : le 6 juillet 2006, « deux détenus affirment que des marines les ont battus et leur ont infligé des chocs électriques (peut-être avec un Taser) (...) Un examen médical du premier a révélé des marques sur la poitrine et les genoux compatibles avec une chute ».

Le 1^{er} février 2007, « le lieutenant colonel X... s'est précipité sur le détenu NKS en évitant les gardes et l'a frappé au visage. Le nez du détenu semble cassé. (...) Si, sur le moment, le soldat a pu considérer son action comme justifiée (son meilleur ami a été tué quelques jours auparavant, a priori par ce prisonnier), nous prenons cet incident très au sérieux et nous sommes prêts à le régler au niveau du bataillon ».

Le dossier irakien WikiLeaks

Les cas de brutalité les plus sérieux perpétrés par la coalition sur des personnes arrêtées ne figurent pas dans le dossier WikiLeaks. Rien, par exemple, sur Ali Mansour, interpellé chez lui le 5 mai 2008 et retrouvé nu, une balle dans la tête, une autre dans la poitrine, onze jours plus tard sous un pont de Baiji, au nord de Bagdad. Le procès militaire qui a eu lieu en septembre de la même année a établi que le lieutenant Michael Behenna et le sergent-chef Hal Warner ont froidement abattu cet homme, qui devait être libéré ce jour-là, ordonnant ensuite aux trois soldats qui les accompagnaient d'indiquer dans leur rapport qu'Ali Mansour avait bien été remis en liberté.

Rien non plus sur le meurtre de 4 civils, des jeunes sunnites dont l'identité n'a pas été révélée lors du procès des soldats en août 2008 en Allemagne. Nuitamment arrêtés par une patrouille en avril 2007, les quatre jeunes, ont expliqué d'autres soldats témoins du crime, ont été conduits au pied d'un canal au sud-ouest de Bagdad et exécutés au pistolet par trois sergents de la 172^e brigade d'infanterie.

Abus par les forces irakiennes

Les officiers américains qui rédigeaient les rapports se sont moins appesantis sur les abus perpétrés par les leurs que sur ceux commis par des Irakiens. Sur la même période de six années, ils ont rapporté 1365 « abus » perpétrés sur des détenus par les forces irakiennes. Là, les détails sont plus horribles encore.

13 novembre 2005 : « A 16 heures, la 2^e brigade de combat signale la découverte de 173 détenus dans une prison du ministère (irakien) de l'intérieur près de Karada (un quartier central de Bagdad). De nombreux prisonniers portent des marques de torture, des brûlures de cigarette, des bleus semblant résulter de passage à tabac et des plaies ouvertes. Beaucoup toussent. (...) Environ 95 détenus étaient enfermés dans une même pièce, assis en tailleur avec un bandeau sur les yeux, tous tournés dans la même direction. D'après ceux interrogés sur place, 12 d'entre eux sont morts de maladie ces dernières semaines. »

L'existence d'une autre « prison secrète », avec 431 détenus, tous sunnites, sera révélée le 18 avril 2010 par le *Los Angeles Times*. Presque tous les prisonniers, suspects d'activisme antigouvernemental ou de complicité avec les insurgés djihadistes d'Al-Qaida, avaient été arrêtés dans le nord du pays à l'automne 2009 par des unités irakiennes, puis transférés à Bagdad. Beaucoup diront avoir été torturés par bastonnades, chocs électriques et asphyxie « contrôlée » avec sacs plastique sur la tête.

Combien de cas similaires non révélés à travers le pays ? Impossible de l'établir. La plupart du temps, et c'est l'une des révélations contenues dans le dossier WikiLeaks, quand des soldats américains sont

confrontés à des abus patents commis par leurs homologues irakiens, ils se contentent de l'indiquer dans les rapports avec la mention : « Les forces de la coalition n'étant pas impliquées dans ces accusations, une enquête plus poussée n'est pas nécessaire. »

19 octobre 2006. Une escouade américaine conduit « une opération de routine » dans un centre de détention de la police irakienne. Elle découvre un détenu en mauvais état. L'homme « affirme avoir reçu des coups sur le visage et la tête. Il affirme aussi avoir reçu des chocs électriques sur les pieds et le sexe, et avoir été sodomisé avec une bouteille d'eau ». Les Américains isoleront le détenu pour conduire « d'autres examens ».

Quelques mois plus tôt, le 26 juin, une



autre patrouille américaine découvre, lors d'« une inspection surprise » dans un commissariat de police, « des traces de torture » évidentes. « Grandes quantités de sang sur le sol de la cellule. Un câble utilisé pour infliger des chocs électriques et un tuyau en plastique étaient fixés au mur. (...) Une formation sur les droits de l'homme sera donnée aux policiers. »

Le 3 mai 2005, déjà, « l'unité 2 d'enquête criminelle » de la police américaine tient réunion avec l'officier de liaison de ses homologues irakiens. L'officier américain entend des cris à l'étage au-dessus de lui. Il se rue dans la pièce incriminée, y découvre un brigadier, deux enquêteurs et un suspect « en pleurs ». Celui-ci, soupçonné de blanchiment d'argent, accuse ses interrogateurs de l'avoir frappé sur la plante des pieds, il peut à peine se tenir debout. Le brigadier irakien reconnaît les faits.

L'officier américain fouille les lieux et découvre deux tuyaux en plastique, un rouleau à pâtisserie, « avec une corde passant par le milieu et un générateur à manivelle avec des pinces (emporté comme pièce à conviction) ». Les Américains signifient au brigadier irakien que « son comportement est inacceptable et criminel. Les cartes d'identité des deux enquêteurs sont confisquées ». L'unité d'enquête s'en va alors voir le général chargé de l'établissement. « Alors que les détails de l'affaire lui sont présentés, celui-ci met fin à la réunion et se met à faire autre chose. » Pas de suite connue. ■

L'Humanité

26 OCTOBRE 2010

« Si affirmer sa culture est un crime, je suis un criminel »

Élu maire de la grande ville de Diyarbakir au Kurdistan, Osman Baydemir est poursuivi, avec 150 autres prévenus, par le gouvernement turc. Leur crime, défendre la reconnaissance du peuple kurde. Entretien.

Kurdistan de Turquie, envoyé spécial.

ENTRETIEN



Blen que maire démocratiquement élu, vous êtes poursuivi pour

« attente à la sécurité de l'État ». Quelle est votre réaction ?

OSMAN BAYDEMIR. Je suis avocat depuis 1995 et, depuis cette date, les inculpations et les condamnations à mon encontre sont quatre fois supérieures à celles de mes clients ! On peut dire que l'AKP (le Parti de la justice et du développement, formation du premier ministre turc, Recep Erdogan - NDLR) est très compétent pour maquiller les choses, pour transformer le noir en blanc. En 2006, les lois ont été changées en Turquie, permettant de mettre des enfants en prison. À douze ans, treize ans ou quatorze ans, des centaines de gosses ont été condamnés, certains à trente ans d'emprisonnement. Personne n'a rien dit. Mais, quand il y a trois mois, ce même pouvoir a allégé le dispositif, les représentants de l'UE s'en sont félicités en oubliant qui était à l'origine de cette loi.

La question kurde n'a rien à voir avec le terrorisme, contrairement à ce que l'on voudrait faire croire. C'est une lutte pour la justice, la liberté, l'égalité. L'Europe doit savoir cela. Malheureusement elle se contente d'une information unilatérale, venant de l'État turc. Depuis plusieurs années, les représentants ne viennent plus, de façon officielle, dans la région du Kurdistan. Ils se contentent de rencontres à Istanbul et Ankara. Ils acceptent tout ce que dit le gou-



Manifestation de soutien de la population kurde au 150 personnalités lors de l'ouverture de leur procès à Diyarbakir.

vernement turc concernant la question kurde. Il faudrait au contraire que les gouvernements européens, les institutions de l'Union européenne, vérifient les informations et rencontrent les représentants kurdes, notamment le BDP (Parti pour la paix et la démocratie dont est membre Osman Baydemir - NDLR). Mais pour que les États européens changent leur politique il faut une pression de l'opinion publique. Le rôle des médias est particulièrement important. Que votre journal, *L'Humanité*, soit le seul média international présent au procès, à Diyarbakir, est important et un signe de l'attitude des autres grands médias qui préfèrent

rester à Istanbul. Il y aura des libérations de prisonniers pour satisfaire l'UE mais dans le même temps beaucoup d'arrestations. Devant le tribunal, nous n'obtiendrons rien. Tout dépendra de la mobilisation de l'opinion publique, en France et en Europe.

Que répondez-vous aux accusations de terrorisme ?

OSMAN BAYDEMIR. Si défendre les droits de l'homme et la démocratie est un crime, alors, oui, je commets un crime. Si revendiquer le droit à ma culture, à mon identité, à ma langue, est un crime alors, oui, je suis un criminel. Nous continuerons à lutter et à commettre ce crime jusqu'à la reconnais-

150
Le nombre de personnes poursuivies sous des chefs d'inculpation divers. La plupart sont des élus ou des militants des droits de l'homme.

sance de nos droits. Nous ne revendiquons pas grand-chose. Nous voulons une Turquie démocratique et un Kurdistan décentralisé, autonome. Nous ne sommes pas contre une grande Assemblée nationale en Turquie. Mais nous voulons aussi un parlement au niveau régional. Nous ne sommes pas contre le fait que le turc soit la langue officielle mais nous voulons que dans le cadre d'une décentralisation, au Kurdistan, le kurde soit aussi une langue officielle. Comme la Catalogne en Espagne, par exemple. C'est la 29^e révolte kurde. Nous continuerons jusqu'à la reconnaissance de notre réalité.

ENTRETIEN RÉALISÉ PAR
PIERRE BARBANCEY

PCF: RESPECTER LES KURDES

Présent à l'ouverture du procès de Diyarbakir en tant que représentant du Parti communiste français (PCF), Daniel Voguet, avocat, a dénoncé « un procès politique, un procès de masse ». Il propose que la question kurde soit prise en compte « de manière plus importante », par les progressistes en France. « Ceux qui sont jugés ne sont pas des terroristes, comme on voudrait le faire croire, ce sont des élus », a souligné le juriste, qui suggère que l'Association nationale des élus communistes et républicains (Anecr) envoie une délégation sur place. « Il existe une solution, qui passe par la discussion et pas par l'écrasement d'un peuple sous les bombes », affirme Daniel Voguet.

A special report on Turkey

All Turks together?

Turkey is overcentralised and treats minorities badly

MOST Turkish schoolchildren take part in a weekly flag ceremony during which they recite a patriotic chant ending, "Happy is he who calls himself a Turk." The old Ottoman empire was a patchwork quilt of different nationalities and religions, but Atatürk's Turkey was intolerant of non-Turks, even though the Lausanne treaty of 1923 recognised the existence of Armenians, Greeks and Jews. In his book on eastern Turkey, "Rebel Land", Christopher de Bellaigue recalls going with a Kurdish friend to meet a local governor. When he tentatively tries to ask about the treatment of minorities, the governor brusquely interrupts to say that "we have no minorities in Turkey."

In reality Turkey today is a multi-ethnic, multifaith society. Some 99% of the population are Muslim, most of them Sunni. But a minority, perhaps 10-15%, are Alevi, a humanist branch of Shia Islam. Turkey also has deep regional divides and exceptional inequality among regions (income per head around Istanbul is almost ten times as high as in the poorest eastern provinces). It also has some 14m Kurds, who are Sunni Muslims but ethnically and linguistically distinct from Turks. Perhaps 3m of them live in Istanbul, which in that sense is the world's biggest Kurdish city. But most are in the poor south-east, where they make up 85-90% of the population.

I see no Kurds

The Kurdish question is a festering sore in Turkey. That is in part because successive Turkish governments, egged on by the army, have refused to recognise the Kurds' existence. Article 166 of the constitution,

which remains in force, declares baldly that the inhabitants of Turkey are Turks. For many years Kurds went under the derogatory label "mountain Turks". Not only was Kurdish culture suppressed, but so was the language. It was banned in education, in broadcasting and even in parliament. In the 1990s, Leyla Zana, a newly elected Kurdish member, was tried and jailed after uttering a few words of Kurdish in parliament.

As in so many countries that have suppressed their minorities, a backlash was inevitable. It came in the form of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), founded by the charismatic Abdullah Ocalan in 1978. Helped for many years by Syria, the PKK has since 1984 waged a long and violent campaign against the Turkish army and state. It has also committed terrorist atrocities, especially but not only in the south-east. The PKK is classified as a terrorist organisation in both Europe and America.

The army's crackdown in response has been even more violent. Troops and tanks have spread out across the region. Fighter aircraft have bombed suspected guerrilla bases, including some in northern Iraq and Syria. Thousands of suspects have been killed or jailed. A system of village guards was set up, supposedly to fight the PKK but as often to intimidate the locals. At the height of the campaign entire villages were depopulated and 1m people herded into cities.

The grisly details of human-rights abuses, torture and extra-judicial killings in Diyarbakir, Batman, Van and elsewhere have been extensively documented by brave human-rights lawyers and campaigners. The death toll over

the PKK's 26-year-old insurgency has reached 40,000, most of them Kurds. That is more than ten times the number killed during the IRA campaign in Northern Ireland.

Even government officials concede that the Kurdish problem cannot be solved by force alone. The PKK was weakened by the capture and imprisonment of Mr Ocalan in 1999 (he is now held on an island near Istanbul). The level of violence has declined somewhat, and the PKK has periodically declared ceasefires (one is in force now). Yet the organisation is not defeated, and the autonomy won by the Kurdish region of northern Iraq will inevitably give it sustenance. The Kurds' grievances which the PKK has exploited remain unsettled.

That is not entirely for want of trying. Successive governments have poured resources into the region, believing that the problem is caused partly by the south-east's backwardness and poverty. The south-eastern Anatolia project (GAP) is the most ambitious and expensive infrastructure project Turkey has ever undertaken; in the 1990s it represented some 5-8% of all investment in the country. It aimed to improve agriculture and provide water and electricity to poor south-eastern villages around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Its network of dams has boosted farm productivity and raised living standards across the region.

Some parts of the east and south-east have also joined in the wider Anatolian economic boom of the past two decades. The city of Gaziantep, in particular, has followed the better-known example of Kayseri into manufacturing. In recent years Gaziantep and much of the surrounding region have also benefited greatly from growing trade with Syria and Iraq (see article). Yet poor education and infrastructure, a deeply conservative Muslim culture and the violence of the PKK continue to discourage investment.

The AK government has tried harder than any predecessor to make amends. Soon after it came to power, it allowed the first ever Kurdish-language television broadcasts. Mr

Erdogan has paid several visits to Diyarbakir, the Kurds' unofficial capital. In 2005 he went so far as to admit to past mistakes, apologise for Turkey's mistreatment of the Kurds and recognise their legitimate aspirations. He was rewarded with a strong showing for the AK party in the 2007 election, when it won more votes in the region than the main Kurdish party. More recently the government has worked hard to reach an accommodation with the Kurds of northern Iraq.

Yet any Turkish government, no matter how strong, is constrained by two powerful forces: the army and the nationalists. The army resists concessions to the Kurds because it does not want to seem soft on terrorism. Conspiracy theorists also point to evidence of a "deep state" that prolongs the fight against the PKK by staging terrorist acts itself. Nationalists, meanwhile, fret that gestures to meet demands for greater autonomy will inevitably lead to the break-up of Turkey. Both opposition parties, especially the far-right MHP, have fiercely resisted openings towards the Kurds, which is one reason why they win so few votes in the south-east.

Yet in fits and starts, and under pressure from the EU, Mr Erdogan has persisted with his overtures. In mid-2009 his government launched an initiative it called the Kurdish opening, later renamed the democratic opening (and labelled by a local AK official as the "national unity and brotherhood project"). The same year saw the start of the first state-owned 24-hour Kurdish-language TV station. And in a blaze of publicity, the government gave an amnesty to a clutch of disarmed PKK fighters based in northern Iraq, allowing them to return home unmolested.

Sadly, this particular move backfired. Instead of returning quietly home, the PKK men triumphantly paraded in uniform through the streets of Diyarbakir. Turkish nationalists and the army were indignant. The government withdrew a promise to let more fighters return—and the PKK resumed battle. It was widely noted that, on the same day that the nine Turkish civilians killed aboard the Mavi Marmara were given



Ready to bring out the guns again?

huge media coverage, six soldiers lost their lives to the PKK in the south.

Devolution, devolution

Hard as it may be, more will have to be done to assuage Kurdish feelings. Turkey needs to stop the common practice in the south-east of arresting and jailing elected mayors for allegedly expressing PKK sympathies. As part of a new constitution promised by Mr Erdogan after the next election, article 166 about the inhabitants of Turkey being Turks could be dropped. Allowing Kurdish-language teaching in schools would also be a good idea, but it is controversial. The governor of Batman, for example, expresses cautious support for it, but the governor of Diyarbakir is against. Yet steps like these will be needed if Turkey is ever to get into the EU. And the 1923 Lausanne treaty states clearly that "no restrictions shall be imposed on the free use...of any language."

Turkey's regional problems go beyond the Kurdish question. Thanks to Ataturk, the country is excessively centralised. The governors of all 81 Turkish provinces are appointed by the government in Ankara. Over time most have become AK men. Education is still largely run from the centre, on the traditional French model. Given the country's size and diversity, that may not be the most sensible approach. Turkey now badly needs a debate on more devolution of power to democratically elected local bodies.

What about the army and the nationalists? Mr Erdogan and the AK may now be well placed to call their bluff. By win-

ning the referendum on constitutional changes in mid-September by such a wide margin, the AK government has shown the weakness of the nationalist opposition, especially the MHP. This, and the promise of a new constitution next year, may create an opportunity for imaginative gestures. That the main Kurdish party, the BDP, persuaded so many Kurds to boycott the referendum serves to show again that neither it, nor the PKK, can be ignored.

BDP officials in Diyarbakir dismiss the so-called Kurdish opening as rubbish. The party is wary in part because its predecessor, the DTP, was banned by the constitutional court in 2009. But its success over the referendum boycott reflects its continuing appeal to Kurdish voters. It will win its usual clutch of seats in next year's election. If AK fails to get a majority, it could do worse than seek a deal (if not a formal coalition) in exchange for BDP support.

That would, however, require concessions such as Kurdish-language education, more power for local mayors and reining in the army. British experience in Northern Ireland also suggests that the AK government may yet have to talk to Mr Ocalan direct. Sezgin Tanrikulu, a lawyer with the Human Rights Foundation in Diyarbakir, declares portentously that Turkey is near the "last exit" with the Kurds. But if Mr Erdogan is bold enough to seize the moment, he could yet crown his premiership with a peace settlement in the south-east.

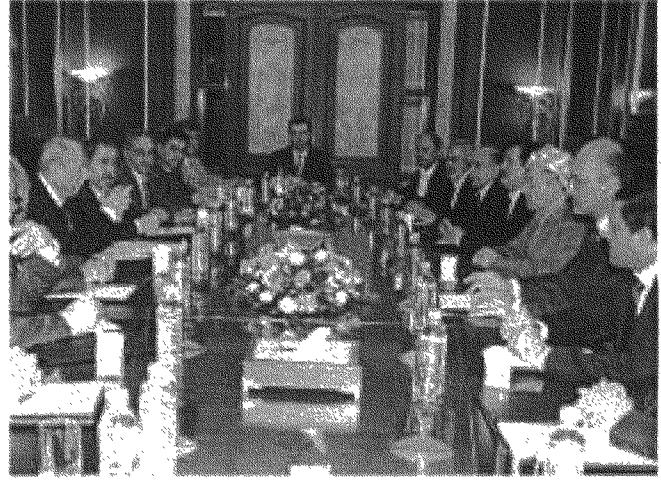


Kurdistan Alliance and Formation of New Iraqi Government

The Kurdistan Region's position on the formation of the new Iraqi government is summarized in the following 19 points. The new government must be dedicated to the following:

Kurdistan Region Presidency (KRP)

- 1- Commitment to the Iraqi Constitution, with all of its articles without exception, and protection of Iraq's federal, democratic system
- 2- A coalition government in which all major Iraqi components participate
- 3- Commitment to the principle of partnership and participation in decision-making through:
 - a. Establishment of a Council on National Security, to be created through the passing of a special law at the same time as the government is formed
 - b. Drafting of bylaws for the Council of Ministers which would give it added legitimacy and institutionalization. Through joint decision-making, the Council would ensure that administrative and financial powers are shared between the Prime Minister and his deputies
 - c. Adherence to the principle of consensus
- 4- Formation of a Federal Council within the first year of this Parliament. The President and his deputies have the right to veto legislation until this Council is formed
- 5- Amendment of the current electoral law to guarantee that all Iraqis are represented fairly
- 6- The census should be conducted on time in October 2010
- 7- Review of the structures of the security and military forces to reflect a fair representation of all Iraqis in these forces
- 8- Introduction of checks and balances in all Ministries and Institutions of state
- 9- Implementation of Article 140 of Iraq's Constitution and allocation of the necessary budget within a period that does not exceed two years following the formation of the government
- 10- Passage of a law for water resources within the first year of the government formation on the basis of the latest agreed-upon draft
- 11- Passage of a law for oil and gas within the first year of the government formation on the basis of the latest agreed-upon draft
- 12- Supplying the Peshmerga forces with arms, equip-



ments, and funds as part of the Iraqi national defense system

- 13- Support for the Kurdistan Region's candidate for the post of President of the Republic
- 14- Compensation for the victims of the former regime, including the victims of the Anfal campaign and chemical bombings of Halabja and other places, immediately and justly
- 15- The Kurdistan Region's blocs should have a fair representation within the sovereign ministries and other institutions based on national gains in the elections
- 16- The Kurdistan Region should have the right to cross-examine candidates for the posts of minister of any sovereign ministries and those ministries that are relevant to the Region
- 17- The Kurdistan Region's negotiating team should elect a candidate for the post of the Secretary of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers
- 18- In the event that the Kurdistan Region's blocs withdraw from the government due to a clear breach of the Constitution, the Iraqi government would then be considered dissolved
- 19- The Prime Minister's bloc in both the Parliament and the Council of Ministers must make a commitment to the implementation of the above terms.

Tensions High Along Kurdish-Arab Line

By MICHAEL R. GORDON and ANDREW W. LEHREN

The new trove of documents released by WikiLeaks portrays the long history of tensions between Kurds and Arabs in the north of Iraq and reveals the fears of some American units about what might happen after American troops leave the country by the end of 2011.

“Without strong and fair influence, likely from a third party, these tensions may quickly turn to violence after the U.S. forces withdrawal,” warned a Sept. 28, 2009, field report.

Experts have long watched the tensions in the region with worry. Their main fear is not that senior Kurdish officials will seek a confrontation with the Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad. The main interest of the political leadership, many experts say, is making sure the oil-rich region continues to grow economically.

Rather, it is that local Kurdish and Arab politicians and security officials may take matters into their own hands if crucial disputes remain unsettled, particularly after the departure of American forces, which have regularly worked behind the scenes to head off confrontations.

Kurds and Arabs are at odds over power-sharing arrangements in the Kirkuk region, the degree of federalism that should be allowed in the Iraqi state, the terms of a new oil law and territorial disputes. Those disputes have been complicated by the fact that American forces initially welcomed the presence of Kurdish troops, the *pesh merga*, in some parts of northern Iraq to help fend off insurgents.

Relations have been so fraught that Gen. Ray Odierno, who recently left his post as the senior American commander in Iraq, established a series of checkpoints, maintained by American, Iraqi and Kurdish soldiers, to head off confrontations, either accidental or planned.

Obama administration officials have voiced hopes that the Kurds’ participation in a new governing coalition will foster long-deferred compromises and lead to the gradual integration of *pesh merga* fighters into Iraq’s army.



But little headway has been made on Kurdish-Arab issues in recent years. The administration is also planning to open embassy branch offices in the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk, which would enable American diplomats to focus on Arab and Kurdish issues even after American forces depart.

The reports disclosed by WikiLeaks document a long history of tensions, which insurgents from Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, a Sunni Arab extremist group, have sought to exploit.

A Sept. 27, 2008, report showed how violence could erupt even when officials on both sides were trying to keep tensions in check. After Iraqi police officers near Khanaqin, in Diyala Province, arrested and roughed up a member of a Kurdish intelligence organization, a local Kurdish leader went to a police station to obtain his release.

The prisoner was let go, but an “ensuing verbal altercation” led to shots being fired and the death of a *pesh merga* fighter.

A report two months later described a more calculated assault: The planting of a roadside bomb in another northern area.

“The Arabs of that district hate the IP’s there because their police chief is a Kurd,” who had links to Kurdish intelligence, noted a Nov. 22, 2008, report, using the military’s abbrevia-

tion for the Iraqi police.

Insurgents have repeatedly sought to stir up trouble between the two sides. On Dec. 11, 2008, a suicide bomber, wearing a vest filled with explosives, blew himself up in a restaurant near Kirkuk that was patronized by Kurdish and Arab officials.

“This attack was likely intended to intimidate the leaders and to dissuade future meetings of political and religious leaders attempting to unite the province,” the field report noted.

The report on a particularly tense episode in May 2009 provides a unusual glimpse at the role American military personnel and civilians have played in trying to avert sectarian violence.

Atheel al-Nujaifi, a Sunni Arab and the newly elected governor of Nineveh Province, was already a polarizing figure for the Kurds, and tensions grew when he proclaimed on May 7 that he planned to visit a hang-gliding festival at Bashliqa. This is a small town northeast of Mosul, in Nineveh Province, but which the Kurds have long claimed.

Two days later, a liaison officer from the Kurdish regional government told Brig. Gen. Robert B. Brown, the deputy American military commander for northern Iraq, that if Mr. Nujaifi “traveled into Kurdish controlled area, there would be a potential incident,” the May report noted.

In an effort to head off a confrontation, Alexander M. Laskaris, the head of the State Department's provincial reconstruction team in Mosul, called the governor and warned him against making the trip, which did not appear to sway Mr. Nujaifi.


As the festival approached, American soldiers from the Third Brigade Combat Team, First Cavalry Division went to inspect the road to the event. Officially, the pesh merga fighters and Iraqi soldiers shared the common goal of thwarting attacks by insurgents and terrorists, but now they appeared to have squared off like two opposing armies.

Pesh merga fighters at a checkpoint on the road to Bashiqa said that they had been ordered to shoot the governor if he tried to pass. Iraqi soldiers, who had their own checkpoint nearby, reported that they had been ordered to fire on the pesh merga if they shot at the governor, the report noted.

By this time, the issue had been brought to the attention of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, who also sought to head off trouble. Mr. Maliki ordered the Iraqi military command in the province not to provide security for the trip, apparently calculating that this would prompt the governor to cancel the visit.

None of that seemed to stop Mr. Nujaifi, who arranged for the local police to protect him.

Finally, a face-saving solution was found: the minister of youth and sports in Baghdad canceled the festival. While that solved the immediate problem, the underlying issues remained. As the May 8 report cautioned: "Recent reporting illustrates increased potential for ethnic tensions."

 Rudaw.Net 30 October 2010

A major Kurdish opposition party breaks away from Kurdish Alliance

Rudaw.

By NAWZAD MAHMOUD and
RAWA ABDULLA

SULAIMANI, Iraqi Kurdistan: One of the major Kurdish political parties broke away from the larger Kurdish alliance on Friday evening, ending and undermining the united political representation of Kurds whose role is decisive to shape Iraq's future government.

By taking this decision, Gorran, the greatest and most influential opposition party in the northern region of Iraqi Kurdistan, deepens its political divergence with the two ruling parties over almost everything here in the most stable region of Iraq.

Gorran says that their separation from the alliance was emanated from the failure of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by the Region's President Massoud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, led by Jalal Talabani, Iraq's President, to abide by their promises to make political reforms within Kurdistan.

But this move could have larger implications on Kurdish-Baghdad relations or at least further complicate the hopes of Iraq's President, Jalal Talabani, to retain his position as the group has made it clear that its 8 lawmakers are not going to vote in favor of Talabani's return.

It is also said that the Gorran's recent move could put the party into an opposition front against Kurdish parties in Baghdad particularly in the issues of oil and Peshmerga forces, two issues in which Gorran wants to see further transparency and independence.

"The authority did not want reform, as it had pledged, that is why we have

withdrawn. We already have them a warning," said Muhammad Tofiq Rahim, a senior leader and spokesman of Gorran, adding, "We will independently start negotiations with any Arab political party we want to."

"Of course, we will not support Talabani to become president as we are not part of the alliance," he added.

Gorran, which defends its separation "the right decision to make", said that it abandoned the bloc particularly because of the insistence of the two nationalist parties to create a commission "in their own way" to run future elections in Kurdistan independent from Baghdad's control which has thus far managed elections of the entire nation through Iraq's High Electoral Commission (IHEC).

"Nothing is independent here. Such a commission will pave the way for KDP and PUK to easily rig elections," said another senior member of Gorran, on the condition of anonymity.

But a senior member of the PUK dismisses the influence of Gorran on the reelection of Talabani or the strength of the Kurdish bloc in Baghdad.

"It will cause no problem. The Alliance still has the support of the rest of the parties," said Alla Talabani, a Kurdish lawmaker and niece of President Talabani.

"They have only 8 seats. Their refusal to support Uncle Jalal to become President will have no weight."

Although, all of the three opposition parties were taking a single united front against the two ruling parties on almost everything including the issue of the election commission, the two other Islamic opposition parties did not follow Gorran's latest move. By doing so, they saved the alliance from dissolution. If

three parties were withdrawn, the alliance will end.

These developments come after a meeting chaired by Nechirvan Barzani, deputy leader of the KDP, with the opposition parties. Barzani seems to have succeeded to convince Islamic parties to stay but failed to persuade Gorran to do so.

"The political arena of Baghdad is different from that of Kurdistan," said Najib Muhammad, an Iraqi lawmaker with the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) (4 seats).

"We have a greater cause to fight for in Baghdad. Why and for who should we remain as an opposition to the Kurdish parties in Baghdad?" said Muhammad. "For us the unity of Kurds is a strong point for Kurds in Baghdad."

Similar to Talabani, the PUK official, Muhammad, whose party's ideology is pretty much similar to that of the Turkish ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), ruled out any major influence that Gorran's breakup might have.

"It will definitely harm our united image in Iraq, but I don't think it would really make any change in the overall political process," added Muhammad.

Also does a senior leader of KOMAL (Kurdistan Islamic Group), Zana Rwestayee, not expect that the recent taking of different positions worsens the strong ties all the three opposition parties managed to have in the region since Kurdistan's landmark elections held in July 2009.

"We have an agreement to negotiate any collective position we may take in advance. If any party took a unilateral position, it would be responsible for all the consequences."

KURDS PUSH FOR END TO IRAQ IMPASSE

By Andrew England and
Roula Khalaf in Marrakech

The Financial Times

A Kurdish alliance that has taken on the role of kingmaker in Iraq's political crisis is pushing for a meeting of rival Iraqi leaders in a bid to solve an eight-month impasse.

Barham Salih, a senior Kurdish official, said Nouri al-Maliki, incumbent prime minister, had come very close to agreeing to almost all their terms as he battles to retain his post.

But Mr Salih, prime minister of the Kurdish regional government, told the Financial Times that the Kurds, who have nearly 60 seats in the 325-member assembly, were making clear to all parties that the next government should be inclusive and have credible Sunni Arab representation.

Mr Maliki's State of Law coalition, which is predominantly Shia, has already agreed to an alliance with the radical Shia, and anti-US, Sadrist movement. If Mr Maliki was to secure the support of the Kurds, he would have a majority in the parliament.

However, the picture has been complicated by the refusal of Iraqiya, a secular list led by Iyad Allawi, Mr Maliki's arch rival, to join any administration headed by the prime minister. Iraqiya was backed by Sunni Arabs and its exclusion from government has raised concerns

about possible sectarian violence.

Iraqiya won two more seats than State of Law in the March 7 elections.

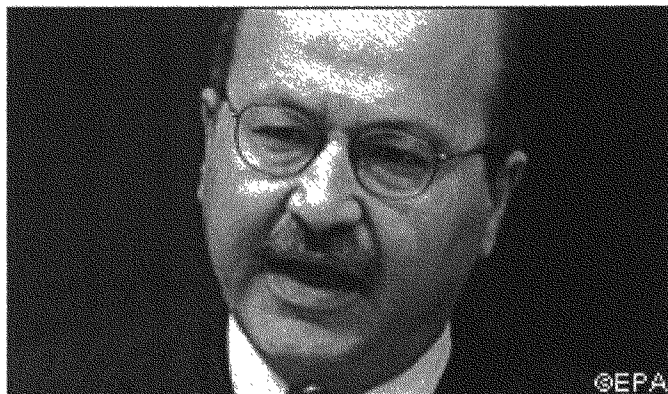
The Kurds are also talking to Iraqiya, which is seeking to form the government in an alliance with other Shia parties. Mr Salih said Mr Allawi has recently been more positive about meeting the Kurds' terms.

In what could represent an important step forward, Kurdish leaders convened a meeting on Wednesday and are preparing for a leadership summit to discuss a power-sharing government.

We have been very much mindful of remaining in the centre of these things and not moving one way or the other. At the end of the day, it not just about who will meet our demands, Mr Salih said. We believe we have now done a lot of homework, and believe we have a framework in place to say this is how a government should function.

The Kurdish terms are believed to include devolution of the prime minister's powers, adopting a much-delayed hydrocarbons law and resolving the dispute over the future of Kirkuk, the oil-rich city that Kurds want in their semi-autonomous northern region.

The battle to form the next government has been exacerbated by concerns among Iraqi politicians that whoever takes the post may refuse to give up power in future, particularly as the US prepares for a complete military withdrawal by the end of next year.



Barham Salih: says issue of Sunni Arab representation is crucial to finding agreement

Our history in Iraq tells us that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely and there are concerns that, as the Americans redeploy, some might get the temptation to hijack the country and revert back to the way we were before 2003, said Mr Salih.

He said Iraqi security forces must be reformed to ensure they are seen as a national force representing all communities. Many Iraqis are wary of the forces and their political links.

The leak of nearly 400,000 war logs by WikiLeaks last week detailed a litany of abuses by Iraqi forces.

Mr Salih said he was not justifying any abuses but argued that a country that has been plagued by terrorism and power struggles was still learning about the value of human rights.

He echoed other officials' concerns that the country's security forces were not capable of secu-

ring their own borders and protecting Iraqi sovereignty from regional predators, therefore requiring a sustained engagement of the US to help develop capabilities.

Iraq, he added, was seen as crucial to the regional balance of power and neighbouring countries were all trying to have their say in the formation of the next government.

Everyone has a dog in this fight — that makes our lives very complicated and it makes the task of a new government not an exclusively Iraqi affair, he said.

Guardian

OCTOBER 29, 2010

Suicide bomber kills 21 north of Baghdad

MAZIN YAHYA Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A suicide bomber wearing an explosives belt killed at least 21 people, mostly Shiites, on Friday in a town north of Baghdad, shattering what had been weeks of relative calm, the town's mayor said.

The blast in the town of Balad Ruz emphasizes the delicate nature of Iraq's security gains and comes as the country is approaching its eighth month without a new government since the March elections.

The suicide bomber blew himself up inside a popular cafe in the town of Balad Ruz, 45 miles (70 kilometers) northeast of Baghdad as people were gathered to play dominoes and drink tea, said the town's mayor, Mohammed Maaruf. An additional 65 people were injured, he said.

The neighborhood where the explosion occurred is home to many Faili Kurds, a small sect of ethnic Kurds following the Shiite branch of Islam, and many of the dead were Shiites.

Although there was no immediate claim of responsibility, blasts targeting Shiites are often the work of Sunni insurgents trying to stir up sectarian problems.

While scattered violence occurs almost daily in Iraq, Friday night's blast broke what has been a time of comparative quiet across Iraq. The last such

major attack came Sept. 19 when twin bombings in Baghdad killed at least 31 people.

Diyala province, with its mixed population of Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds, was once one of the most volatile in Iraq but recent years has seen a drop in violence.

Also on Friday, the New York-based Human Rights Watch denounced the Kurdish regional government's investigation into the slaying of a Kurdish journalist critical of authorities in Iraq.

Freelance journalist Sardasht Othman's handcuffed and bullet-ridden body was found near the restive northern Iraqi city of Mosul and authorities concluded he had been killed by insurgents.

Many Kurds in the autonomous region where he lived, however, blamed the government for his killing and staged dozens of huge protests demanding the perpetrators be brought to justice.

"The Kurdistan government needs to get to the bottom of this killing with an open and independent inquiry that will include looking into allegations of government involvement," said Joe Stork, deputy Mideast director of the New York-based Human Rights Watch.

Kurdish government officials have denied any involvement in Othman's death and in a report in September concluded that he had ties to Sunni militants in nearby Mosul who ultimately killed him.

In Baghdad, Justice Ministry officials

said that a former member of Saddam Hussein's regime who used to head the feared Republican Guard has died in prison.

Ibrahim Abdul Sattar died Friday morning from liver cancer, said Deputy Minister Busho Ibrahim, adding that the cause of death was documented by both the U.S. military and the Red Cross.

A relative of Sattar's in the northern city of Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's hometown and a former stronghold his regime, confirmed that Abdul Sattar died due to illness, but did not want to be identified out of fear for his security.

His body will be handed over to family members on Saturday, said a police official from Tikrit who did not want to be identified because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Sattar, who was born in 1948, was chief of staff for the Iraqi Army when Saddam's regime was toppled. His death comes days after another high-ranking member of Saddam's regime, Tariq Aziz, was sentenced to death on Tuesday.

Aziz was the international face of Saddam's government and a rare Christian in the dictator's inner circle. He was convicted and sentenced to death for charges related to a Saddam-led campaign that hunted and executed members of the Shiite Dawa Party, of which current Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is a member.

REUTERS

Saudi offers to host talks on Iraq political crisis

RIYADH — OCTOBER 30, 2010 (Reuters) By Ulf Laessing

SAUDI ARABIA'S KING Abdullah invited Iraq's political parties on Saturday to attend talks in the kingdom to overcome the 7-month political gridlock that followed an inconclusive election, state news agency SPA said.

The talks would be held in the Saudi capital Riyadh under the auspices of the 22-nation Arab League after the annual Muslim haj pilgrimage ending around November 18, SPA said.

Iraq has been without a new government since a March 7 election that failed to produce a clear winner, leaving Shi'ite, Sunni and Kurdish politicians jockeying for power and position.

Iraqiya, the cross-sectarian Iraqi political bloc that received the most votes in the election, welcomed the Saudi initiative and said Turkey and Iran should also be invited.

The lack of a government has sparked concerns among neighbors of a rise in violence just as the sectarian strife triggered after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion recedes and U.S. forces start to withdraw.

"Everyone believes that you are at a crossroad that requires doing the utmost efforts to unite, get over traumas and conflicts and get rid of sectarianism," SPA quoted the king as saying, addressing Iraqi leaders.

The National Alliance, a merger of major Shi'ite blocs, named sitting Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki its nominee for a second term on October 1 despite dissent within the coalition.

Maliki won support from his own State of Law bloc and the Sadrist movement of anti-American cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

Iraq's Sunni Arab neighbors and the United States are worried about Shi'ite Iran's growing regional influence and want Maliki to include Iraqiya in a power-sharing deal. Iraqiya is led by Shi'ite former prime minister Iyad Allawi but enjoys strong support among Sunnis.

"We welcome the initiative and call on all political blocs to respond positively," said Iraqiya spokeswoman Maysoun al-Damalouji, adding that Turkey and Iran should be involved as well.

There was no immediate word from Maliki or other players.

King Abdullah held talks with Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa last week.

In the shadows, U.S. and Iran battled on

Strategy and equipment aided militias fighting against American forces

BY MICHAEL R. GORDON
AND ANDREW W. LEHREN

On Dec. 22, 2006, U.S. military officials in Baghdad issued a secret warning: The Shiite militia commander who had orchestrated the kidnapping of officials from Iraq's Ministry of Higher Education was now hatching plans to take American soldiers hostage.

What made the warning especially worrying were intelligence reports saying that the Iraqi militant, Azhar al-Dulaimi, had been trained by the Middle East's masters of the dark arts of paramilitary operations: the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps in Iran and Hezbollah, Iran's Lebanese ally.

"Dulaymi reportedly obtained his training from Hizballah operatives near Qum, Iran, who were under the supervision of Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force (IRGC-QF) officers in July 2006," the report noted, using alternative spellings of the principals involved.

Five months later, Mr. Dulaimi was tracked down and killed in a U.S. raid in the sprawling Shiite enclave of Sadr City in Baghdad — but not before four American soldiers had been abducted from an Iraqi headquarters in Karbala and executed in an operation that U.S. military officials say literally bore Mr. Dulaimi's fingerprints.

Scores of documents made public by WikiLeaks, which has disclosed classified information about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, provide a ground-level look — at least as seen by American units in the field and the U.S. military intelligence — at the shadow war between the United States and Iraqi militias backed by Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

During the administration of President George W. Bush, critics charged that the White House had exaggerated Iran's role to deflect criticism of its handling of the war and build support for a tough policy toward Iran, including the possibility of military action. But the field reports disclosed by WikiLeaks, which were never intended to be made public, underscore the seriousness with which Iran's role has been seen by the U.S.



The detainees Documents contain indelible details of abuse by Iraq's military and police forces, including references to the deaths of at least six prisoners.

The political struggle between the United States and Iran to influence events in Iraq still continues as Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki has sought to assemble a coalition — including the anti-American Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr — that will allow him to remain in power. But much of the U.S. military concern has revolved around Iran's role in assisting Shiite militias.

Citing the testimony of detainees, a captured militant's diary and many uncovered weapons caches, among other intelligence, the field reports recount Iran's role in providing Iraqi militia fighters with rockets; magnetic bombs that can be attached to the underside of cars; "explosively formed penetrators," or E.F.P.'s, which are the most lethal type of roadside bomb in Iraq; and other weapons. Those include powerful .50-caliber rifles and the Misagh-1, an Iranian replica of a portable Chinese surface-to-air missile, which, according to the reports, was fired at U.S. helicopters and downed one in Baghdad in July 2007.

Iraqi militants went to Iran to be trained as snipers and in the use of explosives, the field reports assert, and Iran's Quds Force collaborated with Iraqi extremists to encourage the assassination of Iraqi officials.

The reports make it clear that the lethal contest between Iranian-backed militias and U.S. forces continued after President Barack Obama sought to

open a diplomatic dialogue with Iran's leaders and reaffirmed the agreement between the United States and Iraq to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq by the end of 2011.

Established by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini after the 1979 Iranian revolution, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps has expanded its influence at home under President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a former member of the corps, and it plays an important role in Iran's economy, politics and internal security. The corps's Quds Force, under the command of Brig. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, has responsibility for foreign operations and has often sought to work through surrogates, like Hezbollah.

While the U.S. government has long believed that the Quds Force has been providing lethal assistance and training to Shiite militants in Iraq, the field reports provide new details about Iran's support for Iraqi militias and the U.S. military's operations to counter them.

The reports are written entirely from the perspective of the U.S.-led coalition. No similar Iraqi or Iranian reports have been made available. Nor do the U.S. reports include the more comprehensive assessments that are typically prepared by U.S. intelligence agencies after incidents in the field.

While some of the raw information cannot be verified, it is nonetheless broadly consistent with other classified U.S. intelligence and public accounts by

American military officials. As seen by current and former U.S. officials, the Quds Force has two main objectives: to weaken and shape Iraq's nascent government and to diminish the U.S. role and influence in Iraq.

For people like Gen. Soleimani, "who went through all eight years of the Iran-Iraq war, this is certainly about poking a stick at us, but it is also about achieving strategic advantage in Iraq," Ryan C. Crocker, the U.S. ambassador in Iraq from 2007 until early 2009, said in an interview.

"I think the Iranians understand that they are not going to dominate Iraq," Mr. Crocker added. "But I think they are going to do their level best to weaken it — to have a weak central government that is constantly off balance, that is going to have to be beseeching Iran to stop doing bad things without having the capability to compel them to stop doing bad things. And that is an Iraq that will never again threaten Iran."

According to the reports, Iran's role has been political as well as military. A report issued on Nov. 27, 2005, before Iraq's December 2005 parliamentary elections, cautioned that Iranian-backed militia members in the Iraqi government were gaining power and giving Iran influence over Iraqi politics.

"Iran is gaining control of Iraq at many levels of the Iraqi government," the report warned.

The reports also recount an array of border incidents, including an episode on Sept. 7, 2006, in which an Iranian soldier who aimed a rocket-propelled grenade launcher at a U.S. platoon trying to leave the border area was shot and killed by an American soldier with a .50-caliber machine gun. The members of the U.S. platoon, who had gone to the border area with Iraqi troops to look for "infiltration routes" used to smuggle bombs and other weapons into Iraq, were concerned that Iranian border

The political struggle between the United States and Iran to influence events in Iraq continues.

forces were trying to surround and detain them.

After this incident, the platoon returned to its base in Iraq under fire from the Iranians even when the American soldiers were "well inside Iraqi territory," a report noted.

But the reports assert that Iran's Quds Force and intelligence service has turned to many violent and shadowy tactics as well.

The reports contain numerous references to Iranian agents, but the documents generally describe a pattern in which the Quds Force has sought to maintain a low profile in Iraq by arranging for fighters from Hezbollah in Lebanon to train Iraqi militants in Iran or by giving guidance to Iraqi militias who do the fighting with Iranian financing and

weapons.

The reports suggest that Iranian-sponsored assassinations of Iraqi officials became a serious worry.

A case in point is a report that was issued on March 27, 2007. Iranian intelligence agents within the Badr Corps and Jaish al-Mahdi, two Shiite militias, "have recently been influencing attacks on ministry officials in Iraq," the report said.

According to the March report, officials at the Ministry of Industry were high on the target list. "The desired effect of these attacks is not to simply kill the Ministry of Industry Officials," the report noted, but also "to show the world, and especially the Arab world, that the Baghdad Security Plan has failed to bring stability," referring to the troop increase that Gen. David H. Petraeus was overseeing to reduce violence in Iraq.

News reports in early 2007 indicated that a consultant to the ministry and his daughter were shot and killed on the way to his office. The March report does not mention the attack, but it asserts that one gunman was carrying out a systematic assassination campaign, which included killing three bodyguards and plotting to attack ministry officials while wearing a stolen Iraqi Army uniform.

The provision of Iranian rockets, mortars and bombs to Shiite militants has also been a major concern. A report from Nov. 22, 2005, recounted an effort by the Iraqi border police to stop the smuggling of weapons from Iran. The police "recovered a quantity of bomb-making equipment, including explosively formed projectiles," which are capable of blasting a metal projectile through the door of an armored Humvee.

A Shiite militant from the Jaish al-Mahdi militia, also known as the Mahdi Army, was planning to carry out a mortar attack on the Green Zone in Baghdad, using rockets and mortar shells shipped by the Quds Force, according to a report on Dec. 1, 2006. On Nov. 28, the report noted, the Mahdi Army commander, Ali al-Saidi, "met Iranian officials reported to be IRGC officers at the border to pick up three shipments of rockets."

A report on Dec. 27, 2008, noted one instance when U.S. soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division captured several suspected members of the Jaish al-Mahdi militia and seized a weapons cache, which also included several diaries, including one that explained "why detainee joined JAM and how they traffic materials from Iran."

The attacks continued during Mr. Obama's first year in office, with no indication in the reports that the new administration's policies led the Quds Force to end its support for Iraqi militants. The pending U.S. troop withdrawals, the reports asserted, may even have encouraged some militant attacks.

A report on June 25, 2009, about an especially bloody E.F.P. attack that

wounded 10 American soldiers noted that the militants used tactics "being employed by trained violent extremist members that have returned from Iran." The purpose of the attack, the report speculated, was to increase U.S. casualties so militants could claim that they had "fought the occupiers and forced them to withdraw."

An intelligence analysis of an attack on Dec. 31, 2009, on the Green Zone using 107-millimeter rockets concluded that it was carried out by the Baghdad branch of Kataib Hezbollah, a militant Shiite group that U.S. intelligence has long believed is supported by Iran. According to the December report, a technical expert from Kataib Hezbollah met before the attack with a "weapons facilitator" who "reportedly traveled to Iran, possibility to facilitate the attacks on 31 Dec."

One of the most striking episodes detailed in the trove of documents made public by WikiLeaks describes a plot to kidnap U.S. soldiers from their Humvees. According to the report on Dec. 22, 2006, a Lebanese-born militia commander, Hasan Salim, devised a plan to capture American soldiers in Baghdad and hold them hostage in Sadr City to deter U.S. raids there.

To carry out the plan, Mr. Salim turned to Mr. Dulaimi, a Sunni who converted to the Shiite branch of the faith while studying in the Shiite holy city of Najaf in 1995. Mr. Dulaimi, the report noted, was picked for the operation because he "allegedly trained in Iran on how to conduct precision, military style kidnappings."

Those kidnappings were never carried out. But the next month, militants conducted a raid to kidnap American soldiers working at the Iraqi security headquarters in Karbala, known as the Provincial Joint Coordination Center.

The documents made public by WikiLeaks do not include an intelligence assessment as to who carried out the Karbala operation. But U.S. military officials said after the attack that Mr. Dulaimi was the tactical commander of the operation and that his fingerprints were found on the getaway car.

U.S. officials say he collaborated with Qais and Laith Khazali, two Shiite militant leaders who were captured after the raid along with a Hezbollah operative. The Khazali brothers were released after the raid as part of an effort at political reconciliation and are now believed to be in Iran.

The documents, however, do provide a vivid account of the Karbala attack as it unfolded.

At 7:10 p.m., several sport utility vehicles of the type typically used by the U.S.-led coalition blocked the entrance to the headquarters compound. Twenty minutes later, an "unknown number of personnel, wearing American uniforms and carrying American weapons attacked the PJCC," the report said.

The attackers managed to kidnap four American soldiers, dragging them into an S.U.V., which was pursued by po-

lice officers from an Iraqi SWAT unit. Calculating that they were trapped, the militants shot the handcuffed hostages and fled. Three of the American soldiers died at the scene. The fourth later died

of his wounds, the report said, and a fifth soldier was killed in the initial attack on the compound.

Summing up the episode, the U.S. commander of a police training team noted that the adversary appeared to be

particularly well trained.

"PTT leader on ground stated insurgents were professionals and appeared to have a well-planned operation," the report said.

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune
OCTOBER 23-24, 2010

THE IRAQ WAR LOGS

Most civilian casualties are attributed to Iraqis

Report also reveals U.S. killings, but fails to give precise death count

BY SABRINA TAVERNISE
AND ANDREW W. LEHREN

The reports in the archive disclosed by WikiLeaks offer an incomplete, yet startlingly graphic portrait of one of the most contentious issues in the Iraq war: how many Iraqi civilians have been killed and by whom.

The reports make it clear that most civilians, by far, were killed by other Iraqis. Two of the worst days of the war came on Aug. 31, 2005, when a stampede on a bridge in Baghdad killed hundreds after several earlier attacks panicked a huge crowd, and on Aug. 14, 2007, when several truck bombs killed more than 500 people in a rural area near the border with Syria.

But it was systematic sectarian cleansing that drove the killing to its most frenzied point, making December 2006 the worst month of the war, according to the reports, with about 3,800 civilians killed. A total of about 1,300 police officers, insurgents and coalition soldiers were also killed in that month.

The documents also reveal many previously unreported instances in which U.S. soldiers killed civilians — at checkpoints, from helicopters, in aerial bomb-

The archive tells thousands of individual stories of loss.

ings. Such killings are a central reason Iraqis turned against the U.S. presence in their country, a situation that is now being repeated in Afghanistan.

The archive contains reports on at least four cases of lethal shootings from helicopters. In the bloodiest, on July 16, 2007, as many as 26 Iraqis were killed, about half of them civilians. The tally was called in by two different people, however, and it is possible that the deaths were counted twice.

In another case, in February 2007, an Apache helicopter shot and killed two Iraqi men believed to have been firing

mortars, even though they made surrendering motions, because, according to a military lawyer cited in the report, "they cannot surrender to aircraft, and are still valid targets."

The shooting was unusual. In at least three other instances reported in the archive, Iraqis surrendered to helicopter crews without being shot.

The pace of civilian deaths served as a kind of pulse, whose steady beat told of the success, or failure, of the U.S. war effort. Americans on both sides of the war debate argued bitterly over facts that grew hazier as the war deepened.

The archive does not put that argument to rest by giving a precise count. As a 2008 report to Congress on the topic makes clear, the figures serve as "guideposts," not hard totals. But it does seem to suggest numbers that are roughly in line with those compiled by several sources, including Iraq Body Count, an organization that tracked civilian deaths using press reports, a method the Bush administration repeatedly derided as unreliable and producing inflated numbers. In all, the five-year archive lists more than 100,000 dead from 2004 to 2009, although some deaths are reported more than once, and some reports have inconsistent casualty figures.

The archive tells thousands of individual stories of loss whose consequences are still being felt in Iraqi families today.

Misunderstandings at checkpoints were often lethal. At one Marine checkpoint, sunlight glinting off the windshield of a car that did not slow down led to the shooting death of a mother and the wounding of three of her daughters and her husband. Hand signals flashed to stop vehicles were often not understood, and soldiers and Marines, who without interpreters were unable to speak to the survivors, were left to wonder why.

According to one entry from 2006, an Iraqi wearing a track suit was killed by a U.S. sniper who later discovered that the victim was the platoon's interpreter.

The archive's data is incomplete. The documents were compiled with an emphasis on speed rather than accuracy;

the goal was to spread information as quickly as possible among units. U.S. soldiers did not respond to every incident.

And even when Americans were at the center of the action, as in the western city of Falluja in 2004, none of the Iraqis they killed were categorized as civilians. In the early years of the war, the Pentagon maintained that it did not track Iraqi civilian deaths, but it began releasing rough counts in 2005, after members of Congress demanded a more detailed accounting on the state of the war. In one instance in 2008, the Pentagon used reports similar to the newly released documents to tabulate the war dead.

This month, The Associated Press reported that the Pentagon in July had quietly posted its fullest tally of the death toll of Iraqi civilians and security forces ever, numbers that were first requested in 2005. It was not clear why the total — 76,939 Iraqi civilians and members of the security forces killed between January 2004 and August 2008 — was significantly less than the sum of the archive's death count.

The archive does not have a category for the main causes of Iraqi deaths inflicted by Americans. Compared with the situation in Afghanistan, in Iraq aerial bombings seemed to be less frequently a cause of civilian deaths, after the initial invasion. The reports were only as good as the soldiers calling them in. One of the most infamous episodes of killings by U.S. soldiers, the shootings of at least 15 Iraqi civilians, including women and children in the western city of Haditha, is misrepresented in the archives. The report stated that the civilians were killed by militants in a bomb attack, the same false version of the episode that was given to the news media.

Civilians have borne the brunt of modern warfare, with 10 civilians dying for every soldier in wars fought since the mid-20th century, compared with 9 soldiers killed for every civilian in World War I, according to a 2001 study by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Turkey business update

SPOTLIGHT | All systems go

Turkish economy bounces back

With eight months to go until the next general elections, in June 2011, Turkey's ruling party has good reasons to feel confident. On Sept. 12, 58 percent of the population backed a Constitutional reform package containing 26 articles in a referendum widely seen as a watershed for Turkey's democratization process. Foreign investors rejoiced as well, as the vote of confidence for the AK Party government, in place since December 2002, signaled continuity and stability.

Turkey's society remains divided, and many in the Kemalist elite still view the conservative and religious government with suspicion, but most political actors now agree on the need for a new Constitution to replace the restrictive framework document introduced in 1982 during the period of military rule. Chronic problems, considered taboo until recently, are now open for public debate in the search for new solutions. Efforts to put an end to the Kurdish conflict are under way, fueling hope that the temporary cease-fire declared by PKK rebels can be transformed into lasting peace.

Economically, too, the Turkish government can be pleased. The economy, backed by a robust financial sector, has rebounded rapidly from the global downturn, growing 11.7 percent in the first quarter of 2010 and 10.3 percent in the second trimester. The International Monetary Fund has just announced a revised forecast of 7.8 percent growth for 2010. More buoyant than most of its peers in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Turkey was recently described by U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron as "Europe's BRIC," referring to the emerging markets of Brazil, Russia, India and China.

Turkey's growing reputation for economic stability and its rising status as a regional power are proving attractive to foreign capital, which has lifted Istanbul Stock Exchange indices to unprecedented highs. However, short-term capital inflows are keeping the lira strong, much to the displeasure of exporters, who worry that the exchange rate will affect their competitiveness.

Turkey's strong macro indicators have impressed credit rating firms, which have expressed their confidence by raising the country's credit rating on several occasions since the crisis, bringing it tantalizingly close to investment grade. Most analysts say this threshold will be crossed in the near future.

Some structural problems remain, however. Strong domestic demand and in-

Istanbul's business district: Turkey's economy is forecast to grow by 7.8 percent in 2010, according to the IMF.



Backed by a robust financial sector, Turkey has rebounded rapidly from the global downturn

creased industrial output have caused a significant increase in the current account deficit, a problem unlikely to be resolved rapidly as it requires the implementation of import-substitution policies. For the time being, short-term capital inflows are helping finance the gap. "Unfortunately, hot money constitutes a major part of the current capital flow into Turkey," Economy Minister Ali Babacan recently said. "I call it an unfortunate situation because direct investments are in decline. Last year, there was the global crisis. However, direct investments are still not at the desired levels this year."

Foreign direct investments reached a record \$22 billion in 2007, but dropped to \$8.4 billion in 2009, according to Turkey's Investment Support and Promotion Agency. Expected inflows range from \$7 billion to \$8 billion for this year; the Economist Intelligence Unit forecasts suggest Turkey could attract up to \$75 billion in the next four years.

Greenfield investments are important for job creation, which remains a top priority to meet the needs of Turkey's young population. Unemployment peaked at 16.1 percent in February 2009, but it has declined steadily, currently standing close to pre-crisis levels at 10.6 percent. According to the government's Mid-Term Economic Program, unveiled in early October, joblessness will remain in double figures until 2012.

The government's plan, which underlined the government's commitment to fiscal discipline, was welcomed by the markets, which had feared increased spending ahead of the June 2011 elections. "The medium-term economic program we recently made public is a continuation of last year's practices," Babacan explained. By the end of 2010, the public debt stock would stand at 42 percent of the national income, the minister announced.

Turkey succeeded in turning its economy around without resorting to IMF assistance. The government and the Central Bank's skillful crisis management was recently praised by the former director of the World

Bank, James Wolfensohn, who told Zaman newspaper that "as far as I know, Turkey's economic management team is the best in the world. I have watched the team and its success with astonishment and admiration."

Already an active member of the Group of 20, Turkey is now seeking a stronger voice in the IMF. Its economic success has also led its government to reach out diplomatically and expand its area of influence in foreign policy. Under the leadership of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, Ankara has successfully raised its profile internationally, seeking agreements with countries in its immediate vicinity as well as farther afield.

Turkey's decision not to back international sanctions against Tehran at the U.N. Security Council and its war of words with Israel after the flotilla incident, which killed nine Turkish citizens in May, have fueled speculation that Turkey was moving away from the West, a notion vehemently refuted by Turkish officials.

Turkey's European Union accession talks began five years ago, but the anniversary on Oct. 3 was not cause for celebration. Turkey's accession bid has been slowed by obstruction from some European nations and declining enthusiasm in Turkey, where only 38 percent now back the project, compared with over 70 percent in 2003. "We are pursuing our membership talks with determination. But unfortunately, no E.U.-member country has been subject to the treatment that Turkey is now," Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in early October. "It has been 50 years since we first applied to the E.U., and we have been facing delaying tactics since then." Technical work on the 12 chapters of the acquis that have been opened so far is continuing. In business circles, the road map for E.U. membership is still seen as the best blueprint for the country's democratization. These days, internal dynamics, rather than pressure or incentives from Europe, are powering Turkey's political and social transformation. As Minister for European Affairs and Chief Negotiator Egemen Bagis put it, "Turkey is no longer the sick man of the 19th century — it is the dynamic actor of the 21st century." ■

Turkey steps out



Roger Cohen

GLOBALIST

ANKARA Davutogluism is a mouthful. It's not going to make Fox News any time soon. But if I could escort Sarah Palin, Tea Partiers and a few bigoted anti-Muslim Europeans to a single country illustrating how the world has changed, it would be the home of the D-word, Turkey.

Ahmet Davutoglu, who birthed a foreign policy doctrine and has been Turkey's foreign minister since May 2009, has irked a lot of Americans. He's seen as the man behind Turkey's "turning East," as Iran's friend, as Israel's foe, as a fickle NATO ally wary of a proposed new missile shield, and as the wily architect of Turkey's new darling status with Arab states. The Obama administration has said it is "disappointed" in Turkey's no vote on Iran sanctions last June; Congress is not pleased, holding up an ambassadorial appointment and huffing over arms sales.

Nostalgia is running high in Washington for the pliant Turkey of Cold-War days. Davutoglu is having none of it. "We don't want to be a frontier country like in the Cold War," he told me. "We don't want problems with any neighbor" — and that, of course, would include Iran.

Zero problems with neighbors lay at the core of Davutoglu's influential book "Strategic Depth," published in 2001. Annual trade with Russia has since soared to \$40 billion. Syrian-Turkish relations have never been better. Turkey's commercial sway over northern Iraq is overwhelming. It has signed a free trade agreement with Jordan. And now Turkey says it aims — United Nations sanctions notwithstanding — to triple trade with Iran over the next five years.

All this makes the anemic West edgy: The policy has produced 7 percent growth this year. There's also something deeper at work: The idea of economic interdependence as a basis for regional peace and stability sounds awfully familiar. Wasn't that the genius of the European Union idea?

Which prompts another question: Can it only work for Westerners? I don't think so. And, having shortsightedly kept Turkey out of the European Union, the West is scarcely qualified to complain. As British Prime Minister David Cameron, Turkey's strongest European supporter, said recently, "It is just wrong to say that Turkey can guard the camp but not be allowed to sit in the tent."

Wrong indeed, and stupid, but that's where Turkey is, with at least a foot outside the Western tent, and increasingly proud of what it has achieved in a transformed world. Nations have increasing options. They don't depend as much on the United States. Congress can rail about that and it won't change a thing. Turkish foreign policy, Davutoglu said, "is based on a realistic, rational analysis of the strategic picture." Yep.

So it gets prickly over U.S. guidance. When I asked Davutoglu about the visit last week of Stuart Levey, a senior Treasury department official, to Ankara to talk about Iran sanctions, he bristled: "We don't need any advice," he told me. "We are a responsible country of the U.N. system and a member of the U.N. Security Council. We voted no. That is our decision. We have no need to be told by anyone, we will implement the U.N. Security Council resolution. But as for unilateral resolutions — American or European — we will look at our own national interest. Is it wrong to have strong economic relations with neighbors?"

I think Turkey's immediate recognition of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad following his violent electoral putsch of June 2009 was the low point of Davutogluism. But I also think Turkey has Iran policy about right. Isolation comforts the hard-liners. Sanctions won't turn Iran. A Turkish-Brazilian swap deal for Iran's low-enriched uranium, reached last May, was a means "to open the way for diplomatic negotiations."

Davutoglu was adamant: "Of course we were coordinating with the Ameri-

cans at every stage. Nobody from Washington can say Turkey acted on its own. Our purpose was to ease the tension and to contain the Iranian nuclear program."

Turkey can be the West's conduit to the Muslim world if Washington can bury its pique. The new Turkey won't abandon NATO or its American alliance: If NATO wants to talk to the Taliban, or the West to Iran, it can help.

But when Turkish-Israeli relations implode, rumblings on Capitol Hill get furious. That Turkey's Iran diplomacy coincided with Israel's killing of eight Turkish and one U.S. citizen on a Turkish-led Gaza-bound flotilla was a fluke. Still, it has left bitter feelings.

"Turkey expects solidarity from the United States because its citizens were killed in international waters," Davutoglu said. "This is an issue of national pride." He added, referring to Israel, "Yes, we expect an apology because we think friends can apologize to one another."

Far from U.S. solidarity, Turkey got U.S. hostility. One congressman wrote to President Obama demanding that he "condemn Turkey's reaction to the incident." That last sentence cries out for an exclamation mark. It reflects the Turkey-equals-Iran-lover-and-Israel-hater surge in Congress.

That's the kind of cheap jingoistic nonsense that boxes in Obama's Mideast policy and condemns it to tired failure. It's time for Davutogluism to roll off more American tongues.

Suicide bomber wounds 32 in main Istanbul square; no immediate claim of responsibility

By Christopher Torchia
Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — A suicide bomber blew himself up Sunday beside a police vehicle in a major Istanbul square near tourist hotels and a bus terminal, wounding 32 people, including 15 policemen.

The attack in Taksim Square, which was followed by police gunfire and sent hundreds of panicked people racing for cover, coincided with the possible end of a unilateral cease-fire by Kurdish rebels, but there was no immediate claim of responsibility. Turkey, a NATO ally that has deployed troops in a noncombat role in Afghanistan, is also home to cells of radical leftists and Islamic militants.

Istanbul police chief Huseyin Capkin said the bomber tried but failed to get into a parked police van and detonated the bomb just outside the vehicle, blowing himself to pieces. Riot police are routinely stationed at Taksim, a popular spot for street demonstrations that abuts a major pedestrian walkway whose shops and restaurants are usually packed.

At least 32 people, including 15 police officers, were injured, at least two of them seriously, Istanbul Gov. Huseyin Avni Mutlu said.

After the blast, he said, investigators at the scene found and defused a package of plastic explosives that could have been detonated with the push of a button.

"It was a terrifying, very loud explosion," said Mehmet Toz, a coffee stall owner who was in the square at the time of the blast. "Everyone started to run around, people fell on the ground."

Another witness, Muammer Ulutas, said a policeman fired four rounds at the body of the suicide bomber after the explosion. He glimpsed the remains of the assailant, who appeared to be in his early 20s.

The attack occurred as Istanbul was preparing to hold Republic Day parades to mark the 1923 founding of Turkey. The celebrations were originally planned for Friday, but were delayed due to heavy rain. Taksim Square, a transport hub that is a major stop on the city's underground train network and close to the Hyatt, Ritz-Carlton and other major hotels, was festooned with red and white Turkish flags.

Two suicide attacks in Taksim in 1999 and 2001 killed two police officers and wounded a total of 13 people. The first was carried out by a female Kurdish militant, and leftist extremists claimed



Riot police buses are seen at the scene after an explosion close to a spot in Taksim square where riot police were stationed in case of demonstrations in Istanbul, Turkey, Sunday, Oct. 31, 2010. A suicide bomber blew himself up near police watching over Istanbul's main square on Sunday, wounding 22 people, including 10 policemen, officials said. (AP Photo/Hurriyet)

responsibility for the second.

Kurdish rebels are fighting for autonomy in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast and their unilateral cease-fire was scheduled to expire at the end of October. The state has held secretive talks with the jailed leader of the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, in an effort to end the conflict. But an ongoing trial of more than 150 Kurds, including a dozen elected mayors, on charges of rebel links is a sign of the deep reserves of mistrust between authorities and the ethnic minority.

Interior Minister Besir Atalay, speaking to Turkish journalists on a visit to China, said "certain suspicions, certain evidence" indicated who was behind the attack, but said the government would not rush to announce its theories.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was inaugurating a hamlet for villagers whose homes are to be flooded by a new dam in southeastern Turkey, said the suicide attack was aimed at "obstructing Turkey's development."

"We will not show any tolerance toward those who to want cause turmoil," Erdogan said.

President Abdullah Gul said the assailants would "fail in their aim to replace friendship, brotherhood and peace with violence in the face of the people's will for unity to live as brothers."

Turkey frequently accuses the PKK of carrying out attacks to prevent the economic and social progress of Turkey,

which has made big strides as a regional power in recent years despite conflict between its Islamic-leaning government and secular elites linked to the military and judiciary. An alleged anti-government network that includes military officers faces charges of seeking to foment chaos that would topple Erdogan's government; secular critics say the trials are a government effort to silence dissent.

Last week, the PKK's military chief told Turkey's Radikal newspaper that the rebel group was "watching and waiting" for any peace gestures from the government and would assess whether to extend its cease-fire.

"If there is an action in the cities, or wherever, our basic principle is that no civilian should be harmed," Murat Karayilan said in the interview, which was held at the main PKK base in northern Iraq. "In the past it happened, but it won't from now on."

Some rebel cells in Turkish cities, however, are believed to operate with considerable autonomy from their leadership, whose camps at Qandil mountain in Iraq, which borders Turkey, have periodically been bombed by the Turkish air force.

At Taksim, police sealed off roads with yellow tape and forensic teams in blue coveralls combed the area for debris and other evidence. One walked around the ledge of a monument to Turkish independence in the center of the square. Hours later, some areas were reopened.

The Kurdistan Freedom Falcons, a militant group linked to the PKK, claimed responsibility for a June bombing in Istanbul that killed four soldiers and an officer's 17-year-old daughter. Authorities suspected Kurdish rebels in a 2008 bombing in Istanbul that killed 17 people, though the PKK denied involvement.

According to the government, the last suicide bombing by the PKK was in

2008, when an assailant blew himself up at a police checkpoint in the Mediterranean city of Mersin and injured 13 police officers. In May 2007, a Kurdish rebel blew himself up in the capital, Ankara, killing seven.

Homegrown Islamic militants tied to al-Qaida carried out suicide bombings in Istanbul, killing 58, in 2003. The targets were the British consulate, a British bank and two synagogues. In 2008, an attack

blamed on al-Qaida-affiliated militants outside the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul left three assailants and three policemen dead.

On Oct. 22, Turkish police said they detained five people, including three university students, suspected of providing financial and technical support to the al-Qaida network in Afghanistan. The raids were carried out in the Aegean coastal city of Izmir and several other cities.

Ak news Agency of Kurdistan for News

PKK awaits Imrali signal to shatter or extend ceasefire

Erbil, October 31, 2010 (AKnews)-

THE KURDISTAN Workers' Party (PKK) awaits its leader Abdullah Öcalan' response to break or prolong a ceasefire which is due to end Sunday, said a PKK leader. pkk

In 1984 the PKK, an outlawed organization by the U.S., UK and Turkey, instigated war against Turkey to campaign for the rights of 20 million Kurds, constitutionally unrecognized. The leader of the party is detained in Turkey's Imrali Island since 1999.

In its history the organization has declared eight armistices, all unilateral and disregarded by the Turkish army.

Dozdar Hamo, a leader from the military commander of the PKK told AKnews the party awaits Öcalan's message regarding the next step PKK should take.

He said, the party has respected the ceasefire, though the Turkey continued crack down on the PKK, murdering its guerrillas and arresting its supporters.

The last truce on Oct. 13 which was an immediate extension of a previous one was declared after some top Turkish security offi-



cials met with Öcalan and agreed on the party's demands. The officials asked for extending the truce, Duran Kalkan another PKK leader had told AKnews.

Hamo added Öcalan has threatened if his peace initiatives are "overlooked", he will not intervene anymore for settling the tensions. However, Turkey missed many opportunities to step forward for peaceful talks, he added.

PKK's demands included releasing PKK detainees, lifting the ban on education in Kurdish, paving the way for an autonomous democrat Kurdish system within Turkey, reducing pressure on the detained PKK president, stopping military action against the Kurdish party and recomposing the Turkish constitution.

Reported by Karzan karim

Ak news Agency of Kurdistan for News

Al-Iraqiya rejected 9 out of 19 Kurdish demands

Erbil, October 31 (AKnews)

WHILE the Kurdish factions reiterate they look out for the official response of the major blocs to their coalition demands so as to voice their support for a certain party, a Kurdish lawmaker said al-Iraqiya bloc has officially responded and rejected nine terms. zana rostayi

In mid June the Kurdistan Blocs coalition (KBC) introduced a 19-term paper to the Iraqi blocs. The terms demand the allies in the new administration to implement article 140 pertinent to the territorial disputes between the Kurdish and Baghdad officials in addition to disputes over the legality of Kurdistan oil and gas contracts.

Kurds further demand the Iraqi presidential position and resolution to the issues related to Kurdistan budget, the Kurdistan armed forces (locally referred to as Peshmarga) budget and their official status.

Speaking to AKnews Sunday Zana Rostayi from the KBC said

in their recent visit to Erbil, the al-Iraqiya delegation officially rejected nine terms from the Kurdish demands, including the demand for the presidential post and article 140.

Ayad Allawi, the former prime minister and the head of al-Iraqiya accompanied by a delegation of leaders in his bloc, arrived in Erbil this week to hold talks with the Kurdish leaders. The bloc came first with 91 seats in March voting while the KBC won only 57 in the fourth rank.

Allawi seeks the Kurdish support to beat his rival for the PM position, the outgoing PM Nouri al-Maliki who is backed by over 100 deputies.

However, another KBC lawmaker Mahmoud Othman said al-Iraqiya has also rejects to come to terms with Kurds for peshmarga issue.

After more than seven months of delaying the new government the Iraqi leaders are still negotiating over allocation of posts.

Reported by Hevidar Ahmed

Tarek Aziz condamné à mort par la justice irakienne

Instance judiciaire supérieure du régime pour les crimes de sang liés au terrorisme et aux affaires politiques, la Haute Cour pénale d'Irak a condamné à mort, mardi 26 octobre, trois membres supplémentaires du régime déchu de Saddam Hussein. Il s'agit de Saadoun Chaker, un ancien ministre de l'intérieur, Abed Hamoud, ex-secrétaire particulier du dictateur pendu en décembre 2006, et Tarek Aziz, qui fut, les vingt dernières années du régime, sa « vitrine » internationale.

Ancien vice-premier ministre, propagandiste du socialisme baassiste et chef de la diplomatie de la dictature, Tarek Aziz, qui aura 75 ans en janvier, a été condamné à la pendaison pour « meurtres avec préméditation visant à éliminer des partis et des personnalités religieuses » d'Irak avant l'invasion américano-britannique d'avril 2003. Il s'agit surtout de « la répression contre les partis et dirigeants religieux chiites dans les années 1980 », a confié le porte-parole du tribunal, Mohammed Abdoul Saheb, à l'Agence France-Presse. « Notamment, a-t-il ajouté, la mort de Mohammad Baqr Al-Sadr, tué avec sa sœur le 5 avril 1980. »

Exécuté sur ordre de Saddam Hussein pour « trahison », l'ayatollah Al-Sadr fut le fondateur du parti Al-Daawa (l'Appel), dont l'actuel premier ministre, Nouri Al-Maliki, après y avoir milité trente ans, est aujourd'hui le chef.

Entre 1979 et 2003, des milliers de militants chiites d'Al-Daawa, alors accusés d'avoir partie liée avec l'Iran khomeyniste, à qui Saddam Hussein avait déclaré une guerre de huit années avec le soutien des Etats-Unis, de l'Europe et de Moscou, ont été assassinés ou exécutés par les séides du régime. Nombre d'entre eux, dont M. Maliki, avaient dû fuir leur pays et se réfugier à Téhéran pendant ces années de guerre.

Vêtu d'une chemise bleue marine et d'un tee-shirt noir, prenant appui à la barre pour se tenir debout, Tarek Aziz, qui marche désormais avec une canne après avoir subi au moins trois attaques cardiaques, dont la dernière en janvier, « semblait visiblement épuisé », a indiqué un témoin du procès. Aucune de ses paroles au tribunal n'a été rapportée.

« Fier de mon parcours »

En 2003, quelques jours après la chute officielle de l'ancien régime le 9 avril, l'ancien vice-premier ministre avait proposé, via des intermédiaires, de se rendre aux Américains pourvu que son épouse Violette et ses deux fils, Ziad et Saddam, puissent s'installer à l'abri en Jordanie. Les Américains acceptèrent et la famille Aziz vit toujours dans le royaume hachémite. Détenu, avec une cinquantaine d'autres dignitaires – dont une dizaine ont, depuis, été pendus –, dans une prison américaine près de Bagdad (« Camp Cropper »), l'ancien diplomate, qui fut un temps journaliste puis professeur d'anglais avant de lier, très jeune, son sort politique à Saddam Hussein, fut transféré, avec tous ses codétenus, dans une prison irakienne de la capitale le 14 juillet.

Longtemps membre du Commandement de la révolution, la plus haute instance dirigeante de la dictature, Tarek Aziz, qui faisait un peu figure d'intellectuel dans un gouvernement de brutes sanguinaires, a déjà été deux fois jugé et condamné : à 15 ans de prison en mars 2009 pour sa responsabilité dans l'exécution de 42 commerçants prétendument « corrompus » en 1992 ; à 7 ans d'enfermement en août suivant, pour son rôle dans les exactions contre les Kurdes dans les années 1980.

« Je n'ai plus d'avenir, je mourrai en prison », confia-t-il en août à un journaliste étranger autorisé par les Irakiens à le rencontrer en prison, Martin Chulov, du *Guardian* de Londres. Interrogé sur Saddam Hussein, l'ancien diplomate, qui rencontra en leur temps le président Ronald Reagan, son chef de cabinet, James Baker, et tant d'autres personnalités étrangères, refusa de critiquer son mentor décedé. « Je ne dirais rien contre Saddam (...), on me taxerait d'opportunisme (...). Tout ce que je puis dire est que je suis innocent de ce dont on m'accuse. Je suis fier de mon parcours parce que mes intentions ont toujours été de servir l'Irak au mieux. »



tions ont toujours été de servir l'Irak au mieux. »

Appel à la clémence

De nombreux appels en faveur de sa libération pour raisons humanitaires ont été lancés ces dernières années par sa famille et ses avocats, dont le juriste italien, M^r Giovanni di Stefano. Selon certaines sources non confirmées, celui-ci, qui a qualifié mardi le procès de « sinistre farce », serait en partie financé par le Vatican où Tarek Aziz avait été reçu par le pape Jean Paul II quelques jours avant le début de l'invasion en 2003. Il était ensuite allé prier « pour la paix » devant le mémorial de saint François d'Assise.

Seul et unique chrétien de l'entourage du dictateur défunt, lequel veillait à la sécurité d'une population qui ne pouvait menacer son régime en raison de sa faiblesse numérique – environ 2 % de la population, moitié moins depuis 2003 –, Tarek Aziz est de confession chaldéenne catholique. Son premier appel au Vatican avait été lancé en décembre 2004. Mardi, le Saint-Siège a fait savoir dans une déclaration écrite qu'il souhaitait « que la sentence prononcée contre Tarek Aziz ne soit pas exécutée ».

L'intéressé, ainsi que les deux autres condamnés, ont un mois pour faire appel auprès de la Cour suprême d'Irak. Ensuite, si la sentence de mort est confirmée, elle

Ziad Aziz : « Une opération de vengeance »

« La condamnation à mort de mon père est une opération de vengeance contre tout ce qui a trait au passé en Irak, et prouve la crédibilité des informations publiées par le site WikiLeaks », a déclaré Ziad Aziz, l'un des fils de l'ancien dignitaire, installé en Jordanie. « Mon père, a-t-il ajouté, n'a jamais rien eu à voir avec les partis religieux ; [il] a lui-même été victime d'un parti religieux, Al-Daawa [actuellement dirigé par le premier ministre sortant, Nouri Al-Maliki]. » Ziad Aziz faisait référence à une attaque à la grenade contre son père dans une université de Bagdad, la capitale, en avril 1980, où il avait prononcé un discours. Tarek Aziz avait été blessé au cours de l'attentat. – (AFP.)

pourra être exécutée avec l'accord d'au moins deux des trois membres du Conseil présidentiel, composé du président de la République, Jalal Talabani – en principe opposé à la peine capitale –, et ses deux vice-présidents, qui ont toujours approuvé les exécutions. ■

Patrice Claude

Les chiïtes irakiens rejettent une offre de médiation de Riyad

Par Reuters

L'Alliance nationale irakienne a rejeté samedi une offre de médiation de l'Arabie Saoudite estimant qu'un accord pouvait être trouvé à Bagdad pour sortir de l'impasse de la formation d'un gouvernement.

L'Irak n'a toujours pas de gouvernement depuis le scrutin du printemps, qui n'a pas permis de dégager une majorité parlementaire claire. La classe politique n'a pas réussi depuis à se mettre d'accord pour former un gouvernement viable.

Le roi Abdallah d'Arabie saoudite avait invité un peu plus tôt samedi les dirigeants politiques irakiens à se rencontrer à Ryad vers le 18 novembre pour tenter de débloquer la situation.

L'Alliance nationale, une coalition rassemblant les principales formations chiïtes, dont celle du Premier ministre Nouri al Maliki, a fait savoir que Bagdad était proche d'un accord après la reprise des sessions parlementaires.

"Nous sommes confiants dans le fait que les représentants du peuple irakien



L'Alliance nationale irakienne, une coalition rassemblant les principales formations chiïtes, dont celle du Premier ministre Nouri al Maliki (photo) a rejeté une offre de médiation de l'Arabie Saoudite, estimant qu'un accord pouvait être trouvé à Bagdad pour sortir de l'impasse de la formation d'un gouvernement.
(Reuters/Gouvernement irakien)

sont capables de conclure un accord sur la formation d'un gouvernement national", a déclaré Hassan al Sunaid, lisant un communiqué de l'Alliance nationale.

"Nous exprimons notre reconnaissance à l'Arabie Saoudite pour se préoccuper de la situation en Irak et pour sa

volonté d'apporter son aide. Mais je vous confirme que les dirigeants irakiens continuent de se rencontrer pour aboutir à un consensus national."

La liste multiconfessionnelle Irakia, arrivée en tête lors des élections législatives et dirigée Iyad Allaoui, a pour sa part salué l'offre saoudienne. Elle a estimé que la Turquie et l'Iran devraient également être invités.

Depuis le scrutin du 7 mars, Maliki a obtenu le soutien décisif de la faction dirigée par l'imam radical anti-américain Moktada Sadr et celui de l'Alliance nationale. Avec les 89 sièges d'Etat de droit, son parti, et les 39 des alliés de Moktada Sadr, Nouri al Maliki serait encore loin de la majorité de 163 sièges au parlement, qui compte 325 députés.

L'appoint pourrait être fourni par les Kurdes, qui occupent 56 sièges. Ces derniers prônent la formation d'un gouvernement large qui comprendrait notamment Irakia mais qui exclut de participer à un gouvernement dirigé par Maliki.

109.000 morts en Irak de 2003 à 2009

Au moins 109.000 personnes, dont 63 % de civils, ont été tuées en Irak depuis l'invasion américaine de mars 2003 et jusqu'à fin 2009, selon des documents secrets américains obtenus par le site WikiLeaks et révélés par la chaîne de télévision Al-Jazeera.

« Les documents confidentiels obtenus par WikiLeaks révèlent que les forces américaines disposaient d'un bilan recensant les morts et les blessés irakiens, même si elles le niaient publiquement », affirme la chaîne du Qatar.

« Ils montrent que le conflit a fait 285.000 victimes dont au moins 109.000 morts », entre 2003 et fin 2009, selon les mêmes sources. 63 % des morts sont des civils.

Selon un nouveau bilan américain publié discrètement fin juillet sur le site du Commandement central de l'armée américaine (Centcom), près de 77.000 Irakiens ont été tués entre janvier 2004 et août 2008, soit la période la plus sanglante en sept ans de guerre. Parmi eux, 63.185 civils et 13.754 membres des forces de sécurité.

L'évaluation du nombre de victimes irakiennes depuis l'invasion lancée par les Etats-Unis en mars 2003 est l'objet de controverses et varie considérablement selon les sources, allant de moins de 100.000 à plusieurs centaines de milliers.

Dans un rapport publié en octobre 2009, le ministère irakien des droits de l'homme avait avancé le chiffre de 85.694 personnes mortes dans les violences et 147.195 blessés.



Le site indépendant Iraq Body Count estime pour sa part que le nombre de civils tués depuis 2003 se situe entre 98.252 et 107.235 personnes.

Une étude controversée publiée dans le magazine britannique The Lancet en 2006 a affirmé que la guerre avait coûté la vie à 655.000 Irakiens, un chiffre dépassant toutes les autres estimations.

Selon un bilan se fondant sur le site indépendant www.icasualties.org, 4.425 militaires américains ont été tués en Irak depuis 2003. (D'après AFP)

Le Monde
29 octobre 2010

Nucléaire iranien : entrez dans le Rubik's Cube !

En dépit des offres de dialogue qui lui sont faites, et dont on ne sait à ce jour si elles déboucheront sur de nouveaux pourparlers avec les grandes puissances à la mi-novembre, à Vienne, l'Iran poursuit des travaux nucléaires dont plus grand monde ne doute – même plus les officiels chinois, en privé – qu'ils soient destinés à acquérir la faculté de fabriquer un engin atomique au cœur d'une région névralgique.

Cette affaire ressemble à un Rubik's Cube, où chaque pièce déplacée entraîne le mouvement des autres, sans que l'on sache si la combinaison gagnante sera trouvée au bout du compte. Sans que l'on sache non plus combien de temps il reste au juste pour résoudre l'énigme.

L'administration Obama peut se féliciter d'avoir aligné quelques couleurs unies sur une face du cube, celle du multilatéralisme.

Les Russes et les Chinois ont accepté cette année des sanctions à l'ONU plus percutantes que les précédentes, qui dataient de l'époque Bush. Mais ce mouvement-là a entraîné un revers sur une autre face du cube. Les Turcs et les Brésiliens, vexés de la façon dont leur proposition diplomatique a été rejetée par Washington, se sont braqués contre la résolution du Conseil de sécurité, créant un trou non négligeable dans l'unité de la communauté internationale.

Sur la face sanctions du cube, Washington peut aussi se réjouir d'avoir fait bouger d'autres pièces. L'Union européenne et un certain nombre de pays, à titre national, sont allés beaucoup plus loin que l'ONU. Un boycott de l'Iran concernant les investissements étrangers dans l'énergie, la livraison de certains équipements, les services financiers, voire les transports, semble en marche, si l'on en juge par les annonces successives de retrait de compagnies internationales du marché iranien.

Un facteur puissant derrière cet effort a été la législation américaine signée en juillet par M. Obama, qui menace d'exclure du marché américain des sociétés étrangères continuant à traiter de trop près avec Téhéran.

Seulement voilà, cette dimension extraterritoriale des mesures prises par Washington a pour effet de perturber l'alignement décrit plus haut : les Russes et les Chinois sont furieux d'être mis devant le fait accompli de décisions qu'ils estiment n'avoir en rien validées à l'ONU.

Regardons la face politique intérieure iranienne du cube. Les sanctions ont pour ambition de faire céder le régime iranien en le plaçant sur la défensive. Il l'est sur le plan économique. Les sanctions s'ajoutent aux effets de la gabegie d'un régime dominé par une caste paramilitaire, les pasdarans.

Ce mois-ci, le rial, la monnaie iranienne, a subitement perdu 10 % à 20 % de sa valeur, obligeant la Banque centrale à intervenir. Les marchands du bazar ont fait grève pour protester contre des taxes nouvelles. Les autorités ont reporté au mois de novembre des coupes dans les subventions pour l'essence et d'autres produits, craignant des remous sociaux.

Ces pièces-là du cube peuvent toutefois en faire bouger d'autres de façon bien moins satisfaisante. C'est le risque de voir le régime se durcir encore plus, ou bien parvenir à rallier la population derrière le flambeau d'une résistance nationale aux diktats extérieurs. Le programme nucléaire fait l'objet d'un certain consensus en Iran, si l'on veut bien se souvenir que Mir Hossein Moussavi, l'un des chefs de file de l'opposition, était premier ministre lorsque les activités nucléaires secrètes ont com-

mencé dans les années 1980.

Voici maintenant le côté régional du cube. Les Etats-Unis cherchent à endiguer le danger que l'Iran représente aux yeux des Etats arabes du Golfe. Ils préparent d'imposantes livraisons d'armes à l'Arabie saoudite et aux Emirats. Ils brandissent des défenses antimissiles et des garanties de sécurité. Cela vise à la fois à mettre en confiance les pays de la région pour resserrer l'étau financier sur la République islamique, et à dissuader ces mêmes pays de

M. Obama menacé d'exclure du marché américain des sociétés étrangères continuant à traiter de trop près avec Téhéran

se lancer à leur tour dans une course à l'arme atomique.

Ce *containment* fait cependant bouger d'autres pièces. L'Iran a rappelé, avec la récente visite de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad au Liban, sa capacité de nuisance dans la région. Les Arabes du Golfe peuvent aussi s'interroger sur la détermination de l'administration américaine à porter un coup d'arrêt au programme nucléaire du grand voisin chiite. L'endiguement américain pourrait signaler, en pointillé, la préparation de l'« après-bombe iranienne ».

Et maintenant – accrochez-vous – la face technologie du cube. Elle conduit à la question : combien de temps reste-t-il ? L'Iran a

aujourd'hui de quoi fabriquer deux engins nucléaires s'il le décide, mais il a jusqu'à présent opté pour continuer d'accroître son stock d'uranium faiblement enrichi (près de 3 tonnes) pour préserver l'apparence d'un programme civil tout en grignotant du terrain. S'il devait franchir, aujourd'hui, le pas vers la production de matière fissile, il lui faudrait environ un an, selon Washington.

La bonne nouvelle est que l'Iran rencontre des difficultés technologiques. Il peine à se procurer des métaux spéciaux nécessaires à la fabrication de centrifugeuses, les appareils qui enrichissent l'uranium.

Ses 8 000 centrifugeuses connues sont basées sur un vieux modèle pakistanais qui donne des signes d'usure et de dysfonctionnement. Les sanctions, le démantèlement des réseaux du marché noir du nucléaire, ainsi que de probables opérations de sabotage semblent expliquer ces déconvenues. Cette face-là du cube paraît prometteuse, et laisse de la place à la diplomatie.

Sauf si. Sauf si, jugeant que son stock de centrifugeuses a une durée de vie limitée, l'Iran décidait de précipiter la crise en passant, dans un site secret ou non, à la production de matière fissile. Cette hypothèse, évoquée par des spécialistes, ne semble pas retenue par l'équipe Obama, qui mise sur le temps gagné. Elle renvoie cependant au dernier côté du cube : l'attitude d'Israël, qui observe sur toutes les autres faces. ■

Analyse

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TURQUIE: LES REBELLES KURDES S'ENGAGENT À ÉPARGNER LES CIVILS

ANKARA, 28 octobre 2010 (AFP)

LES REBELLES KURDES de Turquie s'engagent à épargner les civils et à poursuivre sans limitation de temps leur cessez-le-feu unilatéral si le gouvernement turc accepte le dialogue, a déclaré le chef militaire des rebelles, dans une interview publiée jeudi.

"Nous sommes favorables à un cessez le feu permanent... Nous attendons. Nous n'avons pas encore pris de décision", a déclaré Murat Karayilan, chef militaire du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), au journal turc Radikal.

Le PKK, qui est en lutte armée depuis 26 ans dans le sud-est de la Turquie pour la défense des droits de la minorité kurde, avait annoncé un cessez le feu unilatéral le 13 août, qui doit se terminer fin octobre.

Conforté par sa victoire lors d'un référendum constitutionnel, le 12 septembre, le Premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a pour sa part lancé une nouvelle initiative visant à résoudre le problème kurde.

Les autorités ont selon la presse associé à cette initiative le dirigeant historique du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, qui est emprisonné à vie, ses avocats agissant comme intermédiaires.

Cette initiative politique est une gageure pour le gouvernement Erdogan, dans un pays où une partie de la population considère le PKK comme l'ennemi public numéro un, et s'oppose à toute tentative de dialogue avec les rebelles.

Interrogé par Radikal dans son repaire des monts Kandil, au Kurdistan irakien qui jouxte la Turquie, Murat Karayilan a admis des "erreurs" à propos d'attaques ayant tué des civils. Il a pris l'engagement d'y mettre un terme, et a indiqué que le PKK pourrait "s'excuser" pour de tels actes.

Les militants du PKK sont aujourd'hui mieux "formés" pour prévenir de telles attaques touchant des civils, qui "ne se reproduiront plus jamais". "C'est un message à la société" turque, a-t-il dit.

"La balle est dans le camp opposé", en ce qui concerne les efforts pour mettre fin au conflit, a-t-il dit.



LE BLOC KURDE AFFAIBLI AU PARLEMENT IRAKIEN PAR LE RETRAIT DE DISSIDENTS

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 30 octobre 2010 (AFP)

LE BLOC KURDE, qui entend jouer le rôle de faiseur de rois au Parlement irakien, se trouve affaibli après le départ de huit députés en dissidence avec les partis traditionnels.

"Nous agissons désormais de manière indépendante au sein du Parlement irakien où continuerons à défendre les droits et les demandes du peuple kurde conformément à la Constitution", a affirmé samedi à l'AFP Latif Kader, membre du bureau politique du parti Goran (Changement), qui compte huit élus.

Lors des législatives irakiennes du 7 mars, les deux formations traditionnelles, le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK de Massoud Barzani) et l'Union Patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK de Jalal Talabani) avaient obtenu 43 sièges sur 325 sièges, les deux partis islamistes 6 sièges et huit pour le Goran.

Elles avaient décidé de former un groupe commun fort de 57 sièges, ce qui les

rendaient incontournables dans la formation d'un gouvernement central et leur permettaient d'imposer leurs exigences au moment où sont en concurrence le Premier ministre sortant Nouri al-Maliki (79 sièges) et l'ex-chef du gouvernement Iyad Allawi (81 sièges).

Les dissidents de Goran ont décidé de se séparer en raison de problèmes internes à la région autonome du Kurdistan. "En août, nous avons établi une liste de plus 2.000 projets de réformes au Kurdistan pour accroître la démocratie dans la région", selon un communiqué publié vendredi.

"Non seulement les autorités n'ont rien fait en ce sens mais au contraire elles ont décidé de prendre des mesures pour accroître leur pouvoir. Aussi, nous avons été obligés d'annoncer notre retrait de la coalition", ajoute Goran.

Goran, dirigé par Noucherwan Moustapha, a été créé en 2009 par d'anciens membres de l'UPK las de voir leurs demandes de réformes renvoyées aux calendes grecques. Il est allé chasser sur les terres traditionnelles de M. Talabani, s'imposant en un an comme le deuxième courant politique au Kurdistan après les deux partis traditionnels.

Goran avait remporté en juillet 2009, 23,57% des suffrages pour le parlement kurde en axant sa campagne sur la corruption.



IRAK: DIX MORTS DANS DES VOLS DE BIJOUTERIES À KIRKOUK

KIRKOUK 26 octobre 2010 (AFP)

DIX PERSONNES, dont cinq policiers, ont été tuées et 15 blessées mardi dans des vols à main armée visant plusieurs bijouteries à Kirkouk dans le nord de l'Irak, a-t-on appris de sources policières.

«Des inconnus, armés de roquettes RPG et d'armes automatiques, ont attaqué en soirée trois ou quatre bijouteries sur le marché al-Asri» dans le centre de la ville, a affirmé à l'AFP le commandant de la police locale, Salam Zangana.

«Dix personnes ont été tuées, dont cinq policiers, et 15 blessées, dont deux policiers. Les assaillants ont réussi à s'enfuir», a-t-il ajouté, après avoir fait état d'un premier bilan de huit morts et 12 blessés.

Selon lui, «les malfaiteurs sont venus à pied et ont attaqué le marché de trois côtés, et l'un des groupes a tiré sur une patrouille de police».

Il s'agit de la première attaque du genre à Kirkouk, la grande ville pétrolière disputée entre Arabes, Turcomans et Kurdes, et située à 240 km au nord de Bagdad.

Le 17 octobre à Bagdad, des hommes armés ont tué les propriétaires de trois bijouteries qu'ils ont dévalisées et cinq personnes -deux malfaiteurs, deux policiers et un soldat- ont trouvé la mort dans la fusillade qui a suivi.

Les attaques armées visant des magasins vendant de l'or ou des bijoux ont augmenté ces derniers mois, et selon des responsables des services de sécurité, elles pourraient être le fait de groupes d'insurgés en recherche de fonds.

Le ministère de l'Intérieur estime aussi que les attaques récurrentes contre des banques, bijouteries et boutiques de change financent l'insurrection.

Dans d'autres violences mardi en Irak, un officier de l'armée irakienne et six autres personnes ont été tuées par des engins explosifs, selon des sources officielles.

Dans le centre de Bagdad, une bombe artisanale visant le convoi du ministre du Plan Mehdi al-Alaq a tué un passant et blessé trois autres personnes, mais le ministre et ses gardes en sont sortis indemnes.

Une autre bombe a explosé dans les environs de Baqouba (au nord-est de Bagdad), tuant six militaires, dont un officier, selon des sources au sein des services de sécurité.

La violence a nettement diminué en Irak par rapport au pic observé lors des violences confessionnelles de 2006 et 2007, mais les attaques meurtrières restent relativement fréquentes.



TURQUIE: UN KAMIKAZE SE TUE ET BLESSE 32 PERSONNES AU COEUR D'ISTANBUL

ISTANBUL, 31 octobre 2010 (AFP)

UN ATTENTAT-SUICIDE a blessé 32 personnes dimanche en plein centre d'Istanbul, la plus grande métropole de Turquie, et les premiers soupçons se portaient sur les rebelles kurdes dont la trêve devait prendre fin dans la journée.

"15 policiers et 17 civils ont été blessés dans un attentat-suicide", a déclaré le gouverneur d'Istanbul Hüseyin Avni Mutlu devant la presse. Le kamikaze, un homme, est mort par l'engin qu'il a fait sauter.

D'autres charges explosives ont été retrouvées sur lui, a dit le responsable.

Un précédent bilan fourni par le chef de la police stambouliote, Hüseyin Capkin, faisait état de 22 blessés, dont 10 policiers et 12 civils.

Le gouverneur a précisé que les jours des blessés n'étaient pas en danger.

Le ministre de l'Intérieur Besir Atalay a déclaré qu'il était trop tôt pour dire qui est derrière cet attentat.

Mais c'est ce dimanche que doit en principe prendre fin le cessez-le-feu unilatéral décrété par la rébellion kurde. Et cet attentat coïncide aussi avec les célébrations marquant l'anniversaire de la république en Turquie, le 29 octobre. D'où les soupçons qui se tournent vers le PKK, le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan.

D'après M. Capkin, l'assaillant aurait tenté de monter à bord d'un car rempli de policiers et de se faire exploser à ce moment-là, pour faire le plus de dégâts possibles.

Mais sa charge a visiblement explosé trop tôt, ce qui a évité un carnage.

Selon des témoignages recueillis par l'AFP et un enregistrement vidéo diffusé sur la chaîne CNN-Türk, des coups de feu ont suivi l'explosion.

L'incident s'est produit vers 08H30 GMT sur l'esplanade de la place centrale de Taksim, sur la rive européenne de la ville, où des policiers anti-émeutes sont constamment en faction.

L'esplanade très fréquentée ainsi que les rues y menant ont été temporairement bouclées par la police.

De Mardin, une ville du sud-est anatolien peuplé majoritairement de Kurdes où il se trouve en déplacement, le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a dénoncé un attentat "terroriste".

"Nous ne tolérerons à personne de s'en prendre à la tranquillité, à la stabilité et à la sécurité de la Turquie", a-t-il dit, cité par l'agence Anatolie.

Cette attaque intervient alors que son gouvernement islamo-conservateur a lancé une nouvelle initiative visant à résoudre le problème kurde.



Les experts de la police au travail sur le lieu d'un attentat-suicide dans le centre d'Istanbul le 31 octobre 2010

Les autorités auraient associé à cette initiative le dirigeant du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, emprisonné à vie, ses avocats agissant comme intermédiaires.

Dans le passé les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ainsi que des groupes d'extrême-gauche ont commis des attentats à Istanbul, mégapole de plus de 12 millions d'habitants.

Si l'attentat n'a pas encore été revendiqué, des spécialistes, cités par les médias, ont pointé du doigt le PKK, dont la trêve décrétée à la mi-août contre les forces d'Ankara devait s'achever ce dimanche.

Murat Karayilan, le chef militaire du PKK, avait pourtant affirmé jeudi à un journal turc depuis le nord de l'Irak que son mouvement, en lutte armée contre Ankara depuis 1984, épargnerait les civils et poursuivrait sa trêve si le gouvernement turc acceptait le dialogue.

Selon Anatolie, il s'agit du troisième attentat-suicide commis à Taksim depuis 1999.

Le 22 juin, une bombe avait explosé dans une banlieue d'Istanbul au passage d'un bus de militaires, tuant six personnes.

L'attentat a été revendiqué par un groupe radical kurde, les Faucons de la liberté du Kurdistan (TAK), considéré par Ankara comme un prête-nom utilisé par le PKK quand ils commettent des attentats susceptibles de choquer l'opinion publique.



IRAK: 30 TUÉS DANS UN ATTENTAT SUICIDE

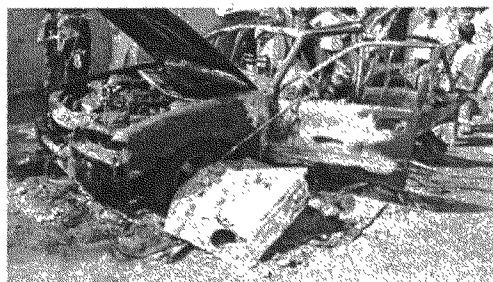
Baladrouz, 31 octobre 2010 (AFP)

TRENTE PERSONNES ont été tuées et 68 autres blessées hier soir dans un attentat suicide perpétré dans un café à Baladrouz, une localité située à 75 km au nord-est de Bagdad, selon un bilan définitif fourni samedi par un responsable hospitalier. Il s'agit de l'attentat le plus sanglant du mois d'octobre en Irak.

"Le bilan définitif de l'attentat de vendredi s'élève à 30 morts et 68 blessés, dont trois femmes et deux enfants", a affirmé Ahmad Alwan, médecin à l'hôpital général de Baqouba, capitale de la province de Diyala.

Selon le commandant Ahmad al-Tamimi, chef de la police de Baladrouz, un kamikaze a fait détonner sa ceinture d'explosifs dans un café du centre de la ville vers 21H00 (18H00 GMT) dans le quartier de Dour Mandali, habité par des Kurdes chiïtes.

La province agricole de Diyala, où est situé Balad Ruz, reste l'une des régions



les plus violentes d'Irak, même si le nombre d'attaques a nettement diminué depuis 2008.

Ce gouvernorat à majorité sunnite, mais qui compte d'importantes minorités chiïte et kurde, a été un fief d'Al-Qaïda, qui y reste toujours présent même si son influence a diminué.