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## Bulletin 316 July 2011

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### IRAQI KURDISTAN: IRANIAN SHELLING AND INTENSE BORDER FIGHTING

**A**s Iranian shelling of Iraqi Kurdistan territory has recommenced, Kurdish and Iraqi officials protested and demanded that Iran cease violating their country's sovereignty, taking advantage of the visit to Baghdad by Iranian Vice President, Mohammed Reza Rahimi.

Iranian attacks on border villages in Irbil and Sulemaniyah Provinces have forced the inhabitants of about twenty of them to flee from their homes.

However, the Iranian government replied that it reserved the right to "*attack and destroy the terrorist bases in the border regions*" on the grounds that PJAK, the Iranian branch of the PKK that was fighting against Teheran, had bases there. It even directly accused the Kurdish President of intentionally supporting and protecting the PJAK bases on his land.

For his part, the President of Iraqi Kurdistan, Massud Barzani, condemned these attacks. A delegation of Iraqi

Kurdistan members of Parliament visited the village of Choman, 10 Km from the Iranian border that had particularly suffered from the shelling. In a public report they noted that the Iranian forces had built roads inside Iraqi territory in the areas they had bombarded.

On 18 July, a senior officer of the Iranians Revolutionary Guards, Delaver Ranibarzadeh, announced that they "completely controlled" three PJAK camps as well as the surrounding region, near Serdash, while mili-

tary operations were continuing. Ranibarzadeh also stated that their objective was to eradicate the PJAK bases totally.

Apart from civilian casualties, the belligerents' losses were unclear and obviously tended to vary according to the source. The Iraqi daily, *Aswat al-Iraq* published an estimate from an Iraqi military source indicating that about thirty Iranian soldiers may have been killed in the fighting.

For its part, Iran has only acknowledged the loss of a single Revolutionary Guard and three wounded, while "a great number" of PJAK members had been killed, including the commander of the Merwan camp.

For its part, PJAK declared to AFP that the Iranians had suffered heavy losses near Panjwin, in Suleimaniyah Province — between 150 and 200 killed or

wounded while only admitting 4 wounded and 7 dead in their ranks.

The Kurdish authorities announced on 20 July that two villagers from the Choman region had been arrested by the Iranian forces and that their herds had been seized by the troops while 11 families had fled the fighting. Mamand Mami Xali, who commands the Kurdish Peshmergas in the area, indicated that the Iranians had penetrated at least a kilometre into Iraqi Kurdistan.

In another village, near Qaladize (Suleimaniyah Province), a man had been wounded and a school damaged on the same day. The village had been obliged to be completely evacuated. Mamand Mami Xali also reported that bombing could be heard at Haj Omran, in the Kodo Mountains, some 250 Km North –East of Irbil, as well as in other districts,

as well as the deploying of "substantial forces including tanks and artillery". Other villagers confirmed what the Kurdish Members of Parliament delegation had denounced: the building of roads and military bases that suggested the beginning of a long-term occupation of these border areas.

Overall, some 200 families living in the border regions have been displaced for security reasons and settled in temporary camps. Bernard Douglas, spokesman of the Office of International Migrations (OIM) pointed out that these families needed, above all else, "shelter and water", and that the OIM had provided them with tents and beds while the Kurdish authorities had supplied water purification kits. "These families cannot long survive without help. (...) Many have had to abandon their crops and their herds".

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## TURKEY:

### TRIAL OF STRENGTH IN PARLIAMENT, INCREASING INTER-ETHNIC VIOLENCE

**P**olitical tension in the Turkish Parliament, following the boycott of the elected Kurdish Members in protest at the imprisoning of two of them has resulted in a fresh outbreak of armed clashes and political overstatements by the BDP.

On 8 July, a clash between the Army and the PKK in the Plumur regions killed one Turkish soldier and wounded three others. On 11 July two other Turkish soldiers were killed by Kurdish guerrillas as well as a civilian working for the Health Ministry, not in the course of a military but at a road-block. Witnesses state that armed Kurdish activists had stopped the vehicles, later found abandoned by those occupying them

On 15 July, 13 Turkish soldiers and 7 PKK fighters lost their lives in fighting near Silvan, in Diyarbekir Province, making this the bloodiest clash between the Army and Kurds in the last 3 years. This triggered a series of "condolences" from the US White House. The Turkish Prime Minister cancelled all his appointments to hold a crisis meeting with top ranking officers of the Army, the Security Forces and the Minister of the Interior, Besir Atalay.

For his part, Cemil Çiçek, the Speaker of the Turkish parliament, violently attacked the Kurdish 'M.P.s (who announced a boycott of the session) by asking them "to chose their camp" between, in his words "democracy, peace and freedom" and "blood,

hatred and barbarism". However, Selettin Demirtas, while regretting the deaths attacked the absence of any political settlement of the Kurdish question, while the 36 Kurdish M.P.s refused to take the oath of office so long as their comrades remained in jail.

On 12 July, the CHP, which had also refused to take its seats in Parliament for the same reasons as the BDP, accepted that its M.P.s take the oath and also, jointly with the AKP, issued a call to the rest of the M.P.s who were continuing the boycott (i.e. the Kurds). However, on the same day the BDP also held a parliamentary session — in Diyarbekir, the capital of Turkish Kurdistan, thus defying Ankara. At that session it contin-

ued to demand the release of the imprisoned M.P.s as well as changes to the Constitution. In the absence of any reply from the government, the BDP declared that this Diyarbakir Parliament would continue to sit until their demands had been met. On 15 July, this “*Kurdistan Assembly*” proclaimed its “*democratic autonomy for a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish question*”.

Thereupon, the legal reaction was immediate — a charge sheet was drawn up and issued for the authors of this initiative while the death in action of the 13 Turkish soldiers was inflaming public opinion and giving rise to fears of clashes between Kurds and Turks in those towns in which the two lived side by side.

Thus, in Istanbul, during an international jazz festival, the Kurdish singer, Aynur Dogan, was unable to perform before an over-excited audience who considered that her Kurdish songs were a “provocation” following the deaths of these soldiers. The singer was obliged to break off her song while part of the audience sang

the Turkish national anthem. This incident was taken up by all the Turkish press as well as foreign papers, which considered this a worrying deterioration in the relations between the country’s two peoples — particularly in the case of a public that, till then, was seen as open to other cultures. “*These people, at a jazz concert, can be considered a more sophisticated Turkish public. They knew that someone was going to sing a Kurdish song and they could not tolerate it. This shows the depth of the trauma, not only amongst the Turks but, I believe among the Kurds*” commented Soli Ozwl, political editor of the daily paper Haberturk. In his view, this incident is the sign of a growing polarisation as between Kurds and Turks, adding that even at the tougher period of the war in the 90s, there had not been this spread of inter-ethnic hostility in the towns of Western Turkey. However, now that thousands of Kurds refugees were there, the tensions had been exported from the Kurdish regions. Seli Ozel stressed the dangerous situation facing the AKP: “*On the one hand the AKP is trying to integrate the*

*Kurds into the economic system, which means that they are more than ever present which creates resentment amongst Turks who already had a position in the system. On the other hand, the Kurds are increasingly educated and are increasingly living in the towns of the West and South where they can express their anger more forcibly*”.

Thus, some young Turks carried out intimidatory raids on an Istanbul shantytown, which has been mainly inhabited by Kurdish refugees for the last two decades. Ertugrul Kurkcu, a Turkish BDP Member of Parliament also made similar forecasts from a Kurdish point of view, speaking about the younger generations born during the war, whose families were displaced, killed or traumatised in various ways by the conflict. “*Their hostility towards the present State setup is fiercer than that of the previous generation. Their rage is not without reason. They live in a very savage atmosphere, not only because of their physical living conditions but also mentally, without any respect for the government — or for society*”.

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## SYRIA:

### A LONG INTERVIEW WITH MACHAAL TAMMO ON THE SYRIAN SITUATION

**L**ast July the Kurdish leader Meshaal Tammo, recently released from prison, gave an interview by phone to the Kurd Watch site, from which the following are extracts:

*Question: There have been demonstrations in Syria against the regime since mid-March. Over 1,500 people have been killed and about 10,000 arrested. What is the position in Syria?*

**Tammo:** The real number of deaths and arrests could well be even higher. We are dealing with a police State. The number

of victims of these State aggressions is never made public. An incalculable number of people have disappeared and I fear that many of them are dead. We know that the regime hits back with mass graves. Once it has fallen we are sure to discover new and horrible facts about the way this police State has worked.

However, quite apart from what is happening, a major part of the population has made its own decision. They want freedom, and they will succeed in having it. The regime can kill and jail thousands, it can plunder towns

and villages, it can raze the to the ground. But it will never prevent the population deciding on a change of regime.

*Question: For a long time we never heard anything from this country’s opposition parties. They have only begun to get organised in the last couple of weeks. Why?*

**Tammo:** We must not forget that the Syrian regime has fought these dissident parties for 45 years. It has deprived the opposition of any freedom of movement. Till now, the Syrian opposition has always acted illegally, and for their activities its mem-

bers have been persecuted and arrested. This opposition has no experience of legal activity. We live in a country where only one party can speak and where diversity of opinion is suppressed. The opposition parties have suffered many setbacks. Many of its members have been in prison for years or had to leave the country. In these conditions, dissident activity is difficult. That is why the opposition is so weak. It is only now that its members are learning how to communicate with one another. It is only now that the people are beginning to learn and express their opinions and to respect those of others. That is why it took some time for the opposition to get round to organising. Meanwhile, a new generation of Syrian society has grown that does not share the same fears as the old one. These young people will build a new Syria.

*Question: The opposition parties are not only weak but divided. In the last few weeks there have been various meetings in the country and abroad, at Antalya or elsewhere, that several opposition parties have boycotted. On 27 June a coalition of 8 Arab parties was formed, but other groups, like those of the Damascus Declaration have distanced themselves from this alliance. Finally you yourself organised a committee with other people to organise a national conference. How can this disunited opposition come together?*

**Temmo:** All that is true. Nevertheless, all these meetings and the formation of these groups are necessary and suited to the present situation. We must know who can act and who cannot, and we must also envisage what this new Syria will be like once the regime has been changed. We need a new Constitution. We need to rede-

fine our external relations and much more besides. The whole opposition is working in this direction. It is possible that certain groups have problems with other ones but one thing brings us together: the desire to be free. The coalition I and others have formed should be preparatory to a conference of national salvation. This conference should be an alternative to the regime. In our coalition, the parties are hardly represented: it is rather the young people who are carrying out the Syrian revolution. That is why I believe that we can bring together many opposition groups. Certainly, they will not all take part but the most important will, including several Kurdish parties, groups stemming from the Damascus Declaration and many others. Together, we will push the revolution forward. What unites us is that we do not want to negotiate with the regime and that we see ourselves as an alternative to the existing government. We want open discussions between ourselves about the new Syria. A civilian and democratic Syria must be built in which the different ethnic groups will secure their rights. Our meetings are open to all who share our aims. They will not take place in secret. Everyone must be able to take their part in the discussions.

*Question: Apart from the young activists, the bulk of the opposition parties have not, so far, demanded that the regime resign. How can you bring people round the same table if the end of the regime is not one of your objectives?*

**Temmo:** Every day more and more are calling for the regime's resignation. The more the government kills and jails people, the more the opposition parties and the Syrian people outside all political organisations call for this government's resignation.

Increasingly, people think that this government has lost all legitimacy. Hardly anyone now wants to negotiate with this regime.

*Question: Are there any plans for the post-Bashar period? Is the Syrian opposition working on concepts for a new Constitution or new laws on parties or organisations?*

**Temmo:** All the opposition parties agree about this: there must be a new Constitution. This Constitution must reflect the cultural diversity of the Syria people. Laws must be drawn up regarding parties, voting, the press, and so on. These are the bases of any modern civilian State. I think that those groups that want a modern, civilian and democratic State will win the day. The first step in this direction is a new Constitution.

*Question: How does the Syrian opposition see the relations between the State and Religion?*

**Temmo:** Whether you like it or not the greater part of Syrian society is religious. Religious but not radical. Erdogan's successes have influenced the population more than all the rest. The people and groups with whom we want to organise the national salvation conference would like to show that their religion is open to differing ideas and notions. We want a new and progressive constitution. Religion must play a secondary role in it.

*Question: Europe and the USA have been reluctant to talk about sanctions against Syria. Why?*

**Temmo:** They fear that, after a change of regime, there will be chaos. They fear a civil war and other disturbances. The Syrian government has fuelled these fears and has even spread propaganda that the Middle East

would collapse in chaos if Bashar al-Assad's government fell. As time passes, the West will conclude that a change of regime will not only contribute to Syria's stability but also to that of the region. Those that criticise the regime argue in the same way.

**Question:** *What must the Europeans and the Americans do in the present situation?*

**Temmo:** They can do a lot. They can impose an economic embargo and exercise more political pressure. They can support the opposition. We do not want any foreign military intervention. We will resolve our problems ourselves. However, the Americans and Europeans can, with a correct evaluation of the situation, speaking clearly and unequivocally, contribute to a situation in which the regime where the regime will no longer kill and jail people blindly.

**Question:** *If a change of regime takes place, what will be its relations with Israel? How will the Golan question be managed? We often here the opposition say that Syria has Israel's interests and has not once fired at Golan in 40 years. Does that mean that the opposition will wage war on Israel?*

**Temmo:** No. The present opposition wants peace and the Golan question must also be resolved peacefully. There must be an internationally observed peace treaty. We no longer want to exploit this conflict for propaganda aimed at diverting attention to our real problems. We want to sincerely want to resolve Syria's internal problems.

**Question:** *Turkey and, above all, Prime Minister Erdogan, is exerting heavy pressure on Syria at the moment. Some voices are arguing that Turkey could set up a security zone for Syrian refugees along*

*its borders with Syria. What does the opposition say?*

**Temmo:** Turkey has its own interests to consider and wants to play an important role in the Middle East. It wants to become a regional great power — that is also why it is taking such a clear stand. The Turkish government does not want to repeat the mistakes of the past and has taken a stand beside the Syrian people. At the same time, we realise that Turkey was more committed before the elections that after. We hope that this commitment is support of our population will increase. We share a common 800 Km border with Turkey and when you take that into account it is understandable that recent events in Syria should also be important for Turkey. Kurds live on both sides of the Syrian-Turkish border — Turkey does not want additional problems. It can also play a role in this transition phase for the same reason. With regard to a security zone, such a thing would be hard to carry out without a UN resolution. Such a security zone cannot be created unilaterally by the Turkish government. It must be supported by the international community. We hope, however, that things won't have to go that far and that the Syrian people will bring the regime down first.

**Question:** *The Syrian security forces have been killing demonstrators for the last three months. It is even feared that there will be a repetition of the 1982 events at Hama. How long can this last? Will things reach the point of civil war?*

**Temmo:** The 1982 events will not be repeated. We are living in a different period. Today the people are on the barricades throughout Syria and not just in one town. The central issue is elsewhere: for how much longer will the Syrian troops take part in the murder of peaceful

demonstrators? Some soldiers have already left the army and refuse to open fire on the population. If this continues, the Army will disintegrate. At the moment there are demonstrations in 14 provinces. The Army can kill 10 or 20 people a day and arrest 200, but it can't reduce the people to silence this way.

**Question:** *What role in the revolution was played by the prisoners' hunger strike, in which you took part in March 2011 at 'Adra prison?*

**Temmo:** This hunger strike certainly served to trigger national demonstrations. The political situation was such that it only needed a spark for the whole population to express its discontent. We were aware of this and we wanted to take part. When we began the hunger strike we only had one aim: incite the people to rise against the regime.

**Question:** *The opposition parties do not seem inclined to play any role in these demonstrations. It is rather the young people who are getting mobilised via Internet. What is holding the parties back?*

**Temmo:** We must not forget that many of these young activists are also members of opposition parties. It is true, however, that these parties are not playing a leading part. The parties must get more forcibly mobilised in favour of the revolution. We must work at that. The youth who are leading the revolution have very effective networks and are well organised. They are very motivated and are working in a very professional manner. They know what they want and have decided that this regime must go — and that is what they are working for.

**Question:** *Till now, we supposed that that the Kurdish parties*

were the best organised opposition forces and that they would play an important part in the regime's downfall. In reality, this is far from being the case. You yourself have not called for taking part in the demonstrations. Why?

**Temmo:** That, unfortunately, is true. The Kurdish opposition was the best opposition group in Syria and was very active in the context of party politics. As from the start of the revolution, the Kurdish parties could have played an important role but they missed the opportunity. On the one hand the regime behaved very skilfully with the Kurds, and on the other several Kurdish party leaders contributed to the weakness of the Kurdish opposition. Several Kurdish parties still have not taken up a clear stand regarding the regime. Some still feel that it would be preferable to negotiate with it. This, naturally, weakens the demonstrations in the Kurdish regions and, consequently, the number of Kurds out on the streets. This does not mean that the Kurds will not secure their rights in a new Syria. The Kurdish youth has actively taken part in and been very useful to the Syrian revolution. We — the Future's Movement, the Kurdish Party for Freedom in Syria (Azadi) and the Kurdish Unity Party in Syria (Yekiti) have taken part in the demonstrations from the start and will continue to do so in the future. Our young members are demonstrating just like the young members of other parties and the independent protesters. As was the case throughout Syria, we deliberately decided to let the youth take charge of organising the demonstrations. The Future Movement, Azadi and Yekiti organised demonstrations in Syria at a time when no one dared protest pub-

lic. We are glad that our youth are now playing an important part.

**Question:** *Is the Kurdish opposition as well as the Arab opposition hiding behind the young people? You want to create this country's future but are delaying at a critical phase of the revolution, leaving all the responsibilities to the youth. Isn't that very contradictory?*

**Temmo:** In our case, the Future Movement, there is no contradiction here. We are taking part in the demonstrations. The three above cited parties could, without delay, issue a statement calling on the people to demonstrate. We are not doing so because we want our youth to become active and take independent decisions. We are thus showing them respect.

**Question:** *The Future's Movement withdrew from the 12-party group because it considered the others were too hesitant in supporting the revolution. In what way is the Future's Movement now different from them?*

**Temmo:** we left the group because of the position some of them took regarding the regime. They wanted to meet the government and carry out negotiations. We refused to do this and simply said: "You can't talk to a regime that kills its own population". The idea of entering into negotiations with the government is still regularly put forward by some Kurdish parties. We have different political ideas. We can only work with groups that refuse to meet the government. All our actions must be directed toward the regime's fall. We say so openly. We have the same position here as the youth in the streets. The majority of the Kurdish parties do not have this position. There are political differences. At this time,

we Kurds, the parties and the other social groups, must play an important role in this decisive phase of the revolution. We can only do this if we adopt a coherent stand and encourage the revolution more strongly. We are working to achieve this end. We are active at the national Syrian level. We must affirm this as Kurds and defenders of their interests as a distinct people. Today the road to the future is open.

**Question:** *Has the position of these Kurdish parties weakened by their not actively taking part in the demonstrations and, consequently, in the revolution?*

**Temmo:** Obviously their position is weakened. If their stand is weak, it is because several Kurdish parties have not yet adopted a clear line regarding the regime. Not only are they not supporting the revolution but they are acting against it.

**Question:** *How is it that demonstrators in Syria are being fired at except in the Kurdish regions?*

**Temmo:** The regime has already had some experience of dealing with us. When they fired on demonstrators in the Kurdish regions in 2004, hundreds of thousands of Kurds came down into the streets in Damascus as well as Aleppo. Murdering the demonstrators unites the population. The government knows full well that if a Kurd is killed in a demonstration in the Kurdish region, hundreds of thousands of Kurds will take over the streets. However weakened and split these groups may be, in such a situation the Kurds stick together. That is why the government does not intervene in the demonstrations in the Kurdish regions. They want to avoid this at all costs.





## AZERBAIJAN: A KURDISH GROUP DEMANDS POLITICAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

**O**n 2 July, a Press Conference was held in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, in the name of the country's Kurdish community, to make public opinion aware of the dangers of de-culturing and dispersion weighing on their community.

Tahir Suleymanov, editor of the *Diplomat* daily, read an appeal to the Azeri President Ilham Aliyev written in the name of the Kurds, before the journalist and members of the public present. In this appeal he stressed the need that the Kurds, in common with the other ethnic groups living in the country, have for schools where teaching is in Kurdish as well as TV programmes or stage plays in their mother tongue so as to preserve

"their national identity". Tahir Suleymanov also pointed out that there was not a single Kurd amongst the 125 members of Parliament in Baku.

The Russian media, also present, pointed out that, hitherto, Kurdish demands had never been heard publicly, as this community preferred, on the contrary, not to stress its origins "out of cautiousness". This cautiousness can be explained by the close political links between Turkey and Azerbaijan, since the Kurds are seen as being close to the Armenians while the conflict over Upper Karabagh has heightened nationalist tensions on both sides. Thus the Russian News Agency suggested that Tahir Suleymanov's initiative must be supported by the PKK,

although the Azeri parliament has always refused to officially describe the Kurdish organisation as "terrorist".

The number of Kurds living in Azerbaijan is estimated at about 70,000, less than 1% of this republic's populations. An autonomous local entity, "Red Kurdistan" had been formed between 1923 and 1930 under the Soviets. It included areas now in Azerbaijan, between Nagorny-Karabakh and the Azeri borders with Armenia and Iran. However, at the end of the 30s, most of the Kurds of Transcaucasia were transported, on Stalin's orders, to Kazakhstan, where a Kurdish community still lives and is much more culturally active and visible.

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## PARIS: THE EIGHTH BEDIR KHAN FESTIVAL

**F**or the first time, the eighth "Bedir Khan Festival" was celebrated on 9 and 10 July in Paris (Sevres). The Festival's theme was "Culture defines the Identity of nations", and its aim was to set up cultural bridges between France and the Kurds, between Kurdistan and Paris.

Kurdish and French intellectuals and research workers, writers and publishers discussed, in a series of Round Tables, the contribution of the Bedir Khans to the blossoming and defence of Kurdish culture as well as contemporary issues like the situation of journalists in Kurdistan.

Throughout the period the debates, an exhibition of works by Kurdish artists took place, including *Calligraphy and paintings* by Namiq Ali Qadir, Burhan

*Sabir, Hemin Jameel, and Mohammed Fatah. Finally there was a Kurdish Book Fair in which all the publishing houses in Kurdistan presented their publication.*

The Festival was opened by a musical event, the *Hymn to Bedir Khan* played by Jamal Abdul and Anwer Qeredaghi. Then the inaugural speeches followed one another, with Mrs Khaman Asaad, the Kurdistan Regional Government's representative in France, Mr. Hamid Boubakir, the organiser of this Eighth Festival in Paris and the Mayor of Sevres. Mr. Hamid Hussein spoke on behalf of the Union of Kurdish Writers, Mr. Kendal Nezan; President of the Kurdish Institute of Paris, as well as a representative of the French Socialist Party also spoke.

A documentary entitled "This is Kurdistan", produced and direct-

ed by Hawraz Muhammad was then shown, showing the real lives of intellectuals in Kurdistan since the uprising to the present.

After a "Kurdish lunch", the first Round Table took place with *Najat Abdullah* and *Luai Jaff* as moderators. This covered the role of the Bedir Khans in encouraging and promoting Kurdish journalism, in which the following Kurdish writers and journalists took part: *Malmisaniy, Mahmoud Lewendi, Dara Bilek, Ahmed Kardam* and *Ahmed Demirhan*.

The second Round Table, moderated by *Barzan Faraj* covered the theme "*Journalism and media in Kurdistan Today*". It brought together several intellectuals and research workers, namely: *Hamid Badirkha, Abdullah Keskin*, publisher of *Avesta Publishing* *Ibrahim Seydo Aydogan, Michael Thévenin*,

*Karwan Anwar, Umed Ali, Behat Hesib Qeredaghi, Bengin Haco and Hassan Yasin.*

The second day kicked off with a documentary entitled "*Danielle Mitterrand in Kurdistan*" by Hawre Aziz and Star Muhamad Amin. The came a Round Table on the subject of "The experiences of Kurdish Writers" moderated by *Halkawt Hakem* and *Ibrahim Seydo Aydogan*, *Kurdish language lecturers at INALCO*. Those taking part were *Mustapha Saleh Karim, Mihemed Mukri, Sherzad Hesên, Ehmed Mihemed Ismail, Fawaz Hussain, Firat Ceweri* and *Muhsin Kizilkaya*.

The second Round Table of the morning session was devoted to "French Orientalists in Kurdistan" and included *Olivier Rouault, Nazand Begikhani, Jammy James, Ephrem Isa Yusif* and *Najat Abdullah*.

The third Round Table, chaired by

Malmisanij was on the subject of "Kurdistan — a window on the world", in which the participants were Mr. Adnan Mufti, Speaker of the Irbil Kurdish Parliament, Hosham Dawood, Director of the Irbil IFPO.

The last Round Table discussed the position of women in Kurdish society, which was chaired by Mrs. Khaman Asaad, the Kurdistan Regional Government's representative in France,

Finally the evening ended with poetry and music, with Omar Dizeyi, Anwer Qeredaghi, Adnan and Rojda of the Koma Zozan" Group and Diyari Qeredaghi as performers, before the closing speeches by Mrs. Khaman Asaad and Azad Hamad Sharif, the event's co-ordinator.

The Bedir Khan family is one of the great Kurdish families that have devoted their lives to the independence of Kurdistan. In

the vanguard of Kurdish development and of their political demands, they were initiators of the schools and other academic institutions. However, it was in the field of journalism that the family was most prominent, by founding the first Kurdish newspapers: *Kurdistan* (1898), *Harwar* and *Ronahî* in the 1930s as well as *Roja Nû* and *Stêr*.

In addition the Bedirkhan Publishing House was founded in Irbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan on 22 October 2000 by Hamid Abubakir Ahmed, a journalist and it director of publication.

The previous "Bedir Khan Festivals" took place in April 2004 in Suleimaniyah, in 2005 in Duhok, in 2006 in Irbil. Then it began to take place outside the Kurdistan Region, beginning with Berlin in 2006, Cairo in 2008, Athens in 2009 and Washington in 2010. This year it was Paris' turn.

## Turquie: 2 soldats tués dans une embuscade imputée aux rebelles kurdes

**DIYARBAKIR** —AFP - Deux soldats turcs ont été tués mardi dans une ville du sud-est anatolien, peuplée en majorité de Kurdes, au cours d'une embuscade imputée par les autorités aux rebelles kurdes, ont affirmé des sources locales de sécurité.

Les deux hommes, habillés en civil, se rendaient à leur travail lorsqu'ils ont été abattus sur l'avenue principale de Yüksekova, une petite ville de la province de Hakkari, proche de l'Iran et de l'Irak, selon ces sources.

Ils ont succombé à leurs blessures à l'hôpital, ont-elles ajouté, précisant que les soupçons se portaient sur les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Les forces de sécurité ont lancé une opération de grande envergure avec un soutien aérien à la suite de cette attaque, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Les accrochages entre les forces de sécurité se sont multipliés ces derniers jours, après les élections législatives du 12 juin.

Les militants kurdes ont obtenu 36 sièges au Parlement, mais leurs élus ont refusé de prêter serment et de siéger après que l'élection de l'un d'entre eux a été invalidée en raison d'une condamnation pour "propagande terroriste" et que la justice a refusé d'en libérer cinq autres, en détention provisoire.

Un soldat a été tué samedi et un autre dimanche dans des attaques attribuées au PKK dans le Sud-Est.



Des policiers examinent les lieux d'une embuscade qui a tué deux soldats turcs, le 5 juillet 2011 (AFP) Adem Altan

Une explosion est par ailleurs survenue mardi matin au passage d'un véhicule militaire à Ankara, sans faire de victimes, a affirmé Anatolie.

Quatre véhicules ont été endommagés par l'explosion qui, selon le chef de la police d'Ankara, Zeki Catalkaya, cité par l'agence, pourrait être celle d'une bombe à percussion, destinée d'abord à faire du bruit qu'à causer des dommages.

Il n'était pas immédiatement établi qu'il s'agissait d'un attentat du PKK, mais celui-ci a déjà pris pour cible dans le passé des véhicules transportant des militaires dans les grandes villes de l'ouest de la Turquie.

Les rebelles ont présenté récemment de strictes conditions pour renouveler un cessez-le-feu décrété unilatéra-

lement en août 2010. Ils exigent un arrêt des opérations militaires et la reconnaissance de leur chef emprisonné, Abdullah Öcalan, comme interlocuteur pour un règlement de la question kurde.

Celui-ci a transmis le mois dernier des propositions pour mettre fin au conflit comprenant une autonomie régionale pour le sud-est anatolien, une éducation en kurde et une amnistie pour les rebelles, selon un de ses lieutenants.

Le conflit kurde en Turquie a fait quelque 45.000 morts depuis le début de l'insurrection du PKK, en 1984, selon l'armée.

**AFP**

## Un haut responsable kurde souhaite le maintien des Américains en Irak

**ERBIL (Irak), 5 juil 2011 (AFP)**

**UN HAUT RESPONSABLE KURDE** s'est prononcé mardi en faveur d'un maintien des forces américaines en Irak au-delà de la fin de l'année, date prévue de leur départ, arguant que le pays restait en proie à l'instabilité et au terrorisme.

"J'aimerais qu'il y ait un vote unanime sur le retrait ou le maintien des forces américaines en Irak, a déclaré à l'AFP Kamal Kirkuki, président du Parlement de la région autonome du Kurdistan et l'un des responsables du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK).

"A l'heure actuelle, la situation en Irak ne permet pas un retrait américain. Il y a toujours un manque de stabilité et les attaques terroristes se poursuivent", a-t-il ajouté.

Selon lui, la décision du maintien ou du départ des forces américaines

"devrait être prise par toutes les composantes politiques en Irak, publiquement, et ne devrait pas être laissée à telle ou telle faction car il s'agit d'un problème sensible qui requiert du courage".

"Il faut éviter que seuls un ou deux camps prennent la décision", a-t-il insisté.

"Les dirigeants kurdes envisagent la situation en Irak d'un point de vue pratique. Nous voulons une situation acceptable, de la stabilité et de la sécurité, et pas des querelles politiques", a-t-il conclu.

L'Irak a connu un net regain de violences en juin, alors que Washington compte toujours 45.000 militaires en Irak, essentiellement engagés dans la formation et le conseil des forces irakiennes.

Les responsables américains multiplient les démarches auprès de Bagdad pour maintenir un contingent au-delà de la fin de l'année, en dépit de l'accord signé en novembre 2008 entre Washington et Bagdad pour le retrait des derniers soldats américains, plus de huit ans après l'invasion conduite par les Etats-unis.

Le Premier ministre irakien Nouri al-Maliki a prôné un dialogue national pour trancher cette question politiquement très sensible, alors que la faction chiite au gouvernement y est vivement opposée.

## Découverte de 900 corps dans un charnier du sud de l'Irak

DIWANIYA - (AFP) — Les autorités irakiennes ont annoncé mercredi avoir découvert 900 corps dans une fosse commune près de Diwaniya, qui seraient ceux de Kurdes assassinés à l'époque de la dictature de Saddam Hussein.

Les corps ont été découverts dans la région de Chanafiya, à 70 km de Diwaniya, la capitale de la province du même nom, située à 160 km au sud de Bagdad.

"Les 900 corps étaient enterrés dans une tranchée", a affirmé Dakhil Sayhoud, le responsable provincial du comité Justice et Responsabilité, chargé de traquer les anciens membres du parti Baas et de faire "connaître les crimes du régime de Saddam".



"Les premières indications laissent à penser qu'il s'agit de Kurdes. Les corps ont été transférés au laboratoire de Najaf pour aider à leur identification" a-t-il ajouté.

Les victimes auraient été tuées dans les années 80 quand l'ancien dictateur menait une lutte implacable contre les velléités d'autonomie des Kurdes.

En avril dernier, les autorités avaient annoncé avoir trouvé une autre fosse commune, qui renfermait 800 corps, dont ceux de femmes et d'enfants, dans la province occidentale d'Anbar.

Le nombre évalué des personnes tuées à l'époque de Saddam Hussein varie de 300.000 à 1,3 million, selon les sources.

## Turquie: Erdogan présente son nouveau gouvernement

Adem Altan - ANKARA

**LE PREMIER** ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a rendu public mercredi la composition de son nouveau gouvernement après la victoire de son parti islam-conservateur lors des législatives du 12 juin.

La nouvelle équipe gouvernementale comprend, outre le chef de cabinet, 25 ministres, dont seulement six nouveaux venus, a indiqué lors d'une conférence de presse M. Erdogan, qui entame son troisième mandat consécutif, après avoir obtenu l'approbation par le président Abdullah Gül de sa nouvelle équipe.

Le ministre des Affaires étrangères Ahmet Davutoglu conserve son portefeuille, de même qu'Egemen Bagis, dont le secrétariat aux Affaires européennes devient un ministère.

Ismet Yilmaz remplace à la Défense le vétéran de la politique Vecdi Gönül tandis qu'un autre nouveau venu, Idris Naim Sahin, s'installe à l'Intérieur, le ministre sortant Besir Atalay devenant l'un des quatre vice-Premier ministres.

Le nouveau cabinet ne comprend



Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan présente son nouveau gouvernement à Ankara le 6 juillet 2011

qu'une femme, Fatma Sahin, ministre de la Famille et des Affaires sociales.

M. Erdogan a indiqué qu'il présenterait le programme de son gouvernement au Parlement vendredi, préalable à un vote de confiance la semaine prochaine qu'il devrait facilement gagner, son Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) disposant de 327 des 550 sièges.

Le nouveau cabinet prend ses fonc-

tions dans un contexte de tensions, les 135 députés du Parti républicain du peuple (CHP, social-démocrate) et les 35 élus de la mouvance kurde ayant refusé de prêter serment.

Le CHP proteste contre le refus de la justice de libérer deux de ses élus, placés en détention provisoire dans le cadre d'une enquête sur un complot supposé contre le gouvernement.

Les élus kurdes dénoncent le maintien en détention provisoire de cinq des leurs, dans le cadre d'une enquête sur une branche urbaine du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, et l'invalidation de l'élection d'un 36e élu, condamné à 20 mois de prison pour "propagande terroriste".

M. Erdogan a critiqué mercredi l'attitude de l'opposition, invoquant le règlement interne de l'Assemblée.

"Nous voulons que les députés d'opposition prêtent serment et assument leur rôle", a-t-il déclaré.

"A quoi ça sert d'être un parlementaire si on ne participe pas au travail législatif (...) S'ils ne parviennent pas à accomplir leurs obligations législatives, il est naturellement de notre devoir de faire ce qu'imposent les règles du Parlement", a-t-il ajouté.

## U.S. suffers biggest Iraq toll in 3 years

BAGHDAD

BY TIM ARANGO

Three more American soldiers were killed this week, the U.S. military announced Thursday, bringing the combat-related deaths for American forces in Iraq to a monthly toll not seen since 2008.

The deaths occurred Wednesday in southern Iraq. A military spokesman said the soldiers had been killed by enemy attack. Recently, the increase in casualties has been attributed to rocket or mortar attacks on U.S. bases by Shiite militias.

American convoys have also come under increasing threat from improvised explosive devices. Militants have stepped up their attacks, the military said, so as to claim credit for pushing out the U.S. forces, who are to withdraw by the end of the year.

The casualties are particularly striking given the diminishing numbers of U.S. forces and their reduced combat role. Fewer than 50,000 remain, compared with more than 160,000 at the height of the war.

Fifteen American soldiers were killed in June, 14 in hostile incidents. According to icasualties.org, an online database, this was the highest number of combat fatalities since June 2008, when 23 soldiers and marines were killed.

The biggest attack came on June 6, when militants fired rockets at Camp Loyalty in Baghdad, killing six soldiers. Kataib Hezbollah, a militia that American officials believe is supported by Iran, claimed responsibility.

Last August, President Barack

Obama declared America's combat mission over. While U.S. forces have largely settled in to an advisory role to the Iraqi military, they are still in harm's way, whether on their bases or moving around.

According to the two countries' security agreement, American forces are severely restricted in their ability to act unilaterally to face threats, a fact that has ratcheted up the anxiety — and the anger — among troops who find themselves under attack but unable to respond.

This is compounded by a reluctance to make targets of Shiite militias, many linked to officials in or close to the Shiite-dominated government. Iraqi security forces have been more aggressive in singling out Sunni insurgent groups such as Al Qaeda in Iraq.

Meanwhile, the debate persists in Baghdad over whether Iraq should ask the United States to extend the troop deadline and allow some units to stay and continue training.

## 11 killed in Syrian city, but tanks are halted

BEIRUT

### Regime tries to recapture Hama after protests that drew 300,000 people

FROM NEWS REPORTS

Syrian security forces and gunmen loyal to the regime shot and killed 11 people Tuesday as residents erected roadblocks to prevent the advance of tanks ringing the city of Hama, which has become a flash point of the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad, activists said.

Hama residents burned tires and set

up sand barriers and other obstacles to block the military, said Rami Abdul-Rahman, the London-based director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

"There is an open civil defiance in Hama," Abdul-Rahman said. "There is a kind of determination not to submit to any tanks or military vehicles."

He said at least 11 people had been confirmed dead, citing accounts from doctors and witnesses.

On Monday, Syrian forces sealed off Hama and blocked the roads leading in, an apparent attempt to retake the city one month after security forces withdrew from it. About 300,000 people protested against the regime in Hama last week.

Activists say security forces have killed more than 1,400 people — most of them unarmed protesters — since mid-March. The regime disputes the toll, blaming "armed thugs" and foreign conspirators for the unrest.

Also on Tuesday, a Syrian activist said buses carrying security forces were spotted heading to restive, mountainous areas near the Turkish border. Omar Idilbi, a spokesman for the Local Coordination Committees, which track the protests in Syria, said witnesses told him the vehicles were rushing to the area where the military has been trying to prevent the opposition from establishing a base.

About 10,000 Syrians have fled to Turkey amid the crackdown, and on Tuesday the head of the Syrian Red Crescent, Abdurrahman Attar, urged all those who had fled there to return home, Turkey's state-run Anatolia news agency said.

AFP

## Turquie: un soldat tué lors de combats avec des rebelles kurdes

ANKARA, 2 juillet 2011 (AFP)

UN SOLDAT TURc a été tué dans la nuit de vendredi à samedi lors de combats avec des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a rapporté samedi l'agence de presse Anatolie.

L'accrochage est survenu dans une zone montagneuse proche de la frontière irakienne, dans la province de Hakkari, a indiqué Anatolie, précisant que les opérations se poursuivaient dans la région.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie et de nombreux pays, dispose de camps dans le nord de l'Irak qu'il utilise comme

bases arrière pour ses opérations dans le sud-est anatolien, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes.

Les rebelles ont présenté récemment de strictes conditions pour renouveler un cessez-le-feu décrété unilatéralement en août 2010. Ils exigent un arrêt des opérations militaires et la reconnaissance de leur chef emprisonné, Abdullah Öcalan, comme interlocuteur pour un règlement de la question kurde.

Celui-ci a transmis le mois dernier aux autorités des propositions pour mettre fin au conflit comprenant une autonomie régionale pour le sud-est anatolien, une éducation en langue kurde et une amnistie pour les rebelles, selon les déclarations d'un de ses lieutenants à la presse.

# Damascus vibrations ripple in Baghdad

By Sami Moubayed

**DAMASCUS** - For a variety of overlapping reasons, the situation in Syria is very alarming to Iraqis from every end of the political spectrum.

For starters, approximately 1 million Iraqis currently live in Syria, all of whom fled the mayhem in their country in 2003. They are worried that if security breaks down in Syria, or if the state can no longer accommodate them, they would have to unwillingly return home - where a very uncertain future awaits them.

A country that now has refugees on the border with Turkey will have a hard time absorbing refugees on its own territories - and certainly not Iraqi refugees.

Iraqi Christians living in Syria are particularly afraid of the

sectarian rhetoric emerging from radical groups inside Syria. They fled their country precisely because they were targeted by radical Islamic groups and are worried that a similar scenario could be repeated in Syria.

Iraqi Ba'athists are also worried about the status of the Ba'ath Party in Syria. Demonstrators have been on the streets throughout rural Syria and in many towns within its interior, demanding an end to one-party rule and cancelation of Article 8 of the Syrian constitution, which designates the Ba'ath as "leader of state and society".

These Iraqi Ba'athists are still very much committed to Ba'ath Party rule and they are horrified by the fact that perhaps soon, Ba'ath Party supremacy will end in a country that gave birth to their doctrine back in 1947. Ba'athist Syria welcomed them with open arms in 2003, but that wouldn't necessarily apply to a country in which the Ba'ath no longer has the upper hand.

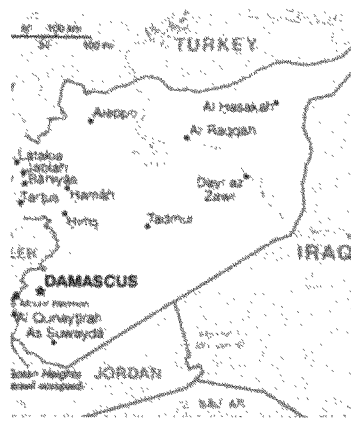
Hardline Iraqi Shi'ites are also alarmed, seeing the demonstrations on the Syrian street as part of a Western-engineered "conspiracy" aimed at punishing Syria for its alliance with Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon. They are very worried that if the regime collapses in Syria, or is reformed beyond recognition, then this would spell out a slow breakdown in the Syrian-Iranian-Hezbollah trio that has dominated the Arab world for more than 10 years.

That alliance was a source of inspiration to radical Iraqi groups like the Mehdi Army, whose leader Muqtada al-Sadr often looked towards Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah for leadership and guidance, enjoying excellent relations with the Syrians. They fear the rise of radical Sunni groups within Syria, like the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, would certainly work to obstruct what its leaders have often described as a "Shi'ite crescent" linking Iran, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.

As far as they are concerned, the Brotherhood, through an alliance with Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is now coordinating with the West over how to end to Iranian influence in the Arab world. The believe this is why Erdogan began dialogue with Hamas in Palestine back in 2004 - to counterbalance the influence of Hezbollah in the eyes of Muslim Sunnis around the world.

If the Brotherhood is empowered by whatever scenario unfolds in Syria, then this would have immediate vibrations in Iraq among groups allied to Sunni Islamic groups, like the Iraqi Accordance Front and the Iraqi Islamic Party, being the Iraqi branch of the Brotherhood.

That fear is shared by the Mehdi Army, the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council (SIIC), and even by Shi'ite heavyweights like former prime minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and his successor, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki. Additionally, an upco-



ming bill of indictment in the murder of Lebanon's former premier Rafik al-Hariri will likely blame five senior members of Hezbollah - a proxy blow to Iran and its allies in the Iraqi arena, and throughout the Arab world.

Iraqi Kurds are also watching the Syria scenario with plenty of interest. Their top leadership, including President Jalal Talabani and president of Iraqi Kurdistan Masoud al-Barazani, are both closely allied to Syrian Kurds, having spent a long exile in Syria during the era of Saddam Hussein.

Early on in the crisis, Syrian Kurds were appeased by the government through a series of measures that included granting citizenship to around 300,000 Kurds (a key demand since 1962) and celebrating the Kurdish Neirouz holiday - for the first time in decades.

Despite that, however, Kurdish districts in eastern Syria went out in anti-government demonstrations, demanding political and economic change, claiming that their ultimate demand is democracy rather than citizenship. To date, although Kurdish demonstrators have been snowballing on Fridays, no casualties have been recorded in the Kurdish community.

If that changes for any reason, this could potentially lead to a bloody confrontation between them and the government, as was the case in 2004. Additionally there are 12 Kurdish political parties in Syria that although unlicensed, have

recently been invited for a meeting with President Bashar al-Assad.

That meeting did not take place, and these parties are concerned that authorities did not contact them early on in the crisis, although they were the ones to calm the Kurdish street back in 2004. All of them are now eyeing a new political party law that is in the works in Syria, waiting to see if their parties, which for years have been persecuted by the government, will get licensed in a multi-party Syria.

If they don't - either for political reasons or if they don't meet the legal requirements - this could also spell more trouble in the Kurdish districts, which could immediately spill over into Iraq. They need to be represented as well in an upcoming National Dialogue that is due to start in Damascus on July 10, chaired by Vice President Farouk al-Shara.

They have already outlined a set of 10 demands which range from full rights for Syrian Kurds, including that of language, schools and culture, onto a new constitution that recognizes the Kurdish ethnicity in Syria.

A quick review of Arab history shows that what happens in Egypt is often duplicated in Syria, and what happens in Syria is often copied in Iraq.

If Syrians are the Egyptian copycat, then Iraqis are the Syrian copycat. Egypt became a Fatimid (caliphate); Syria became a Fatimid. Egypt established a Revolutionary Command Council in 1952; Syria established a Revolutionary Command Council in 1963. Egypt spoke of Arab unity; Syria followed by merging with Cairo in 1958.

And in Iraq's case, the pattern is similar. Damascus established the Muslim Umayyad Dynasty in 661; Baghdad established the Muslim Abbasid Dynasty in 750. Syria created a Hashemite

crown in 1920; Iraq did the same in 1921 - ironically with the same monarch.

Syrians established a Ba'ath Party government in 1963; the

Iraqis followed suit in 1968. What happens in Damascus undoubtedly always has a strong vibration in Baghdad. The street demonstrations that began in Syria in March will

probably soon find their way to Iraq, and so will the democratization and reform process, which Iraqis are still yearning for since the downfall of Hussein, eight years ago.

*Sami Moubayed is a university professor, historian, and editor-in-chief of Forward Magazine.*



04 July 2011

## Qaraylan: Turkish Officials Will Continue Meeting with Ocalan

RUDAW

**T**he leader of an armed Kurdish group closely tied to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) claims the government is holding peace talks with jailed PKK leader Abdulla Ocalan but warns that rebels are prepared to attack "Turkish institutions".

Murat Qaraylan, the leader of the Union of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK), said in an interview with Rudaw that despite the Turkish government's denials, officials have been meeting with Ocalan to discuss a peace plan to resolve the Kurdish issue. Ocalan is also the founder of the Union of Communities in Kurdistan.

Qaraylan warned that if Turkey ignores the cease-fire and the peace process, his group will resume attacks against Turkish troops. He claimed that his group is keeping its August 2010 pledge to not attack Turkish troops, even though clashes between his guerrillas and Turkish troops occurred earlier this year. He maintained that Turkey provoked the fighting.

"If the Turkish state continues its military operations in the cities and the mountains, we will resume our war and we have prepared for it," Qaraylan said. "We won't attack the army if they don't attack us, but we will attack the police and other Turkish institutions that have attacked our people."

Qaraylan said the revolutions in the Middle East will redraw the map of the region, and will ultimately help solve the question over Kurdish rights in Turkey.

Qaraylan believes that Ocalan's roadmap for a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue Turkey is feasible, but that the Turkish authorities are not



Murat Qaraylan.

*Photo Rudaw.*

serious about it.

"The [government] delegation sat with Ocalan but they didn't promise anything," Qaraylan said. "They only (told Ocalan) 'give us another chance and extend the cease-fire.'"

According to Qaraylan, the Turkish delegation will visit Ocalan in Imrali Island, where he is imprisoned, to hold more talks. The coming days are going to be "very important for us and Turkey," he said.

Qaraylan blamed the Turkish government for talking about dialogue and peace while throwing thousands of Kurds in jails for supporting Kurdish parties.

"Over the past three years they have arrested 3,000 people and accused them of having ties with the Union of Communities in Kurdistan without any evidence," he said. "They just look to see who is an active member of pro-Kurdish [Peace and Democracy Party] (BDP) and arrest him."

Erdogan's Justice and Development (AKP) party won the majority of votes in Turkey's parliamentary elections on June 12.

Qaraylan accused the AKP of trying to force Turkish identity on all ethnic groups.

"Kurds, Arabs and Armenians live in Turkey and we are brothers, but we

are not Turks," he said.

Qaraylan said AKP now has a responsibility to bring about peace in Turkey.

"The ball is in Erdogan's court," he said.

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, there have been rumors of talks between the PKK and American officials. However, Qaraylan denied any official or high level with America.

"One has to tell the truth," he said. "American delegates may have come and met with our men as journalists or intelligent officers in disguise. That is all. There hasn't been any high level or direct talks between us."

Regarding the policies of the Obama administration towards the Kurds of Turkey, Qaraylan said, "When Obama came to office many, including the Kurds looked to him with hope, but gradually all the hopes dashed. Even his policies towards the Kurds of Iraq have run cold."

Qaraylan said that America should follow a clear policy towards the Kurdish issue. "Because America doesn't have a clear policy we will keep cautious," he said. "America deals with the Kurdish issue based on its own political and economic interests."

## Arab Spring crackdown damages Kurdistan's image as regional model

The US has long championed semi-autonomous Kurdistan as a democratic model for the rest of Iraq and the Middle East. But Kurdish leaders have violently shut down dissenters.

By Scott Peterson

### Sulaymaniyah, Iraq

Tucked away in an often-overlooked arc of northern Iraq, Kurds launched their "Kurdish Spring" simply enough in mid-February, in solidarity with Tunisians and Egyptians who had toppled dictatorial rulers.

But the result here was very different, and hardly looked like an unfolding of freedom. Washington's close Kurdish allies cracked down hard. After 62 days of street protests, 10 people were dead. The carefully crafted image of Kurdistan as a democratic island in an ocean of regional dictatorship was in tatters.

All that visibly remains of the uprising are a few faded posters of its first victim – a 16-year-old – and scorch marks where security forces burned the tents of protesters. But it has deepened the political crisis in this semiautonomous region of northern Iraq.

Beneath the veneer of restored calm, activists say, is a surging mistrust of Iraqi Kurdish leadership. That could complicate the enclave's relations with the rest of Iraq, especially regarding control of the disputed oil-rich city of Kirkuk.

It could also undermine aspirations among disenfranchised ethnic Kurds outside Iraq – in Syria, Turkey, and Iran – who have long viewed the limited self-rule exercised by their Iraqi brethren as an example of what they could achieve.

"What humiliated us was the killing of Kurdish citizens by the militia of Kurdish political parties," says Nasik Kadir, a health ministry worker and political sociologist who vows to fight what she calls "abuse of power."

"We have suffered for years corruption and lack of rule of law, but when it comes to the blood of our youth, it is unbea-



*Kurdish pro-democracy protesters battled Kurdish security forces in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, in April during the 62-day 'Kurdish Spring.' Some 5,000 to 6,000 people took to the streets to protest corruption and undemocratic rule. The government's crackdown left 10 dead.*  
Zinnako Esmail Khalis

nable," says Ms. Kadir, who says she witnessed casualties firsthand in the hospital. "These authorities have lost legitimacy.... For many people [Kurdish leaders] have betrayed our national cause."

### The lions of Kurdish politics

Few here expect real reform from a feudal and tribal system that has enabled two parties, mired in corruption allegations, to dominate Iraqi Kurdish life for decades.

The Kurdish spring demonstrations, which only attracted 5,000 or 6,000 on the streets of Sulaymaniyah, were dismissed by some Kurdish leaders as the work of "saboteurs" and "anarchists" working for "outside interests."

The gap between the democratic rhetoric and the party-first reality has widened under the long-serving lions of Kurdish politics: the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), whose leader Massoud Barzani is president of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG); and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), whose leader Jalal Talabani is now president of Iraq.

"The PUK and KDP until recent years had a very romantic relationship with the people; they were the tools of the people against Saddam Hussein and people loved that," says one Kurdish analyst who could not be named for fear of retri-

sals. "But that image has been shattered – it doesn't exist anymore."

There are indeed some progressive laws on the books, and in fact internal divisions in both parties over the use of force and content of reform. But recent steps point to an authoritarian tendency especially in KDP areas, where yet more Barzani family have recently been given top posts. PUK influence has declined since the breakaway Goran [Change] movement took up the opposition role.

"There are a few trappings of democracy, around the same faces. The faces that I know are the same ones that my father knew, and that my kids will probably know," says the analyst. "One thing they [KDP and PUK] know very well is how to survive, which can't be until the end of time. Protests have been fruitful because they made clear to leaders that a good part of society does not want them."

### Kurdish soul-searching

The violence has certainly prompted some soul-searching, and promises of change. KRG Prime Minister Barham Salih, a PUK leader with a progressive reputation, says failure to act on demands "will take the Kurdistan experiment into a dark tunnel."

"We admit without any hesitation that there have been



some shortcomings in the corruption files, bad management, and parties have been in control [which] led to protests and legitimate demands for reform," Mr. Salih told the Saudi-owned Asharq al-Awsat this week. "The solution lies in root reform."

The need for such contrition after so many years of Kurdish self-rule is for some a betrayal of decades of suffering and sacrifice. Episodes include Saddam Hussein's Anfal campaign that culminated in 1988 with as many as 100,000 dead, and his forces' crushing of a 1991 Kurdish uprising that pushed 1 million Kurds into Turkey and Iran.

On their lips as they marched across the mountains back then, this reporter heard Kurds praying for an end to tyrannical rule and for freedom. After that, the UN created a safe haven in northern Iraq, marred by a KDP-PUK civil war that took thousands of Kurdish lives in the 1990s.

Kurdistan has since witnessed an economic boom. But that wealth has only touched a few – stoking more anger – as past events are used to excuse the lack of political progress.

"We are still like a baby in the way that we deal with

democracy...we have still to learn how to deal with that," says Ari Harsin, a KDP representative.

Lessons have been learned, he says. But the elevated position of Barzani is sacrosanct, and reflected by a 70 percent victory in a 2009 vote.

"Some people in society have a very special role," says Mr. Harsin. "I agree categorically that is not democratic if you see the same faces. But some people are 'Leader,' they can bring a peace and a sphere of negotiation. I see Mr. Massoud Barzani as one of those people."

### Long-cherished freedom proves elusive

But the freedom envisioned by Kurds and trumpeted by the US is proving elusive. One of Hardi's newspaper staffers left jail recently with broken wrists. Last year, freelance journalist Sardasht Osman received death threats immediately after writing a critical article about Barzani. He was kidnapped in the KDP stronghold of Erbil and later killed.

"You have to remember the ideological root of our parties is totalitarian, because PUK and KDP were Marxist/Leninist [and] are trying to control all

the parts of society," says Hardi. "It's true they have changed after 1991 their slogans, they all talk about democracy, human rights. But the mentality is still the same."

Evidence of that is easy to find. In April toward the end of the protests, according to numerous sources, buses carrying several hundred students and instructors riding to a courthouse protest were diverted by Kurdish security, forced to a remote location, off-loaded and the would-be protesters were beaten.

Hardi's brother Rebin – a prominent Kurdish writer – showed up separately to attend the same courthouse protest, was immediately arrested and severely beaten with electric cables throughout the drive to a local prison.

Photographs show bruises on his head and arm, his thigh bloody and disfigured. Rebin Hardi said it reminded him of the beating he got from Saddam-era Baathists in 1982.

The message was clear: "They are willing to do anything to stay in power," says Rebin Hardi. "The first thing is we should no lose hope. But if things continue like this, we will end up like Libya."



July 1, 2011

## Azerbaijan's Kurds Fear Loss Of National Identity

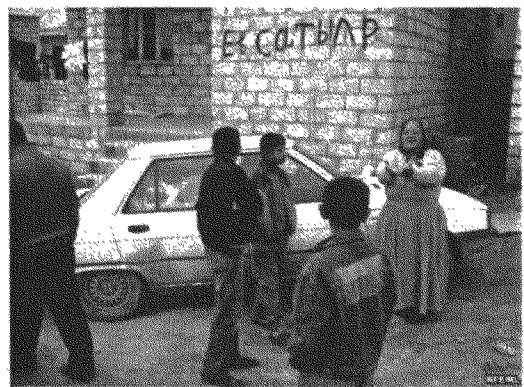
**R**epresentatives of Azerbaijan's Kurdish minority convened a press conference in Baku on June 29 to highlight perceived threats to their continued survival as a separate ethnic group.

Tahir Suleymanov, editor of the newspaper "Diplomat," read out an appeal on behalf of the Kurds to Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev. The appeal stressed that like any other ethnic group, the Kurds need schools with Kurdish as the language of instruction, theaters, and TV programs in their native language, in order to preserve their national identity.

It also noted that Azerbaijani Kurds consider it prudent to conceal their ethnic identity, as publicly identifying oneself as a Kurd "can elicit a negative reaction." Russian media reports on the press conference do not specify why or whether those present elaborated on that claim.

Suleymanov also made the point that not a single one of the 125 members of the Azerbaijani parliament is Kurdish.

Azerbaijan's Kurdish community is estimated at approximately 70,000, or less than 1 percent of the total population of 9.9 million. A Kurdish autonomous formation ("Red Kurdistan") existed from 1923-30, encompassing the regions of Azerbaijan that lie between Nagorno-



Kurdish immigrants in Baku (Photo RFE/IRL)

Karabakh and Azerbaijan's borders with Armenia in the west and Iran in the south. Joseph Stalin subsequently had most of the Kurdish population of the Transcaucasus deported to Kazakhstan.

According to the Russian news agency Regnum, Suleymanov and the paper he edits both support the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) that for decades has battled successive Turkish governments. Despite close ties between Ankara and Baku, and repeated calls to do so from some opposition political parties, the Azerbaijani parliament has for years desisted from formally designating the PKK a terrorist organization.

# Illegal border trade with Iraq revives life of Iranian Kurds

By Farshid Motahari July 3, 2011

**Baneh, Iran** - Kamal, Atta and Mohammad are Kurds in their mid-30s who live in Iran's western city of Baneh near the border with Iraq.

As children, the three cousins lived through the terror of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war and attacks by troops of Iraq's leader Saddam Hussein on their hometown, which turned Baneh into a battleground and one of the most deprived regions in the country.

They had no proper education and had to toil for low wages as cleaning men or construction workers in the capital Tehran, 650 kilometres away.

'That bastard (Saddam) made us suffer for so many years but God not only made him face humiliation but also made his death become a source of prosperity for us Kurds in Baneh,' Atta said.

Following the 2003 US military invasion of Iraq and collapse of the Saddam regime, people in the Kurdish regions of northern Iraq were no longer oppressed and isolated. They soon found a way to turn their freedom into business opportunity with fellow Kurds in Iran.

The Iraqi Kurds began ordering goods from China, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates, shipped them to the southern Iraqi port of Basra and then on to the northern city of Sulaymaniyah and the hands of newly formed smuggling groups.

Those goods were then taken to Iran's Kurdistan, and turned the 70,000-population city of Baneh into a new shopping paradise.

Iranian authorities allow and even invite foreign reporters to the province to see the economic boom in Baneh, but do not allow them to see how the boom was actually made possible.

Yet the smugglers are proud to explain the procedures and, for a fee of 200 dollars, even show reporters how the goods are transferred into Iran.

'The Iraqi smugglers carry on their shoulders, each up to 150 kilograms, goods such as large-size LCD televisions and kitchen and computer equipment to the mountains on the Iranian side and deliver them to us at nighttime when border guards have no view,' one Iranian smuggler said.

'We smuggle the goods from the border area to a safe place, put them onto trucks brought by the city smugglers to the shop owners in Baneh.'

The illegal border trade benefits both border and city smugglers as well as the merchants who sell them tax-free to customers while not paying any taxes to the government, either.



The main beneficiaries are the consumers who would have to pay between 25 to 50 per cent more for the mainly Chinese goods if bought in their own cities.

Police and border guards in Baneh are well aware of the illegal border trade and tax-free sales in the market but apparently prefer to swim in denial. According to the smugglers, one reason is that some of them are on their payrolls.

'Another reason is that police and border guards definitely prefer to have Kurdish smugglers rather than Kurdish guerrillas,' Kamal said.

Kamal has gone from being a cleaner to a successful businessman with a new house, wife and two children. For him, the trade is an internal Kurdish affair related to neither Iraq nor Iran.

'Kurds are one big family, regardless where they live, and they help each other regardless of their nationality,' he said, referring to the almost 40 million Kurds worldwide, including 7 million in Iran and nearly the same number in Iraq.

The business boom from illegal border trade has also produced investment in the city's infrastructure, and at least two four-star hotels will be built in Baneh soon to receive the increasing flow of customers that is now estimated at thousands per day.

Kamal's cousins Atta and Mohammad, who coordinate trade routes from the border to the city, are now earning 10 times what they did before the smuggling boom began.

'May God bless the Americans for having invaded Iraq and killed Saddam, because this changed our lives drastically for the positive,' Atta said.

According to Mohammad, the illegal trade is also a blessing for newlywed couples who can afford to buy in Baneh what they need to start their married lives.

'My fiance and I intended to get married in six months because we had not enough money to buy the necessary goods but here in Baneh we did, saved up to 15 million rials (1,500 dollars), and we get married next month,' said Mohsen, who drove more than five hours from his hometown Tabriz to Baneh.

The Iranian economy has been stifled for several years by the international sanctions imposed on the country because of its uncompromising stance in the nuclear dispute. But the sanctions play no role for the Kurds in Baneh.

'Sanctions, what sanctions? How can sanctions affect in any way something which is and will remain totally illegal, and is just between Kurds and not any countries?' Kamal said.

## Ball in AKP's court, BDP says of impasse

ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News

**T**urkey's president responded positively to Kurdish complaints about the country's parliamentary crisis during a Friday meeting, an independent deputy said, but suggested the government must assume responsibility for resolving the problems that have led to legislative boycotts.

The president gave us positive energy. He said he would work to solve the issue, and we believe he will take positive steps to achieve that, pro-Kurdish independent deputy Ahmet Türk told reporters following his meeting with President Abdullah Gül.

There are ways to fix the problem. If we want to shape the future together, the responsibility falls on the government's shoulders. They have the authority to make the necessary legal changes. The government needs to make an effort. It is not enough for only us to have good intentions. We need to mutually understand each other, said Türk.

Deputies from the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP, as well as others supported by the party, decided to boycott Parliament after the Supreme Election Board, or YSK, quashed the deputyship of their colleague, Hatip Dicle, for a terror-related conviction.

Gül met Türk and pro-Kurdish independent deputy Serafettin Elçi to discuss the crisis that arose after the BDP and the Republican People's Party, or CHP, refused to take their



parliamentary oaths on Tuesday.

Speaking to journalists, Türk also said they entered the general elections believing that Parliament was the place to find solutions to their problems.

But we were faced with an attitude of threats and disregard for our opinions. Faced with injustice, we decided to stay out of Parliament. I would like to repeat that we find it meaningless to go to Parliament where we will be marginalized and snubbed. If we can't contribute, then there is no point in us being in Parliament, he said.

Türk said he told Gül that if the problem remained unsolved, the upcoming period could create bigger problems. The president agreed with the comment, Türk added.

The prime minister is trying to pull the issue to one side, giving the impression that we are criticizing court decisions. If the court decisions are like this, then Parliament has the authority to change the articles, he

said.

Speaking to journalists Friday, BDP group chairman Selahattin Demirtaş said they were waiting for an appointment from either the government or the prime minister, but added that they had not yet requested a meeting with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

If necessary, the problem could be solved via a by-election in Diyarbakir or Agri, he said.

We want Dicle's deputyship back, he said, adding that they could ask for an appointment if the prime minister or the government put forward a concrete proposal for a solution.

Gül also told Türk that the Kurdish issue was Turkey's number-one problem and that Parliament was the place to solve such issues, according to sources.

Some 29 independent deputies backed by the BDP applied to Parliament on Friday to form a legislative group under the BDP's banner.

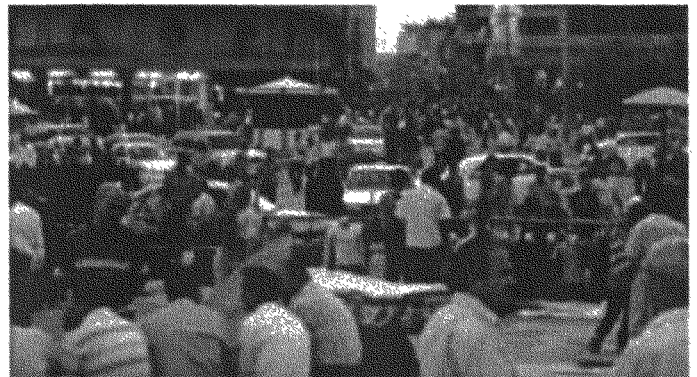
## Kurdistan population reaches 4.9 million

**ARBIL / Aswat al-Iraq:** The head of the Kurdistan Region Census Department announced today that the total inhabitants of Kurdistan has reached 4.9 million, out of a total population of roughly 31 million in Iraq.

Serwan Muhyiddin told Aswat al-Iraq that this figure was reached according to statistics and housing numbering made in 2009 in all over Iraq.

The results of the statistics was issued today that reached 31,664,000 inhabitants in all over Iraq, including 4.9 inhabitants in Kurdistan.

A special ceremony was made here today in cooperation with UNFPA, senior advisor to the Kurdish ministry of planning called the government to exert more efforts to bet-



ter health, scientific, social and educational levels in order to minimize death averages and poverty problems, in addition to increasing work opportunities.

# Le régime syrien est confronté, à Hama, à un soulèvement de grande ampleur

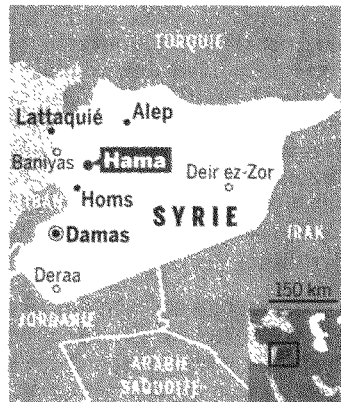
Après une manifestation de masse le 1<sup>er</sup> juillet, les services de sécurité ont multiplié les arrestations

**Beyrouth**  
Correspondante

**A**u cœur de la Syrie, la ville d'Hama a connu quelques jours d'exaltation dont le point d'orgue a été la manifestation géante du vendredi 1<sup>er</sup> juillet. Sur les vidéos postées clandestinement sur Internet, la grande place Al-Aassi avait pris, ce jour-là, des allures de place Tahrir aux grandes heures de la révolte égyptienne, tant les manifestants y étaient nombreux et tant les forces de sécurité paraissaient absentes.

Selon des habitants, les chars ont fait leur apparition dimanche soir, se sont éloignés durant la nuit, avant de se poster à l'entrée de la ville lundi matin. Depuis lors, 80 tanks sont positionnés autour de la cité. « *Nous avons construit des barricades avec des pneus, des poubelles et tous les objets que nous avons pu trouver* », explique un habitant joint par téléphone. Ce n'est sans doute pas cela qui les aurait arrêtés. Mais, finalement, seules les forces de sécurité sont entrées dans les murs de la ville.

« *Nous avons mis au point une riposte quand les forces de sécurité viendraient arrêter les gens, assure un autre habitant dans un rapport de Human Rights Watch publié mercredi. A leur approche, les habitants frappaient sur des pots et des casseroles pour alerter le quartier et laisser aux hommes le temps de fuir. [Mais] les forces de sécurité ont compris notre système. Elles ont lancé des grenades lacrymogènes et assourdissantes pour effrayer les habitants et les dissuader de sortir de chez eux. Les forces de sécurité ont alors arrêté les gens au hasard, les embarquant dans de grandes voitures.* »



Les tirs des forces de sécurité et des *chabiha* – nom désignant des groupes civils armés à la solde du régime – ont fait 16 morts à Hama entre lundi et mercredi, selon ce même rapport. Le dernier bilan dressé par le Comité de coordination locale en Syrie, qui regroupe des activistes à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur du pays, fait état de 24 morts, dont Bilal Mohamed, un adolescent âgé de 15 ans. L'agence de presse officielle SANA, qui rapporte que des « *saboteurs ont coupé les routes et dressé des barrières dans de nombreux quartiers d'Hama* », affirme que « *les habitants ont appelé les forces du maintien de l'ordre pour qu'elles interviennent et les protègent des groupes terroristes armés qui semaient la panique* ». Un policier est mort dans des affrontements avec ces « *groupes armés* ».

Hama, réputée rebelle, a rejoint massivement la contestation le 3 juin. Au cours de cette seule journée, la répression avait fait entre 48 et 70 morts, selon les organisations des droits de l'homme. Mais Hama n'a pas été, à la différence d'autres villes contestataires, matée ou occupée par l'armée.

Peut-être le régime a-t-il hésité à livrer un assaut brutal contre Hama, encore hantée par les raids militaires – entre 10 000 et 20 000 morts – de 1982

Les funérailles des « *martyrs* » s'y étaient déroulées sans présence policière et, selon des habitants, les policiers n'y étaient pas revenus. Le gouverneur de la ville – limogé samedi par le président Bachar Al-Assad – y a gagné la réputation de s'être opposé aux violences. Les autorités avaient même promis de rendre les terres confisquées après le soulèvement des Frères musulmans de 1982. Peut-être le régime a-t-il hésité à livrer un assaut brutal contre cette ville, encore hantée par les raids militaires – entre 10 000 et 20 000 morts – qui avaient écrasé ce soulèvement.

Il est également possible que le régime ait voulu expérimenter à Hama une approche moins répressive dans l'espoir de freiner la contestation, ou pour donner des gages de bonne conduite dans un contexte de fortes pressions internationales.

Dans cette hypothèse, l'immense rassemblement sur la place Aassi constitue un échec cinglant. L'intervention des forces de l'ordre qui a suivi en est un autre. « *Nous voyons Hama encerclée par les forces de sécurité, a réagi la porte-parole du département d'Etat américain Victoria Nuland, c'est donc que nous allons dans la mauvaise direction.* »

En Syrie, des manifestations pour Hama ont été organisées à Deir ez-Zor, Lattaquié, Homs, Idlib, Baniyas et dans la banlieue de Damas. Seule Deraa, aux premiers jours de la révolte syrienne, avait suscité un tel élan de solidarité. ■

Cécile Hennion

## La crise syrienne au crible de l'ICG

L'organisation non gouvernementale International Crisis Group (ICG) a publié mercredi 6 juillet le premier de deux rapports consacrés à la crise politique syrienne. L'ICG est l'une des très rares organisations internationales à disposer d'un bureau permanent dans un pays où la presse internationale est interdite d'accès depuis le début des troubles, à la mi-mars.

Dans ce premier rapport, l'ICG se penche sur les racines de la contestation, notant que les soulèvements sont partis de régions appauvries par la politique économique développée au cours de ces dernières années, alors que le régime syrien s'était reposé initialement sur les classes les plus défavorisées.

Toujours selon ICG, la mise en cause par ce même régime d'une « *conspiration étrangère islamiste* », difficile à étayer par des faits, a été contre-productive, de même que la répression indiscriminée qui, au lieu d'éteindre les foyers de contestation, a abouti au résultat opposé, à savoir leur extension dans le pays.

# Les Syriens bravent la terreur d'Etat

Le séjour à Hama des ambassadeurs américain et français a galvanisé la foule, mais provoque une bataille diplomatique



Images extraites de vidéos publiées sur Internet. A Hama, le convoi de l'ambassadeur américain a été salué par des roses. Son séjour aurait offert une protection inédite contre la répression. DR

## Beyrouth Correspondance

Les images ont été diffusées en boucle par plusieurs chaînes libanaises, vendredi 8 juillet au soir. Elles montrent l'ambassadeur américain à Damas Robert Ford en visite à Hama, tandis que des manifestants, autour de son véhicule, scandent : « *le peuple veut la chute du régime* ».

Le déplacement du premier ambassadeur américain à Damas depuis 2005, en poste depuis janvier, a provoqué la colère des autorités syriennes. Pour le ministre de l'intérieur, ce geste est « *contraire aux normes diplomatiques* », une « *invitation à la poursuite de la violence* ». L'ambassadeur de France, Eric Chevaller, était également présent à Hama, jeudi soir et vendredi matin, comme son homologue américain, pour traduire « *l'engagement de la France aux côtés des victimes, de la population civi-*

## L'ambassadeur syrien à Washington convoqué

Washington a convoqué l'ambassadeur syrien aux Etats-Unis pour lui faire part de son « *inquiétude* » après avoir appris que des personnes manifestant aux Etats-Unis contre la répression en Syrie avaient été « *filmées et photographiées* » par des membres de l'ambassade syrienne à Washington, a indiqué, vendredi 8 juillet, le département d'Etat.

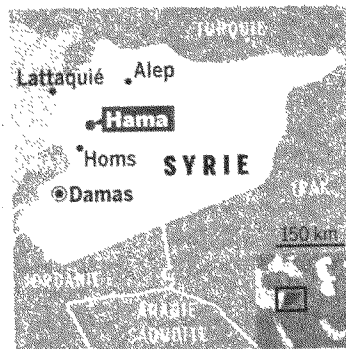
le », selon le Quai d'Orsay.

Le diplomate français, comme M. Ford, s'est rendu dans des hôpitaux de la ville. Sa visite n'avait pas suscité de réactions officielles comparables, vendredi. Elle n'était pas mentionnée par l'agence de presse officielle SANA, qui a fait état de protestations à travers le pays, le 8 juillet, pour dénoncer la présence de l'ambassadeur américain à Hama et les « *ingérences étrangères dans les affaires intérieures de la Syrie* ».

Hama, quatrième ville du pays, située à 210 kilomètres au nord de Damas, a connu une mobilisation sans précédent contre le régime le 1<sup>er</sup> juillet. Elle a ensuite été la cible d'une répression meurtrière, les 4 et 5 juillet. Les forces de sécurité ont tenté de reprendre le contrôle de certains quartiers, en ouvrant le feu et en procédant à des arrestations, indique Nadim Houry, responsable du bureau de l'organisation Human Rights Watch à Beyrouth. Des barrages militaires continuaient d'encercler la ville, vendredi, et l'armée était déployée dans les villages voisins.

En se rendant à Hama, Robert Ford a témoigné du « *soutien des Etats-Unis aux manifestations pacifiques* », a indiqué M. Harder, attaché de presse auprès de l'ambassade à Damas. Il a également envoyé un message : « *Washington demande l'ouverture du pays à des observateurs internationaux* », précise le porte-parole américain.

## « Protestataires pacifiques »



Qu'a vu l'ambassadeur Ford à Hama ? « *Des protestataires pacifiques. Aucune arme parmi eux. Des barricades tenues par des adolescents* », détaille M. Harder. Ces barricades ont été érigées après le 1<sup>er</sup> juillet, pour tenter de prévenir l'arrivée de troupes, alors qu'un mouvement de chars était signalé aux abords de la ville. C'est contre ces comités populaires que les forces de sécurité auraient tiré, selon les recoupements effectués par Human Rights Watch, faisant au moins 16 morts.

L'armée n'était pas présente sur la place Al-Aassi, lieu principal de regroupement, vendredi, à Hama, vers lequel ont convergé des dizaines de milliers de Syriens – jusqu'à 150 000 selon un militant. Ce chiffre reflète une mobilisation massive, dans une ville de quelque 800 000 habitants, même si elle est sans doute inférieure à celle de la semaine précédente. Dans les rues, les manifestants ont porté un immense drapeau syrien, pied de nez au régime. Les rassemblements

de soutien au pouvoir recourent régulièrement à ce symbole, et Damas dénonce derrière la contestation un « *complot étranger* ».

Si l'ambiance était effervescente à Hama, la force a de nouveau été employée ailleurs dans le pays contre ce nouveau vendredi de manifestation, le 17<sup>e</sup> depuis le début de la révolte, le 15 mars. Tard dans la soirée, les armes à feu ont crépité dans la ville de Homs (50 km au sud de Hama) et ses alentours, selon les Comités de coordination locale. Ce réseau de militants, à la pointe de la contestation contre le régime de Bachar Al-Assad, a fait également état d'actes de répression à Damas et ses banlieues, ainsi que dans la province d'Idlib (nord-ouest). Les violences ont fait au moins 13 morts, selon des militants des droits de l'homme. Les autorités ont déploré le décès de cinq « *martyrs, dont des agents de sécurité, tués par des francs-tireurs* » dans les mêmes régions.

Partout dans le pays, les siogans ont rendu hommage à Hama, déjà durement réprimée début juin, et ville martyre en 1982. Hafez Al-Assad avait maté une insurrection armée des Frères musulmans, faisant entre 10 000 et 20 000 morts. Jusque dans les régions à majorité kurde du nord-est du pays, très mobilisées, les manifestants, pour lesquels la ville est devenue, en 2011, un symbole de la résistance, ont scandé « *Halte au siège de Hama* », rapporte un opposant. « *Non au dialogue !* », ont-ils encore lancé.

Une table ronde, annoncée par le

président Bachar Al-Assad, devait s'ouvrir dimanche 11 juillet. De nombreux opposants, y compris de l'intérieur, ont rejeté l'initiative. « Le peuple syrien tout entier a dit oui pour le dialogue. (...) Les réformes se poursuivront et la Syrie va

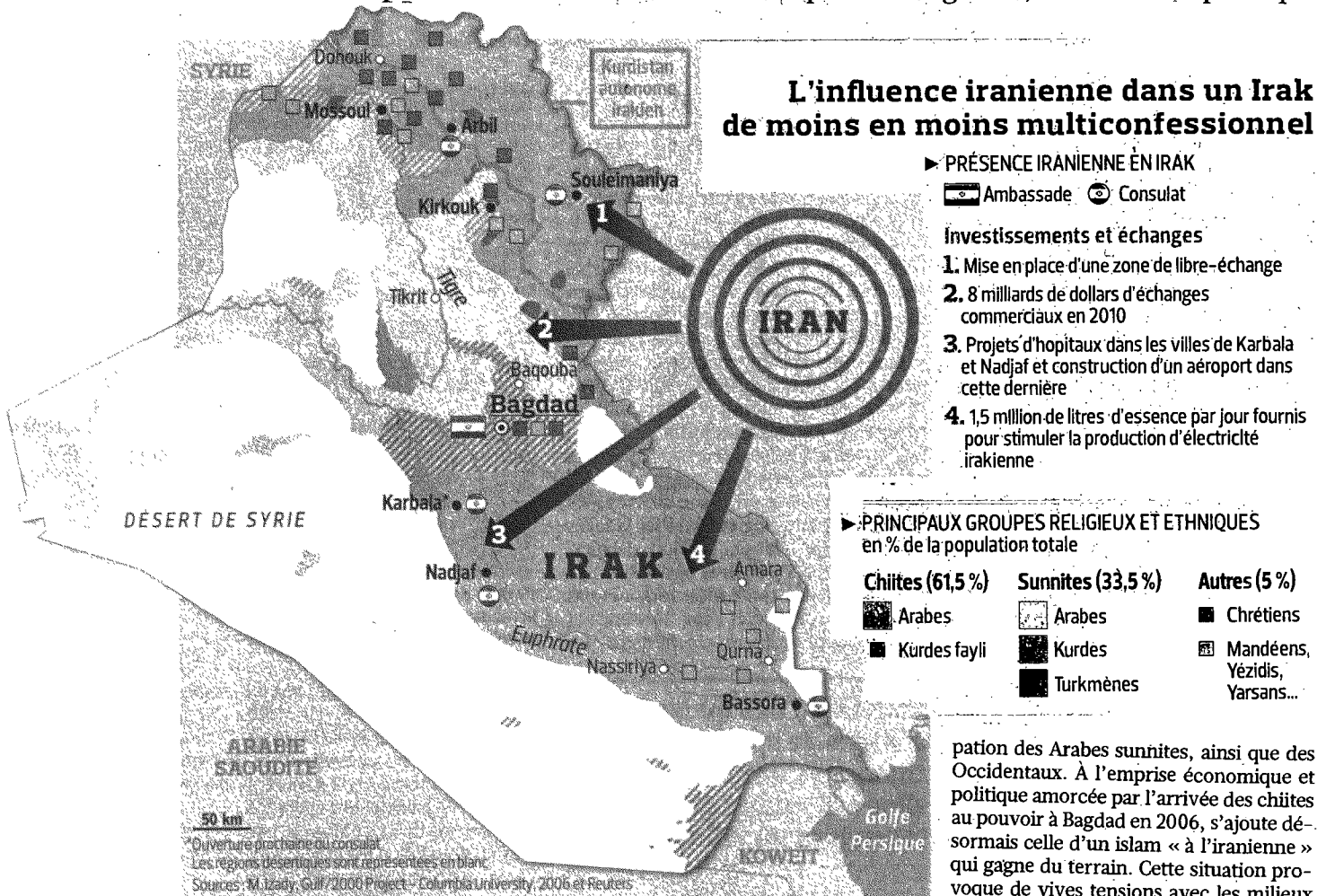
reprendre son rôle régional et international », voulait croire pour sa part Bouthaina Chaabane, conseillère du président, lors d'un entretien accordé, vendredi, à la chaîne britannique BBC. ■

Laure Stephan

LE FIGARO lundi 11 juillet 2011

# L'Iran étend son emprise sur l'Irak

Le jeu d'influence de Téhéran s'exerce ouvertement dans les sphères religieuse, culturelle et politique.



FATMA KIZILBOGA  
 BAGDAD

**MOYEN-ORIENT** À quelques mois de la fin du retrait des troupes américaines d'Irak, le bilan de l'opération « Iraqi Freedom », lancée en 2003 par l'Administration Bush, est loin de correspondre aux aspirations de Washington. « À des années-lumière, même ! », s'exclame le représentant d'un pays allié des États-Unis en poste à Bagdad. Le phénomène qui complique singulièrement l'équation des États-Unis était sous-jacent depuis plusieurs années ; il est aujourd'hui patent et s'expose à la vue de tous : le rôle joué par l'Iran voisin inquiète la

communauté internationale et un nombre croissant d'Irakiens.

« Vous ne pouvez pas imaginer les dégâts causés par Téhéran dans ce pays », soupire ce diplomate occidental. Véritable bête noire de l'ancien président irakien Saddam Hussein, exécuté par pendaison en 2006, le puissant voisin perse jouit aujourd'hui en Irak d'une aura qui est en train de devenir la principale préoccu-

**Certains chiïtes d'Irak « se sentiront plus proches d'un Iranien chiïte que d'un Irakien sunnite »**

UN DÉPUTÉ SUNNITE

pation des Arabes sunnites, ainsi que des Occidentaux. À l'emprise économique et politique amorcée par l'arrivée des chiïtes au pouvoir à Bagdad en 2006, s'ajoute désormais celle d'un islam « à l'iranienne » qui gagne du terrain. Cette situation provoque de vives tensions avec les milieux laïcs et les minorités religieuses irakiennes, qui accusent le gouvernement d'ouvrir la voie à la charia, la loi islamique.

Terre sainte du chiïsme par excellence, l'Irak suscite toutes les convoitises de la République islamique iranienne. Les investissements visant l'augmentation du tourisme religieux se multiplient :

construction d'un aéroport à Nadjaf, projets d'hôpitaux à Karbala et Nadjaf, accords bilatéraux facilitant le voyage des pèlerins, support logistique et médical pendant les périodes de pèlerinage... « Les chiïtes d'Irak ne disposaient pas d'une véritable liberté de culte sous l'ancien régime. Aujourd'hui, l'arrivée massive des pèlerins iraniens a eu pour effet de renforcer ce sentiment de liberté et d'appartenance. Le communautarisme religieux prime sur le sentiment nationaliste, analyse un député sunnite qui s'exprime sous

couvert d'anonymat. Par conséquent ces personnes se sentiront plus proches d'un Iranien chiïte que d'un Irakien sunnite », résume-t-il.

Une influence qui ne semble épargner aucun domaine, particulièrement celui de la culture. « Les pays voisins de l'Irak sont naturellement plus présents à Bagdad, mais ensuite, à chacun sa stratégie. La Turquie par exemple investit davantage dans le commerce et l'énergie, car l'Irak représente pour elle un marché ju-teux, alors que l'Iran préfère miser sur l'éducation », explique Mudhafer Ubaid al-Rubai, chargé des relations internationales au ministère de la Culture à Bagdad. Dans un Irak en pleine reconstruc-

tion, où l'accès aux services publics de base comme l'eau et l'électricité peine toujours à être rétabli, Téhéran anticipe en promettant la rénovation de tous les cinémas et théâtres de Bagdad. En contrepartie, un accord signé entre les autorités irakiennes et le ministère de la Culture et de l'Orientalisme iranien prévoit l'organisation annuelle d'un festival de films consacrés à l'imam Hussein, petit-fils du prophète Mahomet, considéré comme l'une des principales figures du chiïsme.

### Concessions forcées

La coopération entre les deux gouvernements chiïtes inquiète également les mi-

lieux de l'enseignement.

En décembre, la proposition de l'ancien ministre de l'éducation, Khudhair al-Khuzay avait suscité l'indignation des défenseurs de la laïcité. Celui-ci prévoyait notamment la suppression de la mixité et des cours de musique dans les universités, considérés comme contraires aux valeurs de l'islam. Propositions immédiatement retirées face à la pression d'une partie de la rue. Pour Adel al-Kayar, professeur en sciences politiques, « le premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki est aujourd'hui obligé de négocier et de faire des concessions avec des partis politiques chiïtes proches de l'Iran. C'est un véritable numéro d'équilibriste ». ■



### Le Monde

Mardi 12 juillet 2011

## Tant que le pétrole restera cher, le régime iranien n'évoluera guère

Malheureusement, les perspectives économiques de l'Iran ne dépendent pas du sort de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. La santé financière du pays a été gravement fragilisée par les six années au pouvoir de ce président populiste, connu pour ses discours virulents et ses prises de position provocatrices sur le programme nucléaire du pays. Pendant ce temps, les avantages qu'auraient pu apporter les cours élevés du pétrole ont été perdus. Mais la politique économique du

pays a peu de chances de changer, même si la lutte pour le pouvoir se solde par le rejet de ce président qui divise l'opinion, lors des élections à venir en 2012 et 2013.

Ces trois dernières années, l'économie iranienne a affiché un taux de croissance inférieur de moitié au taux moyen des exportateurs de pétrole de la région, selon les données du Fonds monétaire international (FMI). Les sanctions internationales pèsent lourd, même si elles sont en partie atténuées par la cherté du pétrole. L'inflation en Iran a aussi dépassé celle de ses voisins riches en ressources. Les réserves étrangères restent abondantes et ont augmenté d'environ 40 % ces cinq dernières années. Celles de l'Arabie saoudite ont presque

doublé durant la même période.

Ahmadinejad a dû se plier à la réalité. Il a commencé à remettre à plat le coûteux système de subventions en Iran. L'augmentation des prix des produits alimentaires, du carburant et des transports en décembre engendra plus de 60 milliards de dollars (42,3 milliards d'euros) d'économies, soit 15 % du produit intérieur brut (PIB), selon le FMI. Cette réforme ambitieuse devrait permettre à l'Iran de respirer un peu mieux et pourrait être un modèle. Mais il est encore trop tôt pour le savoir et l'initiative a attisé les risques d'inflation – or celle-ci est déjà supérieure à 10 %, entraînant une dépréciation de la monnaie.

Malgré la forte personnalité d'Ahmadinejad, il y a peu de chances que son éventuel départ mette fin à la politique économique associée à son nom. La corruption pourrait quelque peu diminuer dans un climat de plus grande rigueur.

Selon l'indice de perception de la corruption de Transparency International, le pays s'est classé, en 2010, en 146<sup>e</sup> position, une détérioration par rapport à la 105<sup>e</sup> position en 2006, date de l'arrivée au pouvoir du président. Mais ses discours contre l'Occident et son soutien au programme nucléaire sont partagés par le Guide suprême du pays, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, qui conserve un soutien populaire.

L'économie n'a jamais été la priorité de la république islamique, qui veille essentiellement à ce que les recettes du pétrole l'aident à atteindre ses objectifs idéologiques. Tant que Khamenei se maintient à la tête du régime et que les cours du pétrole restent élevés, il ne faut guère s'attendre à des changements. ■

Una Galani

(Traduction d'Isabelle Rosselin)

### L'économie n'a jamais été la priorité de la République islamique



## Soldats turcs tués: les rebelles kurdes paieront "un prix élevé" (Erdogan)

ISTANBUL, 15 juillet 2011 (AFP)

L'ARMÉE TURQUE va faire payer "un prix élevé" aux rebelles séparatistes kurdes après la mort de treize soldats turcs dans une embuscade, averti vendredi le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

"Nos forces de sécurité sont puissantes (...) et je crois qu'elles leur feront payer un prix élevé", a déclaré M. Erdogan à la presse à Istanbul, parlant des rebelles qui ont lancé jeudi une attaque contre des soldats turcs dans la province de Diyarbakir, dans le sud-est à majorité kurde de la Turquie.

Treize soldats ont été tués et sept blessés, a annoncé l'armée, qui a indiqué que sept rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) avaient été tués. Les pertes enregistrées par l'armée sont les plus lourdes qu'elle

ait subies depuis octobre 2008.

M. Erdogan s'en est pris au principal parti légal kurde de Turquie, le Parti pour la paix et la démocratie (BDP), proche du PKK, lui-même considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne.

"Je dis ouvertement à l'organisation terroriste et à ses extensions qu'ils ne doivent s'attendre à aucune bonne volonté de notre part devant des actions aussi malintentionnées", a déclaré le Premier ministre.

"S'ils veulent la paix, il y a une chose à faire : l'organisation terroriste doit déposer les armes", a poursuivi M. Erdogan. "S'ils refusent de déposer les armes, les opérations militaires ne cesseront pas et le processus (de réconciliation) n'avancera pas", a-t-il prévenu.

## BDP vows to support Hatip Dicle until the end

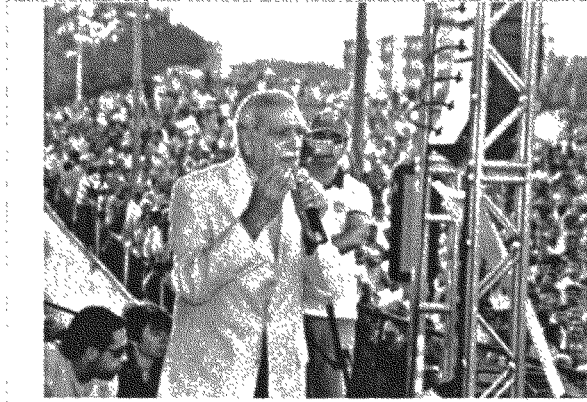
ISTANBUL - Hurriyet Daily News

The Pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP, has reiterated vows to continue its parliamentary boycott until one of their colleagues is released from prison and allowed to join Parliament.

Speaking about the pro-Kurdish candidate Hatip Dicle whose deputys-hip was stripped by the High Election Board, Either [elected pro-Kurdish candidate Hatip Dicle] will come to us, or we will go to him; we promise we will be with Hatip Dicle all the way to the end, said Ahmet Türk, the leader of the Democratic Society Congress, or DTK, an umbrella organization of Kurdish groups, during a demonstration Sunday in Diyarbakir.

Türk, who was also elected in last month's election, addressed the crowd in Kurdish during the demonstration, which also attracted 10 other deputies.

The DTK spokesman said they had



*Türk, who was also elected in last month's election, addressed the crowd in Kurdish during the demonstration, which also attracted 10 other deputies.*

been struggling for freedom for many years. This fight is a fight of our people. This is a struggle of our people. So no matter what you say, the Kurdish people will continue with their struggle in order to make their demands real, and you will see the power of these people.

Türk also said Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan had been threatening them.

Mr. Erdogan, these people have

seen the cruelty of the Sept. 12 [1980 coup], they have witnessed tortures and unsolved murders. So your threats would only give us more strength, Türk said.

BDP will organize its first group meeting in Diyarbakır on Tuesday. Former BDP co-leader Selahattin Demirtas is to address the BDP deputies as the party's group leader.

REUTERS

## PKK leader, Turkey in peace council deal - report

ISTANBUL - July 8, 2011 - By Daren Butler | Reuters -

**A JAILED Kurdish militant leader has agreed with Turkish officials to set up a "peace council" aimed at ending a separatist conflict that has lasted 27 years, a news agency close to the rebels reported on Friday.**

Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan said through his lawyers that the "peace council" must be established within the next month, Firat news agency said. It was unclear what form the council might take.

The proposal came a month after Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party won a parliamentary election and two months after Ocalan threatened "war" unless the government entered talks about the PKK insurgency.

"The Peace Council will not be an official state organ or just a civil body," Ocalan was quoted as telling his lawyers when he met them on his prison island south of Istanbul on Wednesday.

"The Peace Council will work for a solution and to achieve peace." More than 40,000 people, most of them militants, have been killed in the conflict since the PKK took up arms against the state in 1984.

The intensity of the fighting has eased since Ocalan was captured in 1999 but there are still regular clashes in the mainly Kurdish southeast of Turkey.

The government has enacted reforms to meet Kurdish mino-

rity demands for cultural and political change. Erdogan said in a speech presenting his new government's programme to parliament on Friday that it would maintain the reform process.

"We have enacted historical reforms in a wide area, from lifting emergency rule, to the free use and learning of Kurdish," Erdogan said.

"We will continue these reforms with determination to strengthen our brotherhood," said Erdogan, who revealed earlier this year that the state was holding talks with Ocalan.

### KURDISH DEPUTIES

Erdogan's third term in office has been marred by a parliamentary boycott by Kurdish deputies and the main opposition party, who have refused to take their oaths in a protests against bans on their elected candidates.

Thirty-six candidates backed by the Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) won seats in the election, but election authorities barred one of them from taking office due to a previous conviction for spreading separatist propaganda.

It stands to lose five more seats after courts ruled against releasing five candidates, detained on charges of having ties to the PKK, preventing them from taking their place in parliament.

The PKK ended a 6-month cease-fire in February, moving to what it calls an "active defence" stance, whereby its fighters defend themselves if under attack.



## "Kurds have right to self-determination and their independent state," Kurdistan Speaker says

**BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq:** North Iraq's Kurdistan Parliament's Speaker, Kamal Karkuki, has said on Tuesday that "Iraqi Kurds reserve the right for self-determination and to have their own independent state."

"We have the right to practice our right for self-determination on our land, and to have our independent state, similar to others, being a normal constitutional right; and as long as Iraq keeps its constitutional principles, we shall remain to be part of Iraq, which we have chosen to become part of its Federal State," Karkuki said in an interview with al-Sharq al-Awsat Newspaper.

He pointed out that "the implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution had been delayed for a long time, despite fact that Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, had committed himself to implement it."

"Claims that the said Article has died, had been a great and dreadful political mistake, because it is a constitutional article that won't die unless by the death of the constitution itself," Karkuki said.

Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution points out to the naturalization of conditions in the areas, described as "areas under-conflict," in a clear sign for the conflict about their belonging to Kurdistan Region, including Kirkuk Province and parts of Ninewa and DIALA Provinces.

The Constitution had defined a time limit to implement the said Article, through measures that ended on December 31, 2007, leaving residents of those areas with



the freedom of self-determination, whether to stay as an independent administrative area, or their merger with Iraq's Kurdistan Region, through a general referendum.

But certain obstacles had caused the postponement of implementing some of the basic contents of the said Article, for reasons Kurdish politicians consider as "political," whilst Baghdad says that the delay was not intentional, at a time when a special ministerial committee had implemented some of its contents, such as the compensation of some of the harmed residents, while the most important paragraph, related to self-determination in those areas was not implemented.

## Kurdistan Parliament Speaker's statement for self-determination unrealistic, al-Iraqiya says

**BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq:** The Spokeswoman for al-Iraqiya Coalition, led by Iyad Allalwi, has described recent statements by Iraqi Kurdistan's Parliament Speaker, Kamal Karkuki, about the right of Kurds for self-determination as having been "unrealistic and mere media statements."

"Karkuki's statements were mere media, and not realistic statements," Maysoun Damaloujy told Aswat al-Iraq news Agency, adding that "Kurds are experiencing their right for self-determination in Iraq and they have chosen to be part of the State of Iraq since 2003," adding that "self-determination does not mean secession, according to UN resolutions."

As regards to Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, related to the areas in conflict between Arbil and Baghdad, Damaloujy said: "We are not against the restoration of the right for its owners, whether they were Kurds, Arabs, Turkomen or Christians; and so long as the matter is related to restore the right for its owner, we are not against that."

Karkuki has told al-Sharq al-Awsat (Middle East) Newspaper on Tuesday that "the Kurds have the right for self-determination on their land, and to have their inde-



pendent state, similar to others, being a normal democratic right."

"So long as Iraq keeps its constitutional principles and all parties are keen to be committed towards those principles, we shall keep our status, being part of Iraq, which we had chosen to remain with the limits of its Federal State," Karkuki said.

# Quel Moyen-Orient émergerait après une éventuelle chute du régime syrien ? Les bouleversements futurs ménageront sans doute des surprises

## Quand le régime syrien tombera

**L**a révolte syrienne a déjà plus de cent jours derrière elle, des centaines de morts, des milliers d'arrestations, des dizaines de milliers de réfugiés à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur du pays. Pourtant, le régime a tout essayé pour venir à bout des protestations. Il a même tenté au début de suivre le modèle algérien par la recherche d'un équilibre entre promesses de réformes et coercition, mais la réaction démesurée des forces de sécurité contre les civils a poussé une bonne partie du pays dans les rangs des protestataires irréductibles. Le régime a renoué avec ses propres pratiques en vigueur depuis quarante ans.

A considérer cette situation, plusieurs scénarios se présentent. Dans une première hypothèse, qui est déjà dépassée, le régime syrien pensait parvenir à domestiquer



**Hosham Dawod**

**Anthropologue au CNRS**

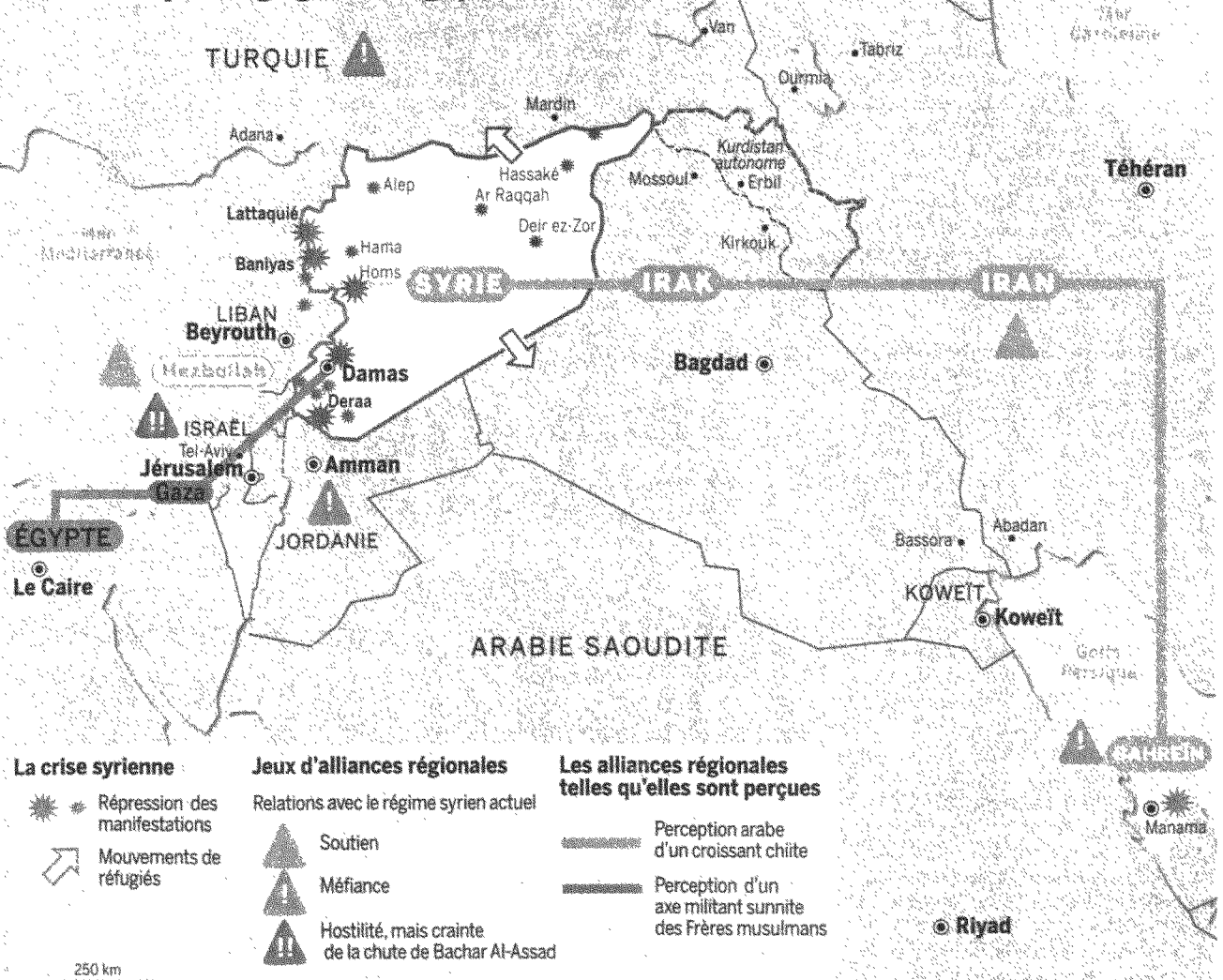
Responsable du programme Proche et Moyen-Orient à la Maison des sciences de l'homme. Son terrain principal : l'Irak et l'Arabie saoudite. Il a publié, dirigé et contribué à plusieurs études touchant aux questions d'ethnicité, de tribalisme et de parenté politique, dont « Tribus et armée américaine en Irak » (Moscou, 2009). Il est responsable de l'antenne de l'Institut français du Proche-Orient en Irak. (PHOTO DR)

et à terroriser les manifestants, à l'image de ce qui s'est passé en Iran après les élections de 2009. Le remède sécuritaire semble ne pas porter ses fruits, bien au contraire. Un deuxième scénario, qui a fait surface sans s'imposer, était que le président Bachar Al-Assad entreprenne des réformes touchant à la liberté de la presse, aux

droits civils, à la pluralité politique, à l'organisation d'élections libres et la lutte contre la corruption.

Un troisième scénario, dont on s'éloigne aussi, serait qu'une dissension s'opère au sein du régime, à l'instar de ce qui s'est passé en Egypte et en Tunisie lorsque l'armée a pris l'initiative d'isoler les éléments

### Vers un rééquilibrage géostratégique



de la classe politique les plus corrompus.

L'idéal selon de nombreuses chancelleries serait – quatrième scénario – qu'une partie de l'élite alaouïte et sunnite parviennent à un accord écartant la famille Assad du pouvoir, qui conduirait à un partage un peu plus équitable entre les communautés. Le cinquième scénario qui est à l'œuvre, et qui est aussi le plus périlleux, consiste en l'intensification du cycle protestation/répression conduisant à une polarisation de la société sur une base ethnique et confessionnelle ouvrant la porte à une guerre civile et à une chute du régime. Cette dernière éventualité ne constitue hélas pas une hypothèse d'école ni une nouveauté après les cas libanais et irakien.

Le Proche-Orient est très secoué par la crise syrienne, à commencer par le Liban où un gouvernement soutenu par le Hezbollah a été imposé à la veille de la mise en cause par une enquête judiciaire internationale de plusieurs de ses dirigeants soupçonnés d'être impliqués dans l'assassinat de l'ex-premier ministre Rafic Hariri. Par ailleurs, les relations entre la Syrie et la Turquie se sont détériorées.

Après avoir employé la Syrie comme son principal portail vers le monde arabe, Ankara prend ses distances avec Damas, la sommant d'entreprendre des réformes, et non des moindres puisqu'elle demande la dissolution de certains appareils de sécurité, la libération des prisonniers politiques et la fin du régime de parti unique. Pour la Syrie, son grand voisin du Nord, qu'elle accuse de néo-ottomanisme et d'arrogance, tente de tisser un front régional des Frères musulmans allant de l'Égypte à la Syrie, en passant par le Hamas palestinien.

Quant aux pays du Golfe, qui se sont toujours méfiés de la Syrie et de son accointance avec l'Iran, ils considèrent que la Syrie constitue un rempart contre la propagation des révoltes arabes vers le Machrek. Le défi pour les pays du Golfe, et surtout pour l'Arabie saoudite, est le suivant : est-il possible que les révoltes arabes et leur portée politico-morale s'arrêtent aux portes du royaume des Saoud, là où des questions de citoyenneté, de libertés politiques et d'égalité entre les sexes et entre diverses communautés confessionnelles se posent avec acuité. Le conflit à Bahreïn, avec sa propre spécificité, fait partie de cette lame de fond qui secoue la région. La situation insurrectionnelle syrienne a aussi précipité la politique dans les territoires palestiniens au point que s'est créée une tentative de rapprochement entre le Hamas et le Fatah sans le consentement de Damas. Pis, le Hamas découvre dans l'Égypte post-Moubarak une amitié nouvelle.

Quant à la Jordanie, elle se trouve tiraillée entre sa traditionnelle hostilité au parti Baas et sa crainte d'une mainmise des Frères musulmans sur l'encombrant voisin syrien. Le roi Abdallah de Jordanie n'ignore pas que des continuités existent entre certaines populations du sud de la Syrie et celles du nord de son pays (à Deraa), sans oublier une affinité régionale entre les Frères musulmans. Il évoquait en 2003 la crainte d'une hypothèse de la for-

mation d'un croissant chiite joignant l'Iran, l'Irak, la Syrie et le Liban. Mais ce pourrait être aussi l'avènement d'un autre croissant recueillant une bénédiction raisonnée de la Turquie, celui des sunnites militants, allant de l'Égypte jusqu'en Syrie, en passant par les territoires occupés. L'Orient arabo-musulman se fait et se défait dans l'imaginaire de certains politiques locaux en adoptant toujours la forme du croissant !

L'une des conséquences inattendues de la révolte syrienne en cours a été de pousser à leur paroxysme l'hésitation israélienne et la gêne américaine. Tel-Aviv sait bien que par-delà la phraséologie révolutionnaire baasiste tout était au plus calme sur son front nord-est syrien. Les révoltes arabes font aussi éclater au grand jour la contradiction d'Israël : il apparaît que la chute des régimes autoritaires arabes ne favorise pas la pérennité de sa suprématie dans la région.

Pour ce qui est de l'Irak, il peut paraître paradoxal que celui-ci puisse se sentir inquiet d'une chute éventuelle du régime syrien. Bagdad et Damas n'ont jamais été en bons termes depuis près d'une cinquantaine d'années, autant à l'époque des frères ennemis du Baas à la tête des deux pays qu'à l'arrivée au pouvoir à Bagdad de l'ancienne opposition irakienne, naguère exilée en masse en Syrie, Nouri Al-Maliki y compris.

D'où vient cette inquiétude ? Est-elle partagée par tous les Irakiens ? Depuis que l'Irak a connu une guerre civile entre 2006 et 2007, un exode massif a eu lieu vers les pays voisins, particulièrement la Syrie où l'on compte un peu plus d'un million de réfugiés irakiens de toutes confessions. Une détérioration de la situation, à la libyenne ou à la yéménite, en Syrie chasserait une grande partie de ces populations réfugiées vers leur pays d'origine au moment où ce dernier connaît une dégradation inquiétante de sa situation sécuritaire. Même si le régime syrien sous domination alaouïte a soutenu et continue de soutenir les insurgés arabes sunnites et les anciens baasistes d'Irak, le gouvernement irakien actuel, à majorité chiite, prévoit que l'alternative au pouvoir à Damas ne pourrait qu'être pire : une sorte de radicalisme sunnite soutenu, selon Bagdad, par l'Arabie saoudite et les pays du Golfe contre les chiites de la région.

Ce faisant les chiites irakiens, malgré leurs différends avec Téhéran, ne souhaitent pas voir une mainmise sunnite sur la Syrie et le Liban. La chute des Alaouïtes à Damas signifierait entre autres pour Bagdad l'affaiblissement inévitable du Hezbollah libanais, et partant, le recul du chiisme dans la région. Rappelons que les chiites irakiens, dans leur diversité, entretiennent de bons rapports avec ce pays et beaucoup y investissent de manière officielle ou officieuse.

Le gouvernement de Nouri Al-Maliki essaie depuis 2009 de créer une relation apaisée qui soit avantageuse économiquement pour les deux États. Divers projets

ont été envisagés, notamment dans les domaines pétrolier et gazier. Une chute brutale du régime de Bachar Al-Assad pourrait pousser la Syrie vers une guerre civile à l'irakienne où les Alaouïtes subiraient le sort des sunnites en Irak après 2003. Cela créerait un chaos propice aux groupes radicaux qui pourraient y trouver

## L'Orient arabo-musulman se fait et se défait dans l'imaginaire de certains politiques locaux en adoptant toujours la forme du croissant !

refuge et bâtir des passerelles salafistes qui iraient de Tripoli à Beyrouth, à la Syrie et jusqu'au triangle sunnite en Irak. Cet hypothétique scénario inquiète déjà les Américains, bien qu'ils n'aient aucune sympathie envers Bachar Al-Assad.

Qu'en est-il du facteur iranien ? Même si les chiites irakiens demeurent attachés à leur pays, cela n'empêche pas quelques-unes de ses fractions d'être réceptives au discours iranien mêlant anti-sunnisme, antinationalisme arabe, anti-monarchies du Golfe et anti-occidentalisme. Ainsi, pour des raisons propres à la sociologie politique irakienne, la majorité des forces du pays craint l'effondrement du régime syrien : les sunnites et les baasistes perdraient un allié pragmatique ; et les chiites, dans une Syrie intégrée à une alliance régionale sunnite, pourraient être confrontés à un régime qui leur serait hostile.

Seuls peut-être les Kurdes d'Irak et plus encore le parti de Massoud Barzani pourraient se sentir soulagés par le départ du régime de Damas. Rappelons qu'environ 1,5 à 2 millions de Kurdes vivent en Syrie dans une situation politique et administrative précaire. Récemment, l'État syrien, sous la pression de la rue, a accordé la nationalité à 300 000 Kurdes qui n'avaient aucun document d'identité.

En résumé, ce n'est pas la première fois dans l'histoire de la région qu'un peuple presse son gouvernement vers plus d'ouverture. La possibilité existait pour le pouvoir syrien, comme pour d'autres dans le monde arabe, d'opter pour un assouplissement, et une transition graduelle. Il y a quelques mois encore le pouvoir syrien prétendait être le cœur de la nation arabe. Aujourd'hui, la rue rappelle à son tour que la Syrie est au centre du monde arabe, mais pour réclamer plus de démocratie, de liberté et de dignité humaine. ■

# At home in Turkey: staying with villagers in Kurdistan

**A one-night homestay in Yuvacali in Turkish Kurdistan is a first-hand look at village life in an ancient land.**

Carol Pucci

Before most people are awake, Pero Salva has baked a day's worth of bread over an open fire, milked the cows, fed the chickens and used a broom made from twigs to sweep the dirt walkway in front of the house she shares with her husband and three children.

As the roosters crow and a muezzin sings the Muslim call to prayer, we take our places for breakfast on the floor around a table fashioned from a sheet of vinyl spread over a woven rug. Men on one side. Women on the other.

Everything before us — tomatoes and cucumbers, cheese, yogurt, honey and sheets of warm bread — was made or grown by the family, our hosts for a one-night homestay in the village of Yuvacali in Turkish Kurdistan.

Situated in the middle of Mesopotamia — the flat, fertile plains between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that were a cradle of civilization — the towns and villages of southeast Turkey trace their history around 10,000 B.C. when bands of hunter-gatherers settled into communities and became the first farmers.

Originally nomadic sheep and goat herders, the Kurdish have their own language and cultural traditions, much of which was suppressed after Turkey became a republic in 1923 and the government pushed to unite ethnic groups under a national identity

Migration to the cities was encouraged, leaving rural outposts such as Yuvacali, first settled more than 6,000 years ago, alone and on their own, often without basic services such as running water and electricity.

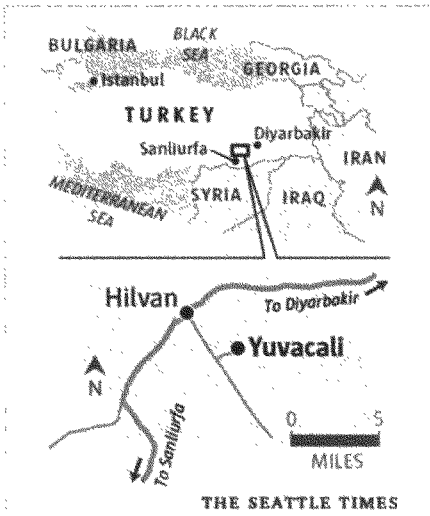
It wasn't that long ago that "Children would go to school not knowing Turkish, and not knowing how to hold a pencil," says Bridget Purcell, an American anthropologist who volunteers as a translator for homestay guests.

Traipsing about on a farm, learning how to milk sheep and bake bread while wearing an ankle-length skirt, wasn't part of the itinerary when my husband, Tom, and I began planning a trip to Turkey. But then I found Nomad Tours Turkey on the Web while doing some research, and emailed the founder, Alison Tanik, a British



CAROL PUCCI / SPECIAL TO THE SEATTLE TIMES

**Kurds were originally Nomadic shepherders. Most families in Yuvacali in southeastern Turkey keep a flock of sheep and use the milk to make yogurt and cheese**



Tours was born.

Painted bright lavender, a favorite color in this part of Turkey, the Salva family's one-story, concrete house has a small kitchen and two rooms — one used by the family for living, watching TV, eating and sleeping, and the other for guests. The toilet is an outhouse and running water comes from a tap connected to tank on the roof filled with water pumped from a well.

Sitting in the garden, sipping tea, we joined six other guests traveling together on an Intrepid tour, and talked with Pero, 45, and her husband, Halil, 46.

Hosting and cooking for groups of strangers is hard work, Pero said, but it means she no longer has to pick cotton and gets to work indoors, a relief in summer when temperatures can top 100.

She greeted us wearing a wispy lavender head scarf, a long polka-dot skirt and blue sweater set. Halil wore traditional Kurdish-style trousers, baggy in the crotch and tight around the legs.

Villagers aren't particularly religious, but they are conservative. The women in our group followed Nomad's instructions to wear long skirts, considered more modest than pants for sitting on the floor or milking animals.

Like most of the married villagers, Pero and Halil are first cousins. They support themselves and their children, Faruk, 18; Fatih, 17; and Aylin, 10, by growing barley, wheat, lentils, cotton and peppers and raising sheep, chickens and cows. Before

woman married to a Kurdish man.

She and her husband, Omer, had moved from Istanbul to his home in Yuvacali when they began looking for a project that might help improve the lives of the 700 or so residents, mainly subsistence farmers with an average income of \$1 per day.

Nearly everyone intermarries. (Villagers share just three last names). Disputes are settled by tribal elders. The rate of birth defects is high. There's no sewage system. No garbage collection. No high school. No Internet. Only 50 percent of villagers read or write.

Alison had launched a project for the local women to sell their handicrafts to a boutique in Istanbul, when an acquaintance from Australia's Intrepid Tours asked about the possibility of homestays in the area. She suggested Yuvacali, and Nomad

the homestays, their only outside income came from the sale of the cheese and yogurt that Pero makes in a hut where she also does the cooking over a wood fire.

For lunch we ate her homemade lentil soup and roasted vegetables and talked about the differences in our home lives. The nearest big city is 35 miles away, and like most women, Pero rarely leaves the village. Men do the shopping and most other jobs that require going to town.

Walking around the village, past flat-roofed houses made of mud bricks, we saw women seated on the ground sewing cotton mattresses by hand. Others were herding sheep in from the pastures. Only women are allowed to bake bread and milk the animals, so the men in our group could only watch as we helped Pero milk, and joined her at a low table to roll out big circles of dough.

Dinner was "Turkish pizza," sheets of the thin, round bread topped with minced meat and herbs. Afterward, the family converted the dining room into a bedroom by blanketing the floor with floral-covered cotton mattresses filed with sheep's wool. We snuggled under the covers slumber-party style, women



CAROL PUCCI / THE SEATTLE TIMES  
Homestay guests eat dinner at a "table" fashioned from a piece of vinyl spread over a woven rug.

in one room, men in an another, while the family slept in an annex they built for themselves off the main house.

#### Funding a future

The Yuvacali homestay project is small.

So far, there are just two host families, but the homestays have done much to bring a bit of the outside world to Yuvacali.

Nomad Tours has used the income to buy supplies for the school (the government supplies only a building and a teacher), and launch a dental-hygiene project, with toothbrushes and toothpaste donated by homestay guests.

Neither Pero nor Halil read or write, but their children go to school and are learning English. All the money they earn from the homestays goes to pay for their education.

The result: Faruk plans to enter college next year, and Fatih, who walks three miles each way to high school, will forgo his usual job at a beach resort this summer to stay home and hone his English skills.

He is preparing for what everyone hopes will be his new career: official village homestay host.

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the guardian JULY 12, 2011

## Iraqi Kurds accuse Iran of illegal border crossing

YAHYA BARZANJI / (AP)

**SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq** — Lawmakers from Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region on Tuesday accused Iran of building on Iraqi soil — the latest in an escalating border spat

The three-province Kurdish region in northern Iraq borders Iran. On Monday, a senior Iranian military official accused the president of the Kurdish region, Massoud Barzani, of providing bases to an Iranian Kurdish opposition group, PEJAK. Iran reserves the right to attack those bases on Iraqi soil, the official was quoted as saying.

On Tuesday, 10 lawmakers from the Iraqi Kurdish parliament visited the village of Choman, about 10 kilometers from the Iranian border. They said they saw Iranian workers paving roads in an area that has been shelled repeatedly by Iranian artillery. They said the Iranians have been in

Choman for the past two weeks.

Previous Iranian attacks have killed sheep and birds that belonged to Kurdish farmers, the lawmakers said.

The central Iraqi government in Baghdad and the Kurdish regional government should press Iran to "stop these abuses" and should also complain to the United Nations, said Carwan Salih, chairman of the Kurdish parliament's defense committee.

Iran's border with Iraq's northern Sulaimaniyah province, porous and largely unmarked, has been at the center of repeated sovereignty spats, even as the Shiite-led governments of Iran and Iraq try to strengthen their political ties.

A year ago, Iran built a small fort on Iraqi land near the border village of Haj Omran in an apparent attempt to protect Iranian troops from PEJAK rebels, said Salih, the Kurdish lawmaker.

The mountainous region is near where three American hikers were

detained by Iranian forces in July 2009 and charged with spying after Tehran said they illegally crossing the border. One of the hikers has since been released on bail, and all maintain they thought they were on the Iraqi side of the border when they were arrested.

Earlier this month, Barzani, the Kurdish regional government president, called on Tehran to discuss the dispute.

Also Tuesday, a suicide bomber killed five members of a government-backed Sunni militia that has helped U.S. forces fight al-Qaida.

The bomber drove an explosives-packed car into a security checkpoint just outside the capital Baghdad in the western suburb of Abu Ghraib, according to two police officers.

The checkpoint was guarded by militiamen belonging to Sahwa, or Awakening Councils. The group once fought Americans but later joined U.S. and Iraqi soldiers in one of the turning points of the Iraq war.

Sunni insurgents have since frequently targeted the group. □



# U.S. opens new consulate in Iraqi Kurdistan

The United States on Sunday opened its first consulate in Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdistan region, a symbol of the normalization of U.S.-Iraqi relations as U.S. military forces withdraw and recognition of the dynamic growth of the Kurdish economy.

By Roy Gutman

McClatchy Newspapers

**IRBIL, Iraq** — The United States on Sunday opened its first consulate in Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdistan region, a symbol of the normalization of U.S.-Iraqi relations as U.S. military forces withdraw and recognition of the dynamic growth of the Kurdish economy.

At the second such event in less than a week, after dedication of a similar mission in Basra, the southern oil hub, U.S. Ambassador James Jeffrey said America's "fondest wish" is that a "strong and vibrant Kurdistan region" within a democratic and federal Iraq "arise from the tragic history of this region."

He was referring to years of suppression of Kurdish culture, the gassing of thousands of Kurds and the wholesale displacement of Kurds from traditional lands by the Saddam Hussein regime, which the U.S. overthrew in the 2003 invasion.

Earlier, Edwin Fuller, president and managing director of international lodging for Marriott International, signed a deal to manage a 200-room hotel and a 75-room executive-apartment complex being built by a Kurdish partner. The complex, which is rising near Irbil airport, also represented a vote of confidence by a top U.S. business that the Kurdistan region, with its oil wealth, openness to the world and overall security, is heading for a major boom.

Kurdistan President Massoud Barzani said Kurds "will never forget" U.S. support going back to the Kurdish uprising in 1991, at the time of the Persian Gulf War, when

the United States and Britain established no-fly zones over the ethnic Kurdish region. This provided "a sort of safe haven" for Kurds, he said, "and we were able to benefit from that opportunity to work on a reconstruction of our country and building institutions here in the region."

Then in 2003, the Kurdish Peshmerga militia took part in the U.S.-led assault to overthrow Saddam. "With your assistance, we were able to topple the dictatorial regime in Iraq ... to provide the golden opportunity for the people of Iraq to build a democratic country," Barzani said.

The United States maintained an active and large regional reconstruction team in Kurdistan until now, and its local staff and U.S. diplomats will transfer to the new consulate. But it's somewhat behind other major regional and foreign powers in setting up a diplomatic presence, following Britain, France, Germany, Iran, Kuwait, Russia and Turkey, among others.

Kurdistan's economy, supported by the sale of oil, is thriving and expanding rapidly, compared to the overall Iraqi economy. The skyline in Irbil, the capital of the Kurdistan region, demonstrates an enormous building boom.

Jeffrey, at the signing of the hotel agreement earlier in the afternoon, took note of Kurdistan's rapid growth in comparison to the rest of the country. "Our motto," he said, "is today, Irbil, tomorrow, all of Iraq."

## Panetta: More arms coming from Iran

BAGHDAD — U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said Sunday that weapons supplied by

Iran are being used in attacks against American forces in Iraq, part of an escalating campaign of violence ahead of the planned U.S. withdrawal by year-end.

"We're seeing more of those weapons going in from Iran, and they've really hurt us," said Panetta, who arrived in Baghdad on an unannounced visit after a two-day stop in Afghanistan.

U.S. officials said 15 U.S. troops were killed in June, the most in any month in two years. More than half of the deaths were caused by rockets known as Improvised Rocket Assisted Mortars that U.S. officials say are provided to Shiite extremist groups by Iran.

Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other U.S. officials also have said publicly in recent days that Iran is behind the surge in violence against the 46,000 U.S. troops remaining in Iraq. U.S. officials are stepping up the pressure on Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to resolve whether he will ask for some American troops to remain beyond the deadline.

By playing up the Iranian threat, U.S. officials may be hoping to spur such a request from Iraq.

# Mass grave with 222 bodies found in Iraq

**Iraq - Shanafiyah - (AFP) -** The remains of 222 people, probably Kurds killed under Iraq's former regime in 1987, were extracted from a mass grave south of Baghdad, the authorities said on Sunday.

"We have found 222 bodies and we have transferred them to the morgue in the province of Najaf," said Karim Ziad, the official in charge of mass graves at the Department of Human Rights.

Iraqi authorities announced on Wednesday they had discovered another mass grave with 900 corpses in the Shanafiyah region near the city of Diwaniyah.

Ziad said several factors suggested that the victims, most with bullet wounds, were Kurds killed during the regime of ousted dictator Saddam Hussein.

"The mass graves are made up of six trenches, and we have done (work) on only three of them," he said, suggesting the number of victims could be much higher.

Dakhil Saihoud, provincial head of the Justice and

Accountability Commission which investigates issues relating to the former regime, said he was informed there were 17 trenches at the site.

"It is possible there are hundreds of bodies in there," he said.

"The mass graves are crimes against humanity committed in 1987," said Human Rights Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani. "This is one of 84 sites listed at our ministry, and we have completed work on 34 of them," he said.

Widad Hatem, director of the Committee for Human Rights in Diwaniyah's provincial council, said women and children were among the victims.

Maghoul Abdullah, an old man of more than 90, said he remembered people being rounded up in town.

"The security forces of the old regime evacuated the area and forced us to leave the place. After a few days, large trucks took away people at night, and we even clearly heard their cries," he said.

During Iraq's 1980-1988 war with Iran, deserters were



Some of the 222 human remains, believed to be those of Kurds found in a mass grave, are marked with red flags, some 70 kms from Diwaniyah, south of Baghdad, on July 10, 2011.

Photo courtesy: AFP

executed and the Sunni Arab dictator intensified a crackdown on Shiites suspected of sympathising with Iraq's predominantly Shiite neighbour.

Kurds were persecuted because they were the main opposition to Saddam.

The number of people missing as a result of atrocities committed by Saddam, who came to power in 1979, is estimated at anywhere between 300,000 and 1.3 mil-

lion, according to various sources.

Human rights groups believe there are hundreds of mass graves in Iraq of people killed during Saddam's rule.

Shortly after the 2003 invasion, the US-led coalition said there were 263 mass reported graves of people executed in Iraq under Saddam, including 40 containing evidence of systematic killings.

## Kurdistan President says formation of regions, constitutional, strengthens Iraq's unity

**ARBIL / Aswat al-Iraq:** The President of North Iraq's Kurdistan Region, Massoud Barzani, has expressed "surprise for warnings by Iraq's Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, towards efforts to form other Regions in Iraq, rather than Kurdistan Region, saying that "the formation of Regions is a legal and constitutional issue, that strengthens the unity of the Iraqi people, in difference with what Maliki had stated."

"What is leading Iraq towards abyss is its non-commitment to the Constitution and not the call for the formation of Regions," Barzani said in a statement, published by the Kurdistan Region's Presidency on Sunday, copy of which was received by Aswat al-Iraq news agency.



Noteworthy is that Iraq's Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, had warned in his meeting two days ago with different Iraqi political parties, against "efforts to form other Regions (rather than Kurdistan), saying that "a measure of such type shall lead towards secession and civil war, exposing Iraq's unity for danger."

# IRAK • Sans fédéralisme, l'implosion menace

Naguère ennemis jurés du fédéralisme, beaucoup de sunnites réclament désormais une région autonome, en s'appuyant sur les résultats du Kurdistan irakien.

I Mouchriq Abbas | Al Hayat

LES RÉCENTES allusions du président du Parlement irakien, Oussama Al-Nojaifi, à une "sécession sunnite" ne doivent pas être prises comme une simple saute d'humeur de sa part. Certes, il affirme simplement vouloir exprimer l'état de frustration qui règne au sein de sa communauté, mais, en réalité, cela est révélateur de l'évolution de l'opinion. Il fut un temps où les sunnites rejetaient catégoriquement tout ce qui était contraire à l'unité du pays, mais, aujourd'hui, ils sont de plus en plus attentifs sinon au séparatisme, du moins à l'idée de créer une région autonome au sein de l'Irak. Aussi, les adeptes sunnites du fédéralisme ne passent plus pour des "traîtres" et des "agents de l'étranger". Ils sont désormais considérés comme les "défenseurs des droits des sunnites". A l'instar de la plupart des dirigeants sunnites, Oussama Al-



▲ Parlement irakien

Nojaifi a lui-même été parmi les plus farouches opposants au fédéralisme. Il n'hésite plus aujourd'hui à dire que "la marginalisation des sunnites et le fait qu'ils soient traités comme des citoyens de seconde zone les poussent au séparatisme". De même, le vice-Premier ministre Saleh Al-Mutlak,

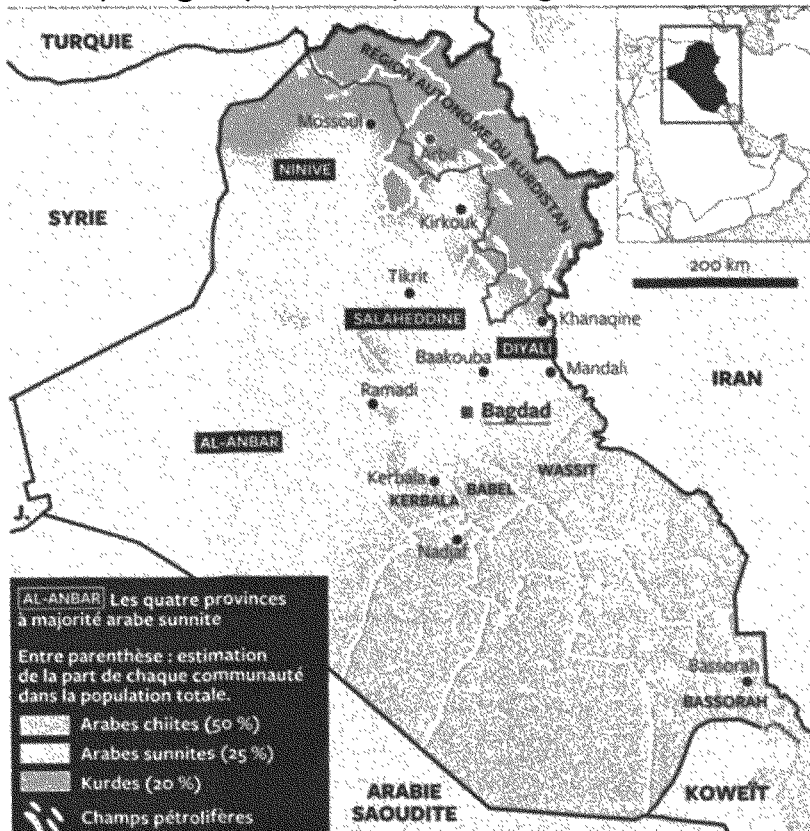
member de la coalition Al-Iraqiya [à dominante sunnite], parle de l'échec de la participation aux instances du gouvernement central.

## En finir avec la mixité religieuse

Jusqu'à présent, les gouvernements successifs ont cédé à un penchant centralisateur encore très présent au sein de l'appareil de l'Etat irakien. Pourtant, le fédéralisme avait été évoqué dès 2003, et cette option reste ouverte selon la Constitution. La situation la plus claire est celle des Kurdes, les seuls à disposer depuis des années de leur autonomie au Kurdistan. Le succès de celle-ci est tel qu'elle fait réfléchir bon nombre d'Arabes sunnites. Quand les dirigeants kurdes déclarent qu'ils se réservent le droit à l'autodétermination pour le cas où la Constitution ne serait pas intégralement appliquée, beaucoup de sunnites comprennent qu'ils risquent de provoquer définitivement l'éclatement du pays s'ils continuent de s'arc-bouter sur l'Etat central.

Par ailleurs, les dirigeants sunnites se plaignent de l'insuffisance de moyens consacrés à la reconstruction, du piètre état des services publics et de la dégradation continue de la situation sécuritaire dans les provinces à majorité sunnite. Certains estiment même qu'il faudrait en finir avec la mixité confessionnelle là où elle existe encore, puis

## Principaux groupes ethniques et religieux en Irak





prendre en charge la politique sécuritaire afin de pouvoir briser l'organisation Al-Qaida. A cela s'ajoute ce que le député Dhafer Al-Ani (lui aussi membre de la coalition Al-Iraqiya) décrit comme "un sentiment d'injustice et de marginalisation". Selon lui, les institutions, les appareils sécuritaires et l'armée sont méthodiquement vidés de leurs dirigeants sunnites. Parmi quarante dirigeants militaires au ministère de la Défense, seulement quatre seraient sunnites et "sur cent quatre-vingts reçus à l'académie militaire, dix tout au plus viennent des provinces sunnites". Il ajoute que la télévision choisit toujours des sunnites lorsqu'il s'agit de montrer des images de terroristes. "Cela s'apparente à une stigmatisation du groupe tout entier, alors qu'on oublie de parler des miliciens chiites qui font couler le sang irakien", affirme-t-il. Il rappelle également que "la loi sur la 'débaasification' avait été adoptée afin d'éliminer les personnalités sunnites de la haute administration".

Ce changement de discours sunnite provoque de la stupéfaction chez les chiites. Car leurs propres demandes de création d'une région autonome chiite dans le Sud irakien se sont toujours heurtées au refus d'instaurer un fédéralisme ayant une base confessionnelle. Beaucoup d'éléments plaident donc en faveur d'une fédéralisation de l'Irak. Cela ne doit néanmoins pas faire oublier un certain nombre de faits géopolitiques et démographiques qui s'y opposent. Il convient tout d'abord de définir précisément le périmètre de la région sunnite. Elle s'étend sur près de 220 000 kilomètres carrés, c'est-à-dire un peu plus de la moitié de l'ensemble du territoire irakien [434 920 kilomètres carrés]. Le nombre d'habitants s'y élève à environ 7 millions [sur un total d'environ 31 millions]. Ces chiffres sont une estimation à partir des statistiques du ministère de la Santé.

Cette population des régions sunnites se répartit sur quatre provinces. La première, au nord, est Ninive, avec la ville de Mossoul. Plus au sud se trouve Salaheddine, avec la ville de Tikrit. A l'ouest, la province d'Al-Anbar, avec la ville de Ramadi, la plus grande du pays. Finalement, à l'est, la province de Diyali, avec la ville de Baakouba. A ces provinces s'ajoutent des territoires dont le statut est moins certain. Un bout de la province de Kirkouk [disputée par Kurdes, Arabes et Turkmènes] reste suspendu aux négociations sur les revenus [pétroliers], ainsi qu'une partie de la province de Bagdad, le nord de la province de Babel et quelques portions des provinces de Wassit et de Kerbala. A cela s'ajoute le fait que les autres communautés pourraient revendiquer des territoires faisant actuellement partie du "territoire sunnite". Ainsi, les Kurdes revendiquent le territoire qui s'étend de la plaine de Ninive au nord-est de Mossoul. De même, la province de Kerbala [chiite] revendique un bout de celle d'Al-Anbar. Troisièmement, la création d'une région autonome sunnite risque de créer une situation délicate pour ceux qui vivent dans des poches sunnites à l'intérieur des provinces chiites, telles que le département de Tel-Afar à Mossoul, le département de Al-Dujail à Salaheddine et quelques autres à Diyali, ainsi qu'à Bagdad... Bref, un partage confessionnel du territoire irakien risquerait d'être non pas la solution, mais le début des problèmes, voire de déclencher une guerre civile dont les sunnites seraient les principales victimes.

#### Washington pour le fédéralisme

Un autre fait qu'il faut avoir à l'esprit est que le territoire sunnite est pratiquement dépourvu de richesses naturelles puisque les réserves de pétrole se trouvent surtout dans le Sud [à dominante chiite, ainsi que dans le Nord kurde].

Ces objections sont toutefois balayées par les adeptes du fédéralisme. Il semblerait qu'un certain nombre d'hommes d'affaires sunnites influents aient formé un groupe de pression pour défendre l'idée qu'il faudrait se débarrasser d'une administration centrale trop lourde afin de pouvoir attirer les investissements étrangers. Par ailleurs, ils rappellent que de récents forages indiquent que la région sunnite recèlerait d'énormes quantités de gaz naturel, ainsi que du soufre et des minéraux, ce qui permettrait d'en faire une région économiquement florissante. A cela s'ajoutent les richesses hydrauliques et agricoles, ainsi que la situation géographique de la région sur les voies d'approvisionnement vers la Syrie, la Turquie, la Jordanie et l'Arabie Saoudite.

Et qu'en est-il de l'attitude des pays voisins ? En Turquie, les officiels n'ont fait aucune déclaration à ce sujet. Quant à l'Iran, il ne semble pas souhaiter la fédéralisation de l'Irak, puisque la région sunnite lui couperait l'accès terrestre vers la Syrie. D'un autre côté, il paraît évident que les pays arabes [du Golfe] et les Etats-Unis feront tout pour éviter que l'Iran établisse sa domination totale sur l'ensemble de l'Irak au moment même où il risque de perdre son allié syrien. Quoi qu'il en soit, l'Irak étant situé à l'intersection des trois blocs antagonistes de la Turquie au nord, de l'Iran à l'est et des pays arabes à l'ouest et au sud, il risque à tout instant de retomber dans l'instabilité et dans les tensions confessionnelles si les équilibres géostratégiques entre les voisins venaient à être perturbés. A cela s'ajoute le facteur américain : les Etats-Unis semblent pencher en faveur du fédéralisme, estimant qu'à terme cela privera Téhéran des moyens de régner en maître sur la politique irakienne.

AFP

## Turquie: deux soldats et un fonctionnaire enlevés dans le sud-est

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 10 juil 2011 (AFP)

DEUX SOLDATS TURCS et un fonctionnaire ont été enlevés dans l'est de la Turquie, ont indiqué dimanche des sources militaires, qui imputent ces enlèvements aux rebelles kurdes.

Deux voitures ont été retrouvées vides sur une route proche de la localité de Lice, près de Diyarbakir, la plus grande ville du sud-est, l'une appartenant à deux soldats en permission et l'autre à un fonctionnaire des services de santé, selon ces sources.

Des témoins disent avoir vu des militants armés du PKK, le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, qui stoppaient ces véhicules circulant de nuit. Des recherches, appuyées par hélicoptères, ont été lancées pour retrouver les disparus.

Le PKK, qui est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et de nombreux pays, lutte pour la défense des droits des Kurdes de Turquie, qui représentent 12 à 15 millions des 73 millions d'habitants de Turquie.

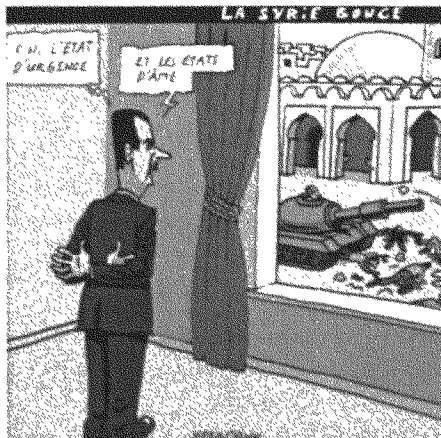
# ISRAËL-SYRIE : Le régime baasiste peut bien s'effondrer

Israël ne semblerait plus effrayé par l'instabilité qui règnerait à ses frontières si Bachar El-Assad était renversé. Même une prise du pouvoir par les Frères musulmans ne suscite pas de craintes.

| Ron Ben-Yishai | Yediot Aharonot

**LE MINISTRE** de la Défense, Ehoud Barak, affirme que le régime de Bachar El-Assad a perdu toute légitimité et qu'il tombera d'ici un an. Plusieurs responsables de l'armée et des renseignements israéliens sont également persuadés que le régime a définitivement perdu le contrôle des régions périphériques. Mais, tant à l'étranger qu'en Israël, d'autres experts estiment au contraire que le régime syrien a de sérieuses chances de s'en sortir. Bachar et les siens sont déterminés ; l'armée et les appareils de sécurité restent loyaux et sont en passe d'écraser méthodiquement et les uns après les autres les foyers de la contestation ; l'opposition syrienne est fragile et divisée ; la communauté internationale et les Etats-Unis ne prendront jamais de mesures effectives.

En Syrie, trois secteurs menacent potentiellement le régime baasiste. Le premier secteur est constitué de la bourgeoisie laïque des grandes villes (Damas et Alep), dont les classes moyennes citadines, qu'elles soient sunnites, alaouites ou chrétiennes, hésitent à rejoindre les manifestations. Elles ne craignent pas tant la répression que la longue période d'instabilité, voire la guerre civile qui pourrait éclater après la chute du régime. Le deuxième secteur de population qui hésite encore à participer activement au soulèvement est la minorité kurde, forte de 1,7 million d'âmes. Opprimés et paupérisés, les Kurdes ont certes de bonnes raisons de se soulever contre le régime baasiste, tandis qu'ils regardent avec envie les résultats engrangés par leurs frères d'Irak, voire de Turquie. Mais, si des manifestations ont éclaté dans certaines localités comme Qamishli, à la frontière turque, les Kurdes ne se sont pas encore décidés à dégainer. La répression d'une main de fer des dernières émeutes [printemps 2005] a sans doute laissé des traces, tandis que l'octroi de la citoyenneté syrienne à 400 000 Kurdes qui en étaient privés depuis des décennies a permis de neutraliser le risque d'une extension de la contestation dans le



© Dessin de Herrmann paru dans la Tribune de Genève, Suisse.

Nord.

## Dépendant de l'Iran

Un troisième groupe ethno-confessionnel ne s'est pas encore joint au soulèvement : les druzes. Dans le djebel Druze, aux confins du sud-est de la Syrie, ce ne sont pourtant pas les guerriers et les armes qui manquent. Mais, fidèles au principe de la takiya, qui autorise les druzes à vivre sous quelque pouvoir que ce soit, sans s'y opposer et sans y adhérer, ces derniers préfèrent attendre de voir de quel côté penchera la balance avant de se prononcer.

A ces trois groupes, il faut ajouter les réfugiés palestiniens, dont plusieurs centaines de milliers [470 000] résident dans les quartiers périphériques des grandes villes du centre et du sud du pays. Bénéficiant des largesses du régime, certaines organisations palestiniennes lui sont redevables, et ce sont elles qui ont organisé les marches de quelques centaines de réfugiés palestiniens sur le plateau du Golan [pour dénoncer l'occupation israélienne]. Néanmoins, majoritairement sunnites, les Palestiniens de Syrie éprouvent davantage de sympathie pour leurs coreligionnaires syriens à la tête des manifestations et considèrent non seulement que ces marches contre Israël sont vaines et risquées, mais également qu'elles n'ont pour but que de sauver un régime syrien honni.

Pour l'instant, le soulèvement ne concerne que la majorité arabe sunnite des régions périphériques, et c'est pourquoi ces dernières constituent la cible prioritaire de la répression déclenchée avec succès par le régime baasiste. Mais l'issue reste incertaine, et le vent pourrait tourner au détriment du régime si ceux qui sont le plus à même de le menacer entraînent en scène : les nombreux mécontents au sein de la communauté alaouite, en particulier ceux qui n'appartiennent pas aux clans familiaux El-Assad et Makhlof [cousins des premiers]. A court terme, le régime baasiste ayant encore la main, ses responsables s'abstiendront sans doute de déclencher les hostilités contre Israël car cela ne ferait qu'affaiblir davantage le régime et renforcer les insurgés. Mais, si le régime se sent réellement acculé, peut-être serait-il tenté par une confrontation avec Israël. Cependant, ce scénario extrême ne sera sans doute pas à l'ordre du jour avant plusieurs semaines ou plusieurs mois. Le régime pourrait également encourager à nouveau de jeunes Palestiniens à se ruer vers la frontière israélienne pour s'y faire abattre par les soldats israéliens et dévier ainsi quelque peu la pression internationale. Rappelons toutefois que l'envie des Palestiniens de Syrie de participer à un tel scénario s'est trouvée freinée. Enfin, si le régime d'El-Assad parvient à se maintenir, peut-être s'estimerait-il trop affaibli pour s'engager dans une confrontation avec Israël. Cependant, vu son affaiblissement, le devenir d'El-Assad dépendra davantage du bon vouloir de l'Iran, lequel pourrait exiger que le Hezbollah rompe avec la retenue observée jusqu'ici.

## Tout bénéfique pour Israël

Un ultime scénario reste la chute d'El-Assad et de son régime. Si les Frères musulmans deviennent l'acteur dominant, ce ne sera pas de bon augure pour le long terme, vu l'arsenal chimique et bactériologique dont dispose la Syrie. Cependant, après la chute du régime baasiste, les Syriens auront longtemps fort à faire pour consolider le nouveau régime politique, relever une économie en lambeaux et ne pas s'aliéner un soutien occidental (et turc) dont ils auront désespéré-

ment besoin.

A l'aune des relations entre l'Iran et le Hezbollah, la chute du régime baasiste ne pourra être que tout bénéfique pour Israël. Il n'est pas difficile d'imaginer la haine des sunnites et de l'opposition syrienne

en général envers les ayatollahs et le Hezbollah libanais. De même, il n'est pas impossible que, pour sortir leur communauté de l'isolement, des alaouites haut gradés finissent par pousser El-Assad vers la sortie. Quoi qu'il en soit, Israël va devoir s'armer de patience, éviter de se

faire happer dans la tourmente syrienne et réfléchir à tête reposée à la meilleure réponse à apporter à la menace que font toujours planer la Syrie et le Hezbollah.



## Le président du Kurdistan d'Irak proteste contre des bombardements iraniens

**ERBIL (Irak), 3 juil 2011 (AFP)**

**LE PRÉSIDENT DU Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani, a protesté dimanche contre des bombardements menés selon lui par l'Iran sur cette région autonome frontalière du nord de l'Irak.**

"Nous condamnons les tirs indiscriminés de l'artillerie iranienne contre des citoyens dans la région frontalière du Kurdistan. Cette action est injustifiée et peut affecter les relations entre l'Iran et la région autonome du Kurdistan", affirme-t-il dans un communiqué publié sur son site internet.

Les forces iraniennes bombardent régulièrement des zones frontalières kur-

des irakiennes qui abritent des indépendantistes du PJAK, un mouvement séparatiste kurde iranien qui opère à partir de bases établies dans les montagnes du Kurdistan irakien.

Le dernier bombardement a visé jeudi Haj Omrane, un poste frontière à 70 km au nord-est d'Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan d'Irak.

"Au lieu de susciter la peur, ils (les Iraniens) feraient mieux de tenter de régler le problème par le dialogue et de trouver des solutions valables", a ajouté M. Barzani.

Selon lui, "les récents tirs d'artillerie ont causé des dommages dans les villages et les fermes de la région et ont forcé les villageois à s'enfuir".



## L'Iran menace d'attaquer les rebelles kurdes iraniens au Kurdistan d'Irak

**TEHERAN, 11 juil 2011 (AFP)**

**L'IRAN "se réserve le droit" d'attaquer les bases du mouvement séparatiste kurde iranien PJAK au Kurdistan irakien, a déclaré un haut responsable militaire cité lundi par l'agence officielle IRNA.**

"Nous nous réservons le droit de détruire les bases terroristes dans les zones frontalières" entre l'Iran et le Kurdistan irakien, selon ce haut responsable militaire qu'IRNA n'a pas identifié.

"Nous n'autorisons pas les terroristes à s'installer en territoire irakien avec le soutien des Etats-Unis et du régime sioniste (ndlr: Israël) pour agresser l'Iran. Nous agissons contre ces terroristes", a-t-il souligné.

Il a accusé Massoud Barzani, le président du Kurdistan irakien, d'avoir "sans informer le gouvernement de Bagdad mis à la disposition du PJAK un territoire de trois cents mille hectares pour y créer des bases d'entraînement et mener des actions terroristes contre l'Iran".

Selon ce responsable, ce territoire est "long de 150 km et profond de 20 km" le long de la frontière nord-ouest de l'Iran.

Le 3 juillet, M. Barzani avait protesté contre des bombardements menés selon lui par l'Iran sur cette région autonome frontalière du nord de l'Irak.

"Nous condamnons les tirs indiscriminés de l'artillerie iranienne contre des citoyens dans la région frontalière du Kurdistan. Cette action est injustifiée et peut affecter les relations entre l'Iran et la région autonome du Kurdistan", avait-il affirmé dans un communiqué.

Les forces iraniennes bombardent régulièrement des zones frontalières kurdes irakiennes, d'où selon Téhéran opèrent des indépendantistes du PJAK.

Le dernier bombardement a visé jeudi Haj Omrane, un poste frontière à 70 km au nord-est d'Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan d'Irak.

Les régions de l'ouest de l'Iran, où vit une importante minorité kurde, sont le théâtre d'affrontements périodiques entre les forces iraniennes et des mouvements rebelles armés kurdes.



## Irak: Les Kurdes ont refusé de prendre Kirkouk par la force (responsable)

**BAGDAD, 14 juil 2011 (AFP)**

**LES KURDES auraient pu s'emparer par la force de la riche province pétrolière de Kirkouk mais ne l'ont pas fait pour ne pas infliger à autrui ce qu'eux-même avaient subi dans le passé, a affirmé Masrou Barzani, 37 ans, directeur du service de sécurité du Kurdistan irakien.**

"Les Kurdes auraient pu occuper Kirkouk, mais ont refusé de le faire car il ont été eux-mêmes victimes de tels actes et nous ne voulons pas donner l'impression qu'il s'agit d'une vengeance pour les années de souffrances endurées", a déclaré jeudi au Ashqarq al-Awsat, un quotidien arabophone publié à Londres, le fils du chef du Kurdistan irakien Massoud Barzani.

La dispute entre Bagdad et le Kurdistan trouve son origine dans l'arabisation au début des années 1990 de ces territoires par le président déchu Saddam Hussein, qui a forcé 120.000 Kurdes à fuir vers le nord, selon l'organisation des droits de l'Homme Human Rights Watch.

Selon Masrou Barzani, "la direction kurde veut recouvrer les droits de son

peuple de manière démocratique et pacifique en s'appuyant sur la Constitution", a-t-il encore dit.

"Nous avons montré de la flexibilité envers les Turcomans et les Arabes et maintenant c'est à eux de faire la même chose pour arriver à appliquer l'article de la Constitution concernant Kirkouk", a-t-il souligné.

L'article 140 de la Constitution prévoit un recensement et un référendum concernant Kirkouk et d'autres régions disputées entre Kurdes et Arabes pour connaître le souhait des citoyens et ceci avant le 31 décembre 2007. Ceci n'a jamais eu lieu en raison des tensions ethniques.

Les peshmergas ou combattants kurdes ont profité de l'invasion américaine de 2003 pour progresser vers le Sud et l'Ouest, revendiquant le caractère kurde de Kirkouk, et de zones dans les provinces de Salaheddine, Diyala (centre) et Ninive (nord).

Depuis, les deux camps s'accusent de vouloir modifier l'équilibre démographique pour contrôler les richesses de ces régions.

# Panetta calls for decision on troops from Iraqi

BAGHDAD

## Pressure is put on Maliki to tell U.S. if he wants forces to stay into 2012

BY ELISABETH BUMILLER

Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta pressured Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki of Iraq on Monday to tell the United States whether he wanted some American troops to remain into 2012, although Mr. Panetta predicted that the U.S. military would have an "enduring presence" for many years in the Middle East.

"I'd like things to move a lot faster here, frankly, in terms of the decision-making process," Mr. Panetta told a gathering of American troops as he expressed exasperation with the Iraqi government and pushed Mr. Maliki to make a key government appointment. "Do they want us to stay, don't they want us to stay? Do they want to get a minister of defense, or don't they want to get a minister of defense?" He concluded, "Damn it, make a decision!"

Making his first visit to Iraq as defense secretary, Mr. Panetta also said flatly — before he and a Pentagon spokesman qualified his remarks — that U.S. forces were in Iraq because of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. That was part of the narrative advanced by the White House under President George W. Bush, particularly by Vice President Dick Cheney, but it is now discredited.

"The reason you guys are here is because on 9/11 the United States got attacked, and 3,000 not just Americans, but 3,000 human beings got killed, innocent human beings, because of Al Qaeda," Mr. Panetta told U.S. Army troops at Camp Victory, the sprawling American military base in Baghdad.

Later, Mr. Panetta told reporters that he was not speaking of the reasons for the 2003 American-led invasion, but rather was referring to events afterward. "I wasn't saying, you know, the invasion, or going into the issues or the justification of that," Mr. Panetta said. "It was more the fact that we really had to deal with Al Qaeda here."

In the prelude to the 2003 war, Bush administration officials repeatedly cited ties between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's Iraq, but a government inves-

tigation found no meaningful operational link between the two. After the invasion, Al Qaeda fighters did pour into Iraq to open attacks on the American military.

Mr. Panetta arrived in Iraq on Sunday from Afghanistan, and his visit was not announced in advance. His itinerary included a meeting Monday with Mr. Maliki. Defense officials said that Mr. Panetta's top priority in the meeting — aside from pressing for a decision about

**"I'd like things to move a lot faster here, frankly."**

American troops — was to urge him to go after Shiite militias that the United States says are using Iranian-supplied weapons to attack American forces in Iraq.

Mr. Panetta, who warned about the Iranian weapons on Sunday, intensified his words on Monday. Last month, 15 American troops died in Iraq, nine in attacks by rockets supplied by Iran, U.S. officials said. The attacks made June the bloodiest month for American combat-related fatalities since June 2008.

"We cannot just simply stand back and allow this to continue to happen," Mr. Panetta said. "I assure you that this is not something we're just going to walk away from. We're going to take this on, straight on."

Mr. Panetta said that American forces were already responding to the threat "unilaterally," implying that they were taking offensive action on their own, without Iraqi troops alongside. U.S. military officials would not specify what he meant.

All 46,000 remaining American troops in Iraq are scheduled to leave by the end of this year under an agreement between the two countries, but both Iraqi and U.S. military commanders believe that some American forces should stay beyond 2011.

Few Iraqi politicians are willing to admit publicly that they need American help, but Obama administration officials say the United States will consider staying only if the Iraqis ask.

The subject is particularly sensitive because the anti-American cleric Moktada al-Sadr helped the current government come to power. Mr. Sadr has said many times that the United States should leave immediately.

Mr. Panetta's remarks demanding that Mr. Maliki make a decision were the strongest on the subject to date from the Obama administration. U.S. officials say that if the Iraqis wait too long to make a formal request, it will come too late, given the complexity of military withdrawals.

Once the Americans withdraw completely, they say, it would be expensive and difficult politically in both the United States and Iraq to bring them back.

# EDITORIAL

## DRAWDOWN IN IRAQ

**Baghdad needs to decide quickly whether it wants a small American military force to remain.**

President Obama is fulfilling his promise to wind down the Iraq war. When he took office, there were about 142,000 American troops on the ground; now there are 46,000. All are supposed to be gone by Dec. 31 under a 2008 agreement between Washington and Baghdad.

The war has already cost more than 4,450 American lives and hundreds of billions of dollars over eight long years. We are eager to see all of our troops out of harm's way. But if Iraq requests it, there are legitimate reasons to keep a small force there — if the mission is carefully drawn. Iraq still needs help building its military and calming tensions between Arabs and Kurds in the north. A small U.S. force — there is talk of 8,000 to 15,000 troops — would also send a big message to Iraq and all of its neighbors that Washington is not ceding the region to Iran. Tehran has been increasing its meddling in recent months.

Experts say most Iraqi factions want the Americans to remain a while longer. No Iraqi politicians have been willing to say that publicly. Their fractious political system indulges foot-dragging well beyond the 11th hour.

The Obama administration, which has demanded an answer for months, is understandably frustrated. "Do they want us to stay, don't they want us to stay?" Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said in Baghdad on Monday, adding: "Dammit, make a decision."

The logistics of withdrawal are complicated. But the administration is pleading too hard. This has to be an Iraqi decision, and Iraqis have to live with the consequences. If Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki or any other leaders really want an extension on the 2008 withdrawal agreement, they need to speak up and they need to tell their supporters why this is good for the country. Uniting in common cause is their best hope of neutralizing Moktada al-Sadr, whose pro-Iran faction has long insisted that all U.S. troops must leave.

If a residual U.S. force stays, the mandate should be carefully drawn: gathering intelligence and, when needed, supporting Iraqi forces in going after insurgents; continuing military training; and conducting joint patrols with Arabs and Kurds along the disputed internal border. Iraq's government must commit to aggressively going after Shiite militias that have increasingly targeted U.S. troops. Any deployment should be reviewed periodically to see if it is needed and still makes sense.

President Obama has concluded the American combat role in Iraq and is beginning the drawdown in Afghanistan. He must be held accountable for his promises but also be prepared to modify his policy when needed. If Iraq asks, we think he should say yes. But only if Iraq asks.

# U.S. raises alarm on flow of arms from Iran to Iraq

BAGHDAD

BY ELISABETH BUMILLER

Leon E. Panetta, U.S. defense secretary, said Sunday that weapons he said were supplied by Iran had become a "tremendous concern" for the United States in recent weeks in Iraq, where more American troops died in June than in any month over the last three years.

"We're seeing more of those weapons going in from Iran, and they've really hurt us," Mr. Panetta said before arriving here on an unannounced trip, his first to the Iraqi capital as defense secretary.

Mr. Panetta is the third top American official to raise an alarm about Iranian influence in Iraq in recent days. The American ambassador to Iraq, James F. Jeffrey, recently said that the United States had "forensic proof" that weapons and weapons parts from Iran were being used by Shiite militias against American troops. His remarks were echoed by Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Mr. Panetta's comments, made a day before he is to meet with the Iraqi prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, were aimed at urging the Iraqi military to take more action against Shiite militias and to see Iran as the Obama adminis-

tration does — not just as a threat to American troops but also as a potential cancer in a future Iraq.

"The key right now is to make sure that we do everything possible to ensure that the Iraqis within their own country are doing what they can to stop the flow of those weapons and to stop the Shia from using them," Mr. Panetta said.

U.S. officials say that Iran supplies the militias with high-powered rockets and parts for bombs that can pierce armor. In June, 15 American troops were killed in Iraq, 9 of them in high-powered rocket attacks, U.S. officials said.

Mr. Panetta is in Iraq as all 46,000 remaining American troops are withdrawing this year under an agreement between the two countries. Both Iraqi and U.S. military commanders believe that some American forces should stay beyond the end of the year, but few Iraqi politicians are willing to admit publicly that they need U.S. help. Obama administration officials say they will consider staying only if the Iraqis ask.

Mr. Panetta arrived in Baghdad from Helmand Province in Afghanistan, where he met with U.S. marines and Afghan Army soldiers at Camp Dwyer, a sprawling military base and the site of a busy medevac hospital in the southern desert. Mr. Panetta said he was encour-

aged by what he saw.

"I think the bottom line is we are on the right path here," he said.

On Saturday on his way to Kabul, Mr. Panetta said the United States was "within reach of strategically defeating Al Qaeda" and that the U.S. focus had narrowed to capturing or killing 10 to 20 crucial leaders of the terrorist group in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen.

They were Mr. Panetta's first public remarks in his new post and among the most positive from a senior U.S. national security official about the decade-old war against Al Qaeda, founded by Osama bin Laden, that was responsible for the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Mr. Panetta, who as director of the C.I.A. ran the U.S. commando raid that killed Bin Laden in Pakistan on May 2, said that vanquishing the terrorist network was one of his most important goals as defense secretary.

Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan — who is leaving Kabul this month to take Mr. Panetta's place as C.I.A. director in September — said later Saturday in Kabul that "enormous damage" had been done to Al Qaeda in the northwest frontier of Pakistan but that elements of the organization would exist for some time. "The brand will be out there," he said.

General Petraeus said that 50 to 100 Qaeda insurgents remained in the remote Afghan provinces of Kunar and Nuristan, on the rugged border with Pakistan.

Daily Times

July 16, 2011

## Turkey investigates Kurdish autonomy declaration

reuters

\* Declaration coincided with killing of 13 soldiers

\* Kurdish party offices hit by petrol bomb attack

DIYARBAKIR: Turkish prosecutors have launched an investigation into a declaration of "democratic autonomy" by an umbrella group for Kurdish non-governmental groups, the prosecutor's office said on Friday.

The declaration could fuel tensions in Turkey after an upsurge in Kurdish militant activity and a boycott of parliament by Kurdish deputies.

The Democratic Society Congress (DTK) announcement coincided with a clash which killed 13 Turkish soldiers and seven Kurdish armed rebels in the mainly Kurdish southeastern province of Diyarbakir on Thursday. Diyarbakir prosecutors were scrutinising the declaration at the DTK meeting, attended by 850 delegates in the city, and could open a court case against leading members of the congress. "As the Kurdish people we declare democratic autonomy, remaining bound to the national unity of the peoples of Turkey,"

deputy chairwoman Aysel Tugluk said on Thursday, reading out the DTK declaration.

Around the same time, the first reports emerged of the attack in the mountains to the east of Diyarbakir. Turkey's chief of staff said in a statement that grenades thrown by Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) guerrillas ignited a fire in a heavily forested area and 13 soldiers died in the blaze. It said seven soldiers were wounded.

The Firat news agency, which has close links to the PKK, disputed the official version with a report quoting a witness saying a Turkish warplane targeted the militants in an air strike which also killed the soldiers positioned nearby.

Subsequently, unknown assailants launched a petrol bomb attack on offices of the main Kurdish BDP party in the capital Ankara overnight, broadcaster NTV reported. The attack caused a small fire but there were no reports of any casualties.

The killing of the soldiers came as troops conducted operations near Diyarbakir to rescue three people, two of them soldiers, kidnapped by the PKK last weekend.

## Kirkuk Officials Divided Over US Troop Extension

RUDAW

Kirkuk officials are divided over whether US troops should remain stationed in Iraq's disputed areas, a key concern as US President Barack Obama's administration presses Baghdad to decide whether they want a limited American military presence in Iraq in 2012.

Rakan al-Jibburi, an Arab member of Kirkuk's Provincial Council, is one official opposed to keeping US troops in his oil-rich province, which is claimed by Arabs, Turkmen and Kurds. If they stay, US troops are likely to be stationed in Kirkuk and other disputed areas.

Some Iraqi and Kurdish officials argue that the presence of US troops in the disputed territories will guarantee stability, but Jibburi told Rudaw that the presence of US troops only worsens the situation.

"Their presence is a risk to those areas because wherever Americans are, that area will never improve," he said. "The security situation will deteriorate. The Americans are not very well-liked."

According to Jibburi, Arabs in Kirkuk, which has been called a "powder keg" because different groups claiming the land, oppose extending the US troop deployment.

He said the decision over whether US troops should stay needs to be made by Iraqis, not Americans.

The Obama administration has indicated it would be willing to delay the withdrawal of some US troops, who are scheduled to pull out in December 2011, upon the Iraqi government's request. Iraqi officials, however, have yet to decide whether they want an extension.



US soldiers on patrol in Kirkuk, Iraq. Photo by Ayub Nuri.

"The presence of US troops has to do with the people of Iraq and the Americans should not make such a decision on their own," he said.

Kirkuk's Governor Najmaldin Karim, a Kurd, told Rudaw in a previous interview that some American troops should stay in Kirkuk once the rest have pulled out of Iraq.

Muhammad Kamal, a member of Kirkuk's Security and Safety Commission, said his commission doesn't have any problems with the Americans staying in Kirkuk beyond their 2011 deadline.

"We don't oppose American troops in the disputed territories especially if their deployment is to prevent clashes between the area's different ethnic groups. In fact we support their presence because their forces are neutral."

He accused Iraqi troops of misconduct and creating trouble for the province.

"The Iraqi forces often stir ethnic sentiments and work against the Kurds," Kamal said. "There are indications that the Iraqi government's policy

plays a role in this."

Kirkuk witnessed a number of violent attacks this year, including a double car bombing in front of the city's main police station that killed at least 15 people and injured dozens more. Kamal believes American troops will help the province's security.

"If the forces stay, security will improve especially now there is a kind of security vacuum and the situation in Kirkuk isn't very good," he said.

Ali Mahdi, a Turkmen member of the Security and Safety Commission, opposes the extension of US troops in the disputed areas but said the decision lies with Baghdad.

"These areas have various religious and ethnic groups," Mahdi said. "In that case, neither the US troops nor the locals will have any easy time. The security will not improve either. It will only get worse."

"We prefer Iraqi troops because they are official government troops," he added. "And we want to see an end to all other armed groups that threaten Kirkuk's security."

**Bloomberg**

July 17, 2011

## Kurdish crude will boost Iraq reserves Oil from region will result in 21% boost

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq may raise its proven oil reserves by 21 per cent after adding those from the semi-autonomous Kurdish region, Hussain Al Shahrstani, deputy prime minister for energy affairs, said yesterday.

Iraq's oil reserves may increase to 173 billion barrels by adding 30 billion barrels of Kurdish oil, Al Shahrstani said in a speech to ambassadors at the Foreign Ministry in Baghdad. The country's crude production capacity will rise to 12 million barrels per day

(bpd) by 2017, he said. Iraq, home to the world's fifth-biggest oil reserves, is struggling to boost energy exports, the main source of revenue, to help rebuild an economy shattered by years of conflict, economic sanctions and sabotage. The country has signed 15 gas and oil licences since the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq that ousted the regime of President Saddam Hussain.

Iraq will sign contracts before the end of the year to add 7,500 megawatts of electricity production capacity, he said.

The New York Times JULY 14, 2011

# Kurdish Rebels Kill 13 Turkish Soldiers

By SEBNEM ARSU

**ISTANBUL —** Kurdish rebels fighting for autonomy in southeastern Turkey ambushed a group of soldiers near Diyarbakir on Thursday, killing 13 and wounding 7, the Turkish military said on its Web site.

The attack, one of the deadliest on Turkish forces in recent years, was denounced by political leaders across the country. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Turkey had the strength and determination to defeat terrorists and would do so “without ever compromising on democracy, law and brotherhood.”

In the ambush, which was mounted in a predominantly Kurdish rural area, the rebels used small arms and hand grenades, which started a fire, the military said. Seven insurgents were also killed in the fighting, the Turkish military said.

A major rebel group, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, had warned that it would start a new wave of attacks if the government failed to produce by Friday a tangible plan for resolving the Kurdish conflict.

The group, known as the P.K.K., which are the initials of its Kurdish name, intensified its attacks in the region in June, killing several soldiers, when 36 Kurdish candidates won seats in a parliamentary elec-



tion. Local courts blocked 6 of the 36 from taking their seats because they are in jail on terrorism charges. The remaining successful Kurdish candidates then refused to take the oath of office.

Hours before the attack on Thursday, some of the Kurdish candidates met with officials of the governing party, the Justice and Development Party, in Ankara, the capital.

But the talks ended without an agreement after the Kurds insisted that one successful candidate, Hatip Dicle, be allowed to take his seat in Parliament; Mr. Dicle has been convicted on charges related to terrorism.

At the same time, more than 800 Kurdish delegates met in Diyarbakir and issued a declaration of “democratic autonomy” for the predominantly Kurdish region. They said they chose the term to make it clear that they were not trying to challenge Turkey’s territorial or national integrity, but rather asserting their freedom and ethnic

rights within Turkey.

The Justice and Development Party has expanded political and cultural rights for more than 12 million ethnic Kurds in Turkey during its nearly 10 years as the governing party. But the party has dismissed demands that Kurdish ethnic identity be recognized in a new constitution that Parliament is expected to draft in its next term.

Many people say the current Constitution, written under the auspices of the military after a coup in 1980, is a source of ethnic friction and discontent. But in the efforts to resolve the conflict, both the government and the opposition have excluded the leading pro-Kurdish political party, Peace and Democracy, because of accusations that it acts as the political wing of the P.K.K.

Kurdish leaders expressed sadness over the violence on Thursday, without denouncing the P.K.K., which Western nations classify as a terrorist organization.

“Youngsters pay the price of politics falling short of resolutions, of uncourageous politics,” said Selahattin Demirtas, deputy chairman of Peace and Development, according to the semi-official Anatolian news agency.

AP Associated Press

## Panetta meets with Kurdish president in Iraq

IRBIL, Iraq (AP) - July 12 2011 - AP foreign

**WRAPPING up his first visit to Iraq as U.S. defense secretary, Leon Panetta is meeting with the president of the Kurdish regional government, Massoud Barzani.**

Panetta is expected to stress the urgency of the Iraqi government filling two key positions — those responsible for the army and the police. Lacking leaders in those positions has kept Iraq from deciding whether it wants U.S. troops to stay beyond their scheduled final departure in December.

The Kurds are one of three main groups sharing government power in Baghdad, along with the Sunnis and the majority Shiites.

A final drawdown of the 46,000 U.S. troops in Iraq is to begin in



August and be completed by December 31.

Panetta was returning to Washington after his Barzani meeting.

# Pro-Kurdish DTK declares 'democratic autonomy' in Turkey's southeast

ISTANBUL - Daily News with wires

The Democratic Society Congress, or DTK, declared democratic autonomy during an extraordinary congress with 850 delegates in Diyarbakır on Thursday and invited Kurds to introduce themselves as democratically autonomous Kurdistan citizens.

Kurdish people do not want to have national existence as a non-status population, the final declaration of the congress said.

Deputies of pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP, mayors and some members of nongovernmental organizations participated in the congress organized by the DTK in a BDP building in Diyarbakır. The DTK is an umbrella organization for pro-Kurdish groups.

The final declaration was read by an independent deputy from Van, Aysel Tuluk after the six-hour meeting.

We can see the genocide conducted by nation-states. Although there are some changes on the surface, deep down, the denial goes on. Even when national existence was granted to

**Aysel Tuluk, co-chair of the of the Democratic Community Congress, or DTK, and an independent deputy from Van, reads the declaration of democratic autonomy. AA photo**



Kurdish people, there were still efforts to keep divisions. The refusal to release Hatip Dicle and other deputies shows that clearly. Cultural genocide against the Kurdish language as a mother tongue is continuing. The rights, language and life of Kurdish people are being ignored, said the final declaration.

Dicle, a pro-Kurdish independent candidate, was elected to Parliament in last month's general elections, but his deputyship was soon quashed by Turkey's top election board for a previous terror-related conviction.

The Kurdish people do not want to

be a non-status population anymore. There is no other population in the world like Kurds, which include 40 million people and do not have rights. We, as Kurdish people, are declaring our democratic sovereignty, holding to Turkey's national unity on the basis of an understanding of a common motherland, territorial unity and the perspective of a democratic nation, Tuluk said.

We invite everyone who lives in our lands to introduce themselves as a democratically autonomous Kurdistan citizen, she said.



## Report: Iranians seize Kurdish bases in Iraq

TEHRAN, Iran - July 18, 2011 - The Associated Press

Iranian Revolutionary Guard forces have taken control of three bases of an Iranian Kurdish opposition group in neighboring Iraq, the state news agency reported Monday.

IRNA quoted Colonel Delavar Ranjbarzadeh, a local commander of the powerful Revolutionary Guard, as saying "a large number" of members of the Iranian Kurdish opposition group PEJAK have been killed in fierce clashes over the past two days. The clashes are still ongoing.

"Three bases in Iraqi territory were providing assistance to the terrorists. ... All the bases have fallen into the hands of the (Iranian) forces," IRNA quoted Ranjbarzadeh as saying. He said PEJAK rebels have sustained a "heavy and historic defeat."

PEJAK rebels say Iranian forces entered Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region to fight them. They claim that rebels have killed 53 Iranian soldiers and wounded 43 while only two PEJAK members were killed and seven wounded in clashes.



Iran threatened last week to attack PEJAK bases in Iraqi Kurdistan after accusing the president of the regional government, Massoud Barzani, of providing bases to the group without informing the central government in Baghdad.

PEJAK, which stands in Kurdish for the "Party of Free Life of Kurdistan," has been involved in sporadic armed clashes with Iranian forces in recent years. The rebels say they are fighting for greater rights for their minority community.

Iran has accused the U.S., Britain and Israel of seeking to incite tension on Iran's borders to undermine the government in Tehran, charges those countries have denied.

Iran has sporadically bombed PEJAK bases deep inside Iraqi Kurdistan.



# Turkey responds to Kurdish autonomy vote with a military offensive against Kurdish rebels

By Associated Press

**A**NKARA, Turkey — Turkish soldiers, air force bombers and helicopter gunships conducted a major offensive in southeastern Turkey on Friday after Kurdish legislators declared autonomy in the region and more than a dozen soldiers were killed there by Kurdish rebels.

After Friday prayers in this mostly Muslim nation, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said violence by the Kurdish rebels in the Diyarbakir area will achieve nothing.

“What they did is never going to drag us to the table,” Erdogan said of the Kurdish guerrillas. “If they want to make peace, there is only one thing to do: the terrorist organization must lay down arms,” he said in nationally televised comments in Istanbul.

In a rare show of unity, Erdogan’s ruling party and the opposition issued a joint parliamentary declaration denouncing the violence and vowing solidarity against “terrorism and separatist attempts.”

On Thursday, Kurdish guerrillas attacked Turkish forces in Diyarbakir, leaving 13 soldiers and seven rebels dead. It was the deadliest violence involving the Kurdish guerrillas in three years. That clash and the autonomy declaration by the regional Kurdish legislators also sparked anti-Kurdish protests across Turkey, including a firebomb attack on a closed office of the Kurdish political party on Thursday night in Ankara, the capital.

The rebel attack, and the autonomy vote, occurred hours after lawmakers from the country’s Kurdish party and the government failed to reach an agreement to end a boycott of Turkey’s Parliament in Ankara by Kurdish legislators.

Kurdish lawmakers have said they will not take their oath of office until



five pro-Kurdish legislators who are charged with ties to Kurdish rebels are released from jail and another Kurdish politician, Hatip Dicle — whose election to Parliament was canceled due to a conviction for ties to the rebels — is allowed to work in Parliament.

The military’s offensive involves hundreds of elite soldiers sent to remote areas of southeastern Turkey where Kurdish rebels are believed to be hiding. The area is near northern Iraq, where Kurdish rebels have long been based. Turkey’s military declined to comment when asked if the offensive has caused casualties.

Kurdish politicians have long pushed for greater cultural and political rights for Kurds, who make up around 20 percent of Turkey’s 74 million people. Since Kurdish rebels took up arms in 1984 to seek autonomy in their southeastern region, the conflict has killed nearly 40,000 people.

After an umbrella group that includes Turkey’s Kurdish party proclaimed Kurdish autonomy in Diyarbakir on Thursday, the prosecutor’s office the region’s largest city said it was examining the declaration, which the government sees as a threat to national unity. Prosecutors are expected to press criminal charges against dozens of Kurdish lawmakers, politicians and activists after the probe.

Meanwhile, NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen

denounced Thursday’s rebel attack on Turkish soldiers.

“I strongly condemn the terrorist attack in Diyarbakir province,” Rasmussen said in a statement on Friday. “Such heinous attacks have no justification. I express my heartfelt condolences to the families of those who were killed. NATO allies stand in full solidarity against the scourge of terrorism.”

Dutch legislator Ria Oomen-Ruijten, a member of the European Parliament, also condemned the attack and urged Kurdish lawmakers to distance themselves from the rebels who are regarded as a terrorist group by the West.

“I urge the newly elected (Kurdish) members of Parliament to distance themselves from this unacceptable violent attack and call upon them to make a fresh start in the peace settlement,” she said. “The only way forward is through political dialogue and concrete initiatives for reconciliation.”

In Turkey on Friday, top generals and senior Cabinet members stood by coffins of the dead soldiers draped in the red and white Turkish flag at a solemn funeral service at a military base in Diyarbakir and prayed for them.

Thursday’s military casualties were the highest since the rebels of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party killed 17 soldiers in an October 2008 attack on a military unit on the Iraqi border.

The rebels also killed a dozen soldiers in an ambush along the Iraqi border in October 2007, an attack that triggered a weeklong air-and-ground Turkish offensive in early 2008 against Kurdish rebel bases in northern Iraq.

AFP

## Leon Panetta achève sa visite en Irak par un saut au Kurdistan

ERBIL (Irak) - 12 juillet 2011 (AFP)

LE SECRÉTAIRE américain à la Défense Leon Panetta a achevé mardi sa visite de trois jours en Irak en rencontrant le président de la région autonome du Kurdistan Massoud Barzani, favorable au maintien de troupes américaines après 2011, a constaté un journaliste de l'AFP.

Par ailleurs, le mouvement du chef radical chiite Moqtada Sadr a vivement réagi aux déclarations du responsable américain affirmant que ses soldats mènent seules des opérations contre les insurgés chiites soutenus par l'Iran, qui ont tué 17 soldats en cinq semaines.

M. Panetta est arrivé mardi matin à Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan, après avoir discuté la veille avec les dirigeants irakiens du maintien d'une présence militaire américaine après la fin de l'année et surtout les avertir que ses soldats allaient réagir à la multiplication des attaques des insurgés chiites proches de l'Iran.

Nous sommes étonnés par l'absence de réactions des dirigeants politiques et militaires irakiens après les propos du secrétaire américain à la Défense qui se moque ouvertement de la souveraineté irakienne et fait fi de l'accord de sécurité signé en novembre 2008 entre Bagdad et Washington, a affirmé mardi à Najaf, le porte-parole du mouvement sadriste, Salah al-Obeidi.

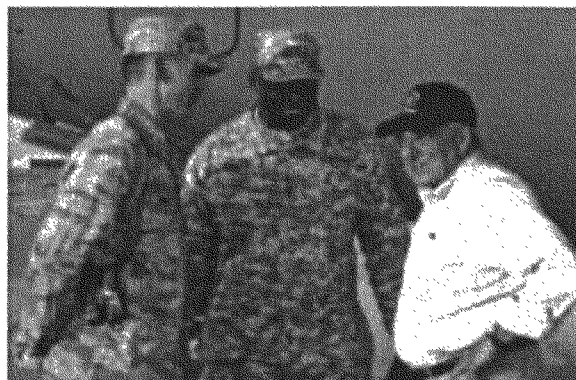
Pour notre part, nous considérons les occupants comme nos ennemis et il en sera ainsi jusqu'à leur départ de notre pays, a-t-il dit.

Lundi, lors d'une rencontre avec 150 soldats réunis dans le Camp Victory près de l'aéroport de Bagdad, M. Panetta avait affirmé: Nous devons agir unilatéralement contre les menaces (des groupes chiites) et nous le faisons.

Pour sa part, le général Llyod Austin, commandant des forces américaines en Irak, a estimé que, selon l'accord de sécurité c'est à l'Irak qu'incombe la responsabilité d'assurer la sécurité de nos forces.

Mais, avait-il confié aux journalistes, s'il n'y a pas moyen d'agir avec les forces de sécurité irakiennes, nous patrouillerons autour de nos bases et je ferai ce qui doit être fait pour protéger mes soldats, sans plus de détails.

Par ailleurs, un communiqué du cabinet du chef du gouvernement publié lundi soir avait indiqué que les deux parties ont discuté des moyens d'aider les forces de sécurité irakiennes dans les domaines de la formation et de la



Le secrétaire d'Etat à la Défense, Leon Panetta, en visite en Irak, le 11 juillet 2011 à Bagdad

fourniture d'armes.

Le Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki a souligné la capacité croissante des forces de sécurité irakiennes à atteindre n'importe quelle cible représentant un danger pour la sécurité et la stabilité du pays.

Mais il a laissé peu de chance sur la possibilité d'un accord pour l'extension de la présence militaire américaine au-delà de la fin de l'année comme le veulent les Américains.

La décision finale sur le maintien d'une présence de certaines forces américaines après 2011 dépend d'un consensus national et d'un accord des entités politiques et du Parlement.

Les partis politiques doivent donner dans deux semaines leur réponse finale sur un éventuel maintien d'un contingent militaire américain en Irak après 2011.

Les Kurdes veulent que les soldats américains restent alors que le chef radical chiite Moqtada Sadr y est totalement opposé. Les autres formations ne se sont pas prononcées clairement.

Les responsables américains multiplient depuis plusieurs mois les démarches auprès de Bagdad pour maintenir un contingent.

AFP

## Irak : deux rebelles kurdes et un gardien de la révolution iranien tués

ERBIL (Irak), 17 juil 2011 (AFP)

AU MOINS DEUX insurgés kurdes d'Iran basés en Irak et un gardien de la révolution iranien ont été tués dans de violents accrochages à la frontière entre les deux pays, ont affirmé dimanche les protagonistes.

"Depuis minuit (samedi 21H00 GMT), une bataille est en cours entre le PJAK et l'armée iranienne. Nous avons deux tués et quatre blessés dans nos rangs et il y a des dizaines de morts et de blessés chez nos adversaires", a déclaré à l'AFP à Erbil, la capitale de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, Shirzad Kamankar.

Côté iranien, l'agence officielle Irna citant une "source informée" dans le village frontalier de Sardasht a indiqué que cinq membres du PJAK avaient été tués samedi dans des heurts avec les gardiens de la révolution, la garde prêtreonne du régime en Iran.

"Cinq membres du groupe terroriste PJAK ont été tués samedi soir dans des heurts avec les gardiens de la révolution iraniens. Leurs corps sont transférés à Sardasht", a précisé la source.

"Un autre membre du PJAK a été blessé et il est actuellement détenu par la

Sepah (gardiens de la révolution)", a-t-elle ajouté.

"La Sepah a pris le contrôle de la région frontalière de Sardasht et les forces du PJAK ont abandonné leurs munitions et se sont enfuis", a poursuivi la source, précisant qu'un gardien de la révolution avait été tué dans les affrontements.

Selon M. Kamankar, "l'armée iranienne continue ses bombardements et a donné trois jours aux villageois de la région de Penjween (50 km à l'est de Souleimaniyeh), où ont lieu les combats, pour quitter leurs maisons".

Pour sa part, le secrétaire général du ministère irakien des Pechmergas (combattants kurdes), Jabbar Yawar, a confirmé qu'il y avait des bombardements, mais a qualifié de "rumeurs" les informations sur un ultimatum donné par l'armée iranienne aux villageois.

Les forces iraniennes bombardent régulièrement des zones frontalières kurdes irakiennes qui abritent des indépendantistes du PJAK, un mouvement séparatiste kurde iranien opérant à partir de bases établies dans les montagnes du Kurdistan irakien.

Le 11 juillet, l'Iran avait affirmé qu'il se réservait "le droit" d'attaquer les bases du mouvement séparatiste kurde iranien PJAK au Kurdistan irakien.

"Nous n'autorisons pas les terroristes à s'installer en territoire irakien avec le soutien des Etats-Unis et du régime sioniste (Israël, ndlr) pour aggraver l'Iran. Nous agirons contre ces terroristes", avait expliqué un haut responsable militaire à l'agence Irna.

## Turquie: 13 soldats et 7 rebelles kurdes tués dans des combats

**DIYARBAKIR (Turquie) (AFP) —** Treize soldats turcs et sept rebelles kurdes ont été tués jeudi lors des affrontements les plus meurtriers pour l'armée depuis trois ans dans le sud-est de la Turquie peuplé en majorité de Kurdes, faisant craindre un raidissement d'Ankara sur la question kurde.

Les combats sont survenus au cours d'une opération de l'armée dans une zone montagneuse connue pour être un bastion des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) près de la ville de Silvan, dans la province de Diyarbakir, les soldats étant tombés dans un guet-apens, ont indiqué des sources locales de sécurité.

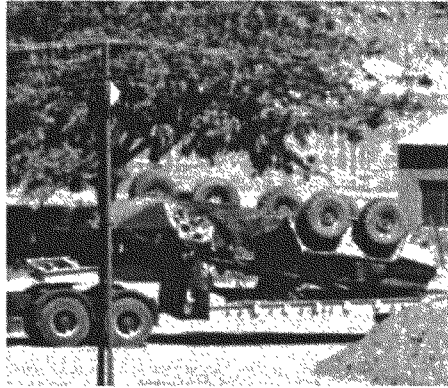
Au cours des heures, 13 soldats ont été tués et sept autres blessés, dont deux grièvement, a affirmé le gouverneur de Diyarbakir, Mustafa Toprak.

Sept rebelles ont été tués dans les combats qui continuaient de faire rage jeudi soir, l'armée disposant du soutien d'hélicoptères, ont ajouté les sources de sécurité, précisant que les affrontements avaient provoqué un incendie de forêt.

Le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a convoqué une réunion extraordinaire à Ankara après l'attaque.

A l'issue de la rencontre, M. Erdogan a exprimé dans un communiqué la détermination d'Ankara. "Les objectifs des forces qui sont derrière cet événement sont clairs. (Mais) la Turquie a la force et la détermination pour surmonter la question du terrorisme", a-t-il dit.

Ces combats sont les plus meur-



triers pour l'armée turque depuis la mort en octobre 2008 de 17 soldats dans l'attaque d'un poste militaire par les rebelles près de la frontière irakienne.

En octobre 2007, la mort de 12 soldats dans une embuscade avait conduit la Turquie à mener des raids aériens contre les bases arrière du PKK dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, puis une opération terrestre de huit jours en territoire irakien, en février 2008.

Le président du parlement Cemil Cicek a réagi avec virulence aux derniers combats en appelant les protagonistes de la question kurde à choisir leur camp.

"D'un côté la démocratie, la paix et la liberté, mais de l'autre le sang, la haine et la barbarie... Désormais, chacun doit dire quelle est sa ligne. Ou on est du côté de la démocratie ou bien on est avec ceux qui crachent leur haine et font couler le sang", a-t-il dit, cité par l'agence Anatolie.

Ses propos interviennent dans un contexte de tensions politiques avec les Kurdes.

Les députés kurdes --36 élus sur un total de 550 aux législatives du 12 juin-- ont refusé de prêter serment au parlement pour protester contre le maintien en détention provisoire de cinq des leurs, accusés de liens avec la branche urbaine du PKK, et l'invalidation d'un 36e élu en raison d'une condamnation à la prison pour "propagande terroriste".

Le président du principal parti pro-kurde de Turquie, le Parti pour la paix et la démocratie (BDP), Selahattin Demirtas, a présenté jeudi ses condoléances pour la mort des soldats, avant de dénoncer un manque de volonté politique pour résoudre la question kurde.

Les Etats-Unis, qui considèrent le PKK comme une organisation terroriste ont condamné l'attaque, survenue alors que la secrétaire d'Etat Hillary Clinton était en route pour Istanbul, afin de participer à la réunion du groupe de contact sur la Libye et de s'entretenir avec les dirigeants turcs.

Mme Clinton, arrivée dans la nuit de jeudi à vendredi, s'est dite "profondément attristée".

"Nous nous tenons auprès de la Turquie dans sa lutte contre le PKK (et) soutenons le combat de la Turquie contre le terrorisme", a déclaré la chef de la diplomatie américaine dans un communiqué.

Les accrochages entre les forces de sécurité se sont multipliés depuis les élections de juin, dans un conflit qui a fait quelque 45.000 morts depuis le début de l'insurrection du PKK, en 1984.

AFP

## Turquie: Des milliers de personnes conspuent le PKK à Istanbul et Ankara

ISTANBUL, 17 juillet 2011 (AFP)

**DES MILLIERS** de personnes ont manifesté dimanche à Istanbul et Ankara pour dénoncer les rebelles séparatistes kurdes qui ont tué treize soldats turcs dans une embuscade la semaine dernière, ont rapporté les médias.

A Istanbul ils étaient plus de 5.000 à défiler avec des drapeaux turcs sur l'avenue Istiklal, la grande rue piétonne de la rive européenne de la métropole, a constaté un photographe de l'AFP.

"Non au terrorisme" et "A Bas le PKK", le Parti des travailleurs du

Kurdistan, ont scandé les manifestants réunis à l'appel d'un message sur Facebook.

A Ankara, environ 4.000 manifestants, brandissant eux aussi le drapeau turc, ont marché dans le centre-ville. La manifestation s'est terminée dans le mausolée d'Atatürk, le père fondateur de la Turquie moderne, ont rapporté les chaînes de télévision.

Treize soldats ont été tués et sept blessés jeudi dans une attaque du PKK dans le sud-est anatolien. Les pertes enregistrées par l'armée sont les plus lourdes qu'elle ait subies depuis octobre 2008.

Les affrontements ont suscité une vive émotion en Turquie.

## Syrie: réunion d'opposants à Istanbul, Clinton en demi-teinte face à Damas



ISTANBUL (AFP)

Plus de 300 opposants syriens se sont réunis samedi à Istanbul avec l'ambition de rassembler l'opposition, cependant le chef de la diplomatie américaine Hillary Clinton, également en Turquie, s'est montrée nettement en retrait dans sa condamnation du régime de Bachar al-Assad.

Les opposants syriens, réunis dans une salle de conférence de la banlieue d'Istanbul pour une "Conférence de Salut national", ont commencé leurs travaux par l'hymne national syrien et une minute de prière à la mémoire des victimes de la répression.

Plus d'un million de personnes ont manifesté vendredi contre le régime en Syrie, provoquant une répression qui a coûté la vie à 28 manifestants, selon des militants.

"Le régime a perdu sa légitimité. Il ne peut pas rester au pouvoir après le sang versé, il doit répondre aux revendications des opposants et quitter le pouvoir d'une manière pacifique", a déclaré Mechaal al-Tamo, un militant kurde intervenant par téléphone depuis Damas.

Les opposants ont aussi déploré l'attaque vendredi soir des locaux d'une réunion jumelle, qui devait avoir lieu simultanément à Damas et a été annulée.

"Hier soir le lieu de la conférence a été attaqué, il y a eu neuf martyrs et cent blessés à Damas, donc la conférence n'a pas eu lieu. Les victimes étaient autour du lieu de la conférence pour la protéger quand les policiers en civil ont attaqué", a affirmé à l'AFP Wael el-Hafez, chef du bureau politique du Mouvement populaire pour le changement en Syrie.

Après des discussions parfois houleuses, marquées par des objections virulentes de représentants kurdes réclamant une prise en compte de leur identité ethnique, les participants à la conférence se sont mis d'accord sur une déclaration finale, qu'ils devaient encore entériner par un vote.

Ce texte comprend "des appels généraux à l'unité nationale, à l'unité des opposants", selon M. Hafez, médecin installé à Paris. Une première mouture du texte insistait sur la nécessité d'un "gouvernement démocratique et pluraliste où tous les Syriens peuvent participer comme des citoyens égaux".

Les participants devaient aussi élire 25 représentants permanents, dont la définition du rôle a donné lieu à des controverses, certains opposants estimant que la conférence, dominée par des courants islamistes, n'était pas assez représentative pour parler au nom de l'ensemble de la révolution syrienne.

"Nous allons élire une liste de 25 personnes qui représenteront cette conférence d'Istanbul, auxquelles s'ajouteront 50 autres représentants pour l'intérieur, pour la Syrie, soit au total 75 personnes qui normalement nommeront un bureau exécutif qui va représenter la révolution syrienne", a indiqué M. Hafez.

Une réunion sans précédent d'opposants s'était déroulée le 27 juin à Damas, et deux réunions de l'opposition syrienne ont déjà eu lieu en Turquie, en avril et en juin.

"Les efforts de l'opposition pour se regrouper, pour s'organiser et définir un programme constituent une part importante de la réforme politique", a pour sa part déclaré Hillary Clinton, en visite à Istanbul.

*Une "Conférence de Salut national" réunissant plus de 300 opposants syriens s'est ouverte samedi à Istanbul pour examiner les moyens de renverser le régime de Bachar al-Assad, tandis qu'une réunion jumelle prévue à Damas a été annulée en raison des violences de la veille. (c) Afp*

Mais ses propos se sont situés en net retrait par rapport à ses déclarations du début de la semaine.

La tentative des Syriens de constituer une opposition est "encourageante", a-t-elle dit, évoquant son espoir d'une "coopération pacifique avec le gouvernement en vue d'un avenir meilleur".

Elle a jugé, de manière plus générale, que la situation syrienne ne pouvait pas être influencée de l'extérieur.

"Aucun d'entre nous n'a vraiment d'influence, en dehors du fait de dire ce que nous croyons, et d'encourager les changements que nous espérons", a-t-elle déclaré à la chaîne de télévision CNN-Türk.

"Ce qui se passe en Syrie est très incertain et troublant, parce que nombre d'entre nous avaient espéré que le président Assad ferait les réformes nécessaires", a-t-elle ajouté.

Or Mme Clinton avait franchi un pas lundi en estimant, pour la première fois, que M. Assad avait "perdu sa légitimité".

"Le président Assad n'est pas indispensable et nous n'avons absolument pas intérêt à ce qu'il reste au pouvoir", avait-elle lancé, avertissant le dirigeant syrien qu'il ferait "une erreur" en pensant que Washington redoute sa chute.



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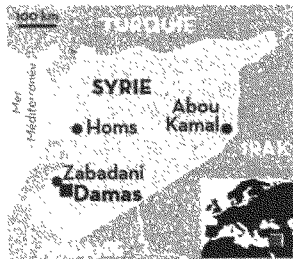
# L'opposition syrienne prend forme en Turquie



Les divisions entre Arabes et Kurdes, laïcs et religieux, n'ont pas épargné la réunion de samedi. PHOTO BULENT KILIC. AFP

**P**eu à peu, dans la douleur et les controverses, l'opposition syrienne s'organise. Ce week-end se tenait à Istanbul, en Turquie, la sixième réunion d'opposants syriens à l'extérieur du pays. Avec, cette fois-ci, l'objectif clairement affiché d'en sortir avec une structure représentative, qui puisse servir tout à la fois de représentant et de porte-voix aux contestataires, qui manifestent de plus en plus nombreux depuis quatre mois, malgré une féroce répression qui a provoqué la mort d'au moins 2000 personnes et conduit à des dizaines de milliers d'arrestations.

**Clandestinité.** L'objectif de cette conférence de salut national, qui réunissait quelque 300 opposants syriens, est partiellement rempli : une «déclaration nationale de principes, vision pour l'avenir de la Syrie» a été adoptée hier, et un Conseil de salut national de 25 membres mis sur pied. En partie parce que le régime syrien a empêché violemment, vendredi, la tenue d'une réunion parallèle dans un faubourg de Damas. Le rassemblement a été attaqué à balles réelles par les milices et services de renseignement du pouvoir, tuant



neuf personnes. Or, les délégués à l'intérieur du pays devaient désigner 50 représentants au conseil, afin de compter au total 75 membres. La répression, qui contraint des opposants de l'intérieur à la clandestinité, ne facilite pas les contacts et les échanges avec les «exilés».

Ce Conseil de salut national, censé élire un exécutif restreint de onze membres, est présidé par l'avocat Aytham al-Maleh, personnalité très respectée et responsable de l'Association des droits de l'homme en Syrie. Il va entamer immédiatement une

tournée des capitales européennes, afin de porter les revendications des manifestants, présenter le projet de l'opposition pour une «Syrie démocratique, moderne, qui respecte la liberté et la dignité des personnes et les droits de

l'homme», mais aussi pour montrer qu'il existe une alternative crédible au régime de Bachar al-Assad, qui use, depuis le début de la crise, du registre «moi ou le chaos». Comme le résume Aytham al-Maleh, cette instance exécutive a pour ambition de devenir un gouvernement de l'ombre, à l'instar du Conseil national de transition libyen, aujourd'hui reconnu par 26 pays.

Mais la répression actuelle n'est pas la seule cause des difficultés de l'opposition syrienne à se structurer. Des années de clandestinité et d'exil ont atomisé la scène politique, qui reste traversée par de profonds clivages. A la division entre exilés et opposants de l'intérieur, s'ajou-

**Cette instance exécutive a pour ambition de devenir un gouvernement de l'ombre, à l'instar du Conseil national de transition libyen.**

tent celles entre Arabes et Kurdes, ou encore entre laïcs et religieux. La réunion d'Istanbul, par moments très agitée, n'a pas échappé à ces clivages. Ainsi, les délégués kurdes ont quitté la réunion faute d'obtenir un engage-

ment à reconnaître la double identité «arabe ET kurde» de la future nouvelle Syrie.

**Tanks.** Les militants de la laïcité et une partie des chrétiens ont également déserté la réunion, estimant que les Frères musulmans y avaient trop de poids. La confrérie a longtemps été l'ennemi le plus redoutable, et le plus persécuté par le régime baassiste, que ce soit sous Hafez al-Assad, au pouvoir de 1970 à 2000, ou sous son fils, Bachar. Plus organisés, plus nombreux que les autres, les Frères musulmans bénéficient surtout du soutien à peine voilé de la Turquie du Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, dont le parti islamiste modéré AKP est cité en modèle dans tout le monde arabe sunnite.

Pendant ce temps, la répression se poursuit. Des tanks sont entrés hier à Homs, où les affrontements ont fait au moins 30 morts. Une opération militaire d'envergure semblait imminente à Abou Kamal, près de la frontière irakienne, après le ralliement de soldats aux manifestants. Enfin, le célèbre écrivain et opposant Ali Abdallah a été arrêté hier à Qatana, à 25 km au sud de la capitale.

**CHRISTOPHE AYAD**

# Iraq-U.S. talks on troops bog down

BAGHDAD

Maliki and Panetta seek to extend U.S. stay but fail to reach a formula

BY TIM ARANGO

The government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki is privately telling U.S. officials that it wants their army to stay here after this year.

The Americans are privately telling Iraqi counterparts that they want to stay.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

But under what conditions, and at what price to the Americans who stay behind?

U.S. combat deaths are on the rise here, an ominous harbinger of what lies ahead if an agreement is reached to keep troops here after the withdrawal deadline set for the end of the year. For the same Iraqi government that wants the Americans to stay is also tacitly condoning attacks by Shiite militias on U.S. troops, by failing to respond as aggressively to their attacks as it does to those of Sunni insurgent groups.

The Maliki government's unwillingness or inability to rein in the Shiite militias adds a new element to a discussion that until now had been centered on the capabilities of the Iraqi security forces and domestic political considerations in Washington and Baghdad, not the safety of U.S. soldiers.

Lately, U.S. officials have been vocal in accusing Iran of arming militias that are attacking U.S. forces, but less vocal in accusing the Iraqi government of complicity.

"Iran is very directly supporting extremist Shia groups which are killing our troops," Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told reporters recently in Washington. He said any discussion with the Iraqi government to keep a force here next year "has to be done in conjunction with control of Iran in that regard."

On Monday, during his first visit to Iraq as secretary of defense, Leon E. Panetta also raised the alarm, and suggested that the Iraqi government could do more.

Recently, the Iraqi Army conducted an operation in southern Iraq, the country's Shiite heartland, against the militias. But the campaign fizzled with no major arrests and no significant impact on the militant networks.

In a recent interview, Maj. Gen. Jeffrey S. Buchanan, the top U.S. military spokesman in Iraq, admitted as much. "I think the overall effect has been just one of disruption," he said. "They have temporarily disrupted some of the networks; they have not defeated any."



SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES-AFP

American soldiers speaking with a local Iraqi while on patrol in Babil Province. Washington and Baghdad must reach an accord to allow the troops to stay after 2011.

General Buchanan said the Iraqi forces began the operations, which took place in Maysan Province and Basra, with a list of "high value targets." But he says they arrested few of the men they were looking for. The arrests that were made, he said, were, "low-hanging fruit."

When asked if the Iraqi government was doing enough to restrain the groups killing Americans, he said, "I think that they can certainly do more."

The unequal response by the Iraqi security forces to the threats from Sunni and Shiite insurgent groups is a legacy of the sectarianism that was violently unleashed by the U.S. invasion eight years ago. That upended the Sunnis' long reign and installed a government dominated by Shiites nursing grudges against their former oppressors that persist to this day.

Meanwhile, another layer of frustration for the Americans, in addition to Iraq's reluctance to confront the Shiite militias, is the judicial system, which is also often infected with sectarianism.

A recent case in Hilla, a town in Babil Province, south of Baghdad, illustrates

**The question is how to make Iraq work more like South Korea and less like Somalia or some other failed state.**

the problem. A U.S. Army unit said it had caught three men laying a roadside bomb and turned them over to the local judiciary. According to a local official, the men were members of the Promised Day Brigade, a militia under the control of Moktada al-Sadr, the anti-American Shiite cleric whose followers in Parlia-

ment helped Mr. Mahki secure a second term as prime minister.

Yet the men were acquitted after a two-hour trial in which the court barred U.S. military officials from testifying. The case became public only because a frustrated U.S. commander issued his own news release, outside the usual communications of the U.S. military command in Baghdad.

"We are deeply disappointed in the court's decision," Col. Reginald Allen, commander of the Third Armored Cavalry Regiment, said in the statement. "To free three suspects without a fair trial, after they were found at the crime scene with a clear intent to commit harm, undermines the rule of law and sends a terrible message that can only serve to embolden the enemies of a free and secure Iraq."

Colonel Allen's comments amounted to unusual candor from a U.S. official about frustrations in operating in Iraq today, and they raised the ire of public relations officials at the U.S. Embassy here. The officials are emphasizing the narrative that Iraq and the United States are entering a new phase in their relationship, a more normalized one between two sovereign countries, even as the recent attacks underscore the violent reality.

Assuming that the two uneasy partners can find a way to reach their mutually agreed goal of keeping a U.S. military presence beyond the end of this year, the question is how to make Iraq work more like South Korea and less like Somalia or some other failed state.

The Americans can keep pushing Iraq's leaders to clamp down more severely on the militias, but that may be too much to ask of a weak and divided government:

Under the security agreement, U.S. troops can act only in self-defense.

Mr. Panetta said the Americans would take matters into their own hands if the Iraqis did not step up, and the blowback was immediate. A spokesman for Mr. Maliki said any such operations would be "a violation of the security agreement signed between Iraq and the United States."

All things being equal, the Iraqis would prefer an agreement between the two governments for a continued troop presence without the political complications that would come from submitting it to Parliament. The Americans have insisted any deal be approved in Parliament because their lawyers have decided it is the only way to secure legal immunities for any soldiers that stay.

To make this palatable in Iraq and the United States, the public relations effort is to draft language that is politically acceptable yet obscures the reality that U.S. soldiers will continue to face an enemy, will need to defend themselves and will almost certainly continue to die.

**GULF TIMES**

20 JULY 2011

## Kurdish nationalism rises with Arab unrest Sudan split

By Namu Abdulla / Reuters

**ARBIL, Iraq** - On the day the newest African nation, South Sudan, was born, Iraqi Kurdish leader Barham Salih used his iPad to tweet his feelings to the world: "Watching history in (the) making as South Sudan goes independent."

"Moral of story, right to self-determination cannot be denied by genocide."

With the emergence of a new nation in Africa and uprisings against autocracies across the Arab world, Kurds in Iraq's semi-autonomous north are speaking in louder voices about the possibility of increasing autonomy if, as some Kurds fear, Iraq's central government becomes more authoritarian

In parts of Turkey, Syria and Iran, Kurds are also seeing new possibilities of freedom beyond governments who have historically repressed their Kurdish minorities.

"There is a lot of inspiration from southern Sudan," said Salih, prime minister of Iraqi Kurdistan, where Kurdish flags and colours -- red, white and green -- are far more common than the red, white and black of Iraq.

"But more important is the deep concern that most of us feel about the direction of the politics of Baghdad as it goes towards centralisation and authoritarianism."

Iraq's central government and the Kurdish region -- three of Iraq's 18 provinces -- have unresolved issues over borders and oil rights. Iraqi Kurdistan has 45 billion barrels of crude reserves.

With a population of about 30 million, largely living in Iraq, Iran, Syria

and Turkey, Kurds are an ethnic group whose culture and language separate them from Arabs, Turks and Persians, with whom they share land.

Largely Muslim, they have been subject to repression by other Muslims who see them as separatists.

After the first Gulf War in 1991 Western powers provided a safe haven for Iraq's Kurds, allowing them to use their natural resources to start building a modern state.

Notions of Kurdish nationalism were reinforced by the 2003 invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein as much of Iraq tumbled into sectarian warfare that threatened its survival as a single state.

### IN ASCENDANCE?

"For the first time in their modern history, the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey, at least, are cautiously ascending," said author Michael Gunter, who has written on the evolution of Kurds in the two countries.

He said Turkey's desire to join the European Union has forced Turkey to improve Kurdish lives in the southeast. Kurdish music is heard in Turkish cities such as Diyarbakir, and a Kurdish-language TV channel broadcasts round-the-clock.

After 27 years of conflict between Turkey and Kurdish rebels, both Kurds and Turks appear to prefer more peaceful solutions to end the hostility.

Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan has acknowledged the existence of a Kurdish problem, long denied as a "security issue", and promised to solve it. In June elections, Kurds won 36 parliament seats, almost double their previous total.

From the streets of Syria's Qamishli, where Kurdish protesters call for freedom, to the Citadel in Arbil, where a Kurdish flag waves over Iraq's biggest boomtown, many Kurds see a promising future for pan-Kurdish nationalism.

"There is no such a thing as half-revolution," said Khalid Ali, a Syrian Kurdish activist in Arbil.

"Syrians have decided it. The toppling of Bashar al-Assad is just matter of time," he said, referring to the Syrian leader who has cracked down on pro-democracy protests. Syria blames armed groups linked to Islamists for stirring violence.

Exiled Syrian activists living in Iraqi Kurdistan are using social media tools such as Facebook, and collect donated money to support protesters at home.

"If this regime falls, it would be better for the Kurds. They will be free to work in their own regions," said Mahmoud Ya'aqub, 34, who administers Facebook groups in Arbil.

David Romano, a Middle East politics professor at Missouri State University, says the success of the Syrian revolution would have profound impact on other countries, including Iran.

"Iran will be more isolated if Syria falls," said Romano, the author of *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement*.

From a hideout high in the Qandil Mountains, Amir Karimi, a senior anti-Iran rebel leader, espouses a more radical vision.

"If Syria falls, Iran would be the next target," he said. "Turkey would be left with two choices: Either to wipe out the Kurds completely ... or surrender to reality."

# The Kurdish question and the AKP



**Columnists**  
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**T**he Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) attack which killed 13 soldiers last week once again demonstrates that the Kurdish question is the most daunting challenge facing Turkey.

One can only hope that the Justice and Development Party (AKP) will not fall into the trap of those who oppose a political solution.

The political aspirations of Turkey's 15 to 20 million-strong Kurdish minority have reached unprecedented levels in the last few years. To be sure, the PKK insurgency is not as strong as it was in the 1990s. But Kurdish nationalism, as a political force, is alive and well across Turkey. Kurdish ethnic, cultural and political demands are fueled by a young and increasingly resentful generation of Kurds who are frustrated and vocal not only in Eastern Anatolia but also in Turkey's large western cities including Istanbul, Mersin, Izmir and Adana. The formative experience of the young Kurdish generation has been the PKK insurgency that began in the 1980s. Although most Turks and a large part of the international community consider the PKK a terrorist organization, most Turkish Kurds romanticize the PKK and its jailed leader, Abdullah Öcalan, who exerts considerable political influence behind bars. To them, the PKK and Öcalan are national symbols of the Kurdish rejection of forced assimilation who have paid a heavy price for the wider recognition of the Kurdish reality.

Today, Kurdish political aspirations are thwarted by legal obstacles which are largely the remnants of Turkey's 1982 Constitution, written under military rule. The current situation of increased Kurdish expectations and limited political space for ethnic recognition does not bode well for Turkey. Raised expectations facing strict political restrictions often create a combustible mix. In 2009, in an attempt to address the root causes of the problem, the AKP launched a democratic opening process which involved a partial amnesty for PKK fighters. This was a step in the right direction. Yet, soon after the Habur border incident, where former PKK fighters were given a hero's welcome by the Kurdish population, the opening turned into an impasse. The AKP faced the worst case scenario: an angry Turkish majority greatly alarmed by Kurdish audacity.

The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) seemed to be the main

beneficiary of the whole process. Under these circumstances, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's democratic instincts reached their natural pragmatic limits. His political discourse took an unmistakably nationalist and intolerant turn in the face of growing Kurdish demands. Since early 2010 and throughout the election campaign the prime minister tried to woo nationalist voters in an attempt to keep the MHP's share of the vote under 10 percent in the June 12 election. This strategy has clearly not worked since the MHP received 13 percent of the vote and the AKP lost ground in the Kurdish Southeast. Now that the elections are over, the most important question is whether the AKP will be able to change course and once again try to address Kurdish demands with the new constitution.

Two crucial steps in the drafting of the new constitution will go a long way in diffusing tension: (1) removing ethnic attributes from Turkish citizenship, and (2) making Turkish the official and not the only recognized language of Turkey. These constitutional changes can pave the way to other crucial legal reforms such as the right to bilingual education.

A more self-confident AKP could also broaden and deepen its former democratic opening by offering permission to Kurdish towns and villages to revert to their original names and allowing more room for local government and administrative decentralization. The party should know that only a more multicultural and less centralized Turkey will satisfy Kurdish demands.

In taking these crucial steps, two additional factors should help the AKP government to find the necessary courage and vision. First, the majority of Turkish Kurds no longer support either the formation of a separate state or the use of force by the PKK. Second, the idea of increased powers for local government, a main demand of many ethnic Kurds, is now supported by Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's Republican People's Party (CHP). Under such circumstances the AKP should face no major problems in forging a parliamentary coalition with either the CHP or the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) to support a new democratization initiative backed by a brand new constitution.

After the events of last week, the challenge for the AKP is to not fall into the trap of opposing a political solution to the Kurdish problem. There are radicals on both sides who have vested interests in the continuation of the conflict. Turkey is once again going through a critical test. Cooler heads should prevail.

**AP** Associated Press

## Turkey probes Kurdish autonomy declaration

ANKARA, Turkey - July 15 2011 - The Associated Press

Prosecutors have launched an investigation into the proclamation of a Kurdish autonomy in the country's largely Kurdish southeast. The prosecutor's office in Diyarbakir, the largest city in the sou-

theast, announced Friday that it is examining the declaration, which the government sees as a threat to national unity.

An umbrella group that includes Turkey's Kurdish party proclaimed Kurdish autonomy in Diyarbakir on Thursday, hours after a clash left 13 soldiers and seven Kurdish guerillas dead in the region.

The deaths of the soldiers and the declaration of autonomy have dramatically fueled tensions in the country, sparking anti-Kurdish rebel protests across the country and a firebomb attack on an office of the Kurdish party in Ankara overnight.



## Turkish nationalist concert-goers protest Aynur songs in Kurdish

ISTANBUL- Daily News with wires

Renowned singer Aynur Doan was forced to leave the stage Friday night at an Istanbul Jazz Festival concert after attracting boos from members of the audience who were angered at her songs in Kurdish.

Shouting slogans such as "The martyrs' blood is not yet dried and Sing Turkish," members of the crowd began throwing objects at Aynur as the Tunceli-born artist is known artistically forcing her to leave the stage during her third song in her mother tongue.

The protest came one day after 13 soldiers were killed in unclear circumstances during a clash with suspected

members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, in the southeastern province of Diyarbakir. Up to seven members of the illegal group were also reported killed in the exchange.

Friday's concert, "Mujeres de Agua" (Women of Water), was organized by Spanish guitarist Javier Limon and featured flamenco renditions by Aynur, Spain's Buika, Israel's Rita and Greece's Glykeria.

The demonstrators also began singing Turkey's national anthem while Buika was on stage after Aynur.

Apart from the nationalist protesters, many in the crowd also saluted Aynur at the end of the concert, shouting their support.



Aynur was protested by members of the audience for singing in Kurdish during an Istanbul Jazz Festival performance. Reuters photo

The Washington Times July 17, 2011

## Kurds battle Iranians at border Turkey clashes with same rebels

By Eli Lake / The Washington Times

Fighting erupted Sunday between Iranian Kurdish insurgents and the Islamic republic's military forces near Iran's border with Kurdish Iraq. At least two Iranian Kurdish rebels and one member of the Iranian

Revolutionary Guard Corps were killed during clashes along the border with Iraq, according to reports from Iraqi Kurdistan, citing officials on both sides.

The rebels are affiliated with the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan, or PJAK, an outlaw group that has waged attacks on Turkey and Iran from the mountainous regions in Iraq. PJAK has ties with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which carried out an attack on Turkish soldiers Thursday that killed 13 and wounded seven others.

"Since midnight, heavy battles have been ongoing between PJAK and the Iranian army, resulting in injuries among elements of our group," rebel spokesman Sherzad Kamankar told Agence France-Press on Sunday.

The border clash could portend renewed tensions between Iraq and Iran as the U.S. government prepares to fully end the military mission in Iraq by the end of the calendar year.

Earlier this month, Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta confirmed that Iran's government had stepped up its weapons shipments to Shiite extremist groups, reprising a strategy Iran tried in 2007 and 2008 to drive the U.S. military out of Iraq.

Last week, Iran warned that it reserved the right to attack the bases of the PJAK in neighboring Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region.

According to Mr. Kamankar, Iranian forces warned villagers living in areas along Iraq's side of the border to evacuate their homes within three days. But Kurdish government officials dismissed that report, according to Agence France-Press.

Mr. Kamankar told Agence France-Press that two rebels were killed and four were wounded, and that Iranian forces had suffered several casualties in the fighting near the Banjaween area of Iraqi Kurdistan's Sulaimaniyah province. Iran's official IRNA news agency said five PJAK members and a Revolutionary Guard Corps member were killed.

Iran and Turkey have restive Kurdish minorities, as did Iraq when Saddam Hussein was dictator. The U.S. invasion set up an Iraqi government where Kurds have much more power and an auto-

nous enclave. Both Tehran and Ankara have charged official connivance by Iraqi Kurds and have called northern Iraq an operating base for the rebels.

The Kurdistan regional government has cooperated with the Turkey against the PKK and does not accord that guerrilla group any official status or aid.

"Turkey and Iran now have a common enemy in Iraq and there are even rumors that the Turks breached the Iraqi border as well, though they are unconfirmed," a security consultant with extensive contacts in the Persian Gulf said.

The clash is indicative of complicated, multiplayer jockeying for influence in the new Iraq.

"This comes conveniently at a time when all Iran wants to do is provoke the U.S. to stay in Iraq, so they have the pretext of launching an all out insurgency through the Madhi Army and others to create a Shiite state in Iraq," the security consultant concluded.

## Democratic autonomy sparks debate among Kurdish intellectuals

TODAY'S ZAMAN, ISTANBUL

**T**he Democratic Society Congress (DTK) last week declared the democratic autonomy of the Kurdish-dominated provinces of the East and Southeast in what was a highly provocative statement, particularly because it came on the same day the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) killed 13 soldiers in an ambush in Diyarbakir province's Silvan district.

The declaration understandably angered nationalists and the average Turk, but some Kurdish intellectuals have also said they were not pleased with it.

The DTK was founded last year after the Constitutional Court decided to shut down the Democratic Society Party (DTP) because of its separatist tendencies.

Altan Tan, who was elected to Parliament as an independent deputy supported by the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), said he was against the unilateral declaration of autonomy at this time and in this manner. Tan, who signed the declaration with some reservations, said: The government and the prime minister refuse to recognize the Kurdish people, that is true. They believe that education in one's mother tongue will cause the country to disintegrate, and that is why our colleagues wanted to declare autonomy, but we didn't go to Parliament to talk about these things. There is a new constitution being drafted, and we haven't put forward our proposals for that. I find that declaring autonomy without doing any of this is rushing things.

The BDP has been boycotting Parliament in protest of court rulings that barred some of its elected candidates who are currently in jail from taking seats.

Former BDP Siirt deputy Osman Ozçelik said the declaration actually is a request for autonomy, not a declaration of autonomy. He said, There can be no autonomy without constitutional change, adding: Autonomy can only be realized if it is accepted within the constitutional system through a consensus that will eventually work to strengthen the local autonomous units of a region



Ahmet Turk (L, front row) and Selahattin Demirtas (2nd left, front row) during the meeting in which Democratic Society Congress members declared the democratic autonomy of a number of provinces in the East and Southeast.

and its local governments. It can be declared bilaterally.

Meanwhile, the DTK and BDP are planning to send a delegation to Europe to examine the existing forms of autonomy in European countries. Eight commissions under the DTK have been established to examine the issue. The DTK is planning to organize seminars both in the region and in the other parts of Turkey to explain what democratic autonomy entails. Their main argument in these seminars will be that autonomy does not mean disintegration or separation but empowering local governments to increase the welfare of the local population.

Another BDP-endorsed deputy and the founder of the Participatory Democracy Party (KADEP), Serafettin Elçi, seconded Tan, saying that the timing and manner of the declaration was wrong. There is another problem, though. Autonomy, by definition, is a special contract a country makes with a region within its own boundaries. It is a bilateral agreement reached with the government in terms of authority and governance. It has to be bilateral. I am in no way against granting autonomy to the Southeast. This can be discussed and realized through a general public reform or specific implementation, but this involves serious legal and political processes. There are many examples, from Kosovo to Ossetia and Tibet. Such a thing should be discussed in Parliament

and reflected in the constitution after arrival at a joint decision, he said in an interview with Milliyet on Monday.

You can't declare autonomy in a press conference. There are no examples of this in the world, nor is it serious. A unilateral autonomy sounds like a unilateral marriage, Elçi noted.

Tarik Ziya Ekinci, a Kurdish politician and writer, has said, There is absolutely no sense to this declaration of democratic autonomy. In an interview with the Radikal daily, Ekinci said: It has no essence at all. When you use an expression, you have essence and shape. In terms of shape and form, they have chosen beautiful words and referred to international agreements [in the declaration], but what is really in it? There is no practical content in any of the DTK's words.

He said the important thing was to produce a formula to work within the legal system and be agreed upon with the government. Now they will establish their own parliament, and it will be a parliament recognized by no one. They currently have the DTK right now, which is similar to a parliament of their own. Some people in the DTK will move to the new parliament, and they will continue making decisions together. The party [BDP] will then implement these policies. There is really nothing that concerns the government, the state, society and Turkey.

He recalled that Turkey's Kurds

once opened a Kurdish parliament abroad. What happened to that one? It shut down and disappeared, Ekinci said, noting that the declaration of autonomy was an empty discourse. Anything that cannot be placed within the constitution and whose methods are not laid out clearly is doomed to remain a personal effort, he said.

Ekinci also said it didn't make much sense to declare autonomy in order to garner public support. It is also meaningless for prosecutors to file charges against this declaration.

What is there to take to court? Some people there are saying that they will live autonomously and make sure that citizens can participate in local decisions. It is a right to enable citizens to participate in the political process. The declaration of autonomy is nothing more. If they had declared their independence, then that would be something else and it would be very important, but this is not the case.

He said the only way to democratic autonomy is to go to Parliament

and get involved in drafting the new constitution. You can no longer administer everything in Turkey from the center. Some powers should be given to local governments and councils. You could have, say, five or six provinces and have a state. You could have a huge province like Ostanbul become a single state and the provinces in Trakya [Thrace] become a single state. You could then have 15-20 states, he said.

 Rudaw.Net 19 July 2011

## French Cultural Director Leaving Kurdistan

By HAWAR ABDULRAZZAQ

Amelie Banzet is wrapping up her three-year stint as Director of French Cultural Center in Erbil, where she has been praised for building cultural bridges between Kurdistan and France and addressing women's rights.

The French Cultural Center is run out of the French consulate in Erbil. Its cultural activities have made the consulate the most active among the 30 foreign consulates in the Kurdish capital. Dr. Muhsin Ahmed Omar, the head of the French Department at Salahaddin University in Erbil, attributed this success to Banzet.

"Since her arrival in Kurdistan she has been working very hard and in one month she was able to understand some of the social and cultural problems of Kurdistan," he said.

Banzet said during her tenure as director of the center, she has noticed major cultural developments in Kurdistan, particularly with regard to women.

"Kurdistan has witnessed a lot of progress," she said. "Cultural and educational levels have risen and women have got a lot of opportunities."

Banzet also said she hopes domestic violence will one day be eradicated, welcoming the law by Kurdistan's parliament last month that criminalizes domestic violence.

"That was a big step and I was surprised that it passed," Banzet said. "A lot of people think it's a good law, but passing that law is not easy and maybe in this culture not many people are ready for that kind of law."



Amelie Banzet. Photo Rudaw.

Sahar is a Kurdish woman who works with Banzet at the French Consulate. She said that Banzet has been particularly helpful to Kurdish women and students whenever they have come by.

"Sometimes she's even better than our Kurdish colleagues," Sahar said. "She's a very brave and simple woman. She heavily emphasizes women's rights and she helps Kurdish students who come to the consulate."

Sahar added that out of respect for the Kurdish culture, Banzet always wears traditional Kurdish dresses to ceremonies.

Banzet said during her time in Kurdistan she has met many "strong" women who play leading roles in the Kurdish society. She also believes that Kurdish women can become prime ministers, but she doesn't think it will

happen any time soon.

For Banzet, the cultural differences between Kurdistan and France were educational.

"The culture and lifestyle of Kurdistan is very different from culture and life in my country," she said. "I learned a lot of things from Kurdish culture and when you learn about another culture it helps you to understand more about your own."

One aspect of the Kurdish culture that stood out for Banzet during her time in Kurdistan is the way people stand by each other.

"The aspect of helping among the Kurds is one thing that I will never forget," she said.

Banzet admires the strong family ties in Kurdistan and believes it is one major difference between Kurdish and French societies.

"When you go to the parks on Thursday evenings [the start of the weekend in Kurdistan] all members of the family are there, sitting together from grandfathers to the smallest kids," she said. "But we in Europe are losing this... I love this Kurdish tradition that you know all your neighbors and relatives."

In her work, Banzet also relied on the support of Frederic Tissot, the French consul general in Erbil. Tissot was a doctor in Kurdistan's villages in the 1980s and enjoys strong relations with the Kurdish people and leaders.

Banzet is unsure what the future holds back in France, but she is certain her ties to Kurdistan are unbreakable.

"Maybe I will stay with the government job or work in a private company," she said. "But I will be back to Kurdistan."

## Les forces iraniennes prennent le contrôle de trois camps de rebelles kurdes en Irak

LEMONDE.FR avec AFP

Les forces iraniennes ont pris le contrôle de trois camps du mouvement rebelle kurde iranien PJAK situés en territoire irakien, a annoncé lundi 18 juillet le commandant des Gardiens de la révolution de la région de Sardasht, dans le nord-ouest de l'Irak, cité par l'agence officielle IRNA.

"De l'aide était fournie aux terroristes [du PJAK, Parti pour une vie libre du Kurdistan] depuis trois camps en territoire irakien, et tous ces camps sont tombés aux mains des forces iraniennes, qui contrôlent totalement la région", a déclaré le colonel Delavar



Des rebelles kurdes dans une zone frontalière entre l'Irak et l'Iran, en 2006. AFP/DAVID FURST

Ranjbarzadeh, en précisant que les opérations lancées samedi en territoire irakien par les Gardiens de la révolution se poursuivaient.

"Dans les affrontements entre les forces des Gardiens de la révolution et les éléments contre-révolutionnaires

et terroristes du PJAK, de nombreux éléments [de ce groupe] ont été tués", a-t-il ajouté, en faisant état d'un mort et de trois blessés du côté iranien. Le responsable des Pasdaran (la garde prétorienne du régime islamique iranien) a précisé que les

opérations lancées samedi en territoire irakien par les Gardiens de la révolution se poursuivaient "avec force et détermination", et que "toute la région" était sous le contrôle des forces armées iraniennes.

Le PJAK, qui opère à partir de bases établies dans les montagnes du Kurdistan irakien, est souvent impliqué dans des affrontements armés avec les forces iraniennes. Ces dernières bombardent régulièrement des zones frontalières kurdes irakiennes, qui abritent ces indépendantistes. Le 11 juillet, l'Iran avait affirmé qu'il se réservait "le droit" d'attaquer les bases du PJAK au Kurdistan irakien.

AFP

## Irak: Echanges d'accusations entre les Kurdes irakiens et l'Iran

ERBIL (Irak), 19 juillet 2011 (AFP)

LES AUTORITÉS du Kurdistan irakien ont appelé mardi Téhéran à respecter la frontière, tandis qu'un responsable iranien a demandé au gouvernement de Bagdad et aux dirigeants du Kurdistan d'Irak d'empêcher les rebelles kurdes du Pjak d'agir contre son pays depuis l'Irak.

"Nous demandons à l'Iran de respecter la souveraineté de la région du Kurdistan, qui fait partie de l'Irak", a affirmé à l'AFP le porte-parole du gouvernement régional kurde, Qawa Mahmoud.

"Il y a eu une infiltration le long de la frontière irakienne. Le meilleur moyen de régler des problèmes frontaliers passe par la négociation et par des moyens pacifiques, et pas en bombardant des civils", a-t-il dit.

Le général iranien Mohammad Pakpour, commandant de l'armée de terre des Gardiens de la révolution, a pour sa part déclaré mardi sur la chaîne de télévision en arabe Al-Alam "attendre du gouvernement irakien et des autorités du Kurdistan d'Irak qu'ils tiennent leurs engagements et empêchent les rebelles du Pjak d'agir contre l'Iran depuis le territoire irakien".

"Au cours des dernières 72 heures, les rebelles ont subi de lourdes pertes dans la région d'Al-Watan", a-t-il assuré, précisant que "les camps du Pjak dans la région de Jassoukan avaient été anéantis et que les journalistes pouvaient s'y rendre pour le constater".

Et il a démenti tout bombardement de villageois kurdes, en expliquant que la zone visée était "inhabitée".

Lundi, le colonel iranien Delavar Ranjbarzadeh avait annoncé la prise de contrôle par les forces iraniennes de trois camps du Pjak (Parti pour une vie libre du Kurdistan) situés en territoire irakien, qui fournissaient "de l'aide" aux Kurdes en Iran.

Selon le colonel Ranjbarzadeh, "de nombreux" rebelles kurdes ont été tués dans l'attaque de Gardiens de la révolution iraniens, qui ont pour leur part compté un mort et trois blessés.

Dimanche, un responsable du PJAK avait parlé "de dizaines de morts et blessés" parmi les forces iraniennes et de "deux tués et quatre blessés" dans ses propres rangs.

Le Pjak est régulièrement impliqué dans des affrontements armés avec les forces iraniennes, qui bombardent en représailles les zones frontalières montagneuses du Kurdistan irakien, d'où opèrent les combattants indépendantistes.

Le 11 juillet, un responsable militaire iranien avait affirmé que l'Iran se réservait "le droit" d'attaquer les bases du Pjak, accusant Massoud Barzani, le président du Kurdistan irakien, d'avoir mis un territoire de 150 km sur 20 km "à la disposition du Pjak" le long de la frontière iranienne, "pour créer des bases d'entraînement et mener des actions terroristes contre l'Iran".

# Turquie : la provocation des "profonds"?

Cengiz Çandar / Radikal  
Traduction pour TE : Marillac

**Alors que les élections du 12 juin dernier avaient conduit au parlement le plus représentatif de toute l'histoire de la Turquie et, ainsi, relancé la double perspective d'une solution à la question kurde et d'une nouvelle constitution, la Turquie, toujours aux prises avec un boycott des nouveaux députés kurdes [BDP], renoue avec cette spirale de la violence bien trop connue : le 14 juillet dernier, 13 jeunes soldats et 7 membres du PKK ont péri à la suite d'un accrochage et d'un incendie de forêt. En 2007, à la suite des précédentes élections législatives, la perspective d'une nouvelle constitution "civile" s'était déjà écrasée sur un regain de violence dans le sud-est du pays, suivi d'opérations aériennes lancées sur les bases du PKK situées au nord de l'Irak.**

**Cengiz Çandar, journaliste et spécialiste reconnu des rapports de force régionaux, est l'auteur d'un récent rapport sur les conditions d'un désarmement du PKK. Il revient là sur une évolution de la situation qui ne le surprend guère.**

Le retour de militants du PKK par le poste frontière de Habur [à l'automne 2009, l'AKP avait voulu lancer son "ouverture" sur la question kurde en autorisant le retour de militants kurdes ; face au tollé suscité et entretenu par l'opposition, il avait interrompu son ouverture au lendemain de cet événement] avait déraillé l'ouverture démocratique du gouvernement sur la question kurde en 2009 ; aujourd'hui, le drame de Silvan (13 soldats turcs et sept Kurdes du PKK ont péri au cours d'un accrochage dans le sud-est du pays), semble avoir anéanti les chances de l'ouverture post-électorale que l'on attendait. Kemal Burkey [Homme politique kurde en exil depuis le coup d'Etat de 1980, fondateur du Parti socialiste du Kurdistan de Turquie] dont on attend prochainement le retour en Turquie après 31 ans d'exil a fait une déclaration écrite sur cette tragédie. Je le cite :

« Dans un proche ou lointain avenir, nous réussirons certainement à fonder un pays libre et démocratique et à y vivre les uns à côté des autres comme des gens civilisés, à égalité. Mais ces vies aujourd'hui tombées à terre ne nous reviendront pas. Ces vies ont été fauchées en leur printemps. Rien ne pourra apaiser la douleur de ceux qui les aimaient, de leurs pères et de leurs mères. Une série d'actions violentes depuis les récentes élections et, en particulier, ce dernier drame, sont des pièges destinés à entraver toute initiative en direction d'une solution à la question kurde et de la rédaction d'une nouvelle et démocratique constitution. D'ailleurs, les milieux en quête de tels prétextes se sont aussitôt mis à faire pression sur le gouvernement et à mettre en accusation, et les initiatives démocratiques et le processus d'ouverture. Il est du devoir de chaque personne qui a le sens des responsabilités, à commencer par le gouvernement, de déjouer ce piège. Le Premier ministre a parlé de « la main » se tenant derrière



ce dernier événement.

Cette main, ou bien ces éléments, ces foyers de violence, il n'est guère besoin d'aller les chercher très loin. Nous savons, dans ce pays, qu'ils se tiennent dans les profondeurs de l'appareil d'Etat et qu'ils ont des prolongements jusqu'au cœur du PKK. Le gouvernement se doit d'être encore plus courageux pour démasquer ce piège et éclairer l'opinion publique. Le drame de Silvan se doit d'être éclairé de tous les points de vue possibles. Pourquoi un tel acharnement dans ce genre d'opérations sanglantes juste au moment où l'on attend de sérieux développements en direction d'une nouvelle constitution, d'une démocratisation et d'une solution à la question kurde ? Le BDP [Parti pour la paix et la démocratie, pro kurde] doit aussi jouer pleinement son rôle pour déjouer ce piège ; il doit se tenir à distance des positions qui servent les partisans du chaos, doit mettre fin à son boycott, et faire des efforts dans le sens du changement et de la démocratie... »  
Du Premier ministre au BDP...

Bien, mais comment le Premier ministre apprécie-t-il la situation et le drame ? De la façon suivante :

« Nos treize martyrs nous déchirent le cœur, c'est certain ; l'organisation terroriste et ses prolongements doivent se mettre cela en tête...Que face à ce genre de comportements et de mauvaises intentions, ils n'ont pas à attendre de nous quelque bonne intention que ce soit. Eux, comme leurs prolongements politiques. Nous, nous avons su faire preuve de la meilleure des intentions à l'égard de leurs prolongements politiques. Avec la meilleure intention qui puisse être, nous leur avons donné toutes les possibilités de poursuivre leur lutte sur le terrain démocratique. Mais les propositions qu'ils n'ont cessé d'avancer, relèvent d'approches totalement inconséquentes, d'approches qu'on n'a jamais vues de par le monde. Jamais l'AKP ni un gouvernement AKP ne prendra place autour d'une table sur la base de ces propositions non sincères. »

De qui parle Erdogan quand il parle des "prolongements politiques" de l'organisation terroriste (PKK) ? Du BDP ! Le Premier ministre déclare qu'il a fait preuve des meilleures intentions à leur égard, et qu'il leur a donné toutes les garanties de pouvoir poursuivre leur lutte sur le terrain démocratique. Très bien, mais près de 3 000 membres du BDP sont en prison dans le cadre de l'affaire du KCK [Union des Sociétés du Kurdistan, considéré

rée comme l'émanation civile du PKK, Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, en guerre contre Ankara depuis 1984 ; en décembre 2009, dans la cadre d'une enquête sur cette organisation, 35 responsables politiques kurdes, dont 8 maires, ont été arrêtés. Parmi eux, des personnalités élues le 12 juin dernier]. Il n'est personne non plus qui ignore ce qui leur est arrivé après des élections auxquelles ils ont participé dans des conditions très difficiles. Tout le monde a pu voir de quelle façon cavalière l'AKP avait poussé son candidat à reprendre le siège du député kurde invalidé, Hatip Dicle, par son candidat non élu...

Bref, sincèrement, on n'est pas très convaincu de ce que l'AKP ait pu faire preuve des « meilleures intentions du monde envers les prolongements politiques... ». Il est évident que ces paroles du Premier ministre seront perçues comme la déclaration de rupture du dialogue entre l'AKP et le BDP, comme une déclaration de guerre, non seulement au PKK, mais aussi au BDP.

### Un coup du DTK porté au BDP

Malgré cela, par le biais du DTK [Congrès pour une société démocratique, plate-forme politique kurde élargie, comprenant le BDP], et parallèlement au drame de Silvan, le BDP s'est lui-même placé sous la coupe d'une « autonomie démocratique » proclamée à Diyarbakir lors d'une réunion à laquelle prirent part 850 personnes et dont la forme évoquait une sorte de fête de fin d'année. Pour le dire autrement : avant même les salves du Premier ministre, par cette proclamation « d'autonomie démocratique », le DTK avait porté un sérieux coup au rôle parlementaire de l'une de ses composantes, le BDP.

La déclaration « d'autonomie démocratique » du DTK est un inextricable salmigondis, une formule mi-chèvre, mi-chou. Alors que le boycott parlementaire du BDP se poursuit, « l'autonomie démocratique » ne peut avoir qu'une seule conséquence politique : « l'exacerbation de la violence, la continuation du bain de sang, et de nouvelles pertes en vies humaines... » Ou, pour le dire autrement, la mise hors course du BDP et le monopole de l'initiative laissé au PKK.

Une telle situation rejoint les paroles suivantes du Premier ministre : « S'ils veulent la paix, ceux-là, il n'y a qu'une chose qu'ils puissent faire, et c'est la suivante : l'organisation terroriste déposera les armes une bonne fois pour toutes. Tant qu'ils n'auront pas déposé les armes, les opérations ne s'arrêteront pas et le processus n'ira pas plus loin... Dans ce pays, il n'est plus de problème kurde, dans ce pays, il y a un problème PKK, et nos concitoyens d'origine kurde ont des problèmes... Mon frère turc a lui aussi des problèmes. Comme les Lazes, les Bosniaques, les Albanais, les Géorgiens et les Roms... »

### Retour aux années 1990 ?

Il n'y a dans ce discours que très peu de différences avec le discours qui était celui des années 1990 [Les années noires de la guerre contre le PKK]. La différence fondamentale est « psychologique ». En 2011, il existe une Turquie dont la confiance en soi est très forte, dont l'économie est bonne, et dont le profil international est correct. Et peut-être que le Premier ministre pense qu'il pourra régler le « problème du PKK » en se disant que, « ma foi, si ce doit être la guerre, alors ce sera la guerre. » De toutes façons, étant donné qu'il n'est plus de problème kurde...

De mon propre point de vue, il n'y a rien de surprenant d'en arriver là aujourd'hui, avec ce genre d'événements. Car, pendant neuf mois, j'ai parlé des jours durant avec des dizaines et des dizaines de personnes, des responsables d'Etat aux leaders PKK de la montagne de Kandil (Irak), en passant par d'anciens dirigeants ayant rompu avec le PKK, et des personnalités de l'opposition kurde au PKK, avec des membres du BDP ; j'ai lu des milliers de pages et rédigé un rapport de cent pages intitulé : « Sortir du maquis - Comment le PKK déposera-t-il les armes ? - Débarrasser la question kurde de la violence » [Rapport rendu il y a trois semaines dans le cadre du Think tank TESEV]

### Un point souvent atteint

Grâce à ce travail, je me suis rendu compte que nous nous étions très souvent retrouvés dans une situation de ce genre. J'en ai appris bien plus que ce que j'ai pu apprendre en quarante années, quant aux réflexes mentaux des principaux acteurs de ce problème, à l'arrière-plan de la question, à la psychologie des Kurdes parties prenantes au problème, à la structure du PKK, etc.

Le rapport a suscité l'intérêt de l'opinion publique et l'on continue d'en discuter. En dehors des officiers en retraite qui étaient partisans, dans les années 1990, d'une politique d'assimilation des Kurdes et des ultras-nationalistes anti kurdes, il y a eu assez peu de critiques. La seule exception fut celle de Mustafa Karasu, proclamé « idéologue du PKK » et considéré par certains comme l'un des représentants de la « ligne dure » de l'organisation, qui m'a accusé d'avoir écrit ce rapport dans la « perspective de l'AKP » et de « renvoyer la politesse à l'AKP ». Au même moment où Öcalan me salue en citant mon nom depuis son île-prison d'Imrali, et, une semaine plus tard, fait positivement référence à mon rapport. Libre à chacun d'interpréter tout cela.

Je sais que lorsque s'esquisse une possibilité de rapprochement entre les parties en direction d'une solution, au sein du PKK, comme au sein de l'appareil d'Etat, il en est qui sont prêts à en torpiller toute possibilité et qui désirent maintenir « l'option de la guerre » tout en haut de l'agenda.

En dehors de certains appuis extérieurs et régionaux du PKK, comme le dit Kemal Burkay, que la « Turquie profonde » ait pris place au cœur du PKK n'est un secret pour personne. Ni même que de tels « acteurs » disposent à tout moment des pièges sur le chemin de la Turquie. Faire toute la lumière sur la façon dont ont péri brûlés 13+7 jeunes est tout particulièrement important pour comprendre la façon dont ce piège est posé.

C'est le lot de la politique ; il ne peut être aucune force capable d'empêcher ceux qui, malgré toute la conscience qu'ils en ont, veulent sauter à pieds joints dans ces « pièges ». À ceux qui se demandent ce qu'il convient de faire dans de telles situations désespérées, je recommande vivement la lecture attentive de mon rapport. À eux, ainsi qu'à notre gouvernement.

Source : *Radikal*, le 16/07/2011

- Traduction pour TE : Marillac

## Le nationalisme kurde se nourrit du «printemps arabe» et du Soudan

Reuters

**L**E JOUR où l'Afrique a accueilli officiellement son 54<sup>e</sup> Etat, le chef du gouvernement kurde irakien a twitté ces mots pour exprimer son sentiment au monde entier: «Je regarde l'histoire en marche avec l'indépendance du Soudan du Sud».

«Et, morale de l'histoire, le droit à l'autodétermination ne peut pas être nié, même par un génocide». Avec l'émergence d'un nouveau pays sur la carte du continent africain et les soulèvements du «printemps arabe», de plus en plus de Kurdes installés dans le nord de l'Irak osent dire plus haut, plus fort, qu'ils aspirent à une autonomie élargie.

La minorité kurde est répartie sur plusieurs pays: en Turquie, en Irak, en Syrie ainsi qu'en Iran. Et mis à part quelques intermèdes dans l'Histoire, ce peuple a souvent été réprimé par ces gouvernements.

### Critique des autorités irakiennes

«Ce qui s'est passé au Soudan du Sud nous inspire», déclare Barham Saleh, le Premier ministre du Kurdistan irakien, où le rouge, le blanc et le vert - les couleurs du drapeau kurde - remplacent souvent, voire systématiquement celles du drapeau irakien.

«Mais ce qui nous préoccupe le plus à

l'heure actuelle, poursuit le responsable kurde, c'est la direction que sont en train de prendre les autorités de Bagdad, vers une plus grande centralisation et vers un plus grand autoritarisme».

Le gouvernement central de Bagdad et la région semi-autonome du Kurdistan, l'une des 18 provinces irakiennes, ont des conflits ouverts depuis des années, notamment sur la question des frontières et sur celles des importantes réserves de pétrole que renferme cette région.

Au-delà de ces considérations locales, le peuple kurde regroupe près de 30 millions de personnes, dont la culture et la langue se distinguent de celles des Arabes, des Turcs ou des Perses.

### Situation en Syrie

A majorité musulmane, cette minorité a souvent été réprimée et stigmatisée par les autorités des pays sur lesquels elle est implantée, qui ont toujours vu en elle un mouvement de séparatistes permanent.

Depuis la Guerre du Golfe de 1991, les Kurdes irakiens vivent dans une région plus sécurisée et peuvent disposer de leurs ressources naturelles. Et depuis l'intervention anglo-américaine de 2003 et la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein, la notion de natio-

nalisme kurde n'a cessé de se renforcer.

«Pour la première fois dans leur histoire moderne, les Kurdes d'Irak et de Turquie, au moins eux, avancent, même si c'est avec prudence», estime Michael Gunter, un spécialiste de la question qui a suivi l'évolution de cette minorité au sein des deux pays. Pour lui, le souhait de la Turquie d'entrer au sein de l'Union européenne joue en faveur des Kurdes, qui ont vu leur situation évoluer positivement dans ce pays. Symbole de ces avancées, on entend selon lui aujourd'hui de plus en plus de musique kurde dans les villes turques comme Diyarbakir et une chaîne de télévision en langue kurde émet désormais en continu.

A Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan irakien, on s'enthousiasme du contexte actuel au Moyen-Orient, notamment dans les pays où se trouvent des Kurdes, à commencer par la Syrie. «Les demi-révolutions, ça n'existe pas», confie Khalid Ali, un militant kurde originaire de Syrie. «Les Syriens l'ont décidé: la chute de Bachar al Assad est juste une question de temps», ajoute-t-il, évoquant la situation du président syrien, qui fait face à un important mouvement de protestations depuis la mi-mars.

AFP

## Deux rebelles kurdes tués lors de combats dans le sud-est de la Turquie

ANKARA, 22 juillet 2011 (AFP)

**DEUX REBELLES** kurdes ont été tués lors de combats dans le sud-est de la Turquie alors qu'ils tentaient de poser une mine sur une route, a rapporté vendredi l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Les deux hommes ont été abattus lors d'un accrochage entre une unité de l'armée et un groupe de rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) qui posaient une mine sur une route souvent empruntée par les militaires, près du village de Gelisen, dans la province de Hakkari, selon Anatolie.

Deux soldats ont été légèrement blessés dans les affrontements, a ajouté l'agence.

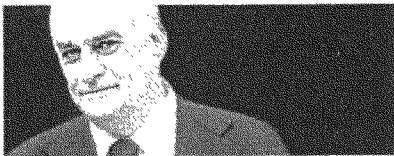
Les accrochages entre les forces de sécurité et les rebelles se sont multipliés depuis les élections législatives du 12 juin.

Vendredi dernier, 13 soldats et sept rebelles avaient péri lors de combats dans le sud-est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes.

Cet incident, le plus meurtrier pour l'armée turque depuis octobre 2008, a suscité une vive émotion en Turquie et le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a prévenu que l'armée turque allait faire payer "un prix élevé" aux rebelles.

Lors des législatives, le courant pro-kurde a remporté 35 sièges sur 550 à l'Assemblée --un chiffre sans précédent-- mais ces élus ont refusé de prêter serment pour protester contre le maintien en détention provisoire de cinq des leurs, accusés de liens avec l'aile urbaine du PKK, et l'invalidation de l'élection d'un 36<sup>e</sup> militant kurde, condamné pour "propagande terroriste".

# Syria tests U.S. resolve to do right



**John Vinocur**

## POLITICUS

**PARIS** In dealing with the Middle East's political eruptions, the United States, credibly or not, has made standing on the right side of history its operative watchword.

The White House first used the phrase in explaining how it chose — after serious in-house arguments about the relative strategic insignificance to America of the stakes involved — to provide air support to the Libyan rebellion against Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi.

Since the halting Libyan intervention, at low cost and low risk to the United States, the Obama administration has found comfort in indicating that it will respond to the Arab world's revolts against its dictators on the basis of moral imperatives.

Last month it carried this notion to the upheaval in Syria, where, more than in Libya, the opportunities for positive change affecting the entire region are vast.

Backing a French-British resolution condemning the Syrian regime for its

**"We will be on the right side of history if and when this comes to a vote."**

brutal repression of opposition demonstrators, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Susan E. Rice, reached for the moral prop: "We will be on the right side of history if and when this comes to a vote."

If others are unable to, or are unwilling to, then that will be their responsibility to bear."

Now, with deaths in Syria reported to have risen to 1,400 over four months of clashes, there has been no U.N. condemnation, and no U.S. calling-out by name those countries blocking the measure and supplying Syria with its arms and financial wherewithal.

With Syria's dictatorship killing daily with impunity, Ms. Rice's line, five weeks later, has less the look of a U.S.

government acting on history's right side than one comfortable with indignation minus consequences.

As it turns out, the West is doing very little to transform the outrage of Syrian citizens into effective penalties against the regime of Bashar al-Assad and its suppliers, or into active outside support for a best-case scenario — ending Damascus's symbiotic relationship with Iran, stopping Syria's promotion of terrorism and isolating Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The language of moral commitment remains: President Barack Obama has said the United States is "using all the diplomatic, economic and strategic tools at our disposal" to support democratic transition and "block the path of murder." But evidence of that action — or anything resembling results — isn't shirring through.

One of the problems seems to be how specific the administration wants to get in pushing or shaming or pointing to the Big Players lurking on its version of the wrong side of the historical street.

From the start, Russia and China have threatened to veto any Security Council action condemning Syria. Russia is the central player because it is Syria's prime purveyor of arms, because it regards the Assad regime as its single true partner in the Middle East and because

it plans, according to officials in Moscow, to modernize its logistical base at the Syrian port of Tartus to accommodate "heavy warships after 2012."

An initial draft of the resolution, prepared by France and Britain, had language, I was told, that called for the exercise of "vigilance" involving arms transfers to Syria — a word vague enough for the Russians to have agreed to it last year in the latest round of U.N. sanctions against Iran.

But this time Moscow said no. According to the account I heard, although the draft's language was softened accordingly, the Russians made clear that the resolution — seen by its sponsors as opening a legal gate for Western action against Syria by individual countries or groups of them — has no future.

Up until now, the Obama administration has not issued a peep.

Rather, it was the French, through Defense Minister Gérard Longuet, who seemingly picked up on the right-side-of-history notion, and called the Russian and Chinese veto threat "indecent," which in my dictionary means morally offensive. Mr. Longuet recommended that the international community "dry out Syria financially" because a military intervention was not feasible.

(Problem: Iran appears to be working fast at assisting Syria's cash and energy needs. Les Échos, the French financial newspaper, reported Friday that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, had approved \$5.8 billion in assistance to Syria, as well as 290,000 barrels of oil daily, without

charge to the Assad regime for the next nine months.)

As for the Americans, moral impeccability, with the Security Council action floundering, relates in the short term to whether the United States considers the Russians and the Chinese too big to assail concerning Syria.

As it was described to me, the Americans' dilemma is "whether we take no for an answer" — meaning abandoning a Security Council vote — "or do we force the moral point" and make Moscow and Beijing openly responsible for the veto of the West's proposed Syria condemnation?

The American hesitation seems to come with the rationale that as the revolt deepens, the Russians might want to hedge their Syrian bets. But how do you not exert pressure on Moscow now when tanks and helicopters — Pieter D. Wezeman of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute estimates Russia to be the essential source of the Syrian military's heavy equipment — mass near a Syrian town where soldiers have defected?

Two despairing answers:

One, according to a European diplomat, is that the European Union, without specific U.N. cover, could never achieve the consensus necessary to call out Moscow or penalize it for providing the hardware involved in Syria's ongoing massacres. The other is that for the Obama administration, the task of confronting Syria's supply chain with sanctions would savage the basic Russia-is-manageable premise of the president's so-called reset with Moscow.

Still, under these circumstances, there's the possibility of far greater embarrassment for the United States and its friends: no good outcome emerging from Syria, the place where an Arab dictator's departure is most likely to signify a win for international peace and stability.

By way of precedent, Mr. Obama did not take the risk of rushing in with U.S. backing (moral or material) for the anti-regime demonstrators being shot down in Iran's streets in June 2009 after the mullahs blatantly nullified an election victory by the opposition.

This time, with millions of Syrians risking their lives for months, the American president has the theoretical vocabulary in hand — but nothing else of substance, so far, to indicate where his administration's concrete support for the right side of this history begins.



# Kirkuk is a 'land mine' where all sides want U.S. to stay

By ROY GUTMAN  
McClatchy Newspapers

If civil war were to resume in Iraq, a dread event that could mean the breakup of the world's next great oil power, Kirkuk is the likely epicenter.

It doesn't take much to set ethnic tensions boiling in this oil-rich province of 850,000, also named Kirkuk, which Kurds consider their Jerusalem but which Arabs and Turkmen also claim. An altercation on a street in the city of Kirkuk, a riot in a nearby Arab town and a car bombing shook the peace in the first half of this year, pitting Kurds against Arabs in a manner that Sunni Arab extremists are only too eager to exploit.

"Kirkuk is different from anywhere else in Iraq," said Col. Michael Pappal, the U.S. military commander at Contingency Operating Site Warrior, the American base at Kirkuk airport, soon to be turned over to Iraqi forces. "Does it have the most violence? No. The most lethal violence? No. Is this where the civil war is going to start? There's a potential for that."

Or, as Tahseen al-Shaikhli, an Iraqi government spokesman, put it: "Kirkuk is like a land mine on a lake of oil."

Nowhere, Iraqi and U.S. officials say, is the argument for keeping American troops in Iraq past Dec. 31 stronger than in Kirkuk.

"We are the glue that brings people together, that facilitates cooperation," said Pappal, a Creekside, Pa., native who commands the U.S. 1st Advise and Assist Task Force of the 1st Infantry Division, about 4,000 troops. "We're also the nuclear control rod that keeps things from going to critical mass. It's the two things together." Remove the control rod, and "you have a reaction that potentially could get out of control."

Iraq's political leaders are struggling with whether to ask the United States to keep some troops in the country after this year, when an agreement the two countries signed in 2008 dictates that they be gone. The Obama administration has said it would consider such a

An Iraqi Army soldier patrols the northern part of Kirkuk Province alongside U.S. soldiers earlier this month. Kurds consider Kirkuk their Jerusalem, but Arabs and Turkmen claim it, too.



request, but time is short and the decision is caught up in a logjam of competing Iraqi interests, including the appointment of ministers to run the country's Defense and Interior ministries.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki appears to favor a continued U.S. presence, but other members of his coalition are opposed, including the anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, whose disarmed Mahdi Army militia until recently appeared prepared to attack American troops if they remained. U.S. military planners warn that the pace of withdrawal for the last 46,000 Americans is picking up, and they've said they need to know by July 30 what the Iraqis want.

"Nobody will touch the Kirkuk problem for the time being, nor reach within 100 feet of it," Shaikhli said. "The American troops are the balance of everything there."

That view is widely shared in Kirkuk.

"The Iraqi security forces do not have the ability to secure Iraq's borders, its airspace or its sole seaport in Basra," said Najmeldeen Kereem, the Kurdish governor of the province. The U.S. is needed, he added, "not just for their military role and advice, but for mediation during crises."

Even Sunni Arabs who want the U.S. to leave acknowledge the role of its troops in keeping competing sides apart. "Occupation forces are never good for any country. Their presence is not right and I believe that they should go," said Husein Ali Salih, a member of the Kirkuk provincial council. But, he

added, "their withdrawal may tip the scales in favor of any side. Who knows which?"

As with most of the American troops still in Iraq, the mission of Pappal's 4,000-strong "Devil Brigade" is training Iraqi police and soldiers to combat violent extremists. But in Kirkuk, its primary role is crisis management.

Kirkuk is plagued with complicated ethnic rivalries, a legacy of Saddam Hussein's effort to dilute the region's native Kurdish population by moving tens of thousands of Arabs here from the south. A former aide to Saddam, Izzat al-Douri, is directing insurgent forces from Syria, Pappal said. These include Naqshabanda, the military arm of the new Baath Party, which targets mainly foreign forces, and Ansar al-Sunna, which targets both civilians and foreign military. Both work with the group al-Qaida in Iraq and its close cousin, the Islamic State of Iraq, which attack civilians. Their active numbers are relatively small - "hundreds, if that" - but their support base may be in the thousands, Pappal said.

A mix of forces are arrayed against them: police, about 12,000 for the province, who are a mix of Kurds, Turkomen and Arabs; the Kurdish Regional Guards Brigade, thought to be 3,000 to 4,000 troops; and the 12th Iraqi Army Division, which is three-quarters Arab and totals 15,000. To complicate things further, an unofficial Kurdish force known as the Asayish has 300 uniformed police, a much larger number of undercover agents and two lines of organization, one for each of the main Kurdish political parties.

Some times the forces face off against one another, which is where Pappal comes in.

Pappal, who holds up to 10 meetings a week with different armed groups, as well as the region's Kurdish governor, has had to step in regularly to keep the various sides apart, most recently when a car bomb killed 28 people two months ago in the parking lot of the main provincial police station. The casualties included members of the Asayish, which aspires to be the Kurdish FBI but isn't recognized by the central government.

The commander of the Asayish, which had been targeted by previous bombings, was livid, Pappal recalled. "They were emotional and upset. They blamed it on the IP," he said, meaning the local Iraqi police. They took the attitude "We are no longer going to cooperate," he said

"I'm not sure exactly what he was going to do, but he was going to do something," Pappal said of Gen. Halo Najat Rashid,

the Asayish commander. Pappal spent two hours talking to Halo to persuade him to do nothing for a day. He called political leaders. Then he alerted the governor, who called in all parties to air their anger.

"It was a week's worth of bringing everybody back together," Pappal recalled.

Other incidents in the province this year also required the U.S. to step in to keep peace between competing Kurdish and Arab groups.

When Sunni Arab demonstrators burned the government offices in the predominantly Arab town of Hawija on Feb. 25, the Kurdish Regional Guards Brigade moved south, claiming it was trying to protect the city of Kirkuk from Arab mobs. But the area it moved into was already under the control of the 12th Iraqi Army Division, and a confrontation loomed.

"It raised up all the political tensions of the area," Pappal said. It wasn't until

March 31 that the Kurds had fully departed, he said.

On April 25, in the city of Kirkuk, another crisis loomed when Iraqi army troops riding in a pickup got into a "road rage" fight with a man on the street and shot him. Asayish troops, whose headquarters were nearby, responded. Gunfire broke out and three members of the Asayish were killed.

Pappal, who by coincidence was having lunch with two generals at the headquarters, warned them that they had to stop the confrontation from escalating "or I have to go out to stop it." The generals came up with a solution. "They had to," Pappal recalled.

Pappal is confident that even the worst-case confrontation won't lead to civil war - as long as Americans remain in Kirkuk.

"Not while we're here," he said. "It won't happen while we're here."



7 Juillet 2011

## Un rassemblement à Paris divise l'opposition syrienne

Par RFI

**UN RASSEMBLEMENT** visant à dénoncer la répression en Syrie a eu lieu lundi 4 juillet, au cinéma Saint-Germain-des-Prés, à Paris, à l'initiative d'associations syriennes et organisé par le philosophe Bernard-Henri Lévy. Certains opposants syriens n'étaient pas d'accord avec cette action qu'ils ont dénoncée comme une récupération politique et médiatique.

Des femmes et des hommes politiques de droite et de gauche, comme Fadela Amara, Laurent Fabius, Bernard Kouchner, le maire de Paris Bertrand Delanoë ou encore Rama Yade, ainsi que certains opposants syriens en exil ont répondu à l'invitation de Bernard-Henri Lévy, lundi 4 juillet, à Paris. Le philosophe et sa revue La Règle du jeu co-organisaient, avec SOS-Syrie et France-Syrie démocratie, une rencontre pour dénoncer la répression en Syrie.

« Vous n'avez pas honte ?! »

Place Saint-Germain-des-Prés, à 20 heures, des cars de CRS et un service d'ordre sont déployés autour du cinéma. Visiblement, on craint des débordements. Le philosophe Bernard-Henri Lévy est déjà sous les feux des caméras de télévision.

Soudain, un homme qui s'était fondu



Bernard-Henri Lévy (droite), ici lors d'une manifestation de soutien à Sakineh, à Paris, le 12 septembre 2010. AFP

dans la foule des badauds l'interpelle : « Vous n'avez pas honte ?! » Bernard-Henri Lévy est rapidement conduit à l'intérieur du cinéma Saint-Germain-des-Prés, où a lieu la rencontre.

Plusieurs groupes d'opposants dénoncent de sa part une récupération politique de la situation en Syrie. Certains craignent que le pouvoir syrien exploite cette récupération, ils ont appelé au boycott de cette réunion. Certaines personnes qui étaient attendues ne sont pas venues, comme Amar Qurabi, président de l'Organisation nationale des droits de l'homme, actuellement en exil en Egypte.

D'autres se sont fait refouler à l'entrée du cinéma. C'est le cas d'Alolaiwy Mohamed, qui s'exprime au nom de la Déclaration de Damas, du Comité du 15 mars et des indépendants : « Bien sûr,

il est très important aujourd'hui de pouvoir parler de la Syrie. Seulement, la prise de position de personnalités qui ont soutenu les crimes qui ont été commis à Gaza et les crimes qui ont été commis en Irak est un désavantage pour nous et nuit à notre cause. »

**Unir tous les opposants à Bachar el-Assad**

En revanche, pour le Kurde de Syrie Radwan Badini, membre du comité exécutif de la Conférence d'Antalya, qui vit en Irak depuis 34 ans, il était très important d'informer l'opinion publique sur la répression dans son pays : « Nous ne pouvons pas dire un seul mot librement face au régime qui est au pouvoir depuis plus de quarante ans. Eux ici, ils se permettent de parler librement, de crier, d'injurier, de dire tout ce qu'ils veulent, tandis que nous, nous ne pouvons pas. »

A la sortie, un homme qui n'a pas pu entrer dans le cinéma fait un signe. Lui est plutôt partisan du régime, il appelle à la poursuite des réformes, dans le calme. Il voulait s'exprimer dans la salle, il regrette cette démocratie à deux vitesses. Quant à Lama Atassi, présidente de France-Syrie démocratie, co-organisatrice du rassemblement avec Bernard-Henri Lévy, elle appelle tous les opposants à s'unir contre Bachar el-Assad. L'opposition est donc divisée sur la forme que ces réunions doivent prendre.

JERUSALEM POST EDITORIAL

# The Kurdish case

**The unilateral declaration of Kurdish autonomy in Turkey was greeted with deadly silence. The world couldn't care less.**

**F**ew of us may realize it, but 850 delegates from North Kurdistan recently declared democratic autonomy in Amed (Diyarbakir), proclaimed as the capital of North Kurdistan. They invited all Kurds to regard themselves as Kurdistanis citizens. The area the autonomy claims constitutes a substantial portion of southeastern Turkey.

Ankara waxed furious. The world couldn't possibly be more oblivious.

The Kurds are indigenous folk arbitrarily overlooked by the powers that artificially carved up the Mideast after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire post-World War I. Not only were Kurds denied recognition and independence, but they were divided among Turkey (an estimated 20 percent of Turkey's overall population), Iran (7% of Iran's population), Iraq (20% of Iraq's population) and Syria (9% of Syria's population) – the latter two being synthetic political concoctions created by Britain and France, respectively.

The lack of elementary Iraqi and Syrian cohesion is reflected in internal strife to this day.

According to prevalent mythology, the international community deems self-determination the natural and inalienable right of each nationality. That, at least, is the pretext for the worldwide clamor for a Palestinian state.

Swept aside are reservations about the rather recent origin of claims to a separate Palestinian national identity, along with the fact that Palestinians are indistinguishable from their neighbors in language, religion, culture and every conceivable marker of ethnic uniqueness.

National designation, we are told, is subjective. If any collective regards itself as worthy of self-determination, then self-determination is its due. Yet this principle is hardly applied with universal even-handedness. Evidence of bias abounds even without bringing in pervasive animus to the very notion that the long-suffering Jewish people merits sovereignty just like far younger and less distinctive ethnicities.

The Kurdish case clearly underscores such double standards.

Far more numerous than Palestinians, they're estimated

at between 30 million and 35 million. They form an obvious separate nationality, non-Arab, with its own culture and readily distinguishable language (a subcategory of the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian group of Indo-European languages.) They were around far before any Arabs had learned of the Palestinian moniker, and the Kurds struggled for independence long into the 19th century, before the advent of Arab nationalism. They established the short-lived Republic of Ararat in 1927 but it was soon vanquished. Both Turkey and Iran cruelly suppressed numerous Kurdish uprisings. Kurds are still fighting for their freedom.

The contrast between how the world treats the Palestinians and the Kurds couldn't be more marked. Palestinians are spoiled with international succor and are pampered financially. They were offered an independent state back in 1947 but rejected it, preferring to destroy the twin Jewish state instead.

Practically the entire world has come round to backing Palestinian statehood again and awaits with fevered anticipation the unilateral quest for recognition of Palestinian independence at the UN General Assembly in September.

The unilateral declaration of Kurdish autonomy in Turkey, however, was greeted with deadly silence. The world couldn't care less. It doesn't glorify the Kurdish nationalist drive, doesn't offer it diplomatic assistance, doesn't shower it with indulgent cheer-leading in the media and doesn't fund Kurdish separatists, and has denounced what's perceived as Kurdish terrorism but has abided anti-Kurdish ruthlessness in four countries for many decades.

In short, a nation that meets many more prerequisites for self-determination than do Palestinians – and other Mideastern constructs of yesteryear's Western imperialism - keeps getting a very raw deal. The Kurds fail to elicit even a modicum of the sympathy so liberally accorded the Palestinians.

Nonetheless, potential new opportunities now beckon to the Kurds. They enjoy semi-autonomy under the Americans in Iraq (though there's uncertainty about the post-American future), Syria is rocked by instability, and partial alleviation of Damascus's oppression emboldens Iranian and Turkish Kurds as well.

Perhaps this is the time for bolder Israeli foreign policy, especially in view of Ankara's ongoing antagonism toward Israel (our wishful thinking for Recep Tayyip Erdogan's rethink notwithstanding). We have little to lose – certainly not Turkey's friendship.

There's no reason not to express un-stinted Israeli support for Kurdish self-determination – as we did for South Sudan's. This isn't merely the right thing to do as quid pro quo for Turkey's own conduct, but because the Kurds deserve it.

dpa..... Deutsche Presse-Agentur

## Kurdish rebels kill Iranian commander, five guards

Tehran - July 22, 2011

**MEMBERS of the Kurdish rebel group Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) killed a commander and five senior forces of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) in north-western Iran, the IRGC said Friday in a statement.**

An IRGC vehicle with the six IRGC forces, including General Abbas Asemi who was a high-ranking IRGC commander, was hit by a landmine planted by the PJAK near Sardasht, a city near the Iraqi border.

The statement, carried by Fars news agency, did not say when the

incident took place.

Iranian forces and the separatist group PJAK have been involved in renewed clashes in the last ten days and the Iranian forces have also crossed over into Iraq in pursuit of the rebels.

According to local reports, there have been casualties so far on both sides.

Iranian Kurds, estimated to number around 7 million, mainly live in the provinces of West Azerbaijan, Kermanshah and Kurdistan which border Turkey and northern Iraq.

A minority of Kurds in Iran have been at odds with the government in Tehran for decades, seeking autonomy in Kurdish-populated provinces and aiming for an alliance with Kurds in Turkey, Iraq and Syria.

Kurds are Sunni Muslims, while the majority of the Iranian population are Shiites. Sunnis make up about 10 per cent of Iran's population.

dpa..... Deutsche Presse-Agentur

## Turkish court green-lights investigation of former top general

Ankara -July 21, 2011

**IN AN unprecedented move, a Turkish court Thursday ordered that a retired chief of general staff should be investigated for a fatal bomb attack on a Kurdish bookshop.**

A court in the eastern province of Van ordered prosecutors to investigate General Yasar Buyukanit for a November 2005 bombing that killed one person in the town of Semdinli, the news agency Anadolu reported.

Buyukanit was then commander of the Turkish Army. He was promoted to chief of general staff in August 2006 and served two years as the number-one commander in the Turkish military.

It is the first time that prosecutors have been allowed to investigate

a former chief of general staff for a crime.

The move shows the balance of power in Turkey is shifting away from the military - which has toppled four governments since 1960 - towards civilian authority.

In early 2006, a Van prosecutor, Ferhat Sarikaya, summoned Buyukanit for questioning about the grenade that was thrown into the bookshop. Three low-ranking members of the Gendarmerie had been arrested, but Sarikaya suspected that senior military officers were involved.

Sarikaya lost his job and was later disbarred for having 'exceeded his authority.' Last April he was re-admitted to the bar.

The involvement of the Gendarmerie, the paramilitary police in Turkey's countryside, in the bombing led to riots in which several people were killed.

Buyukanit himself caused controversy when he praised one of the three suspects as a 'very valuable soldier.'

All three accused were convicted and sentenced, but an Appeal Court annulled the verdict and ordered a retrial, which has not taken place yet.

**StarTribune**

July 25, 2011

## Iranian shelling of Iraq's Kurdistan region kills 2 Iraqis as hundreds forced to flee homes

by: YAHYA BARZANJI (AP)

**SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq** - Iranian forces shelled suspected rebel outposts in Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdistan region, killing two Iraqi civilians, officials said Monday, in the latest in a string of cross-border attacks that have forced hundreds of residents to flee.

The artillery fire hit the small Iraqi town of Sidkan, about 12 miles (20 kilometers) from the Iraq-Iran frontier, said Sidkan mayor Ahmed Qadir. He added that three residents were wounded in the four hours of shelling. Kurdish border guard Capt. Ahmed Saleh confirmed the casualties.

The Iranian attack appeared to target bases of the Iranian Kurdish opposition group PEJAK, which stands for the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan. The group has been involved in sporadic clashes with Iranian forces in recent years and says it is fighting for greater rights in Iran.

The border-area violence has forced more than 800 Iraqi Kurdish residents to flee their homes, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

ICRC said it has so far given humanitarian aid to 175 Iraqi Kurdish families.

"Having left behind all their belong-

ings, the majority of these people are now living under makeshift shelters, tents or sharing crowded houses with relatives or friends," the ICRC said in a statement Monday.

Tehran maintains that it has the right to attack PEJAK's bases in Iraq and has accused residents of Iraq's Kurdistan region of providing a safe haven for rebels.

The border area has been a flash-point of conflict over the last several years, even as the Shiite-led governments of both countries move to strengthen their political ties.

## Kurdistan Deploys Troops Along Border As PJAK-Iran Fighting Intensifies

### RUDAW SPECIAL

Kurdistan has deployed 12,000 forces to an area along the Iran-Iraq border as ongoing fighting between Kurdish rebels and the Iranian military has killed civilians and raised concerns that Iranian troops are crossing into Iraqi territory.

Salah Dilmani, a high-ranking Peshmarga officer, told Rudaw that the Kurdistan Region has sent around 12,000 Peshmargas or Kurdish military forces, to the Pishdar border district where Iranian forces have reportedly launched ground attacks on the rebel fighters of the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK) over the past two



Kurdish villagers displaced by Iranian bombing. Photo Rudaw.

weeks.

"We will confront any forces that may attempt to cross the borders of Kurdistan," Dilmani said.

Ahmed Qadir, the mayor of the nearby Sidakan district told Rudaw that on Saturday two shepherds, Herish Karim, 20, and Shekho Hassan Mustafa, 44, were killed during the latest Iranian bombardment. Qadir said the men had brought their livestock to a pasture along the border.

According to Qadir, three other people were injured.

For the first time since Iranian shelling of the border areas began a few weeks ago, the US Embassy in Baghdad reacted to the incidents.

US Embassy spokesman David J. Ranz told Rudaw, "We have seen a number of contradictory reports and we continue to watch the situation. Iraq is a sovereign country and we expect its neighbors including Iran to respect its

sovereignty and integrity."

Iran claims to have seized PJAK camps and claimed dozens of PJAK casualties in recent weeks, but PJAK maintained that they have killed around 200 Iranian soldiers and lost 7 of their guerilla fighters.

In an interview with Rudaw last week, Sherzad Kamangar, a PJAK spokesperson said that members of the extremist group Ansar al-Islam, which is connected to Al-Qaeda and was based in Iraqi Kurdistan, have joined the Iranians in crossing the border. Most Ansar al-Islam fighters were killed or fled to Iran during US-Kurdish military assaults on Ansar al-Islam's strongholds in 2003, but the group is still considered a threat to Iraqi Kurdistan's security.

Dilamni, the high-ranking Peshmarga officer, confirmed that Ansar al-Islam fighters were involved in the clashes.

"The Ansar fighters guide the Iranians because they know the area's geography well," Dilmani said. "At the moment two units of Ansar fighters are with the Iranian soldiers. They are all Kurds from Qaladze, Sangasar, Taq Taq, Kifri and Kalar."

Kamangar told Rudaw that PJAK fighters killed a high-ranking Iranian army commander named Abbas Asimi near the city of Sardasht on July 21 and also claimed that his group killed two other Iranian officers along with around 200 soldiers.

Iran's Fars News Agency only confirmed the killing of Abbas Asimi and five of his soldiers.

William Anderson, professor of political science at Wright State University in Dayton Ohio believes that the Obama administration has taken a very soft approach toward Iran compared to the Bush administration.



"Since Obama came to power, the US policies towards Iran have changed," Anderson told Rudaw. "His administration has branded PJAK as a terrorist organization; therefore, it is unlikely that Obama would say anything about the fight between PJAK and Iran."

Some observers believe that Iran is shelling the Iraqi Kurdistan border to put pressure on the Kurdish authorities not to support extending the US troop presence in Iraq.

US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said during a visit to Baghdad earlier this month that Iran was supplying weapons used in attacks against US forces in Iraq ahead of the planned US troop withdrawal at the end of 2011.

Khalid Asadi, an Iraqi MP from the State of Law Coalition told Rudaw that Iran's shelling along the border is unacceptable and any disputes should be solved through dialogue with Iraq. Asadi also said that Iran has legitimate reasons for using force in those areas.

"Iran says the PJAK fighters are launching attacks against it, which is true," Asadi said. "So, Iraq must expel those groups that attack its neighbors from its territories."

In a press conference on Monday Chris Bowers, British consul-general in Erbil, said that he is opposed to any country crossing the borders of another sovereign nation and bombarding it.

"We have also relayed this view to the Iranian government," he said. "It is obvious that we are especially concerned about those villagers who have fled their areas under bombardment."

# Kurdish Foreign Relations Chief: US Withdrawal Will Boost Iranian Influence

By STEPHEN DANILOVICH

*The following is an interview by Rudaw's Stephen Danilovich with Falah Mustafa Bakir, head of the Kurdistan Region's Department of Foreign Relations, about the planned withdrawal of US troops from Iraq in December 2011.*

**Rudaw: How are American troops helping with the stability of the current situation?**

**Falah Mustafa:** Currently, the American troops are providing training and capacity-building to the various Iraqi security forces, and my personal opinion is that the Iraqi security forces need more time to gain the experience and expertise required to defend Iraq and its people. In addition to training the security forces, the American troops are helping to provide security in the disputed regions through the combined security mechanisms, and their presence in these areas has been key to keeping the peace between the various religious and ethnic groups living in these areas.

**Rudaw: What are the dangers that would justify an extension for their withdrawal, if any?**

**Falah Mustafa:** In order to answer this question it is important to leave politics aside and ask oneself whether the Iraqi security forces are ready and capable of maintaining security within Iraq while defending its international borders, its airspace and its navigable waterways. This is the question that has to be answered collectively in Baghdad by the various political blocs, and the safety and security of the people of Iraq should be paramount in answering this question. There are also a number of unresolved issues in Iraq that should be taken into consideration such as the status of the disputed territories, implementing a national census, as well as the passage of both the revenue-sharing and hydrocarbons laws. If these issues remain unresolved they will lead to problems in Iraq, creating unnecessary Kurdish-Arabic tensions. Another concern is the possible escalation of violence between both hard-line Iraqi Arab Sunnis and Shiites in the event of



*Head of Kurdistan Region's Department of Foreign Relations Falah Mustafa. Photo krg.org*

American withdrawal.

**Rudaw: Are there any risks to the new Iraqi federal system that was sponsored by the United States, a system that gives significant autonomy to Iraqi Kurdistan?**

**Falah Mustafa:** According to its constitution Iraq is a federal, democratic and pluralistic state, and while the United States has expressed its support for this system, it was not sponsored by the US. Rather, this system is something that the various Iraqi political groups agreed upon even before the fall of the regime. Their agreement, manifested in the Iraqi constitution, was given to the people of Iraq for approval, which a significant majority of the people [approved] in the 2005 referendum.

The only risk that I see to this system is the concern that some political groups may attempt to subvert the constitution and try to recentralize power in Baghdad. The truth of the matter is that this system is the best formula to serve Iraq's communities, and recent comments by Iraqi politicians suggesting the creation of additional federal regions helps put to [rest] the myth that only the Kurds support living in a federal Iraq. I personally see no risks stemming from Iraq using a federal system, as it is successfully used in many countries around the world.

The United Nations is providing technical assistance and expertise to facilitate the understanding of federalism and decentralization across all of Iraq through their various institutions and representational offices. While we support the concept fully, the notion that federalism is only a Kurdish idea is wrong. Other groups within Iraq sup-

port it, and history suggests that it is an excellent model for Iraq to follow.

**Rudaw: What are the prospects of Iran-Iraq relations after the withdrawal?**

**Falah Mustafa:** Iraq is an important country in this part of the world. Our vision for Iraq is to have normal and cordial relations with all its neighbors, a relationship based on non-interference, mutual respect and understanding. In case of differences and disputes with our neighbors we strongly believe that dialogue is the best solution, and the use of violence will only escalate our disagreements.

The relationship between Iran and Iraq is a long-standing one and will be determined by the federal government. Obviously Iranian influence in Iraq is likely to increase upon the withdrawal of US forces, but the policies that will characterize this relationship are a matter to be handled by the federal government and the federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Rudaw: How likely is it that the US will actually hold to its deadline for withdrawal?**

**Falah Mustafa:** It is important to remember that the US forces were part of the process of liberating Iraq from tyranny and dictatorship, and they have sacrificed much over the years and invested a great deal in Iraq. However, the US has made it clear that they will not extend the withdrawal unless requested to do so by the federal Iraqi government in Baghdad. The important thing for us is that the US seems committed to a long-term relationship with Iraq.

We hear conflicting statements from the different political factions regarding the necessity for an extension, but we hope that a collective agreement can be made which will be in the best interests of the security of the Iraqi people and the stability of the county.

**Rudaw: If the extension is made, can the region really depend on US forces to help against the violence? Even now, the Iranian-Kurdistan border is reported to be shelled by Iranian**


artillery, displacing hundreds of villagers, and the US has been silent about it.

**Falah Mustafa:** As I said before, the United States has already invested a great deal in promoting the security and stability of Iraq, so I think that it is safe to assume that they will assist to diffuse excessive violence in the event that there is an extension. The US has provi-

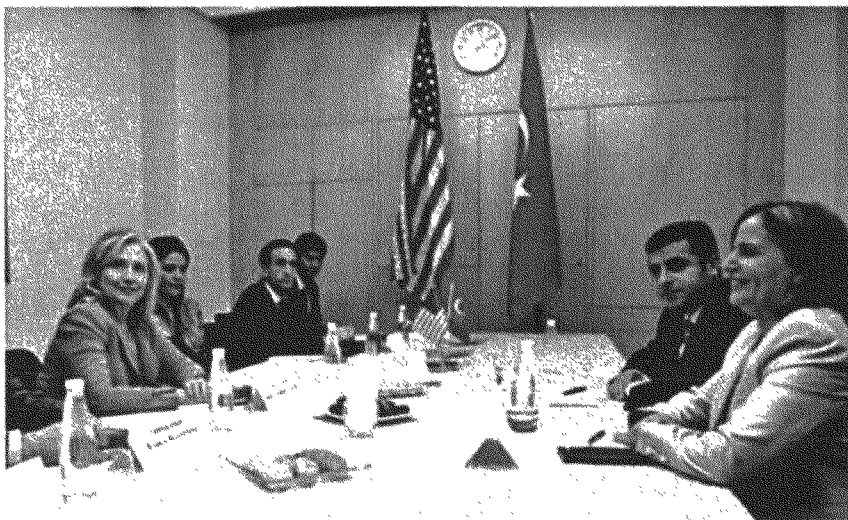
ded, and would presumably continue to provide, mediation in the disputed territories and in other significant areas of instability. However, these are Iraqi problems and need Iraqi solutions.

The shelling by Iran is unacceptable, and it has been condemned by the Kurdistan Region's President, Massoud Barzani. However, the defense of Iraq's borders is the responsibility of the Iraqi

federal government, and we have seen steps in the last few days where the various political blocs have come together to condemn Iran's actions as well. We believe that dialogue is the best way to resolve these types of disputes, and we hope the Iranian government will respect the sovereignty of Iraq's borders.

 Rudaw.Net 25 July 2011

## Kurdish MPs Discussed New Constitution With Clinton



By HEMIN KHOSHNAW / Rudaw

**G**ultan Kisnak, a Kurdish member of the Turkish Parliament and co-leader of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), met with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Istanbul during her visit to Turkey last week.

In an exclusive interview with Rudaw, Kisnak said she and prominent Kurdish politician and MP Selahattin Demirtas met with Clinton on July 16 at Clinton's request after the Secretary of State met with MPs from the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and People's Republican Party (CHP).

Kisnak said the BDP deputies told Clinton that Turkey needs a new constitution in order to solve the Kurdish issue.

"We also told her that the Kurds and all the other political blocs will participate in re-writing the constitution. We said openly that Kurdish rights should be in the new constitution and that it should

guarantee the rights of all other ethnic and religious minorities," Kisnak said.

According to Kisnak, the Kurdish MPs had also made Clinton aware of Turkey's anti-terror law and its impact on the Kurds.

"We said that the anti-terror law has become a law for threatening and oppressing the Kurds," Kisnak said. "That's why without changing this law and passing an amnesty law it's very hard to build trust."

Kisnak said the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a Kurdish armed group that the US government lists as a terrorist organization, was not discussed in the meeting with Clinton.

"I should say openly that in that meeting we didn't talk about the PKK in any shape or form. Both sides focused more on the importance of the Kurdish role in re-writing Turkey's constitution."

Clinton's meeting with the Kurdish MPs came after detailed discussions with

MPs from Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's AKP party. Kisnak said the AKP didn't express any opinion about Clinton's meeting with the Kurdish MPs, but media outlets close to AKP did not report positively on the meeting.

Some observers in Turkey believe that the Turkish government is trying to use the July 14 killing of 13 Turkish soldiers to curb the BDP's powers. The government has accused the PKK of the attack, though the group has not taken responsibility for it.

Kisnak maintained that it is not possible to sideline the BDP.

"BDP is relying on democracy; it has obtained people's voice and leads democratic solutions and will never give up that aim," she said. "Even before that incident we had and still have the same view that the military operations should stop because the possibility of war is always close."

Earlier this month, the Kurdish Democratic Society Congress declared political autonomy for the Kurdish areas of Turkey, a decision opposed by the Turkish government and some Kurdish MPs.

Kisnak said the Democratic Society Congress is an ideologically diverse group that includes Islamists, liberals and democrats, and accused the government of attempting to divide the Kurds.

"If the state wants to solve the Kurdish problem peacefully, it has to give up the policy of dividing the Kurds," she said. "This policy is not right and won't serve the situation."

Kisnak added, "It's normal if some of our colleagues inside the KCD have different views on autonomy, but that doesn't mean we are not united on the basic rights of Kurds."

AFP

## Iran: 6 Pasdaran tués dans des accrochages avec des rebelles kurdes

TEHERAN, 22 juillet 2011 (AFP)

UN COMMANDANT des Gardiens de la révolution, l'armée d'élite du régime islamique, et cinq autres militaires ont été tués lors d'affrontements avec des rebelles du Pjak (Parti pour une vie libre du Kurdistan) à la frontière avec le Kurdistan d'Irak, a rapporté vendredi l'agence Fars.

"Le général Assemi du corps des Gardiens de la révolution de Qom (centre) et cinq de ses compagnons ont été tués dans des accrochages avec les rebelles terroristes du Pjak dans la région de Sardasht" à la frontière, selon l'agence, qui ne donne pas d'autres détails.

Les Gardiens de la révolution ont lancé samedi une vaste offensive contre des bases du Pjak de part et d'autre de la frontière avec le Kurdistan d'Irak.

Les responsables militaires iraniens ont affirmé que de "nombreux" rebelles du Pjak ont été tués, sans indiquer de chiffre précis.

De son côté, le Pjak avait parlé de "dizaines de morts et blessés" au sein

des forces iraniennes et de "deux tués et quatre blessés" dans ses propres rangs.

Mardi, les autorités du Kurdistan irakien avaient appelé Téhéran à respecter la frontière, faisant état d'une "infiltration le long de la frontière irakienne".

La veille, le colonel iranien Delavar Ranjbarzadeh avait annoncé la prise du contrôle de trois camps du Pjak en territoire irakien, qui fournissaient "de l'aide" aux Kurdes en Iran.

Le 11 juillet, un responsable militaire iranien avait affirmé que son pays se réservait "le droit" d'attaquer les bases du Pjak, accusant Massoud Barzani, le président du Kurdistan irakien, d'avoir mis un territoire de 150 km sur 20 km "à la disposition du Pjak" le long de la frontière iranienne, "pour créer des bases d'entraînement et mener des actions terroristes contre l'Iran".

Le Pjak est régulièrement impliqué dans des affrontements armés avec les forces iraniennes, qui bombardent en représailles les zones frontalières montagneuses du Kurdistan irakien, d'où opèrent les combattants indépendantistes.



25 juillet 2011

## Irak: des centaines de Kurdes déplacés après les bombardements iraniens

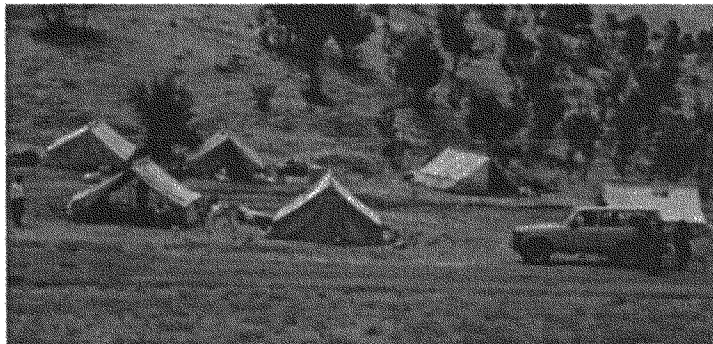
Des centaines de familles ont été contraintes de quitter leurs villages, après des affrontements entre séparatistes kurdes iraniens et l'armée de la République islamique d'Iran. Deux villageois ont été tués.

Des centaines d'habitants de la région frontalière du nord de l'Irak ont quitté leurs villages à la suite d'affrontements entre les séparatistes kurdes iraniens et les Gardiens de la révolution, a affirmé lundi la Croix rouge.

Par ailleurs, deux villageois ont été tués et deux autres ont été blessés lundi à 04H30 (01H30 GMT) par un bombardement iranien contre un village de la région de Sidakan, à 100 km au nord-est d'Erbil, selon Maksoud Islamil, le chef de l'hôpital Souran à Erbil.

«Le Comité international de la Croix rouge (CICR) a apporté une assistance humanitaire à 800 personnes déplacées dans le nord de l'Irak par les récents bombardements sur les montagnes de Qandil», le long de la frontière, a affirmé dans un communiqué l'organisation humanitaire.

«Ayant abandonné tous leurs biens, la majorité de ces



personnes vivent dans des abris improvisés, des tentes, ou partagent des maisons surpeuplées avec des amis et des parents. Certaines familles ont pu louer une habitation très rudimentaire», ajoute le CICR.

Les Gardiens de la révolution, l'armée idéologique de la République islamique d'Iran, ont lancé depuis une semaine une vaste offensive contre des bases du Pjak (Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan), de part et d'autre de la frontière avec le Kurdistan irakien.

Les responsables militaires iraniens ont affirmé vendredi que de «nombreux» rebelles du Pjak ont été tués, sans indiquer de chiffre précis, et ont reconnu la mort d'un commandant des Gardiens de la révolution et de cinq autres militaires lors d'affrontements à la frontière avec le Kurdistan d'Irak.

frontements à la frontière avec le Kurdistan d'Irak.

Déplacement de «centaines de familles»

Pour sa part, l'Organisation internationale pour les migrations (OIM) a annoncé dimanche avoir aussi participé à l'aide pour ces déplacés en distribuant des lits, des kits pour purifier l'eau et d'autres équipements sommaires.

«Les combats actuels ont conduit au déplacement de centaines de familles qui ont dû abandonner leurs maisons pour s'installer dans un camp à plusieurs kilomètres après les bombardements de leurs villages. Un villageois a été blessé et plusieurs maisons ainsi qu'une école ont été endommagées», déplore-t-elle dans un communiqué.

Mardi, les autorités du Kurdistan irakien avaient appelé Téhéran à respecter la frontière, faisant état d'une «infiltration le long de la frontière irakienne».

La veille, le colonel iranien Delavar Ranjbarzadeh avait annoncé la prise de contrôle de trois camps du Pjak en territoire irakien, qui fournissaient «de l'aide» aux Kurdes en Iran.

Le 11 juillet, un responsable militaire iranien avait affirmé que son pays se réservait «le droit» d'attaquer les bases du Pjak, accusant Massoud Barzani, le président du Kurdistan irakien, d'avoir mis un territoire de 150 km sur 20 km «à la disposition du Pjak» le long de la frontière iranienne, «pour créer des bases d'entraînement et mener des actions terroristes contre l'Iran».

Le Pjak est régulièrement impliqué dans des affrontements armés avec les forces iraniennes, qui bombardent en représailles les zones frontalières montagneuses du Kurdistan irakien, d'où opèrent les combattants indépendantistes.

(Source AFP)



# En Syrie, la ville de Homs, encerclée par les chars, continue de défier le régime

La grande ville industrielle, au nord de Damas, est le théâtre d'une vaste opération militaire

**Beyrouth**

Correspondante

Les manifestants ont été encore très nombreux, vendredi 22 juillet, à descendre dans les rues de Syrie pour y défier le régime du président Bachar Al-Assad. Cette nouvelle journée de mobilisation avait été consacrée par les cyber-activistes syriens aux habitants de la ville de Homs. Cette grande cité industrielle, située à 160 km au nord de la capitale, est, depuis le début de la semaine, le théâtre d'une opération militaire d'envergure qui a fait plus de 50 morts civils, selon les organisations des droits de l'homme.

Homs a rejoint le camp des contestataires aux premiers jours de la révolte débutée à la mi-mars, suivie par les villes du voisinage, notamment Talbisseh et Rastan, où des manifestants s'étaient filmés, le 15 avril, en train de déboulonner une immense statue d'Hafez Al-Assad, père du président actuel. Ce geste serait à l'origine, selon des habitants, de la terrible répression qui s'est abattue sur eux. Plus de vingt civils sont tombés sous les tirs des forces de sécurité dans les quarante-huit heures qui ont suivi.

**Des vidéos montrent des blindés qui passent en trombe avec, en arrière-plan, le claquement de tirs nourris**

L'armée syrienne a aussitôt encerclé la ville. Une situation à laquelle les cyber-activistes de Homs ont essayé de faire face avec humour, en créant la page Facebook «Laverie internationale des chars à Homs», parce que, précise l'intitulé de la page, «les chars sont nombreux en Syrie et à Homs en particuliers. Avec l'aide de Dieu, nous avons ouvert le premier centre au monde spécialisé dans l'entretien des blindés». Cette lourde présence militaire n'a pas empêché de nouvelles manifestations, ni la diffusion sur YouTube de vidéos amateurs qui ont donné un aperçu



Près de Damas, à Maadamiya, où les manifestations contre le régime avaient déjà repris mardi 19 juillet. SHAAM NEWS NETWORK/AP

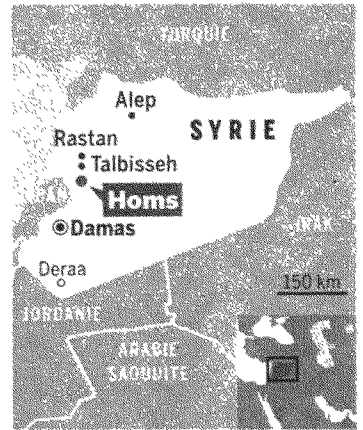
effrayant du quotidien de la ville, magasins fermés et murs criblés de balles.

Dimanche 17 juillet, des habitants ont rapporté des heurts, dans la ville, entre la majorité sunnite et la minorité alaouite à laquelle appartient le clan Assad et dont sont issus une majorité des hauts officiers de l'armée. Ce jour-là, les corps mutilés de trois Alaouites – des loyalistes au régime, selon des manifestants – ont été retrouvés aux abords de la ville. La nouvelle aurait déclenché la colère vengeresse d'autres Alaouites qui auraient alors brûlé des magasins appartenant à des Sunnites et tué trois personnes, dont une mère de famille.

Dans un communiqué, le Comité révolutionnaire de Homs a indiqué que «plusieurs habitants ont

été tués après avoir été enlevés par des inconnus; depuis la rumeur s'est répandue que ces crimes étaient d'origine sectaire (...). Le jeu pervers du régime visant à provoquer des violences sectaires et de diviser les citoyens d'une même ville ne marchera pas». Des opposants dénoncent les pratiques des autorités syriennes qui distribueraient des armes à une partie de la population pour provoquer des tensions intercommunautaires.

Après ces clashes, les chars ont pénétré dans la cité. La répression y a fait dix morts, lundi 18 juillet, et seize autres, lors des funérailles de ces derniers, lorsque des soldats «ont tiré sur la foule qui se recueillait», selon les Comités de coordination locale de Syrie, qui regroupent des activistes à la poin-



te de la contestation. L'armée aurait par endroits tiré à l'artillerie lourde. Des vidéos datées de jeudi 21 montrent d'importantes destructions, y compris sur le minaret d'une mosquée, des voitures écrasées ou calcinées, des chars qui passent en trombe avec, en arrière-plan, le claquement de tirs nourris.

Selon les activistes, des défections auraient eu lieu dans les rangs de l'armée basée à Rastan, près de Homs. Ils ont fourni une liste de plusieurs officiers, l'un d'entre eux appartenant aux Forces spéciales, qui auraient rejoint la «division des officiers libres de Rastan». Ces informations sont pour l'instant invérifiables. Ce n'est pas la première fois que des mutineries sont signalées mais elles restent, en tout état de cause, limitées.

Une source non identifiée, citée par l'agence de presse officielle SANA, a démenti l'existence de ces scissions. «Il s'agit d'une tentative de porter atteinte à la réputation de l'armée de Syrie et à sa mission consistant à défendre la patrie, la stabilité et la sécurité des citoyens», dit cette source. SANA indique par ailleurs qu'un «bus transportant des éléments des forces armées» a été la cible, à Rastan, vendredi 22, d'une «attaque à l'arme lourde menée par un groupe terroriste», au cours de laquelle deux officiers ont été tués.

Dans la soirée, les organisations des droits de l'homme ont dressé un bilan de huit civils tués vendredi, dont cinq à Homs où des manifestations avaient été organisées, malgré le siège de l'armée. ■

Cécile Hennion

# “Le régime sera étranglé par l'économie”

L'opposition syrienne s'est réunie en conférence le 16 juillet à Istanbul pour présenter une alternative en cas de chute du régime. Haitham El-Maleh, grand défenseur des droits de l'homme, y participait.

Asharq Al-Awsat (extraits) Londres

## Comment avez-vous réussi à quitter la Syrie pour venir à Istanbul ?

**Haitham El-Maleh** J'en suis moi-même le premier surpris. Je n'étais pas seulement en résidence surveillée : le régime avait décidé de m'éliminer physiquement et avait donné l'ordre à ceux qui encerclaient ma maison de tirer sur moi. Si cela avait abouti, il aurait expliqué qu'un inconnu s'était introduit chez moi pour m'assassiner. Ce régime ment comme il respire. Notre Etat est hors la loi. Depuis ses débuts, il se retranche derrière l'état d'urgence pour suspendre la Constitution, répandre la corruption, tuer, pourchasser et humilier. Entre 1980 et 1990, on a dénombré 50 000 prisonniers politiques et d'opinion en Syrie, ainsi que 60 000 tués. Les coupables sont toujours là, au sein de l'Etat. Dans les deux prisons de Palmyre et de Mazzeh [banlieue de Damas], plus de 15 000 prisonniers ont été tués. La stratégie de l'ancien président Hafez El-Assad [père de l'actuel président] consistait à laisser tout le monde autour de lui agir à sa guise tant qu'on ne mettait pas son pouvoir en danger. Avec le temps, les hommes de son entourage ont eu les dents de plus en plus longues, jusqu'à ce que lui-même, à la fin de son règne, ne soit plus en mesure de les contrôler. C'est eux qui sont devenus les vrais gardiens du pouvoir. La corruption s'est répandue jusqu'au sommet de l'Etat. Plus de 85 % des revenus de la Syrie sont entre les mains de ces gens-là, le peuple se partageant les 15 % restants. C'est ainsi que 60 % de la population syrienne vit au-dessous du seuil de pauvreté et que 30 % de la population active est au chômage.

## Pourquoi ne répondez-vous pas aux appels au dialogue lancés par le pouvoir ?

Personne n'a cherché autant que moi le dialogue, et ce depuis que Bachar El-Assad est arrivé au pouvoir. Je me suis adressé à lui en le considérant comme le président de la République, sans tenir compte de la manière dont il a accédé à son poste [sans élection], ni du fait qu'on avait changé la

## LES SYRIENS MEURENT EN SILENCE

Constitution pour lui. Je lui ai envoyé huit lettres. Dans la première, je lui ai dit que j'étais un homme âgé qui n'avait plus d'ambitions alors que lui était un homme jeune auquel on prêtait une volonté réformatrice. Je ne lui ai pas parlé de politique, mais de droits de l'homme et d'aspects juridiques.

La vision d'avenir que je lui ai soumise aurait pu changer la situation déplorable du pays en lui évitant les dommages. J'ai demandé à Bachar comment qualifier une loi telle que le décret n° 14 de 1969, dont l'article 16 stipule qu'un membre des forces de l'ordre qui commet un crime dans l'exercice de ses fonctions ne peut être poursuivi sans l'accord du président. C'est une loi dont le texte n'a pas été publié, mais qui est appliquée et qui dépénalise le crime ! Il en va de même pour les lois portant sur la “sauvegarde de la révolution” et sur la “sauvegarde du parti Baas”. Toutes ces lois sont iniques. Vingt mille maisons ont été confisquées sous prétexte que leurs propriétaires étaient membres des Frères musulmans. A cela s'ajoutent les disparus et les 250 000 Syriens vivant en exil. Mais tous mes appels sont tombés dans l'oreille d'un sourd. Ce n'est pas un dialogue, mais un monologue. Il n'y a aucun espoir que ce régime prenne des décisions positives.

## Le dialogue est donc impossible avec ce régime ?

Le régime est incapable de changer quoi que ce soit. Avec Bachar El-Assad à sa tête, il n'a aucune vision d'avenir et aucune volonté de changer. Donc, il n'y a pas d'espoir. Après des centaines de martyrs, 1 500 disparus et 15 000 déplacés, de quel dialogue parle-t-on ? Trois mille chars sont déployés à travers le pays. Ils ont été achetés avec l'argent du peuple sous prétexte de combattre Israël. Or le régime les utilise contre son propre peuple. De quoi voulez-vous qu'on discute ? Nos conditions pour l'ouverture du dialogue sont la libération des prisonniers politiques, la fin du harcèlement de la part des forces de l'ordre et le retrait de l'armée des villes.

## Quel est le but de cette conférence ?

La Syrie est en révolution. Dans cette situation, rien n'est comme d'habitude. On est en ébullition et l'opposition est multiple. Tout le monde doit se réunir pour que chacun puisse présenter son point de vue. Des rencontres publiques



Né en 1931 en Syrie, Haitham Al-Maleh est un juriste et défenseur des droits de l'homme connu dans tout le monde arabe.

et privées ont eu lieu, ce qui nous a permis de mettre par écrit un projet d'avenir que nous avons résumé en une page. Le but est de former un gouvernement provisoire, avec un programme et une vision claire afin d'analyser les événements du point de vue de l'opposition. Il y aura des ministres de l'Economie, des Finances, de la Défense et des Affaires étrangères. Ils travailleront loin de toute démagogie. Ainsi, on sera opérationnel quand le régime tombera [cette proposition n'a pas été retenue par l'opposition réunie à Istanbul].

## Il semble que vous soyez mécontent de la Turquie parce qu'elle se désintéresse de ce qui se passe en Syrie.

Tout à fait. Je pense que ce désintérêt correspond à une phase transitoire en Turquie, mais également en Occident. Il y a eu une sorte de ralentissement parce qu'on a beaucoup parlé d'un possible dialogue [entre le régime syrien et l'opposition]. Or, après notre conférence, c'en sera fini. On passera à une nouvelle étape lorsque la Turquie et l'Union européenne hausseront le ton vis-à-vis de Damas.

## Y a-t-il une rébellion armée ?

Les histoires sur les bandes armées que raconte le régime ressemblent à ce que disaient les régimes de Ben Ali en Tunisie et de Moubarak en Egypte. En réalité, les seules bandes armées sont celles des *chabiha*, les miliciens du régime. Un peu partout, le régime donne des bâtons, des couteaux et d'autres armes à des éboueurs, à des ouvriers d'usine et à de petits fonctionnaires et leur dit de s'en prendre aux manifestants. Je connais des familles dont le père a reçu 1 000 livres syriennes [15 euros] et chacun des fils 500 afin qu'ils attaquent les manifestants et participent aux rassemblements de soutien au régime.

**D'un autre côté, vous dites que**

### **L'Iran et le Hezbollah participent à la répression ?**

Le secrétaire général du Hezbollah libanais, Hassan Nasrallah, a lui-même déclaré qu'il soutenait le régime syrien. Quant à l'Iran, je crois qu'il envoie des gardiens de la révolution [milices du régime]. Nous le savons à travers les récits des gens de Deraa [première ville syrienne, dans le sud du pays, à s'être révoltée]. Ils disent avoir vu des hommes armés dans les rues de leur ville qui parlaient en arabe littéral, et non en dialectal syrien. Nous avons également des informations sur des camps. Les indices d'une participation iranienne à la répression sont sûrs à 90 %. L'Iran n'y gagnera rien, mais sera perdant. Hassan Nasrallah a déjà perdu la popularité qu'il a pu avoir dans le passé. Ils sont en train de se griller.

### **Sur quoi repose votre confiance dans la chute prochaine du régime ?**

Le régime s'est condamné à l'échec à partir du moment où il a tiré la première balle contre le peuple. Autre chose importante : la situation économique. Dans

deux mois, il ne pourra plus payer les fonctionnaires, il n'y a plus un seul touriste en Syrie, les hôtels sont vides, le commerce à l'arrêt, les revenus fiscaux se tarissent. Le régime sera étranglé par l'économie.

**Propos recueillis par Thaer Abbas**

## **Le Monde**

Mardi 19 juillet 2011

### **Syrie**

## **Plus de 30 morts lors de heurts entre partisans du régime et opposants**

HAMAS. Des affrontements entre partisans du régime de Bachar Al-Assad et opposants ont fait, dans la nuit de samedi 16 juillet au dimanche 17, au moins 30 morts à Homs, dans le centre du pays. Les accrochages ont débuté dans le quartier Hadara, puis se sont étendus à plusieurs autres parties de la ville, sans que les forces de l'ordre ne s'interposent, selon le chef de l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme, Rami Abdel Rahmane. Les heurts sont intervenus après l'assassinat à Homs de trois partisans du régime enlevés la semaine dernière par des inconnus et dont les corps démembrés ont été rendus, samedi, à leurs proches. Depuis le début de la révolte, le régime attribue les violences à des groupes armés cherchant à semer le chaos. - (AFP.) ■

**Observateur**

24 juillet 2011

## **Trois soldats turcs tués par des séparatistes kurdes**

### **DIYARBAKIR, Turquie (Reuters)**

Des rebelles kurdes ont tué trois soldats turcs dans une embuscade tendue tard samedi soir dans la province de Mardin (sud-est), a-t-on confirmé dimanche de sources proches des services de sécurité.

Cette attaque des séparatistes est un signe supplémentaire du regain de tensions observé entre les forces armées turques et les rebelles kurdes dans le sud-est du pays.

Les trois soldats regagnaient leur caserne après s'être rendus dans le village d'Ikipinar lorsqu'ils ont été pris sous le feu de combattants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Il y a dix jours, des affrontements dans la province de Diyarbakir ont fait treize morts et sept blessés dans les rangs de l'armée turque. Sept séparatistes du PKK avaient également péri dans cet accrochage.

Le PKK a mis fin en février à un ces-

sez-le-feu qu'il respectait depuis six mois et a annoncé être passé en mode de "défense active" qui autorise ses combattants à se battre s'ils sont menacés.

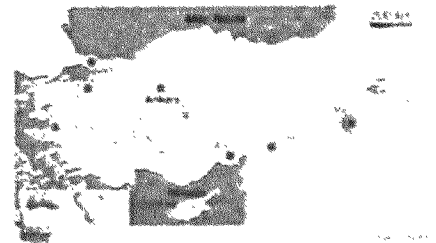
Des spécialistes de la question kurde lient cette évolution aux soulèvements du "printemps arabe" ainsi qu'à la création du Soudan du Sud, qui offre un modèle aux Kurdes, répartis sur plusieurs pays (Turquie, Irak, Syrie et Iran).

En Turquie, le conflit armé a fait 40.000 morts depuis 1984.

Début mai, de sa cellule où il purge une peine de réclusion criminelle à perpétuité, Abdullah Öcalan, le leader du PKK, avait menacé les autorités turques d'une "guerre totale" si des pourparlers n'étaient pas engagés.

Le 8 juillet dernier, il a fait savoir par son avocat qu'il avait accepté avec des représentants du pouvoir la création d'un "conseil de paix" pour tenter de trouver une solution au conflit.

Mais la situation est compliquée, sur



le terrain politique, par le boycott du parlement décidé par des élus d'un parti kurde.

Les 36 députés du Parti de la paix et de la démocratie (BDP) ont décidé de ne pas prendre part aux travaux de la nouvelle assemblée, élue le mois dernier, pour protester contre l'interdiction faite par la justice à cinq des leurs, actuellement incarcérés, de siéger.

Les discussions menées avec le parti majoritaire, l'AKP, n'ont pas abouti.

# In Syria, new unity starts to fray

HOMS, SYRIA

Divisions based on class, region and religion could turn revolt into civil war

BY ANTHONY SHADID

On the birth of his daughter this month, a young activist in this central city bestowed on her a name that had little resonance until not so long ago. Dara'a, he called her, the namesake of the southern Syrian town where the anti-government uprising began.

Syria is awash in such stories of solidarity these days, bridging traditional divides that have colored politics for generations. But even as the stories emerge, they are colliding with the same older forces — geography, class and, in particular, religious sect — that can also tear Syria apart. Those divisions are deepening, though Syrians offer differing explanations. Protesters blame cynical manipulation by a government bent on divide and rule, and the government points to Islamist zealots seeking to impose a tyranny of the majority.

Whether new loyalties born of revolution or old rivalries entrenched in smaller identities prevail may decide the fate of Syria's four-month revolt.

Colliding along the front lines of the uprising, and especially here in Homs, these forces suggest a grim reality of the revolt against President Bashar al-Assad: The longer his government remains in power, the less chance Syria has to avoid civil strife, sectarian cleansing and the kind of communal violence that killed at least two dozen people in Homs last week. Unlike in Egypt, and despite the protesters' hope and optimism, time is not necessarily on their side, a point that some of them admit.

"If the government keeps playing the sectarian card, they're going to get what they want," said Iyad, 27, the activist who named his daughter after the cradle of the uprising. "If this regime lasts, there's absolutely going to be a civil war, absolutely."

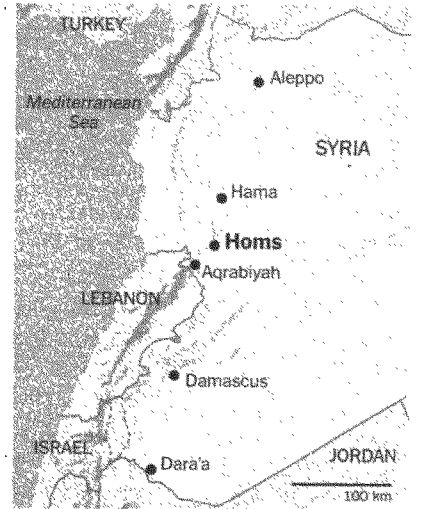
That is not to say that anyone really knows what kind of state the protesters want. In Homs last week, pious activists debated the differences between an Islamic state and a civil one, both of which they said should rely on religious law.

Minorities fear militant currents within the Sunni Muslim majority. Sunnis seethe at the injustice of living for decades under a state endowed with a remarkable capacity for violence and led by the Alawite minority, a heterodox Muslim sect. Even some activists celebrating the unity that the revolt has brought warn that repression is breeding strife.

"The government is going to push us in the direction of violence," said a former Republican Guard officer who has joined the ranks of protesters in Homs, Syria's third-largest city, after Damascus and Aleppo, with a Sunni majority and Alawite minority. "A lot of guys think it's almost over, but I don't. The situation, very regrettably, is going to become a crisis," by which he meant bloodshed.

As was the case in Iraq, a sectarian lens is often unfairly imposed on Syria's diversity, with its sizable communities of Christians, Alawites and ethnic Kurds. Other divisions are no less pronounced — between cities like Damascus and Aleppo; among classes; between the countryside and urban areas; and within extended clans, especially in eastern Syria.

Residents of Hama, a traditional rival of Homs in central Syria, said they had long felt discriminated against, especially in the military, which carried out a brutal crackdown there in 1982.



**"If the government keeps playing the sectarian card, they're going to get what they want."**

These days, chants ring out in protests that suggest a growing sense of nationalism, often reinforced by virtual communities that disseminate information.

At Khalid bin Walid Mosque, a center of dissent in Homs, protesters chant, "With our souls and blood, we sacrifice for you, Dara'a." Solidarity with Homs, the scene of a persistent crackdown, is heard in Hama, where activists say they have sometimes traveled back and forth in an effort to build what one activist called "a culture of protest."

"This is the beauty of the revolution," said Ahmed, a 28-year-old smuggler and protester, sitting with others in a safe house near Homs.

Pointing to his friends, Ahmed said: "He didn't know him, he didn't know



A leader of the anti-government uprising in Homs, where pious activists recently debated the differences between an Islamic state and a civil one, both relying on religious law.

him, and he didn't know him before the protests.

"This is the result of the regime's oppression. Now we're ready to defend each other."

Activists often repeat that the Syrian uprising is "a revolution of orphans," and young activists take pride in the fact that they are organizing themselves by neighborhood for the fight against Mr. Assad's leadership. But the term also points to divisions that are emerging, where sectarian tension intersects with other resentments.

Many in Homs and Hama feel anger at what they see as acquiescence by the United States, the European Union and Turkey to Mr. Assad's stay in power. They often express resentment at Aleppo, which has remained relatively quiet.

"There's anger at Aleppo, there really is," said a young activist in Hama who gave his name as Mustafa.

A friend, Bassem, nodded, as they sat in a clubhouse-turned-hideout. "Aleppo benefits from the regime and business with the leadership," he said.

Perhaps most pronounced is the anger at Hezbollah, the Shiite Muslim movement in Lebanon that has bluntly supported Mr. Assad's government. Hezbollah was widely popular in Syria, where sentiments against Israel and long-standing U.S. dominance of the region run deep. But Hezbollah's backing of Mr. Assad has unleashed a sense of betrayal at a movement that celebrates the idea of resistance. At times, it has also given rise to chauvinism among Syrian Sunnis against Hezbollah's Shiite constituency.

"We've started to hate them more than we hate Israel," said Maher, a young father and protester in Hama, sitting with a friend who gave his name as Abu Mohammed.

Abu Mohammed said that during the war fought between Hezbollah and Isra-

el in 2006, which forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes, he sheltered 40 Shiite families for as long as a month. "Food, drink, and I accepted nothing in return," he said. "Now they're with the regime, but it wasn't the regime who opened the doors of their homes to them."

In almost every conversation, Syrians stress that their country lacks the sectarian divisions of neighboring Iraq and Lebanon, which both fought brutal civil wars. In Hama last week, residents were still celebrating a visit in June by six Alawites from nearby villages, who joined their huge demonstrations in Assi Square. The Alawites offered lines of a song, known to everyone.

"I take your hand in mine," they declared to the jubilant crowd. "I kiss the ground under the soles of your shoes, and I say I will sacrifice myself for you."

To many residents in Homs and Hama, the government is behind every incitement, its hand visible in any provocation, however convoluted the conspiracy. Residents insisted that after an especially bloody Friday in June, security forces dropped off bags of Kalashnikovs and ammunition in the streets of Hadir, a neighborhood in Hama home to most of the victims, trying to goad residents into an armed fight they would lose.

"No one came close to them," said a young activist who gave his name as Abdel-Razzaq. "They knew to leave them alone. They knew this was the regime's game."

A few weeks later, the government helped organize a pro-Assad demonstration in a city where nearly every family claims someone killed, wounded, arrested or disappeared in the crackdown of 1982, ordered by Mr. Assad's father, Hafez. Several residents insisted that the loyalists chanted: "O Hafez, re-

peat 1982. They didn't learn their lesson."

"When they said this, no one could control themselves," another activist recalled.

Within minutes, residents said, enraged crowds who had kept their distance set upon the demonstrators' vehicles, burning cars and a bus that had helped bring them to the city.

But even protesters themselves acknowledge the way sectarian tensions have deepened, especially along fault lines of Sunni and Alawite communities, as in Homs, especially in its countryside. Some Facebook pages, ostensibly affiliated with the uprising, give voice to vulgar bigotry against Alawites, who are far from monolithic in their support for the government and, historically as peasants, were the most exploited and downtrodden of Syria's people.

Protesters speak of the importance of reaching out to Christians and Alawites, while in the same conversation warning that Alawites in the countryside will face retribution from Sunnis insistent on exacting revenge for the security forces' crimes; complaints are rife in Homs that government agents search only Sunni homes.

In the bloodletting in Homs this past week, which bore an indelible sectarian stamp, another incident went largely unnoticed. An Alawite was killed Sunday in Aqrabiyah, a town near the Lebanese border. In the ensuing hours, security forces poured into the region, and Sunnis from nearby Burhaniyya stayed indoors. Though joined by a road, no one dared to drive through the other village. Everyone seemed to expect more killing.

"One death is enough to create hatred," said Iyad, the young father of Dara'a.

## Syrian forces open fire on tire-burning protesters

BEIRUT

At least 8 reported killed as troops with tanks enter Damascus suburb

FROM NEWS REPORTS

Syrian troops opened fire Wednesday on scores of people in a Damascus sub-

urb, killing at least eight people who were trying to halt the soldiers' advance by throwing stones and burning tires, activists said.

Ammar Qurabi, who heads the National Organization for Human Rights in Syria, put the death toll higher, at 11. Al Jazeera, citing a local resident, said the dead included four children.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, based in London, said residents of the suburb, Kanaker, had been trying to set up blockades to stop several tanks and a bulldozer that were heading into the area.

Citing its wide network of witnesses on the ground in Syria, the group said the raid had wounded several people, who were being treated in mosques that residents had turned into makeshift hospitals. It said the raid occurred after electricity and telephones were cut off in the area.

The uprising against President Bashar al-Assad has lasted for nearly five months despite a brutal govern-

ment crackdown on dissent. Activists say more than 1,600 people have been killed, most of them unarmed protesters.

Although Mr. Assad's regime blames terrorists and foreign extremists for the unrest, the president has acknowledged the need for change. Late on Tuesday, his cabinet endorsed draft legislation that would enable newly formed political parties to run for Parliament and local councils, a human rights group said.

The ruling Baath Party has held a monopoly over political life in Syria for decades. On Monday, the government endorsed a draft law that it says will allow the formation of political parties alongside the Baath Party, something that had been a key demand of the protest movement.

Still, the promises are not likely to appease protesters. Mr. Assad, who inherited power in 2000 after the death of his father, Hafez al-Assad, has made a series of overtures, but the protests have grown larger. (AP, BLOOMBERG)

## Hundreds flee from fighting between Iranian soldiers and Kurdish rebels inside Iraq

James Calderwood

The National / UAE

Fighting between the Iranian military and Kurdish guerrillas in northern Iraq has caused hundreds of villagers to flee from their homes amid signs that the conflict along the Iraqi-Iranian border is escalating.

The International Committee of the Red Cross "has provided humanitarian assistance to over 800 internally displaced people in northern Iraq, all of whom have been driven from their homes by the recent shelling in the mountains of Qandil", a statement from the organisation said this week.

The Kurdish villagers have been caught up in an Iranian military offensive that began on July 16 against Pjak, the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan. The organisation demands autonomy for Iranian Kurds and uses the isolated mountain range as a base to strike at military targets in Iran.

Mohammed Tofiq, a spokesman for the Kurdish opposition party Goran, the Change Movement, said their was "no justification for Iran to bomb the border areas" because civilians live among the guerrillas. He criticised the Kurdistan Regional Government for saying little about Iran's violation of Iraqi sovereignty, adding: "Even from Baghdad, we haven't heard anything".

An officer of the Kurdish Peshmerga forces said 12,000 troops have been deployed to the region, the Erbil-based Rudraw newspaper reported yesterday. The officer said: "We will confront any forces that may attempt to cross the borders of Kurdistan."

Iraq's Council of Representatives has responded to the crisis by sending a parliamentary delegation on a fact-finding mission to Kurdistan. The spokesman for the committee, Hasan Al Sinead, said on Sunday that Iranian forces had not crossed the border into Iraq, but their artillery had shelled border villages "without justification".

The committee's conclusion conflicts with a statement made by an Iranian military commander last week when he claimed Iranian forces had taken "full control" of three Pjak camps inside



Photo: AP

Recruits of Pjak, the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan, a splinter group of the PKK, the Kurdistan Workers Party, take defensive positions near the Pjak training camp in the Kandil mountain range, northern Iraq (File)

Iraq.

In the days leading up to the assault, state-run Iranian media reported that 5,000 Iranian troops had been moved to the border region.

The Iranian military said it has killed "dozens of Pjak terrorists" while Pjak claimed 255 members of Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps and eight guerrillas had died during the fighting.

Orouj Mojahedi, the governor of the western Iranian city of Piranshahr, warned on Friday that the operation would continue until Pjak was "fully uprooted" from the region.

Soran Khedri, a London-based spokesman for Pjak, said the Iranian troops used tanks, armoured vehicles, helicopters and artillery, and crossed one kilometre into Iraqi territory on the first day of the assault. He said the Iranian's claim to have taken control of three camps is propaganda, because "the guerrillas don't have camps."

Anthony Cordesman, a senior analyst for the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said it has been long predicted that Iran would expand its activities in Iraq by the end of this year.

About 6.8 million Kurds live in Iran and

4.3 million in Iraq. Both communities have pushed for greater autonomy, against the wishes of their national governments.

Iran has "lashed out at Kurdish areas in Iraq" because of the "reoccurrence of the Kurdish problem in Iran", Mr Cordesman said, adding that the cross-border incursions are "sending a message" to Kurds in Iraq not to support those across the border.

Iran's main physical actions are in the south of the country, where it is supporting Shiite and even Sunni militias with weapons and finance, he said.

John Drake, a risk consultant with the UK-based AKE Group, said border incursions by the Turkish and Iranian militaries have been a fairly common occurrence in recent years. "It usually occurs during the summer months because it's too difficult to conduct combat operations during the winter in the mountains," he said.

"Fighting tends to cease for the Holy Month [of Ramadan], and there have been previous amnesties offered around that time so it could be that Iranian forces are looking to get as much of the fighting over with now," Mr Drake said.

# Turkey edges toward conflict with Kurds

As reforms stall, spate of killings, unrest in Istanbul signal growing violence; analysts warn fighting could escalate.

By DAVID ROSENBERG

## THE MEDIA LINE

Three Turkish soldiers were killed in the southeastern province of Mardin over the weekend in an ambush laid by Kurdish nationalists. In Istanbul police detained some 70 people following days of inter-communal violence, amid growing signs that the uneasy peace between the two sides is unraveling.

More worryingly, analysts warned, the disturbances in Istanbul could signal a new chapter in the Turkish government's decades-long fight with Kurdish nationalists as the conflict moves to the cities. They also point to opinion polls that show a growing polarization between Turks and Kurds.

"We had two years when we had extremely positive development, up to the elections," Hugh Pope, project director for Turkey and Cyprus at the International Crisis Group. "The elections supplied an amazingly positive-looking parliament in that there were 36 people from the Kurdish nationalist party elected. Now we're seeing a setback."

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, fresh from a third-term election victory last month, has sought to press forward with democratic reforms to the constitution and ensure the economy stays on its growth trajectory. But some analysts worry that the recent violence risks spinning into the carnage of the 1984-2007 period when fighting between Turkish forces and the PKK claimed some 40,000 lives.

The three Turkish soldiers killed over the weekend brought the total number of casualties

attributed to the outlawed Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) to 21 since election day. Thirteen of them were killed in a July 14 ambush. In response, Erdogan vowed that Kurdish rebels would pay a "heavy price." But, in fact, the killings had the immediate effect of sparking inter-communal tensions.

In Istanbul's Zeytinburnu district nightly clashes erupted spurred by social media and what police say were rumors of killings and arson designed to encourage tensions. At an Istanbul jazz concert shortly after the killings, Aynur Dogan was booed by audience members for singing in the Kurdish language.

"That night we again saw the real reason behind the insolvability of Kurdish problem," wrote Cem Erciyas, a journalist for the newspaper Radikal.

Fadi Hakura, a Turkey specialist at the British research institution Chatham House, said the fighting, once principally confined to the Kurdish southeast, may spread to the cities with what he called a "mass popular mobilization."

Kurds make up about 20% of Turkey's population, but they are concentrated in the southeast, adjacent to Kurdish areas in Syria, Iraq and Iran. But, they have flooded into the cities as the army's crackdown on Kurds' traditional strongholds made many homeless and economic growth has created urban job opportunities.

"If the stagnation and confrontations escalate between the Turks and Kurdish nationalists, this is likely to put further strain in inter-communal ties. Already there are hints that the strings have begun to fray," Hakura told The Media Line.



The stagnation relates to the political and cultural opening that Erdogan promised in 2009, which included easing restrictions on the use of Kurdish language and more access to government assistance. But after some initial progress, the drive bogged because Erdogan, like many Turks, see Kurdish aspirations as a challenge to Turkish unity.

"Although the AKP has adopted more relaxed attitude towards Kurds compared to previous governments it's still a nationalist party that doesn't agree with many of the demands put forth by the Kurdish nationalists," said Hakura, referring to Erdogan's Justice and Development Party AKP.

The PKK ended its six-month-old unilateral ceasefire with the government in February and adopted what it calls an "active defense," whereby its fighters defend themselves if threatened. Meanwhile, Kurds pressing for change using ordinary political channels ran up against strong opposition.

Hundreds of people belonging to the Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), including lawmakers, are being prosecuted under what Human Rights Watch calls draconian anti-terror laws. Shortly before

elections, Turkey's High Elections Board barred some Kurdish candidates from running, prompting widespread violence and a quick retreat from the ruling.

Nevertheless, Erdogan's AKP captured 30 seats in Kurdish areas while the BDP won 36 in the June elections. Pope, of the International Crisis Group said the two sides should have seen the split vote as a sign of their respective strengths and moved to negotiate.

Instead, six of the BDP lawmakers remain in jail and the rest have refused to take the oath of office until they are released. Two week ago, an umbrella organization of the Kurdish figures and groups, the Democratic Society Congress, or DTK, announced a declaration of democratic autonomy for Kurds, provoking a sharp criticism from many Turks.

"There is a problem in the media coverage. There is very little understanding in mainstream Turkish public opinion about what the Kurds want," he said. "You have an ingrained habit of violence. The democratic opening we had over last two years went some way to counter that, and now we're seeing a reversion."

Analysts disagree about how big a role the upheavals of the

Arab Spring are playing either as an inspiration for popular unrest or because turmoil has created a security vacuum in neighboring countries, making it easier for PKK fighters to move across the border into Turkey.

Hakura and Pope are doubtful, saying the Kurds are mainly influenced by domestic issues. But, Mehmet Kalyoncus, an independent political analyst writing in Today's Zaman, a newspaper close to the AKP, warned that Syria, Iraq and Iran could all serve as staging

ground for PKK operations inside Turkey even after the Arab Spring turmoil subsides.

"Syria will also be paralyzed by an internal conflict and instability in a way that would prevent Damascus from functioning as an effective regional

partner for Ankara in the foreseeable future," he wrote in a commentary on Monday. "Iran is [also] highly likely to experience popular unrest in the coming years."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL JULY 20, 2011

## Kurds Divided on Autonomy Declaration

By Ayla Albayrak

**I**STANBUL — Most of Turkey's large Kurdish minority are united on the need for more regional self-governance in the predominantly Kurdish South East.

But when it comes to last week's "declaration of autonomy" by the Kurdish Democratic Society Congress, an umbrella organization which gathers some 850 Kurdish politicians and other notables, they are divided.

About five parliamentary deputies from the main Kurdish political party — the BDP, or Peace and Democracy Party — oppose the declaration, according to party officials. Two of them — Altan Tan and Serafettin Elci — have gone public with their concerns.

The autonomy declaration appears to have been accelerated out of frustration as the BDP sought to negotiate a way to end its boycott of Turkey's new parliament. The boycott started after the country's election committee excluded one of the BDP's winning candidates from taking his seat after the June 12 election on grounds of a prior conviction on terrorism-related charges. At the same time, courts refused bail to another five BDP candidates who were in jail awaiting trial.

To put it mildly, the Kurdish declaration was not well received among Turks in general and in particular by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Declaring autonomy on a unilateral basis was never going to be popular in Ankara, but it also came on



Protesters shout slogans against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party during a demonstration in Istanbul on Saturday.

the same day as an attack by militants from the outlawed Kurdish Worker's Party, or PKK, which left 13 Turkish soldiers dead. To many Turks, the BDP's declaration looked like a provocation.

"To make this declaration on the day of these clashes caused the message to be blurred, misunderstood. The timing could have been chosen differently," said Ertugrul Kurkcü, a BDP deputy who opposes the declaration, in a telephone interview. Since 1984, some 40,000 people are believed to have died in clashes between Turkish security forces and the PKK.

The other problem is that there isn't yet a consensus among Kurds about what autonomy means, according to Mr. Kurkcü. While the principle is right, he said, but it's "still raw."

"There should be more discussion among all classes and layers of Kurdish society about how it would be applied in different areas of life, be it in education or even tourism. Now it

is still just an idea," he said.

And that's just on the side of Kurdish society that votes for the BDP, a party based around Kurdish identity. Mr. Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, also has strong support among Kurds in the South East. Needless to say, like Mr. Erdogan, the AKP is against the autonomy declaration.

Kurdish sociologist and AKP member Mazhar Bağlı agrees on the need for more self-governance in Kurdish provinces — but "this call should have been made in the Parliament and it should be clarified," he said.

Discussing Kurdish autonomy in the Turkish legislature will have to wait though. The BDP's boycott isn't likely to get solved until at least early October when parliament comes back from its annual summer break.



# Turkey heads to more ethnic polarization

Isil Egrikavuk

ISTANBUL - Hurriyet Daily News

The death of 13 soldiers in Diyarbakir's Silvan district has sparked angry demonstrations and protests against people of Kurdish origin. As politicians ramp up their harsh rhetoric, fears are building that Turkey is heading toward further ethnic polarization.

A group of young Turkish nationalists march in Zeytinburnu district of Istanbul in protest of a recent pro-Kurdistan Workers Party demonstration in the district.

Tension following the deaths of 13 soldiers in Southeast Anatolia has spread across much of Turkey, with pro-Kurdish political party headquarters assailed with stones and a Kurdish performer protested for singing in her mother tongue.

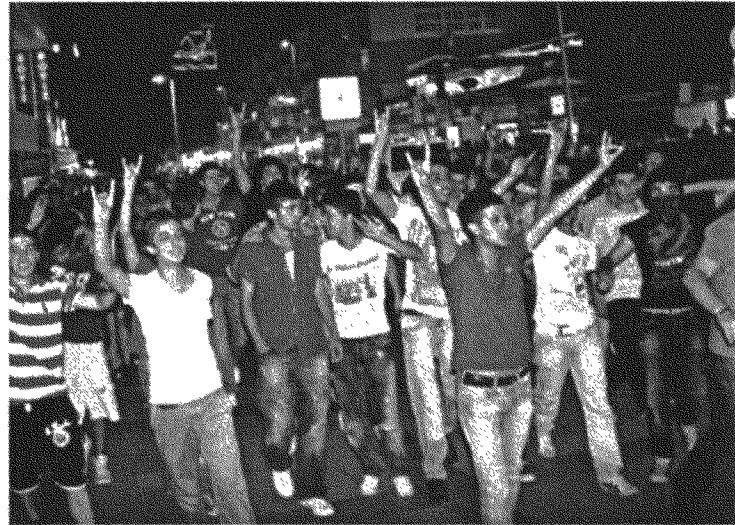
As the clashes continue, leading academics and other experts have criticized politicians and the media for casting blame rather than making an effort to solve the issue.

I cannot believe that instead of really addressing the issue, the politicians are speaking like taxi drivers in answering each other, Bekir Agirdir, the general manager of the research firm KONDA, told the Hürriyet Daily News this week. KONDA recently published a survey showing that polarization between Turkish and Kurdish people in Turkey is quite high.

The tension has ramped up following a July 14 terrorist attack by members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, that killed 13 troops in Diyarbakir's Silvan district.

A subsequent clash between PKK supporters and opponents in Istanbul's Zeytinburnu district lasted several days, only ending with police intervention, while some construction workers of Kurdish origin in the Black Sea province of Trabzon and the eastern province of Erzurum have claimed they were driven out of town after being attacked on the job.

Following the announcement of the terrorist attack, Prime Minister Recep



A group of young Turkish nationalists march in Zeytinburnu district of Istanbul in protest of a recent pro-Kurdistan Workers Party demonstration in the district.

Tayyip Erdoan said: There is no Kurdish issue in this country. There is a PKK problem in this country. The terror organization and its [sympathizers] should not expect goodwill from us.

The PKK is listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union. Members of the group killed three more Turkish soldiers on Saturday night in the southeastern province of Mardin.

According to Agirdir, the Kurdish issue is moving from the mountains - referring to PKK members fighting in many rural and mountainous areas of Turkey - to the Turkish Parliament. He added, however, that the Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP, the country's main pro-Kurdish political party, has not been successful in managing this process.

The BDP acted childishly in going for a boycott [of Parliament]. They couldn't really use this opportunity and the [ruling party] leaders made a show out of what happened, Agirdir said.

The BDP achieved success in the June 12 general elections by backing independent candidates for Parliament, but members of their bloc have refused to take the oath of office in protest of the continued imprisonment of their elected colleagues who are being held behind bars on terror-related

charges.

Politics is moving from being an institution toward [being] a neo-pagan ritual, Süleyman Ogün, a political scientist and professor at Istanbul's Maltepe University, told the Daily News. Political leadership means managing the catharsis of this ritual, of which the language is violence. However, the leaders are just busy reacting to each other's comments.

## Polarization debate

While the tension rises in the country, questions have been raised in the media about how the situation will develop. According to writer and economist Mustafa Sönmez, the current discourse will only serve to take Turkey back to the 1990s, when violence among Kurdish and Turkish groups was quite common.

Many of the PKK supporters in Istanbul are young people who migrated to western cities and the state's bureaucratic language will only cause Kurdish people to withdraw among themselves. By uttering these words they are repeating the 1990s discourse, Sönmez told the Daily News, while also criticizing the BDP for not having a constructive political agenda.

The democratic autonomy announcement is not clear, and this shows confusion among the BDP [ranks].

Such confusion brings along speculation, Sönmez said.

On the same day as the PKK ambush in Silvan, an umbrella organization of the pro-Kurdish figures and groups, the Democratic Society Congress, or DTK, announced a declaration of democratic autonomy. The unilateral announcement has been much criticized by many, including some deputies elected

with the BDP's backing in last month's elections.

When asked whether the clashes might lead to bigger incidents, Sönmez expressed optimism that they would not. My observation is that there is a strong common sense among society, so I don't expect anything big, he said.

KONDA's Agirdir believes, however,

that Turkey is walking on thin ice.

The pro- and anti-Kurdish issue is not the only one; there are polarizations among several other groups, such as Sunni and Alevi groups, though they are not seen so clearly now, Agirdir said. Yet when all of them come together, the violence might become quite severe. That's why politicians need to act immediately.

THE JERUSALEM POST  
Israel's best-selling English daily and most-read English website

JULY 29, 2011

## Syrian Kurds hope to ride wave of regional change

**Arab World: The minority group wants a democratic alternative to the current regime, agreed upon by all Syrians, both Arabs and Kurds.**

By JONATHAN SPYER

The uprising against the rule of Bashar Assad in Syria is continuing to grow. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians are now taking part in the protests. As the month of Ramadan approaches, the forecast is intensified strife.

Still, serious fissures have yet to appear in the regime, and the Assads show every intention of fighting on. This opens up the prospect of a long period of violence ahead.

One of the signs of the unflagging strength of the uprising is the broadening involvement of different sections of the population. An example of this is the Kurdish minority, which in the last weeks has begun to play a greater part in the protests. The role of the Kurds is complicated, however, by indications that elements of the Syrian opposition are determined to preserve the overtly Arab self-definition of the country, even following the hoped-for downfall

of the Assad regime.

Last week saw the regime's first major attempt to crack down on Kurdish support for the uprising. Syrian police and militiamen loyal to the authorities used batons and tear gas against demonstrations in Qamishli, a Kurdish-majority city in the Northeast. In the Kurdish neighborhood of Ruknuddin in Damascus, meanwhile, two protesters – Zardasht Wanli and Khezwan Safwan – were killed and dozens more injured.

Demonstrations by Syrian Kurds in Qamishli, Hassake, Amouda and the surrounding villages have been steadily increasing in size over the last month. The Kurds were slow, however, to join the uprising against the Assad regime. This was not out of any sentiments of loyalty to the dictatorship, but because of wariness and skepticism regarding the Arab opposition.

This skepticism was the product of experience. In March 2004, a small prelude to the current uprising in Syria took place. Kurdish citizens,



encouraged by the toppling of Saddam's regime in Iraq, rose up against the Assad regime. The revolt was swiftly and brutally crushed, and 36 Kurds were killed.

Hoped-for support from the country's Arab opposition did not emerge. As such, the Kurds were reluctant to join the current revolt until it became unmistakably clear that the rebels were in earnest.

There is no remaining doubt in this regard. Still, the regime has done its best to induce the Kurds to stay on the sidelines in recent months by offering a series of cosmetic "concessions."

The nature of these gestures highlights the depths of systematic brutality that characterize the Assad regime, because of the details they reveal regarding life under Assad.

Since the Arab nationalist Ba'ath party came to power in Syria in 1963, Kurds have suffered systematic discrimi-

nation in all areas of life.

Numbering between 10 percent and 15% of the population, they are the largest non-Arab minority in the country. Within this community, there are some half a million Syrian-born Kurds who lack citizenship, deprived of even the most minimal entitlements from the state under whose rule they were born. They have limited access to education and health provision, and no ability to acquire a passport.

This population is further subdivided into two groups: "maktoum" (people of no country), who lack all citizenship rights, and "ajanib" (foreigners), who have ID cards and some limited rights.

The Ba'ath regime systematically depopulated Kurdish areas, attempting to create an Arab population belt along the border with Turkey. The use of the Kurdish language and Kurdish names for children were banned, as was the celebration of Kurdish

festivals.

In an act of characteristic cynicism, as the uprising against his rule began to spread, Assad on April 7 announced the provision of full citizenship rights to those Syrian Kurds known as ajanib.

Activists say that this promise has yet to be fulfilled.

In any case, it leaves around 200,000 remaining Kurds lacking any status. But it was the first evidence of the regime's determination to keep its most oppressed minority out of the circle of dissent.

Further gestures followed. For the first time this year, Kurds were permitted to celebrate their Nowruz new year's festival. Then representatives of 12 Kurdish par-

ties were invited to meet with Assad (they declined).

This attempt to placate the Kurdish population now seems to have been abandoned.

Increased Kurdish participation as the revolt gathered steam may have led the Assad regime to conclude that any further gestures were irrelevant. The default option of unambiguous repression has returned.

For Syria's Kurds, unfortunately, there have recently been discouraging signs of Arab nationalist sentiment among the opposition as well. Kurdish organizations withdrew from participation in a "National Salvation" conference of Syrian oppositionists held in Istanbul earlier this month. They did so to protest the fact that the

conference was held under the title of the "Syrian Arab Republic." The Kurds want to see the name of the country changed to the "Syrian Republic" to reflect their own status as a national minority.

This symbolic issue reflected deeper concerns regarding Turkish backing for the emergent opposition leadership, and the prominent role of the Muslim Brotherhood within it.

Shirzad al-Yazidi, a Syrian Kurdish opposition activist, told Asharq Alawsat newspaper that "the alternative to the ruling mob in Damascus must be a democratic one that is agreed upon by all Syrians, both the Arabs and the Kurds, and not a tyrannical alternative that is tailored to well-known regional standards." Should such an alter-

native fail to emerge, Yazidi added, Syrian Kurds will look to the recent declaration of "democratic autonomy" in the Kurdish region of Turkey as a model for their own situation.

Far from the media attention afforded the Arab Spring, the past months have been eventful and dramatic ones for the region's Kurds, too. The declaration of democratic autonomy in Turkey, and Iranian attacks on Kurdish guerrillas in northern Iraq have combined with the dramatic events in Syria to produce a sense of ferment, flux and imminent change. The Kurds of Syria remain divided into 16 different political factions. They are nevertheless genuinely determined this time to ride the wave of change, rather than be crushed once more beneath it.

**Scoop**  
INDEPENDENT NEWS

26 July 2011

## Iran against the Kurds

Column: Patrick Mac Manus

[www.scoop.co.nz](http://www.scoop.co.nz)

**EARLIER** this week, the Iranian News Agency announced that units of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard had crossed the border into Iraq. Their mission – to attack, disable and destroy military bases belonging to PEJAK, a Kurdish militant group. Accusing PEJAK of being a terrorist organization, Tehran has taken it upon themselves to do what the US backed Iraqi regime refuses to do – crack down on armed militants on the Iraqi side of the Iranian border.

The Kurds have been fighting for their independence and sovereignty since their nation of Kurdistan was officially taken away by the League of Nations back in 1925. Coerced into fighting on the side of the neighboring Ottoman Turks during World War 1, the Kurds found themselves on the losing side of peace negotiations. Their country was split four ways between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

For decades, Kurdish fighters have fought pitched battles against all four governments in an attempt to

regain their country. In 1988, Iraqi forces launched one of the worst chemical weapons attacks in history against their own Kurdish citizens. 5,000 were killed while 10,000 were injured and thousands more would die later from their wounds.

As recently as 2009, Iranian troops clashed with Kurdish freedom fighters along the same Iraqi border. In that engagement, Kurdish fighters had gained the upper hand until helicopter gun ships reinforced Iranian infantry. Clashes between the Kurds and Iran's Revolutionary Guard are common and can last for days. Such is the case this week.

The pro-Kurdish group SupportKurds.org has been reporting the action in detail since the second day. The group announced they were receiving first hand accounts of the fighting from multiple eye witnesses. News has been slow to trickle out of the desolate region of northeast Iraq.

According to a report published in Whiteout Press, Kurdish rebels claim they've killed 120 Iranian soldiers including 2 high-ranking officers. PEJAK spokesmen put their own

casualties at a mere 7 killed with 4 wounded over the three days of fighting. SupportKurds.org also announced, "Today, the Iranian Army continued bombarding the areas of Suni, Ali Rese, Dole Koke, Sehit Ayhan, Sehit Harun and high mountains in the surrounding areas of Zele. Eye-witnesses say the Iranian army is preparing to continue their attacks."

The Iranian News Agency is telling a somewhat different story. "Three bases in Iraqi territory were providing assistance to the terrorists. All the bases have fallen into the hands of our forces" AP reports Revolutionary Guard Colonel Delavar Ranjbarzadeh as saying. He went on to say that the Kurds had suffered, "a heavy and historic defeat."

While the results of the past three days of fighting are in dispute, one thing that is agreed upon by both sides is that the fighting will continue. Iranian spokesmen report the presence of 5,000 troops on and along the Iraqi border, many of which are involved in the fighting. It is not known how long Tehran intends to occupy the Kurdish territory inside Iraq. Kurdish rebels will continue to try and repulse the invaders while Baghdad appears to be staying out of the conflict.



## Iran : 35 rebelles kurdes tués par les Gardiens de la révolution islamique

27 juillet 2011 / xinhua

QUELQUE 35 membres du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan (PJAK), mouvement rebelle kurde iranien, ont été tués par le corps des Gardiens de la révolution islamique (IRGC) dans un affrontement entre les deux parties dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran, a rapporté mardi la chaîne de télévision locale Press TV.

Dans cet affrontement qui a eu lieu lundi, plusieurs autres membres du PJAK ont été arrêtés par l'IRGC, selon la même source.

Des "terroristes" du PJAK ont transporté leurs membres blessés vers l'Irak, d'où ces derniers ont été transférés vers la ville d'Erbil à bord d'ambulances appartenant au Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (KDP) de l'Irak, a indiqué Press TV.

L'IRGC a déjà pris le contrôle des bases de ce groupe "terroriste"

dans la ville de Sardasht, située dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran et une attaque contre les positions du PJAK dans les zones frontalières avec la région semi-autonome irakienne du Kurdistan est en cours.

Le PJAK est un groupe nationaliste activiste kurde, qui a été accusé par l'Iran de mener de nombreux attentats contre les forces iraniennes dans l'ouest du pays.

De plus, l'Iran croit que le PJAK aurait des liens étroits avec le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) de la Turquie, et que les deux groupes partageraient leurs bases dans la région montagneuse dans le nord de l'Irak.

L'Iran a récemment déployé 5 000 militaires dans le nord-ouest du pays, le long de sa frontière avec la région semi-autonome irakienne du Kurdistan.

AFP

## Turquie: un soldat tué par une mine

ANKARA, 28 juillet 2011 (AFP)

Un soldat turc a été tué aujourd'hui et quatre autres ont été blessés par l'explosion d'une mine au passage de leur véhicule dans le sud de la Turquie, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

L'explosion est survenue près d'une décharge publique sur la route reliant les communes d'Elbistan et de Nurhak, dans la province de

Kahramanmaras, selon l'agence. Les sources citées par Anatolie ne donnent pas d'indications sur les auteurs possibles de l'attentat.

Les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont cependant souvent recours à des mines dans leurs opérations contre les forces de sécurité turques. Depuis le lancement de l'insurrection du PKK en 1984, les violences ont fait quelque 45.000 morts. Le PKK est considéré par de nombreux pays comme une organisation terroriste.

REUTERS

## Iran: Explosion sur un gazoduc alimentant la Turquie

29 juillet 2011 - Reuters

UNE EXPLOSION s'est produite ce vendredi matin sur un gazoduc acheminant du gaz naturel iranien vers la Turquie, entraînant l'interruption des livraisons, rapporte l'agence de presse iranienne Mehr.

«Le flux de gaz a été interrompu momentanément (...). Une explosion s'est produite en territoire iranien (...). Mais elle a été maîtri-

sée et des réparations sont en cours sur le gazoduc», écrit l'agence. On ignore pour l'instant la cause de l'incident. L'Iran est le deuxième fournisseur de gaz naturel de la Turquie après la Russie.

Les cas de sabotages ne sont pas rares sur les conduites d'hydrocarbures entre l'Iran, l'Irak d'une part et la Turquie, du fait de l'activité de groupes séparatistes kurdes.

AFP

## Iran : des rebelles kurdes tuent un membre de la milice Bassidji (médias)

TEHERAN, 29 juil 2011 (AFP)

Des rebelles kurdes ont tué un membre de la milice iranienne Bassidji, après avoir attaqué un de leurs camps au Kurdistan iranien, situé dans le village de Selin, a rapporté vendredi l'agence Mehr, en citant un gouverneur local.

Selon Mehr, l'attaque contre la milice islamiste a été menée mercredi soir par le Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan (PJAK), non loin de la ville de Sarv-Abad.

"Les terroristes ont attaqué la base (...), tuant un membre de la milice Bassidji et en blessant quatre autres", a déclaré le gouverneur de Sarv-Abad, Ahmad Mohammad-Rezaei.

Il a affirmé que les rebelles avaient "subi de lourdes pertes" pendant les combats, sans autres précisions.

L'agence a écrit que les rebelles avaient tué un Bassidji et un policier dans la ville ces deux dernières semaines.

Le 16 juillet, l'armée iranienne a déclenché une vaste offensive sur les bases du PJAK, au cours de laquelle elle a perdu au moins huit hommes.

Les Gardiens de la révolution, l'armée d'élite du régime iranien, ont affirmé de leur côté avoir tué plus de 50 rebelles kurdes depuis le début de leur offensive.

Le PJAK est régulièrement impliqué dans des affrontements armés avec les forces iraniennes, qui bombardent en représailles les zones frontalières montagneuses du Kurdistan irakien, d'où opèrent les combattants indépendantistes.

Un enfant kurde irakien de dix ans a été tué jeudi soir par les bombardements iraniens.

Le ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères, Hoshiyar Zebari, avait pourtant demandé mercredi à l'Iran de cesser ses bombardements dans le nord de l'Irak.

Les Gardiens de la révolution ont affirmé de leur côté qu'ils allaient poursuivre les opérations jusqu'à ce que l'Irak reprenne le contrôle de la région, selon des médias iraniens.

## Le Point

27 juillet 2011

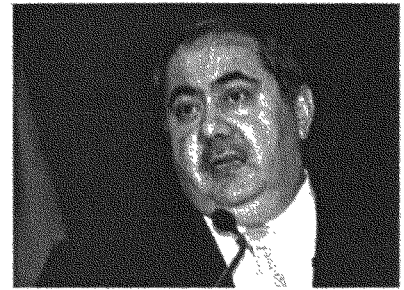
# La tension monte entre l'Irak et l'Iran

Bagdad demande à l'Iran de cesser ses bombardements, au nord du pays. Plus de cinquante séparatistes kurdes iraniens en seraient victimes.

Le ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères, Hoshyar Zebari, a demandé mercredi à l'Iran de cesser ses bombardements contre le nord du pays, où les Gardiens de la révolution ont lancé une offensive contre les séparatistes kurdes iraniens du Pjak. "Nous demandons encore une fois au gouvernement iranien de cesser ses bombardements continus, car cela endommage les liens entre l'Irak et l'Iran", a-t-il dit à des journalistes. "Il y a des bombardements répétitifs depuis cinq ans mais, cette fois, la durée est plus longue que les précédentes. Ils sont faits de manière indiscriminée" et ont endommagé des fermes de cette région rurale, a-t-il expliqué lors d'une conférence de presse. Le 16 juillet, les

Gardiens de la révolution, l'armée d'élite du régime iranien, ont lancé une large offensive contre les militants du Pjak qui se cachent dans la région frontalière entre les deux pays.

Les médias iraniens ont affirmé mercredi que "plus de 50 éléments contre-révolutionnaires ont été tués au cours des opérations des dernières semaines, une centaine ont été blessés et d'autres ont été faits prisonniers". Des centaines d'habitants de la région frontalière du nord de l'Irak ont quitté leurs villages à la suite d'affrontements entre les séparatistes kurdes iraniens et les Gardiens de la révolution, a affirmé lundi le Comité international de la



Croix-Rouge. Par ailleurs, deux villageois ont été tués et deux autres ont été blessés lundi par un bombardement iranien contre un village de la région de Sidakan, à 100 km au nord-est d'Erbil, selon Maksud Islamil, le chef de l'hôpital Souran dans la ville. (AFP)

EuroNews

30 juillet 2011

## Démission collective à la tête de l'armée

Les rapports entre l'armée et l'AKP ont toujours été tendus

**LA TÊTE DE L'ARMÉE** turque qui démissionne en masse. C'est une première dans un pays membre de l'Otan. Le chef d'état-major turc ainsi que les commandants des armées de terre, air et mer ont claqué la porte. Un geste pour protester contre l'incarcération de 42 généraux et plusieurs dizaines d'officiers, soupçonnés d'avoir comploté contre le gouvernement.

Le président Gül a nommé l'actuel patron de la gendarmerie à la tête de l'armée de terre turque. Pour mieux comprendre, nous avons joint au téléphone notre correspondant à Istanbul, Bora Bayraktar. Bora, comment expliquer cette situation ?

"Nous avons deux problèmes : le premier, c'est celui classique en Turquie, la lutte entre l'armée et l'administration civile. Et il y a aussi les critiques qui émergent à propos de l'armée et son futur, sa fonction et sa capacité à écraser le PKK, les séparatistes kurdes. L'armée a toujours eu des problèmes avec les gouvernements. Quand en 2002 l'AKP est arrivé au pouvoir il faisait partie d'un mouvement politique qui avait déjà eu des problèmes avec l'armée, c'est pour



cela qu'il y a toujours eu des tiraillements entre eux.

Quand l'AKP a fait une avancée pour devenir plus civil, il a aussi limité le pouvoir de l'armée.

Après la mort de 14 soldats ces derniers jours, les généraux sont la cible de critiques. Actuellement, le gouvernement essaye de faire évoluer l'armée vers une armée professionnelle. Alors je suppose que la nouvelle direction de l'armée va être choisie pour permettre de faire cette révolution.

AFP

## 2 soldats turcs tués dans deux affrontements distincts

ISTANBUL, 30 juil 2011 (AFP)

**DEUX SOLDATS** turcs ont été tués et deux autres blessés dans des affrontements distincts en Turquie, a annoncé samedi l'agence Anadolu.

Les rebelles séparatistes kurdes ont tué un soldat turc en ouvrant le feu dans la nuit contre une unité militaire qui assurait la sécurité d'une route proche du village de Beyyurdu au sud-est de la ville de Semdinli à proximité de la frontière avec l'Iran et l'Irak, a précisé Anadolu.

Un deuxième militaire turc a été tué samedi dans la région de Gellezif dans la partie méridionale de la province de Kahramanmaraş, au cours d'une

attaque armée contre un poste de la police militaire en charge de la circulation, ajoute Anadolu.

Deux soldats ont d'autre part été blessés au cours d'une fusillade qui a éclaté entre des assaillants et les forces de sécurité, indique Anadolu sans préciser le lieu et les conditions de l'incident.

Des affrontements entre les forces de sécurité et des militants du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) se sont multipliés depuis les élections du 12 juin dernier.

Le 16 juin, 13 soldats ont été tués dans des affrontements avec le PKK dans la province de Diyarbakir. Ce sont les pertes les plus lourdes pour l'armée turque dans ce conflit depuis octobre 2008.

# Iraqi-Kurd force to take over in Kirkuk after U.S. withdrawal

Jim Loney / Reuters

**KIRKUK, Iraq** - Iraq's experimental Golden Lions security force made up of old foes is getting ready to stand alone as U.S. forces withdraw along the potentially explosive fault line of Kirkuk, the disputed northern oil city.

Assembled as a beacon of stability in a volatile mix of Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen, the Golden Lions brought together Iraqi soldiers and police with the peshmerga of the semi-autonomous northern Kurdish region under the watchful eye of U.S. troops, who act as a buffer between the wary allies.

In the coming weeks, U.S. soldiers will leave the Iraqi and Kurdish forces increasingly alone on checkpoints and patrols in Kirkuk, Nineveh and Diyala provinces, in areas claimed by the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdish capital Arbil.

With the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq scheduled for year-end, more than eight years after the invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein, American troops hope the members of the amalgamated force can overcome years of animosity and hold together.

"We don't have any differences between the peshmerga and the Iraqi army," said veteran peshmerga Captain Ahmed Mohammed, waving toward a Golden Lions patrol in the Gurga Chal neighbourhood of Kirkuk. "We look at them like we are the same."

Whether that goodwill between historic foes lasts may help determine the near-term fate of the tinder-box city considered a likely flashpoint for future conflict in Iraq.

Sitting atop a vast sea of oil — by some estimates 4 percent of the world's reserves — Kirkuk is secured by the Arab-led central government but claimed by Arbil, which says the city is predominantly and historically Kurdish.

The Kurdish and Iraqi forces came together more than a year ago across northern Iraq but in small numbers; now about 1,200 in the three provinces. By comparison, the Iraqi security forces number more than 600,000, and the peshmerga at least 100,000.

A Golden Lions battalion, about 380, trains in Kirkuk.

The lion is a symbol of fighting



A Kurdish Peshmerga soldier from the Golden Lions forces, stands a guard during a patrol in the city of Kirkuk, north of Baghdad July 20, 2011. REUTERS/Saad Shalash

strength for Iraqis.

## MUTUAL SPYING

"It's very good. You know why? Because both sides, now they have become like spies against each other," said Colonel Bethune Mohammed, the police chief of Keokuk's Azadi district. "Each side is not letting anyone do anything wrong."

On a recent patrol of upscale neighbourhoods around Kirk, the Iraqis arrived in Ford and Chevy pickups, the Americans in massive CRAP armoured vehicles.

Residents hawked as the one-time enemies — the Kurd fought guerrilla battles against Iraq's army for years and exploited the 1980s Iran-Iraq war to launch attacks — walk side by side.

While there's been talk of a single uniform for the Golden Lions, for now the Kurd wear distinctive green camouflage while the Iraqi police are in blue and the Iraqi army in khaki.

The Iraqis take the lead. The Americans hang back, watching.

"They all sleep in the same tent, they all live together, eat together," said 1st Lieutenant Matthew James Trout, an American soldier who patrols with the Golden Lions.

He said he has seen little sign of ethnic tension. "All the squabbles are the same ones that I see with my soldiers.

Neighbourhood children bring glasses of water on trays to the sweating soldiers, who are clad in battle gear.

"I like to see the Iraqi and posh force. I feel safer," said Reb war Saba Mohammed, a soda factory worker.

But U.S. troops must stay, he quickly adds. "U.S. soldiers have to be a referee between these people and bring

them together and talk to them, until Kirk belongs to Kurdish."

## PLEASE STAY

Most Kirk want U.S. troops, now about 46,000 strong, to remain beyond year-end, when a security pact between Washington and Baghdad lapses. The Americans are seen as a critical buffer between factions.

"We're going to be so happy if the United States wants to stay here," said Mohammed.

For the moment U.S. military leaders see the Lions as a success story and express optimism that they can continue joint patrols as U.S. soldiers pull back. Their hope is that the force can set an example, particularly for squabbling politicians.

"It shows how everybody can work together. Everybody will work together and security comes first with a lot of people," said Colonel Michael Pap pal, commander of the U.S. Devil Brigade in Kirk. "It all depends on the politicians ... the hard part is the politics involved in the province."

But historic animosities are not easily forgotten in Iraq.

Mohammed, the plain-spoken police chief, said 27 members of his family, including his wife, two children, parents and eight siblings died when Saddam's forces deployed poison gas against Kurd in 1988, killing thousands.

"No!" he said sharply when asked whether the Lions would get along after the Americans withdraw. "I swear to God, three days after you guys (Americans) leave, you can hear it blowing up. But, God willing, you guys will never leave us. God willing."

## Independent Iraqi MP: US Troops Needed In Iraq's Disputed Areas

By HEMIN BABAN RAHIM  
RUDAW.

In an interview with Rudaw, Dr. Mahmoud Othman, an independent Kurdish member of the Iraqi Parliament, said the planned US troop withdrawal has turned political but that US troops are needed in Iraq's disputed territories.

"Iraqi security officials have to present their own report about their ability to maintain Iraq's security," Othman said. "But right now they do not play any role and instead it is politicians who make decisions for them, which is really bad."

Kurdish politicians in Erbil and Baghdad advocate for extending the US troop presence in Iraq. Othman, however, said it is a national issue and if Baghdad decides the US military must leave there is nothing the Kurds can do about it.

"The US withdrawal is an Iraqi issue," said Othman. "The Kurds say, 'We are not against prolonging the American presence,' but if Iraq decides that they [US troops] should leave, the Kurds won't have problem with it. However, we would like for them to remain in the disputed territories, and all Kurdish parties in Baghdad share this view."

After the 2010 elections the Kurdish parties agreed to participate in Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's government on the condition that Article 140 of the constitution, which aims to resolve issues over territories disputed by Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen, be quickly implemented. But Othman said the Kurds in Baghdad are not well-organ-



Independent Iraqi MP Mahmoud Othman. Photo Rudaw.

zed and are not communicating with each other to pursue their own demands.

"If the Kurds don't follow up their conditions won't be implemented," Othman said. "There are many problems with the Kurds when it comes to coordination and following up. The ministers and MPs in Baghdad are not connected and it is because we do not hold meetings among ourselves."

According to Othman, the Kurds have not been successful in pushing their agenda because of rifts among Kurdish parties in Kurdistan.

"We as Kurds are united and are not divided," Othman said. "But the internal political conflict in the Kurdistan region has had an impact on our work in Baghdad. Since the government was formed the Kurdish factions here haven't met even once and it seems that the [Kurdistan] Alliance has collapsed. The Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP] is to blame for this because they hold most seats and [KDP MP] Dr. Rozh Nuri Shawaes is in charge of the Kurdish Alliance."

Since the trials of former Baathist leaders began, there has been a serious

dispute inside Iraq's Parliament over the fate of those charged with crimes against humanity. Kurdish and Shiite deputies call for their execution while Sunni MPs claim they were carrying out orders.

"This is a big and serious problem and unfortunately it has become a political issue," said Othman. "Politicizing people's blood is a crime. The Sunnis say the convicts were soldiers and carried out orders, but those people committed genocide. They weren't in a fight with another country. In the trials they still continue to deny their involvement and do not apologize. Defending those people means there are still some who see things through a sectarian eye."

Recently Parliament Speaker Usama al-Nujayfi angered many when he suggested that Iraqi Sunnis might create a federal region. Nujayfi's own tribesmen and colleagues blamed him for pushing Iraq towards partition, but Othman said creating more semi-independent regions will only strengthen federalism in Iraq. Federalism is guaranteed under the constitution but has been slow to take hold outside of Kurdistan, which is the only official region in Iraq.

"No one has talked about the formation of Sunni regions and the region won't be formed based on Sunnis," said Othman. "It will be formed based on provinces. We would like to see other regions so that federalism can take root and federalism can be balanced in the country. If there aren't other regions there will be threats to the Kurdistan region. They might say, 'We want to rewrite the constitution' and thus destabilize the situation."

**Bloomberg** July 27, 2011

## Hess, Petroceltic to Explore Two Iraqi Fields in Kurdistan

By Brian Swint

Hess Corp. (HES), the New York-based oil company, and Petroceltic International Plc (PCI) agreed to explore two fields in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq.

The two companies signed a production-sharing agreement for the Dinarta and Shakrok blocks with the Kurdistan Regional Government, Dublin-based Petroceltic said in a sta-

tement today. Both blocks will be operated by Hess, with Petroceltic and the KRG each taking a 20 percent interest.

Iraq resumed oil exports from the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region earlier this year, ending a yearlong halt caused by a dispute over oil revenue between local authorities and Baghdad. Kurdistan has attracted more than \$10 billion in energy investments from more than 40 companies from 17 countries, Regional Government Prime Minister Barham Salih said on May 5.

"These highly prospective blocks add further high-impact exploration potential to our portfolio," Petroceltic's Chief Executive Officer Brian O'Cathain said in a statement. "While significant discoveries have already been made, the Kurdistan region of Iraq remains a vastly under-explored area with huge potential."

# A Sunni Federal Region Is Inevitable

By JASIM ALSABAWI / Rudaw

During Saddam Hussein's regime no Arab, particularly from Iraq's Sunni areas, dared to go to the Kurdistan region. They didn't even dare think about it. Kurdistan was considered enemy territory, and any attempt to visit was considered treason. As a result, most Arabs were curious as to what was happening in Kurdistan.

After the fall of the regime in 2003, waves of Arabs poured into Kurdistan and were shocked by the progress that they witnessed there. Upon their return, families and friends gathered to listen to the tales of Kurdistan, as if it was a distant country. The visitors spoke admirably of Kurdistan's successful reconstruction, the cleanliness of the streets, the organized traffic rules and other signs of development.

Soon many Arabs began to dream that one day their cities would become like those in Kurdistan. They were unhappy with having to live under unfair and tightly-controlled government policies.

A group of intellectuals and tribal leaders in Kirkuk and Mosul's Sunni-majority districts wanted their areas to join the Kurdistan region. The idea was born in 2006 and was relayed to Kurdish leaders through intermediaries. The proposal, however, was not considered by the Kurds. No one knew why.

The masterminds of this project put themselves to great risk at a time when the Sunni areas raged with insurgency and violence by organizations such as al-Qaeda. The hopes of these influential Arabs to join the Kurdistan region were dashed in the face of Kurdish indifference. If the Kurds had been wise and supported the idea, it would have boosted their long-term prospects in Kirkuk and the disputed territories.

Now the question is why the Arabs have not come up with their own proposal without falling back on Kurdistan. The answer is that the Kurds, despite all the miseries of their past and the unfortunate civil war between their parties in the 1990s, still managed to put most of their history behind them in order to move forward. Nowadays, the rest of Iraq is experiencing the same difficulties as the Kurds did, but the Arabs are not trying to learn from the Kurdish experience, nor do they look to the Kurds for



*A meeting of Anbar tribal chiefs. Photo by Sahwat al-Iraq.*

inspiration.

"The Arabs are not trying to learn from the Kurdish experience, nor do they look to the Kurds for inspiration"

Abdullah Aljibburi, one of the masterminds behind the idea to join Arab areas with Kurdistan, says, "We could shorten the time it takes to create our own region by simply looking and learning from the experience of others," i.e. the Kurdistan region.

Today there are still voices demanding their constitutional right to create their own federal region. Establishing federal regions does not kill citizens' patriotism for their country.

There are Arab leaders who refuse to consider a federal region and believe it partitions the country. But those same leaders sat down and drafted the constitution, which allows any province or group of provinces to create a federal region of their own.

This kind of attitude throws the country back to a dictatorial era, where one man ran everything alone. These leaders must know that people's demands and interests are more important than their narrow-minded policies.

Iraq's Sunni Arabs feel that a federal region of their own is inevitable. They are marginalized by the current government and are not given any role in decision-making. The only solution for the Sunni people and the only way to rule themselves is to create a federal region.

The leaders of Sunni-dominated Anbar province have finally unanimously demanded to establish an Anbar Federal Region. For them, it is about dignity. Jasim al-Halbusi, the head of the Anbar provincial council, says, "to live in a small region with dignity is better than living in a huge country with no dignity."

Anbar province, once the center of the Sunni insurgency, suffered enormous

destruction following the fall of the regime and is now completely ignored by the central government. Despite promises to rebuild the province, nothing is happening on the ground.

There are, however, some tribal leaders in Anbar -- namely Sheikh Majid Ali al-Suleyman, the leader of the powerful al-Dulaim tribe -- who says any attempt to create a federal region is a foreign conspiracy to divide Iraq. Sheikh al-Suleyman threatened the Anbar provincial council and called them "robbers and bandits." He even vowed to take up arms against any such project.

In addition, Parliament Speaker Usama al-Nujayfi's recent comments that Iraqi Sunnis may have to consider a federal region of their own angered many Arab leaders and political parties. Unfortunately, some Kurds also called al-Nujayfi's statement "immature" instead of throwing their full support behind him.

Since Saddam Hussein's regime fell, frustration and failure have defined Iraq's governments. The authorities are continuing to fail, and most people are still frustrated.

"The Kurdistan region should share their experience with the rest of Iraq and show them the way"

As a result, the Kurdistan region must fully support Arab voices calling for federal regions across Iraq. The Kurdistan region is strong and is in a position to hold influence. This way, it can also weaken Baghdad's hand in running the entire country.

The Kurdistan region must send envoys to all parts of Iraq -- Sunni and Shiite -- and encourage them to push forward with their demands for federal regions of their own. The Kurdistan region should share their experience with the rest of Iraq and show them the way.

Some are unhappy with the idea of an Iraq that consists of different federal regions, but that is what the reality of the country calls for. Countries that have strong central rule have countless political, economic and social problems. On the other hand, places such as the United States, Switzerland and United Arab Emirates make strides every day. A country with one party and a central rule only suits leaders like Saddam Hussein, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.



# Turkey's resignations, a sign of military decline



In this photo released by the Turkish Presidency Press Service, President Abdullah Gul, right, meets with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, center, Gen. Necdet Ozel, commander of Gendarmerie paramilitary force, at the Presidential Palace of Cankaya in Ankara, Turkey, late Friday, July 29, 2011. Gul approved the appointment of Gen Ozel as the new commander of Turkey's Land Forces, hours after the country's Chief of Staff and other top army commander have resigned Friday in what is seen as tensions with the Islamic-rooted government.

By **CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA**

**ISTANBUL (AP)** — In past decades, the Turkish military showed displeasure with civilian leaders by overthrowing them. This time, the upset generals quit, a move that only strengthened the hand of an elected government that has in turn been accused of targeting opponents at the expense of democracy.

The decline of military clout in Turkey, a NATO member with a robust economy and an activist foreign policy, is welcome for many Turks who believe any political role for commanders is a throwback to the era of coups and instability that once sullied their international image. It's also key to Turkey's bid to join the European Union, though the candidacy is adrift because of mutual skepticism on a host of issues.

"The military has been largely pushed to the side. They're not going to be able to implement a coup d'etat," said Howard Eissenstat, a Turkey expert at St. Lawrence University in the United States. "The police force is thoroughly under the control of the (ruling party) and has been militarized over the last 10 years, and the opposition is weak and divided."

President Abdullah Gul said Saturday that the sudden resignations a day earlier of the nation's top four military commanders, who were troubled by the arrests of dozens of generals in alleged coup plots, would not cause a crisis even if their departure was unprecedented.

The subtext of his message was: the government is in firm control and there's no danger of a coup. The government sought to gloss over the controversy, saying the generals had merely asked for retirement, but some observers speculated the brass miscalculated by believing their radical step could force their civilian masters to make concessions.

Merve Alici, a member of Young Civilians, a non-governmental group that promotes democracy, described the resignations as "passive-aggressive" behavior and said she was happy to see that had not created a "crisis" in the old sense of the term in Turkey. The Turkish currency dipped in value, as nervous traders reacted, but the government was poised to fill the leadership vacuum by appointing Gen. Necdet Ozel, the military police commander, as chief of staff.

"I believe that it's a good development in the sense that this untouchable image of the military is just decaying one step at a time," Alici said. "They are

not these people who come and stay there and never leave."

On Saturday, Labor Minister Faruk Celik tried to reassure the country ahead of the formation of a new command structure at a key military meeting that begins Monday.

"I believe that what happened last night would contribute to the normalization of Turkey as well as putting the military-civilian relations on the right track," he said.

The military contributes troops to NATO operations in Afghanistan and Libya, though they are not directly involved in combat, and is fighting Kurdish rebels concentrated in southeast Turkey. The resignations of Gen. Isik Kosaner as chief of staff, along with the commanders of the navy, the army and the air force, are unlikely to have an immediate effect on operational matters.

But the military has seemed increasingly archaic in political terms, clinging to its self-appointed role as guardian of the hardline secular values of national founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk long after the ruling party of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a devout Muslim whose grand vision sometimes draws comparisons to Ataturk, came to power in 2002 on a platform of democratic reform.

The conflict between Turkey's old and new elites partly played out as a debate over the role of Islam in society, but Erdogan cast it as a struggle for transparency and accountability when police rounded up hundreds of retired and active-duty military officers accused of plotting against his government. The trials were widely welcomed at first, but long imprisonments without verdicts and alleged irregularities in the handling of evidence have stirred claims that the government is manipulating the legal process.

The resignations of Kosaner and his peers came after a court ordered the arrest of seven more active duty generals and admirals along with more than a dozen other officers on charges of carrying out an Internet campaign to undermine the government. In his farewell message, Kosaner said he was quitting because he could not protect the rights of his staff and he sharply criticized the wave of arrests.

Kerem Oktem, author of "Angry Nation: Turkey since 1989," a book about the country's transition from military to democratic rule, said that while there is "no doubt" that the military has tried to subvert elected

governments, there are "serious shortcomings" in the coup plot trials that point to long-standing problems in the Turkish justice system.

More broadly, Oktem said, accusations that the government has amassed too much control stem from an authoritarian tradition of power that "does not represent or encapsulate liberal views" in Turkey. In his view, the ruling Justice and Development Party followed electoral rules but was compelled to fight off

non-democratic challenges by similar means.

In 2008, the Constitutional Court, then a bastion of secularism, narrowly ruled against shutting the ruling party on the grounds that it had violated the country's secular values but still gave the party a warning against leading the country toward Islam. Ruling party leaders viewed the crisis as a political attack, and much of the national debate has since focused on the coup plot trials

that they back.

The trials "started out as positive things, but they've grown so unwieldy and they seem so political that this doesn't look to me like the creation of a neutral bureaucracy," said Eissenstat, the St. Lawrence academic. "It looks to me like the assertion by a single party over more and more parts of the apparatus of the state."

**TODAYS ZAMAN**

31 July 2011

## Turkey welcomes Kurdish socialist Burkay after 31 years

TODAY'S ZAMAN, ISTANBUL

**K**urdish socialist intellectual and poet Kemal Burkay returned to Turkey on Saturday, ending a 31-year exile that began with his judicial prosecution in 1980.

A crowded group of supporters and friends waited for Burkay at Istanbul Atatürk Airport on Saturday evening as his flight from Stockholm landed on the tarmac. The crowd had posters and banners in both Kurdish and Turkish, with references to his poems. His daughter Berivan Kayam, whom he hadn't seen for three years, and niece Seher Dilovan, a well-known singer, were also at the airport. Some members of the crowd were singing the Sezen Aksu song *Gülümse* (Smile), which has lyrics from a Burkay poem.

The Taraf daily interviewed Burkay's daughter Kaya at the airport. She said that although she hadn't seen her father in three years, the two always maintained ties and talked on a daily basis. Kaya said her father was coming to do all that he could to contribute to Turkey's democratization and find a democratic settlement to the Kurdish question.

Istanbul Deputy Governor Ahmet Aydin and members of the pro-Kurdish Rights and Freedoms Party (HAK-PAR) as well as the anti-militarist youth platform Young Civilians were at the airport.

The long wait for Burkay finally came to an end when Burkay, together with his daughter Helin Burkay and journalist Oral Calisar, entered the International Arrivals Terminal. Journalists and supporters rushed toward Burkay, creating



*A crowded group of supporters and friends were waiting for Kemal Burkay at the Atatürk Airport in Istanbul Saturday evening.*

a motion that fell short of a stampede. The excitement and the rush also prevented him from making a press statement at the airport. He had to force his way through the crowd accompanied by screams of excitement and shouting and reached the nearest taxi, which took him to the Taksim Hill, the hotel where he is staying. It was also at the hotel where Burkay could make his first press statement.

He spoke to the press at his hotel in the evening, saying he was ready to start dialogue with all sections for a solution to the Kurdish question. He said the turning point in the Kurdish question was the period of easing of the state's Kurdish policy, which had been very strict until then, beginning in 1993 during Turgut Ozal's presidency. Burkay said this first move for peace and reconciliation was later overshadowed by guns and violence.

Burkay also had things to say about the

Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) stalled Kurdish initiative, a program that was launched two years ago in hopes of marginalizing terrorism by maximizing the cultural rights afforded to Turkey's Kurds. Burkay recalled that President Abdullah Gül recently said the Kurdish question is Turkey's most important question and that it can't be settled through violence. He said such a statement coming from the top of the state hierarchy was promising and important. He criticized the Kurdish movement and socialists of Turkey for not supporting the government's initiative saying: The strongest segments inside the Kurdish movement didn't support the initiative. They didn't even support the opening of [Kurdish language television channel] TRT 6. The right thing to do would be to support the government against the status quo in spite of the differences in opinion that there might be.



## Analysis: Kurds serve warning as U.S. withdrawal nears

July 31, 2011 - By Jim Loney - (Reuters)

**KIRKUK, Iraq** - When Iraq's northern Kurdish region sent a division of troops to surround Kirkuk in February, it may have been a signal of the delicate balancing act to come when U.S. forces leave the disputed oil city.

Officially, the 10,000 or so peshmerga fighters were there to protect Kirkukis from any violence associated with nationwide protests. But their presence sparked a furious diplomatic offensive by the United States to calm tensions between the central government in Baghdad and Arbil, the Kurdish capital.

The deployment may have been a trial balloon, analysts said, to test Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and to warn Baghdad and Washington that U.S. troops are needed as a buffer in the disputed northern territories claimed by both capitals.

"The Kurdish military maneuver in Kirkuk in February was both a message to the U.S. to keep its troops on the ground beyond 2011 - which is a Kurdish interest - and a way of testing the resolve of the Baghdad government," said Joost Hiltermann, an analyst with International Crisis Group.

It took a month to persuade semi-autonomous Kurdistan, comprised of three northern provinces, to withdraw the unit.

"It was a lot of diplomacy in saying 'look this isn't right. It's upsetting the area. It doesn't lead to stability,'" said Colonel Michael Pappal, commander of the U.S. Devil Brigade in Kirkuk. "It showed to me that a third party was necessary for that to happen."

Eight years after the United States ousted Saddam Hussein, Iraq is still building its police and army to battle a lethal Sunni Islamist insurgency and Shi'ite militias within, as well as defending against external threats.

As violence ebbs, Kirkuk and other disputed northern areas are considered potential flashpoints for future conflict in a country hobbled by ethnic, religious and political strife.

The late February incursion was no spur-of-the-moment decision and prompted a quick response from the Americans, who told Kurdish commanders their soldiers would not be allowed into Kirkuk, U.S. military officials said.

"You don't send a division across a border without a lot of planning and preparation ... it takes a while to put an army on the road and that's what they did," said Lieutenant Colonel Joe Holland, a U.S. commander in Kirkuk.

The unit was 12,000 strong, a Kurdish official told Reuters, while the U.S. military estimated it at 8,000-9,000. Sources said the Kurds had AK-47s, artillery and armored vehicles.

### CLOSE TO BLOWS

Holland said it was the third time in 20 years the Kurds had moved into the Kirkuk area; the first in 1991 after the invasion of Kuwait and the second in 2003 when Saddam was ousted.

Maliki's government demanded the peshmerga withdraw and the Kurdistan Regional Government at first refused, escalating tensions. Iraqi and Kurdish troops have come close to blows in the past two years as Baghdad tightened its grip on Kirkuk.

Iraqi officials said the incursion was illegal. Officially, the city -- which by some estimates sits atop 4 percent of the



*A U.S. soldier attached to the Golden Lions forces walks past a girl carrying her doll, during a patrol in the city of Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad July 20, 2011.*

world's oil reserves -- is secured by central government forces.

"The effect was a significant schism in the relationship between us and the Kurds," Holland said.

Kirkuk has suffered huge population upheavals in recent decades, from Saddam's "Arabization" campaigns to more recent moves by Kurds to reclaim parts of the city.

"They were sending a message to the central government, saying 'we can enter Kirkuk any time and you cannot stop us,'" a senior Iraqi Defense Ministry official told Reuters.

The official said the KRG would not invade Kirkuk after the U.S. leaves but would seek to displace Arabs. He said the Kurd population had soared from 150,000 to 350,000 since 2003.

The peshmerga, however, represent a formidable challenge to the Iraqi army. The Kurds have 100,000 troops, better weaponry and experienced leaders, the official said.

"After 2003, they captured the former Iraqi army tanks. About 4,000 tanks left by the former Iraqi army in the streets and cities disappeared, and our investigations indicate that the Kurds have most of them and Iran got the rest," he said.

The peshmerga deployment served notice that without the neutral buffer of U.S. forces, the Kurdish region might "feel compelled to use military muscle to defend its interests," said Wayne White, an analyst with the Middle East Institute.

"So, while a signal that the KRG will not tolerate any perceived trampling of its interests in Kirkuk, this deployment also was meant as a reminder to both Washington and Baghdad that greater consideration should be given to the prolongation of a more meaningful U.S. presence," he said.

But because Maliki, perhaps calculating that the Americans would pressure their Kurdish allies to withdraw, did not offer a serious challenge, the deployment was not an effective trial run for securing Kurdish control of Kirkuk, Hiltermann said.

"This will have to wait till the time when U.S. troops will no longer be there," he said. "At that point, all bets are off and tensions could easily escalate, intentionally or inadvertently, to a bigger conflict, at least as long as the dispute between Baghdad and Arbil remains unsettled."