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IRAN

DEATH TOLL RISES FOR NOVEMBER PROTESTS, NEW ARREST CAMPAIGN

The regime's blackout on the November demonstrations makes it difficult to determine the number of victims accurately. But as the Iranians manage to get information out of the country, the toll is getting clearer and the horror is increasing. According to government sources themselves, 120.000 to 200.000 demonstrators took part in the five days of protests. On 3 December,

Amnesty International gave a minimum figure of 208 dead, already up from previous estimates of 106, 143 and 161. The *Kaleme* site, close to the opposition "green movement", estimated that there were at least 366 deaths. On the 5th, the US State Department's special envoy for Syria, Brian Hook, said the number of casualties could exceed 1.000, pointing to a video showing more than 100 demonstrators shot in one place.

Then on the 23rd, *Reuters* announced that it had received information from sources close to the Supreme Leader that Ali Khamenei had personally ordered the crackdown: "The Islamic Republic is in danger. Do whatever it takes to stop [the protests]. You have my order", he was quoted as saying. Based on counts by security forces, morgues, hospitals and forensic doctors, these sources put the death toll at 1.500, including 400

women and 17 teenagers, a frightening figure far higher than any previous estimate. The regime described the news as “fake news” without offering its own count. On 3 March, state television acknowledged that security forces had opened fire on “rioters” in at least 10 cities across the country, including Mahshahr in the oil and Arabic-speaking province of Khuzistan (*Radio Farda*).

Neither was there any official figure for people wounded. The Kurdistan Human Rights Association (*KMMK*) estimated them at over 4.000. As for the number of arrests, on the 5th, Brian Hook estimated it at 7.000 at least. For Tehran province alone, its governor general on the 5th put the figure at 2021. After the bloody suppression of the protests, the forces of repression imprisoned in a series of raids many people who had participated, including hundreds of Kurds. *Radio Farda* has compiled the following figures for the Kurdish provinces of the country: in Kermanshah 1.370 arrests, 1,230 during the protests, reported by the NGO *Hengaw*, and 140 afterwards, according to the *Pasdaran* (Revolutionary Guards). In the province of Kurdistan, more than 500 arrests (local NGO sources) and for the provinces of West-Azerbaijan, Mazandaran, Kerman, and Bushehr, 100 arrests minimum each (social network sources and official statements). In Lorestan, the police chief mentioned 300 arrests, most of them in Khorramabad, the capital. But estimates rose steadily during the month, with arrests continuing on a daily basis. For example, on the 4th, the Kurdish writer and activist Mozghan Kawasi was arrested in Kelardasht (Mazandaran) for “supporting protests”. In Bokan, *Etelaat* (Intelligence) arrested the

Kurdish activist Azad Mahmoudian. Some local news agencies have published details of the arrests in cities such as Marivan and Javanrud where a dozen demonstrators were killed by security forces. Fereshtha Chraghy, a Kurdish journalist and member of the Yarsan Kurdish religious minority, was arrested in Sarpol-e Zahab while dozens of activists and demonstrators were detained in Kermanshah, Marivan, Sanandaj, Saqqez, Salas-e Bawajani and Javanrud (*WKI*). On Monday 9th in Marivan, *Etelaat* arrested the Kurdish activist Arman Shakiri, injured during the demonstrations (*KMMK*). In Sanandaj, *Etelaat* arrested and held incommunicado the Kurdish activist Akbar Kawyli. In Kermanshah, two Yarsan Kurdish activists were arrested, one of whom was seriously injured during the operation. Finally, in Oshnavieh (Shno), the Kurdish political activist Rashid Naserzade, previously imprisoned for his opposition to the death penalty, was arrested again (*WKI*).

According to information gathered by *Amnesty International*, the forces of repression have also threatened the families of the victims, forbidding them to talk to the media or to hold funeral ceremonies for their relatives. Some have been beaten, others imprisoned for attempting to visit the grave of a relative killed during the protests. The family of young Pouya Bakhtiari, killed in Karaj, refused to obey these orders. His father gave an interview to *Radio Farda*, not hesitating to post on his *Instagram* page a photo of Prince Reza Pahlavi, who had sent him his condolences. On the evening of the 23rd, several family members were arrested, including the young man’s parents and grandparents.

Families of victims have had to pay to recover the remains of their loved ones, such as that of singer Mustafa Frazmi in Kermanshah. The families of those arrested have also sometimes been subjected to blackmail, such as that of student Soha Motezaei, secretary of the Central Student Council of Tehran University, who was arrested during the protests, summoned and threatened, initially by the university authorities, then by a security agency. Already arrested and sentenced to six years in prison in 2018, the young master’s student, although ranked 10th in the national doctoral entrance examination, was banned in September 2019 by Tehran University Security from registering for Ph.D. After starting a protest sit-in on campus, she was arrested again on 17 November in the university dormitory. The university threatened her family with an additional prison sentence or transfer to a psychiatric institution, where she would be subjected to electric shocks.

In Sanandaj, Kurdish activist Fatima Darwand, arrested on 17 November, was charged on the 16th of December with inciting violence after she spoke at rallies, chanting, among other things, “The government is starving the nation”. She was due to be released on bail, but the court revoked this possibility when the family applied for a reduction in the amount. Her family cannot afford a lawyer (*Rûdaw*). The *Washington Kurdish Institute* (*WKI*) reported on 18 other arrests: in Javanrud, two activists, Kawa Salih and Hamza Azizi, arrested and held incommunicado; in Dehgolan, environmental activist Sabir Qadiri. In Bokan, activist Simko Maroofi was sentenced to two years in prison for “undermin-

ing national security” for organising a demonstration of solidarity against the Turkish invasion of the Rojava. In Kermanshah, 250 people were arrested (the police chief called them “ringleaders”). Also on the 18th, according to the *Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN)*, activists Fuad Mozaffari and Farzad Sofrah were arrested at their homes. Tension remains high in Kermanshah, where during the November demonstrations more than twenty people were shot dead, and many injured people arrested in hospital. Several journalists have also been arrested, such as the editor of the political monthly *Zhilwan*, published in Kurdish and Persian in Tehran, Humayoon Abbasi (*Rûdaw*).

The repressive bodies have also carried out numerous “preventive arrests”, which speaks volumes about the regime’s fear. The regime is trying to use minorities as scapegoats, accusing them of being responsible for attempts to destabilise the country. Repression has been particularly violent in areas inhabited by ethno-religious minorities, Kurds, Khuzistan Arabs, Azeris and Baluchis (*UNPO*). The Kurds, in particular, have been publicly indicted as agents working for the USA and Israel. They have long been particularly targeted by repression: although being less than 10% of the population, they provide almost half of the political prisoners.

What happened in Kurdistan in November? Testimonies began to appear on the internet at the beginning of December. In Marivan, the protests began peacefully with a blockade of the streets with cars carrying messages denouncing the rise in fuel prices. In the afternoon, security forces began removing license plates or breaking car wind-

screens, threatening or attacking residents. But the population counter-attacked, forcing the attackers to seek refuge in a building, which provocateurs unsuccessfully pushed the inhabitants to attack. As night fell, gunmen fired live ammunition at the demonstrators from the roof, killing two youths. These unexpected deaths sent the city into a state of shock, before provoking a general uprising and the occupation of the streets by crowds of young people and women. Demonstrations, accompanied by stone throwing at barracks, petrol stations and banks, lasted for a week... 60 km to the south, in Javanrud, a poor town subsisting thanks to *kolbars* (cross-border porters), the announcement of the tripling of the price of petrol made the inhabitants take to the streets. The security forces quickly dispersed them (the town is home to a military base). Members of the intelligence (*Etelaat*) in civilian clothes also mingled with the crowd. Snipers fired to kill, but some residents were also victims of stray bullets. In some hospitals, families had to pay up to 70 million tomans (about € 15.000) to recover the bodies of their relatives. They had to be buried silently and the funeral ceremony held at home. Since the events, according to local sources, repressive forces have been launching incessant raids on the houses of residents suspected of taking part in the demonstrations from 5 to 6 a.m. in the morning (*Rûdaw*).

Information about the crackdown caused international reactions. On 6 December, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michèle Bachelet, expressed concern about “serious human rights violations” and called for “those responsible to be held accountable”.

Confirming the arrest of “at least 7.000 people”, her statement expressed her “extreme concern” about the “physical treatment of detainees, violations of their right to a fair trial”, and testimonies of “forced confessions”. On the 8th, the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, called on the Iranian authorities to “investigate and prosecute those responsible for the deaths and guarantee all detainees a fair trial” (*Bianet*) (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/12/08/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-recent-protests-in-iran/>). In a petition published on the 9th, *Amnesty International* and several other NGOs urged UN member states to condemn the “serious human rights violations” committed by the Iranian authorities. On the 12th, Iranian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi said from Brussels that “separatism is a label that the Islamic Republic uses to oppress ethnic groups”. Criticising European countries for maintaining contacts with Iran despite the fierce repression taking place there, Ebadi urged them to make business with the country dependant on “stopping the repression and releasing political prisoners, who are only asking for bread and work” (*Rûdaw*). On the 16th, a coalition of 23 human rights NGOs, including the CHRI, called on the United Nations Human Rights Council to launch an independent inquiry, while *Amnesty International* accused the regime in its report on the repression of having hidden the bodies of victims to conceal the real number of deaths. For example, on the 17th, the body of a missing demonstrator was found near Marivan, that of another in the suburbs of

Javanrud. According to *KMMK*, the two disappeared persons had probably been abducted and murdered *after* the demonstrations; their bodies showed signs of torture.

On the 18th, the United Nations General Assembly passed by 80 votes to 30 with 70 abstentions a resolution submitted by Canada calling on Iran to end its human rights violations, including the release of those arrested solely for participating in peaceful demonstrations. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Mousavi called the resolution “biased”. On the 20th, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced sanctions against two Iranian judges, Mohammad Moghiseh and Abolghassem Salavati, both heads of “Revolutionary Courts”, already sanctioned in 2009 by the EU after the repression of the “green movement” opposing the fraudulent re-election of Mahmud Ahmadinejad. Mohammad Moghiseh is also infamous for his role in the torture and execution of many political prisoners in the 1980s. Finally, on the 27th, at the “G7” summit on gender equality held at the Elysée Palace in Paris, a chair was symbolically left empty for imprisoned Iranian lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, who was invited by the French president but unable to travel to France.

Within the country, too, the violence of repression has provoked reactions. On 1st December, human rights defender Nargis Mohammadi, from her cell in Evin prison, where she has been imprisoned since 2015 for 16 years, courageously circulated an open letter in which she wrote that “the state can offer no justification” for such violence: “There can be only one demand, and that is the punishment of those responsible for the mas-

sacre of defenceless people” (full text of her letter on <https://iran-humanrights.org/2019/12/rights-activist-narges-mohammadi-speaks-out-from-prison-on-irans-brutality-against-protestors/>). Several members of parliament have taken the floor to protest or seek clarification on the number of deaths. On the 2nd, Tehran MP Mahmoud Sadeqi warned the authorities in a tweet that if no official death toll was published, parliament would have to produce its own by calling on citizens to testify. Another deputy, Mrs. Paravaneh Salahshouri, called for a parliamentary inquiry commission, then took the floor again on the 9th to describe the Islamic Republic as a “dark despotism” and denounce the concentration of power in non-elected structures controlled by the Supreme Leader, who then “escape all responsibility for their actions”. The following day, MP Ali Motahari made similar criticisms, calling in particular for the dissolution of the “Economic Coordination Council”, composed of the President, the President of the Supreme Court and the Speaker of Parliament – precisely the body which had decided on the tripling of petrol prices. On the same day, the government promised to publish a report on the demonstrations, including the number of people killed. Similar promises, made after the student demonstrations in 1989, the post-election protests in 2009, the murders of intellectuals in 1998, and more recently in 2017 and 2018, have never been kept... (*Radio Farda*)

On the 9th, 160 lawyers wrote to President Rouhani denouncing the characterisation of “legitimate protests” as “plots from abroad” and calling for a thorough investigation into the repression and punishment of those responsible.

Parallel to the repression of participants in the November protests, arrests, convictions and even executions not directly related to the protests continued. For example, on 4 December, Section 28 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Moghiseh, sentenced Neda Naji, who had been arrested during the 1st May protests, to five years in prison for, among other things, “gathering and collusion”, “propaganda against the state” and “disturbing public order”. According to her husband, Naji, she was beaten twice in prison by another prisoner and a prison official and had to be transferred to the infirmary (*HRANA*). On the 6th, social networks in Kurdistan reported the execution of singer Mohsen Lorestani, sentenced for “spreading corruption on earth” (*fasad fil arz*) by a court presided over by Judge Moghiseh. The reason for this conviction is not clear, it could be linked to the creation by the singer of an *Instagram* group with transsexual people.

A rare piece of good news concerns Zahra Mohammadi, the director of the Nojin Cultural Association for the teaching of Kurdish. Arrested in Sanandaj last May, Mohammadi was, according to *Hengaw*, released on bail on 2 December. But she is not finished with justice, as she has yet to go to trial (*Rûdaw*). According to *Amnesty International*, she reported confessing under duress while in solitary confinement (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/1390/2019/en/>).

On Christmas Eve, two foreign academics detained in Evin prison on charges of espionage, Franco-Iranian Fariba Adelkhah and Australian Kylie Moore-Gilbert, announced in an open

letter to the *Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI)* that they had managed to get out of the prison, that they were beginning a complete fast to protest their detention. At least eleven other foreign nationals are imprisoned like them.

On the 25th, five prisoners were sentenced in Tehran by a court presided over by Judge Salavati to publicly receive 74 lashes each. This punishment is common in Iran: the day before, a young man had been sentenced to be whipped for extramarital relations (*HRANA*). Finally, on the 27th in Shiraz, a Muslim municipal councillor was sentenced to one year's imprisonment for asking for the release of

two Baha'i, and another councillor was suspended for 10 months for defending his colleague (*CHRI*).

At the borders, the security forces continue to assassinate the Kurdish porters known as *kolbars*. The *Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI)* has drawn a grim picture of those porters' situation: earlier this month a *kolbar* was shot near Saqqez and another was wounded in Sardahst when the group to which he belonged was targeted. Another died of a heart attack near Marivan. The following week, another was shot near that town, then another 16-year-old near Sardasht and another in Baneh. Finally, a *kolbar* was

wounded near Pawa by a mine placed by border guards. On the 21st, *Rudaw* counted on the Hawraman five *kolbars* frozen to death and more than ten missing in a snowstorm on the border with Iraq. On the 28th, the brother of a *kolbar* who died in hospital said in an interview given through his tears: "When hospitals know that the injured person is a *kolbar*, they don't take very good care of him, because they think he is a smuggler... My brother and thousands of others like him do this risky work to earn a living, to get a piece of bread, because of the lack of jobs in Kurdistan. It is poverty that forces them to offer their chests to the bullets of the border guards..."

ROJAVA: THE RUSSIANS MASTERS OF THE GAME IN SYRIA, THE KURDS FORCED TO SEEK AN ARRANGEMENT WITH THEM

Since the withdrawal without notice of the Americans (and then partly cancelled), Moscow appears more than ever as the master of the game in Syria. In the north-east of the country, the Russians have guaranteed the withdrawal of Kurdish militias, and Turkey has had to rely on them. Joint Russian-Turkish patrols continue, and three Russian officers were even slightly injured by an explosive device near Kobane: from the very beginning of these patrols, the Syrian Kurds have expressed their rejection of the Turkish military presence, and at least two civilians have been killed in clashes, either by Turkish fire or run over by their vehicles...

The Commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Mazloum Kobani, announced on 2 February that they had reached an agreement with the Russian

forces. The latter will deploy in Amuda, Tall Tamr and Ayn Issa (*Ahval*), which will effectively prevent Turkish action against these cities. There are regular clashes between the SDF and the Turkish military or their auxiliaries, for example a Turkish soldier was killed on the 2nd by mortar fire... (*AFP*) The complexity of the situation is well illustrated by the fact that the anti-ISIS coalition and the SDF have returned to Hassakeh, Qamishli, Derik and Deir Ezzor to continue the fight against the dormant jihadist cells (*Ahval*). In Amuda, the Russian deployment was reported on the 4th (*Asharq Al-Awsat*). On the 7th, *Rudaw* reported that discussions between SDF and Russian forces had continued and that in a second phase provided for the deployment of Syrian border guards along the border between Kobanê and Semelka, facing Iraq, notably in the cities of Manbij, Derbasiya, Amuda,

Qamishli and Derik. The Syrian military will be stationed in the bases evacuated by the Americans. The regime is thus gradually reappearing in Rojava... On the 10th, Russian President special envoy for Syria, Alexander Lavrentyev, said that Russia opposed the expansion of Turkey's "security zone" in northern Syria: Turkey must remain within the limits of the area "clearly defined" by the agreement signed in October with Russia, and must not extend it beyond, he said (*Ahval*, *TASS*).

Russia also acted as an intermediary for discussions between the PYD-dominated Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) and the Damascus regime. On the 12th, however, Mohammed Ismail, an official of the Kurdish National Council (ENKS), which brings together the opposition to AANES, said that ENKS was

ready to enter into discussions with Damascus as well... if Russia played the role of guarantor. Indeed, the ENKS has little confidence in the regime, with which no discussions have taken place so far, as the ENKS belongs to the opposition coalition supported by Turkey. On the other hand, a three-member ENKS delegation recently held several meetings in Moscow with Mikhail Bogdanov, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister and special envoy of President Putin to the Middle East. Bogdanov told the delegation that it had to clarify its demands and to unite with the other Kurdish forces. ENKS is also present at the "Syrian Constitutional Committee" from which AANES is excluded following Turkey's opposition. Bringing together the United Nations, the regime and the opposition, this Committee is tasked with drawing up a draft of a new constitution for Syria, but it is progressing very slowly (*Rûdaw*). AANES rejected the Committee's discussions, expressing its continued surprise at its exclusion, when jihadist groups such as *Jabhat Fatah al-Sham*, ex-Al-Nosra and Al-Qaeda in the Levant (*Al-Qa'ida fi Bilad al-Sham*) participate in it.

On the 19th, VOA reported that Russia had begun the creation of a new military force in North-Eastern Syria to be deployed on the border. Two recruitment centres have been opened in Amuda and Tell Tamr. A commander of the SDF stated that the SDF was "involved in the process of recruiting and vetting new fighters". On the political front, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem said on *Russia Today* on the 25th that talks with AANES were "terminated [...] because of the fluctuations in relations between the United States and the Kurds" (*Ahval*).

Comforted by what it sees as its gradual regaining of control of the country's North-East, the regime, supported by its Russian allies, launched a violent offensive on the province of Idlib. At the beginning of the month, fighting there became increasingly violent. Dominated by the jihadists of *Hayat Tahrir al-Cham*, the former Syrian branch of al-Qaeda, the province has become a terrible tangle where Islamists and jihadists have gradually flocked, gradually driven out of the rest of Syria, but also millions of displaced persons, a real concern for neighbouring Turkey. On 2 December, bombings killed nearly 20 people in Syria, 13 of them in strikes by the regime on a market in the province. This dramatic development reflects the failure of Turkey's Syrian policy. In particular, the Turkish President, with his Kurdish obsession, has not been able to fulfil his commitments to Russia: to disarm his rebel "clients". Turkish troops find themselves in a very tight position on the ground, to the point of sometimes being surrounded in their observation posts, set up after a cease-fire agreement with Moscow, but dependent on disarmament... At the end of the month, Defense Minister Hulusi Akar publicly took a martial posture, declaring that Turkey would not evacuate any of its posts, but Turkish diplomacy had to resort to underhandedly begging for an honorable exit to Moscow, asking for intervention to lower the intensity of the Damascus offensive.

Furthermore, Turkey, after its solitary invasion of the Rojava and the purchase of a Russian air defence system, cannot expect any automatic assistance from its NATO allies, with whom the relations have become strained. Attempts by the

Turkish president to blackmail the Alliance by threatening to block several NATO decisions to strengthen the defences of the Baltic States and Poland against Russia, in order to force the Alliance to adopt a text describing the YPG as a terrorist threat, have not succeeded. The French President, in particular, was extremely critical of Turkey's attitude, saying before the Alliance summit: "I am sorry to say that we do not have the same definition of terrorism around the table", and "When I look at Turkey, they are fighting those who have fought shoulder to shoulder with us against the Islamic State and sometimes they work with its proxies". Mr. Erdoğan finally gave up his pressure.

In terms of intra-Kurdish relations, some attempts at improvement are to be noted, no doubt spurred on by the Turkish invasion of last October. On the 17th, AANES announced that it would allow the ENKS to open offices in the region it administers without requesting prior authorisation, and that it would waive all legal proceedings against its members. On the 21st, the Kurdish security forces (*Asayish*) announced the release of a recently imprisoned ENKS member, Suud Mizar Issa. He had been accused of "collusion with outside parties" endangering the Rojava, which the ENKS had denied, accusing the administration of imprisoning him because of his political activities. The Autonomous Administration also set up a Commission of Inquiry into the political imprisonments denounced by ENKS. Not recognizing AANES, the ENKS has so far refused to follow the procedures imposed for opening political offices, which led in 2016 to a wave of repression in which the authorities closed some 40 of

its offices and imprisoned hundreds of its members, who were later released. AANES declared that there were no more ENKS political prisoners in Rojava, but the ENKS responded by publishing a list of ten of its members it claimed were still detained.

Fesla Yousef, a member of the ENKS board, welcomed the AANES decision, while calling for its immediate implementation. However, on the 27th, after a meeting in Qamishli, ENKS decided to refuse to reopen its offices in Rojava. Bashar Amin, member of the ENKS General secretariat, said in *Rûdaw* that the main problem is the lack of trust in the administration: “For us, the most important thing is to create trust between us.

Moreover, we give priority to the issue of detainees [over the reopening of the offices]”.

Besides, the Turkish attacks, although they have prompted these recent attempts to restore unity, have also provoked a crisis of confidence in the other direction: several ENKS leaders have been banned from staying in Rojava because of their links with Turkey through their membership of the Ankara-backed coalition of the opposition to the regime, which led to the accusation of them being accomplices in the Turkish invasion of Afrin.

Concerning ISIS, because of the insecurity and the difficulty in

controlling the Al-Hol camp, where several assassinations attributed to the jihadists occurred this month, and also to avoid the risk of a break with their Arab allies, the SDF agreed at the beginning of the month to the release of some 300 Syrians, and then on the 8th of 200 more. Most of them are women and children, including relatives of jihadists belonging to certain tribes who at one time chose the side of the jihadist organisation. The aim is to gradually release and reintegrate into society the 28.000 Syrians imprisoned (UN figure), while the AANES is still asking foreign countries, especially Western countries, to take back their 12.000 nationals – without much success so far.

ROJAVA: CONTINUING TURKISH EXACTIONS AND ETHNIC CLEANSING

On 2 December, in Tal Rifaat (Aleppo province), a town under Kurdish control, where Russian and Syrian troops are also present, at least 11 civilians, including eight children, were killed by Turkish artillery fire as they were leaving school, according to Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), which also counted 21 injured. Most of the victims were Kurds already displaced by the Turkish invasion of Afrin (*AFP*).

This month, a number of recently published data allow us to attempt a short synthesis concerning Turkish exactions in Rojava. Regarding last October invasion, the *Rojava Information Center* published on December 1st a report entitled *Turkey's war against civilians* (<https://rojavainformationcenter.com/2019/12/report-turkeys-war-against-civilians-1/>, download link at page bottom), which provides numerous testi-

monies as well as a database with supporting evidence for all the rights violations suffered by the civilian population (<https://rojavainformationcenter.com/2019/12/database-documenting-war-crimes/>).

Over the past four years, Turkey has conducted three military operations in Rojava: *Euphrates Shield* in August 2016 in the Jerablous-Al-Bab region, *Olive Branch* against Afrin area in February-March 2018, and finally *Source of Peace* in October 2019, in the border area stretching from Kobane to the Iraqi border. These are invasions (to date no withdrawals have taken place) in which the same elements are found to varying degrees: the use on the ground, in addition to the regular army, of Syrian Jihadist auxiliaries who commit acts of violence against the civilian population; Turkish air strikes against these same civilians during and after the invasion, and sometimes the use

of prohibited weapons against civilians, such as phosphorus. All these elements constitute war crimes, or even potential crimes against humanity, especially as their repetition in each operation shows that these are not “blunders” resulting from Turkey’s lack of control over its auxiliaries, but from a deliberate, anti-Kurdish (and not anti-terrorist) policy aimed at creating terror in order to change the demographic composition of the territories: in short, these are ethnic cleansing operations aimed at destroying Syrian Kurdistan.

As early as November 17, Sheri Laizer recalled in *eKurd* the chilling testimony of a farmer from Afrin, collected after Operation *Olive Branch*: “The Turkish-sponsored jihadists kidnapped me from my home – I am not a PYD member, just an olive farmer. They detained and tortured me for three weeks, burned me, threatened to kill me, beat me until my bones were

broken and starved me. Then they demanded a ransom, occupied my land and evicted me and my family to a remote village so that they could take our house and olive groves. After my family paid them for my release, I was so weak that I could barely stand. I was skin and bones. [They] threatened to take me back and kill my wife and children if I told anything”.

Released on 18 October, *Amnesty International's* report on Operation *Source of Peace*, speaking of the invaders’ “shameful disregard for civilian lives”, also attests to “overwhelming evidence of war crimes and other violations committed by Turkish forces and their allies”. Recent testimonies echo the one reproduced above, such as the one, dated 5 December, of this 65-year-old displaced mother from Ras al-Ain / Serê Kaniyê, who received on her mobile phone the message “Come and fetch your son”, accompanied by a picture of a bloody corpse. The whole family had taken refuge in Qamishli at the time of the invasion, but the son had to return to collect administrative papers. He was killed along with four other people who came with him to ask about the fate of their house (*AFP*).

On 29 November, *The Independent* mentioned “videos posted online by soldiers of the Turkish-supported ‘Syrian National Army’ – showing summary executions, mutilation of corpses, threats against Kurds and widespread looting”, and recalled an earlier clip showing jihadists parading a Kurdish prisoner and threatening to kill “pigs” and “infidels”... These numerous videos have achieved their goal: to spread terror, especially among Kurds and non-Sunni minorities, to provoke a mass exodus. A Yazidi woman displaced from Ras al-Ain with her whole family testified: “When we saw the murder of [...] Havrin Khalaf, we saw that they were doing the same thing as ISIS”. The family resettled

in a hastily built camp near Tell Tamr. This is a repeat of what happened in Afrin, from where more than 130.000 residents, mostly Kurds, are still displaced in camps, their homes now occupied by Syrians from other regions. According to figures compiled by the SOHR on 2 December, the Turkish invasion in October caused the death of 150 civilians and displaced more than 300.000 people. The following week, the figures were 490 dead and 1.070 wounded. In addition, more than 18.000 refugees had to resettle in Iraqi Kurdistan.

If Erdoğan was able to repeat the invasion of Afrin, it’s because it had provoked only a few shocked admonitions from its Western allies. He can therefore now extend his anti-Kurdish ethnic cleansing to the newly conquered territories, as he suggested in an interview with TRT on 24 October, where he described the area designated for his “security zone” as “unsuitable for the Kurds”: “The most suitable people for this area are the Arabs. These areas are not suitable for the Kurdish way of life”, before explaining: “Because they are desert areas”... On 9 December, *Foreign Policy* reported that Turkey had started sending Syrian refugees back to North-Eastern Syria. According to the American magazine, local media reports and information from the *Rojava Information Center* show that most of them are families of Arab and Turkmen fighters supported by Turkey, coming from other parts of Syria... On December 16, Mazloun Abdi, General Commander of the SDF, called in *Foreign Policy* on the US President to ensure full compliance with the US-Turkish agreement negotiated in Ankara on the 17 October, including the condition that both sides protect religious and ethnic minorities within the Turkish-controlled “security zone”. In particular, Abdi called on Trump and the United Nations to send international observers to the

zone to monitor the situation of the Kurds. He also called on Russia, which has signed another agreement with Turkey, to play its role as guarantor of compliance with this agreement, which provides for the cessation of operations. Indeed, the invaders have continued ground attacks and air strikes on the civilian population, including extensive use of armed drones, followed by numerous attacks using IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices). On the 6th, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed her concern in this regard (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25395&angID=E>): “We are concerned about two worrying developments and their direct impact on civilians. Firstly, we are seeing a spike in what appears to be the indiscriminate use of IED attacks in residential areas and local markets. These attacks have been carried out mainly in areas under the control of Turkish forces and affiliated armed groups and, to a lesser extent, in areas under the control of Kurdish armed groups in Northern and North-Eastern Syria. We are gravely concerned about the increased use of improvised explosive devices in populated areas... Such use may constitute an indiscriminate attack, a serious violation of international humanitarian law and a war crime”.

In order to achieve its objectives of destroying Rojava, Turkey has remained faithful since 2014 to its policy of collaborating with the members of ISIS and providing covert support to the terrorist organization. Isn’t it remarkable that, when American and Kurdish forces tracked down and killed Al-Baghdadi on the night of 26-27 October, it was without Turkish help, while the jihadist leader was in Idlib, thus in an enclave protected by Turkey? The next day, ISIS’s spokesman Abu al-Hassan Al-Muhajir was killed in Ain al-Baydah near Jerablous, a city under Turkish control since the operation

Euphrates Shield. *Al-Monitor* also recalled on 9 December that in November 2015, when Turkey had just shot down a Russian *Mig*, Russia had released satellite images which it claimed proved that Turkey was buying oil from ISIS. Shortly afterwards, Russian Deputy Defence Minister Anatoly Antonov accused the Turkish President of being personally involved “in this criminal business”. Erdoğan published a furious denial, and after the Turkish-Russian reconciliation, the whole affair was conveniently buried... However, the team that prepared the *Rojava Information Center's* report on Turkish abuses is still working on verifying information about 70 people, whose names were provided by local media, who may have belonged to ISIS and have returned once the Turkish “security zone” was established (*Foreign Policy*).

On the 18th, Mazloum Abdi accused Turkey on *Sky News* of recruiting ISIS fighters to participate in the invasion of Rojava (*NRT*). In an article published the next day by the *Washington Examiner*, former Pentagon official Michael Rubin noted that Turkey's Syrian auxiliaries, some of whose militiamen had previously worked for al-Qaida and ISIS, imposed, from Afrin to the

latest invasion, a social order quite close to that previously imposed by that organization. Worse, Rubin quotes testimonies from Yazidis that not only does the regime of Erdoğan favour Sunni Arab refugees on its territory, refusing aid and assistance to Yazidis, but also leaves Yazidi captive women in the hands of their persecutors in the territories it controls in Syria, and in some cases in Turkey itself, without intervening. Rubin writes: “The fact that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Turkey has become an Islamic state is self-evident”, and appeals to US politicians, Republicans and Democrats alike: “Erdoğan and the forces under his control must immediately release all Yazidi girls and women remaining in slavery or married against their will in Turkey or Turkish-held territories”.

Turkey's policy in the territories it occupies hints at a long-term presence. Since the beginning of the month, the Turkish occupation forces have installed new mayors in the towns they have taken in north-eastern Syria, Serê Kaniyê and Girê Spî. The governor of the bordering Turkish province of Şanlıurfa, Abdullah Erin, came on the 5th to supervise the new administration. Several sources in Syria said that Kurds were excluded from positions

of responsibility, the Kurdish language had been removed from school curricula and indications in Kurdish had been removed from local institutions... (*Rûdaw*). Erin said that Turkey had appointed governors for the two cities, and planned to create a police force of 3.500 to 4.000 men for the area, which would be recruited in two stages from among the Syrians, with a first group of 1.800 expected to begin training within a week. This is the same policy that has already been implemented in Jerablous and Al-Bab, and then in Afrin, after their invasion. Thus the Turkish Post has been present in Jerablous since 2017, and the University of Gaziantep has established faculties in the province... This amounts to annexation by stealth of the conquered territories, where Turkey applies its own law: since the beginning of the invasion, 104 Kurds from Syria have been arrested and transferred to Turkey by the MIT (secret service) for prosecution. The prosecutor of Şanlıurfa reported that 99 of them were charged with “endangering the unity and integrity of the State” and “membership of an armed terrorist organization” (*WKI*). On the 14th, three of them were sentenced to life imprisonment on the first charge, and four others received 12 years on the second (*Turkey Purge*).

TURKEY: HDP's ELECTED OFFICIALS AND HDP MEMBERS STILL MAIN TARGETS OF REPRESSION

On 2 December, it was learned that, after fainting on 26 November in his cell, where he was found unconscious, the imprisoned former leader of the HDP (People's Democratic Party) Selahattin Demirtaş had been transferred to hospital for tests (*AFP*). According to the sister and lawyer of the detainee, Aygül Demirtaş, despite his “breathing difficulties and chest pain”, the

prison administration had initially refused his transfer. Demirtaş has been detained since November 2016 on fabricated charges of “terrorist propaganda”. Brought back afterwards to his cell, he was able on the 9th to give an interview to the daily *Evrinsel*, in which he notably accused the Turkish judicial institution of being at the service of the war of annihilation waged by the fascist block AKP-MHP against the Kurds

and all dissidents. As for another interview given on the 13th to the newspaper *Bir Gün*, the prison administration refused to give him the newspaper issue containing his own interview: this would have “fuelled opposition to the state” (*Bianet*).

Besides, HDP elected officials and members continue to suffer ruthless repression. By the end of November, police had detained nearly 100 HDP mem-

bers and Kurdish journalists in Ankara, Gaziantep, Urfa, Diyarbakir, Ağrı, Adiyaman and Batman, then in Muş and Van. At dawn on 6 December, HDP co-mayors from several districts of Van province, Muradiye (Yılmaz Şalan and Leyla Balkan), Özalp (Yakup Almaç and Dilan Örenci), and Başkale (Erkan Acar and Şengül Polat) were imprisoned following investigations launched against them. The police prevented any access to or exit from municipal buildings. At Diyarbakır, HDP City Councillor from Bağlar, Naşide Buluttekin Can, was also detained. Dismissed on 22 October with the other five HDP councillors, she had been replaced by a government-appointed administrator (*kayyım*). Police also arrested Osman Karabulut, co-Mayor of İkikopru (Batman). On the 7th, three other co-mayors were replaced by government-appointed administrators. In Kocaeli province, 14 of the 22 HDP members previously arrested on 26 November were imprisoned, while eight others were released on bail. In Antalya, 29 people, mostly HDP members, were arrested in house raids. In Muş, authorities detained two provincial council members, Mehmet Demir and Mehmet Tuğrul (*WKI*). On the 9th, the elected officials incarcerated on the 6th were charged with “membership in” and “propaganda for” a terrorist organization and arrested, except for Leila Balkan and the co-mayors of Başkale, who were released on parole (*Bianet*).

On 10 December, 27 of the defendants in the so-called KCK (Union of Kurdistan Communities) trial, in which 96 people have been prosecuted since 2008, were sentenced in Adana to six years and three months in prison each for

“membership of a terrorist organization”. Among them, the co-president of the DTK (Congress for a Democratic Society) Leyla Güven. At the end of 2018, she had initiated a hunger strike in prisons to protest against the isolation of the imprisoned PKK leader and the conditions of detention of Kurdish political prisoners. The lawyers of the persons concerned announced that they would appeal. On the same day, on the occasion of Human Rights Week, the HDP published a report on the violations suffered during the year 2019: 1.674 of its members were imprisoned and 200 arrested. Since 2015, 6.000 HDP members have been arrested. For the March 31 municipal elections, 750 members were incarcerated and 107 arrested, including nine mayoral candidates, nine municipal council candidates, six provincial co-presidents, and about ten district or provincial co-presidents....

On the 11th, police arrested many people in raids in Lice (Diyarbakir) and several districts of Mardin, including the local HDP leader. On the 12th, Nilüfer Elik Yılmaz, the district co-mayor of Kızıltepe (Mardin), was incarcerated, while Mehmet Fatih Taş and Fatma Ay, the co-mayors of Kulp (Diyarbakir) who had been incarcerated since 17 September after an IED exploded in Ağaçkorur, killed seven people and injured 13. After the attack, the pro-AKP newspaper *Yeni Safak* accused the HDP. On the 16th, Nilüfer Elik Yılmaz was indicted for her activities within the DTK (Congress for a Democratic Society) on the basis of anonymous testimonies, and replaced by an administrator.

On the 13th, the Supreme Election Commission (*YSK*, *Yüksek Seçim Kurulu*) revoked

the electoral certificate of the AKP Mayor of Ceylanpınar district, Abdullah Aksak, due to a previous conviction. But unlike the HDP elected officials, all without exception replaced by administrators, the new mayor will be elected by the members of the municipal council... (*Bianet*)

On the morning of the 17th, the HDP co-mayors of the districts of Bulanık, Eylem Saruca and Adnan Topçu, and of Varto, Ülkü Karaaslan and Mahmut Yalçın (province of Muş), were incarcerated following house raids, as was a municipal councillor of Varto, Mahmut Yalçın. Police searched municipal buildings. On the same day, eight members of the HDP and local associations were arrested in Adana and Malatya (*WKI*), and the mayor of Urla, İbrahim Burak Oğuz (CHP), was arrested on charges of “belonging to the armed terrorist organisation FETÖ” (the name given by the AKP to the Gülenist network). On the 18th, the Ministry of Interior appointed administrators for the HDP municipalities of Bulanık, Varto and Eretepe (Muş), as well as for the municipality of Urla (Izmir). At that date, *Bianet* counted 32 mayors replaced by administrators since the municipal elections of 31 March 2019, 31 of which were from the HDP. The cities concerned are: Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality (Adnan Selçuk Mızraklı), Mardin (Ahmet Türk) and Van (Bedia Özgökçe Ertan), Hakkari Municipality (Cihan Karaman), Yüksekova (Remziye Yaşar), Nusaybin (Semire Nergiz), Kulp (Mehmet Fatih Taş), Kayapınar (Keziban Yılmaz), Bismil (Gülcan Özer), Kocaköy (Rojda Nazlıer), Erciş (Yıldız Çetin), Karayazı (Melike Göksu), Cizre (Mehmet Zırığ), Saray (Caziye Duman), Kızıltepe (Nilüfer Elik

Yılmaz), Yenişehir (Belgin Diken), Hazro (Ahmet Çevik), İdil (Songül Erden), Akpazar (Orhan Çelebi), İpekyolu (Azim Yacan), Savur (Gülistan Öncü), Mazıdağı (Nalan Özaydın), Derik (Mülkiye Esmez), Suruç (Hatice Çevik), Bulanık (Adnan Topçu), Varto (Ülkü Karaaslan Baytaş), Erentepe (Dilaver Kesik), Urla (İbrahim Burak Oğuz, CHP).

On the 20th, the HDP Co-Mayor of Sur District (old town of Diyarbakır), Filiz Buluttekin, and two municipal councillors were arrested during police raids on their homes. At Filiz Buluttekin's home, according to her lawyer, police officers put her, her husband and her 10-year-old child to the ground and pointed guns at their heads: "Police violence and illegality have become routine now", he commented (*Bianet*). The two co-mayors were charged on the 24th with "membership in a terrorist organisation". On the 23rd, three municipal councillors from Bağlar (Diyarbakır district), Zeki Kanay, Ramazan Özçelik and Nursel Örnek, were dismissed following an investigation for "terrorism", without even being notified. Six other councillors from Bağlar had already been dismissed. In the March municipal elections, the HDP had won 30 of the 37 council seats. On the 25th, the court extended the detention of Diyarbakır's Metropolitan Co-Mayor, Adnan Selçuk Mızraklı. Charged with "membership of a terrorist organization", he faces 7 to 15 years in prison.

Information also continues to accumulate on the abuses suffered by detainees in Turkish prisons, to the point that at the end of the month, on the 25th, HDP co-president Sezai Temelli said that "torture in detention" had become "systematic",

adding that sick prisoners were in an "unbearable" situation. Several reports published at the beginning of the month indeed attest to an unacceptable situation. On the 2nd, the Initiative for Rights (*Hak İnisiyatifi*) reported that the number of children under seven years of age in detention had risen to 780 in November 2019 from 743 the previous year. 543 detained children are under four years old and 37 under six months... Other frightening figures, there are 35 pregnant women prisoners, 519 convicted mothers and 224 incarcerated. On the 5th, the State Statistical Institute *TurkStat* published its figures, this time for 2018 (<http://bianet.org/english/human-rights/216719-prison-population-increases-by-14-percent-in-one-year-says-turkstat>). They stand at 264.842 inmates, a constant increase since 2013, with an increase from 188 inmates per 100.000 inhabitants in that year to 401 per 100.000 in 2018.

Beyond the figures, some cases show the abuses detainees may face. On the 2nd, Esin Kavruk was forcibly taken away for a DNA sample that she had refused. The police entered a section of the prison and beat the inmates there, dragging some of the women by the hair and confiscating their belongings. Two women had to be hospitalized. On the 6th, Istanbul Turan MP CHP Aydoğan noted: "According to the latest data shared by the Human Rights Association (İHD), there are 1.333 sick detainees, 457 of whom are in a serious condition. Officials of the association indicated that although the state of emergency has been lifted, its practices have become permanent in the prisons". Recalling the European standards on imprisonment, he regretted that they are not respected in Turkey.

On the 17th, when the Constitutional Court ruled (after four years of deliberation!) that the magazine *Yürüyüş* could be delivered to a prisoner in Van prison, the penitentiary administration refused to apply the decision. Some bans go as far as neurotic: still in Van, Mecit Şahinkaya was refused a female bird to keep company with its male: "They decided to allow only male birds in the same cage", the prisoner told *Bianet*.

The issue of torture at the Ankara Security Directorate led to a skirmishing between HDP MP Kocaeli Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, who denounced it, and AKP Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu, who said on the 23rd: "These allegations recently made by a MP infiltrated by FETÖ into the parliament are inconsistent, unfounded, misleading and defamatory". Gergerlioğlu had indicated that it had testimonies from lawyers and families of 46 people tortured during their imprisonment in Ankara, including former officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice... Gergerlioğlu reacted the next day by twittering the minister: "Your slander cannot cover up torture", adding that "someone who refuses a report by a bar will obviously resort to slander".

Concerning the military situation, on the 18th, the Governor of Hakkari declared five areas of the province "security zones", with access prohibited until the 22nd, including Hakkari, and the districts of Yüksekova, Şemdinli and Çukurca. At the same time, more than 40 villages around Bitlis remained under an indefinite curfew due to anti-PKK military operations (*WKI*). On the 27th, the governor of Hakkari extended the duration of the "security zones", including Derecik, for 15 days, before ban-

ning all demonstrations in the province on the 30th for 15 days. On the 31st, the Governor of Gaziantep declared 48 sectors near the Syrian border (*Bianet*)

as “security zones” for 15 days.

In neighbouring Iraqi Kurdistan, the anti-PKK operation “Claws”, launched in May, continued with

regular air strikes, such as the one that hit the village of Sidekan in Soran district on 13 May. These attacks have already displaced thousands of people.

TURKEY: CRACKDOWN ON CIVIL SOCIETY, JOURNALISTS, WOMEN, LAWYERS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In Turkey, beyond the HDP opposition party, the whole of civil society is under surveillance. The media are still particularly targeted by the authorities. Vice-President Fuat Oktay told a parliamentary committee on 2 December that 685 press cards had been withdrawn “for reasons of national security” and their appearance changed to “avoid forgeries” (*Bianet*). On 4 December, *Mezopotamya* Agency journalists Sadiye Eser and Sadık Topaloğlu were arrested in Istanbul on charges of “belonging to a terrorist organisation” supported by an anonymous witness. The court ordered their arrest. On 5 November, Hacı Yusuf Topaloğlu, a journalist with the *Dicle* (*DIHA*) agency (closed by emergency decree), who has been in prison since 27 November, was charged with “membership in a terrorist organisation” and arrested. On the 11th, *DIHA* journalist Aziz Oruç was imprisoned at Ağrı, then received the same charge on the 18th. The HDP co-heads of the district of Doğubayazıt, Abdullah Ekelek and Muhammet İkrâm Müftüoğlu, were arrested on the 13th for assisting him. Exiled in Iraq, Oruç had been beaten and sent back to Turkey by the Armenian border police during an attempted trip to Europe.

On the 18th, seven journalists accused of “targeting a public officer who served in the fight against terrorism” for reporting and sharing information about the deputy general commander of the gendarmerie Musa Çitil were acquitted by the

court in Diyarbakır. Among them were *DIHA* news editor Ömer Çelik and three reporters, and the editor of the newspaper *Özgür Gündem* İnan Kızılkaya. Çitil had filed a complaint against them for an article reporting on the operation he led at Sur (Diyarbakır) when he was regional commander of the gendarmerie. Çitil himself had been the subject of a murder complaint against thirteen villagers in Derik between 1993 and 1994 (the indictment against him mentions that he had called them “terrorists” in his reports); Çitil was acquitted in May 2014. The families of the murdered villagers had appealed, but the Supreme Court upheld the acquittal...

The Turkish Journalists’ Union (TGS) denounced in a statement read outside the offices of the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* the recent incitement by an *Akit-TV* presenter on the 23rd: “Let’s go. Let’s get together and throw a hand grenade in front of *Cumhuriyet*!”. The channel had already distinguished itself in 2018 when, after the attack on Afrin, presenter Ahmet Keser criticised the media reporting civilian deaths, saying that if the Turkish army was going to kill civilians, it might as well start with the “traitors” in Turkey itself: “There are plenty of traitors. There are also traitors in the National Assembly”, he had told in a transparent allusion to the HDP MPs. Keser then had to resign. On the 27th, seven members of the editorial staff of the daily *Sözcü*, against whom a police raid was launched in May 2016, were sentenced to prison terms of two to

three and a half years on several charges including “assisting the [Gülenist network] FETÖ”. On the 30th, several inhabitants of Elaziğ were fined 153 Turkish pounds (around €20) for “disturbing the peace”: they had distributed the almanac of the left-wing daily *Evrinsel* in solidarity...

Regarding censorship, the Turkish Association for Freedom of Expression (*İFÖD*) noted on 9 December that the number of websites blocked in the country in October was 288.310, compared to “only” 80.553 at the beginning of 2015, to which should be added more than 150.000 URLs (pages) blocked. On 26 December, the constitutional court, examining the *Wikimedia* foundation’s request, ruled that blocking access to *Wikipedia* in Turkey was an infringement of free expression. A court in Ankara had ruled on 29 April 2017 that certain content “attempted to make people believe that Turkey was operating [...] in cooperation with various terrorist organisations”. On the 30th, two lawyers called for the verdict to be implemented immediately without waiting for it to be published in writing.

Lawyers and human rights defenders were also repressed. For example, on 2nd December, the Batman Criminal Court initiated proceedings against the President of the Diyarbakır Bar Association and the Executive Office of the Diyarbakır Bar Association for their statement of 24 April declaring that they

“share the grief of the Armenian people”. They are charged with “inciting public enmity and hatred”. The statement said, *inter alia*, “We remember with respect all the innocent Armenian civilians in Anatolia who lost their lives in the genocide”.

On the 3rd, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) condemned Turkey for seizing electronic data protected by the professional secrecy of three lawyers and refusing to return or destroy it. The seizure was aimed at finding out the means of communication between Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned PKK leader, and his former organisation. In 2012, the lawyers referred the case to ECHR, which took seven years to process their request. Turkey will have to pay € 3.500 to each of them (AFP). Such long delay and low compensation inevitably raise the question of the limits of the ECHR’s action...

On the same day, the Freedom of Expression Initiative (*Düşünce Suçu(!)na Karşı Girişim*) posted its report for October 2019 on violations of freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and peaceful protest (<http://bianet.org/english/human-rights/216635-initiative-for-freedom-of-expression-releases-october-2019-report>). The document was prepared in cooperation with the Human Rights Association (İHD) and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV). On the 18th, the President of the Malatya section of İHD, Gönül Öztürkoglu, was sentenced to six years and three months in prison for “propaganda for a terrorist organization” for her activities, including her preparation of a meeting in the framework of World Women’s Day...

Peaceful demonstrations by women against violence and femicide continued to be the target of attacks by the police, a situation denounced on the 9th by the Turkish Bar Association in a joint statement

which declared particularly “unacceptable” the violent intervention by the police the day before against the demonstration at Kadıköy, during which seven women were handcuffed behind their backs and arrested. On the 12th, intervening against a new demonstration where women danced to the Chilean tune *Las Tesis* in Ankara, the police arrested about ten participants. On the 14th, the CHP women MPs protested inside the Parliament against recent police violence using the same tune. One of them, Sera Kadıgil, told the session about the Chilean dance: “Thanks to you, Turkey has become the only country where [parliamentary] immunity is needed to hold this protest”. On the 17th, an investigation was opened in Izmir against 25 women who used the *Las Tesis* dance to protest, and on the 29th, a women’s demonstration was prevented by the police in Antalya.

Ironically, the meeting held on the 19th at the Ankara Governor’s office to discuss the “2020-2021 Plan to Combat Violence Against Women” did not include any female participants, as all the officials present were men...

On the trial of the Gezi Park protests and the imprisonment of Osman Kavala, the ECHR announced its verdict on the 10th. For the European institution, the detention of the businessman, human rights defender and philanthropist was decided and prolonged in bad faith, for illegal purposes and in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, and he should be released immediately. The following day, *Human Rights Watch* and *Amnesty International* issued a joint statement calling on Turkey to respect this judgment, an appeal also made on the 13th by the Chair of the European Parliament’s Subcommittee on Human Rights Maria Arena. Kavala, the only detained defendant among the sixteen in the Gezi trial, has been jailed

since 1st November 2017. His lawyers had appealed to the ECHR on 8 June 2018. However, on the 24th, at the fourth hearing of the case, the Court remanded him in detention before adjourning the trial to 28 January 2020. The court said the next day that it had not been notified of the ECHR’s decision, but the Ministry of Justice denied it. On 31 January, the defence appealed against the continued detention and requested the recusal of the judge on the grounds that the ECHR verdict had not been implemented.

Besides, three journalists who reported on the investigation launched after 15-year-old Berkin Elvan was killed by tear-gas canisters during protests in Gezi Park were charged with “targeting a public official who served in the fight against terrorism”. They are accused of revealing the identity of one of the suspect police officers in the investigation, making this officer a target for leftist organizations. In another case, that of the student Duran Eren Şahin, this time injured by a tear gas grenade, the Constitutional Court ruled that his rights had been violated and decided on a financial compensation of 20.000 pounds (3.100 €). However, the prosecutor’s office dismissed the criminal complaint against the police officers filed by Şahin’s lawyer: the surveillance videos had been destroyed, making it impossible to determine the identity of the shooter, and the office based its decision on the argument that the officer had been doing his duty.

To the already reported list of judicial abuses should be added several denials of justice that show how non-existent the independence of the judiciary has become under the AKP-MHP regime. We will only summarize them here. On the 13th, at the final hearing of the case of Ankara’s JİTEM (Gendarmerie Intelligence Organisation, illegally created and implicated in dozens of extra-judicial executions in

Kurdistan), all the accused, including the then Minister of the Interior, Mehmet Ağar, were acquitted. The charge related to the enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions of 19 people in the 1990s. On the 17th, the hearing in the case of Medeni Yıldırım, 18, who was killed during a protest in Lice (Diyarbakir) in 2013 by military gunfire that also left eight people injured in the crowd. Not having received any of the requested reports from the television or forensic medicine, the court adjourned the hearing after five minutes. Numerous dismissed civil servants continue to fight for their reinstatement. Hundreds of "Academics for Peace", although theoretically cleared by the Constitutional Court and acquitted, have still not been able to return to their posts or obtain payment of the salaries withheld. Some have committed suicide. The State of Emergency Inquiry Commission charged since 27 May 2017 with examining applications for reinstatement has processed 98.300 of the 126.000 applications received but has accepted only 9.600. 28.000 applications are still being examined. Processing times extends over years. Behind these figures lie thousands of personal tragedies. The Commission's period of action was extended by one year on 26 December by presidential decree.

On the 10th, an art history student from Eskişehir, Furkan Sevim, was sentenced to nine years and nine months in prison for "belonging to

and propaganda for the DHKP-C" on the basis of the following "evidence" found at his home: a cap with a star and a biography of İbrahim Kaypakkaya, the founder of the Communist Party (M-L) of Turkey (TKP/ML)... The defense appealed. On the 31st, a employee of a Gaziantep development agency, Hasan Emre Şentürk, who was dismissed after the coup d'état, was refused reinstatement, even though it was legally pronounced. Asked by his father about his case, Governor Davut Gül replied: "Should we reinstate all those who won a case?". Şentürk remarked: "I have no friends in Court and I am an Alevi"...

In a rare, more positive piece of news, on the 27th, a court in Mardin acquitted Mürvet Aslan of "propaganda for a terrorist organization". Charged with clicking "Like" on social network messages, the accused had not written anything herself. The court ruled that these "Likes" "cannot on their own be considered a crime". This ruling could set a precedent for other cases, but given the state of justice in Turkey, it is not clear whether this will be the case...

In terms of international relations, Turkey continues to suffer setbacks after setbacks, particularly in the United States. On the 10th, the US House of Representatives passed a defence bill that included sanctions for the country's purchase of the Russian S-400 anti-aircraft system,

including a ban on the transfer of F-35 aircrafts to Turkey. On the 12th, the US Senate unanimously approved the resolution recognising the Armenian genocide of 1915, which had previously been blocked three times by the Republicans at the request of the Presidency. The United States thus joins the 29 countries already recognizing this genocide: Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Vatican, Venezuela. At the same time, the influential chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Eliot Engel, condemned Ankara's actions in north-eastern Syria in a statement beginning with the words: "Turkish President Erdogan has been waging a bloody campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Syrian Kurds in north-eastern Syria...". The next day, the American ambassador in Ankara was summoned by the Turkish Foreign Ministry, and the Turkish President threatened to close Incirlik (NATO air base) and Kürecik (anti-missile radar near Malatya), where US troops are stationed. On the 18th, the US Senate approved the defence bill already passed by the Representatives. Another challenge to Turkey is the Foreign Aid Law, which provides for \$1.5 million in military training for Cyprus... (*Al-Monitor*)

IRAQ:

WEAKENED BY AN INCREASINGLY TENSE POLITICAL CONTEXT, KURDISTAN IS TRYING TO PROTECT ITSELF

Protests against corruption and the lack of services and jobs that began in early October have only increased in the Arab part of Iraq, as has violence against demonstrators. After more than 400 deaths, the resignation finally

extracted from Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi on 29 November and accepted by parliament on 1st December has not been enough to calm the streets.

President Barham Salih immediately began consultations to identify a

possible successor. The Constitution stipulates that the largest bloc in Parliament must nominate a candidate within 15 days, but given the instability of the alliances represented there, Bagdad Parliament is unable to agree even on which bloc should be considered the largest...

Iran is following events very closely; according to *Reuters*, Iranian General Qassem Soleimani arrived in Baghdad to try to influence the choice, but no candidate has emerged. As regards future elections, the Parliament approved on 5 December the law specifying the composition of the Independent High Electoral Commission, which will have to include seven judges.

At the same time, attacks on protesters continued. Some have been missing since the first rallies in Baghdad's Tahrir Square on 7 October, and their families often refuse to talk about it to avoid putting them at risk. On 6 October, unidentified gunmen committed a massacre when they opened fire on the crowd in Tahrir Square: 25 dead and at least 130 wounded. Pro-Iranian militias are suspected, without any real investigation apparently being carried out. On the 8th in Kerbela, activists were shot dead, while others escaped attempts using weapons with silencers and homemade bombs. On the 10th, a missing activist in Baghdad was found shot several times in the head. On 9 September, a report from the office of the Iraqi Human Rights Commission in Dhi-Qar counted 88 of the 94 dead demonstrators in the province as having been shot. As of 11 December, the Ministry of Health counted 511 dead...

On the 13th, when the Parliament, unable to agree on a successor to Abdul-Mahdi, was forced to extend the deadline for appointment until the 22nd, the country's most prominent Shi'a religious leader, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, called on the government to crack down on illegal armed groups and ensure that all arms and armed persons return to the exclusive control of the state. *Amnesty International* also called for an end to a "lethal campaign" against protesters, while a *Human Rights Watch* report revealed that government forces

of the 6 massacre. On the 15th, when a bomb placed under their vehicle injured two activists in Diwaniyah, and a shopkeeper known to support the protesters was shot dead in eastern Baghdad, the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights warned of a dangerous escalation in killings and abductions of protesters. On the 17th, another shop owner was murdered for the same reason, this time in the west of the capital. On the 18th, there was another disagreement in Parliament, this time over the electoral law. The Judicial Council announced that 2.700 incarcerated demonstrators had been released, with 107 remaining detained.

On the 17th, demonstrators in Basra blocked access to the Rumaila oil field, while those in Wasit blocked the entrance to the Zubaidiyah power plant, one of the largest in Iraq. On the 20th, two activists were killed and two others wounded near Nassiriya in three different attacks. In Baghdad, a political satirist escaped shots from a passing car. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned assassinations and enforced disappearances and the apparent failure of the government to bring the perpetrators to justice. On the same day, Ayatollah Sistani talked again to call for early elections as "the quickest and surest way out of the crisis".

On the 23rd, the Supreme Judicial Council announced its selection of the seven judges to form the Independent High Electoral Commission. The Commission includes one member of the Sadrist coalition, one member of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's coalition, one member of the Shi'a Badr movement led by Hadi al-Amiri, and two Kurdish judges, one from the KDP and one from the PUK. The Council also requested the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to select its representatives to serve as electoral commissioners

(NRT). On the 24th, Parliament approved an electoral law establishing smaller districts and allowing candidates to run individually rather than on party lists, changes which did not convince the demonstrators. On the 26th, the appointment of a new Prime Minister remained deadlocked, despite the original deadline of the 23th long gone. President Barham Salih indicated that he would prefer to resign rather than support candidates rejected by the people.

During this period, protests and attacks against protesters continued: on the 22nd, the roads to the Roumilla oil field near Basra were blocked, and on the 24th protesters attempted to enter the West Qurna oil field, while others blocked the port of Maqal on the Shatt-al-Arab. On the 25th in Kerbela, a group attacked demonstrators with knives and gunshots, injuring at least two people. On the 29th, the protesters provoked the suspension for one day of the exploitation of the Nassiriyah oil field (80,000 barrels/day); the next day, the activist Ali al-Khafaji was murdered in Nassiriyah by men armed with silencer guns. On 28 September, the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights put the number of missing persons since the start of the demonstrations at at least 68, adding that during the same period at least 33 assassination attempts had resulted in 14 deaths and 19 injuries.

In addition to the violence provoked by the demonstrations and their repression, there are those opposing Iran and the United States on Iraqi soil. On the 4th, the *New York Times* reported that Iran was using Iraqi militias to bring short-range missiles into the country while the country was concerned about its internal political situation. On the 16th, Iranian trade officials reported that monthly imports to Iraq had dropped by more than \$ 200 million as a result of the boycott of Iranian

products. On the 27th, at least 30 rockets (about 10 according to Coalition sources) hit the “K-1” military base in Kirkuk, killing an American contractor and, according to local security sources, two policemen. The United States, accusing the pro-Iranian militia *Kataib Hezbollah*, carried out a retaliatory strike near Al-Qaim which killed at least twenty-five of its members. On the 30th, Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi, President Salih, Moqtada al-Sadr and Ayatollah Sistani condemned the unilateral action of the United States, and the Iraqi National Security Council, denouncing a violation of the country’s sovereignty, threatened to reconsider its relations with them. On the 31st, supporters of *Kataib Hizbollah*, accompanied by several militia commanders, including Hadi al-Amiri, Qais al-Khazali and Falih al-Fayadh, attacked the United States Embassy in Baghdad, causing superficial damage. The Iraqi President, Prime Minister and Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament condemned the attack and the failure to comply with the rules on the protection of diplomatic missions.

In this increasingly tense context, the KRG tried to protect the initial results of the ongoing negotiations with Baghdad. On 1st December, as the Baghdad Parliament accepted the resignation of the Iraqi Prime Minister, a KRG delegation was in Baghdad to finalise the agreement on the 2020 federal budget. The budget provides for the payment by Baghdad of KRG civil servants in exchange for oil deliveries. Erbil had been unable to respect a similar agreement for 2019, and some Iraqi MPs criticised Abdul-Mahdi for being too complacent towards it. However, in Erbil, Planning Minister Dara Rashid said on *Rûdaw* that there was no question of calling the agreement into question after Abdul-Mahdi’s resignation. On the 7th, the KRG Prime Minister’s office announced progress in other areas, such as an agreement with the

Iraqi Interior Ministry allowing the Kurdistan Region to issue its own visas, thus giving official approval to a practice already prevalent. On the 12th, the Iraqi Ministry of Oil confirmed the conclusion with Erbil of an agreement according to which the KRG in 2020 will deliver 250.000 barrels daily to Baghdad, using the surplus of 200.000 barrels to gradually reduce its debt to the international companies exploiting its oil fields, to which it could owe up to 18 billion dollars (*ISHM*).

On the 14th, the KRG sent to Baghdad a proposal for the resumption of the process of implementation of Article 140 of the Constitution. This article, which aims at resolving through dialogue the issue of the “disputed territories”, with mixed populations, provided for the cancellation of the arabization measures implemented by Saddam Hussein’s regime and the holding of a referendum in which the residents of these areas could choose between remaining within federal Iraq and becoming a part of Kurdistan Region. However, the referendum, which was supposed to be held before 2007, never took place. Discussions had begun between Baghdad and the two main Kurdish parties, KDP and PUK, after the appointment of Abdul-Mahdi as Prime Minister, but were interrupted by protests. According to KRG Federal Affairs Minister Khalid Shwani, the proposal has two stages: first the normalization of the “current military, security, administrative and demographic conditions in Kirkuk and the other disputed territories” and then the re-launch of the implementation of Article 140. The Kurds are in fact seeking a return to a form of joint administration of the disputed territories. On the same day, the President of the Turkmen Front, Arshad Salihi, declared from Kirkuk his opposition to the involvement of Baghdad in a dis-

cussion on an issue “concerning [only] the components of Kirkuk”.

However, given the ever-increasing danger posed by ISIS, which is still exploiting the security vacuum in the disputed territories, a more coordinated administration will have to be put in place. Several attacks on 30 November, including two bombs in a busy market, left 16 people injured in Kirkuk. The village of Kolajo, south-east of Kifri, was mortar-bombed and the *Asayish* (Kurdish Security) who came in response were ambushed and three of them killed. On the 3rd, Hawija police captured the military chief of the Salahaddin region and former deputy of Al-Baghdadi, Hamid Shaker – also known as Abu Khaldun. On the 4th, a Kurdish couple was shot dead in the village of Haftaghar (Daquq).

Diyala province remains an epicentre of jihadist presence. ISIS carried out a series of attacks there earlier this month, including bombings, assaults on security force positions and sniper fire, which left at least 21 people dead and 44 injured, including peshmerga, *Hashd al-Shaabi*, Iraqi military and police personnel and civilians. On the 5th, the Ministry of Peshmerga called for increased support by the anti-ISIS coalition. Attacks continued the following week: a farmer killed by jihadists and an explosion near a religious shrine on the 7th, two more IEDs on the 10th and one civilian injured, and another IED on the 12th which left one civilian dead and four injured. On 15, two attacks on the security forces killed five people and wounded four. On the 17th, one attack and one bomb resulted in a total of two dead and two injured. In response, Kurdish security forces conducted several raids near Khanaqin and captured ten jihadists. On the 19th, tribal clashes killed four people, including

two soldiers, and wounded four others.

The provinces of Kirkuk and Mosul were also affected. On the 6th, an IED killed a policeman and injured two others in Kirkuk. In the village of Hatin, West of Kirkuk, jihadists killed two Iraqi federal police officers. On the 24th, a policeman was killed in an attack on the Khabbaz oil field West of Kirkuk and two others were injured. On the evening of the 26th, a civilian was killed and two others injured (another source counted four civilians killed) by gunfire against a civilian vehicle on the Kirkuk-Tikrit highway (*Rûdaw*). A bomb also killed one civilian and injured another on the 6th in Mosul. On the 15th, two civilians were killed by an IED West of Mosul; on the 24th, two bombs killed two and injured five security forces.

On the 27th, *Rudaw* announced for the end of the month the visit to Kurdistan of a high-level Iraqi military delegation, charged with discussing the security of the disputed territories, those under Iraqi and Kurdish control. On the 29th, Iraqi forces launched a major operation covering the regions of Kirkuk, Diyala, Ninewa (Mosul), Salahaddin and the desert area on the Syrian

border. It resulted in the destruction of dozens of tunnels and caches of weapons and fighters, nine of whom were killed. On the 30th, an Iraqi officer was wounded in Kirkuk by an improvised explosive device. On the 31st, eleven jihadists were killed in Ninewa by air strikes and a ground operation. These successes do not mean the end of the jihadist attacks: on 8 December, Iraqi forces had already concluded an anti-ISIS operation entitled "Will to Victory" which had covered the provinces of Salahaddin, Diyala and Kirkuk over more than 3,000 km²...

Concerning internal politics in Kurdistan, the KRG submitted to the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament a draft "reform law" which was labelled "Urgent" and examined in first reading on the 16th. The text, supported by most of the political parties, aims at improving budgetary transparency: reorganisation of pensions, reduction of salaries of senior civil servants, elimination of double salaries and reorganising the budget of the two main peshmerga divisions. Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee is due to examine the draft after its first reading and will prepare it for a second reading before it is put to the vote.

The issue of arabization continues to cause tensions in the disputed territories. The most recent is linked to the unexpected decision of a tribal chief and landowner in Dubiz, in the West of Kirkuk province, to lease for the next 20 years the 180 donums (about 45 hectares or 125 acres) of agricultural land he owns in three villages to Arab Bedouins. Jamil Talabani has thus decided not to renew the lease of his Kurdish tenant farmers, who had been renting his land for years and refused to pay the significantly increased rent he was asking them to pay, five million dinars (about € 4.000) per donum per year. The tenant farmers, caught off guard, are hoping for support from the Kurdish political parties and are even considering buying the land concerned. After the dismissal of the Kurdish governor of Kirkuk by Baghdad in October 2017 and the installation of an interim Arab governor, Rakan al-Jabouri, the Kurds of the Dubiz region claim that he has restarted the process of arabisation in the province. In the past two months, about 1,250 donums of land have been transferred to Arabs from other parts of Iraq. In the nearby town of Sargaran, about 480.000 donums are under dispute (*Gulan Media*).

TURKEY: HASANKEYF, JEWEL OF KURDISH HERITAGE, SOON TO BE SUBMERGED BY A DAM

On December 15, the last historical building in Hasankeyf to be moved, the Er-Rızk mosque, began its journey to the "New Hasankeyf Cultural Park" where six other buildings are already located. The 1.700-ton building was loaded into a 256-wheel transport system to be moved. What will not be transferred will be gradually submerged under the waters of the Tigris River as the reservoir of the Ilisu Dam upstream is filled. Filling began between 20 and 22 July this year – just as a fire broke out in

Hasankeyf Castle. As if the authorities, who did not officially announce the start of the process, had taken advantage of the fire to divert attention from the filling...

The construction of the dam, part of the gigantic GAP project launched in 1982, has continued despite all attempts to stop it. The authorities did not hesitate to damage part of the valley's heritage wealth in an attempt to remove arguments from opponents. Two monuments, including the Tigris bridge, were covered with stones under the pre-

text of "restoration". More than 200 caves dating from the Neolithic period, and a large part of the valley near the citadel have been filled with excavation waste.

This disregard for heritage that does not belong to the dominant culture, the one that can be linked to Turkish history in the narrowest ethnicist sense, is unfortunately historically characteristic of the Turkish state. We can remember how it destroyed in the past everything that could remind us of Kurdish history, for example Birca Belek, the "colourful

palace" built in Cizre by the Kurdish Bedirxan dynasty. The ruling AKP has certainly made a change of orientation by including the Ottoman remains in what deserves to be preserved, but its Islamist orientation leads it to reject the heritage of religious minorities, as will be seen below.

The authorities also seem to have taken no steps to prevent the recent looting of the stones of the medieval walls and citadel of Diyarbakir, which are listed as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. This is shown by a set of parliamentary questions put to Culture Minister Nuri Ersoy by MP HDP Musa Farisoğulları on the 20th of this month: "Are you aware of the looting in the area of the citadel of Diyarbakir and Sur? Are you going to take action against those responsible? Will there be a programme to restore the damaged buildings? Are there plans to assess the extent of the destruction caused by the looting? Will you take the necessary precautions and measures to avoid similar events in the future?". According to testimonies from residents obtained by the *Mezopotamya* agency, stones decorated with animal figures are particularly popular with thieves and are now found in new restaurants and cafes in the Sur district (*Bianet*). After the destruction of a large part of this old district by the Turkish security forces between autumn 2015 and the end of winter 2016, the current neglect can only mean one thing: this heritage is not worthy of being preserved.

Intangible heritage is no better considered, as shown by a new parliamentary question put on the 26th by the same MP, this time on the "cemevi" of Diyarbakir – the place of worship of the Alevi, which owes its name to the fact that they hold there their ceremony called *djem* (written *cem* in the Turkish and Kurdish alphabets, the "c"

being pronounced "dj"). In his question, Farisoğulları asked how it was that the cemevis were excluded from places of worship whose annual electricity expenses are covered by the funds of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. However, in a 2016 judgement, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) had expressed an opinion in favour of their "recognition as places of worship". *Bianet's* account does not allow us to conclude whether electricity has been cut off at the concerned cemevi, but it is clear that, here again, this heritage is not worthy of being preserved.

Recently, a new wave of repression has hit Dersim's musicians. After the musician Şenol Akdağ, who was jailed and then arrested at the end of November after a concert abroad for "giving a concert under the flag and banner of an illegal organisation", it is Yılmaz Çelik, imprisoned in a police raid at his home after giving a concert on 8 December in Dersim, who was charged with "membership in" and "propaganda for" a terrorist organisation. As Ferhat Tunç and Mikail Aslan said after this latest arrest in an interview with *Bianet*: "They want to prevent the mother tongue and cultural values from reaching people through art". The State is thus continuing the repression of the 1990s, which forced dozens of Dersimis musicians, mostly Kurdish or Alevi, into exile in Europe. Not only is this heritage not considered worthy of preservation, but it is hunted down as a threat to the State: "The reason we were sent into exile in the 1990s was because of the art we made, and the reason we are exposed to oppression today is because of the art we make", one of these musicians told *Bianet*.

Alevi in Turkey have been targeted in the past, notably in the Gazi district of İstanbul, where in 1995, 22 people died and 155 were wounded in a series of armed attacks. This

explains the anxiety of the residents of the Piri Reis district of Yenişehir (Mersin), most of whom are Alevi, when one morning at the beginning of the month they found about twenty of their houses marked with different dates. This happened one week after another incident at Karşıyaka (Izmir) in which houses belonging to Alevi and Kurds had been marked with red crosses. They immediately informed the police.

Other minorities are also concerned about the State's control over their community representation. On 4 December, the *Nor Zartonk* Armenian group issued a statement on the election of their new patriarch, whose process began in March after the death of Patriarch Mesrop Mutayfan. After the Interior Ministry issued an order preventing the participation of foreign candidates in the election, the group said the decision violated the Turkish Constitution as well as international conventions, citing a Constitutional Court ruling dated 22 May 2019. Is there a move towards the authoritarian appointment of an "administrator" as Armenian patriarch, similar to what is widely practised for elected HDP members?

No doubt some might consider that these blockages to access many elements of the collective heritage, while certainly harmful, are an exaggeratedly theoretical problem with no daily impact, or only concern the actors in the field of culture. This month's two-day discussion forum in Diyarbakir organised by the Tahir Elçi Foundation for Human Rights on the Kurdish Question' belies this: one of the participants pointed out how much a person prevented from expressing oneself in one's mother tongue remains disadvantaged in all areas of life. State obstacles to access to the Kurdish language have long had serious socio-economic consequences for the Kurdish community in Turkey.

Abou Bakr Al-Baghdadi, rattrapé par tous ses ennemis

Enquête Dans la nuit du 26 au 27 octobre, à Baricha, dans le nord-ouest de la Syrie, le chef de l'organisation Etat islamique est mort lors d'un assaut des forces spéciales américaines. Cette opération est l'aboutissement d'une longue traque, au cours de laquelle de multiples renseignements ont été collectés auprès de ceux qui ont approché le « calife ».

Les nuits sont d'ordinaire plutôt calmes à Baricha, hameau adossé à la frontière turque, dans le nord-ouest de la Syrie. Parmi les millions de Syriens forcés de fuir la guerre, beaucoup y ont trouvé refuge dans des tentes de fortune campées au milieu des oliveraies, loin des bombardements de l'aviation russe qui ravagent le sud de la province d'Idlib. Le calme a été rompu, dans la nuit du samedi 26 au dimanche 27 octobre, par le vrombissement des hélicoptères, le sifflement des balles, des explosions et des aboiements de chiens.

Un commando des forces spéciales de l'armée américaine a débarqué. La cible de ces militaires, une centaine d'hommes qui font camp dans la nuit, n'est autre qu'Abou Bakr Al-Baghdadi, chef de l'organisation Etat islamique (EI), l'homme le plus recherché de la planète.

Le théâtre des opérations se concentre autour d'une petite maison délimitée par un mur d'enceinte, à environ 300 mètres de Baricha. Les lieux sont isolés, sans témoin – sauf peut-être un berger, sommé de répondre quelques heures plus tard à des combattants fébriles d'Hayat Tahrir Al-Cham (HTS), le principal groupe djihadiste de la région et ennemi déclaré de l'EI. Aux miliciens venus « enquêter » après avoir investi Baricha et ses alentours, le berger raconte : « J'ai vu des soldats étrangers débarquer des hélicoptères. » Il pense que certains d'entre eux, qu'il a entendus parler dans sa langue natale,



Donald Trump entouré (de gauche à droite) de Robert O'Brien, Mike Pence, Mark Esper et Mark Milley, dans la « situation room » de la Maison Blanche à Washington, le 27 octobre. SHEALAH CRAIGHEAD / WHITE HOUSE / AFP

sont arabes. « Ils ont crié dans des haut-parleurs : « Abou Mohammed, rends-toi ! » Puis ils ont tiré sur la maison, dit-il dans la vidéo mise en ligne par le groupe. Plus tard, ils sont repartis avec deux prisonniers. Ils m'ont aussi confié trois enfants, en me donnant l'ordre de m'éloigner d'un kilomètre. »

Aux Etats-Unis, c'est encore l'après-midi. A bord de Marine One, l'hélicoptère présidentiel, Donald Trump a quitté Camp David, où il a fêté la veille les dix ans de mariage de sa fille aînée, Ivanka, et de Jared Kushner. Il s'est rendu à son club de golf de Sterling, bordé par le Potomac, en Virginie. Le président golfe presque toujours le samedi. Revenu à 16 h 18 à la Maison Blanche, tiré à quatre épingles, il se dirige vingt minutes plus tard vers la situation room, la « salle de crise » située dans les sous-sols de l'aile ouest, pour assister en direct aux opérations.

Aussi évanescant qu'un « fantôme »

Dans un autre sous-sol, près de Baricha, Abou Bakr Al-Baghdadi est pris au piège. Dans la maison, cinq personnes sont tuées, parmi lesquelles quatre femmes et le fameux « Abou Mohammed », dont le berger avait entendu le nom et qui s'avérera être le propriétaire

des lieux. Poursuivi par un chien, acculé dans un cul-de-sac, il actionne sa ceinture d'explosifs, tuant avec lui deux de ses jeunes enfants et provoquant un effondrement partiel du sous-sol. Le « calife » est mort. Deux hommes, dont on ignore l'identité, ont été capturés. Voilà ce que l'on sait du raid américain, d'après sa version officielle. Selon une hypothèse avancée par Hicham Al-Hachemi, chercheur irakien spécialiste de l'EI, le garde du corps personnel du chef de l'EI, Ghazouan Al-Raoui, et le responsable de la sécurité de l'organisation en Syrie, Abou Al-Yaman, étaient également présents. Ainsi qu'un certain Abou Saïd Al-Iraki, peut-être l'ultime compagnon de cavale, au bout de neuf années de traque durant laquelle le « calife » était devenu aussi évanescant qu'un fantôme.

Les soldats américains ont déblayé les décombres pour récupérer les restes des dépouilles. « Il ne restait pas grand-chose, mais ils ont ramené des morceaux de corps substantiels », dira Donald Trump. Un test ADN est pratiqué sur place pour le comparer à celui qui avait été prélevé dans le camp de prisonniers Bucca, à la suite de l'invasion américaine de 2003 : il s'agit bien d'Abou Bakr Al-Baghdadi, de son vrai nom Ibrahim

Awad Ibrahim Ali Al-Badri, né le 28 juillet 1971, à Falloujah, dans la province irakienne d'Anbar.

Pour venir à bout du « cerveau » de l'internationale djihadiste, Washington a déployé des moyens considérables : une centaine de soldats d'élite, des drones armés, des munitions à profusion – missiles air-sol JASSM, GBU, missiles Hellfire... Huit hélicoptères ont décollé de deux bases situées dans l'Irak voisin – d'Erbil, au Kurdistan, et d'Al-Asad, dans la province d'Anbar –, sans compter les avions de combat qui ont mené six frappes, une fois la mission accomplie, sur la maison vide, afin qu'elle « ne devienne pas un sanctuaire, ni ne soit mémorable sous aucune forme ».

Dans la foulée, les forces spéciales américaines ont mené une seconde opération. Quelques heures après l'élimination d'Al-Baghdadi, un raid vise Abou Hassan Al-Mouhajir, le porte-parole de l'EI. L'homme détenait un poste stratégique, incarnant la propagande du groupe et sa diffusion, quand le « calife » ne s'exprime que de façon exceptionnelle. Al-Mouhajir est tué par un missile Hellfire, alors qu'il circulait, dissimulé à l'intérieur d'un banal camion, dans le village d'Ayn Al-Bayda, au nord de la province d'Alep. Le maître est mort, la voix de son maître aussi. En 2017, il avait qualifié le président Trump d'« affreux idiot qui ne sait pas ce qu'est la Syrie, l'Irak et l'islam ». Contrairement à Oussama Ben Laden, le chef d'Al-Qaïda, friand d'apparitions et de déclarations médiatiques, Abou Bakr Al-Baghdadi a évolué dans l'ombre, se hissant dans la hiérarchie de la nébuleuse djihadiste, avant de rompre avec elle. Proclamé « calife de l'Etat islamique » par ses affidés, il apparaît pour la première fois en public le 4 juillet 2014, dans la grande mosquée Al-Nouri de Mossoul. Le prêche qu'il prononce ce jour-là marque le début de son règne.

Women are being tortured in Turkey's prisons, opposition MP warns

TURKEY'S opposition Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) MP Leyla Guven warned on Saturday that women being held as political prisoners — many on trumped-up terror charges — have been tortured.

Ms Guven, who was herself jailed for opposing Turkey's illegal war and occupation of Afrin in northern Syria last year, alerted the Morning Star to brutal attacks in the all-female Bakirkoy Prison.

The HDP MP for Hakkari, in Turkey's largely Kurdish south-east, started a hunger strike last year in protest against the continued isolation of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan that spread across Turkish prisons.

She told the Star: "Female political prisoners were attacked by security forces in the international week of the protests against gender violence. Their lawyers say female prisoners were tortured brutally."

Similar to the case of Ms Guven, the Turkish state has clamped down on those resisting and opposing the country's latest war on northern Syria.

Turkey's authoritarian President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has launched a deadly assault in the operation, allied with a myriad of jihadist terror groups accused of carrying out war crimes, including extra-judicial executions and the use of chemical weapons.

One of those allegedly tortured in Bakirkoy Prison, Esin Kavruk — detained after declaring "No



War" on social media — was attacked after refusing to give a blood and saliva sample and submit to an internal examination.

At least 100 police officers and soldiers raided the cell and subjected 16 women to brutal beatings and torture. According to reports, Dilek Gecgin was kicked in the genital area while fellow prisoner Zeynep Gercek suffered terrible injuries to her back.

Esin Kavruk was also kicked in the back, after which the women were placed in solitary confinement.

The HDP women's platform condemned the brutality as an attempt to "break the will of women" with attacks on those outside and inside prison.

The Turkish state has moved against the HDP

co-chair system, which ensures equality of the sexes throughout the party. Mr Erdogan has branded it an act of terrorism, in a bid to stop women from participating in political life.

The HDP itself has faced a severe clampdown, with recent reports showing that about 16,500 of its members, including MPs and elected officials, have been detained by authorities since November 2016.

"Torture and assault against women prisoners is a continuation of the state's policy of breaking women's will. We women ... condemn the torture of Esin Kavruk and all other women prisoners," a statement said.

"Even if you confine us between four walls, you will not break our will. We will not back down from organising our rebellion against torture!"

Several pro-Kurdish party members arrested in southeastern Turkey

Turkish authorities have arrested 10 pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) members after a Turkish prosecutor objected to the ruling of release on probation, Mezopotamya news agency [reported](#) on Saturday.

Police detained 52 HDP members on Nov. 13 in advance of the party's congress in the southeastern city of Gaziantep, including co-chairs of the party.

Some 25 of the detainees were arrested and 10 were released on probation, according to

Mezopotamya news agency.

Ankara has intensified a [crackdown](#) on the Kurdish political movement since peace talks with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) broke down in 2015. HDP lawmakers and mayors have frequently been dismissed from their roles or faced legal charges for alleged PKK links in the years since.

The party's former co-chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ were arrested on terror charges in 2016.



A total of 24 HDP mayors have been dismissed over terror charges and replaced with a government appointee since the local elections in March.



Dr. Adnan Selçuk Mızraklı
Dec 01 2019

The Kurdish movement's gains did not come easily and must not be sacrificed | Ahval

When the Turkish government dismissed 24 mayors from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) this year, debates began within the party on whether to withdraw from parliament.

While much of this discussion was well-intentioned, we know that some pushing to withdraw held an alternate agenda and bad will. The majority of those calling for a full withdrawal from parliament were unable to give any satisfying idea about what path the HDP could follow next.

It is easy to say the HDP should withdraw from parliament and local administrations, but what comes next?

What the party would do, which political line it would follow and how it could organise are the questions that need answering, and so far no answers that would persuade the HDP and its base have been provided.

It would be wrong to present a withdrawal as the only option during a critical period that has the potential to define a whole people's standing in the legal political field. Without a good answer to what will come next, and without a model befitting this period, such a move would be inappropriate and misguided.

Most importantly, Kurdish legal politics has only come to its current position thanks to great sacrifices. Kurdish deputies have been murdered in the street, elected officials have been detained and activists and sympathisers have suffered torture.

We cannot simply ignore all of this. The municipalities we won this year were not gains made in a single election. The politicians who were elected also had long histories of struggle. This should not be forgotten when decisions are taken.

The question of what purpose a withdrawal from parliament and local administrations would serve, and who would benefit from it, should also be addressed.

A withdrawal would make the government's job all the easier, as the HDP is the greatest obstacle in the way of a full-blown one-man dictatorship.



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The other opposition parties have failed to create policies to counter this one-man rule, and in fact we must acknowledge they support the current government and lend it credence by associating it with the state's survival.

At the moment, the opposition parties are more preoccupied with their own internal conflicts than the country's real political agenda. None of them have any initiatives on the country's most significant issue that is the Kurdish question. Nor have they produced any solutions to the economic problems, violence against women, polarisation, racism or other major problems facing Turkey.

The HDP is the sole party working to create solutions, making it the country's only opposition party. So it is obvious who would benefit most from the party's withdrawal from parliament and local administrations.

Some could say the HDP has given the impression that democracy still exists in the country by not withdrawing. Though this idea may appear to have merit, the reality is quite the opposite.

We have been stating in every area of the legal political field that the country does not have a democracy. The moment we withdraw, we lose the ability to do so.

This is the real issue: Where are we able to talk about what is happening? Free and objective media is under severe pressure, and the mainstream press is loyal to the govern-

ment. While democratic rights are being neglected and public demonstrations are barred, the HDP is striving against the odd to be the voice of the people. If we overlook this, we risk losing the spirit of struggle.

Taking all of this into account, the HDP called a press briefing last week to declare that it would not withdraw, and would instead remain on the political scene, redoubling its efforts. We must now come together to find answers for how we can follow up on our statement; how we can become stronger, press the government more effectively, and create an organisational network that extends past parliament and local councils into the broader society.

Any debates that go beyond this risk forcing Kurdish politics into a vicious circle. In any case, the foresight and experience we have gained through our principled position and years of effort and struggle is enough to transcend all obstacles.

The most obvious examples of this are the setbacks the HDP's strategy caused for the ruling coalition. This was strikingly the case in Istanbul, which the opposition wrested from the ruling party's grasp in this year's local elections for the first time since 1994 thanks to the HDP's successful policies. This example alone shows clearly the HDP's success on the political stage in spite of all adversity.

We are obliged, though, to answer how we can carry this success on to the next stage. The HDP is the leading party in its own re-

gion, but it must strive to extend its success to Turkey's west, too. That it has been unable to, so far, is down to the tough conditions and great pressure facing the party that has prevented it from organising in the country's western regions.

The HDP can make even greater gains by following a broader democratising strategy across Turkey: a Democratic Republic strategy. This project is among the party's priorities. During a period such as this, the party must place the greatest emphasis on this project and restructure its organisation accordingly.

We must create an organising network that can address the problems of workers, villagers, unemployed, young people and all parts of the opposition individually; and we must again strive to go from street to street, shop to shop and house to house to reach every segment of society, if only to listen to their problems.

We must also strive to achieve a national unity of Kurds throughout the region – there is no alternative. It is the only way to resist the assimilationist and genocidal policies directed at the Kurdish people across the Middle East. Having come so close to this unity in the recent period, we must not squander this opportunity.

We already have a history of projects aimed at fostering this unity. Now every political force and every component of civil society – women, religious scholars, opinion leaders and every other party that desires Kurdish national unity – must come together and ensure that organising in this direction takes place. We, at the HDP, must not lose a single day in carrying out this historic duty that has fallen to us.

In the March 31 local elections this year, the HDP regained the municipalities the government had taken over in 2016, replacing HDP mayors with its own appointees. The party took back municipalities that the government appointees had plundered and loaded with debt.

In just four months, while we were still working to set right that destruction, the government once again began replacing our mayors. The elected local governments were criminalised with the help of the government's compliant media. They arrested co-mayors and councillors, enacting a fresh coup against the will of the local people.

This coup sent the message that Kurds are not accepted in the field of legal politics. Since the ruling power is intent on depriving the Kurds of all their human rights, it is nat-

ural that their right to elect and be elected is under attack.

Having dealt this coup against Kurds, the government is attempting to dissemble and lend its actions the air of legal legitimacy by calling the new administrations it has imposed on Kurdish municipalities "temporary appointments".

We may have seen government appointees take over many of our municipalities, but we must not view those municipalities as a simple office. We have no right to restrict our gains to four walls, nor to withdraw once we lose them.

What we have achieved has never been handed to us on a silver platter. Our successes have come at great cost through unified struggle as a people. This is why we have never given up.

And we will never give up.

** Dr. Selçuk Mızraklı is the elected mayor of Diyarbakır.*

The views expressed in this column are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of Ahval.

AMIN
Al-Masdar News

By News Desk
2019-12-01

SDF agrees to allow Russian troops to enter several areas in Raqqa, Hasakah

BEIRUT, LEBANON – The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have agreed to allow Russian forces operating in Syria to deploy their troops in more areas in the Al-Hasakah and Al-Raqqa governorates, weeks after a Russian agreement with the SDF on the deployment of their troops along the border with Turkey.

The commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces, Mazloum Abdi, published on Twitter, "We were honored today to host the commander of the Russian forces operating in Syria, General Alexander Tshaiko. It was a very productive meeting, and we agreed to the deployment of Russian forces in both Amuda and



Tal Tamr. We look forward to further joint efforts in the interest of our two countries."

On October 22, Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart signed a memoran-

dum of understanding to end a very tense situation along the Syrian-Turkish border.

The two sides agreed on several points in Syria, most notably the withdrawal of the YPG to a depth

of 30 kilometers from the border. The agreement included joint Russian-Turkish patrols in northern Syria within 10 km of the border and the deployment of Syrian border guards and Russian military police on the border with Turkey.

On October 9, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan launched a military operation called "Peace Spring" in northeastern Syria to "clear the territory of terrorists," referring to the Kurdish-led People's Protection Units (YPG), which Ankara considers a terrorist organization and an arm of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Le premier ministre irakien concède sa démission à la rue

Le départ d'Adel Abdel Mahdi, après deux mois d'une contestation qui a fait plus de 420 morts, n'a pas apaisé les manifestants qui réclament « la chute du régime ».

Des cris de joie se sont élevés de la place Tahrir à Bagdad, en début d'après-midi, vendredi 29 novembre. Au lendemain d'une journée particulièrement meurtrière dans le sud de l'Irak, le premier ministre, Adel Abdel Mahdi, venait d'annoncer qu'il remettrait sa démission au Parlement. Alors qu'au moins 420 personnes sont mortes depuis le début de la contestation, le 1er octobre, le sentiment qui domine est celui d'avoir gagné une bataille, mais pas encore la guerre contre le « régime » dont les manifestants réclament la chute.

« C'est le début de la victoire, commente Sara, une militante, mais cela ne répond qu'à une partie de nos souhaits. Nous occuperons les places jusqu'à ce que toutes nos demandes soient entendues et que le sang des martyrs soit honoré. »

Reprenant mot à mot le sermon adressé lors de la prière du vendredi par l'ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, la plus haute autorité chiite du pays, Adel Abdel Mahdi a concédé une démission devenue inéluctable. Révéré parmi la majorité chiite dont sont issus la plupart des contestataires, et écouté par la classe dirigeante, le « vieux sage » de Nadjaf venait d'exhorter le Parlement à lui retirer sa confiance pour éviter le « chaos ».

Les formations chiites qui dominent le Parlement ont aussitôt obtempéré. Les coalitions Sairoun (« en marche »), du chef populiste Moqtada Al-Sadr, et Al-Fatah, menée par le chef du parti-milice Badr, Hadi Al-Ameri, ont appelé à un vote de défiance contre M. Abdel Mahdi. Cet indépendant de 77 ans, sans base partisane et populaire, était le candidat de compromis sur lequel ils s'étaient entendus, en octobre 2018, après plusieurs mois de tractations sous l'égide des deux « parrains » américain et iranien.

Une nouvelle flambée de violences

Lorsqu'il s'était dit prêt à démissionner, fin octobre, sous la pression de la rue, ils ont ressoudé les rangs autour de lui, pressés par le général iranien Qassem Soleimani, dépêché à Bagdad. Considéré comme un responsable politique malléable, et flanqué d'un chef de cabinet proche du général des forces Al-Qods, M. Abdel Mahdi demeurait, pour ces partis et leur parrain iranien, le



Rassemblement après l'annonce de la démission du premier ministre Adel Abdel Mahdi, sur la place Tahrir à Bagdad, le 29 novembre. HADI MIZBAN / AP

meilleur garant de leurs intérêts. Ils ont alors plutôt envisagé de recourir à la force pour écraser la contestation, vue par Téhéran comme un « complot » ourdi depuis Washington, avant de miser sur son essoufflement.

L'exhortation de l'ayatollah Sistani, réclamée en vain par les manifestants depuis des semaines, est tombée comme un couperet.

Il aura fallu une nouvelle flambée de violences particulièrement meurtrière pour qu'il cède à leurs supplications. Face aux atermoiements de la classe politique, qui n'a offert que des promesses d'aides sociales et d'emplois, ainsi que de timides projets de réformes politiques, le mouvement de désobéissance civile s'était durci dans le sud du pays.

Il a pris un tour dangereux, mercredi soir, avec l'incendie du consulat iranien dans la ville sainte chiite de Nadjaf. La répression ne s'est pas fait attendre. Jeudi, 62 personnes ont été tuées à Bagdad et dans des villes du Sud, l'une des journées les plus meurtrières depuis le début de la contestation.

Nassiriya, une ville tribale à majorité chiite à 350 kilomètres au sud de Bagdad, a été le théâtre de véritables « scènes de guerre », selon Amnesty International. D'après des sources locales, 47 manifestants ont été tués sous les tirs intenses des forces de sécurité qui tentaient de les déloger de deux ponts sur l'Euphrate, puis de disperser ceux qui encerclaient un poste de police, réclamant vengeance pour les « martyrs ». Des combattants tribaux en armes se sont déployés à l'entrée de la ville pour empêcher l'envoi par Bagdad de renforts policiers et militaires, faisant craindre une plongée dans le chaos.

Faibles réactions de la communauté internationale

A 250 kilomètres plus au nord, Nadjaf, siège de la marjaya (la direction religieuse chiite), où les manifestations étaient restées pacifiques, a subi à son tour la répression. En réaction à l'incendie du consulat iranien, les forces de sécurité ainsi que des hommes en civil, suspectés par les manifestants d'être des membres de milices chiites, ont ouvert le feu sur la foule qui s'est formée près de la représentation consulaire, mais aussi des sièges de partis, faisant 18 morts parmi les manifestants.

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Dans le centre de Bagdad, le 29 novembre. HADI MIZBAN / AP

L'ampleur de la répression n'a fait qu'attiser la détermination de la rue. Elle n'a, en revanche, suscité que de faibles réactions au sein de la communauté internationale. Depuis le début de la crise, seule la représentante des Nations unies (ONU) pour l'Irak, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, a exercé une pression continue sur le gouvernement, multipliant les condamnations à chaque pic de répression, et les propositions de réformes à l'adresse des responsables politiques. Vendredi, elle a de nouveau condamné les violences et annoncé qu'elle en informerait le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, le 3 décembre.

Le département d'Etat américain a, lui, appelé les responsables irakiens à répondre aux « revendications légitimes » des manifestants. Bien que « parrains » de l'Irak, les Etats-Unis ne sont intervenus que rarement en deux mois, pour condamner la répression et les attaques contre les médias, et pour appeler à la tenue d'élections anticipées.

Par la voix du porte-parole du Quai d'Orsay, la France a, pour sa part, condamné, « l'usage excessif et disproportionné » de la force contre les manifestants. Paris a toutefois réitéré son soutien aux autorités, comme lors de la visite à Bagdad, le 17 octobre, du ministre des affaires étrangères, Jean-Yves Le Drian, venu négocier le transfert des djihadistes français détenus dans

les camps du Nord-Est syrien. Il n'avait pas évoqué la répression, qui avait déjà fait 147 morts, début octobre.

Corruption et pratiques clientélistes

Le Parlement irakien doit désormais se réunir dimanche en session extraordinaire. Le flou domine, parmi les experts, sur la procédure de désignation d'un nouveau chef de gouvernement. Ces subtilités constitutionnelles sont loin des préoccupations des manifestants, qui restaient mobilisés, vendredi, place Tahrir à Bagdad, et dans le sud du pays. A Nassiriya, au moins 21 manifestants ont encore été tués par balles alors qu'ils tentaient de forcer l'entrée d'un commissariat de police, et un autre a été abattu par des tirs à balles réelles devant le QG d'un parti, à Nadjaf.

Adel Abdel Mahdi n'est, à leurs yeux, que le sommet de l'iceberg. Les contestataires réclament la fin du système politique conçu par les Américains après la chute du dictateur Saddam Hussein en 2003, et notamment l'arrêt de la répartition confessionnelle des postes qui alimente corruption et pratiques clientélistes parmi les partis au pouvoir.

Ils appellent au renouvellement complet de la classe politique qui a détourné, de source officielle, 410 milliards d'euros de la rente pétrolière depuis 2004, sans se préoccuper de remettre sur pied des infrastructures dé-

liquescents, ou de lutter contre la pauvreté, qui touche un habitant sur cinq, et contre le chômage, qui atteint 25 % chez les jeunes.

Lire aussi Irak : contre la corruption, le chômage et la faillite de l'Etat... les manifestations sanglantes continuent

« Le chemin qui reste à parcourir s'annonce bien plus difficile, mais nous misons sur la détermination des jeunes et nous poursuivons notre route en toute quiétude », assure Naqib Al-Qaebi, un militant de la société civile de Bassora, dans le sud du pays.

« Le plus dur est fait »

Nombreux sont ceux qui, comme lui, anticipent un long conflit avec les partis religieux chiites proches de l'Iran et leurs milices, qui dominent la vie politique et l'économie du pays. Certains que ces partis ne renonceraient ni au pouvoir ni à ses privilèges, ils redoutent qu'ils ne s'engagent dans de longues tractations pour entraver la mise en œuvre d'une transition au sommet de l'Etat.

D'autres veulent croire, en revanche, que les divisions dans le camp chiite au pouvoir serviront leur cause. « Ce sera long, mais le plus dur est fait, estime Ali, un militant de Bagdad. Les partis ne sont pas unis, ils sont fragiles et vont se déchirer à force d'invectives. De toute manière, nous ne rentrerons pas avant d'avoir obtenu tout ce que nous demandons : une réforme de la loi électorale et des élections anticipées. »

Avec le retour d'Internet, les Iraniens découvrent l'ampleur de la répression

Les autorités ont organisé des manifestations prorégime, lundi, alors qu'émergeaient les noms des victimes. La répression de la contestation a fait au moins 143 morts.

Après la répression sanglante, voici venu le temps de la démonstration de force dans la rue. Pour répondre à l'importante vague de contestation dans le pays, les autorités iraniennes ont invité leurs partisans à investir à leur tour les rues, lundi 25 novembre, pour dénoncer « le saccage des biens publics et privés » par les opposants au régime et « l'ingérence de l'étranger ». La répression des heurts qui ont suivi l'annonce de la hausse des prix de l'essence, le 15 novembre, aurait causé la mort d'au moins 143 personnes, selon Amnesty International. Le nombre de personnes interpellées pourrait atteindre 4 000, voire 7 000, à en croire un député iranien.



Des piétons passent devant une banque incendiée lors des manifestations à Téhéran, le 20 novembre. VAHID SALEMI / AP

« Le message de la manifestation d'aujourd'hui est que nous réglons nous-mêmes nos problèmes et que nous n'avons guère besoin des étrangers. Je remercie le peuple d'avoir séparé sa voix de celle des contestataires », a martelé Mohsen Rezaï, le chef adjoint du Conseil de discernement des intérêts de la République (qui légifère par décret sur les questions urgentes), alors que les manifestants prorégime scandaient : « A bas les auteurs de sédition. »

Quelques heures plus tôt, le porte-parole du ministère des affaires étrangères, Abbas Moussavi, était allé encore plus loin en qualifiant les manifestants de ce lundi de « vraies gens », invitant les pays étrangers à les regarder de près.

Stupéfaction et horreur

Les « vraies gens » face aux autres, c'est-à-dire les contestataires, ceux qui ont été dans la rue et ceux qui sont aujourd'hui en colère contre la violente répression entreprise par Téhéran. Depuis la levée du blocage d'Internet, le 23 novembre, des Iraniens arrivent à envoyer des images des manifestations, tandis que les autres découvrent, avec stupéfaction et horreur, l'ampleur de la violence. Petit à petit, le nom et les portraits des victimes surgissent, surtout de jeunes hommes, simples passants ou manifestants.

Dans une vidéo, prise sur une place

de la ville de Gorgan, dans le Nord-Est, on voit ainsi un civil s'attaquant avec un sabre à des policiers, tandis qu'un autre manifestant agite dans l'air une hache. Une autre vidéo, prise d'un autre point de vue, montre ce dernier, sans sa hache, qui, touché de très près par une balle, tombe au sol. Les forces de l'ordre traînent ensuite le jeune homme par les pieds et l'évacuent de la place.

« Ils peuvent nous faire ce qu'ils veulent »

« Depuis que la connexion est rétablie, je suis en train de devenir folle en voyant les vidéos, alors que pendant la semaine où Internet était coupé, j'avais le sentiment de faire le deuil d'un proche, explique Sara (son nom a été modifié), médecin dans le nord de l'Iran. La gorge serrée, je sens un mélange de solitude et de frustration en pensant que ces gens peuvent nous faire ce qu'ils veulent et que, nous, nous ne pouvons rien faire. »

Avec le retour d'Internet, la liste des étudiants arrêtés émerge également grâce aux informations partagées par leurs amis et proches, car, en l'absence de réseau, les habitants d'une même ville étaient restés parfois sans nouvelles les uns des autres. A Téhéran uniquement, les étudiants parlent de l'arrestation d'une trentaine de leurs camarades. Les manifestants arrêtés dans la capitale auraient été transférés à la

prison tristement célèbre d'Evin, dans le nord de la ville, mais aussi dans celle de Fashafouyeh, plus au sud, connu pour ses conditions de détention difficiles.

Même Hassan Khalilabadi, le chef du conseil de la ville de banlieue de Chahr-e Ray, où est situé Fashafouyeh, a fait part de son inquiétude. « Ce centre de détention où sont aussi placés des prisonniers dangereux ne peut pas détenir autant de gens », a-t-il mis en garde. Des propos alarmants, pourtant démentis par le responsable des prisons de Téhéran.

« Machines de propagande »

« Ils vont bientôt diffuser les aveux de quelques-uns de ces milliers de prisonniers, dans le but d'alimenter leurs machines de propagande et de justifier la répression », se désole Mahdi, un habitant d'Ispahan, à 400 kilomètres au sud de Téhéran, qui témoigne que les forces de l'ordre ont ouvert « systématiquement » le feu sur la foule en colère lors des manifestations dans sa ville, du 15 au 18 novembre.

« Rien que dans notre quartier, une dizaine de personnes ont été tuées. Dans beaucoup d'endroits, c'était une atmosphère de guerre civile. J'ai caché un blessé par balle à la jambe chez moi, dit cet Iranien de 30 ans en montrant des photos de sa cour, tachée du sang. J'ai vu brû-

ler trois stations de métro et cinq banques. » Les autorités parlent de 900 banques incendiées lors des manifestations dans tout le pays.

Pour certains Iraniens, le saccage est l'œuvre des éléments liés au pouvoir, qui cherchent ainsi à justifier sa réponse violente, tandis que d'autres y voient la colère des couches défavorisées dont la situation s'est sensiblement dégradée ces dernières années. Selon le Fonds monétaire international, l'inflation a dépassé les 40 % et le taux du chômage des jeunes se situe autour de 30 %, un chiffre certainement sous-estimé. Depuis le retour des sanctions américaines en raison d'un retrait unilatéral de Washington, en mai 2018, de l'accord sur le nucléaire iranien, les recettes du pays, liées surtout au pétrole, ont drastiquement chuté.

L'économie, déjà gravement atteinte par la corruption et une mauvaise gestion, est aujourd'hui soumise à de fortes pressions. Or, la coupure d'Internet vient de lui infliger une perte de 1,4 milliard d'euros, selon un ancien membre de la chambre de commerce iranienne. Les secteurs les plus touchés seraient les commerces en ligne et les start-up. « Le blocage d'Internet a été un coup de poing dans le ventre de ceux, comme nous, qui pensaient qu'il était possible de rester, de construire et de mener des réformes en Iran, malgré les obstacles et les problèmes », a écrit sur Twitter l'entrepreneur Nasser Ghanemzadeh.

De quoi encore assombrir le tableau pour de nombreux Iraniens. « Beaucoup de couples de mon âge m'ont parlé de leur intention de partir », confie Mahdi. « Ici règne un sentiment de haine et de désespoir généralisé », ajoute-t-il. Le mari de Sara aussi a accepté qu'elle parte seule avec leur fille de 8 ans au Canada. « J'ai déjà appelé un cabinet d'avocats spécialisé dans les questions d'immigration. Mon mari restera en Iran. Et moi au Canada, je travaillerai ou ferai des études, dit-elle. En ce moment, je traverse les jours les plus tristes de ma vie. »

Ethnic cleansing already taking place in Turkey's Syrian safe zone - Independent

Displaced Kurds from northern Syria have spoken of a dramatic demographic change in their hometowns since Turkey took control of them in a military operation last month that amounts to ethnic cleansing, the [Independent reported on Saturday](#).

Ankara said its main priority in Operation Peace Spring was to clear Kurdish-led groups that it considers terrorist organisations from its border. But it has also vowed to resettle a large portion of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees it is hosting in what it calls a safe zone in the 32-km deep area between the border towns of Tel Abyad and Ras al-Ayn that it now controls.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces and its affiliates played a key role in the international fight against Islamic State, but Turkey says these groups pose a security threat since they have links to insurgents within Turkey.

However, footage shot by Turkey's Syrian rebel auxiliaries has shown that it is not only these groups, but Kurds more broadly who have been targeted.

This became apparent to many Kurdish locals soon after the launch of the operation on Oct. 9 when Hevrin Khalaf, the leader of the Future Syria Party, was waylaid by Turkish-backed Syrian fighters and killed. Her killers uploaded a video of the moments her car was attacked.

Other videos have shown similar displays of brutality directed against Kurds and other minorities, the Independent said, leading



thousands to flee their homes. Many of these now live in refugee camps across northeast Syria and fear they may never be able to return to their homes, the newspaper said.

"No one can go back there now, it's impossible," Muhammad Amin, 37, a Kurdish man who fled with his family from the city of Ras al-Ayn in the first days of the Turkish-led operation told the Independent.

"We've seen the videos," he said at a camp near the Syrian town of Tel Tamr. "They are shooting Kurdish people where they find them."

The United Nations has reported that the same Syrian rebel groups imposed what it called a reign of terror over Afrin, an area in northwest Syria that Turkey captured in its last offensive in 2018, and signs point to the same being true in the newly captured areas, according to the Independent.

There have already been widespread reports of looting by members of the Syrian National Army, the umbrella organisation of Turkish-backed rebel groups once known as the Free Syrian Army.

A report released by Human Rights Watch included documented evidence of looting and interviews with locals who said the groups had blocked relatives from returning to their homes, killing three men who had attempted to go back.

"We had a house and a shop. They stole everything. Some family members were able to go back briefly to check and it was all empty," said Fasel Amin, one of the Syrians the rights group interviewed.

"Turkey wants to control the whole area. It wants to change the whole demography of the area – take the Kurds out and bring the Arabs in."



REUTERS Dec 2, 2019

Jailed pro-Kurdish leader unwell but not taken to hospital: lawyer

ISTANBUL (Reuters) - The jailed former head of Turkey's main pro-Kurdish party lost consciousness after experiencing chest pains last week but he still has not been taken to a hospital despite such requests, one of his lawyers said on Monday.

One of Turkey's best known politicians, Selahattin Demirtas has been in jail for more than three years and faces several cases against him, mainly on terrorism charges. He could be sentenced to 142 years in jail if found guilty in the main case.

His Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), the second largest opposition party in Turkey's parliament, called on the Justice Ministry to issue a statement on his health, saying it was unacceptable that he had not been taken to hospital.



A supporter of Turkey's main pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party holds a portrait of their jailed former leader and presidential candidate Selahattin Demirtas during a campaign event in Istanbul Reuters

The Justice Ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Demirtas, 46, remained unconscious for a long time after fainting on the morning of Nov. 26 following chest pains and trouble

breathing, lawyer Aygul Demirtas, who is also his sister, said on Twitter.

An electrocardiogram was carried out on Demirtas but the prison doctor asked that he be taken to hospital for examination by car-

diology, neurology and gastroenterology experts, she said.

"Demirtas has not be transferred to the hospital in the seven days since... (They) virtually want to turn Selahattin Demirtas' being held as a political hostage into an interference with his right to live," Aygul Demirtas said.

In September, prosecutors in Ankara launched a new investigation into Demirtas and requested his detention after a court lifted his arrest warrant in the main case. Demirtas denies the charges against him.

Ankara accuses the HDP of links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has waged a decades-long armed struggle against the Turkish state. The HDP denies links to terrorism.

(Reporting by Ali Kucukgocmen, Ece Toksabay and Tuvan Gumrukcu; Editing by Daren Butler and Gareth Jones)

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02/12/2019
avec AFP

Des bombardements turcs en Syrie font plusieurs morts dont huit enfants

Huit enfants de moins de 15 ans font partie des victimes, causées lundi par des frappes turques à Tal Rifaat, une ville du nord de la Syrie, selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme. La plupart des victimes sont des déplacés kurdes.

Au moins onze civils, dont huit enfants âgés de moins de 15 ans, ont été tués, lundi 2 décembre, dans des bombardements turcs, près d'une école dans une ville du nord de la Syrie sous contrôle kurde, a rapporté l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH).

Le drame s'est déroulé dans la ville de Tal Rifaat, où [des heurts opposent sporadiquement forces turques et combattants kurdes](#). Cette ville accueille également des forces du régime de Bachar

al-Assad et des militaires russes, selon l'ONG.

"Les tirs d'artillerie des forces turques se sont abattus près d'une école, au moment où les enfants sortaient" de l'établissement, selon le directeur de l'OSDH, Rami Abdel Rahmane qui a également fait état de 21 blessés.

La plupart des victimes sont des déplacés kurdes qui s'étaient installés à Tal Rifaat après avoir fui l'enclave d'Afrine, située plus à l'Ouest et conquise en 2018 par les forces d'Ankara.

Après cette opération, Ankara avait menacé d'attaquer Tal Rifaat, mais un accord négocié avec Moscou avait permis d'éviter une offensive turque sur la ville. [La Russie s'était engagée à obtenir un retrait de la milice-](#)



Des soldats turcs à Suruç, près de la frontière entre la Turquie et la Syrie, fin 2018. AFP/Bulent Kilic

[kurde](#) des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG).

Située dans la province d'Alep, Tal Rifaat se trouve juste au sud de la ville d'Aazaz, tenue par des rebelles financés et soutenus par Ankara.

C'est pour éloigner de sa fron-

tière la milice kurde des YPG, considérée comme une organisation "terroriste" par Ankara, que la Turquie a lancé le 9 octobre avec des supplétifs syriens une offensive majeure sur la région. Malgré deux cessez-le-feu acceptés par Ankara, les affrontements sporadiques se poursuivent.

Le chef du Pentagone appelle Ankara à ne plus bloquer des plans de l'Otan REUTERS

LONDRES, 3 décembre (Reuters) - Le secrétaire américain à la Défense, Mark Esper, a exhorté lundi la Turquie à soutenir des plans de défense préparés par l'Otan pour les Etats baltes et la Pologne, alors qu'Ankara demande à l'Alliance de soutenir l'offensive turque menée contre les combattants kurdes dans le nord de la Syrie.

S'exprimant dans un entretien à Reuters avant le sommet de l'Otan, qui s'ouvre mardi à Londres, le chef du Pentagone a prévenu la Turquie qu'il ne soutiendrait pas la désignation sous le terme d'organisation terroriste des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG), la milice kurde qui a aidé Washington à combattre le groupe Etat islamique (EI) en Syrie.

Mark Esper a appelé Ankara à se focaliser sur les défis plus importants auxquels fait face l'Otan.

"Le message à la Turquie (...) est que nous devons avancer sur ces plans de défense et que cela ne peut pas être retardé par ses

propres préoccupations", a-t-il dit à bord de l'avion qui l'emmenait dans la capitale britannique.

"L'unité de l'Alliance, la promptitude de l'Alliance, font que nous devons nous concentrer sur des préoccupations plus grandes (...) Et pas tout le monde ne voit pas les menaces qu'ils voient", a-t-il ajouté.

Sans l'approbation des Turcs, l'Otan aura plus de difficultés à mettre en place ses plans militaires de défense conçus pour la Pologne, la Lituanie, la Lettonie et l'Estonie dans l'éventualité d'une agression russe à la suite de la crise ukrainienne et de l'annexion de la Crimée par la Russie en 2014.

La Turquie, qui impute l'impasse actuelle aux Etats-Unis, souhaite que l'Otan désigne sous le terme d'organisation terroriste les YPG, comme l'a rapporté Reuters la semaine dernière.

Ce contentieux est un signe des divisions entre Ankara et Washington sur l'offensive

que l'armée turque a lancée le 9 octobre dernier dans le nord-est de la Syrie. Il est aussi un élément de plus dans les difficultés que les Alliés éprouvent pour s'entendre sur des sujets pourtant cruciaux.

Le président français Emmanuel Macron a accusé Ankara d'avoir mis ses alliés devant le "fait accompli" lors de son offensive contre les milices kurdes dans le nord-est de la Syrie, provoquant une critique violente de la part de son homologue turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Le traité de l'Atlantique-Nord prévoit qu'une agression contre l'un des Etats membres de l'Otan est une agression contre l'ensemble des Alliés, d'où la nécessité pour l'Alliance de se doter de plans d'intervention pour mettre en œuvre cet instrument de sécurité collective.

(Phil Stewart, avec Robin Emmott à Bruxelles; version française Jean Terzian)



03/12/2019

Iran/Kurdistan irakien : le volume d'échanges commerciaux atteint 6 milliards de dollars

Téhéran (IRNA)-Le Chef de l'Union des exportateurs et importateurs du Kurdistan irakien, Cheikh Mustafa Abdul Rahman, évoquant les relations entre Téhéran et la région du nord de l'Irak, a déclaré que les relations commerciales entre les deux parties atteignent 6 milliards de dollars par an.

Cheikh Mustafa Abdul Rahman, s'exprimant dimanche, premier décembre, lors d'une réunion irano-irakienne des affaires que la relation entre les commerçants iraniens et ceux de la région du Kurdistan irakien continuait à se développer.

« Nous espérons que cette relation ne se limite pas à l'importation de marchandises en provenance d'Iran », a-t-il précisé.

« Nous essayons également de rendre la ré-



gion du Kurdistan irakien productive et de favoriser la présence des usines de productions conjointes dans la région du Kurdistan », a-t-il ajouté.

Il a souligné que la région du Kurdistan, en tant que représentant du gouvernement ira-

kien, était prête à coopérer avec les exportateurs iraniens.

« L'Iran a beaucoup d'usines de qualité dans différents domaines et nous pouvons en profiter », a déclaré le président du syndicat des exportateurs et importateurs du Kurdistan.

S'attardant sur la nécessité des relations de cette région avec le consulat d'Iran à Erbil, ce responsable kurde irakien a plaidé pour la présentation des hommes d'affaires par la partie iranienne afin d'accélérer les choses.

La réunion d'affaires Iran-Irak se tiendra aujourd'hui et demain (les 2 et 3 décembre) à l'hôtel Parsian Azadi de Téhéran, axé sur les produits alimentaires et les supermarchés.

Turquie: le leader kurde détenu Demirtas subit des tests médicaux

Le leader kurde emprisonné Selahattin Demirtas a été transféré à l'hôpital lundi pour subir des examens complémentaires après avoir été victime d'un malaise dans sa cellule la semaine dernière, selon les autorités turques.

La sœur du détenu, Aygül Demirtas, a révélé en début d'après-midi sur Twitter que M. Demirtas avait été retrouvé inconscient dans sa cellule mardi 26 novembre "à la suite de difficultés respiratoires et des douleurs à la poitrine". Selon elle, les autorités turques avaient d'abord refusé de le transférer vers un hôpital.

Le procureur d'Edirne, la région



Le leader kurde Selahattin Demirtas. Photo d'archives AFP

dans laquelle M. Demirtas est détenu, a indiqué lundi dans un communiqué que ce dernier avait reçu les soins nécessaires

sur place le 26 novembre et qu'il avait été transféré lundi à l'hôpital pour des examens supplémentaires "bien qu'aucun

problème de santé n'ait été détecté".

Selahattin Demirtas, ancien dirigeant emblématique du Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP), est détenu depuis novembre 2016 pour des accusations en lien avec le "terrorisme". Il risque jusqu'à 142 ans de prison.

Le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan accuse régulièrement le HDP d'être la vitrine politique du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), un groupe classé terroriste par Ankara et ses alliés occidentaux. Plusieurs élus de ce parti ont été placés en détention ces dernières semaines, accusés eux aussi de liens avec une organisation terroriste.

AMN 2019-12-02

Russian military comes under attack in northern Syria

An improvised explosive device has gone off in front of a Russian armoured police vehicle in Syria, Russia's Defence Ministry said on Monday.

According to the ministry's statement, the incident occurred as a Russian-Turkish joint patrol conducted route reconnaissance some 1.5 kilometres to the west of a town in the Kobane district of Aleppo Governorate in northern Syria.

The three servicemen who were in the vehicle at the moment of the explosion sustained minor non-life-threatening injuries, the ministry added. There was some damage to the vehicle as well.

On 22 October, Turkey and Russia concluded a memorandum that detailed conditions for a peaceful withdrawal of Kurdish



forces to a distance of 18.6 miles from the Turkish border. The 10-point document envisions regular joint patrol missions to ensure the implementation of the deal.

The adoption of the memorandum comes after a week-long military operation launched by Turkey on 9 October that sought to rid the region of the SDF, viewed as a terrorist organisation

by Turkey due to its ties with the Kurdistan Workers' Party.

Source: Sputnik

The New York Times Dec. 3, 2019
By Farnaz Fassihi and Rick Gladstone

With Brutal Crackdown, Iran Is Convulsed by Worst Unrest in 40 Years

What started as a protest over a surprise increase in gasoline prices turned into widespread demonstrations met with a systematic repression that left at least 180 people dead.

A burned bank after protests against increased fuel prices in Tehran last month.

A burned bank after protests against increased fuel prices in Tehran last month. Nazanin Tabatabaee West Asia News Agency, via Reuters

Iran is experiencing its deadliest political unrest since the Islamic Revolution 40 years ago, with at least 180 people killed — and possibly hundreds more — as angry protests have been smothered in a government crackdown of unbridled force.

It began two weeks ago with an abrupt increase of at least 50 percent in gasoline prices. Within 72 hours, outraged demonstrators in cities large and small were calling for an end to the Islamic Republic's government and the downfall of its leaders.

In many places, security forces responded by opening fire on unarmed protesters, largely unemployed or low-income young men between the ages of 19 and 26, according to witness accounts and videos. In the southwest city of Mahshahr alone, witnesses and medical personnel said, Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps members surrounded, shot and killed 40 to 100 demonstrators — mostly unarmed young men — in a marsh where they had sought refuge.

"The recent use of lethal force against people throughout the country is unprecedented, even for the Islamic Republic and its record of violence," said Omid Memarian, the deputy director at the Center for Human Rights in Iran, a New York-based group.

Altogether, from 180 to 450 people, and possibly more, were killed in four days of intense violence after the gasoline price increase was announced on Nov. 15, with at least 2,000 wounded and 7,000 detained, according to international rights organizations, opposition groups and local journalists.

The last enormous wave of protests in Iran — in 2009 after a contested election, which was also met with a deadly crackdown — left 72 people dead over a much longer period of about 10 months.



A burned bank after protests against increased fuel prices in Tehran last month. Credit... Nazanin Tabatabaee West Asia News Agency, via Reuters

Only now, nearly two weeks after the protests were crushed — and largely obscured by an internet blackout in the country that was lifted recently — have details corroborating the scope of killings and destruction started to dribble out.

The latest outbursts not only revealed staggering levels of frustration with Iran's leaders, but also underscored the serious economic and political challenges facing them, from the Trump administration's onerous sanctions on the country to the growing resentment toward Iran by neighbors in an increasingly unstable Middle East.

The gas price increase, which was announced as most Iranians had gone to bed, came as Iran is struggling to fill a yawning budget gap. The Trump administration sanctions, most notably their tight restrictions on exports of Iran's oil, are a big reason for the shortfall. The sanctions are meant to pressure Iran into renegotiating the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and major world powers, which President Trump abandoned, calling it too weak.

Most of the nationwide unrest seemed concentrated in neighborhoods and cities pop-

ulated by low-income and working-class families, suggesting this was an uprising born in the historically loyal power base of Iran's post-revolutionary hierarchy.

Many Iranians, stupefied and embittered, have directed their hostility directly at the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who called the crackdown a justified response to a plot by Iran's enemies at home and abroad.

The killings prompted a provocative warning from Mir Hussein Moussavi, an opposition leader and former presidential candidate whose 2009 election loss set off peaceful demonstrations that Ayatollah Khamenei also suppressed by force.

In a statement posted Saturday on an opposition website, Mr. Moussavi, who has been under house arrest since 2011 and seldom speaks publicly, blamed the supreme leader for the killings. He compared them to an infamous 1978 massacre by government forces that led to the downfall of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi a year later, at the hands of the Islamic revolutionaries who now rule the country.

“The killers of the year 1978 were the representatives of a nonreligious regime and the agents and shooters of November 2019 are the representatives of a religious government,” he said. “Then the commander in chief was the shah and today, here, the supreme leader with absolute authority.”

The authorities have declined to specify casualties and arrests and have denounced unofficial figures on the national death toll as speculative. But the nation’s interior minister, Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli, has cited widespread unrest around the country.

On state media, he said that protests had erupted in 29 out of 31 provinces and 50 military bases had been attacked, which if true suggested a level of coordination absent in the earlier protests. Iran’s official media have reported that several members of the security forces were killed and injured during the clashes.

The property damage also included 731 banks, 140 public spaces, nine religious centers, 70 gasoline stations, 307 vehicles, 183 police cars, 1,076 motorcycles and 34 ambulances, the interior minister said.

The worst violence documented so far happened in the city of Mahshahr and its suburbs, with a population of 120,000 people in Iran’s southwest Khuzestan Province — a region with an ethnic Arab majority that has a long history of unrest and opposition to the central government. Mahshahr is adjacent to the nation’s largest industrial petrochemical complex and serves as a gateway to Bandar Imam, a major port.

The New York Times interviewed six residents of the city, including a protest leader who had witnessed the violence; a reporter based in the city who works for Iranian media, and had investigated the violence but was banned from reporting it; and a nurse at the hospital where casualties were treated.

They each provided similar accounts of how the Revolutionary Guards deployed a large force to Mahshahr on Monday, Nov. 18, to crush the protests. All spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution by the Guards.

For three days, according to these residents, protesters had successfully gained control of most of Mahshahr and its suburbs, blocking the main road to the city and the adjacent industrial petrochemical complex. Iran’s interior minister confirmed that the protesters had gotten control over Mahshahr and its roads in a televised interview last

week, but the Iranian government did not respond to specific questions in recent days about the mass killings in the city.

Local security forces and riot police officers had attempted to disperse the crowd and open the roads, but failed, residents said. Several clashes between protesters and security forces erupted between Saturday evening and Monday morning before the Guards were dispatched there. When the Guards arrived near the entrance to a suburb, Shahrak Chamran, populated by low-income members of Iran’s ethnic Arab minority, they immediately shot without warning at dozens of men blocking the intersection, killing several on the spot, according to the residents interviewed by phone.

The residents said the other protesters scrambled to a nearby marsh, and that one of them, apparently armed with an AK-47, fired back. The Guards immediately encircled the men and responded with machine gun fire, killing as many as 100 people, the residents said.

The Guards piled the dead onto the back of a truck and departed, the residents said, and relatives of the wounded then transported them to Memko Hospital.

One of the residents, a 24-year-old unemployed college graduate in chemistry who had helped organize the protests blocking the roads, said he had been less than a mile away from the mass shooting and that his best friend, also 24, and a 32-year-old cousin were among the dead.

He said they both had been shot in the chest and their bodies were returned to the families five days later, only after they had signed paperwork promising not to hold funerals or memorial services and not to give interviews to media.

The young protest organizer said he, too, was shot in the ribs on Nov. 19, the day after the mass shooting, when the Guards stormed with tanks into his neighborhood, Shahrak Taleghani, among the poorest suburbs of Mahshahr.

He said a gun battle erupted for hours between the Guards and ethnic Arab residents, who traditionally keep guns for hunting at home. Iranian state media and witnesses reported that a senior Guards commander had been killed in a Mahshahr clash. Video on Twitter suggests tanks had been deployed there.

A 32-year-old nurse in Mahshahr reached

by the phone said she had tended to the wounded at the hospital and that most had sustained gunshot wounds to the head and chest.

She described chaotic scenes at the hospital, with families rushing to bring in the casualties, including a 21-year-old who was to be married but could not be saved. “Give me back my son!,” the nurse quoted his sobbing mother as saying. “It’s his wedding in two weeks!”

The nurse said security forces stationed at the hospital arrested some of the wounded protesters after their conditions had stabilized. She said some relatives, fearing arrest themselves, dropped wounded loved ones at the hospital and fled, covering their faces.

On Nov. 25, a week after it happened, the city’s representative in Parliament, Mo-hamad Golmordai, vented outrage in a blunt moment of searing antigovernment criticism that was broadcast on Iranian state television and captured in photos and videos uploaded to the internet.

“What have you done that the undignified Shah did not do?” Mr. Golmordai screamed from the Parliament floor, as a scuffle broke out between him and other lawmakers, including one who grabbed him by the throat.

The local reporter in Mahshahr said the total number of people killed in three days of unrest in the area had reached 130, including those killed in the marsh.

In other cities such as Shiraz and Shahrar, dozens were reported killed in the unrest by security forces who fired on unarmed protesters, according to rights groups and videos posted by witnesses.

“This regime has pushed people toward violence,” said Yousef Alsarkhi, 29, a political activist from Khuzestan who migrated to the Netherlands four years ago. “The more they repress, the more aggressive and angry people get.”

Political analysts said the protests appeared to have delivered a severe blow to President Hassan Rouhani, a relative moderate in Iran’s political spectrum, all but guaranteeing that hard-liners would win upcoming parliamentary elections and the presidency in two years.

The tough response to the protests also appeared to signal a hardening rift between Iran’s leaders and sizable segments of the population of 83 million.

Peshmerga unity depends on healing political divisions

The Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) peshmerga forces are lacking a unified command. Rather, the peshmerga, which played a key role in defeating the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq alongside the US-led global coalition, is receiving commands from the Kurdish ruling parties: the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). This raises concerns that the peshmerga will be exploited in political disputes.

"Peshmerga forces must be free of political influence and remain neutral during party disputes," Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani said Nov. 12. "The Kurdistan Region needs an armed national force that has modern discipline and principles."

Following the 1991 Gulf War, Iraqi Kurds rose up against the Iraqi Baath regime and established a semi-autonomous region. The two main Kurdish ruling parties, the KDP and the PUK, have their own peshmerga forces. The KDP has 80 units, and the PUK has 70 units. Both parties jointly have nearly 240,000 peshmerga troops. The parties engaged in an internal armed conflict against each other from 1994 to 1998. Moreover, they frequently use the peshmerga to attack rival political parties and forcefully suppress civilian protests.

The unification of peshmerga forces has been a key topic in discussions between foreign military delegations and officials of the KRG. But no real steps to unify the peshmerga have been taken.

Barzani's speech came two days after a tragic incident occurred within Brigade 12 of the KRG's peshmerga. In the town of Bardarash, 70 kilometers (43 miles) north of Erbil, a verbal quarrel between peshmerga officers led to the killing of a major and a first lieutenant, according to a senior peshmerga commander. The commander told Al-Monitor that the quarrel was related to who should hold military posts within the newly unified brigade.

"The KRG Ministry of Peshmerga has no authority in distributing the posts within the peshmerga units," the commander said. "Rather, ruling parties and tribal figures are settling out [who will adopt] the commanding posts, consequently leading to quarrels and



Kurdistan Regional Government forces conduct an operation against the Islamic State in the Makhmur district of Mosul, Iraq, July 17, 2018. Yunus Keles/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

killings. The tribes insist that, for example, the commander of a peshmerga brigade should be from [among] them, and when their demands are met by ruling party officials, they nominate persons who lack any military knowledge and experience. Thus, qualified commanders and officers are not accepting of such a situation, leading to conflicts."

He added, "Both the PUK and the KDP use peshmerga forces under their command for other purposes: to guard orchards and houses of their political bureau members, to safeguard and serve tribal chiefs and even 'artists and dancers.'"

Jabbar Yawar, secretary-general of the KRG Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs, told Al-Monitor that the incident was "unwanted" and was not related to the peshmerga or political affairs. He said the person who fired and killed the officers has been detained and that once he is interrogated he will be brought to justice.

"There is a reform project within our ministry," Yawar said. "We can say that by the end of the current KRG Cabinet tenure in 2022, all the peshmerga forces will be unified. We have no problems for the time being and the unification is not an easy task, it needs time."

The commander indicated that the processes of unification and reforming peshmerga are going on "slowly" due to "political concerns."

"The PUK feels its rival, the KDP, while holding the KRG and Kurdistan Region's presidency; once peshmerga forces were unified under the command of the KRG Ministry of Peshmerga, the PUK cannot rein its forces as before. Hence the fears are culminating," the commander added.

The office of KRG spokesman Jotiar Adil told Al-Monitor that many issues have delayed the unification of the forces. "The process is taking time for a number of reasons," the office stated, "among them new laws that need to be passed on peshmerga retirement and pensions, logistics and finances that need the support of the coalition forces and the Iraqi government. Also, Baghdad is now taking seriously the issue of the peshmerga budget through Erbil-Baghdad negotiation committees."

However, the office stated that "the process of the unification of the peshmerga forces is going forward with the support of the coalition forces. It is a comprehensive 35-package reform plan, five of which have been finished and eight are underway."

The office added, "Prime Minister Masrour Barzani has met with the commanders of

both the 70 and 80 forces and is closely working with them to accomplish this unification plan. Progress has been made on two major issues and that is unifying the financial units of both forces and their organizational structure.”

Mustafa Chawrash, commander of the PUK's 70 forces, in a phone call with Al-Monitor denied the commander's accusations, without making other clarifications.

The senior peshmerga commander emphasized that the global coalition against IS has warned the KRG officials that may be it is the last chance for unifying the peshmerga forces, and the coalition would stop financial aid to the peshmerga if not unified under one command.

"Kurdistan regional security and stability are long-held priorities for the Global Coalition against [IS] as well as important components of a stable, secure and prosperous

Iraq," Col. Myles Caggins, coalition military spokesman, told Al-Monitor via email. "Peshmerga reform is a key element of that commitment and restructuring the security sector. The Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve and our partners at the Embassy's Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq support the Kurdistan Regional Government by building partner capacity through security assistance and sector reform and through defense institution building."

Maj. Gen. Baktyar Muhammed Sadiq, a member of the Ministry of Peshmerga's reform board, told Al-Monitor that 14 brigades — nearly 40,000 peshmerga forces — are unified under the KRG Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs.

"There are plans for unifying all peshmerga forces, including the 70 and 80 forces, but there is no specific timeline yet," Sadiq said. "There are also plans that the political

parties would no longer be involved in recruiting peshmerga forces."

Abubakr Haladni, a lawmaker from the Kurdistan Islamic Union opposition party, told Al-Monitor, "KRG officials only remember the unification of peshmerga forces in ceremonies, or when the coalition forces put pressure on them. The KDP and the PUK lack a true will for merging their forces, as the forces are loyal to the parties and they are being used in party conflicts, especially in elections."

Haladni, who is also a member of the peshmerga parliamentary committee, said, "We, as the peshmerga committee, will make follow-ups for the unification process. According to Code No. 17 for the year 1993, issued by the Kurdistan parliament, no political party should have armed forces, accordingly, the KDP and the PUK are ... disarmed parties."



December 2, 2019

Syrian Kurdish military commander announces SDF deal with Russia

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have come to an agreement with Russian armed forces in Syria, commander of the Kurdish-led SDF Mazloum Kobani said in a tweet on Monday.

Kobani's tweet in Russian announced a "high level of mutual understanding and agreement on the deployment of Russian forces in Amuda, Tel Tamer and Ayn Issa" reached at a meeting with Alexander Chaiko, the commander of Russia's armed forces in Syria.

Clashes continue in northern Syria after Turkey's military incursion into the Kurdish-held regions ended with two separate deals with the United States and



Russia, and the SDF agreed to withdraw to 30 km south of the border with Turkey.

Turkey-backed Syrian rebel forces have been clashing with the SDF in several areas, including the three towns cited by Kobani.

The SDF and the U.S.-led international coalition against ISIS forces have returned to Hasakah, Qamishli, Derik and Deir al-Zor to continue to fight ISIS sleeper cells after Kurdish forces which previously spearheaded the war had been driven out of the region, pro-Kurdish news agency Rudaw announced.

La Turquie sème la zizanie au sein de l'Alliance atlantique

Les relations entre Paris et Ankara sont au bord de la rupture

DIPLOMATIE LA TURQUIE va-t-elle faire imploser l'Otan, dont le sommet s'ouvre mardi à Londres ? Pendant longtemps, les réunions annuelles de l'organisation ont été l'occasion de réaffirmer l'unité transatlantique. Elles étaient si préparées que le communiqué final était connu de tous avant le début des rencontres, qui laissaient rarement place au hasard et à l'improvisation. Depuis 2017, l'élection de Donald Trump a chamboulé l'ennuyeux train-train des sommets de l'Otan en lui rajoutant suspens et incertitude. L'affirmation autoritaire et stratégique de la Turquie d'Erdogan rajoute cette année un chaos supplémentaire dont l'Alliance, déjà fragilisée par les hésitations trumpiennes, n'avait sans doute pas besoin.

Entre Paris et Ankara, les relations diplomatiques n'avaient pas été aussi dégradées depuis longtemps. Les critiques d'Emmanuel Macron, qui a déploré que la Turquie ait mis ses alliés « devant le fait accompli » en intervenant au nord-est de la Syrie contre les partenaires kurdes de la coalition anti-Daech, ont provoqué une réponse violente de Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Il a multiplié les « insultes » contre son homologue français, faisant monter la tension à la veille du sommet de l'Otan. Macron avait aussi mis en doute la bonne santé de l'Alliance, dont la Turquie est un pilier, dans son interview à *The Economist* début novembre. Il s'était interrogé sur la pertinence de l'article 5, le cœur de la défense collective, en se demandant s'il serait actionné pour la Turquie, si elle était attaquée par l'armée syrienne.

Les propos du président turc, qui a accusé son homologue français d'être un « amateur », « inexpérimenté », fanfaron et lui-même « en état de mort cérébrale », ont mené à la convocation de l'ambassadeur turc au Quai d'Orsay. Il avait déjà été appelé à s'expliquer en octobre, juste après le lancement de l'offensive turque contre la milice kurde YPG au nord de la Syrie. La France accuse la Turquie d'avoir agi unilatéralement et de faciliter une « résurgence » de l'État islamique. « De tous les pays de l'Alliance, elle est le pays qui a critiqué le plus ouvertement l'offensive turque en Syrie. Or, pour Erdogan, la rhétorique est plus forte que tout. Il a donc besoin de répondre encore plus fort aux provocations », explique un expert proche du dossier.

Les relations entre les deux capitales se sont envenimées depuis qu'Emmanuel Macron a reçu à Paris des représentants des Forces démocratiques syriennes, dominées par la milice kurde YPG, considérée par Ankara comme une extension de son ennemi, le Parti des tra-



Recep Tayyip Erdogan, en juin dernier. Jorge Silva/REUTERS

vailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Mais le lien franco-turc est en mauvais état depuis longtemps. En janvier 2018, Emmanuel Macron avait jeté un froid en affirmant que la situation des droits de l'homme en Turquie excluait « toute avancée » dans les négociations d'adhésion à l'Union européenne. Sous Nicolas Sarkozy, la relation avait déjà subi des secousses à cause de la reconnaissance du génocide arménien.

Le problème turc n'est pas seulement celui de la France, mais aussi celui de l'Otan. L'intervention contre un allié clé de la lutte anti-Daech a allumé un incendie au sein de l'Alliance, où les Européens sont directement visés par la menace djihadiste. Plus récemment, la Turquie a rejeté un plan de défense de l'Otan pour les pays Baltes et la Pologne. Elle menace d'utiliser son veto tant qu'elle n'est pas davantage soutenue par les alliés dans son combat contre les YPG, qu'elle considère comme une organisation terroriste. Elle reproche aux membres de l'Alliance de ne pas tenir suffisamment compte de ses préoccupations sécuritaires, surtout depuis la tentative de coup d'État de l'été 2016. Mais au sein de l'Otan, les menaces de la Turquie sont considérées comme une manière de faire du « chantage » envers les pays d'Europe de l'Est. Les alliés sont aussi vent debout contre l'achat par Ankara d'un système de défense antiaérienne russe, le S400, incompatible avec celui de l'Otan. Ce geste de défiance a déjà provoqué l'exclusion des Turcs du programme d'avions de chasse F35.

Malgré l'ampleur de la crise qui oppose la Turquie, seul pays musulman de l'Otan, à ses alliés, nul ne parie aujourd'hui sur un divorce. « Le préjugé contre la France est énorme en Turquie. Mais les deux pays ont besoin l'un de l'autre », poursuit l'expert proche du dossier. La coopération antiterroriste entre Paris et Ankara fonctionne bien. Les pays de l'Union européenne ont besoin que le robinet migratoire soit maintenu fermé par la Turquie. Et même dans les pires moments de tension avec les États-Unis, les responsables turcs n'ont jamais bloqué la base américaine d'Incirlik, où sont entreposées jusqu'à 50 bombes nucléaires. Macron et Erdogan discuteront de leurs différends syriens lors d'une réunion où seront également présents Angela Merkel et Boris Johnson. Le président français espère une « clarification » de la politique turque. Quant aux États-Unis, ils se sont donnés quelques semaines supplémentaires pour tenter de résoudre la question des S400.

En s'exprimant sans filtre dans *The Economist*, Emmanuel Macron a renversé la table otanienne. Reste à savoir si les alliés réussiront à recoller les morceaux de l'unité brisée, tout en tirant les leçons du diagnostic fait par le président français. Ou si, au contraire, les désaccords vont s'amplifier et s'étaler sur la place publique, quitte à menacer de dislocation une organisation qui a pourtant su se réformer depuis la fin de la guerre froide et qui demeure, tant que l'Europe n'aura pas pris son destin stratégique en main, la seule défense du Vieux Continent.



December 03-2019
Editing by Karzan Sulaivany

SDF says Turkish ceasefire violations have killed at least 68 civilians

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The Syrian Democratic Force (SDF) on Tuesday accused Turkey and Turkish-backed groups of violating a ceasefire, killing at least 68 civilians.

“Turkish forces have not stopped their interference in the security and stability of the region” since Ankara launched its assault against the SDF on Oct. 9, the Kurdish-led forces said in a statement.

A ceasefire deal was first **reached** between the United States and Turkey on Oct. 17 and then **another** between Russia and Turkey on Oct. 22 to stop the fighting.

According to the SDF, the Turkish army is targeting areas far outside of the designated safe zone between Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ain.

Persistent attacks and clashes have taken place near the town of Tal Tamr and Ain Issa.

On Monday, two Syrian government soldiers were killed in a village 15 kilometers northwest of Ain Issa.

Elsewhere, on Monday, at least 11 civilians were **killed** in a Turkish artillery attack in Tal Rifaat.

The attacks occur while Turkey has accused the SDF of “harassing” Turkish troops, and despite Ankara’s claims that it would not target civilians.

However, the SDF says the “Turkish army and its mercenaries” have used “all kinds of heavy weaponry, artillery, and drones” to launch attacks in areas outside of the safe zone.



Fighters of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) stand atop a roof next to their unfurled flag at a position in the village of Baghouz in Syria’s eastern Deir al-Zor province near the Iraqi border on March 24, 2019. (Photo: AFP/Delil Souleiman)

“A large number of SDF fighters and civilians were martyred due to the attacks on the positions of Syrian Democratic Forces, Syriac Military Council, and civilian settlements as well as the displacement of thousands of people.”

The Kurdish-led forces also claim the heavy drone and artillery attacks have enabled Turkish-backed groups to extend control beyond the agreed zone, carrying out an alleged 143 ground incursions on SDF and Syrian army positions.

Moreover, Turkey carried out 42 drone strikes and “147 tank and artillery attacks on civilian

settlements and areas outside of the safe zone” since the Oct. 17 ceasefire deal.

During the attacks, 68 civilians were killed and 214 others injured.

The Turkish backed groups and the Turkish army also reportedly attacked 88 villages and towns, where they positioned Turkish-backed groups.

At least 64,000 civilians, including many Christians, were displaced as the attacks led to the evacuation of six Assyrian villages near Tel Tamr, the SDF concluded.



Dec 03 2019

Twenty homes marked in Alevi-majority neighbourhood in Turkey

Residents of an Alevi-majority neighbourhood in Turkey’s southern province of Mersin are on edge after discovering a number of date markings on homes amid reports of a targeting of the religious minority group.

Local residents informed police that roughly 20 homes were marked with different dates in the Piris Reis neighbourhood of the town of Yenişehir, news site Duvar reported on Monday.

The report follows an incident last week, when houses belonging to Alevis and Kurds in the

Karşıyaka district of Turkey’s western province of İzmir were marked with red crosses, prompting residents to notify the police.

Alevism is the second most widely held belief in Turkey following Sunni Islam. A branch of Islam that combines Shi’ite, Sufi, and Sunni traditions, Alevis are not recognised as Muslims by many groups in Turkey due to their secular beliefs and acceptance of drinking alcohol, among other practices.

The group has been targeted in the past, including in Istanbul’s predominantly Alevi Gazi neigh-

bourhood, where in 1995 22 people died and 155 were injured in a series of armed attacks.

“There’s tension in the air in the neighbourhood since yesterday. We don’t know what these dates mean,” one resident of Piris Reis told Duvar.

“If those dates denote construction or maintenance work in the neighbourhood, they could have informed us beforehand,” the resident added.

Turkey threatens to veto Nato plans unless the Syria Kurd militia is labeled a 'a threat'

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday threatened to scuttle Nato plans to bolster security along its eastern flank unless the military alliance endorses its description of a Syrian Kurdish armed group as a "threat".

Speaking to reporters before heading to London for a summit of Nato leaders, Mr Erdogan warned his country would continue to veto plans to help Poland and the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia to defend against Russian encroachments unless the alliance would endorse its stance that the People's Protection Units (YPG), the Syrian offshoot of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), is a terrorist threat.

"It is inescapable for Nato to renew itself according to current threats," Mr Erdogan said, according to the official Anadolu news agency.

The matter nearly upended a summit of Nato defence ministers in late October, with US defence secretary Mark Esper and German and French officials butting heads against Turkish defence minister Hulusi Akar, who refused to budge on the matter, citing tweets by US President Donald Trump that likened the Kurdish militants to Isis.

Mr Erdogan suggested no breakthrough had come about over the issue.

"If this comes up then our stance will be the same," he said. "Nothing will be changed."

Nato's secretary-general, Jens Stoltenberg, said that it was "well known" that the alliance had an issue on how to designate the YPG, adding that he was working to resolve the dispute with Turkey.

"It is not like Nato doesn't have a



Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaks before departing to attend a Nato leader's summit in London / AP

plan to defend the Baltic countries," he told reporters.

Turkey launched an operation against the Kurdish-led militia in the group's northeast Syria self-rule area on 9 October, ending it after

US and European officials have refused to designate the YPG as a threat. The group served as an ally during the years-long battle against Isis. But Ankara sees the YPG as a major threat to its territorial integrity. It has fought the group's Turkish



Erdogan and Macron at a press conference in 2018 (AFP/Getty)

deals brokered by Russia and the US in the ensuing weeks. The offensive, which prompted sanctions on Turkey by US and European countries, strained relations between Ankara and the rest of Nato.

[erdogan.jpg]

cousin, the PKK for decades.

Nato officials are still recovering from the trauma of the last meeting of defence ministers in October. During that gathering, European officials were furious with Turkey, which

insisted on holding up support for plans to defend the bloc's flank from Russia until officials came up with a stronger stance against the YPG

Mr Esper was "livid" as he tried to cajole the Turks into endorsing the bolstering of Nato's eastern flank and to scale back its operations in Syria only to be told by his Turkish counterpart Mr Akar that the word of the White House was more powerful than that of the Pentagon.

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"It was surreal," a Western diplomat, who asked to remain unnamed, told The Independent.

"The Turks are literally in a position of strength only because the Americans' weakness is Trump, and the Turks have constantly been working on Trump. The Turkish defence minister kept smiling and saying Trump is our biggest supporter and our biggest asset. The Turkish defence minister quoted Trump's tweets saying PKK is worse than Isis."

Meanwhile officials from the Baltic states and Poland are worried that the imbroglio over the YPG would hold up their defence plans, urging Germany and France to sign on to the Turkish language.

"The eastern allies are prepared to agree to anything because Isis and the PKK is not their problem," said the official.

The official said the UK was "completely lost", absorbed in the Brexit shambles, which has caused an incoherent foreign policy.

"Their whole diplomatic capacity is sterilised, even while they have special forces on the ground in Syria," said the official. "They do nothing. They're silent."

Passe d'armes Macron-Erdogan : pourquoi la Turquie reste membre de l'Otan

L'un estime que l'Otan est en état de « mort cérébrale », l'autre lui réplique qu'il a plutôt intérêt à s'inquiéter de sa propre santé. C'est dire si les retrouvailles entre Emmanuel Macron et son homologue turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan, ce mardi après-midi à Londres à l'occasion du sommet de l'organisation politico-militaire, s'annoncent musclées.

Au point de remettre en cause près de 70 ans de présence de la Turquie dans l'Otan, créée après la Seconde Guerre mondiale ? C'est ce que demandent régulièrement en France plusieurs responsables ou anciens hauts dirigeants, comme François Hollande.

« Comment admettre qu'un pays qui est dans une alliance avec nous puisse attaquer une force qui a été notre principal partenaire contre Daech. Donc la question de la relation de la Turquie avec l'Otan est posée », assérait notamment l'ancien chef de l'Etat dans le Parisien le 9 octobre dernier, au moment du déclenchement de l'offensive turque

réveiller » l'Otan et lancer un débat sur son fonctionnement. La Turquie membre de cette organisation, ce « n'est pas forcément très moral, ni très agréable, mais c'est un moindre mal », estime aussi François Heisbourg, conseiller spécial à la Fondation pour la recherche stratégique.

Le pays à cheval sur l'Europe et l'Asie a intégré l'Alliance en 1952. À l'époque, le but pour les Occidentaux était de « contrer l'influence soviétique », rappelle Didier Billion, chercheur à l'IRIS et spécialiste de la Turquie. « Certains pays considéraient déjà que la Turquie n'avait rien à y faire. Mais la logique stratégique a prévalu », poursuit l'expert.

Depuis, cette appartenance de la Turquie à l'Otan a régulièrement fait débat, notamment en 1974, lorsqu'une guerre a éclaté avec la Grèce à Chypre. « Si la Turquie n'avait pas été membre de l'Otan, le conflit aurait été encore bien pire », estime François Heisbourg.

La Turquie joue sur plusieurs tableaux

Ces dernières années, tout en restant dans l'Otan, la Turquie n'a pas hésité à s'en affranchir. Elle a, par exemple, initié un partenariat stratégique et militaire avec... la Russie, héritière de l'Union soviétique et grande rivale de l'Alliance atlantique ! Ce qui s'est notamment matérialisé par la livraison à Ankara, en juillet puis en septembre dernier, de systèmes antimissiles russes S-400.

Cela lui permet de jouer sur les deux tableaux. « Il faut se poser la question à l'envers : quel serait l'intérêt pour l'Otan de ne plus avoir la Turquie parmi ses membres ? Et la réponse est aucun, sauf à vouloir plastronner, car ça permettrait sinon à la Turquie de se jeter dans les mains des Russes ou des Chinois », note François Heisbourg.

« La Turquie n'est pas contre l'Otan, mais elle veut qu'on prenne aussi en considération ses intérêts, et c'est normal de vouloir être entendue. Du coup, elle essaie de trouver aussi ses propres alliés et quelques terrains d'entente dans sa région », argue Arman*, un franco-turc qui vit une partie de l'année à Istanbul.

Des moyens de pression limités

Au risque, pour les Occidentaux, de donner l'impression que la Turquie peut tout se permettre. Quand Erdogan décide de lancer une offensive militaire contre les Kurdes, ou quand il qualifie Emmanuel Macron de dirigeant en état de « mort cérébrale », les moyens de pression qui lui tombent dessus semblent limités.

La France a, par exemple, annoncé en octobre dernier la « suspension de tout projet d'exportation vers la Turquie de matériels de guerre susceptibles d'être employés » en Syrie. Les industriels français ont reçu pour 45,1 millions d'euros de commandes de la part de la Turquie en 2018. Sur les dix dernières années, le pays se classe seulement au 26e rang des plus gros acheteurs d'armes françaises.

De toute façon, « il n'y a pas de clause d'exclusion dans les statuts de l'Otan », souligne François Heisbourg. Seule la Turquie pourrait faire le choix de quitter d'elle-même l'Alliance. Une hypothèse à laquelle le chercheur « ne croit pas » : « C'est toujours plus utile de jouer sur les deux tableaux. »

* Le prénom a été modifié



Recep Tayyip Erdogan et Emmanuel Macron lors d'une conférence sur la Syrie, à Istanbul, le 27 octobre 2018. AFP/Ozan Kose

contre les Kurdes en Syrie. La Turquie dans l'Otan, « un moindre mal »

Une séparation ne semble toutefois pas du tout être dans les intentions immédiates d'Emmanuel Macron et de la diplomatie française. Le chef de l'Etat souhaite avant tout «

« Aujourd'hui, il suffit bêtement de regarder une carte de géographie. Si on considère que le Moyen-Orient et une région instable et qu'on a intérêt à la stabiliser, la Turquie peut incontestablement être utile », souligne aussi Didier Billion.



03/12/2019
Avec AFP

Sommet de l'Otan : Macron accuse la Turquie de proximité avec le groupe État islamique

Le président Emmanuel Macron et son homologue américain Donald Trump, lors du sommet de l'Otan, à Londres, le 3 décembre 2019.

Emmanuel Macron s'en est pris à la Turquie, mardi, l'accusant de travailler avec des intermédiaires du groupe État islamique. Le président français a appelé l'Otan à clarifier sa stratégie en matière de lutte contre le terrorisme. Il s'exprimait lors d'une conférence de presse commune avec Donald Trump.

Peu avant l'ouverture du sommet de l'Otan à Londres, le président français Emmanuel Macron a pointé du doigt la Turquie, mardi 3 décembre, lui reprochant de combattre les Kurdes alliés de la coalition internationale en Syrie contre les islamistes. Il a affirmé qu'Ankara travaillait "parfois avec des intermédiaires de l'EI", l'organisation État islamique.

"Nous n'avons pas la même définition du terrorisme autour de la table" parmi les 28 Etats membres de l'Otan, a-t-il estimé. "Quand je regarde la Turquie, ils se battent à présent contre ceux qui ont combattu à nos côtés. Et parfois ils travaillent avec des intermédiaires de l'EI", a-t-il déclaré lors d'une conférence de presse avec Donald Trump.

Nous avons besoin de clarification de la part de la Turquie lors du sommet, a ajouté Emmanuel Macron, quelques semaines après avoir dé-



Le président Emmanuel Macron et son homologue américain Donald Trump, lors du sommet de l'Otan, à Londres, le 3 décembre 2019. Kevin Lamarque, Reuters

noncé le manque de coordination au sein de l'Otan face à l'offensive turque dans le nord-est de la Syrie contre les Kurdes.

Macron maintient ses propos sur la "mort cérébrale" de l'Otan

Un peu plus tôt, le président français a maintenu ses propos sur l'alliance atlantique qu'il a jugée en état de "mort cérébrale", à la grande irritation de ses pairs.

"Je sais que mes propos ont suscité des réac-

tions, ont un peu secoué, mais je les maintiens", a-t-il répété. Le président américain avait qualifié quelques heures auparavant de "très insultantes" ces déclarations sur l'Otan, qui fête mercredi ses 70 ans.

De son côté, Donald Trump a loué, lors de la conférence de presse, la "très bonne relation" franco-américaine et estimé qu'il y avait besoin de plus de "flexibilité" au sein de l'Alliance atlantique.



04/12/2019
Avec AFP

Iraqi forces capture former ISIS leader's alleged deputy in Kirkuk

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Iraqi security forces on Tuesday announced the arrest of a suspect believed to be the deputy of former Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Iraq's Security Media Cell released photos of a man who it captured during an operation in the disputed Kirkuk province, claiming he was Baghdadi's deputy.

"A unit from the Hawija police in the province of Kirkuk has arrested the terrorist known as 'Abu Khaldoun' inside one of the apartment in the March 1 area," a statement from the Media Cell read.

"He was carrying a false identity card under the name Shaalan Obeid. This criminal worked as a deputy under al-Baghdadi and was previously the so-called military police of the province of Salahuddin," it added.

Baghdadi was killed during a US special forces raid in northwestern Syria in October.

Despite Iraq having declared a military defeat against the terror group in late 2017, the Islamic State continues to pose a threat in the region, with arrests of Islamic State fighters and leaders made regularly.

Read More: ISIS attack in Kurdistan Region kills 3 and wounds 8, including children

On Saturday, separate bombings in the disputed province of Kirkuk left at least 16 people injured, security and health officials said.

On Sunday, Islamic State attacks in the disputed province of Diyala left at least five people dead and dozens more injured.

Officials in the Kurdistan Region have often called on the relevant authorities to address the root causes that led to the rise of the Islamic State, warning that the group's ideology remains a risk.

Comment Macron veut ressusciter l'OTAN

L'organisation du traité Atlantique nord se réunit ce mardi à Londres en présence du Président qui avait affirmé qu'elle était en état de « mort cérébrale ».

L'Otan (Organisation du Traité de l'Atlantique nord qui compte 29 Etats membres) la plus vieille alliance militaire du monde, célèbre à Londres son 70e anniversaire. Mais aujourd'hui quel ennemi, quelle stratégie? Telles sont, selon une source à l'Elysée, les questions posées par Emmanuel Macron à ses partenaires à travers sa formule choc sur la « mort cérébrale ».

En 1949, lorsque le Traité de l'Alliance atlantique fut signé à Washington par les douze pays fondateurs, dont la France (la Turquie, elle, adhéra en 1952), les choses étaient simples : l'ennemi, c'était l'Union soviétique, avec ses satellites est-européens du Pacte de Varsovie. Des centaines de milliers d'hommes, des chars, des avions, et surtout des missiles nucléaires garantissant une destruction mutuelle, étaient massés de part et d'autre du rideau de fer déchirant l'Europe.

Comment Macron veut ressusciter l'OTAN Mais depuis la fin de la Guerre froide et la chute du Mur en 1989, l'ennemi a changé voire disparu, la plupart des anciens vassaux de l'URSS rejoignant même l'Otan, à la fureur de Moscou. L'alliance s'adapte, intervient sur des théâtres comme la Bosnie (1993) ou le Kosovo (1999) où, sous l'impulsion des présidents Clinton et Chirac, l'aviation alliée bombarde l'ex-Yougoslavie. De même, la France participe en 2001 aux opérations en Afghanistan, l'Américain Bush ayant activé après les attentats du 11 septembre le fameux article 5 du Traité, prévoyant que si l'un des membres est attaqué, les autres lui prêtent assistance. Avec l'invasion américaine de l'Irak en 2003, ou l'attentisme de Washington face aux massacres d'Assad en Syrie, les désaccords transatlantiques deviennent criants; l'Otan, dominée par des Américains lassés de payer plus de 60 % de son budget, paraît privée de sens.

A l'ère du terrorisme international...

Que recherche Macron ? Son objectif est



Alors que l'OTAN célèbre à Londres son 70e anniversaire, le président Emmanuel Macron veut que la plus vieille alliance militaire du monde s'interroge sur sa stratégie. AFP/Bertrand Guay

double. « D'abord, provoquer un débat au sommet, sortir du sempiternel ronron de ces réunions », résume un diplomate proche du palais. Débat ? Sur la nature de l'ennemi, à l'ère du terrorisme international, des attaques cybernétiques, etc.

Sur la relation avec la Russie, Macron prônant le dégel et le dialogue alors que plusieurs partenaires, pays Baltes et scandinaves en tête, jugent sa menace plus vive que jamais depuis la crise ukrainienne et l'annexion de la Crimée. Sur la Turquie, sur le fonctionnement même de l'Alliance. « Le volet militaire marche bien, nos armées sont interopérables, se félicite un militaire de haut rang. Seulement, au sommet, tous les membres ne regardent pas dans la même direction ».

Le chef de l'Etat a ainsi été ulcéré d'apprendre par un simple tweet la décision de Trump de retirer ses troupes du nord-est syrien, tandis que le Turc Erdogan n'a pas pris la peine d'avertir ses partenaires de l'Otan de son offensive contre les Kurdes... nos alliés contre Daech! « Ça a été le déclic », confie un conseiller élyséen.

La défense européenne en ligne de mire

Deuxième objectif du chef de l'Etat, profiter de cette crise pour donner un coup d'accélérateur à la défense européenne. Véritable serpent de mer, celle-ci patine depuis plus de 20 ans.

« Mais Paris et Berlin avancent sur un char et un avion commun, la récente Initiative de défense européenne doit permettre de mettre sur pied des contingents communs, peut-être demain au Sahel. Enfin, un fonds de 13 milliards d'euros aide à financer des programmes militaires conjoints », vante l'eurodéputée Nathalie Loiseau.

Reste que la plupart des partenaires, l'Allemagne de Merkel en tête, craignent de froisser les Etats-Unis. « Pourtant nous nous tuons à répéter que l'Europe de la défense n'est pas contre l'Otan, mais complémentaire : c'est fromage ET dessert », martèle, agacé, un conseiller élyséen. Au président Macron de les mettre au menu à Londres.

President Erdogan has issued a license to kill

A few weeks ago, in a meeting with Turkish parliamentarians not long after President Trump's announcement that U.S. special forces had killed Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in northern Syria, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated that he regarded the U.S. president as a role model:

"Some countries eliminate terrorists whom they consider as a threat to their national security, wherever they are," he said. "This means they accept that Turkey has the same right." He then hinted about his target: "This includes the terrorists they shake hands with and praised. I hope we will have good news for the nation on this matter soon."

This was a blatant announcement of an assassination in the works. After the meeting, journalists asked Erdogan whether the target he had in mind might be Syrian Kurdish commander Mazloum Abdi. Erdogan responded: "Who would announce such actions? Did the United States arrive announced?"

There is a difference between al-Baghdadi and Abdi. Turkey also considered the former to be a terrorist. But Gen. Abdi has been invited to the United States by senators, and Trump has spoken of him in highly positive terms.

Erdogan's statement came amid widespread speculation that Ankara has been planning assassinations of dissidents abroad. It may have already carried out some killings — the most infamous being the assassination of three female members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), who were shot in the head at the Kurdistan Information Bureau in central Paris in early 2013. Turkey regards the



Students of Mehmet Akif College in Kosovo protest the arrest and deportation of their teachers in Pristina March 29, 2018. (Visar Kryeziu/AP)

PKK as a terrorist organization (as does the United States).

According to one widely circulated interpretation, a faction within the Turkish state committed the Paris murders in order to sabotage peace negotiations then underway between the government and the PKK. Yet that is not the only possible scenario. Last May, despite Turkey's National Intelligence Organization's (MIT) denials of any involvement, France reopened the file that had been closed upon the alleged assassin's death in prison. The prosecutors intend to investigate whether MIT was implicated.

Germany followed next. At the end of 2017, Garo Paylan, a Turkish lawmaker from the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), shared a tip with the press: "A number of sources confirmed that a series of assassinations are planned, targeting Turkish citizens living abroad, particularly in Germany, and are branded as 'traitors' by the government." German authorities had already been alerted to the arrival in the country of a three-man hit squad, he added.

At the time, I did some investigating that pointed to the source of the information: the interrogations of the two MIT operatives captured in northern Iraq by the PKK in August 2016.

The PKK had leaked this bit of intelligence, prompting dissident circles in Ankara to warn Berlin, which boosted close protection for targeted dissidents in Germany.

Last week, the Turkish authorities arrested a lawyer for the German Embassy in Ankara on espionage charges. According to Der Spiegel, the man was looking into cases of Turkish dissidents seeking asylum in Germany.

His job was to report to German authorities on whether the applicants were truly under threat in Turkey. After his arrest, the police raided his offices, seizing files on hundreds of dissidents, including supporters of the PKK and Fethullah Gulen, the exiled Islamist leader Erdogan regards as a mortal enemy.

Erdogan accuses Gulen and his followers of orchestrating the failed coup attempt in July 2016.

Most of those suspected in orchestrating the coup fled to Germany. Erdogan has been pressing for their extradition ever since; the German authorities saw fit to issue an alert when they realized that Turkish intelligence had obtained information in the raid. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas protested to his Turkish counterpart at the Group of 20 meeting in Japan last week.

The foreign operations conducted by Turkish intelligence are no secret — quite the opposite, in fact. According to official figures announced by a government spokesman last year, since the 2016 coup attempt, MIT has "bundled up" and returned to Turkey a total of 80 Gulenists from 18 countries, including Azerbaijan, Gabon, Kosovo, Malaysia and Mongolia.

Last year, an international consortium of nine media organizations investigated the kidnapping program run by Turkish intelligence, including conducting interviews with a range of sources who attested to the existence of secret torture sites inside Turkey.

It looks as though MIT has initiated a series of new covert operations this year. Lawmaker Omer Faruk Gergerlioglu, who has been investigating the matter, claims that those snatched were interrogated under torture and later silenced with the threat of death for speaking out. He says that their families are also under threat.

The rising number of abductions and the open acknowledgment of a policy of targeted killings all suggest that Erdogan is preparing to become even more aggressive in his treatment of his enemies abroad. He appears to need no pointers from Trump on this score.

SELAHATTIN DEMIRTAS EMPRISONNÉ, IL GÊNE TOUJOURS ERDOGAN

Même derrière les barreaux, Selahattin Demirtas, ancien codirigeant du Parti démocratique des peuples. (HDP), fait peur à ses geôliers turcs. Il est emprisonné depuis maintenant trois ans, mais sa voix ne s'est jamais tue. Ni dans ses déclarations politiques, ni dans son recueil de poésie publié l'an dernier et pas plus dans les nouvelles que l'on peut lire dans son dernier ouvrage, véritable hymne à la liberté. Ce qui n'a pas l'heur de plaire au pouvoir d'Ankara. La semaine dernière, le 26 novembre à 5h30 très exactement, Selahattin Demirtas tombe inconscient dans sa cellule. Il se plaignait juste avant de douleurs à la poitrine et d'une difficulté à respirer. Les signes bien connus d'une crise cardiaque. Son codétenu, ancien député du HDP, Abdullah Zeydan, lui a prodigué les premiers

secours. Mais, malgré les demandes du médecin de la prison de pratiquer des examens plus approfondis, aucune autorisation d'hospitalisation de Selahattin Demirtas n'a été consentie par les autorités. Il aura fallu un tweet d'alerte de sa sœur et avocate Aygül pour qu'au bout d'une semaine l'ancien dirigeant du HDP soit enfin transféré dans un centre hospitalier.

Ce qui s'est passé en dit long sur la volonté de Recep Tayyip Erdogan d'en finir une fois pour toutes avec les opposants à sa politique, régulièrement accusés de « terrorisme ». De nombreux élus du HDP sont emprisonnés. Selahattin Demirtas encourt jusqu'à 142 ans de prison. Le PCF appelle à se mobiliser pour sa libération.



L'OBS

05/12/2019
ÉLISABETH PHILIPPE

Drôle d'oiseau LE TRAQUET KURDE

Drôle d'oiseau
LE TRAQUET KURDE,
PAR JEAN ROLIN,
FOLIO, 160 P., 6,20 EUROS.

On ne se méfie jamais assez des ornithologues. Nez au vent et jumelles en bandoulière, ces amis des oiseaux semblent inoffensifs. Mais derrière les longues-vues braquées sur quelque rousserolle des buissons, se dissimulent parfois de redoutables espions, de fieffés salauds et même des écrivains, cette engeance. Observateur de l'avifaune et de la faune humaine, Jean Rolin (photo) fait partie de cette drôle d'espèce. En mai 2015, un traquet kurde, passereau aussi appelé Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna, « est formellement identifié, au sommet du puy de Dôme - soit à quelques milliers de kilomètres tant de sa zone d'hivernage que de sa zone de reproduction ». Cette « visite inopinée » advient trois mois après qu'« une milice kurde d'obédience marxiste léniniste » est parvenue à repousser un assaut de l'État isla-



mique sur la ville de Kobané. Une coïncidence qui suffit à entraîner notre Rouletabille du désert jusqu'à Mossoul, en plein combat. Sous prétexte de cette traque au traquet, Rolin retrace l'histoire coloniale du Moyen-Orient, avec l'humour pince-sans-

rire qui le caractérise. En route, on croise des Peshmergas, des moines et même des ours. Et beaucoup d'oiseaux.

ÉLISABETH PHILIPPE

Erdogan ou l'Etat de droit en «mort cérébrale»

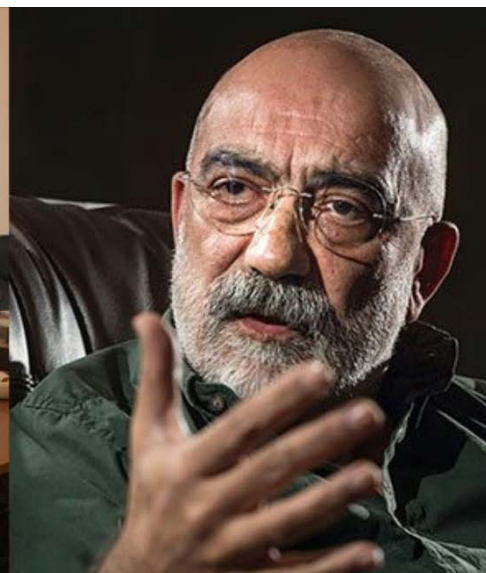
Le sommet de l'OTAN débute aujourd'hui. Contre le nationalisme autoritaire et voyou d'Erdogan, posons-nous la question de l'attitude déterminée à avoir.

Le président Erdogan a donc retourné le compliment à Emmanuel Macron : plutôt que l'OTAN, c'est le dirigeant français qui serait en état de «mort cérébrale». Erdogan juge que Macron «fanfaronne», tandis que ce dernier a convoqué l'ambassadeur turc à Paris, qui, reçu par un haut diplomate, s'est entendu dire que le gouvernement français était «étonné et choqué». Macron et Erdogan doivent se rencontrer aujourd'hui, au sommet de l'OTAN. A l'origine de cette brouille, donc ? D'abord, l'offensive turque en Syrie, pour mater (et massacrer) les combattants Kurdes, qui avaient pourtant payé le prix du sang pour la défense des valeurs européennes, et la liberté de leur peuple, et des démocraties. Emmanuel Macron s'est, par conséquent, montré très sévère à l'encontre de la Turquie, dans son entretien avec le journal *The Economist*. Il se disait sidéré, et on peut le comprendre, qu'un membre de l'OTAN, la Turquie, attaque, sans prévenir ni concerter, un groupe politique et militaire, allié de l'OTAN, plaçant l'alliance atlantique dans une situation grotesque et misérable – une «mort cérébrale» avait dit Macron. D'autant que la Turquie, encore une fois supposément liée au camp occidental, s'est récemment rapprochée de la Russie, en lui achetant des boucliers anti-missiles, autrement dit, en faisant entrer le loup dans la bergerie. Et, last but not least, Erdogan a des visées sur le gaz et le pétrole en Méditerranée, via l'État croupion de Chypre du nord, soutenu et porté à bout de bras par la Turquie, quand l'Union Européenne soutient naturellement la Grèce. Bref, la Turquie se comporte en passager clandestin de l'OTAN, comme le chat de Schrödinger, à la fois en dehors et au dedans, simultanément.

Dans ce contexte, la logorrhée d'Erdogan franchit un cap supplémentaire. D'une rare violence, sur le fond comme sur la forme, Erdogan s'inscrit ainsi dans les pas de Bolsonaro (dont les ministres se permettent des commentaires ignominieux sur Brigitte Macron) ou Trump (qui avait qualifié son jeune homologue de «stupide»). En d'autres temps, de telles insultes valaient une déclaration de guerre : à l'ère des satrapes et de la vulgarité, on est obligé de s'en accommoder, mais on peut sincèrement se demander quelle vision du monde est attachée à des mots aussi insultants, fascinés par la force,



Les locaux de Nouvelles d'Arménie saccagés et l'écrivain Ahmet Altan qui, à peine libéré, a de nouveau été emprisonné.



l'égoïsme, la misogynie, la haine de l'altérité.

Surtout, ce changement d'alliances de la Turquie est opéré à la suite du coup d'État manqué contre Erdogan en juillet 2016. La Turquie et la Russie, qui ont toujours été en guerre depuis le XVIIIe siècle, que ce soit dans les Balkans ou dans la mer Noire, se sont alors étonnamment rapprochées. Car les Etats-Unis et l'Union Européenne ont exprimé des réserves sur la reprise en main autoritaire, pour ne pas dire dictatorial, d'Erdogan, quand Poutine lui a chaleureusement apporté son soutien et son amitié. S'est ainsi mis en place un duo d'autocrates, Poutine et Erdogan, qui, l'un autorisant les Russes à bombarder Alep, l'autre donnant son feu vert aux massacres des Kurdes, vont, bras-dessus, bras-dessous, violer les lois de l'humanité et du droit international.

Et puis, et c'est sans doute le plus grave, Erdogan a été saisi d'une mégalomanie, d'une paranoïa face à la révolte de la société civile turque, et d'un effarant sentiment d'impunité. On pense ici au cambriolage, à Paris le 19 octobre, des locaux de Nouvelles d'Arménie, la courageuse revue qui se bat depuis si longtemps pour le droit des Arméniens, et leur lutte contre le négationnisme. Les locaux ont été saccagés, pillés. Tous les indices pointent vers la Turquie. Or, personne n'en a étrangement parlé, ni ne

s'est ému de cette attaque inédite, contre la liberté de la presse, et contre la démocratie. On aimerait que les «souverainistes» et les «patriotes» s'indignent davantage d'une exaction commise sur le territoire national. On aimerait que tous les souverainistes qui nous rabâchent «l'extra-territorialité» du droit américain haussent le ton quand un Etat se permet d'intervenir sur le sol français pour persécuter ses opposants. Et on aimerait des paroles fortes de l'ensemble de la classe politique, pour dire que la défense de la mémoire du génocide arménien, et la cause de la liberté politique pour la société turque ne sont pas négociables.

Et de même, le grand écrivain turc Ahmet Altan, a été remis en prison le 12 novembre. Altan est une figure de la société civile turque : rédacteur en chef du journal *Milliyet*, il avait été licencié et condamné à 20 mois de prison en 1995 pour soutien à la cause kurde. Puis de nouveau accusé, quand il avait signé une déclaration en 1999 pour le droit des Kurdes, avec entre autres les écrivains Orhan Pamuk et Yachar Kemal. En 2008, il avait dédié un article aux victimes du génocide des Arméniens et avait été alors inculpé d'«insulte à la nation turque». En 2016, lors d'un procès kafkaïen, il est condamné à perpétuité à cause de liens allégués avec la secte Gülen, devenue l'ennemie de la paranoïa d'Erdogan. Altan a

donc passé trois ans en prison, avant que la justice d'Erdogan ne semble faire machine arrière, et, face à l'absurdité des charges, autorise une liberté le temps de la révision du procès. Mais dans la Turquie d'Erdogan, c'est l'Etat de droit qui est en mort «cérébrale». Voilà Altan de nouveau en prison, comme 160 écrivains et journalistes, faisant de la Turquie «la plus grande prison du monde pour professionnels des médias» (selon les mots de RSF) et participant d'un «climat de terreur» (Pen Club). Avec une ironie spécialement sinistre, on fêtait le 15 novembre, trois jours après l'embastillement d'Altan, la journée mondiale des écrivains en prison...

La Règle du Jeu soutient, cela va sans dire, la cause d'Altan, ce romancier dont la maestria lui a valu le surnom de «magicien». Avec une lucidité et une intelligence déchirante, Altan, pendant sa courte semaine de liberté, a multiplié les tribunes, tout en se doutant de ce qui l'attendait. Dans un texte paru dans Le Monde, il écrit : «la solution, face au nationalisme, c'est d'adopter une attitude plus déterminée. Il faut que tous ceux que cette folie du nationalisme écoeure fassent front commun afin de clamer haut et fort, chacun dans son pays respectif, que le nationalisme est le plus grand poison de l'humanité, et que si elles le boivent, toutes les sociétés y succomberont».

Contre le nationalisme autoritaire, voyou, et liberticide d'Erdogan, posons-nous donc la question de l'attitude «déterminée à avoir». Il nous faut une vraie «Alliance atlantique», qui soutienne les Kurdes et sanctionne la Turquie, et une «Union Altan-tique» qui se batte pour Ahmet Altan, et fasse reculer Erdogan. Cela commence par être intrinsèque, sur la défense des Nouvelles d'Arménie, et faire le maximum de pression sur Ankara, pour qu'enfin, les journalistes et les écrivains turcs soient de nouveau libres et écoutés.



03/12/2019
By AFP

Children Among 10 Kurdish Civilians Killed in Shelling from Turkish-Controlled Area in Syria

WASHINGTON - Artillery fire from the Turkish-controlled area on the town of Tal Rifaat in northwest Syria's Aleppo governorate killed at least ten civilians and injured 21 others, according to local sources.

Ibrahim Haftaro, the head of Avrin Hospital in the region, told VOA that eight children, between 7-15 years of age, were among the Kurdish civilians killed in the Monday attack.

"The majority of those killed, eight of them, are children; one is an elderly man over 60 years of age, and the other is a woman," Haftaro said, adding that among the injured, two were in a critical condition.

Newroz Resho, the VOA stringer at the scene, said the majority of the casualties from the attack were residents of Afrin who were displaced in early 2018 following a Turkish incursion. The artillery landed in downtown Tal Rifaat near the town's elementary school and a building belonging to the Kurdish Red Cross.

According to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), the children were leaving the school when the area came under attack. It said it was unclear if the attack came directly from Turkish fire or its allied militants.

"Turkey is the responsible party for the violations committed by the rebels it is backing because Turkey is supervising the area," SOHR's head Rami Abdul Rahman told VOA.



He said the town has for months witnessed continued shelling from Turkey and its aligned rebels.

Located about 12 kilometers south of Turkey's border with Syria, Kurds have maintained influence in Tal Rifaat despite the full Turkish control of nearby Afrin in March 2018. The strategic town has also been a site of Russian military activities in recent months.

YPG a key ally

Kurdish fighters, known as People's Protection Units or YPG, have been a key ally to the United States in the fight against the Islamic State (IS). Turkey, however, says the

group poses a grave threat to its national security.

The Turkish military and its allied Syrian rebels through Operation Olive Branch in early 2018 ousted the YPG from most of the predominantly Kurdish city of Afrin in the Syrian northwest. The military, in a separate operation in October, attacked Kurdish forces in the northeast, inviting a strong condemnation from its NATO allies.

Turkish officials say they cannot tolerate along their borders any presence of the YPG, which Ankara sees as a terrorist organization and an extension of the Turkey-based Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a U.S. and EU designated terror group.

They aim to create a 30-kilometer (19 miles) long zone across their southern border where the Kurdish elements of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) will be forced to withdraw.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday warned that his country could block a NATO defense plan for Baltic countries should the alliance reject to recognize the YPG as a terrorist organization.

"If our friends at NATO do not recognize them as terrorist organizations those we consider terrorist organizations ... we will stand against any step that will be taken there," Erdogan said during a news conference in the capital Ankara en route to London for a NATO meeting marking the alliance's 70th anniversary.

The call has been rejected by the United States, which sees the YPG as a key counterterrorism partner.

French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday said he was "sorry" that NATO allies did not share a common definition for terrorism, accusing Turkey of working with Islamic State (IS) proxies.

"When I look at Turkey, they are fighting

against those who fought with us shoulder-to-shoulder against ISIS and sometimes they work with ISIS proxies," Macron said, using another acronym for IS.

Human Rights Violation

Turkish-backed forces in Syria are accused of religious extremism and committing serious human rights violations against Kurds and other minorities in the region.

Human Rights Watch organization last week said it had "damning evidence" proving that Syrian rebels committed summary executions, pillaging, seizing properties, and preventing the return of people to their homes.

"Turkey is turning a blind eye to the reprehensible behaviors displayed by the factions it arms," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director of the watchdog group. "So long as Turkey is in control of these areas, it has a responsibility to investigate and end these violations," the group said.

Turkish officials have rejected those claims, calling the accusations media propaganda to smear their military campaign in Syria.

"Our soldiers have always been very care-

ful. The militia that we support in Syria also have been careful in not attacking the civilians," Turkey's presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin told CNN in October.

Some experts charge that actions by the Syrian rebels in the region show that Turkish government is unlikely to be in full control of the groups' operations on the ground.

Aaron Stein, the director of the Middle East Program at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, told VOA that Turkey has been able to bend the rebels to fight for Ankara's interests rather than their own, but it is questionable whether it can monitor their daily operations on the ground in Syria.

"I don't think the Turkish military has enough forces in Syria to know obviously what these groups have done. I think more generally Turkey has made a political decision to try and minimize casualties, and in doing so, they've outsourced a lot of the fighting to these groups, and they've accepted that these groups are going to try and do their own thing," Stein said.

VOA's Kurdish reporter Mutlu Civiroglu from Washington and Newroz Resho from Tal Ri-faat contributed to this report.



04/12/2019

US Senate will take up sanctions on Turkey, following NATO conference

WASHINGTON DC (Kurdistan 24) – The US Congress returned to Washington on Monday after the Thanksgiving holiday. With the resumption of their work, key senators announced their intention to move ahead with legislation to sanction Turkey for its purchase of the Russian air defense system, the S-400.

On Monday, Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D, Maryland) and Sen. Lindsey Graham (R, South Carolina) sent Secretary of State Mike Pompeo a letter, pressing him to do just that.

"The time for patience has long expired. It is time you applied the law," they wrote. "Failure to do so is sending a terrible signal to other countries that they can flout US laws without consequence."

A law, passed in 2017, known as CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), basically requires the US to impose sanctions on countries purchasing

Russian military equipment.

The Democratic-controlled House of Representatives has already passed a bill to sanction Turkey, but the Republican-led Senate has yet to act, in large part, because President Donald Trump asked for a delay, as he sought to reach an understanding with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

However, on Monday, Sen. Jim Risch (R, Idaho), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, stated that he would take up legislation to sanction Turkey in his committee next week. "My patience wore thin a long time ago," Risch said.

The House bill passed by an overwhelming majority and the same is expected in the Senate—assuming that Sen. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R, Kentucky) allows a vote on the issue.

Such considerations were reflected at the

NATO meeting in London on Tuesday. Trump was asked about imposing sanctions on Turkey for the S-400, and he responded: "We're looking at it now," adding, "We'll be meeting with Turkey in a little while, and also tomorrow."

Trump blamed the Obama administration for the problem, saying that Turkey first tried to buy the US air defense system, the Patriot, but was repeatedly rebuffed, so Ankara turned to Russia.

However, French President Emmanuel Macron, who has been open about disagreements with his US counterpart, was sitting opposite Trump and explained that Ankara had had a third option.

Turkey was offered a European air defense system, the SAMP/T, but rejected the offer, although it was "totally compliant with NATO," Macron said. "So, they decided not to be compliant with NATO."

Indeed, Macron earlier asked, “How is it possible to be a member of [NATO], to work with our office, to buy our materials, to be integrated, and to buy the S-400 from Russians?”

Risch, who was a major figure in the Nov. 13 White House meeting involving Trump, Erdogan, and five Republican senators, spoke similarly in a Defense News interview published on Tuesday.

Risch explained that at that meeting, Erdogan “was presented with a plan by the United States that would allow him to get out of the hole he’s dug himself into.”

“He couldn’t have the S-400,” Risch said, “but we could get him out of it without there being any financial detriment” to Turkey.

“I can’t go into the details,” Risch continued, but Erdogan “didn’t say ‘yes,’ he didn’t say ‘no.’” However, even while “on the airplane, on the way home, Erdogan told the reporters that he hasn’t given up on the S-400s.”

“As soon as I saw that,” Risch explained, “I said, ‘Well I’m gonna take him at his word.’” So, the senator decided to move ahead with sanctions legislation, “sooner, rather than later.”

Risch also emphasized that other countries were watching how the US deals with Tur-



The Russian S-400 air defense system. (Photo: Archive)

key. “The world’s got to know we’re serious about CAATSA sanctions. You can’t do this [buy the S-400], and this is particularly true with a NATO member. [It’s] not compatible with membership in NATO, nor is it compatible” with owning the F-35, America’s most advanced fighter plane.

“This isn’t about purchasing US equipment,” Risch stressed. “This is about purchasing

Russian equipment. If they abandon Russian purchases and turn to Sweden, France, or Germany, we’re perfectly satisfied with that.”

“This has got to be across the board,” he affirmed. “This is something we feel very strongly about, and it needs to be enforced.”

Editing by Karzan Sulaivany

FL24.NET 04/12/2019

Pourquoi Macron refuse de considérer comme terroristes les milices kurdes qui ennuiet Erdogan?

“Je ne vois pas de consensus possible” a déclaré le président français à propos de la définition du terrorisme. Il exprimait cela en réponse à la demande du dictateur turc, Erdogan, de reconnaître les milices kurdes que son armée combat comme terroristes.

Ce mercredi, lors du sommet de l’Otan à Watford, près de Londres, Emmanuel Macron n’a pas cédé à la demande turque: “Il est clair que nous ne sommes pas d’accord pour classer comme groupe terroriste YPG (Unités de protection du peuple) et PYD (parti de l’union démocratique) et je crois que là-dessus il y a un consensus”, explique t-il en évoquant ses

partenaires de l’Otan à l’exception de la Turquie.

“Nous combattons le PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) et tous ceux qui mènent des activités terroristes contre la Turquie, de manière très claire mais nous ne faisons pas ce raccourci ou cette agrégation que la Turquie souhaite entre ces différents groupes politiques et, ou militaires, donc là il y a un désaccord, il n’est pas levé”, a-t-il précisé.

Le PKK, organisation séparatiste kurde qui a déjà commis des attentats depuis contre le pouvoir central turc, est déjà considéré comme terroriste. La Turquie est exaspérée par le



soutien de la France aux Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), qui ont joué un rôle majeur dans la défaite du Califat, or elles in-

cluent les YPG, considérées par Ankara comme une extension du PKK.

Source: AFP



By Seth J. Frantzman
December 4, 2019

The Fight for ISIS's Old Territory Is Just Beginning

A host of forces including Turkish and Iranian proxies to Russian troops and Syrian government forces are jockeying for control of the lands that once were held by the Islamic State.



Turkish-backed Syrian Arab fighters staff a checkpoint in the Kurdish-majority city of Afrin in northern Syria after seizing control of it from the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) on March 18, 2018. OMAR HAJ KADOUR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The collapse of the Islamic State's so-called caliphate and the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi were symbolically important. His death bookends a five-year effort to defeat the Islamic State that involved more than 70 countries and comes amid a U.S. withdrawal from parts of Syria. The United States remains in other areas of eastern Syria in Deir Ezzor and Hasakah provinces, where it is keeping Islamic State sleeper cells on the run.

The Islamic State once occupied an area the size of Britain, and the war against it made millions of people refugees.

However, the slow defeat of the group has left a vacuum in Iraq and Syria; areas once controlled by the group have been filled by forces linked to Iran, Turkey, the United States, and Russia. New conflicts are emerging, including the protests in Iraq and Turkey's invasion of Syria. A conflict between Israel and Iranian proxies, such as Hezbollah, could even be unleashed. This is bad news for average people seeking to recover from the depredations of the Islamic State.

It is a cliché that countries sometimes win the war but lose the peace. However, in Syria and Iraq, it is true. The Islamic State once occupied an area the size of Britain, and the war against it made millions of people refugees and led to the destruction of cities and the disappearance of thousands in the carnage. For instance, 3,000 Yazidis, members of a minority group in Iraq targeted by the Islamic State in 2014, are still missing. There are hundreds of mass gravescattered across Iraq and Syria, with forensics teams only beginning now to identify remains. The sudden U.S. decision to leave parts of northern Syria that the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) had liberated has now enabled a Turkish invasion that forced an estimated 200,000 people from their homes. Worse may be yet to come.

On a recent trip to northern Iraq in September, I met with refugees. Yazidis still sitting in barren tents near Dohuk said they could not go home because areas in their home villages around Mount Sinjar were festooned with armed checkpoints. Some of these are

run by the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), a group of mostly Shiite militias that is now an official arm of the Iraqi security forces. These same units have been accused of killing protesters in other parts of Iraq in October.

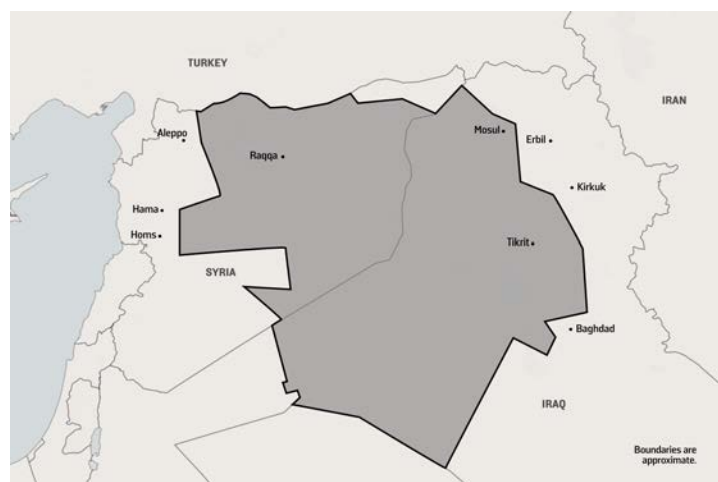
Turkey has carried out airstrikes in Sinjar, alleging that the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is present there. In northern Iraq, the Islamic State still exists in various forms, slipping in and out of villages south of Mosul and exploiting the lack of coordination between the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government and Iraqi federal forces. The overlapping military forces create a sense of insecurity, as opposed to the security that Iraq seems to think it has achieved since militarily defeating the Islamic State.

The feeling one gets from speaking to people impacted by the war against the Islamic State is that from Raqqa in Syria to Mosul in Iraq, a distance of 230 miles, a

gaping wound remains that may not be easily healed.

The advance of different forces, such as Turkish-backed Syrian rebels near Tal Abyad in Syria and U.S. repositioning to secure oil fields near Deir Ezzor, neglects local communities, representing a competition for land, power, and resources.

The post-Baghdadi period should be seen as a series of interconnected events and conflicts that emerged after the setbacks the Islamic State faced in 2017. This list includes the Kurdistan Regional Government's referendum in September 2017; the attempted attack on SDF-held oil fields by Syrian regime-backed Russian contractors in February 2018; the threats by Turkey to invade eastern Syria and its eventual attack on the SDF in October 2019; a series of mortar and rocket attacks near U.S. facil-



Circa 2015: ISIS at Its Greatest Extent - SOURCE: Seth J. Frantzman. Basemap: CARTO

gaping wound remains that may not be easily healed.

The feeling one gets from speaking to people impacted by the war against the Islamic State is that

ities in Iraq allegedly carried out by pro-Iranian elements; and the airstrikes attributed to Israel that were carried out in Syria and Iraq against Iranian-linked facilities.

The conflicts in Syria and Iraq appeared to be winding down between 2017 and 2019 as Russia, Turkey, and Iran met frequently as part of the Astana process and agreed to areas of control and influence in Syria and Iraq that kept an Islamic State resurgence in check. But the forces unleashed over years of war in Iraq and Syria have now come back to haunt almost everyone. The PMU in Iraq is infiltrated by groups that work closely with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Formed to fight the Islamic State after a fatwa by Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani in 2014, it has led the recent crackdown on protesters, and its political leaders want the U.S. presence in Iraq to end. Syrian rebel factions have been shoe-horned by Turkey into a Syrian National Army (SNA) now being used to fight Kurdish forces. The SNA is accused of widespread human rights abuses in areas Turkey helped it control.

dozens of IRGC targets in Nov. 20 airstrikes that it launched in response to rocket fire from Syria.

The best way to look at the complex and intricate post-Baghdadi landscape is as a series of spheres of influence projected by regional and global powers, operating through local paramilitary units. For instance, Turkey sees the entirety of northern Syria as an area it wants to either control directly or use proxy forces to control. It now runs areas around Afrin, Idlib, Jarabulus, and Tal Abyad. This is an unprecedented expansion of Ankara's power not seen since the Ottoman Empire. A Russia-Turkey cease-fire deal has resulted in joint patrols by the two countries, and Turkish operations have paused.

Putin and Erdogan negotiated a deal on Oct. 22 that lays the groundwork for a frozen conflict between Turkish-backed proxies,

Iran regime forces and appears more like what exists in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russian forces clash with the Ukrainian army daily, than a peaceful solution. Moscow has experience with managing these kinds of conflicts in the Caucasus region and other parts of the former Soviet Union, including Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria.

Iran, working through Shiite paramilitaries, such as Hezbollah and the PMU, has unparalleled access in Iraq and Syria today. The United States, partnering with the SDF, is purposely reducing its footprint, but it still has a major role with 1,000 soldiers and personnel in Syria and around 5,000 in Iraq. The U.S. Army is partnering closely with the Kurdish Peshmerga in northern Iraq, for instance. Much of this is a result of the war against the Islamic State.

The United States helped create the SDF, Turkey helped create the SNA, and Iran's Quds Force, an elite unit of the IRGC, works with leaders of the PMU. Turkey's backing for the Syrian rebels, although it appeared initially in the context of opposing the Assad regime, is today fully committed to fighting the SDF, which Turkey alleges is linked to the PKK. That is why Turkey redirected the Syrian rebels to fight against the Islamic State in Jarabulus, blocking the advance of the SDF in 2016, and then sent them into Afrin to fight the Kurds in 2018 and then into Tal Abyad in 2019.

For civilians in the vast areas liberated from the Islamic State, the future is uncertain. The U.S. government says the coalition helped free 7.7 million people in an area that covers 20,000 square miles. In Iraq, there are still 1.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and nearly 230,000 Syrian refugees, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). An additional 12,000 Syrians fled in October to Iraq following Turkey's offensive.

In areas of Syria retaken from the Islamic State, there are IDPs hoping to return to areas such as Raqqa, and there are proposals by Turkey to resettle more than a mil-

lion refugees from other parts of Syria in areas it has conquered. Even though Turkey claimed it wants to resettle people, its offensive has caused around 200,000 to flee, and UNHCR has had to step in to distribute blankets to 52,000 of them.

Yet despite the obvious needs for a major effort to aid civilians, the White House says it is focusing on securing oil fields now and has ended diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving what it once termed "stabilization" in eastern Syria. A mosaic of minority and tribal groups, many of them targeted by Islamist militants, have little chance to rebuild their lives now in Syria and Iraq.

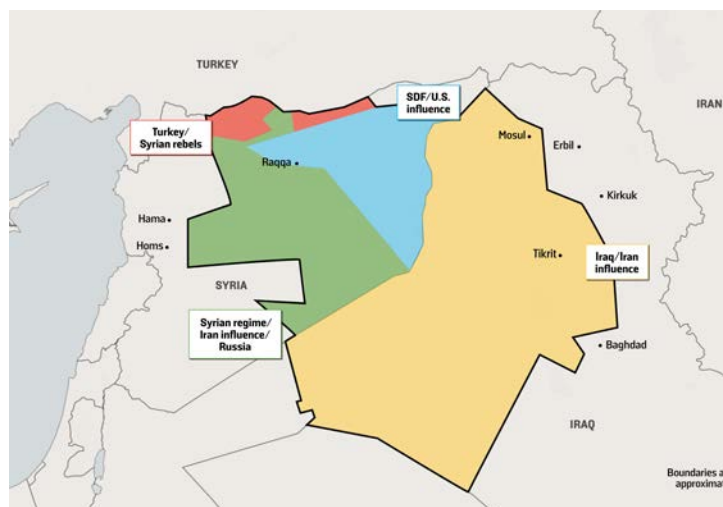
A mosaic of minority and tribal groups, many of them targeted by Islamist militants, have little chance to rebuild their lives now in Syria and Iraq.

Moreover, thousands of foreigners and their families who joined the Islamic State are now detained in eastern Syria and in limbo as their countries refuse to take them back. Although some orphans were recently repatriated by the U.K., most countries refuse to take back their citizens or descendants of them.

The successful operation against Baghdadi symbolizes how short-term tactics, such as killing terrorists, fail to advance any sort of long-term solution to the instability and radicalization that led to the Islamic State's rise. The U.S. government doesn't want to address these issues in Iraq or Syria.

Iran, Russia, and Turkey want to solve issues on the ground, but their approach tends toward cynical power politics and carving up these states into spheres of influence. Every country involved in the war against the Islamic State now seems drawn to the spoils in its wake.

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October 2019: Areas Retaken From ISIS and Who Benefited | SOURCE: Seth J. Frantzman. Basemap: CARTO

There is also a simmering war for influence in the skies over Iraq and Syria. Iran and Israel both appear to see Syria as a strategic corridor; from Israel's point of view, Iran's growing role means Tehran can more easily supply Hezbollah with precision guidance for rockets and threaten Israel from an extended front line along the Golan Heights. Satellite imagery has shown alleged Iranian bases along this route, and the U.S. Defense Department says there are several thousand Iranian members of the IRGC in Syria. Israel says it struck

the SDF, and Syrian regime forces much like what exists in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine.

Russia has entrenched itself in the coastal city of Latakia and sent its military police to areas in eastern Syria, seeking to supplant areas the U.S. forces withdrew from and sign a deal with Turkey. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan negotiated such a deal on Oct. 22, and it looks to sketch out a frozen conflict between Turkish-backed proxies, the SDF, and Syr-



December 04-2019
Wladimir van Wilgenburg

Turkish sociologist says Ankara is against Kurds, not terrorism

ERBIL - Renowned author and sociologist İsmail Beşikçi told Kurdistan 24 on Wednesday that, although Turkey claims it is not against ethnic Kurds, it is in reality opposed to Kurdish accomplishment and intends to actively decrease the Kurdish population in northern Syria.

The PKK is an armed group formed by Kurds in Turkey after decades of state repression to fight for expanded rights and has fought in a decades-long conflict with the Turkish military.

“The argument that Turkey uses is that ‘we do not have an issue

language and Kurdish education and prevented any cultural activity that the Kurdish people want to conduct.”

“After Afrin was occupied in 2018, Turkey turned towards eastern Euphrates and planned for a 30-km deep zone. But that was not a common interest of Russia and the United States of America. Therefore, Turkey was not able to immediately realize its plans,” he said, adding that the Kurdish areas “were occupied, the language was banned, and the names of Kurdish neighborhoods were changed. Turkey is focusing on a Turkish curriculum in areas they have occupied.”

“Hafez Assad tried to change the demography of northern Syria,” he said, referring to the former Syrian leader and father of the current president, Bashar al-Assad. “There were other at-

and for that, they must make concessions to each other, and not for Syria, Iraq or Iran.”

Cengiz Candar, a Distinguished Visiting Scholar at Stockholm University Institute for Turkish Studies (SUITS), Nov. 19. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

Cengiz Candar, a Distinguished Visiting Scholar at Stockholm University Institute for Turkish Studies (SUITS), told Kurdistan 24 on Nov. 19 that Turkish officials are not being honest when they say that they are not against Kurds, but only against terrorism.

“So, why you are fighting with the Kurdish language then? Is [the] Kurdish language terrorism? Let us be very serious and sincere.”

“The way to do it to resolve the Kurdish question [is] to recog-



Author and sociologist İsmail Beşikçi speaks to Kurdistan 24, Dec. 4, 2019. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

Beşikçi, who spent over 17 years in a Turkish jail for advocating for Kurdish rights in Turkey, made the comments during a seminar at the University of Kurdistan Hewler (UKH), located in the capital of the Kurdistan Region.

“Turkey’s official policy was that the Kurds should not have any achievements during the developments in Syria,” he said.

On Oct. 9, Ankara launched its “Operation Peace Spring” in northern Syria against the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Ankara considers a key component of the SDF, the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG), to be the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK) and designates both as terrorist organizations. The SDF denies links to the PKK and has accused Turkey of cooperating with the Islamic State.

with the Kurds; we have issues with terror. There is an attempt to establish a terror state [in northern Syria, and we [Turkey] want to preserve Syria’s territorial unity,” said Beşikçi.

“But in reality, they are doing exactly the opposite,” he said.

“When we look at the time when they occupied Afrin, they did similar actions to what they did with replacement of city mayors in Kurdish cities of Turkey with trustees. Through a political authority, they replaced Kurdish leaders in Afrin with appointees, and they immediately shut down [the] Ahmad Khani institution and other centers which work for Kurdish culture.”

He continued, “In general, there is a paradox between what Turkey says and what Turkey does. Their actions indicate that they are against Kurds because they have banned [the] Kurdish



Cengiz Candar, a Distinguished Visiting Scholar at Stockholm University Institute for Turkish Studies (SUITS), Nov. 19. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

tempts, too. And today, Turkey wants to complete what Hafez Assad, Nureddin al-Atassi, and others could not finish.”

Beşikçi told Kurdistan 24 after the seminar that Kurdish parties must make concessions in order to jointly work together for Kurdistan. “The Kurds are trying to preserve their Kurdish identity,

nize that Kurds have rights and how those rights have to be implemented. You have to speak at least with their elected representatives,” he said.

Turkey, he argued, “should stop these kinds of practices and go back to the negotiation table.”

Editing by John J. Catherine



PolicyWatch 3221

By Phillip Smyth - December 4, 2019

Iran Is Losing Iraq's Tribes

Angry over Iranian militia abuses and Baghdad's sundry failures, a number of powerful tribes are setting aside their traditional sectarian loyalties and pushing to safeguard their basic needs, sometimes violently.

Between escalating nationwide protests and this weekend's resignation of Prime Minister Adil Abdulmahdi, the latest events in Iraq have put a spotlight on the future of Iranian influence over Baghdad. Tehran is often depicted as a puppet master operating completely subservient Shia militias and other proxies in service of its goals in Iraq. Yet many of these actors also have tribal loyalties that are increasingly coming into conflict with their Iranian loyalties—partly in response to actions that proxy groups have taken against tribal leaders, and also because the militias have largely failed to provide adequate security or curb corruption. Thus, even as Tehran continues its bid to integrate and control the Iraqi government, the strength of Shia and mixed tribes may be a source of leverage over the proxies charged with carrying out that mission, including the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF).

THE KHAFAJI CONUNDRUM

One of southern Iraq's major Shia tribes, the Khafaja exemplify two key trends: how tribes tend to back the strongest horse, and how Tehran's efforts to pressure them can backfire. During the rule of Saddam Hussein, elements of the Khafaja contributed thousands of fighters to his armed forces, both during the Iran-Iraq War and when their Shia coreligionists in the south launched a rebellion in 1991. Later, however, as the post-2003 U.S. occupation came to a close and the Syrian uprising escalated into war, numerous sections of the tribe began to align more closely with Iranian-backed organizations.

In 2012, for example, tribal cleric Sheikh Auws al-Khafaji split from Iraqi Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr and formed the Iranian-backed Quwat Abu Fadl al-Abbas (QAFA), a group used to recruit and deploy fighters in support of Syria's Assad regime. Another top tribal figure, Sheikh Raad al-Khafaji, reportedly served as a commander in one of Iran's most loyal and ideologically fervent proxies, the U.S.-designated terrorist group Kataib Hezbollah.

Yet the tribe's attitude began to shift against such links in February 2019, when the PMF arrested Sheikh Auws and shut down QAFA.

This militia crackdown was apparently spurred by his accusation that Tehran had been involved in assassinating fellow tribe member Alaa Mashzoub, a novelist known for criticizing Iranian interference in Iraq. Previously, QAFA had avoided publicizing tribal issues, while the outspoken Sheikh Auws had focused on sectarian and security matters. After his arrest, however, tribal concerns took center stage.

In Basra, for example, Khafaji leaders gave the central government a forty-eight-hour deadline to disclose the sheikh's whereabouts and physical condition, while local tribal authority Adil al-Khafaji threatened to close down border posts with Iran in response to the arrest. The Baghdad section of the tribe called for his release as well, launching protests outside the Green Zone and near QAFA's shuttered headquarters in the capital.

In May, the tribe announced that Sheikh Auws had been released and the charges against him dropped, but reconciliation with Tehran was hardly apparent. Two months later, the sheikh's sister and her family were reportedly kidnapped in Ahvaz, Iran. Although they soon escaped their captors, the incident may have been Tehran's way of warning him to be more cooperative, or at least passive. Far from backing down, however, the sheikh spoke out in support of the anti-government and anti-Iran protests that exploded throughout the country this fall, using his social media accounts to argue that the demonstrators have legitimate demands. Likewise, other members of the Khafaja tribe, particularly youths, have erected banners around Baghdad in support of the protests.

AWAKENING OF THE MIXED TRIBES

While certain tribes most relevant to this discussion are solidly Shia in composition, others are more mixed, with significant Sunni sections. Some of these tribes are now downplaying sectarian differences and adopting a more unified approach in response to mounting anger over Iranian/proxy pressure, a sense of neglect by Baghdad, and lingering worries about security.

The Khazraj. This tribe is based north of Baghdad in Salah al-Din province, with Shia members concentrated around Dujail and most Sunni members living near Tikrit. For reasons explored below, various members have had numerous run-ins with Iranian-controlled PMF elements.

In March 2015, Al-Arab reported that the Iranian-controlled militia Saraya Talia al-Khurasani (the PMF's 18th Brigade) had kidnapped Khazraji tribespeople and killed an unknown number of Shia members. In response, local Khazraji residents kidnapped militia members.

Similar reprisals occurred when tribesman Hussein al-Faisal al-Khazraji, a lieutenant colonel in the Interior Ministry, was assassinated by "unknown gunmen" in July 2018. The killers were widely suspected to be members of Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), a top Iranian proxy that forms the PMF's 41st, 42nd, and 43rd Brigades. When the colonel's funeral procession returned from Najaf to Dujail, AAH kidnapped two prominent Khazraji sheikhs; they were later found executed. The incident sparked days of fighting that left four AAH members and three tribespeople dead. Khazraji leaders publicly called on AAH to pull out of Dujail and other Shia-majority tribal areas, arguing that the group's forces should be replaced by Muqtada al-Sadr's militia Saraya al-Salam—a clear message in support of Iran's major Shia rival and the faction from which AAH splintered.

According to al-Quds al-Arabi, the clashes were only the latest episode in an overlooked conflict that the Khazraj and AAH had been fighting for at least a year. AAH reportedly assassinated multiple tribespeople affiliated with Saraya al-Salam and the Iraqi security forces. The group has also been accused of engaging in criminal activities targeting tribal members and their land holdings.

Despite reconciliation meetings between the antagonists, tensions persist today. In the words of one Shia Khazraj and former Saraya al-Salam fighter who wished to remain unnamed, "Even if it is calm with [Iran-

backed groups in our areas], we no longer want them...Our protests deal with many issues...This issue is another of importance.”

The Shammar. Since 2016, members of this tribe have helped lead Iraq’s broader shift toward stronger tribal identity as a social and political focal point. One of the largest tribes in the Middle East, the Shammar’s influence extends through Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, and Syria, with Sunni and Shia members holding a diverse array of loyalties. For instance, some Shammar Shia became leaders in the most staunchly sectarian Iranian militias; some Sunni Shammar joined the Islamic State; other Sunnis joined anti-IS militias; and some shifted from supporting Free Syrian Army rebel factions in Syria to backing more tribally oriented militias that focus on protecting and projecting regional Shammar interests (e.g., Quwat al-Sanadid).

The latter shift carried over into Iraq proper, particularly after IS kidnapped more than thirty Shammar tribespeople and launched attacks in areas north of Baghdad in spring and summer 2018. When the central government and Iranian proxies failed to respond adequately to these incidents, it served as a tipping point for many Shammar.

Today, Hussein Alwan—a former fighter with Sadr’s Mahdi Army who held affiliations with multiple Iran-backed militias in the past—serves as a leader and spokesman for Shia Shammar seeking greater protection, services, and recognition from the Iraqi government. In a series of interviews with the author, he stated, “Sunni or Shia, we would do anything for our tribe...The army and the [PMF] are not doing enough for security...We are already commanders in these [PMF] groups, but we need a force of our own...to send a message.” In July 2018, sections of the tribe sent that message by forming Liwa Shammar Baghdad. Although this brigade has not been deployed militarily, its supporters continue to protest the tribe’s poor living conditions—a campaign that has led some Shammar to show up at recent mass demonstrations in Baghdad and other cities.

TRIBAL MOBILIZATION AND VIOLENCE

Apart from displaying support for the national protests, some tribal elements have

played a major role in the uprising’s more violent strains. In Baghdad, Basra, Dhi Qar, and Maysan, these elements have taken the lead in crafting protest tactics, shutting down roads, and even retaliating against Iranian-backed groups.

The tendency toward vengeance arose after numerous protestors were killed by government security forces and Iranian-backed PMF units. Since then, tribal groups have come to define the confrontations in Baghdad, acting as the main voice pushing the government to rein in its forces and the PMF. In other instances, the response has been more forceful—on October 25, some tribespeople chose to avenge fallen members by burning more than a dozen Iranian-backed organizational headquarters across southern Iraq.

SADR’S GRIP SLIPPING?

Muqtada al-Sadr has attempted to act as the political face for those protesting Iranian influence and the government’s abuses. Yet while his influence over national politics is still potent, his control over his tribal allies may be more limited. The Baghdad slum of Sadr City—a core support zone for him, and home to thousands of tribespeople who moved from rural areas—has seen some of the heaviest protests. According to a November 20 New York Times report, a Sadr-linked protest leader relied on a network of tribal contacts to mobilize demonstrators there, as opposed to using Sadr’s own offices. Indeed, many of the rallies that shook Baghdad in mid-October were organized through such links after tribespeople were among those injured or killed earlier that month.

Questions about Sadr’s authority over Shia tribes also arose when an AAH commander and his brother were killed in Amara that same month following the reported deaths of ten protesters. According to some activists, the incident arose from clashes between Saraya al-Salam and AAH, indicating that certain members of his militia may be acting on their own out of concern for their local and tribal interests. Since then, Sadr has said he may call on Saraya al-Salam to “protect protests” while pushing demonstrators to maintain a nonviolent approach—perhaps an effort to reclaim his position among increasingly autonomous tribal factions. Such maneuvers may just increase

the potential for violence, especially against a backdrop of longstanding Sadrist antipathy toward Tehran, tribal calls for vengeance, Abdulmahdi’s ouster, a lack of substantive changes, and heavy-handed security responses by Baghdad and Iranian proxies.

U.S. POLICY OPTIONS

In seeking creative ways to at least temporarily wean Shia and Sunni tribes away from Iran, policymakers should address the actual issues on which these factions are currently focused. For example, the United States has long concentrated on providing security and military solutions to the central government in Baghdad. Yet by broadening this focus to include retraining and equipping some sections belonging to local Shia tribes, Washington could do much more to demonstrate its soft and hard power while countering Iran’s.

Perhaps most important, a constant thread among disaffected Shia tribal groups has been the lack of services and jobs. In the past, many tribes created their own patronage networks within the Iraqi government in order to fulfill those needs, but they are increasingly being locked out. Iran’s growing patronage networks have not done much to satiate those needs either. In such a political environment, properly executed U.S. aid can go far, particularly via European, international, and vetted local NGOs that focus on training tribal figures in governance, service provision, and the supply of needed infrastructure equipment. This effort would require a more detailed focus in Washington, not just on the grand strategic level, but also at the town and village level.

Finally, U.S. officials should recognize that tribal issues are rarely addressed in Arabic-language publications and television programming. Elevating and publicizing these issues in independent U.S.-based/backed outlets such as Alhurra Iraq would give the tribes another voice. It would also show that U.S. involvement is much lighter and more considerate than Iran’s heavy-handed, often ineffective approach.

Phillip Smyth is a specialist on Iranian proxy groups and a Soref Fellow at The Washington Institute, where he created the Shia Militia Mapping Project.

Au cœur du Kurdistan syrien La ligne de Fracture

Intervention de l'armée turque, camps de réfugiés pour les Kurdes trahis, prisons de fortune pour les combattants de l'Etat islamique... Dans le nord-est de la Syrie, tous les revirements d'un conflit qui a ravagé le pays ont des conséquences concrètes. Le photographe Lorenzo Meloni en a saisi la violence.

C'est à un voyage déchirant dans une région laminée par les revirements politiques que nous invite le photographe de guerre Lorenzo Meloni. Dans le nord de la Syrie, les vainqueurs kurdes de l'organisation Etat islamique (EI), trahis par les Américains, sont devenus des réfugiés comme les autres. Leur vieux rêve de former une entité a explosé quand Erdogan a lancé l'opération «Source de paix» pour démanteler le petit Etat dans l'Etat qu'était le Rojava – le Kurdistan syrien.

Ce rêve est mort-né. Les Kurdes ont péché par excès de naïveté en pensant pouvoir troquer six années de guerre contre l'EI et des dizaines de milliers de morts en échange de la promesse d'un petit Etat autonome. Ils dorment aujourd'hui, et pour la énième fois, sous des tentes.

Meloni photographie aussi les prisonniers issus des rangs de l'Etat islamique : les conquérants sanguinaires d'hier ont désormais le regard vide des vaincus et errent dans ces Guantánamo syriens éclos sur ce terrain géopolitique instable. Que vont-ils devenir ? Les Kurdes trahis ne voudront ou ne pourront pas longtemps rester leurs geôliers. C'est la France, cette fois, qui a eu la naïveté de le croire.

Evoquons alors une image, une seule puisqu'on ne peut parler de tous ces clichés dont les gris subtils, les rouges éclatants et les plans semblent travaillés comme des tableaux de la Renaissance. Sur cette photo prise dans une cellule de la prison de Hassaka, les détenus de l'Etat islamique sont imbriqués, dans leur tenue orange qui est devenue la couleur des prisonniers, des otages et des condamnés à la décapitation depuis les attentats du 11 septembre 2001. Certains dorment, d'autres prient ou sont perdus dans leurs abîmes intérieurs. Ils sont jeunes ou vieux, tous assez maigres. Leurs crânes ont été rasés et leur barbe, taillée, ils ont l'air inoffensif, privés de cette pilosité fondamentale, équivalent du niqab pour les femmes de l'organisation. Aucun d'eux ne regarde l'objectif, sauf un. Son regard de défiance noire rappelle ce qu'a été et ce que sera l'Etat islamique.



Dans la prison de Hassaka s'entassent 5 000 prisonniers de 28 nationalités différentes, tous liés à l'organisation Etat islamique. (LORENZO MELONI/MAGNUM PHOTOS)



La ville de Hassaka abrite aussi des réfugiés kurdes, venus notamment de Ras al-Aïn, à la frontière. Ils attendent sous des tentes avec les affaires qu'ils ont pu rassembler. (LORENZO MELONI/MAGNUM PHOTOS)



Hommage à cinq civils et à un combattant kurde tués dans l'explosion de deux voitures piégées de l'Etat islamique. (LORENZO MELONI/MAGNUM PHOTOS)



December 5, 2019
AFP

Kurds left homeless as reports of Turkish proxies' abuse continue

Reports continue to surface of Turkey's Syrian rebel proxies killing and looting in the so-called safe zone created in Turkey's northeastern Syrian military operation in October, and Kurds who fled the area are too frightened to return home, Agence France-Presse reported.

Turkey says the military offensive was necessary to drive the Peoples' Protection Units (YPG), a Kurdish militia controlling much of northeast Syria before the operation, away from its border. Ankara says the YPG is a terrorist group because it is linked to insurgents fighting for Kurdish self-rule in Turkey.

But Turkish forces, spearheaded by Syrian rebel auxiliaries from the Syrian National Army, also carved out a 120-km long and 32-km deep "safe zone" between the towns of Tel Abyad and Ras al-Ayn, which is now under Turkey's control.

The Turkish government says it will resettle many of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees hosted in Turkey in the zone. But so far, the military operation has only deepened Syria's humanitarian crisis as 200,000 civilians fled the area, and the United Nations says only half of those displaced have begun making their way back.

Many of the Kurdish civilians who fled fear returning because Turkey's Syrian rebel allies are killing civilians and looting their belongings, AFP said.

"They killed my son in cold blood," the news agency quoted 65-year-old Syrian Kurdish woman Shara Sido as saying.



Sido said a Syrian fighter had sent her a picture of her son Rezan's corpse, confessing to killing him and instructing her to come to retrieve his body.

Rezan was shot dead while returning to their family home in Ras al-Ayn, AFP reported.

Sido's story follows other similar reports that have come from Kurds and other minorities in northern Syria since Turkey launched its operation on Oct. 9.

This week the Independent reported that footage shot by Turkey's auxiliaries and shared on social media contained evidence of ethnic cleansing.

A report released by Human Rights Watch included documented evidence of looting and interviews with locals who said the groups had

blocked relatives from going back to their homes, killing three men who attempted to return.

Mustafa al-Zaim, a Kurdish merchant who fled to Qamishli in October, told AFP that Syrian rebel fighters had seized his home and business and stolen his property.

"We wouldn't even think of returning without international guarantees," he said.

AFP quoted Sarah Leah Whitson, Human Rights Watch's Middle East director, as saying Turkey had been "turning a blind eye to the reprehensible behaviour displayed by the factions it arms".

She said that, "so long as Turkey is in control of these areas, it has a responsibility to investigate and end these violations".



05/12/2019

La Turquie, enfant terrible de l'Otan

Si l'Otan a péniblement réaffirmé son unité, mercredi, au cours d'un sommet à Londres, les tensions autour de la Turquie ont marqué les discussions. Pour en comprendre les enjeux, France 24 s'est entretenu avec Yves Boyer, chercheur spécialiste de l'Otan.

En dépit de leurs désaccords persistants, notamment autour de la Turquie, les membres de l'Otan ont adopté, mercredi 4 décembre, une déclaration commune, à l'issue de plusieurs jours d'échanges souvent tendus à Londres. La veille, une série de passes d'armes entre Donald Trump, Emmanuel Macron et Recep Tayyip Erdogan a ag-

gravé la zizanie au sein de l'Alliance, l'affaiblissant face à la montée en puissance de la Russie et de la Chine.

Les récentes déclarations du président français jugeant l'Alliance née en 1949 en état de "mort cérébrale" et la montée de tensions avec le président turc au sujet de son inter-

vention en Syrie ont électrisé les échanges dans les heures précédant le début des commémorations à Londres du 70e anniversaire de l'Otan.

Et même à l'issue de cette déclaration, les dissensions demeurent : Ankara a ainsi annoncé un accord de coopération militaire

avec la Libye, provoquant la colère de la Grèce, qui y voit une violation de ses zones maritimes et demande le soutien de l'Otan... Comment comprendre les positions de la Turquie et quel est son avenir au sein de l'Otan ? France 24 s'est entretenu avec Yves Boyer, chercheur associé à la Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (FRS), spécialiste de l'OTAN.

France 24 : Au cours de ces rencontres entre dirigeants de l'Otan, les griefs à l'encontre de la Turquie se sont multipliés, notamment concernant l'offensive en Syrie contre les Kurdes. Comment la Turquie a-t-elle pu lancer son offensive sans l'aval de ses alliés de l'Otan ?

Yves Boyer : Du côté d'Erdogan, l'affaire des Kurdes [les Kurdes de Syrie ont été soutenus par les États-Unis dans leur lutte contre l'organisation État islamique, NDLR] et le fait que son opposant Fethullah Gülen ait pu se réfugier aux États-Unis ont envenimé la situation. Il a considéré que puisque l'affaire de la Syrie était plus ou moins réglée, il pouvait se donner une marge de manœuvre en créant une zone tampon entre les régions kurdes de Syrie et de Turquie. Et donc il a lancé son offensive, et je pense qu'il l'a fait avec l'accord des États-Unis. Une offensive, ça se prépare, ça se voit. Les Français étaient au courant que l'armée turque avait massé une partie de ses forces le long de la frontière avec la Syrie. Du côté des États-Unis, on savait et on a donné un blanc-seing à Erdogan.

Face à cela, l'Otan ne peut rien faire. La Turquie est un pays souverain, l'Otan est une alliance, ça n'est pas une entité politique, contrairement à l'Union européenne. Chaque État reste libre de ses choix. L'Otan n'allait pas en rajouter en condamnant ouvertement la Turquie, qui, par ailleurs, flirte un peu avec les Russes.

L'Otan ne peut pas s'opposer à une décision d'Erdogan visant à imposer cette zone tampon à l'encontre des Kurdes. Et ce, même si cela pose un sérieux problème, parce qu'une partie des Kurdes sont nos alliés et Emmanuel Macron a eu raison de le signaler, cela met en évidence une forme de duplicité des Turcs.

La Turquie affirme qu'elle est membre de l'Alliance atlantique, qu'elle est un partenaire solide, et en même temps elle retrouve une forme de pantouranisme, c'est-à-dire qu'elle retrouve les aspirations de l'Empire ottoman [ancêtre de la Turquie, NDLR] qui regarde aussi vers l'Est, vers l'Asie centrale et qui cherche à rétablir des liens plus étroits avec la Russie. Le président russe Vladimir Poutine sera ainsi reçu en Turquie début janvier, et Ankara a acheté des missiles antiaériens S-400 à la Russie.



Le drapeau turc flotte sur le quartier général de l'OTAN, à Bruxelles, alors que sa place est contestée au sein de l'Alliance. REUTERS - Francois Lenoir

De nouvelles sources de tensions émergent: la Turquie a ainsi annoncé un accord de coopération avec la Libye contre l'avis de la Grèce...

Depuis des années, la Turquie bloque un certain nombre de décisions au sein de l'Otan. Ça n'est pas nouveau. Elle joue depuis longtemps un rôle extrêmement perturbant. En ce qui concerne l'accord de coopération avec la Libye, c'est le monde vers lequel on se dirige : on retrouve l'histoire traditionnelle. La puissance ottomane retrouve son pré carré historique et cherche à s'imposer dans une zone, qui a toujours été une zone d'influence turque. Ce n'est pas la fin de l'histoire, c'est le retour de l'Histoire.

On observe le retour des puissances sur la scène internationale. Les Français et les Européens ont du mal à acter ce retour, parce qu'ils sont très pris par le multilatéralisme et la dynamique européenne. Mais les États qui ne sont pas dans cette dynamique sont dans un jeu national et retrouvent leurs caractéristiques géopolitiques fondées sur l'Histoire. Donc on assiste en ce qui concerne la Turquie à une forme de néo-pantouranisme, un retour de l'Empire ottoman sous une forme différente.

Dans ce contexte de tensions, est-il envisageable que la Turquie quitte l'Otan ?

La Turquie ne quittera pas l'Otan. Les dirigeants turcs réaffirment que c'est une bonne alliance, dans ce contexte géopolitique nouveau de retour des puissances. Pourquoi la Turquie quitterait-elle une alliance qui lui fournit des avantages intéressants ? D'un point de vue militaire, c'est une sorte de protection acquise. Ses militaires peuvent obtenir des postes d'influence au sein du commandement de l'Otan. L'armée turque peut bénéficier de méthodes de planification et de conduite des opérations utiles et modernes

qui sont celles de l'Otan, largement assurées par les États-Unis. D'un point de vue militaire et géopolitique, la Turquie n'a aucune raison de délaisser l'Otan.

Tous les États membres de l'Alliance atlantique ont intérêt à demeurer dans cette structure, quelles qu'en soient les imperfections. Les États-Unis parce que c'est un moyen de contrôler la sécurité européenne et de peser sur ses partenaires, les petits États de l'Est parce qu'ils misent sur la protection des États-Unis qui leur donnent une marge de manœuvre et un répit certains. Je ne vois pas pourquoi on casserait la maison, elle est utile. C'est comme refuge en montagne, on n'y va pas souvent, mais on peut en avoir besoin donc on va l'entretenir et le préserver.

Et du côté de l'Alliance, quel intérêt à maintenir la Turquie au sein de l'Otan ?

La place de la Turquie est importante au sein de l'Otan, d'abord au plan démographique, parce qu'avec plus de 82 millions d'habitants, c'est l'un des pays les plus peuplés de l'Alliance, après les États-Unis et à quasi égalité avec l'Allemagne. C'est aussi un pays qui contrôle les détroits, qui est garant de la Convention de Montreux [signée en 1936, elle permet la libre circulation dans les détroits des Dardanelles et du Bosphore, ainsi que dans la mer Noire, NDLR]. C'est un État héritier de l'Empire ottoman, donc son influence en Asie centrale est également intéressante à un moment où il y a toute la problématique de la Chine qui se pose. C'est aussi un pays par lequel peuvent transiter un certain nombre de moyens militaires, notamment américains, qui pourraient avoir à intervenir en Asie centrale et le flanc sud de la Russie. Ce pays a donc un intérêt géostratégique très important.

Tués "de sang froid": des Kurdes de Syrie accusent les alliés d'Ankara de "crimes"

Pour Shara Sido, une déplacée kurde syrienne, la nouvelle, glaçante, est tombée sur son téléphone portable: un message "Venez chercher votre fils", assorti d'une photo montrant un cadavre ensanglanté.

Cette femme de 65 ans impute le meurtre de son fils aux groupes armés syriens soutenus par la Turquie, accusés par des ONG d'exécutions, d'expropriations et de "crimes de guerre potentiels" dans les régions conquises en octobre dans le nord de la Syrie.

"Ils ont tué mon fils de sang-froid", lance la sexagénaire, en montrant à l'AFP, sur son téléphone, la photo du "monstre" qui, selon elle, a dit avoir tué "par erreur" son fils.

Mais Shara Sido ne croit pas à une méprise. "Ils viennent tuer les Kurdes", accuse-t-elle.

Cette mère de cinq enfants vivait à Ras al-Aïn, une ville frontalière majoritairement kurde, passée sous le contrôle des troupes pro-Ankara, à l'issue d'une vaste offensive en octobre.

Craignant pour sa famille, elle s'est réfugiée dans la ville de Qamichli, plus à l'est, capitale de facto de la minorité ethnique, emportant à la hâte quelques affaires.

Mais quand son fils, Rezan, 38 ans, est retourné à Ras al-Aïn pour récupérer des papiers administratifs et des vêtements, il a été tué avec quatre autres personnes venues avec lui s'enquérir du sort de leur maison.

"Je vais dénoncer leurs crimes au monde", s'exclame la sexagénaire.

Changement démographique

Depuis 2016, la Turquie a lancé trois opérations militaires dans le nord de la Syrie, où habitent de nombreux Kurdes, pour chasser notamment les combattants des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG), principale milice kurde en Syrie qu'Ankara qualifie de "terroriste".

La Turquie craint l'émergence d'un noyau d'Etat kurde à sa frontière, qui galvaniserait les velléités indépendantistes de la minorité ethnique sur son territoire.

Ankara affirme vouloir renvoyer une partie des 3,5 millions de syriens réfugiés sur son sol dans une "zone de sécurité" dans le nord syrien, un secteur de 120 km de long, aujourd'hui sous son contrôle.

Vendredi, quelque 70 Syriens qui s'étaient réfugiés en Turquie ont traversé la frontière pour se rendre dans cette zone tampon, selon les médias turcs.

Ce commerçant kurde de 44 ans s'est réfugié à Qamichli après avoir fui Ras al-Aïn.

"La région n'est plus sûre et nous n'envisageons pas de rentrer sans garanties internationales", dit-il.

Sa maison, ainsi qu'un supermarché et des boutiques qu'il possède à Ras al-Aïn, ont tous été saisis, selon ses dires.



Tués "de sang froid": des Kurdes de Syrie accusent les alliés d'Ankara de "crimes"
© AFP / Delil souleiman

Pour les Kurdes, Ankara cherche surtout à remplacer la population de cette région, en grande partie kurde, par des Syriens arabes.

"Tout pillé"

Si des dizaines de milliers de personnes déplacées par les violences dans cette région commencent à revenir chez elles selon l'ONU, la plupart d'entre elles sont des Arabes, non des Kurdes, estime l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme (OSDH).

L'ONG Human Rights Watch (HRW) a récemment indiqué dans un rapport que les rebelles alliés d'Ankara empêchaient le retour de familles kurdes, pillant et occupant leurs propriétés.

L'Armée nationale syrienne (ANS), une alliance de groupes rebelles soutenus par la Turquie, a démenti les accusations de HRW dans un communiqué publié samedi, dénonçant un rapport "biaisé".

Le Kurde Moustafa al-Zaim, lui, fait partie de ceux qui craignent de rentrer chez eux.

"Ils ont tout volé et pillé", affirme-t-il.

Pour la directrice de HRW au Moyen-Orient, Sarah Leah Whitson, "la Turquie ferme les yeux sur le comportement répréhensible des factions qu'elle arme".

"Tant que la Turquie contrôlera ces zones, il lui incombe d'enquêter sur ces violations et d'y mettre fin", écrit-elle dans le rapport.

"L'occupation elle-même est la plus grande violation", lance de son côté Teymour Af-daki.

Ce réalisateur de 42 ans originaire de Ras al-Aïn affirme que les rebelles ont brûlé sa maison dans laquelle il avait conservé quelques 500 livres.

"Ces livres, c'était une expression de notre identité kurde", dit-il, amer, ses deux filles assises sur ses genoux.

Mais, pour lui, cet incident n'aura pas raison de sa détermination. "Nous allons bientôt retourner dans notre ville", assure-t-il.

Qamichli (Syrie) (AFP) - © 2019 AFP



04/12/2019
Karwan Faidhi Dri

Peshmerga forces killed in ISIS attack near Iran border

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region – Islamic State (ISIS) militants attacked Kurdish Peshmerga forces in Kolajo (Golajo), Diyala province near the Iraq-Iran border late Wednesday, according to reports from the scene. Initial reports suggest injuries and fatalities.

The attack comes just days after ISIS killed three Kurdish security force personnel (Asayesh) in the area.

Located in the Garmiyan area, the village of Dakay Sarcham, where the attack took place, is roughly a kilometer from where the three Asayesh men, including their commander, were **killed in ISIS shelling** on November 30.

In the face of this ISIS resurgence, the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs called on the international community to increase its military support.

More Peshmerga forces have been deployed to the area, he said.

The Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs confirmed the attack, claiming its forces had repelled the ISIS assault.

ISIS attacked Peshmerga forces in Kolajo but “the attack was soon repelled by Peshmerga forces who chased them and repelled the attack,” the ministry said in a [statement](#).

“We assure the people of Kurdistan that Peshmerga forces are on full alert to protect the people and soil of Kurdistan and terminate terror,” it added.

The ministry did not confirm casualties. It called on its allies in the international coalition to defeat ISIS to “increase its aid, support, and coordi-



nation with Peshmerga forces and the ministry in order to prevent the spread of terrorist groups.”

Rudaw’s reporter said local units of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), also known as Hashd al-Shaabi, attacked ISIS positions in aid of the Peshmerga.

Kolajo in the Garmiyan Region south of Kirkuk has witnessed several attacks by ISIS remnants and sleeper cells. The area is currently under the control of Kurdish Peshmerga and Asayesh.

Sirwan Barzani, a Peshmerga commander, told Rudaw that ISIS will pose a “serious threat” to Iraq if it is not contained.

He said some ISIS foreign fighters have moved from Syria to Iraq since their defeat in Baghouz in March 2019.

The latest Pentagon inspector general report covering July 1 to Oct 25 said ISIS has continued to cement and expand its command and control structure in Iraq, enabling the group to stage more attacks.

“ISIS in Iraq conducted both attacks of opportunity, such as improvised bombs and hit-and-run attacks, and attacks designed to intimidate or gain influence, such as assassinations, kidnappings, and sniper attacks,” the report read, citing the Combined Joint Task Force–OIR (CJTF-OIR) which leads the fights against ISIS.



Dec 06, 2019

Turkish police detain three district HDP mayors in eastern province

Police in Turkey detained three mayors of the mainly Kurdish People’s Democratic Party (HDP) in the eastern province of Van on Friday, [Hürriyet daily reported](#).

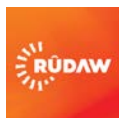
The mayors of Muradiye, Özalp and Başkale districts were detained over membership of a terrorist organisation and making terrorist propaganda, it said.

The Turkish government accuses the HDP of harbouring sympathies to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), an armed group which has been fighting in Turkey for Kurdish autonomy for more than 30 years.

Since the collapse of a peace process between the government and the PKK in 2015, 16,300 HDP members have been detained

and 3,500 of those have been imprisoned, according to the HDP.

The authorities have dismissed 24 out of the 65 mayors who were elected from the HDP in the March local election in Turkey’s Kurdish-majority regions and replaced them with government-appointed mayors.



Dec. 6, 2019
Karwan Faidhi Dri

Kirkuk police officer killed in roadside blast

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region – One police officer died and two were severely injured after their vehicle struck an IED in the Panja Ali neighborhood of Kirkuk on Friday.

A Rudaw reporter at the scene reported that a roadside bomb caused the police vehicle to explode while worshipers in Panja Ali were leaving mosques after Friday prayers. A number of people were wounded, and a Kurdish member of the emergency police named Karwan Osman Yasin died as a result of his injuries.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack, but Islamic State (ISIS) sleeper cells have conducted similar attacks in the past.

Kirkuk province is a disputed territory claimed by both the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and the Iraqi Federal government.

After the Iraqi armed forces fled the advancing Islamic State (ISIS) in 2014 and Kurdish Peshmerga forces stepped in to defend Kirkuk, the city fell under the control of the KRG. Iraqi forces then drove the Peshmerga out of Kirkuk in October 2017 in the wake of the [Kurdish independence referendum](#).

ISIS frequently takes advantage of the lack of cooperation between the Iraqi and Kurdish armed forces to launch attacks in Kirkuk.

Several people were wounded on November 30 after [two explosions](#) took place in downtown Kirkuk and in the countryside surrounding the city.



A police vehicle was destroyed and an officer killed by a roadside blast in Panja Ali, Kirkuk. Photo via social media

On November 11, five Italian soldiers [were injured](#) in a roadside IED blast in Kirkuk while conducting counter-terrorism training for the Iraqi armed forces.

ISIS has increased its attacks in other disputed areas as well. The [most recent attack](#) was in Diyala province's Kolajo (Golajo) sub-district on Wednesday, killing three Peshmerga fighters.

The latest Pentagon Inspector General report, which provides US congress with a quarterly up-

date on the fight against the Islamic State, [said](#) that ISIS has continued to reestablish and expand its command and control structure in Iraq, enabling the group to stage more attacks.

"ISIS in Iraq conducted both attacks of opportunity, such as improvised bombs and hit-and-run attacks, and attacks designed to intimidate or gain influence, such as assassinations, kidnappings, and sniper attacks," the report read, citing the Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), a multinational force which leads the fight against ISIS.



Dec. 6, 2019

Iraq's Kurdish region hands oil to Baghdad for first time

Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government is transferring 250,000 barrels of oil per day to the federal government in Baghdad, the minister of finance said yesterday.

Awat Sheikh Janab said this comes as part of a deal between

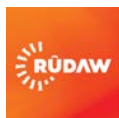
Erbil and Baghdad which would see the KRG receive its share from the 2020 federal budget.

"With the adoption of the agreement as of 2020, there will be no problem regarding the salaries of the region's employees," he added.

The Kurdish minister considered that "reducing the region's share of the federal budget, was unfortunately a political decision" noting that "the region's share of the budget next year, will be the same as this year which is 12.67 per cent".

Meanwhile KRG's Cabinet Secretary Amanj Rahem said the province will contribute to raising Iraq's revenues.

The region has been exporting crude oil since 2014 amid opposition from Baghdad.



06-12-2019
Karwan Faidhi Dri

Turkey appoints mayors in recently invaded northern Syrian towns

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region -- Sari Kani and Gire Spi, Syrian towns recently occupied by Turkey, have been assigned new mayors by the Turkish government.

Abdullah Erin, the governor of Turkey's Sanliurfa province, which borders Syria, said that Turkey has appointed mayors for both Gire Spi and Sari Kani "in order to create a coordination" in the areas.

Turkish forces and their Syrian proxies launched the ironically titled Operation Peace Spring against the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) on October 9 and took control of both Sari Kani (Ras al-Ain) and Gire Spi (Tal Abyad) after weeks of fierce fighting.

Governor Erin visited both towns on Thursday, meeting with Turkish military and intelligence officials as well as the commanders of pro-Turkey Syrian militia groups.

"We evaluated the services provided and planned in Tel Abyad in coordination with the local council and other authorities after the Operation Peace Spring," read a tweet from the governor.

The governor also said that Turkey has started providing various municipal services including water, energy, health centers, education and infrastructure, according to a statement from his office.

Ibrahim Madenli, the head of Governor Erin's media office, told Rudaw that the newly appointed mayors have already begun working. He did not provide a specific start date, but a source in the area told



Turkish governor Abdullah Erin meets with military officials in Tel Abyad. Photo via social media

Rudaw that the mayors have been in office for a week.

The Turkish government took similar steps in other areas of Syria it has occupied over the past few years, appointing officials and controlling infrastructure and access to services after capturing al-Bab, Jarabulus, and Azaz in 2016 and Afrin in 2018.

The Turkish governor said on Tuesday that, "Turkey has opened its arms to Syrian refugees and has met all kinds of their needs. We will continue to stand with our Syrian brothers."

However, Turkey has been accused of mar-

ginalizing Kurds in formerly Kurdish-majority towns like Afrin, Sari Kani and Gire Spi. Sources in Syria say that Kurds are prevented from assuming leadership positions, the Kurdish language is being excluded from the education curriculum and Kurdish language signs have been removed from local government institutions.

Kurds no longer represent a majority in areas that have been invaded by Turkey; the majority of the Kurdish population, fearing oppression in the wake of Turkish incursions into Syria, has fled to Kurdish-controlled areas such as Tel Rifaat and Hasaka. Those who have remained have faced looting and oppression.



Dec. 07, 2019

Turkey to appoint 4,000 police officers to Syria

Turkey will be appointing 4,000 urban and rural police officers in Ras al Ayn and Tel Abyad in northern Syria, the governorate of southeastern border province of Şanlıurfa [said in a statement](#).

Turkish forces had taken control of the two Syrian towns as per the Sochi Accord Turkey signed with Russia, following its Operation Peace Spring into the Kurdish-controlled territories in northern Syria in October.

Şanlıurfa Governor Abdullah Erin said in a meeting in Tel Abyad Turkish security forces would start training some 1,800 Syrian men within the week.

Governor Erin said the second group would start training later, bringing the total force up to 3,500 to 4,000 officers.

Turkey has appointed governors to Tel Abyad and Ras al Ayn, Erin said, and started to provide municipal, education and medical services.

Governor Erin's media office said the governors had already started to work, and a local source said they started a week ago, pro-Kurdish [Rudaw reported on Friday](#).

Syrian Kurds in the towns and provinces controlled

by Turkey have been marginalized, the Kurdish language has been excluded from the curriculum, and Kurdish signs have been removed from local government institutions, Rudaw said.

Turkey had appointed governors to Syrian towns Jarabulus and Al Bab after Turkish forces took control in 2016.

Turkish postal service PTT had been providing [money transferring and postal services in Jarabulus](#) since 2017, and Gaziantep University had established faculties in the province.



06/12/2019
Par Yann Lagarde

Yılmaz Güney, une voix pour les Kurdes

Yılmaz Güney est le premier réalisateur à montrer la condition kurde à l'écran. Sa vie est à l'image de l'histoire des Kurdes entre exil, clandestinité et oppression. Découvrez le parcours incroyable de ce réalisateur qui remporta la Palme d'or à Cannes avec un film qu'il a dirigé depuis la prison.

Il fut le premier à faire entendre la voix des Kurdes à travers le monde. Yılmaz Güney fut réalisateur, écrivain militant. Par sa vie de résistance, de clandestinité, d'exil, il incarne l'histoire du peuple kurde.

Yılmaz Güney naît en 1937 en Turquie, dans une famille de paysans kurdes. Très tôt, il s'intéresse au cinéma, devient montreur de films et parcourt les camps de nomades avec un projecteur de fortune. À cette époque, les revendications nationalistes kurdes sont ignorées par le gouvernement turc.

Les insurrections successives dans le Kurdistan sont réprimées dans le sang. La langue kurde est formellement interdite dans l'espace public.

Dans les années 1960, Yılmaz Güney perce dans le cinéma en tant qu'acteur, c'est notamment en incarnant des rôles de paysans et d'hommes du peuple, victimes d'injustice qu'il devient très populaire.

Au fil du temps, il développe une conscience politique de gauche, pour la défense du prolétariat et des Kurdes. Il écrit d'ailleurs plusieurs essais qui lui valent de la prison pour "propagande communiste".

À sa sortie, il commence à réaliser lui-même des films dès 1966. Dans un style néo-réaliste, il montre la Turquie rurale, les paysans, les travailleurs exploités. Ses personnages sont souvent déracinés, pourchassés, opprimés par le pouvoir turc. Pour la première fois, les montagnes du Kurdistan, leurs habitants et leurs chants sont montrés au cinéma.

Mais son cinéma subversif dérange les autorités turques. Il est accusé du meurtre d'un juge lors d'une bagarre et de nouveau envoyé en prison, même si sa culpabilité n'a jamais pu être prouvée. De sa cellule il continue d'écrire des romans et des scénarios. Il dirige même la réalisation de plusieurs films à un ami les indications de tournage, plan par plan.



En 1978, il réalise ainsi *Le Troupeau*, une histoire de familles rivales de bergers kurdes. Plus tard, il dira de ce film : "Le Troupeau, c'est l'histoire du peuple kurde, mais je n'ai même pas pu utiliser la langue kurde dans ce film. Si on avait utilisé le kurde, tous ceux qui ont collaboré à ce film auraient été mis en prison."

Il s'attaque ensuite à ce qui sera son chef-d'œuvre, *Yol*, la permission, une histoire de détenus en permission qui se heurtent à la brutalité de la vie hors de la prison. Le film dénonce l'archaïsme conservateur et la condition des femmes au sein de la société turque et montre aussi un village kurde durement réprimé par l'armée.

Yılmaz Özdil, spécialiste du cinéma kurde : "Yılmaz Güney ne montre pas seulement les Kurdes victimes. Les personnages de Yılmaz Güney sont aussi capables de se révolter, de fuir la prison, de se révolter contre les grands patrons. Il montre aussi à travers des histoires très personnelles, très réduites, la résistance politique kurde."

Yılmaz Güney profite lui-même d'une courte permission pour fuir la Turquie en passant la frontière, caché dans le coffre d'une voi-

ture. Il termine à la hâte le montage de son film en France pour le présenter au festival de Cannes en 1982. *Yol*, la permission remporte la Palme d'or et donne un retentissement international à la situation des Kurdes.

Comme beaucoup de Kurdes, Yılmaz Güney vit en exil en France, bien loin de chez lui. Condamné à 100 ans de prison en Turquie, il est déchu de sa nationalité turque en 1983. Le simple fait de prononcer son nom y est sévèrement puni et toutes ses œuvres sont interdites. Ses films vont pourtant se diffuser dans le monde grâce à la diaspora kurde.

Yılmaz Güney meurt en 1984 d'un cancer, à 47 ans. Lors de son enterrement au Père Lachaise, des dizaines d'exilés kurdes lui rendent hommage.

Yılmaz Özdil : "Yılmaz Güney lui-même est devenu une figure de résistance, une figure de "l'autre". Cet "autre", ce ne sont pas seulement les Kurdes, cet "autre", ce sont aussi les Turcs rejetés, la classe ouvrière turque, les Arméniens, les Juifs, tout autre minorité vivant en Turquie."



December 6, 2019
By Thomas Parker

Erdogan, Davutoglu, and the Kurdish Vote in Turkey

After considerable consternation in U.S. congress against Turkey's incursion into Syria, and a subsequent successful visit by Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan to the White House in mid-November, much attention in the United States has been focused on Turkey's foreign policy agenda. However, Turkey's foreign policy in Syria is deeply driven by domestic politics, including its concerns regarding any efforts of its local Kurdish population to work towards autonomy and specifically the presence of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), which Turkey considers a terrorist organization.

Moreover, Turkey has internally continued its ongoing investigations into the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), which it escalated earlier this year by forcing several recently elected mayors from this party to resign. Simultaneous to Turkey's incursion into northeastern Syria, the "anti-terrorism" initiative launched against Kurdish politicians, particularly within the HDP, gained enormous traction.

Internally, pro and anti-Erdogan parties have supported the invasion, but the HDP opposed what it has described as an "occupation"—a stance that could subsequently mobilize Turkey's Kurds and export the "Kurdish crisis in Syria" to Turkish territory. Relations between Erdogan's government and the country's Kurdish population have often been poor, but the further erosion of these relations during the past few months have convinced some ex-Justice and Development Party (AKP) politicians that Turkey's Kurdish population is a potential new avenue for support. With the AKP's embarrassing



double loss in local Istanbul elections last spring, Erdogan has since faced increasingly sharp criticism not just at the hands of leaders of the country's two main opposition parties—the Republican People's Party (CHP) and HDP—but from some former senior members of his own party. Notably, Ahmet Davutoglu, a former AKP prime minister and a prominent politician once known as Erdogan's and his party's "mastermind" has recently formally split from the AKP after carefully distancing himself for years.

Davutoglu resigned from the AKP in mid-September 2019 after the AKP central committee unanimously agreed to expel him from the party. This expulsion was prompted by his criticism of AKP's loss of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and the government's decision to remove tens of the country's Kurdish HDP mayors on unsubstantiated charges of 'terrorism,' among other AKP policies.

The resignation of Davutoglu marked the second of its kind after economist Ali Babacan resigned from the AKP in a similar manner in July. Erdogan and his

party, which used to depend on Babacan for his economic expertise, have now turned Erdogan's son-in-law Berat Albayrak, the country's current Finance Minister, to play a similar role. Babacan has just recently stepped back into the public sphere after resigning with an interview confirming his decision to form a new party to challenge the AKP.

Both Davutoglu and Babacan are attempting to form new national parties to disrupt the hegemony of Erdogan's AKP and are seeking to capture votes from their former party's support base. Both have announced the formation of these parties to compete against Erdogan, decrease the AKP's popularity, and isolate the AKP from its preexisting alliance with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). With the most recent national election held in 2018, Turkey is not due for another election until 2023. Yet there are some suggestions that elections may be held early, and two former key AKP members—both of whom presenting potential alternatives to AKP's base—pose a new kind of threat to Erdogan's party. By the government's own figures, AKP membership has decreased by

10 percent in the past year, which suggests a new opening for both Davutoglu and Babacan among disillusioned AKP supporters.

However, both Davutoglu and Babacan will have to attract support outside of this demographic as well to be effective contenders to the AKP itself. The question of Kurdish support recently more salient given Turkish Kurds' frustration with Erdogan and the importance of their votes in securing the loss of AKP during the Istanbul elections. It appears that Davutoglu in particular may see the Turkish-Kurdish vote as a potential demographic for support, especially given his public rejection of the government's decision to remove the HDP mayors as a clear erosion of democracy.

As it now stands, it is unlikely that Kurds will support Davutoglu and his current efforts to build a base—particularly since he has done little to nothing about the violations the government has committed against the HDP. For example, Davutoglu has yet to criticize the detention of the HDP's former co-chairman, Selahattin Demirtaş, who has languished in prison for three years. Davutoglu's silence on this key issue suggests that he agrees with the current "ruling" party's policies toward the Kurds.

Due to these and other ways in which the two leaders have failed to criticize AKP policies over the years, it is safe to assume that it will not be easy for Davutoglu and Babacan to appear different enough from AKP to skeptical voters—unless they are willing to make a serious effort to break with their former party's discriminatory practices. Nevertheless, these two figures

do possess enough public recognition and credibility to pose a serious threat to Erdogan in Turkey's future elections. The AKP is in an increasingly perilous position, now having to compete against Davutoglu and Babacan's two new parties in addition to the opposition CHP and HDP.

Turkish opinion polling bears out this view, showing that Erdogan's party is losing popularity amid its recurring losses. As the

value of the "Turkish currency" continues to fall, the "ruling party" is likely to continue to lose popularity until elections are held, making it a matter of when, not if, Erdogan will have to contend with serious critiques of his tenure from all sides.

Depending on the ability of Davutoglu and Babacan to distinguish themselves from the AKP's abuses of power, the process of forming these new parties, expected to begin in

early 2020, is likely to mark a historic moment in Turkey's political history. And for a political party already in decline, Turkey's recent political decisions will further alienate any remaining Kurdish support that they might have had, making this vote a potential option for the ex-AKP leaders if they are willing to more overtly criticize the AKP's policies towards Turkey's and Syria's Kurdish population.

If Erdogan's party cannot learn

from its previous mistakes and make proper reforms—like the ones Davutoglu called for before he resigned, the AKP risks becoming an emaciated party, incapable of fighting on multiple fronts—either foreign or domestic.

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LE FIGARO

08/12/2019

avec AFP

Plus de 200 Syriens quittent le camp de déplacés d'Al-Hol

Quelque 200 Syriens, en majorité des femmes et des enfants, ont quitté ce dimanche 8 décembre le camp d'Al-Hol dans le nord-est de la Syrie, a annoncé un responsable kurde. Fer de lance en Syrie de la lutte contre le groupe Etat islamique (EI), les forces kurdes gèrent plusieurs camps de déplacés où sont installés les milliers de civils ayant fui les batailles contre les djihadistes, mais aussi des familles de l'EI, notamment des étrangères et leurs enfants.

Les autorités kurdes, qui contrôlent des régions du nord et nord-est de la Syrie, ont commencé en juin à faire partir des dizaines de familles syriennes du camp d'Al-Hol, où s'entassent près de 70.000 personnes vivant dans le plus grand dénuement.

48 familles ont rejoint leurs villages

Dimanche, quelque 48 familles, soit plus de 200 personnes, ont quitté Al-Hol pour rallier leurs villages de Hajine, Chaafa ou encore Baghouz, dans la province orientale de Deir Ezzor, a indiqué à l'AFP Cheikhmous Ahmed, responsable du dossier des déplacés au sein des autorités kurdes.

«La majorité sont des enfants et des femmes, avec certains hommes», a-t-il précisé, assurant que «la majorité» de ceux qui sortent n'ont «aucun lien avec l'EI». Il a toutefois reconnu que certains ont pu être «at-



Une femme voilée dans le camp d'Al-Hol, le 17 février 2019 BULENT KILIC / AFP

tirés» par «l'idéologie» des djihadistes, mais que «leur réinsertion dans la société va aider à éliminer l'idéologie extrémiste de leurs esprits». Cheikhmous Ahmed a ajouté que «certains hommes» pouvaient avoir rallié l'EI «en raison de pressions ou de questions financières», mais qu'aujourd'hui «ils regrettent».

Près de 12.000 étrangers

D'après Cheikhmous Ahmed, environ 300 Syriens avaient déjà quitté le camp la semaine dernière pour rejoindre Deir Ezzor et les départs ont repris après avoir été inter-

rompus à cause d'une opération militaire lancée par la Turquie le 9 octobre contre les forces kurdes.

L'objectif à terme, selon les Kurdes, est de faire sortir du camp tous les Syriens - près de 28.000 au total, d'après le Bureau de coordination des affaires humanitaires de l'ONU (Ocha).

Les camps de déplacés gérés par les Kurdes accueillent aussi 12.000 femmes et enfants étrangers, des proches de djihadistes. Les autorités kurdes appellent les pays occidentaux à rapatrier leurs ressortissants, mais ces retours se font au compte-goutte.

Crackdown on opposition continues in Turkey as state takes over more HDP municipalities

SOLDIERS stormed a city hall in Turkey's south-eastern Batman district today on the orders of the government as its own trustees were appointed to take over four more Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)-run municipalities.

Osman Karabulut, co-mayor of the Ikkopru municipality in the Besiri district of Batman, was dismissed on the grounds that he faces trial on allegations of membership of an illegal organisation. He was replaced by the Besiri district governor Sinan Asci.

The move comes after Ozalp municipality co-mayors Dilan Orenci and Yakup Almac and Baskale municipality co-mayor Erkan Acar were detained as their homes were raided in Van last week.

Muradiye municipality co-mayors Leyla Balkan and Yılmaz Salan were also taken into custody.

It brings the total HDP-run districts taken over by the government to 25.

In August the Turkish state moved against the HDP to take control of the metropolitan municipalities of Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van in the country's largely Kurdish south-east.

The actions were seen as revenge for the HDP refusing to stand a candidate in June's rerun Istanbul mayoral election, which led to a humiliating defeat for authoritarian President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's hand-picked candidate the former prime minister Binali Yildirim.

Mr Yildirim lost by more than 800,000 votes to the Republican People's Party (CHP) candidate Ekrem Imamoglu. In March's local elections, Mr Erdogan's ruling Justice & Development Party (AKP) had also lost the capital Ankara and failed to win in Turkey's third-largest city Izmir, a CHP stronghold.

At least 92 people were held in raids in the province of Ankara last month. Exiled former HDP activist Hazal Yasacan told the Star she was lucky after her family home in the capital was raided, with authorities looking to quiz her on trumped-up terrorism charges.

Last month it was reported that 163,000 HDP activists, elected officials and MPs have been detained since 2015.



10-12-2019
Karwan Faidhi Dri

Russia wants Syrian Kurds to unify, clarify their demands of Moscow: Kurdish opposition

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region – A delegation from the Syrian Kurdish opposition group received Monday by a special Russian presidential envoy in Moscow was told Kurds must clarify their demands of Russia and turn reconciliatory talks between themselves into agreements for unity.

The three-member delegation from the Kurdish National Council (ENKS) met with Mikhail Bogdanov, Russian deputy foreign minister and special presidential envoy to the Middle East and Africa.

"The situation in Syria was looked into in detail, with a focus on the situation of northeast of the country," read a statement from the Russian foreign ministry, and included "the need to take into account the interests of all the ethnic and religious groups in Syria."

The delegation also discussed implementation of Russia's October 22 deal with Turkey to end the latter's Operation Peace Spring against the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in northern Syria.

The operation entered its second month on



Monday. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been accused of using the operation, which has displaced hundreds of thousands of predominantly Kurdish civilians, to re-engineer northern Syria's demographic composition. He plans to resettle millions of mostly Arab Syrians, who fled to Turkey over the course of nearly a decade of conflict, in the area.

Kamiran Hajo, head of ENKS' foreign relations and a member of Syrian constitutional committee, told Rudaw from Moscow that Russia advised them to make their demands clear and strike deals with other Syrian Kurds, in reference to the Democratic

Union Party (PYD) - northeast Syria's ruling party.

"When it comes to the Kurdish question, it [Russia] says that 'You [Kurds] have to make deals and clarify your demands. Then, we can help you in ensuring rights in the future of Syria,'" he said.

The PYD took control of Kurdish areas of Syria in 2011, when regime forces left the region to protect other parts of the country when the Syrian uprising began. The ENKS and PYD have since been at odds.

ENKS officials and members have been jailed, its offices closed, and some of its leaders banned from entering northeast Syria due to their criticism of the PYD.

Before Turkey's invasion, deals between the two parties were struck, but not implemented. The two sides have re-entered reconciliatory talks following the launch of Peace Spring.

The New York Times

By Farnaz Fassihi
and Ronen Bergman
Dec. 10, 2019

Iran Banks Burned, Then Customer Accounts Were Exposed Online

The details of millions of Iranian bank cards were published online after antigovernment protests last month. Experts suspect a state-sponsored cyberattack.



Protesters burned a branch of Tejarat Bank in the city of Shahriar last month. Abedin Taherkenareh / EPA, via Shutterstock

After demonstrators in Iran set fire to hundreds of bank branches last month in antigovernment protests, the authorities dealt with another less visible banking threat that is only now coming to fuller light: a security breach that exposed the information of millions of Iranian customer accounts.

As of Tuesday, details of 15 million bank debit cards in Iran had been published on social media in the aftermath of the protests, unnerving customers and forcing the government to acknowledge a problem. The exposure represented the most serious banking security breach in

Iran, according to Iranian media and a law firm representing some of the victims.

The breach, which targeted customers of Iran's three largest banks, was likely to further rattle an economy already reeling from the effects of American sanctions and came as Iran's leadership was grappling with deep-seated anger over its deadly crackdown on the protests.

The number of affected accounts represents close to a fifth of the country's population.

"This is the largest financial scam in Iran's history," reported Aftab News, a conservative media outlet. "Millions of Iranians are worried to find their names among the list of hacked accounts."

Iran's information and telecommunications minister, Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi, described the breach as data theft by a disgruntled contractor who had access to the accounts and had exposed them as part of an extortion attempt. He denied the banking system's computers had been hacked.

But outside cyberexperts disputed that claim. They also said a breach of such

magnitude was likely the work of a state entity aiming to stoke instability, not criminals whose objective is blackmail for financial gain.

Iran has been engaged in a cycle of hack and counterhack in a cyberwar against the United States and Israel. Both sides have targeted each other's financial and sensitive government institutions through cyberattacks for years.

The banks affected — Mellat, Tejarat and Sarmayeh — had all been sanctioned more than a year ago by the United States Treasury, which accused them of having transferred money on behalf of blacklisted entities of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, part of the armed forces. The entire Revolutionary Guards organization was designated as a terrorist group by the Trump administration last April.

A White House spokesman did not respond to a request for comment on the Iran banking breach. A spokesman for the Israel Defense Forces said: "We do not respond to foreign reports."

Analysts monitoring Iran said that regardless of who was responsible, the breach created another financial challenge for the Islamic Republic as it struggles to manage tough economic sanctions imposed by the United States, as well as unrest at home and a political backlash in the region over Iran's influence.

The data exposure could have a long-term impact on the three banks if customers lose trust and withdraw their money.

Iran's official silence for nearly two weeks on the exposure could reflect a reluctance by the leadership to acknowledge that its financial institutions are vulnerable, experts said. The bank card data first began to appear on Nov. 27, but it was not until Sunday that Mr. Azari Jahromi, the information minister, commented on the breach.

The persons or entity behind the attack and the motivation remain unclear. The account information was published on a channel called "Your banking cards" on

Telegram, a popular mobile phone app used in Iran. The first message warned that "we will burn the reputation of their banks the same way we torched their banks," referring to protesters across Iran who pillaged and burned about 730 bank branches.

The message on Telegram also stated that the perpetrators had demanded payment from the banks but their request had been ignored, and therefore they would be releasing the details on millions of bank cards. Within hours, they did.

The information uploaded on Telegram contains names of account holders and account numbers but the PIN codes appear obscured. The information also included directions on how to make homemade forgeries of cards containing the leaked information.

The banks sent clients text messages and Iran's cyberpolice alerted them in an email titled, "Your bank account is in danger of illegal usage," and asked customers to visit a bank branch and replace their cards, according to a copy of the email published in Iranian media.

None of the three banks have issued public statements acknowledging the breach.

ClearSky, a cybersecurity company that was among the first to issue warnings of the breach, said it had damaged the flow of financial transactions inside Iran and had harmed the reputation of the affected banks, with customers panicking about their personal information having been made public.

Boaz Dolev, the chief executive officer of ClearSky, said the scope of the breach indicated that whoever was responsible possessed "high technological capability, which is usually at the hand of state intelligence services."

ClearSky issued a warning to Israeli credit card companies on Dec. 3 to be on alert in case of an Iranian counterattack if the authorities in Tehran concluded the banks had been compromised by hostile foreign powers.

The last major hacking targeting Iranian banks occurred in 2012 when hackers gained access to the account information of three million users across 22 banks. An information technology specialist, Khosrow Zare Farid, who formerly managed a company for electronic payments in Iran, claimed responsibility for the hack to prove security loopholes in Iran's electronic banking system, according to media reports.

In the United States, the Justice Department accused Iran of major cyberattacks from 2011 to 2013 targeting several American banks including Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo, US Bank and PNC Bank. The hackers interrupted customer service and jammed websites. In 2016, seven Iranians were indicted on federal charges for cyberattacks on behalf of the Revolutionary Guards.

The Trump administration has given the United States military more power to launch pre-emptive cyberattacks on Iranian interests, reversing a directive under President Barack Obama that required the president's permission for cyberattacks that could trigger "significant consequences."

An Iranian organization that identifies itself as the Citizenship Protection Foundation has offered free legal consultations for Iranians affected by the data breach, according to its website and reports in Iranian media. The organization's home page includes a link to "the hacking of 10 million accounts" and says that Iran's intelligence officials are investigating.

Amir Rashidi, an Iranian internet expert who designed the cyberstructure of Iran's state-owned petrochemical industry, said that although Iran's state-sponsored hackers are sophisticated, the cybersecurity of most government entities and banks in the country "is in shambles."

Many loopholes, he said, "make it easy and possible for state actors and criminals to hack the system."

Mark Mazzetti contributed reporting.

Répression à la mitrailleuse dans le sud de l'Iran

Le mouvement de contestation a été maté avec une grande violence dans la région du Khouzistan

La répression du mouvement de contestation a été particulièrement forte dans cette région, où des dizaines de manifestants ont été abattus en marge d'accrochages avec les gardiens de la révolution.

Depuis le 5 décembre, Internet est enfin rétabli en Iran après un black-out total lors du mouvement de contestation déclenché après l'annonce, le 14 novembre, de la hausse des prix de l'essence. Avec le retour du pays en ligne, de nouveaux détails émergent sur un épisode particulièrement sanglant de la répression menée par les autorités de la République islamique. Un massacre a ainsi eu lieu à Mahshahr, dans la région du Khouzistan (sud-ouest), l'une des dernières reconnectées au réseau. Ainsi, le 19 novembre, des dizaines de manifestants ont été abattus en marge d'accrochages violents entre contestataires et gardiens de la révolution, l'épine dorsale sécuritaire du régime.

Une source locale a indiqué au Monde avoir eu connaissance de la mort d'au moins trente personnes, tuées au même endroit. Rapportant le même événement, le New York Times a fait état d'un bilan de 40 à 100 morts. Des vidéos filmées lors des affrontements et publiées sur Internet depuis révèlent la présence dans la région d'un lourd dispositif déployé par les gardiens : pick-up équipés de mitrailleuses et, pour la première fois depuis la guerre Iran-Irak (1980-1988), des chars patrouillant dans la ville tandis que des tirs nourris se font entendre.

« Tout a commencé lorsque nous avons bloqué les axes routiers menant à la ville de Mahshahr à partir du 15 novembre, a indiqué au Monde un manifestant présent sur les lieux. Notre but était de bloquer les activités du complexe pétrochimique du port Imam-Khomeini. Nous cherchions à ce que notre voix soit entendue par Téhéran. Le complexe embauche des gens d'ailleurs, jamais des gens d'ici. »

Manifestants non armés abattus

Ce sont d'abord les forces de l'ordre régulières qui interviennent. La police tire en l'air ou avec des balles en caoutchouc contre des manifestants dont certains portent des armes et commencent selon des témoins à en faire usage. Dans cette région, foyer de la minorité arabe, la détentation d'armes à feu est courante.

Les gardiens de la révolution sont alors envoyés sur place et, si le flou persiste quant au déclenchement des accrochages, il est avéré que des manifestants non armés ont été abattus. Selon le New York Times et le journaliste iranien en exil Shahed Alavi, les gardiens de la révolution auraient été les premiers à ouvrir le feu, sans sommation. Mais la chaîne BBC Persian, citant une habitante, soutient qu'une balle avait été tirée depuis une zone marécageuse de Shahrak-e Shahid Chamran vers les gardiens de la révolution, touchant l'un d'eux.

Tous les récits s'accordent néanmoins sur le fait que les manifestants bloquant la route, non armés, se sont réfugiés dans le marais et que les gardiens ont continué leurs tirs, tuant de nombreux contestataires. Des habitants ont précisé que trois jeunes habitants des environs, disparus depuis le 19 novembre, avaient été retrouvés quelques jours plus tard, morts, dans les marais.

Mahshahr, et de manière plus générale le Khouzistan, est une province singulière. En dépit d'importantes ressources pétrolières, sa population est extrêmement pauvre et se considère comme délaissée par la capitale. Dans toute la région, les traces de la guerre avec l'Irak restent visibles aujourd'hui, ajoutant au sentiment de discrimination et d'abandon par le pouvoir central.

Aucun chiffre officiel

« A cause des activités pétrochimiques, le nombre d'enfants handicapés nés dans

cette région bat un record en Iran, explique un chercheur iranien, fin connaisseur du Khouzistan. Certains jeunes arabes ont déjà formé des groupes rebelles, parfois avec des tendances séparatistes. La moindre manifestation peut se transformer en lutte armée. C'est bien pour cela que la contestation à Mahshahr a duré si longtemps alors qu'ailleurs dans le Khouzistan, elle a été facilement réprimée dès les premiers jours. »

Le lendemain de la tuerie, le ministre de l'intérieur, Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli, a confirmé une intervention des gardiens de la révolution et a qualifié les manifestants d'émeutiers ayant bloqué une voie stratégique. Aucun chiffre officiel n'existe sur le nombre des morts ou celui des interpellations dans cette région. Selon des habitants, après cet épisode, de nombreux jeunes hommes des environs se sont enfuis, de peur d'être arrêtés.

Dans le reste du pays, le manque d'informations sur le sort des personnes arrêtées lors de la répression reste par ailleurs criant. La militante des droits humains Nargesse Mohammadi, elle-même détenue depuis 2015 dans la prison d'Evin à Téhéran, a toutefois réussi à faire parvenir clandestinement vers l'extérieur un témoignage porteur de détails inquiétants.

Dans ce document publié le 1er décembre, elle raconte avoir croisé un jeune homme arrêté pendant une manifestation dans la ville de d'Eslamshahr, à l'ouest de Téhéran, blessé à la jambe par balle et souffrant d'une hémorragie. Dans un autre passage de sa lettre, la militante explique la situation d'une jeune femme, elle aussi arrêtée dans une manifestation à Téhéran et malmenée en vue d'obtenir une confession forcée. L'interrogateur de la jeune iranienne, la traitant des « pires insultes », lui avait tiré « avec force » les cheveux, jusqu'à ce qu'elle « accepte de dire tout ce qu'on lui avait demandé devant une caméra ».

« Le massacre de Sinak » fait craindre une dangereuse escalade dans la contestation en Irak

Dans la nuit de vendredi à samedi, au moins 24 personnes ont été tuées et une centaine d'autres blessées, quand des hommes armés ont attaqué le garage de Sinak qu'occupent les contestataires.

Dans la nuit du vendredi 6 au samedi 7 décembre, au moins vingt-quatre personnes ont été tuées – vingt manifestants et quatre policiers – et une centaine d'autres blessées à Bagdad par des hommes non identifiés armés de mitrailleuses. L'attaque s'est concentrée sur le garage de Sinak qu'occupent les contestataires, en prolongement de la place Tahrir, dans la capitale irakienne.

Le témoignage d'un manifestant, recueilli par Amnesty International, corrobore ceux publiés sur les réseaux sociaux et par les agences de presse. A la tombée de la nuit, vendredi 6 décembre, « nous avons entendu et vu des mitrailleuses, au moins sept, installées sur des pick-up qui sont entrés dans la zone du pont et du garage de Sinak », raconte-t-il. « Ils avaient déjà des hommes parmi la foule car, quand ça a commencé, ils sont arrivés depuis deux directions », poursuit le témoin. Des tirs nourris ont résonné près du garage à étages occupé par les contestataires, puis à l'intérieur, où un incendie s'est déclaré, ainsi que sur le pont adjacent. « Ils avaient le contrôle total de la zone (...), ajoute ce manifestant. Ils l'ont contrôlée jusqu'à 6 heures du matin. »

Plus de 445 morts et 20 000 blessés depuis le 1er octobre

Le « massacre de Sinak », ainsi que le nomment les manifestants, est un tournant dans la contestation contre le pouvoir, qui a déjà fait plus de 445 morts et 20 000 blessés depuis le 1er octobre. Il fait craindre de nouvelles attaques contre le sit-in et une dangereuse escalade entre groupes armés chiites, alors que les tractations sont engagées pour nommer un premier ministre après la démission d'Adel Abdel Mahdi, le 29 novembre.



Des opposants au régime dans un bâtiment près du pont Sinak, lors d'une manifestation le 18 novembre 2019. Khalid Mohammed / AP

Les manifestants accusent des membres de milices chiites soutenues par l'Iran d'être derrière l'attaque. Elles sont déjà suspectées d'avoir déployé des snipers à Bagdad lors de la première semaine d'octobre, qui avaient fait de nombreuses victimes, d'avoir mené des attaques contre des sit-in et tué des activistes dans des villes du sud du pays. Jeudi 5 décembre, lors d'une contre-manifestation de membres de milices chiites place Tahrir, des manifestants avaient été poignardés.

Après la tuerie de Sinak, le président Barham Saleh a appelé à « protéger les manifestants pacifiques » et à retrouver et juger « les criminels ». Mais depuis le début de la contestation, les autorités assurent ne pouvoir ni identifier ni arrêter les auteurs d'attaques dans un pays où les factions armées pro-Iran gagnent en influence.

Certaines d'entre elles, comme l'organisation Badr ou la Ligue des vertueux (« Asaib Ahl Al-Haq »), sont la colonne vertébrale des unités de la Mobilisation populaire (MP), une force paramilitaire formée en 2014 pour lutter contre l'organisation Etat

islamique (EI) et désormais intégrée aux forces armées. Elles ont noyauté d'autres corps, notamment le ministère de l'intérieur et la sûreté nationale. Leurs chefs dirigent la deuxième force politique au Parlement depuis 2018, avec la coalition Al-Fatah.

D'autres milices, comme les brigades Hezbollah ou Al-Khorasani, restées en marge de la MP, sont en lien étroit avec le général iranien Qassem Soleimani, le chef des forces Al-Qods des gardiens de la révolution. Ce dernier est venu plusieurs fois à Bagdad depuis le début de la contestation, pour piloter la réponse sécuritaire et les tractations politiques, selon des sources officielles anonymes.

Un obus devant la maison de Moqtada Al-Sadr

Vendredi, les forces de sécurité qui encerclent la place ne sont pas intervenues. La file de pick-up montée de mitrailleuses a pu passer leurs barrages sans être arrêtée. Ce sont des membres des Brigades de la paix (« Saraya Al-Salam »), la milice du chef populiste chiite Moqtada Al-Sadr, non armés, mais identifiés par

leur casquette bleue, qui ont protégé les manifestants. Depuis le début de la contestation, ses membres sont présents discrètement pour assurer la sécurité et la logistique du sit-in.

Leur chef, à la tête de la première force politique au Parlement, la coalition Sairoun (« En marche »), s'est rangé du côté des contestataires, dont beaucoup sont issus de sa base dans les quartiers défavorisés chiites. De nombreux manifestants refusent son patronage, le considérant comme partie intégrante du « système » dont ils réclament la chute, mais ils n'ont d'autre choix que d'accepter la protection de ses membres face aux menaces.

L'intervention des Brigades de la paix a été suivie de représailles. Ses partisans sont déjà soupçonnés par des factions rivales chiites d'être derrière les incendies de sièges de partis et de factions armées dans des villes du Sud depuis début octobre. Samedi à l'aube, un obus a été lâché par un drone devant l'enceinte de la maison de Moqtada Al-Sadr, dans la ville sainte chiite de Nadjaf, sans faire de victimes, selon des membres du courant sadriste. Il a été vu comme un message d'intimidation envoyé au chef populiste, actuellement en Iran, pour qu'il cesse son soutien à la contestation. Cette attaque pourrait « déclencher une guerre civile », a averti son porte-parole, tout en appelant à « la retenue ».

Dénonciation de l'ingérence iranienne

Les rivaux de Moqtada Al-Sadr dans le camp chiite le soupçonnent de vouloir utiliser son influence dans la rue pour peser sur les tractations en cours pour la désignation d'un nouveau premier ministre. En octobre 2018, la nom.

Turkey 'to resettle 1 million Syrians' into formerly Kurdish-held area

Turkey launched an offensive against the Kurdish YPG militia in October

Turkey aims to settle one million Syrian war refugees in the area of northern Syria where it carried out a military incursion in October, President Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday.

He told state broadcaster TRT that Ankara would finance the resettlement on its own if allies did not provide support.

Turkey and its Syrian rebel allies launched the offensive against the Kurdish YPG militia, which Ankara views as a terrorist group. After seizing a strip of land inside Syria 120km (75 miles) long and around 30km (18 miles) wide running from the town of Ras Al Ain to Tel Abyad, Turkey signed separate deals with the United States and Russia to halt its assault.

Turkey had previously said it could settle up to 2 million Syrian refugees in a 444-km (275-mile)-



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says he is to send 1 million Syrians to the previously Kurdish-held area of Syria where the country launched an incursion in October. EPA

long "safe zone" it aimed to form in north-eastern Syria, and repeatedly urged NATO allies to provide financial aid for the plans.

Turkey currently hosts more than 3.5 million refugees from neighbouring Syria's 8-1/2-year-

old war. Turkish officials have not indicated when any resettlement of refugees would begin.

The Turkish nation can carry out an exemplary step between Ras Al Ain and Tel Abyad," Erdogan said in his TRT interview, holding up a map of the region with mar-

kings on it. "Settling one million people between Tel Abyad and Ras Al Ain, that is our aim in the safe zone, that is our plan."

Last week, Erdogan met his German, French and British counterparts on the sidelines of a NATO summit in London to hold talks on developments in Syria and his "safe zone" plan.

After the summit, Erdogan said one country, which he did not name, had pledged support for the plan but that Germany, France and Britain had not done so. He had previously said that Qatar could back it.

The European Union and Turkey's allies in NATO have rejected its calls for financial assistance and condemned the Turkish offensive, which they said might hinder the fight against Islamic State in Syria. Turkey has dismissed the concerns.

Turquie. La justice européenne se penche sur le cas Kavala

L'homme d'affaires et mécène de la société civile en Turquie a été arrêté en septembre 2017. Accusé de « terrorisme », il dénonce une détention arbitraire par une justice aux ordres.

À 10 h, ce mercredi 11 décembre au matin, les hautes sphères du pouvoir en Turquie et les multiples ONG de la société civile auront les yeux braqués sur Strasbourg : la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (CEDH) doit rendre un arrêt très attendu sur le cas d'Osman Kavala.

Cet homme d'affaires de 62 ans, mécène de la culture et bienfaiteur des ONG pacifistes et démocrates, a été arrêté le 18 septembre 2017, en pleine

vague de répression après le coup d'État manqué de l'été 2016. Il dénonce une détention arbitraire et une justice aux ordres.

Officiellement, Kavala est inculpé de participation au complot contre le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Lui, le « milliardaire rouge », figure de la gauche, aurait participé à cette tentative avortée de "renverser l'ordre constitutionnel" et de "renverser le gouvernement". "Contre toute vraisemblance,

l'accusation le lie à la confrérie islamique de Fethullah Gülen, mouvement religieux « terroriste » qui a tenté de renverser Erdogan après l'avoir longtemps soutenu.

Coup d'État, État d'urgence

L'état d'urgence proclamé dans la foulée du coup d'État de 2016 a donné au pouvoir les instruments pour pourchasser sans discrimination les gülenistes, les militants kurdes et les démocrates, qu'il suffit d'associer aux uns ou aux autres. Plus de 150

000 personnes (policiers, militaires, professeurs...) ont été révoquées de la fonction publique, plus de 70 000 arrêtées, dont d'innombrables avocats et journalistes... Kavala n'est que le plus emblématique d'entre eux.

Parmi les purgés, figurent de nombreux juges et procureurs, remplacés à la va-vite par de jeunes magistrats sans expérience et malléables, instruments zélés ou craintifs d'une justice aux ordres.

Presentation by Kurdish feminist, Dilar Dirik – Transnational Institute of Social Ecology



ISE board and faculty member Brian Tokar reports:

Dilar Dirik, a noted international voice of the Kurdish women's movement, was a keynote speaker at the recent fifth international conference of Trise (Transnational Institute of Social Ecology), the European social ecology organization. Speaking via Skype from Cambridge, England to an audience of well over 100 in Athens, Greece, she offered a wealth of important background information on the Kurdish movement, various international support efforts, and the current situation on the ground.

Dirik began by emphasizing that the Kurdish militias' alliance with US forces was a tactical response to the threat of ISIS, which was best known for enslaving women, and slaughtering the Yazidis, among other abuses, and should not be confused with a geostrategic alliance. The Kurds knew from the outset that the US could not be trusted in the long run, and was merely tolerating Kurdish self-governance in order to defeat ISIS.

It is important to recall that Turkey has the 2nd largest army in NATO. Today, they are weaponizing 3.6 million Syrian refugees as part of their rationale for attacking northern Syria. Demonstrations have been held around the world to support the people of Rojava and the Kurdish-initiated revolution there, but also to further the defense of alternative institutions in all our communities. It's a new kind of internationalism, and a significant departure from the predominantly state-centered internationalism of the Soviet era, she suggested. Some recent events have also celebrated the life and work of Ivana Hoffman, a young Black German feminist, who was the first internationalist to have been killed in Rojava.

The current movement reaches beyond the limits of traditional solidarity, and highlights all our common struggles, Dirik explained. It is about self-determination, democratic self-development, and the ability of all peoples to define themselves beyond the limits of the State and patriarchy. Kurdish activists, especially women, work actively within the

larger society while also creating separate, decolonized spaces to more fully realize women's autonomy. They were able to accomplish this, not only within Kurdish enclaves, but in a variety of ethnic and religious communities across northern and eastern Syria.

The international support movement highlights the role of women, youth, artists, indigenous peoples, and others who are historically marginalized, highlighting the tensions Abdullah Ocalan has emphasized between democratic and authoritarian aspects of modernity. The movement engages in various forms of popular and women's diplomacy and cultivates strategic alliances with left tendencies around the world. It is helping preserve cultural knowledge that has been undermined by statist and capitalist hegemony, assimilation, and social engineering. Rojava represents a prefigurative and subversive historical legacy for all of us, rooted in a distinctively non-essentialist understanding of Kurdishness.

The New York Times

Dec. 11, 2019

By Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Eric Schmitt

Turkey and Russia Judged Bigger Risk Than ISIS for U.S. Troops in Syria

American commanders have requested guidance on dealing with an attack from those armed groups and others from Iran and the Syrian government, but officials say they have received muddled direction.

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration's rapidly shifting strategy in northern Syria has American commanders there scrambling to protect their forces from an expected surge in actions by military units from Turkey, Russia, Iran and the Syrian government, as well as their proxy forces, according to Defense Department officials. American commanders now see these armed groups as a greater danger than the Islamic State forces they were sent to fight.

Commanders have requested guidance outlining how American forces might deal with an attack from the assortment of armed groups, including Russian-backed Syrian government forces, that have, in the past, tried to seize territory held by the United States. But they have received muddled direction from the Pentagon, two Defense Department officials said.

For now, the American command heavily relies on the instincts of junior commanders on the ground, cautionary phone calls to officials from Russia and Turkey and overhead surveillance — susceptible to failure in poor weather — to help avoid close encounters with other forces in the Euphrates River Valley, where most American troops are based.

“These forces are at risk without a clear understanding of what they are expected to achieve, and without the political support of their nation, if or more likely when, one of these American adversaries decided to attack them,” said Jennifer Cafarella, the research director for the Institute for the Study of War in Washington. “These guys are deployed in one of the most risky, complex and rapidly evolving environments on the planet.”

These concerns are the result of President Trump's order to withdraw 1,000 American troops from the country, amid Turkey's invasion of northern Syria in October. Weeks later, Mr. Trump approved the Pentagon's plan to leave roughly 500 troops behind at several outposts around the city Deir al-Zour to go after the Islamic State, often known as ISIS.



An American military vehicle in northeastern Syria, where forces have resumed pursuing remnants of the Islamic State. Credit... Delil Souleiman/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Though Mr. Trump said the American presence there is “to protect the oil,” the reality is that the Americans are continuing their earlier mission of pursuing remnants of the Islamic State, military officials say. The Americans continue to operate alongside allies in the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

Trump Threw This Mission Into Chaos. The Military Is Scrambling To Save It. On a rare visit to U.S. bases in eastern Syria, we saw how President Trump's message is being reinterpreted on the ground.

These Bradley fighting vehicles just arrived in Syria. The National Guard showed them off to us during a rare visit to an American base here. “O.K., is everybody good? Because the most important story is the Bradleys. Combat power: That's what the Bradleys brings to the fight.” But why bring these vehicles in now? The commander in chief says one thing: “We're keeping the oil. We have the oil. The oil is secure. We left troops behind only for the oil.” While the mil-

itary says another: “I would be cautious with saying that the mission to secure the oil fields. The mission is the defeat of ISIS.” What we saw on the ground clarifies some of the confusion. The military is scrambling to save a mission that Trump has thrown into chaos. In early October, Trump announced an end to U.S. presence in northeastern Syria. “We are out of there. We've been out of there for a while. No soldiers whatsoever.” So the military abandoned bases and outposts and began to cede influence. Which let Russian and Syrian government forces sweep in to fill the vacuum. But as the U.S. was pulling out, military leaders convinced Trump that some troops had to stay. They said they needed to stop a precious resource, oil, from falling into the wrong hands. The plan worked. But when we visited, the oil didn't seem like a priority. “And where are the oil fields exactly, from here?” “I think there's one right up there. I'm not really sure.” “We don't go patrol the oil fields or anything of that sort. But I mean having the Apaches here is a big strategic deterrence.” The priorities we saw? “We know that ISIS is trying to regroup.” Con-

tinue the fight against ISIS. “And we’re going to continue to put the pressure on ISIS. That is our mission.” Mend alliances — which is why a spokesman for the American-led coalition made a point of praising Kurdish forces in front of the cameras. “And we will never forget the sacrifice made by the strong, proud, brave S.D.F. warriors throughout Syria.” And more broadly, signal that the U.S. still has a foothold here. Clearly the president’s message ... “We’re getting out of the endless wars.” ... is being reinterpreted on the ground. “The mission still continues. We’ll be in bases from Deir al-Zour to Qamishli to Derik, and all throughout that expansive area.” What we saw was not a military in retreat. We saw a military displaying its beefed-up arsenal. “The Bradley provides a deterrent against conflict. Bad guys see it and they don’t want to fight it.” Evidence that for the U.S., the endless war here is going to last a little longer.

On a rare visit to U.S. bases in eastern Syria, we saw how President Trump’s message is being reinterpreted on the ground. CreditCredit...The New York Times

As American forces pulled back in early October, an American military document circulated to forces in the region, warned of the coming difficulties. “Complexity” surrounding American forces in northern Syria “has only increased in recent weeks as multiple opposing groups and actors have gradually increased their forces in surrounding areas,” said the document, a copy of which was obtained by The New York Times. The warning was part of a flurry of situation reports, maps and communiqués outlining the movements of Russian military forces around the Syrian city of Manbij and the start of Turkey’s military operation along the Syria-Turkey border.

Before Turkish-backed forces entered the area in northern Syria previously held by United States troops, the American and Russian militaries were responsible for coordinating military operations in that part of the country, and had done so for three years. Both militaries had relied on a “de-confliction” phone line and a separate planning group, using a map broken down into lettered and numbered sectors, known as a keypad, for reference. This allowed officials from both countries to determine where troops were operating.

But the introduction of hundreds of Turkish-backed forces quickly strained this long-standing system, as shown by the accidental Turkish shelling close to an American outpost near the Turkey-Syria border in early October. In one of the military documents obtained by The Times, American of-



On a rare visit to U.S. bases in eastern Syria, we saw how President Trump’s message is being reinterpreted on the ground. CreditCredit...The New York Times

officials wrote after that attack that they “cannot rule out” that Turkish military forces “will miscalculate U.S. force dispositions again.”

Speaking to lawmakers on the House Armed Services Committee Wednesday, Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper said that the situation in northern Syria has “generally stabilized,” although he cautioned that Turkish-backed fighters remained a “wild-card.”

Mr. Esper added that there currently are no plans to withdraw American troops from the country. “Right now there’s no disposition plans that I’m tracking,” Mr. Esper said.

Turkish-backed fighters are often poorly managed by the Turkish military, said several Defense Department officials, who added that the Russian military is far more reliable in navigating the difficulties of such a contested battlefield.

To underscore the fact that the battlefield in northern Syria is continuously changing, Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie, the head of the military’s Central Command, said in a recent interview that protecting the oil fields might ultimately draw a larger challenge from Syrian Army troops west of the Euphrates. “I’d expect at some point the regime will come forward to that ground,” General McKenzie said.

But for now, General McKenzie said, the remaining American forces in northern Syria, working alongside several thousand allied militia members from the Syrian Democratic Forces, will be able to carry out “effective” counterterrorism missions against ISIS in that part of the country. Last month, the forces restarted operations against the terrorist group, after groups of ISIS fighters began operating again in the chaos created by the Turkish incursion and American retreat.

“We have enough to very capably, with our S.D.F. partners, pursue a counterterrorism platform against ISIS,” General McKenzie said.

He noted that the United States maintains a strong capability for reconnaissance and combat air power to protect American forces and to carry out strike missions when necessary. “We have everything we need,” General McKenzie said in the interview.

The idea that Syrian troops could move to retake ground from the Americans is nothing new.

In February 2018, about 500 Syrian troops and dozens of vehicles, backed by Russian contractors, attacked the Conoco gas plant near Deir al-Zour. American commandos there, alongside Kurdish forces and backed by waves of American aircraft, fought back, killing hundreds of the fighters.

The hourslong battle was a clear message to other fighters in the region that the Americans would protect their partner forces.

But after months of political tumult in Washington and Mr. Trump’s assent to the Turkish invasion in October, it remains unclear if American forces, even with an addition of Bradley armored fighting vehicles, would stand and fight as they have in the past, the officials said.

The Bradleys, the officials added, were sent only as a signal of resolve, not necessarily to fight the Syrian government’s military.

Carlotta Gall contributed reporting from Istanbul.

Ankara fait barrage aux plans de défense de l'OTAN pour l'Europe de l'Est

La Turquie entend encore bloquer les décisions finales relatives au plan de défense de l'OTAN pour la Pologne et les pays baltes. L'Europe de l'Est appelle donc l'alliance à réaffirmer ses engagements.

La semaine dernière, lors du sommet de l'OTAN à Londres, la Turquie avait menacé de bloquer l'accord de défense de l'OTAN pour la Pologne et les pays baltes à moins que l'alliance n'accepte de reconnaître les combattants kurdes en Syrie — contre qui Ankara avait lancé une offensive en octobre — comme étant des terroristes.

Pour le gouvernement turc, les Unités de protection du peuple (YPG), qui sont l'épine dorsale des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), forment un groupe terroriste lié aux insurgés kurdes présents sur son propre territoire. Les alliés de l'OTAN se sont donc attirés les foudres d'Ankara après avoir accordé leur soutien à la milice kurde, considérant qu'il s'agissait d'un partenaire dans la lutte contre l'État islamique en Syrie.

À l'issue du sommet londonien, le ralliement du président turc Recep Tayyip Erdoğan au plan de défense avait finalement été annoncé — une information confirmée par le ministre polonais de la Défense, Mariusz Błaszczak. Selon ce dernier, un entretien à huis clos entre le Président polonais Andrzej Duda et son homologue turc avait contribué à débloquer la situation.

Les raisons qui ont poussé M. Erdoğan à abandonner sa requête demeurent mystérieuses. Le Secrétaire général de l'alliance, Jens Stoltenberg, a confirmé à la presse que pendant la séance de travail, aucune discussion sur les combattants kurdes n'avait eu lieu. Il est donc peu probable que le revirement du président turc soit lié à la réunion. D'autres sources indiquent cependant qu'un entretien fortuit a eu lieu entre M. Erdoğan et M. Trump.

À l'issue du sommet, le président turc a déclaré que l'OTAN ne devait pas abandonner la Turquie dans sa lutte contre le terrorisme. Des propos tenus après avoir accepté le plan de l'alliance pour la défense de la Pologne et des pays baltes à la demande de la France, de l'Allemagne, de la Pologne et de Jens Stoltenberg.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during NATO Summit in London, Britain, 04 December 2019. NATO countries' heads of states and governments gather in London for a two-day meeting. After an hour Central hall Westminster was re-open. EPA-EFE/WILL OLIVER [EPA-EFE/WILL OLIVER]

« Ils nous ont appelés et nous ont demandé de soutenir ce plan. Après en avoir discuté avec mes collègues, nous avons marqué notre accord, mais ne nous abandonnez pas dans la lutte contre le terrorisme », a précisé M. Erdoğan.

Lors d'une visite en Italie quelques jours après le sommet de Londres, le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu a tenu des propos démontrant que le gouvernement turc avait fait volte-face. Il a déclaré que la position d'Ankara sur la question n'avait pas changé et que son pays allait bloquer la publication finale de la feuille de route de l'OTAN sur la défense de ses frontières orientales tant que l'organisation ne reconnaîtrait pas l'YPG comme un groupe terroriste.

M. Çavuşoğlu a indiqué que la Turquie avait accepté de « passer à la prochaine étape du dispositif », mais n'avait approuvé aucune décision concernant l'approbation du plan de défense en lui-même. Il a souligné qu'« aucun compromis n'avait été établi ».

« Ankara s'opposera au plan de l'alliance

tant qu'elle ne recevra pas un plan de défense pour la Turquie, qui devra être conforme au point de vue turc sur l'YPG », a affirmé le ministre turc.

Il a ajouté qu'« aucun plan de défense pour le flanc Est ne sera[it] accepté tant que la Turquie ne recevra[it] pas un plan semblable » et la position d'Ankara pendant le sommet londonien constituait simplement un « geste de bonne volonté à l'égard des alliés ».

« Ce serait injuste que certains pays soient en faveur d'un plan de défense pour le flanc Est, mais que les mêmes refusent un plan de défense nous concernant ».

Réponse polonaise

Pendant le sommet de l'OTAN de la semaine dernière, l'opposition de la Turquie a échauffé les esprits des États de l'Europe de l'Est, qui doutaient déjà de la détermination de leurs alliées à assurer leur défense à la suite des déclarations d'Emmanuel Macron sur l'état de « mort cérébrale » de l'alliance.

Un représentant polonais a indiqué lundi (9 décembre) que l'OTAN ne pouvait pas faire marche arrière et devait poursuivre la mise en place du plan de défense pour la Pologne et les pays baltes, malgré les menaces d'Ankara.

« L'Alliance ne peut pas revenir sur ses pas », a maintenu Krzysztof Szczerski, un homme politique proche du président polonais. « Les décisions prises par l'OTAN concernent la Pologne et les pays baltes. Des plans sur la situation en Turquie ont aussi été élaborés. Et, nous attendons désormais leur mise en œuvre. C'est une question militaire ».

Le ministre turc de la Défense, Hulusi Akar, a réaffirmé que le gouvernement souhaitait la publication simultanée des deux plans, et qu'Ankara campait sur ses positions au sujet de l'YPG.

« Nous avons autorisé que le plan pour la Pologne et les pays baltes, qui est désormais en révision, soit adopté par le

Conseil de l'OTAN et qu'il soit réévalué par le comité militaire », a déclaré M. Akar.

« Toutefois, après des discussions avec le secrétaire général de l'OTAN, nous nous sommes mis d'accord pour que les deux plans soient publiés au même moment », a-t-il précisé, ajoutant que la Turquie restait ouverte à toute coopération à ce sujet.

Les ministres de la Défense des pays baltes et le président polonais se sont montrés optimistes lors du sommet à Londres, contrairement à d'autres représentants des pays d'Europe de l'Est qui ont fait preuve plus de prudence une fois interrogés sur des perspectives d'apaisement. « C'est comme si la région était de nouveau le pion des grandes puissances », a révélé l'un d'entre eux.

Le conseiller de M. Erdoğan, Gülnur Aybet, a souligné, en marge du sommet, que du point de vue turc, le contentieux sur le plan de défense constituait un « sujet interne à l'OTAN » que les leaders devaient aborder à huis clos.

Recrudescence des tensions

Les dirigeants d'Europe occidentale perdent patience face à la Turquie qui, selon eux, glisse de plus en plus vers l'autoritarisme.

Les tensions entre les alliés de l'OTAN et Ankara se sont aggravées après l'échec du coup d'État de 2016 en Turquie, notamment parce que Washington avait refusé d'extrader le religieux turc Fethullah Gülen, que Recep Tayyip Erdoğan considérait comme l'instigateur du coup.

Au cours des derniers mois, de nombreux alliés et responsables de l'OTAN ont exprimé leurs préoccupations au sujet de l'évolution de la Turquie au sein de l'alliance, en particulier après l'achat par Ankara du système russe de défense antimissile S-400 – qui serait incompatible avec les systèmes de communication de l'OTAN, et donc incontrôlable.

Selon un haut responsable de l'agence russe de coopération militaire, la Russie et la Turquie travaillent sur un contrat concernant un nouveau lot de S-400, Moscou espérant conclure l'accord au début 2020.



By Wladimir van Wilgenburg
December 12-2019

Kurdish-led forces target ISIS smuggling network in Syria

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The US-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) on Wednesday announced that they had carried out a large-scale operation against an Islamic State smuggling network in Syria's eastern Deir al-Zor province.

“Our Counter-Terrorism units carried out a wider operation against an ISIS sleeper-cell that were responsible for running a smuggling network of logistical equipment, weapons and other armory,” the SDF press office said in a statement, which added that multiple militants were captured in three separate operations in Diban, Busayra, and Hajin.

“Our forces targeted their logistical and weapons supply-lines as well as the ISIS members responsible for the network. The members of the smuggler-network posed a threat and carried out attacks on the population with the items that were being traded,” the SDF said.

As well as the arrest of the individuals suspected of being part of the smuggling network, said the statement, “A large number of weapons and armory and miscellaneous documents were seized during the operation.”

The SDF stated that the operation would have

the effect of foiling future attempts of the group to carry out new attacks.

Col. Myles Caggins, spokesman for the US-led anti-Islamic State coalition, formally known as Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Resolve (CJTF-OIR), told Kurdistan 24 that the SDF “are tenacious in their pursuit of ISIS remnants.”

“Finding this weapons cache will hinder Daesh's [Islamic State's] ability to threaten the local civilian people.”

Caggins later called attention to the raids in a tweet, referring to the SDF as the coalition's “security partners in Syria.”

After US President Donald Trump's decision in late October to leave about 500 to 600 American troops in Syria to protect oilfields, the SDF continued counter-Islamic State operations, including those targeting the extremist group's smuggling networks.

On Dec. 4, the SDF arrested Shawaysh Sattam Saud Al-Ajrash Al-Thabti Al-Shammari, who is accused of being responsible for smuggling Islamic State fighters from Syria's sprawling detention camps to Iraq.

Counter-terrorism units also arrested those belonging to an Islamic State smuggling network in late November that was attempting to smuggle Islamic State-affiliated women from al-Hol Camp to Turkish-controlled territories.

Read More: Kurdish-led forces bust ISIS human smuggling ring in north Syria

Nicholas Heras, a Fellow at the Center for a New American Security, told Kurdistan 24 that “the SDF preserved the bulk of its counter-terror units even during the height of the Turkish-led operation into northeast Syria [in early October].”

“This decision was a practical one because ISIS still has a deadly sleeper cell network in large areas of northeast Syria and without constant pressure from the SDF, there is a great risk of the terrorist organization resurging.”

He also underlined that there has also been close coalition support for the SDF to continue its fight against the Islamic State “throughout the period of the Turkish operation, because the SDF is the only local partner the coalition has that can effectively fight ISIS.”

Editing by John J. Catherine



REUTERS DECEMBER 12, 2019
Orhan Coskun

Former Turkish PM Davutoglu forms new party in challenge to Erdogan



FILE PHOTO: Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu speaks during a news conference at his ruling AK Party headquarters in Ankara, Turkey May 5, 2016. REUTERS/Umit Bektaş/File Photo

ANKARA (Reuters) - Former Turkish prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu, once a close ally to President Tayyip Erdogan, applied on Thursday to establish a breakaway political party which could erode support for Erdogan and his ruling AK Party.

A source close to Davutoglu said he applied to the Interior Ministry on Thursday to form his new party and that he will formally announce it at a news conference in Ankara on Friday. It will be called Future Party, the source said.

“The new party will breathe new life into politics,” the source said.

Davutoglu announced his resignation from the Islamist-rooted AKP in September, saying the party which has dominated Turkish politics for 17 years was no longer able to solve the country’s problems and was preventing internal debate.

His resignation came two months after former deputy prime minister Ali Babacan also left the AKP, citing deep differences. Babacan said last month that Turkey was in a “dark tunnel”, and warned of the dangers of “one-man rule”.

Babacan will announce his own rival political party within weeks, a source close to Babacan said.

UNKNOWN FACTORS

Polls show support for the new parties and their leaders in single percentage point figures, meaning they could pose little challenge to Erdogan and the AKP on their own.

However, after defeat in mayoral elections in Ankara and Istanbul earlier this year, and with economic difficulties eroding his voter base, even an incremental loss of support

could hit Erdogan’s aim to extend his 17-year hold on power.

Since national elections last year, the political parties in Turkey have been in rival alliances. The AKP and its nationalist MHP allies secured a parliamentary majority, based on a combined 53.7% of the vote, while in the presidential election Erdogan secured a first round victory with 52.6%.

New elections are not scheduled until 2023, but opposition parties have said the government may opt for early elections if it sees its support dwindling, after the local election defeats by the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) and its İyi (Good) Party allies.

The New York Times By David D. Kirkpatrick
Dec. 12, 2019

As Rivals Fight for Control of Libya, Erdogan Says Turkey May Jump In

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Turkey might send troops to Libya to counter Russian-backed militia forces.

LONDON — The battle for control of Libya threatened to escalate further this week as Turkey said it might intervene to stop the Russian-backed forces now closing in on Tripoli, the capital.

In comments to Turkish television networks on Monday night and again on Tuesday, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan pointedly raised the possibility that Turkey might send troops to counter the Russians if the United Nations-recognized government headquartered in Tripoli formally requested it.

“In case of such an invitation, Turkey will decide itself about what kind of initiative to undertake,” Mr. Erdogan said Monday. On both Monday and Tuesday he referred explicitly to the possibility of “sending soldiers” or “our personnel.”

Mr. Erdogan, for commercial and political reasons, has emerged as the last significant patron of the beleaguered Tripoli government. His blunt talk of a new military intervention underscored the perilousness of the situation now facing the Tripoli government, which is under a tightening siege by Russian forces backing the militia leader Khalifa Hifter.

Officials of Tripoli’s so-called Government of National Accord said they were open to any assistance that advanced its mission. “The G.N.A. welcomes ALL international support,” Mohamed Ali Abdullah, an adviser for United States affairs to the Tripoli government, wrote in a text message.

Libya is a strategic prize with vast oil reserves and a long Mediterranean coastline.

But eight years after a NATO intervention helped topple Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi during the Arab Spring revolt, the country remains mired in chaos. The bedlam has turned its beaches into a departure point for tens of thousands of Europe-bound migrants and its deserts into a haven for bands of militant extremists.

Over the last three months, Russia has transformed Libya’s simmering civil conflict



Fighters loyal to the Government of National Accord on the frontline during a clash with Khalifa Hifter’s forces in June. Mahmud Turkia/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

by deploying large numbers of fighters in what increasingly appears to be a determined push to help Mr. Hifter capture the capital.

Mr. Hifter, 76, had been waging an on-again, off-again fight to take Tripoli for more than five years, with no success. His most recent assault, launched April 4, left his forces stalled for more than five months on the southern outskirts of the city.

Now, however, the heavy Russian support has enabled Mr. Hifter’s forces to renew their advance into the city. Over the weekend, they captured most of the neighborhood of Salah el-Deen, one of their biggest gains in months.

“The momentum has definitely shifted,” said Frederic Wehrey, a scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace who recently returned from a visit to the front. He saw signs of exhaustion among some of the city’s defenders, he said.

“If morale snaps, it is a terrifying thing,” Mr. Wehrey said. “And who knows when it is going to give way?”

A collapse of the government would most likely mean a prolonged period of bloody street fighting inside the city, with years of insurgency by regional militias opposed to Mr. Hifter and now facing revenge. The turmoil would almost certainly set off new waves of internal and external migrants fleeing, analysts and diplomats say.

For Washington, Mr. Wehrey argued, allowing Russian forces to establish dominance in Libya, as they already have in Syria, would also “seriously damage whatever U.S. credibility is remaining in the Middle East.”

“Russia is basically pushing on a door that has been creaking open for a while,” he said. The United States has largely withdrawn from Libya while the European powers have been divided over how to approach it.

Since the United States began to pull back after the 2011 NATO intervention, an array of regional powers — all Western-armed American partners — have plunged into the vacuum, providing weapons and support to favored clients doing battle with one an-

other. The United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and France eventually lined up behind Mr. Hifter, betting that his authoritarian style could restore stability.

Turkey, in part because of its rivalry with the Emirati-Egyptian-Saudi bloc in a regional cold war, has become the only significant military backer of the Tripoli government.

The United States, along with the other Western powers, also publicly supports the Tripoli government and a United Nations-sponsored peace process on the unity government, but only Turkey has provided military support.

Washington, in practice, has sent mixed signals.

United States officials, who say the Russian forces in Libya now include uniformed troops as well as mercenaries, have called their presence “incredibly destabilizing” and warned of “the specter of large-scale casualties among the civilian population.”

But the National Security Council official overseeing Libya, Victoria Coates, met with Mr. Hifter two weeks ago to discuss peace talks, granting him a new level of recognition from the White House.

When Mr. Hifter began his advance, in April, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued a statement condemning the assault on Tripoli, but the White House released a statement days later saying President Trump had called Mr. Hifter to commend his fight against “terrorism.”

This week, United States military officials said that they believed a Russian air defense system installed in Libya had brought down an American surveillance drone. Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, chief of the United States Africa Command, said in a statement on Monday that the forces that brought down the drone had not realized it was American.

“But they certainly know who it belongs to now,” he said, “and they are refusing to return it. They say they don’t know where it is, but I am not buying it.”

Before the Russian intervention this fall, the Libyan strife had consisted mainly of simmering, low-intensity warfare.

A total of a few hundred untrained fighters at any one time clashed in a handful of de-



President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, third from right, meeting with Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj of Libya, third from left, in Istanbul last month. Credit... Turkish Presidential Press Service

serted districts on the edge of Tripoli, as armed drones fired down from above. Mr. Hifter’s forces flew Chinese-made drones furnished by the United Arab Emirates, and the Tripoli forces countered with less potent Turkish models.

But all that began to change as the Russian forces arrived earlier this fall.

By October, as many as two hundred Russian mercenaries had arrived, and within weeks the number grew to more than a thousand. They brought with them more advanced air power, better coordinated air support for ground troops, and guided artillery, as well as trained snipers.

With their help, Mr. Hifter’s forces now control the air. The Tripoli government’s Turkish drones seem to have disappeared from the sky, presumably damaged or destroyed by Mr. Hifter’s allies.

“The Tripoli forces have nothing in the air now,” said Wolfram Lacher, a scholar of Libya at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. “Everyone is waiting for the new Turkish equipment to arrive.”

Mr. Erdogan spoke for years about avoiding conflicts in the region. But his talk of intervening in Libya follows a Turkish incursion into northern Syria two months ago, as Turkish troops moved against American-backed,

Kurdish-led militias there and struck an accommodation with the Russian forces active in the country.

In the television interview on Monday night, Mr. Erdogan pledged to appeal personally to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia at a meeting in January.

Calling Mr. Hifter “an outlaw,” Mr. Erdogan said, “On the Hifter issue, I don’t want it to give birth to a new Syria in relations.”

He added, “I believe Russia will also review its existing stance toward Hifter.”

Mr. Erdogan has more at stake, though, than stability in Libya.

His comments about a possible military intervention come just days after Ankara signed a deal with the Tripoli government that would give Turkey drilling, pipeline and other maritime rights over an expanded portion of the Mediterranean Sea between the countries. That set off outrage from Greece and Europe, but gave Turkey a new financial stake in the Tripoli government.

The president’s statements, Mr. Lacher said, “suggest that this agreement is so important to the Turks that they are willing to do whatever it takes to stop Hifter from winning.”

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The real story behind a charred Iraqi shrine: Resentment of Iran

NAJAF, IRAQ

Outside the charred walls of a shrine complex here is ample evidence of the ferocity of a dayslong battle mounted by Iraqi protesters, convinced they were targeting a symbol of Iranian power in Iraq.

Molotov cocktails that failed to explode – their blackened fuses stuffed into bottles of gasoline or spirits – lie scattered amid a carpet of stones, bricks, and broken glass.

They were thrown by men who first stormed and torched the nearby Iranian consulate Nov. 27, chanting “Iran out of Iraq” – the first of three attacks on that building in a week.

Then they moved to the shrine, their anger fueled by rumors of an Iranian intelligence presence at this vast mausoleum, built to deity Ayatollah Mohammad Bakr al-Hakim, leader of an Iraqi opposition group created by Iran in the 1980s.

“Iran takes all our resources, our funding, our freedom,” charges one protester, explaining why he and others fought at the complex. Beside him, a student, Zain, holds three pieces of metal shot extracted from his banded forehead.

“For sure, the protests will help lower this negative Iranian influence,” says Hamed, another young participant.

The protests that have shaken Iraq are first about removing a corrupt, entrenched sectarian system of rule that has failed to provide jobs, services, or hope since the U.S. military removed Saddam Hussein in 2003.

But Iran’s outsize influence has also been a growing target of Iraqis resentful toward what they



A burnt entrance and broken glass mark the aftermath of days of anti-Iranian attacks in late November against the shrine complex devoted to Ayatollah Mohammad Bakr al-Hakim, the leader of the Iran-backed Badr Brigade militia, in the Shiite holy city of Najaf, Iraq, Dec. 9, 2019.

Scott Peterson/Getty Images/The Christian Science Monitor

regard as Iranian arrogance. Tehran’s overt meddling in Iraqi politics is seen as enabling a weak government as well as the rise of dozens of Shiite militias and their parties, which analysts say are corruptly engaged in every aspect of Iraq’s economy.

As a result goodwill toward Iran has been falling from its high of 2014, when Iran’s immediate military assistance and advisers – orchestrated by Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard’s elite Qods Force – were instrumental in stopping the advance by Islamic State (ISIS) militants.

An Iraqi demonstrator gestures in front of the Iranian consulate, as people gather during anti-government protests in Najaf, Iraq, Nov. 27, 2019.

Portraits of Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, have been defaced and torched. Across southern Iraq, offices of Shiite militias most closely associated with Iran have also been attacked.

Analysts say Iranian overreach has undermined Tehran’s influence, ambitions, and the popularity of its proxy forces in Iraq. The erosion coincides with another taking place in Lebanon, where veteran fighters of the Shiite organization Hezbollah are questioning their role fighting Iran’s wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.

“If I were in Ayatollah Khamenei’s position, I would put Soleimani in jail,” says Hisham



An Iraqi demonstrator gestures in front of the Iranian consulate, as people gather during anti-government protests in Najaf, Iraq, Nov. 27, 2019. REUTERS

al-Hashemi, a Baghdad-based security analyst with the European Institute of Peace who advises the Iraqi government.

“He failed in the mission. Iraq should be the last front line [of defense] for the Iranians,” says Mr. Hashemi. Iran’s influence in elections last year and General Soleimani brokering the government that resigned in late November under pressure, he says, means that “Iran achieved lots of things in 2018. But all that it won it has lost in 2019.”

The conversion of the Shiite militias, collectively known as the Popular Mobilization Forces, from fighting ISIS to waging political war as parties last year, meant the PMF “didn’t realize it had become part of the corruption.” But ordinary Iraqis saw it.

“They became like the gods of the temple, and see themselves as sacred people,” Mr. Hashemi says of the PMF. “Without Iran, they wouldn’t be so much in control. The problem is not with Iran, but with the proxies. People are attacking Iran because their proxies mistreated them.”

The Trump administration a week ago issued sanctions on

three senior Iraqi militia chiefs, saying they acted under Iranian orders when cracking down violently on Iraqi protests.

Iran's declining numbers

Even by 2018, Iraqis' attitudes toward Iran were shifting, with polls indicating that those holding favorable views had declined from nearly 90% in 2015 to fewer than 50%. Those who

tivist and head of the Al-Rafidain Society for Human Rights in Najaf.

He cites Iranian officials speaking as if Iraq were an asset of Iran. Among them, in a speech last April, Hassan Abbasi, a strategist and former Revolutionary Guard officer, said that for every dollar Iran had spent in Iraq and Syria fighting ISIS, "it is

the aftermath of days of anti-Iranian attacks in late November against the shrine complex in Najaf, Iraq, Dec. 9, 2019.

Video of one nighttime battle at the shrine and prayer complex dedicated to Ayatollah Hakkim, head of the Iran-backed Badr Brigade militia, shows the shrine's defenders firing heavily amid flames, as the protester recording the scene shouts: "They [the gunmen] are coming from the grave of al-Hakkim, the Iranian!"

Another online video shows one man shouting during the battle: "These people killed our sons! We want revenge."

"Talking and gossip"

Fueling the bloodshed in Najaf were rumors about Iranian use of the sprawling Hakkim complex, which includes the vaulted shrine chamber itself, a mammoth marble mosque, and extensive seminary grounds still under construction.

One rumor was that the complex hosted a secret center for Iranian intelligence. Another was that Mr. Soleimani himself was inside. Or, at the very least, protesters say, captured demonstrators had been imprisoned in the basement.

Hassan al-Hakkim, vice president of the Shahid Al-Mihrab Foundation, which runs the complex, dismissed the rumors as "talking and gossip."

On a tour of the complex a week after the fight, only one assault rifle is evident, the smell of burning still hanging in the air.

Like many political families in Iraq, the Hakkims maintain their own militia. Dozens of young Iraqi men wearing black balaclavas, to mask their identity during a rare visit by a foreigner, sit anxiously on mattresses laid all around the gilt, ornate cage that encloses the ayatollah's coffin.

There were no Iranians inside during the battles, they say, adding

that they were waiting for a new attack by those bent on turning the legitimate grievances of Iraqi protests into an anti-Iran wave.

Mr. Hakkim, speaking by phone from northern Iraq, says the rumors were meant to tarnish the reputation of the center, which is "just a school" that does charity work and feeds 20,000 "people in need." But local anger has been developing over the project's scale saying it appears to portray the late ayatollah as on par with the 12 recognized Shiite imams.

"They managed to create this constant irritation for locals, even locals who are close to them," says one Najaf native in Baghdad whose grandfather's house is 100 yards from the Najaf complex. "It was an irritation that was created by the Hakkims out of arrogance."

Noticing corruption

He also notes a shift among Iraqis away from sectarianism, such that by 2014 Iraqi Shiites were asking why Shiite-dominated governments had done so little for them.

After ISIS's defeat, people found corruption and lack of services, and the emergence of a "new class of nouveau riche" that was "heavily associated" with the PMF, says the Najaf man.

"So people are beginning to realize how much corruption is around," he adds. "This is where the anti-Iranian sentiment mainly comes from."

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Is that a blow to Iran?

"At the politician level, if you drank the Iranian Kool-Aid, then it really doesn't matter," says one Iraqi official in Baghdad, who asked not to be named. "But if you've got Iraqi nationalism in your blood, and you're looking to better this country, then, yeah, you would see this as Iranian overreach."



Masked men guard the gilt cage around the coffin of Ayatollah Mohammad Bakr al-Hakkim in the aftermath of days of anti-Iranian attacks in late November against the shrine complex in Najaf, Iraq, Dec. 9, 2019.

Scott Peterson/Getty Images/The Christian Science Monitor

view Iran as a threat to Iraqi sovereignty shot up from 25% in 2016 to 58% in 2018.

Those views have been magnified by the publishing last month of 700 Iranian intelligence reports by The Intercept and The New York Times, detailing Iran's systematic and successful efforts to co-opt Iraqi leaders, cultivate former CIA informants, and infiltrate every aspect of Iraqi life.

Part of the backlash has played itself out in the attacks on Iranian consulates of Najaf and Karbala – cities with close ties to the Islamic Republic that welcome millions of Shiite pilgrims each year, many from Iran, to visit the shrines of Shiite Islam's two most important seventh-century saints.

"For sure Iran had a positive stance against ISIS, but it came at a cost," says Ali Hussein Aboud al-Dhuwayhir, a local ac-

now returning \$1,000" in contracts.

"In the current government we see the influence of Iran, and Soleimani comes and gives orders like we have no sovereignty," says Mr. Dhuwayhir.

"Let me ask this question: Can we put any picture of Iraqi politicians or religious figures in Iran, or hold the flag of Iraq in Imam Reza's shrine [in Mashhad, Iran]? No," he says, referring to the ubiquitous Iranian flags and portraits of Iranian clerics across Shiite areas of Iraq.

"We can see and are sure that Iraq is about to become a suburb of Iran," says Mr. Dhuwayhir. "All these things have created hatred against Iran and anyone affiliated with them. ... Because of the bloodshed, there is no way back."

Masked men guard the gilt cage around the coffin of Ayatollah Mohammad Bakr al-Hakkim in

Ankara : Le procès du JITEM se solde par des acquittements



Manifestation des Mères du Samedi, organisée par les défenseurs des droits de l'Homme et les familles de personnes disparues en détention est un exemple de désobéissance civile de long terme en Turquie.

L'affaire dite du JITEM* d'Ankara dans laquelle 19 personnes étaient poursuivies pour des disparitions forcées et des exécutions extra-judiciaires commises dans les années 90, a débouché sur des acquittements.

L'audience de délibération dans l'affaire connue sous le nom de « JITEM d'Ankara » s'est tenue ce matin devant la 1ère Cour criminelle d'Ankara.

Begüm Erdoğan, fille de Namik Erdoğan, l'une des 19 victimes des disparitions forcées et exécutions extra-judiciaires survenues à Ankara dans les années 90, était à l'audience avec d'autres proches de victimes, ainsi qu'avec Pervin Buldan, Coprésidente du HDP, elle-même épouse d'une victime de ces crimes politiques.

Aucun des accusés n'était cependant présent à l'audience.

Considérant que Mahmut Yıldırım, nom de code « Yesil » (le vert), était « fugitif », la Cour a décidé de disjoindre son dossier.

Tous les autres accusés, dont Mehmet Ağar, le ministre de l'intérieur de l'époque, ont été acquittés. Quant à Ahmet Demirel, décédé entre temps, les juges ont prononcé à son égard l'extinction de l'action publique.

Ignorant les objections des avocats des parties civiles et suivant la position du parquet, l'instance de jugement a motivé sa décision par la considération qu'il n'y avait « aucune preuve dans le dossier ».

Les proches des victimes ont réagi à la décision en disant : « Nous savons que justice ne peut être faite ici. Nous sommes convaincus que tous les accusés sont coupables. »

Le 20 décembre 2013, une procédure pénale avait été ouverte contre les auteurs d'assassinats d'hommes d'affaires et d'écrivains, majoritairement kurdes, survenus dans les années 1990.

L'acte d'accusation concernait les assassinats de Abdülmecit Baskın, Namik Erdoğan, Metin Vural, Recep Kuzucu, Behçet Cantürk, Savaş Buldan, Hacı Karay, Adnan Yıldırım, İsmail Karaaloğlu, Yusuf Ekinci,

Ömer Lutfi Topal, Hikmet Babataş, Medet Serhat, Feyzi Aslan, Lazem Esmaeili, Asker Smitko, Tarık Ümit, Salih Aslan et Faik Candan.

Les mis en examen étaient Mehmet Ağar, İbrahim Şahin, İbrahim Şahin, Korkut Eken, Ayhan Çarkın, Ayhan Akça, Ziya Bandırmalıoğlu, Ercan Ersoy, Ahmet Demirel, Ayhan Özkan, Seyfettin Lap, Enver Ulu, Uğur Şahin, Alper Tekdemir, Yusuf Yüksel, Abbas Semih Sueri, Lokman Külünk, Mahmut Yıldırım, Nurettin Güven, Muhsin Korman.

Ils étaient poursuivis pour « homicides dans le cadre des activités d'une organisation armée créée dans un but criminel »

* Le JITEM (Service de Renseignement et d'Antiterrorisme de la Gendarmerie turque), est une formation créée par l'Etat turc pour lutter contre le Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Cette organisation clandestine s'est rendue coupable, dans les années 90, de plus de 1500 disparitions en garde à vue et 5000 exécutions extra-judiciaires.

Armement. La Turquie va se doter de drones équipés de mitrailleuses

Le régime de Recep Tayyip Erdogan, devenu l'un des plus gros utilisateurs de drones tueurs, va acquérir avant la fin de l'année des appareils équipés de mitrailleuses. Ils sont fabriqués par une société établie à Ankara.

Le régime de Recep Tayyip Erdogan, devenu l'un des plus gros utilisateurs de drones tueurs, va acquérir avant la fin de l'année des appareils équipés de mitrailleuses. Ils sont fabriqués par une société établie à Ankara.

La Turquie est sur le point de devenir le premier pays à disposer de drones équipés de mitrailleuses, rapporte New Scientist. Le pays doit recevoir une livraison "avant la fin de l'année" d'un drone de 25 kg qui est équipé "de huit pales rotatives" et d'une mitrailleuse "dotée de 200 cartouches".

"De nombreux pays utilisent déjà de petits drones militaires qui peuvent larguer des grenades ou voler vers une cible pour faire détoner un explosif", observe le magazine britannique.

La Turquie, devenue avec les États-Unis et le Royaume-Uni l'un des plus gros utilisateurs de ces drones tueurs, notamment contre les rebelles kurdes du PKK, a développé une industrie performante dans ce secteur : le nouveau drone équipé d'une mitrailleuse, baptisé Songar, est fabriqué par Asisguard, une société établie à Ankara.

D'après New Scientist, Asisguard affirme que Songar, qui est équipé de capteurs nocturnes et a une portée de 10 kilomètres, a



Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan au milieu de la foule, après l'inspection d'un drone sur un salon de l'aéronautique à Istanbul, en septembre 2019. AFP/Onur Coban / Anadolu Agency

une précision qui lui permet de viser "une zone de 15 centimètres à 200 mètres de distance", et qu'elle travaille à des améliorations pour atteindre des cibles "à plus de 400 mètres de distance".

Le fabricant a publié sur Youtube une vidéo

assurant la promotion de son drone tueur :

New Scientist note que les drones sont extrêmement difficiles à arrêter et que les experts militaires redoutent "que des groupes armés ne copient la technologie pour produire leurs propres versions".

Turkish court dismisses case against police for death of Kurdish man

A Turkish court in the southeastern Şırnak province has dismissed a case against the police force over the death of a young Kurdish man, Mezopotamya Agency wrote on Saturday.

Ali Bağdur lost his life during the curfews in Şırnak's Cizre district in 2016, after violent conflict flared up between the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Turkish se-

curity forces following the collapse of a peace process.

On Jan. 10, 2016, special operations units opened rapid fire on the 25 year-old man, who lost his life at the scene.

Bağdur, by virtue of being in a neighbourhood under curfew at the time, was deemed to be a member of the PKK, which

Turkey has designated a terrorist organisation, the prosecutor said.

The killing of Bağdur was justified "as per their orders from an authorised institution, security forces were in the neighbourhood where members of the organisation carried out actions with firearms and explosives, and as such, they carried out a lawful order," he said.



The case was shelved in May 2017, and had not been touched in the year and a half that followed.

The prosecutor said the case had been reopened following an inquiry by the Bağdur family's lawyers on Oct. 30.

On Oct. 31, the Cizre prosecutor moved for non-jurisdiction and turned the case over to the Şırnak public prosecutor.

The Şırnak prosecutor ruled for dismissal on Nov. 8, according to Mezopotamya Agency.

The indefinite curfews in Kurdish-majority southeastern provinces started in August 2015, when Turkey re-launched its military operations against the PKK after two-and-a-half years of ceasefire.

A report by Human Rights Foundation Turkey (TİHV) found during curfews declared in 22 districts of seven provinces that at least 1.6 million people had their fundamental and natural rights violated, including the right to life as at least 310 civilians lost their lives between August 2015 and March 2016.

At least 183 people lost their lives in Cizre alone, with 137 people being killed within their own homes.

An Amnesty International Turkey report said the perpetrators of rights violations did not face trial or consequences.



Dec 15 2019

Dismissed pro-Kurdish HDP mayor arrested over terror links in southeast Turkey

A former pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) district mayor in Turkey's southeastern province of Mardin was arrested on Sunday over membership in a terrorist organisation, news site T24 reported.

The former co-mayor of Kızıltepe, Nilüfer Elik Yılmaz, who was removed from duty and replaced with government appointed official earlier this month, was arrested for membership in the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), it said.

Yılmaz is one of tens of HDP mayors elected in the March local elections that have removed from duty as part of a crackdown against the group by the Turkish government.

The Turkish government accuses the HDP of harbouring sympathies and acting in the interest of the outlawed PKK. The HDP denies any links.



The PKK is an outlawed group that has fought for Kurdish self-rule in Turkey since 1984.

Ankara has intensified a crackdown on the Kurdish political movement since peace talks with the PKK broke down in 2015. HDP lawmakers and mayors have frequently been dismissed from their roles or faced

legal charges for alleged PKK links in the years since.

A total of 25 HDP mayors have been dismissed over terror charges and replaced with a government appointee since the March polls in Turkey's Kurdish-majority southeast.

The New York Times Dec. 16, 2019
By Sinan Antoon, Mr. Antoon is an Iraqi novelist.

I Will Visit Your Grave When I Go to Iraq

Safa al-Sarray was killed when Iraqi forces fired a tear-gas canister at his head.

Iraqis have been protesting since early October against the dysfunctional and corrupt political system installed by the United States after the 2003 occupation. Unlike previous waves of protests that began in 2011, this protest was spontaneous and not organized by any party.

The most common and passionate slogan throughout these protests has been, "We want a homeland." It reflected the anger and alienation Iraqis felt toward a political class beholden to external influence (Iran and the United States) and oblivious to its people's demands.

The regime's brutal suppression and killing of peaceful protesters fueled Iraqis' anger, widening and intensifying the protests and strikes across Iraq. It also radicalized the tone and demands of protesters who have been calling for an overhaul of the entire system, rather than cosmetic change. The resignation of Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi on Nov. 29 did nothing to quiet the protesters. And the regime's violence continues unabated.

More than 500 protesters have been killed. I try to find out their names and catch a glimpse of their faces. I can't keep up. Death seizes them in a flash and delivers their bodies to the darkness of the grave. But it also illuminates their names, faces and life stories, making them ever more familiar to those of us who are viscerally connected to Iraq, whether we live there or in a distant country.

I did know Safa al-Sarray, a 26-year-old aspiring poet and amateur artist, very well. He wrote to me nine years ago on social media about one of my novels. We kept corresponding. I loved his wit and sense of humor, and his insightful posts about life and politics in Iraq.

Safa was a precocious, passionate young man and a voracious reader, particularly of poetry. He grew up in a large working-class family in Baghdad. His father had died when he was quite young. He worked hard — three days a week as a construction worker and porter while studying at the University of Technology in Baghdad — to make ends meet and to support his family.

In 2011, a wave of protests against the corruption and sectarianism of the Iraqi regime swept through the country. Safa, who was 18 at the time, joined his compatriots seeking change. He was at the forefront of every single wave of protests in the years that followed. Despite being harassed and detained several times, he would be back on the street for the next protest.

I worried about him and would check on him every time protests broke out to make sure



he was safe. "We are staying here in Tahrir," he would write, referring to Tahrir Square in central Baghdad, where the protesters have been gathering. He knew the dangers he faced. He once wrote to me wondering when he might meet "the gratuitous death waiting for me in my homeland." He loved Iraq and would go to sleep at night thinking of what he could do to change it.

I met Safa for the first time in February at the Baghdad Book Fair. He came to my book signing and was as charming and charismatic in person. We met again for breakfast on my last day in Baghdad. Safa had an undergraduate degree in computer networking, but like hundreds of thousands of young Iraqis, he couldn't find employment in his field.

Over breakfast he told me that he'd recently started working as an "ardhahachi," or a scribe, writing letters and filling out forms for citizens going before courts. He would set up his chair and table every morning outside a courthouse in Baghdad. "Were there any interesting stories that you came across?" I asked. "It is just a traffic court," he said with a smile. The letters he had to write were quite prosaic, mostly about mundane accidents or transfer of ownership.

Safa was 26, but he was using a cane and grimaced with pain when he moved. He spoke of the pain killers he was taking and the costly physical therapy. During the protests in the summer of 2018 he had received messages on social media from regime thugs warning him to stay away. He ignored them at first. A few days later plainclothes security personnel detained him and tortured him to extract information on other protesters. He said that the memory of his mother, Thanwa, and her strength helped him withstand the pain and remain steadfast in moments of weakness.

He was very close to Thanwa, who died of cancer in 2017, and wrote about her suffering and resilience. He called himself "Thanwa's Son." Shifting the emphasis away from the patrilineal to the matrilineal

was an act of poetic resistance against social norms.

Safa was fiercely independent and critical of the intellectual elite and the media personalities who had betrayed the protesters, hijacked previous protests and made back-room deals with political parties.

He was an aspiring poet, an artist. He donated the money from his art to an orphanage. His heart was a garden for all. I have been thinking of some verses he wrote: "People's sadness is my sadness/Their feasts are mine/Let the wellspring of my life flow onto their deserts/These flowers in my soul are gardens of people."

When the Iraqi uprising began in October, Safa was at the forefront once again. He recited poetry and urged protesters to remain peaceful but never give up.

On Oct. 28 I messaged Safa: "I heard you were injured. Let me know you're O.K." There was no response. A tear-gas canister fired intentionally and directly at the crowds by the riot police had pierced his head while he was protesting peacefully in Tahrir Square. He was taken to the hospital. He died a few hours later. I cried when I saw the footage of his coffin circling the square, surrounded by fellow protesters bidding farewell to a hero.

Some years ago, I wrote a poem about those who die for freedom and justice. I never thought that I was writing it prematurely for my friend.

Martyrs do not go to paradise
They leaf through the heavenly book
each in their own way
as a bird
a star
or a cloud
They appear to us every day
and cry
for us
we, who are still
in this hell they tried to extinguish
with their blood.

A few weeks ago, I saw a photograph of a white dove perched on the coffin of one of those murdered by the regime near Tahrir Square. Was that you, Safa?

I will visit your grave when I go to Iraq, but I know that you are not only there. Your face is on so many walls, banners, T-shirts, and your spirit is everywhere. Your brothers and sisters, Thanwa's children, are still fighting for the new Iraq you dreamed of and loved.

Erdoğan under Political Siege

By: Dr. Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak, expert on contemporary Turkish politics and foreign policy, Turkish-Israeli relations, and the Kurds.

As of 2002, Turkey has been ruled by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP). It is not a secret that one of the most important reasons for the AKP's constant success in all general election campaigns is the existence of an ineffective opposition that could challenge the party's head, Erdoğan. Inevitably, this impressive record of victories over the past 17 years has created an image of invincibility among Erdoğan's comrades and also throughout opposition circles. However, this reputation of invincibility suffered a huge blow in the 2019 municipal elections when the AKP lost control of Turkey's largest city, Istanbul, as well as its capital Ankara. Since the president knows well the unwritten fundamental rule of the Turkish politics that whoever controls Istanbul and Ankara will rule Turkey, these municipal election defeats not only rang the alarm bells of the presidential palace in Ankara but also encouraged opposition figures to come out against the Turkish president.

Besides the reasonable attrition that he suffers after being in power for 17 years, Erdoğan is challenged by serious problems, such as the deepening economic crisis due to the Turkish Lira's continuous de-valuation vis-à-vis the US Dollar and the Euro, which impacts all citizens. Additional challenges include the Kurdish question, extra-territorial Turkish military campaigns in Syria, and the status of the Syrian refugees whose official numbers reached 3.6 million people in October 2019.[1] These crucial problems formed a suitable atmosphere for criticizing Erdoğan's policies on the matters that directly affect people's daily lives. This dissatisfaction can be observed easily on the Turkish street and felt in daily conversations as well as in social media.

Turkey's politicians are keenly aware of this tense situation. While still celebrating the municipal victory over the AKP, the secular Republican People's Party (CHP) – the only political adversary that can threaten Erdoğan's rule – is still very busy with its own "Game of Thrones" starring the head of the party, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, CHP's presidential candidate for the 2018 elections, Muharrem İnce, and the new Istanbul mayor, Ekrem İmamoğlu, who has risen to the ranks of CHP leadership from behind the scenes.

On the other hand, within the AKP, the charismatic figures in the party such as Ahmet Davutoğlu and Ali Babacan (who is secretly supported by Abdullah Gül) seem to be fed up

with Erdoğan's unprecedented authoritarianism, and therefore it seems that they will no longer play the role of the president's "rubber stamp," as former Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım did. This new awakening led by Davutoğlu and Babacan resulted in mass resignations from the party. In last two months alone approximately 60 thousand members of the party have resigned from the AKP. It should also be noted that since August 2018 the total number of resignations from the party reached to 902 thousand people, while then the total registered members was above just 10 million people. Erdoğan is aware of this phenomenon but he tries to persuade his followers that the decline in the numbers is due to natural deaths of the party members rather than political resignations.[2]

Besides Davutoğlu and Babacan, there are also some very influential candidates who have not resigned from the AKP but should be taken into account in all future political equations. The former chief of staff and current Defense Minister, Hulusi Akar, as the champion of Turkey's extra-territorial military operations in Syria, and the Minister of Interior, Süleyman Soyulu, who is orchestrating the mass arrests of Gülenists, Kurdish separatists and other opposition figures at home appear as the most popular candidates who could replace Erdoğan in the future. It should be noted that given the deteriorating economic situation it seems that Erdoğan's son-in-law, the minister of Treasury Berat Albayrak, who is seen by many as a natural candidate to succeed Erdoğan is unlikely to meet this expectation due to his lack of public support.

Having set the political scene above, it should be noted that last November was a crucial month for all of Erdoğan's rivals given the intra-party power struggle and important progress they made in forming new frontiers against the Turkish president. For instance, the new Istanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu who managed to defeat Erdoğan's candidate Binali Yıldırım in the Istanbul municipal elections, has been able to implement revolutionary changes in the Istanbul municipality. While making administrative reforms that resulted in cutting the funds to AKP affiliated non-governmental organizations and foundations İmamoğlu is attempting to stabilize the budget of the municipality which suffers from deficit. To fulfill this goal, since his entry to the office, İmamoğlu has fired 3800 people including those who would have retired from their jobs. Given the AKP majority in the municipal coun-

cil İmamoğlu's task is not an easy one. Since his ascension to power, due to party discipline within the opposition and budget cuts from the central government the construction of eight metro lines were halted. In order to find a solution to the problem the İmamoğlu administration sought to receive credit from Turkish public banks, but could not receive a penny due to pressure from the central government.[3] Therefore, in November İmamoğlu signed a 110 million Euro credit agreement with Germany's Deutsche Bank to overcome this obstacle.[4] As can be seen in the example of Deutsche Bank, Istanbul's mayor proved that he is capable of thinking out of the box. As it is expected from him, he is utilizing his current office as a springboard to go further. In an exceptional move last October İmamoğlu paid a visit to European Council where he emphasized his commitment to European values, while expressing his gratitude for European support in the second round of the cancelled municipal elections. On the same stage, İmamoğlu went on and made important criticisms against the EU and the Turkish government regarding the Syrian refugees and Turkey's Kurdish question respectively.[5] Certainly, these brave statements once again showed İmamoğlu's great ambitions. However, the Istanbul mayor should also be aware that he is not alone in this race in his camp. The recent loud quarrel between the party head, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, and CHP's defeated presidential candidate Muharrem İnce over the rumors regarding whether İnce paid a secret visit to Erdoğan's palace to seek Turkish president's support in order to gain the control of the CHP or not also indicates that the CHP will likely be the base of any future "game of thrones." [6] In other words, in the event that this disagreement within the CHP leadership will deepen there is a danger that it will split the secular votes, which will in turn help the Turkish president.

Despite the above, the internal power struggles are not only the headache of the CHP, they also create serious problems for the ruling AKP. In this regard the former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and former Foreign and Economy Minister Ali Babacan could st

Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak

Dr. Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak, in the current issue of *Turkeyscope*, analyzes the latest moves of the emerging charismatic Turkish opposition figures challenging Erdoğan.

La Turquie et ses frontières, du zéro à l'infini

Inspirée par la doctrine du « zéro problème », la Turquie entend redevenir une puissance régionale apte à capter des marchés à portée de main — comme au Kurdistan irakien. Mais Ankara continue de livrer une guerre de basse intensité contre les Kurdes syriens et le PKK, légitimée par la vision nostalgique d'un passé mythifié.

La Turquie a eu gain de cause dans le nord-est syrien. Les accords séparés conclus avec les États-Unis et la Russie lui ont accordé une « ceinture » de 120 km de long et de 30 km de profondeur entre les villes de Tel Abyad et de Ras El-Ain. Pour l'État turc, il était impératif d'éloigner les Kurdes de sa frontière.

Cependant, les raisons qui ont entraîné les différentes interventions turques en Syrie sont plus complexes que la lutte contre les Kurdes syriens. Pour tenter de les comprendre, il faut revenir sur les politiques transfrontalières de la Turquie, son rapport à la question kurde, mais aussi sur l'histoire de ses frontières.

Des frontières discutées à la chute de l'empire

Après la chute de l'empire ottoman, les Turcs ont remporté la guerre d'indépendance (1919-1921) contre les Grecs et fait reculer les Alliés — Français, Britanniques et Italiens, empêchant ainsi l'application du traité de Sèvres (1920). Celui-ci prévoyait la création d'une grande Arménie et d'un Kurdistan à l'est ainsi que l'élargissement de la Grèce à l'ouest, décisions qui amputaient d'autant la Turquie. Sa frontière sud, elle, fut définie par les accords Sykes-Picot consacrant le partage du Proche et Moyen-Orient entre les Français et les Britanniques.

En 1923, faisant suite à ses victoires militaires, le gouvernement nationaliste turc avec à sa tête Mustafa Kemal entérina le traité de Lausanne qui dessinait une nouvelle Turquie et organisait des déplacements de populations afin de constituer des territoires homogènes. Cependant il faudra attendre le traité anglo-irako-turc de 1926 pour que la Turquie reconnaisse l'Irak et abandonne ses revendications sur le vilayet de Mossoul (subdivision administrative de l'empire ottoman). L'article 10 de ce traité prévoit « une zone de 75 km de part et d'autre de la frontière dans laquelle les deux États doivent s'abstenir d'actes hostiles envers le voisin ». La Turquie s'est appuyée sur ce traité pour intervenir militairement à plusieurs reprises dans le Kurdistan irakien, en particulier dans la zone contrôlée par le



11 octobre 2019. — Checkpoint abandonné par les FDS à Ras El-Ain bombardée par les forces turques - A. Lourie/VOA

Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) où l'armée turque se comporte en pays conquis.

Les autorités turques ont aussi déclaré qu'en cas de désintégration de l'Irak, l'accord serait considéré comme caduc. En application de ce principe, en 1990, au moment de l'invasion du Koweït par l'Irak, Ankara aurait sérieusement envisagé d'annexer la région de Mossoul et de Kirkouk. Quelques années plus tard, renchérissant sur le credo nationaliste dominant, le président Süleyman Demirel évoquait son désir de voir « la frontière suivre le pied des montagnes », ce qui, de fait, incluait Mossoul dans la Turquie. En 2004, profitant de l'invasion de l'Irak par l'armée américaine, Ankara réclamera le vilayet de Mossoul. Elle ne l'obtiendra pas, mais, trois ans après, elle réussissait à acquérir le droit de mener des opérations militaires dans le nord du pays.

Les contraintes du statu quo bouleversés

Les frontières de la Turquie n'ont été fixées définitivement qu'en 1939 avec la cession par la France du sandjak (division administrative) d'Alexandrette appartenant à la

Syrie, alors sous protectorat français. Longtemps, la Turquie s'est efforcée de conserver une politique de non-ingérence — à l'exception notable de son intervention militaire à Chypre en 1974. Cette retenue belliqueuse était en partie due au statu quo imposé par la Guerre froide. En effet, la Turquie, membre de l'OTAN, ne pouvait intervenir chez ses voisins syriens ou irakiens, alliés de l'URSS, ni en Arménie devenue République soviétique.

La première guerre du Golfe vint bouleverser cette position. Le chercheur Yohanan Benhaim voit dans l'opération militaire « Bouclier de l'Euphrate » en 2016 et la politique d'Ankara vis-à-vis de la région depuis la guerre du Golfe de 1990

une certaine continuité (...) La première invasion états-unienne de l'Irak a en effet représenté une étape décisive qui a fait sauter le verrou idéologique et diplomatique que constituait la tradition de non-ingérence¹.

C'est à partir de cette date que le prisme sécuritaire orientera la politique étrangère d'Ankara et l'écartera de ses logiques de non-intervention vis-à-vis de la Syrie et du

nord de l'Irak. Cependant, les interventions turques en Syrie et en Irak sont surtout dictées par un problème intérieur récurrent : la « question kurde ».

L'État turc considère le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) comme son principal ennemi, l'envisageant, selon l'expression d'Hamit Bozarslan, comme une « menace organique ».

Au début des années 1990, désormais convaincu que la guérilla du PKK constituait la «vingt-neuvième révolte kurde» de l'histoire du pays, l'état-major adopta officiellement la stratégie «guerre de basse intensité». La doctrine de l'armée, cautionnée par le gouvernement, consistait à ne pas traiter la question kurde comme une question politique, ni même «culturelle», mais comme relevant du «terrorisme séparatiste». Bien au-delà du PKK, toute expression de la kurdicité fut désignée comme la «principale menace stratégique» contre la Turquie².

Vision stratégique du « zéro problème »
Dans la continuité de ce tropisme sécuritaire, en 1998, la Turquie amassa des troupes à la frontière syrienne, faisant pression sur Damas qui hébergeait le PKK depuis de longues d'années. Cédant à l'intimidation, Hafez Al-Assad expulsa le PKK et son chef, Abdullah Öcalan. Durant sa fuite à la recherche d'un pays où s'exiler, celui-ci fut capturé au Kenya par le Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı (MIT) — les services secrets turcs —, aidé par la CIA et le Mossad israélien. Cette politique de pression sur un « étranger proche » va se combiner avec une nouvelle vision portée par le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP), celle du « zéro problème » avec les voisins.

Dans cette optique, la Turquie va renouer le dialogue avec les Russes et les Iraniens, mais aussi avec l'Irak et la Syrie. Les importantes mutations qu'ont connues ces deux pays, les deux guerres d'Irak, la chute de Saddam Hussein et l'accession de Bachar Al-Assad au pouvoir en Syrie favorisent ces rapprochements.

Les relations vont encore s'améliorer avec l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'AKP en 2002 et la mise en œuvre effective de la doctrine « zéro problème » d'Ahmet Davutoğlu. Universitaire et homme d'État, conservateur et nationaliste, il a été à la fois premier ministre et président de l'AKP d'août 2014 à mai 2016. Pour lui, la Turquie doit sortir de la politique d'alignement qu'elle a adoptée vis-à-vis du camp occidental durant la Guerre froide. Il souhaite mettre en place une nouvelle politique plus adaptée au contexte régional de son pays.

Elle doit désormais reconfigurer sa position géographique plus largement, non

plus à partir de deux blocs, mais de onze voisins (8 voisins directs, 3 voisins quasi directs riverains de la mer Noire et Chypre). Elle doit aussi se positionner par rapport à des bassins maritimes, mer Noire, mer Égée, Méditerranée, mais aussi indirectement, la Caspienne dont elle est devenue un débouché énergétique. Elle a de fait un rapport direct avec trois continents, asiatique, européen, mais aussi africain, y compris à travers les espaces intermédiaires de la péninsule arabique et du Caucase³.

À partir de cette idée, deux conceptions vont émerger. La première repose sur une vision sécuritaire qui est largement majoritaire chez les partis nationalistes ainsi que dans l'armée confrontée au PKK. La seconde, celle de l'AKP, plus intégrationniste, évoque une communauté de destin liant la Turquie à d'autres acteurs politiques de la région. Elle perçoit les « étrangers proches » comme des marchés potentiels pour l'économie turque et leurs territoires comme des zones où la Turquie a des intérêts à défendre. Cette vision d'espaces extérieurs où la Turquie doit jouer un rôle majeur est légitimée par leur ancienne appartenance à l'Empire ottoman et par la présence de populations turcophones.

La nostalgie de l'impérialisme ottoman

Dans cette instrumentalisation du passé par Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, il faut voir la continuité d'un impérialisme turc ou ottoman qui n'a jamais disparu. Durant la première guerre du Golfe (1990), si les souvenirs du vilayet perdu de Mossoul ont refait surface, c'est en référence au Serment national (ou Pacte national), voté en 1920 par le dernier Parlement ottoman. Ce texte exprimait les revendications territoriales et nationales du peuple turc. À travers lui, les parlementaires ottomans reconnaissaient le démantèlement de l'empire, mais refusaient de céder l'Arménie et la Mésopotamie (c'est-à-dire l'Irak actuelle).

Dès lors, il faudra attendre 1926 pour que la Turquie reconnaisse l'Irak — et 1991 pour qu'elle n'hésite pas à faire valoir des revendications sur ce pays. Selon l'historien Edhem Eldem, la mobilisation et l'instrumentalisation du passé dépassent les stratégies politiques, la Turquie ayant toujours été « cliomane »⁴ obsédée d'attribuer à l'histoire une mission politique et idéologique destinée à formater la nation.

L'arrivée au pouvoir de l'AKP et la reprise du conflit avec le PKK en 2015 accentueront ce rapport délirant à un passé mythifié. Durant une cérémonie en hommage à Atatürk en 2016, le président Recep Tayyip Erdoğan prononce un discours qui en fournit un excellent exemple :

La Turquie est plus grande que la Turquie, sachez cela. Nous ne pouvons pas rester enfermés dans 780 000 km². Car nos frontières physiques sont une chose, et nos frontières de cœur (gönül sinirimiz) autre chose. Nos frères de Mossoul, de Kirkouk, de Hassaké, d'Alep, de Homs, de Misrata, de Skopje, de Crimée et du Caucase ont beau être en dehors de nos frontières physiques, ils sont tous dans nos frontières de cœur.

Dans ce discours, les références aux minorités turcophones sont utilisées afin d'évoquer leur proximité ethnique et historique avec les Turcs. Ankara va tenter de les instrumentaliser afin d'augmenter son influence en Irak et plus spécialement à Kirkouk.

Cependant, faute de résultats significatifs la Turquie opte pour une autre stratégie. Pour influencer sur cet espace transfrontalier, Ankara tente d'abord de manipuler les minorités turcophones, mais n'obtenant pas de résultats satisfaisants, elle se tourne vers le gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan irakien.

De nouveaux marchés pour les travaux publics

À partir de 2008, elle met en place un partenariat avec le gouvernement de l'entité kurde et plus particulièrement avec le PDK de Massoud Barzani. L'objectif principal étant de neutraliser les bases arrière de la guérilla du PKK, installée en territoire irakien, dans le Qandil, au cœur d'une région particulièrement difficile d'accès de la chaîne des monts Zagros. Pour le PDK ce rapprochement avec la Turquie est un moyen de s'émanciper du gouvernement fédéral de Bagdad. Il lui permet aussi de se renforcer et de contrer l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), son opposant soutenu par l'Iran.

La doctrine « zéro problème » que préconise l'AKP va permettre d'ajouter à ce partenariat sécuritaire une dimension économique.

La levée des barrières idéologiques et la récession économique européenne, liée à la crise financière américaine, incitent les hommes d'affaires turcs à s'investir dans le marché de la construction et des travaux publics du Kurdistan irakien qui constitue également un débouché commercial salubre pour ses exportations⁵.

Le commerce transfrontalier en est redynamisé. Les revenus douaniers fournissent des recettes importantes pour le Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan (GRK) qui contrôle la frontière irako-turque. Aujourd'hui l'on dénombre quelque 40 000 travailleurs

turcs au Kurdistan irakien. Au fil du temps, les liens économiques se développent et l'Irak est devenu le deuxième partenaire commercial de la Turquie avec plus de 12 milliards de dollars (10,83 milliards d'euros) d'échanges — 70 % de ces recettes proviennent du commerce avec le GRK. La construction en 2013 d'un oléoduc reliant Kirkouk au port turc de Ceyhan renforce le caractère stratégique du partenariat entre Ankara et Erbil, la capitale du GRK.

En parallèle l'Iran consolide ses liens avec le gouvernement central irakien. La bipolarisation entre Erbil et Ankara ainsi qu'entre Téhéran et Bagdad se renforce avec la montée en puissance de l'organisation de l'État islamique (OEI) et par l'expansion territoriale des Kurdes.

Le 4 août 2014, à la surprise générale, l'OEI lance une offensive d'ampleur sur le Kurdistan irakien. Les Forces de défense du peuple (HPG, la branche armée du PKK) sont les premiers à s'opposer aux djihadistes et à évacuer la population de Makhmour et du Sinjar. Les forces militaires du GRK, les peshmergas, eux, vont se replier sur la ligne Erbil-Kirkouk, abandonnant à leur sort les Yézidis. Le PKK saura tirer avantage de cette situation. Le retrait des peshmergas lui permettra de se positionner en marge de la zone d'influence du PDK.

En 2013, l'État turc ouvre des pourparlers avec le PKK afin de trouver une solution politique à la question kurde en Turquie, avec en tête l'hypothèse de relations pacifiées comme dans le cas du Kurdistan irakien. Dans un premier temps cette stratégie semble fonctionner. Le dirigeant du Parti de l'union démocratique (PYD) est invité à deux reprises en Turquie et le parti n'est pas loin d'ouvrir une représentation à Ankara. Mais la négociation échoue.

En Syrie, les Kurdes et l'opposition soutenue par la Turquie n'arrivent pas à trouver

un terrain d'entente. Sur le terrain militaire, les Unités de protection du peuple (YPG) et les Unités de protection de la femme (YPJ) affrontent les djihadistes du Front Al-Nosra (Al-Qaida en Syrie), eux aussi soutenus par la Turquie. De plus, les relations entre les Kurdes syriens et irakiens, alliés des Turcs, ne sont pas bonnes. Barzani se rapproche de plus en plus d'Erdoğan. Alors qu'en Irak la Turquie s'allie au PDK, en Syrie elle va soutenir une partie des mouvements djihadistes qu'elle pense capables d'empêcher l'autonomisation en cours des Kurdes syriens, redoutant, depuis le début de la crise que le régime de Damas ne s'en serve contre elle. Par ailleurs, elle considère cette autonomisation comme n'étant qu'une émanation du PKK.

Le partenariat avec le PDK permet à Ankara de contrôler son espace transfrontalier avec l'Irak, mais aussi de contrer politiquement le PKK en Turquie. En 2015, fort de la victoire des Kurdes à Kobané et renforcé par le soutien occidental au YPG/YPJ, le PKK pensait pouvoir l'emporter militairement aussi en Turquie. De violents combats éclatèrent dans d'importants centres urbains du Bakûr, le Kurdistan turc. Ce fut la guerre des villes. Elle se révéla désastreuse pour le PKK qui ne parvint pas à vaincre l'armée.

Une double stratégie

La stratégie d'Ankara vis-à-vis de la question kurde est double. D'un côté elle s'allie avec le PDK de Barzani et de l'autre elle combat le PKK. L'État turc s'efforce aussi de promouvoir Massoud Barzani comme une figure politique kurde d'ampleur régionale. Ce n'est donc pas un hasard si des mouvements politiques se réclamant de son héritage connaissent un renouveau en Turquie.

Dans un premier temps, pour combattre les Kurdes de Syrie, l'État turc va s'appuyer sur des forces djihadistes locales et adopter une

posture plus que complaisante vis-à-vis de l'OEI ; ensuite, pour contrer le PYD, elle va intervenir militairement par trois fois. La première en 2016, avec l'opération « Bouclier de l'Euphrate » bloquant l'avancée des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS) qui espéraient faire la jonction avec le canton d'Afrine situé à l'ouest du fleuve. La deuxième fois en 2018, avec l'opération « Rameau d'olivier » en s'emparant de la province d'Afrine. Et la troisième fois, cette année, avec l'opération baptisée par antiphrase « Source de paix » qui porte un rude coup au projet de société des Kurdes dans le Rojava.

Sans l'appui des États-Unis, les FDS n'ont alors d'autre alternative que de se tourner vers le régime syrien. Ce rapprochement met en danger le projet d'autonomie de la Fédération démocratique de Syrie du Nord, Damas souhaitant rétablir un État central fort. En parallèle, Ankara intensifie ses bombardements dans le nord de l'Irak dans l'espoir de faire tomber Qandil, le bastion du PKK.

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1) Yohanan Benhaim, *La ligne Alep-Mossoul, nouvel étranger proche de la Turquie, Mouvements* n° 90, 2017.

2) Hamit Bozarslan, *Histoire de la Turquie contemporaine*, La Découverte, Paris, 2010.

3) « La doctrine Davutoğlu : une projection diplomatique de la Turquie sur son environnement », *Confluences Méditerranée* n° 83, avril 2012.

4) NDLR. Dans la mythologie grecque, Clio, fille de Zeus et de Mnémosyne (déesse de la mémoire), est la muse de l'Histoire.

5) Hardy Mède, « La stratégie de partenariat turc du Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan irakien au prisme des logiques de situation », *Anatoli*, n° 8, 2017.



16 décembre 2019

Torturé en Iran, arrêté et qualifié de terroriste par la Turquie, un journaliste kurde témoigne

Après avoir été torturé et laissé pour mort à la frontière irano-turque, le journaliste kurde Aziz Oruç a été arrêté en Turquie et désigné par les autorités et les médias pro-gouvernementaux comme un « terroriste ». Par la voix de son avocat, il a raconté ce qu'il avait vécu en Arménie et en Iran.

Aziz Oruç, journaliste de l'agence de presse

kurde Dicle (DIHA), interdite en 2016 par décret-loi, a été arrêté mercredi 11 décembre à Dogubayazit, dans la province d'Agri, avec deux responsables locaux du Parti démocratique des Peuples (HDP), Abdullah Ekelek et Muhammet Ikram Müftüoğlu. Le ministère turc de l'intérieur s'est d'emblée félicité de l'arrestation d'un « terroriste ». Cette qualification largement relayée par les

médias turcs a été dénoncée par le HDP, ainsi que par les proches du journaliste. TORTURÉ PAR LA POLICE ARMÉNIENNE

Aziz Oruç avait quitté la Turquie en 2017 pour aller se réfugier au sud-Kurdistan (Irak). De là, il s'était dirigé vers l'Iran, via l'Arménie, afin de rejoindre l'Europe. Arrivé au poste-frontière entre l'Arménie et l'Iran le



Aziz Oruç, journaliste kurde.

8 décembre, il avait été placé en garde à vue par les autorités arméniennes.

Voici le récit du journaliste transmis par son avocat :

«La police arménienne m'a arrêté au poste frontière, en prétendant que mon passeport était faux. Ils m'ont mis dans une pièce pendant plusieurs heures. Ils m'ont menacé et infligé des violences physiques. J'ai dit que

j'étais journaliste et que je voulais aller en Europe parce que j'étais recherché en Turquie. J'ai déposé une demande d'asile en Arménie par l'intermédiaire de ceux qui me retenaient dans cette pièce. Cependant, toutes mes demandes ont été rejetées avec des menaces. J'ai été menotté et menacé : on m'a dit que je serais livré à l'Iran et que je serais exécuté là-bas. Puis ils m'ont livré aux services de renseignements iraniens qui m'ont placé en garde à vue pendant

deux jours. Poursuivi en justice par les autorités iraniennes, j'ai été condamné à une amende pécuniaire et fait l'objet d'une décision d'expulsion.

Une nuit, ils m'ont emmené à la frontière turco-iranienne et ont voulu me forcer à franchir les fils de fer et à entrer illégalement en Turquie. Malgré mes protestations, ils m'ont jeté de l'autre côté de la frontière. Je suis repassé à plusieurs reprises du côté iranien et ai demandé à entrer en Turquie par la frontière officielle, mais ils ont refusé. J'ai été blessé en franchissant les barbelés de la frontière. J'ai été abandonné là, à la mort. Puis, j'ai réussi à marcher jusqu'à Dogubayazit. L'Iran et l'Arménie ont violé le droit international en refusant ma demande d'asile. Nous déposerons plainte contre eux devant les juridictions internationales. »

Dans une conférence de presse tenue samedi 14 décembre, l'antenne locale du HDP de Dogubayazit a indiqué que son Coprésident, Abdullah Ekelek, et un autre membre du HDP, Muhammet Ikram Müftüoğlu, avaient aidé le journaliste après son abandon par l'Iran dans la zone frontalière, et que les trois hommes avaient été arrêtés dans ce contexte.

Déférés devant un juge, dimanche, les deux membres du HDP ont été inculpés pour « soutien à une organisation terroriste » et envoyés en prison.



16 décembre 2019

Turquie : 11 personnes originaires d'Afrin torturées et condamnées à de lourdes peines

11 civils enlevés à Afrin par des milices djihadistes soutenues par la Turquie, puis remis aux services secrets turcs (MIT), ont été torturés et condamnés à de lourdes peines de prison.

Kidnapés à Afrin et emmenés à Hatay, en Turquie, l'année dernière, les 11 civils étaient accusés de la mort de deux soldats turcs à Afrin. Ils ont été condamnés, la semaine dernière, à des peines d'emprisonnement allant de douze ans à la réclusion à perpétuité.

Durant l'audience, les accusés ont plaidé leur innocence et déclaré qu'ils

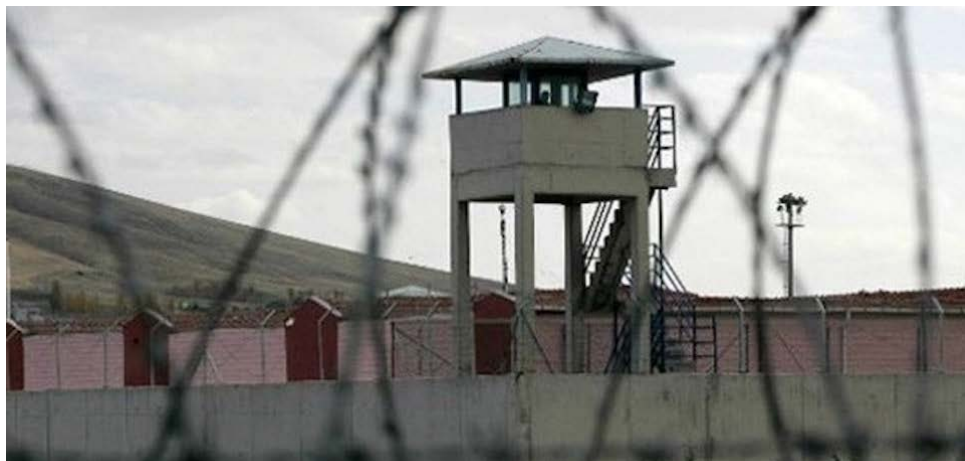
avaient été forcés de faire des déclarations sous la torture.

« Les onze civils ont été torturés pendant 12 jours, de la manière la plus atroce, par les milices pro-turques, avant d'être emmenés en Turquie où ils ont été interrogés ; leurs tortionnaires ont participé à leur interrogatoire », a déclaré l'avocat des accusés, Suphi Zarif.

L'avocat a ajouté que ses clients avaient ensuite été contraints de signer des aveux préparés à l'avance, car leurs tortionnaires les menaçaient ainsi

que leurs familles en cas de refus. Selon les témoignages des accusés rapportés par leur avocat, leurs tortionnaires avaient menacé de retourner à Afrin et d'infliger les mêmes tortures aux membres de leurs familles, de violer leurs femmes et de les tuer « si nécessaire ».

En septembre 2018, le gouvernement turc avait annoncé victorieusement la « capture » de plusieurs combattants des Unités de Défense du Peuple (YPG) dans le cadre d'une « opération spéciale ». Les médias gouvernementaux avaient ensuite publié des photos de 9



des hommes visiblement blessés. Il s'est avéré que les prétendus combattants des YPG étaient en fait des habitants d'Afrin. Enlevés et torturés à Afrin par des milices djihadistes, ils avaient ensuite été remis au MIT le 3 septembre 2018. Deux semaines plus tard, ils

avaient été emmenés en Turquie.

Condamnés pour « atteinte à l'unité de l'Etat turc et à l'indivisibilité du pays »

Les captifs sont originaires du village d'Omera, dans le district de Mabeta.

Accusés d'être responsables de la mort de deux officiers turcs de haut grade, ils ont été condamnés pour « homicide » et « atteinte à l'unité de l'Etat turc et à l'indivisibilité du pays ». Les deux officiers en question sont morts le 23 janvier 2018, dans les affrontements avec les forces kurdes, au début de l'opération d'invasion d'Afrin, cyniquement nommée « branche d'olivier » par le régime d'Erdogan.

Indiquant qu'il n'existait dans le dossier aucune preuve tangible permettant d'étayer les accusations, M. Zarif a dénoncé « l'incohérence et l'absurdité » de ces condamnations fondées uniquement sur les déclarations d'un prétendu témoin et sur des « aveux » arrachés à ses clients sous la torture. Il a déclaré qu'il ferait appel du jugement.



Dec 17 2019

Syrian Kurd commander calls on U.S. to halt Turkish ethnic cleansing efforts

The commander of Kurdish-led forces in Syria called on U.S. President Donald Trump to stop Turkey's efforts to ethnically cleanse the Kurds from northeast Syria and replace them with Syrian Arab refugees, Foreign Policy reported on Monday.

Turkish forces and their Syrian Islamist proxies launched a military operation in northeast Syria on Oct. 9 to clear Kurdish-led forces from areas south of its border. Turkey took control of an area between the border towns of Ras al Ayn and Tel Abyad and aims to create what it calls a safe zone to resettle most of the more-than 3.6 million Syrian refugees it currently hosts.

"America should not allow forced changes in demography and ethnic cleansing in the 21st century," Mazloum Kobani, the commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), told Foreign Policy in an interview.

Kobani said Turkey had carried out similar policies after it captured the northeast Syrian district of Afrin early last year where he said Kurds and religious minorities had been displaced and replaced with Syrian Turkmen and Arab families.

The Turkish-backed Syrian rebels spearheading the Turkish offensive in northeast



Syria have been accused of war crimes, carrying out summary executions and unlawfully occupying and looting private property.

Foreign Policy said Kobani had indicated he might travel to Washington in the near future and called on Trump and the United Nations to send international observers to the 30-km-deep Turkish-controlled zone as a guarantee to the displaced Kurdish population.

Russia and the United States brokered two separate deals with Turkey to halt its offen-

sive and facilitate the withdrawal of Kurdish forces to 30 km south of the Turkish border.

"They should claim their role in stopping those actions and make the Turks abide by the agreement ... their efforts are not sufficient," Kobani said.

Trump withdrew most U.S. forces from the border area in October, allowing Turkey to launch its offensive against the SDF, which led the ground war against Islamic State.

Ilhan Omar writes to US Syria envoy over Turkish white phosphorus allegations

Congresswoman calls on US Syria envoy to give full briefing on October incident in border town

Four US congressional Democrats have written to Donald Trump's Syria envoy asking him to spell out what information the US has about the alleged use of white phosphorus by Turkey against Syrian Kurdish civilians in October.

Ilhan Omar and three of her colleagues in the House of Representatives called on Jim Jeffrey to provide a full briefing – in private if necessary – into whether it believes the incident during the Turkish invasion two months ago amounts to a war crime.

They wrote: "The United States is uniquely positioned as a Nato ally of Turkey and a partner of the Syrian Kurds, who are the alleged victims of this attack, to take a lead on a full investigation into the circumstances surrounding [it]."

Pictures emerged at the time of Syrian children who had been seriously burned, prompting accusations that they had been targeted by Turkish forces using white phosphorus in or around the border town of Ras al-Ayn.

White phosphorus is routinely held by militaries around the world and is used legally in combat as a smokescreen in daytime and as an incendiary to light up an area at night. But it is illegal to use it against civilians because it causes serious and exceptionally painful burns on contact with skin.

Inspectors at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) initially said they were "collecting information" on the incident, but subsequently concluded it would "not

initiate an investigation". The OPCW said the case fell out of its remit because the use of white phosphorus as an incendiary weapon was intended to exploit its thermal properties and not its chemical properties.

The four members of Congress say that the situation has become "a matter of urgency" and called for tissue samples from the alleged victims, which they say are being held in Iraq, be studied so "the United States and the international community can have the full evidence".

of the attack".

Turkey has previously said that the accusations were false. Hulusi Akar, the defence minister, said in October: "It is a fact known by everyone that there are no chemical weapons in the inventory of the Turkish armed forces."

Trump unexpectedly gave Turkey a green light to invade Kurdish-controlled north-east Syria in October when he suddenly said he would withdraw US troops from the border region. After a brief period of fighting between Turkey



Smoke and fire rise from the Syrian town of Ras al-Ayn in the Turkish offensive against Kurdish groups in north-east Syria in October. / Photograph: Ozan Köse/AFP via Getty

They also ask Jeffrey to spell out what the US state department's position would be "in the event it is proven that Turkey used white phosphorus against civilians", whether it would "commit to a full, impartial and multilateral investigation into the allegations of chemical weapons use by Turkey in Syria" and "full accountability for the perpetrators

and Syrian Kurdish forces, a ceasefire was brokered with the involvement of Russia leading to the establishment of a security zone.

The other congressional signatories to the letter are Karen Bass, Juan Vargas and Sheila Jackson Lee.

Shirin Ebadi :

« L'arrestation d'un responsable iranien en Suède doit permettre de faire la lumière sur les crimes contre l'humanité commis par le régime »

Prix Nobel de la paix en 2003, l'avocate et militante iranienne appelle, dans une tribune au « Monde », tous les responsables et toutes les instances concernés par la défense des droits humains à intéresser l'opinion publique au cas d'un responsable d'exécutions massives détenu à Stockholm.

Tribune. Pour la première fois depuis l'instauration de la République islamique d'Iran (1979), l'un des responsables iraniens impliqués dans des crimes contre l'humanité est détenu dans l'attente d'une éventuelle mise en accusation, qui pourrait intervenir d'ici au 8 janvier 2020.

Arrêté le 9 novembre à Stockholm par les autorités suédoises, actuellement en détention provisoire, Hamid Noury, 58 ans, avait un poste à responsabilité dans la prison de Gohardasht (l'actuelle prison de Rajai Shahr, au nord de Téhéran) lorsque, sur ordre de l'ayatollah Khomeiny, plusieurs milliers de prisonniers politiques furent exécutés, de manière sommaire et expéditive, pendant « l'été noir » de 1988.

Selon les preuves réunies par des militantes iraniennes des droits humains, Hamid Noury officiait alors comme procureur à la prison de Gohardasht et aurait joué un rôle actif dans ces exécutions. De nombreux anciens prisonniers et des familles de victimes ont porté plainte contre lui.

Ces exécutions sont considérées par plusieurs organisations et instances internationales de défense des droits humains comme des crimes contre l'humanité

En 1988, presque 4 000 détenus politiques, préalablement condamnés à des peines d'emprisonnement, ont été



Shirin Ebadi (Avocate et militante des droits humains iranienne, Prix Nobel de la paix 2003)

exécutés, entre juillet et septembre, par une commission connue sous le nom de la « commission de mort » en vertu d'une fatwa (édit religieux), émise par l'ayatollah Khomeiny. Cette commission à Téhéran a été dirigée notamment par Ebrahim Raïssi, actuel chef du système judiciaire iranien et Mostafa Pourmohammadi, ancien ministre de l'intérieur et des renseignements. A Téhéran, comme dans tout le pays, où des commissions similaires ont siégé, des fonctionnaires ont multiplié les condamnations à mort, lors d'interrogatoires ne durant parfois que quelques minutes.

L'ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, ancien dauphin de Khomeiny, avait été écarté du pouvoir en mars 1989 pour avoir publiquement fait part de

sa désapprobation sur ces exécutions, qu'il qualifiait de « crime le plus horrible commis sous la République islamique ». Il avait également interpellé les membres de la commission : « C'est vous, messieurs, qui avez commis ce crime et vos noms resteront dans l'histoire en tant que criminels. »

Ces exécutions sont considérées par plusieurs organisations et instances internationales de défense des droits humains comme des crimes contre l'humanité. L'arrestation d'Hamid Noury constitue donc un pas important pour la justice internationale et les familles en Iran qui attendent que justice soit rendue contre les responsables de ces exécutions extrajudiciaires.

Immense espoir

Cette arrestation n'aurait pas été possible sans la persévé-

rance d'anciens prisonniers politiques et de leurs avocats. Parmi eux : Iraj Mesdagh, auteur de plusieurs livres sur les exécutions de prisonniers politiques en Iran et membre du Comité pour l'observation et l'utilisation des données sur la justice iranienne, ainsi que Kaveh Moussavi, juge et arbitre à la Cour pénale internationale.

Alors qu'en Iran, malgré leurs revendications, les familles des victimes n'ont jamais été entendues, alors qu'on leur refuse même de savoir où sont enterrés leurs enfants, le fait qu'un des responsables de ces crimes puisse comparaître devant un tribunal est porteur d'un immense espoir. Pour les familles, d'abord, car elles sauront qu'elles peuvent compter sur la justice internationale. Pour les Iraniens, ensuite, qui verront enfin se lever la censure sur ces crimes massifs. Et, bien sûr, pour les droits humains et leur avancée dans notre monde.

Pour toutes ces raisons, je me dois d'attirer l'attention de toutes les instances qui défendent les droits humains, de tous les acteurs politiques sensibles à l'universalité de ces droits : nous demandons que lumière soit faite sur les crimes contre l'humanité perpétrés par Hamid Noury et ses complices. Intéressez-vous à cet événement sans précédent, intéressez-y l'opinion publique ! Ne le laissez pas sombrer dans le silence et l'indifférence !

The New York Times

Dec. 18, 2019

By Nader Hashemi

How Iran Justifies Its Violence

Tehran uses religious arguments, anti-imperialist nationalism and neo-Stalinist repression to ensure compliance.

Historians will record the blood-soaked days of November as some of the worst mass killings of protesters in modern Iranian history. A sudden increase in fuel prices led to protests across the country; the regime responded with brute violence.

Amnesty International has verified “at least” 304 deaths between Nov. 15 and 18. Credible Iranian opposition sources have cited a preliminary figure of 366 while The New York Times reported that “180 to 450 people, and possibly more, were killed,” with “at least 2,000 wounded and 7,000 detained.” A statement from the Iranian Writers’ Association observed: “Every corner of Iran is mourning the atrocities.” Iranian artists, physicians, trade unionists and teachers have condemned the repression.

The Islamic Republic is in damage control mode as it seeks to manage growing public anger and international demands for accountability. Reversing the regime’s early narrative that these protests were a foreign plot, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran, has admitted the loss of innocent life. He said these citizens were “martyrs” who deserved financial compensation.

These events raise a series of important questions. Why is the Islamic Republic seemingly indifferent to human rights criticism? How does the Iranian government justify its use of violence to crush dissent? Is there anything the international community can do to alleviate this situation?

Over the past 40 years, Iranian leaders have pursued a three-pronged strategy to deflect human rights criticism. They have advanced both religious arguments rooted in claims of Islamic authenticity and secular arguments rooted in anti-imperial nationalism — and they have adopted a policy of neo-Stalinist repression to ensure obedience.

From its inception, the Islamic Republic claimed its brand of Islam encompassed an ethically superior human rights framework. Islam has its own value system, inspired by divine revelation, which has sometimes overlapped with international human rights standards but often has not. For the Iranian regime, a Western secular understanding of human rights did not apply to Iran. Not only were these norms rejected, but Iranian leaders also did so with pride, basking in the glow of Islamic authenticity. Traditional Islamic concepts have been utilized to guide state policy rooted in a pre-modern and self-serving reading of Islamic law. Equality between genders or religions was rejected; harsh corporal punishments became routine. Though the regime claimed that this model would advance social justice better than the Western model, the result has been a human rights catastrophe.

During the recent protests, for example, an obscure religious expert, Abolfazl Bahrampour, appeared on state television. He provided a Quranic justification for the dismemberment and hanging of protesters.



People protesting on a highway against increased gas prices in Tehran in November. Credit...Wana News Agency, via Reuters

This produced a huge social backlash, reflecting the chasm between state and society. The Islamic Republic’s official news agency was forced to criticize Mr. Bahrampour’s interpretation. He subsequently reappeared to apologize for hermeneutic errors that damaged the reputation of the Islamic faith, offended senior clerics and gave succor to Iran’s enemies.

At a deeper level, Iranian state policy has been shaped by a famous 1988 fatwa by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (not the one against Salman Rushdie). In attempting to resolve a public policy dispute between two branches of government, Ayatollah Khomeini decreed that in a clash between the needs of the state and the core pillars of Islam, the needs of the state must take priority — even if this should necessitate the abrogation of “prayer, fasting and pilgrimage.”

Ayatollah Khomeini argued that the Islamic Republic was the living embodiment of Prophet Muhammad’s earthly mission, and so its preservation had to be prioritized above all else. Otherwise, Islam itself would disappear.

During the controversial 2009 presidential election, for example, where vote rigging gave Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a second term, it was reported that Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, a prominent, hard-line cleric, issued a fatwa permitting the faithful to miscount votes. Given this guiding theological-political principle, virtually any abuse can be justified for reasons of the state.

Third-world nationalism, rooted in a strong anti-imperialist framework, has also been an enduring feature of the Islamic Republic. This theme has been elevated in recent years because of continuing tensions with the United States and Europe and a growing crisis of legitimacy, as Iranian society becomes more secular. Iran deflects criticism of its

egregious human rights record by leveling the charge of hypocrisy at its chief critics in the United States and Europe. Western double standards in the Israel-Palestine conflict, President Trump’s embrace of Middle East tyrants and Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel’s prime minister, feature prominently in this narrative.

And then there is the regime’s model of neo-Stalinist repression, replete with imprisonment of dissidents, assassinations, torture, forced television confessions, censorship and state propaganda. During the recent protests, for example, the family of a slain protester was informed that if they spoke to the media, the authorities would “dig up his body and take it away.” At its core, Iran remains a police state.

Nevertheless, nonviolent civil resistance comes from many quarters. Religious reformers and dissident clerics — their authority stemming from the 1990s, when a widely popular, modernist reading of Islam was suppressed — have led part of the resistance to Iran’s human rights crisis.

They have been joined by women, labor activists, teachers, students, artists, lawyers — all those who have not been cowed by arguments that the only form of injustice facing Iranians derives from American foreign policy. Four decades of clerical rule in Iran have shaped an authoritarian reality that cannot be whitewashed any longer.

There is also the international context to consider. President Trump’s withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement and the sanctions against Iran have deeply exacerbated the human rights crisis. The sanctions have strengthened the hard-liners, disproportionately affected the average citizen and undermined the work of human rights and democracy activists.

The response by those outside of Iran who support human rights should be twofold: Keep the spotlight on Iran, while also restraining the predatory impulses of the Trump administration and its regional allies who seek a military conflict. While internal repression has reached new heights, further deterioration is possible, notwithstanding the bloody days of November.

Nader Hashemi is the director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver.

Who Exactly Is Turkey Resettling in Syria?

Ankara claims it's helping displaced Syrians return home. Kurds and international observers accuse Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government of demographic engineering.

NORTHEAST SYRIA—Just two months after the launch of Turkey's most recent incursion into Syria, dubbed Operation Peace Spring, civilians' return to areas now occupied by Turkish forces has already begun.

Turkey launched its long-anticipated operation in October in order to clear the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) from the border region of Syria and Turkey and create a so-called safe zone to settle millions of Syrian refugees who fled to Turkey over the course of the Syrian war. The Turkish government deems the YPG a terrorist organization and an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, which has waged a decadeslong and deadly campaign for Kurdish autonomy inside Turkey.

According to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), more than 75,000 people still remain displaced from areas in northeast Syria and are now sheltering in relatives' homes and camps for internally displaced people after fleeing the Turkish operation. More than 17,000 people have crossed the border to Iraqi Kurdistan to seek safety, according to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

The return of Syrians to their homes in the northeast is highly politicized.

Considering the underpinnings of the operation, the return of Syrians to their homes in the northeast is highly politicized.

Various regional groups such as the Internationalist Commune of Rojava and the Rojava Information Center have long argued that Turkey is undertaking ethnic cleansing of Kurds and sees its most recent operation as part of this demographic change along Turkey's borders.

Turkey, on the other hand, contends that it is paving the way for Syrians who have been sheltering in Turkey to return to their homeland, thereby restoring the population from before the Syrian war. Various media outlets have recently reported cases of Syrian Arabs returning to areas recently cleared of so-called terrorists, particularly the



essa Fox -northeast-syria-looting, Rojava Information Center

now Turkish-controlled areas of Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ain—towns that have always had a substantial Kurdish population.

For instance, Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency reported that about 70 Syrians, some of whom had lived in the border town of Sanliurfa for seven years, had crossed into Syria and returned to Ras al-Ain.

The Turkish Defense Ministry also stated that 295 people have recently moved from Jarabulus, a Syrian border town west of the Euphrates River, to Tal Abyad now that "peace and security" has been restored. These Syrians had allegedly fled the YPG an unspecified number of years ago and are returning to their homeland thanks to Turkey.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has deemed this a form of engineered demographic change, noting that civilians only need to register their names with Turkish forces in order to be moved by a car escort that departs twice a day.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has deemed this a form of engineered demographic change, noting that civilians only need to register their names with Turkish forces in order to be moved by a car escort that departs twice a day.

Mahmud Komiteya, a Kurdish community leader from Tal Abyad, fled the city after Turkey launched its operation and is now sheltering in Qamishli, in the far northeast of Syria. He recently spoke to Foreign Policy by phone, which regularly cut out due to poor service.

Komiteya said he was told by his Arab neighbor, who is currently looking after his home in Tal Abyad, that no one has returned to the city besides a few Arabs. "Some people are coming from outside the city ... to delete the demographic, put other people there and remove our culture," Komiteya told Foreign Policy.

U.N. data shows that approximately 123,000 people have returned to their place of origin since the start of the operation. Roughly half of these people have returned

to places now controlled by Turkey. As of the start of December, Turkey had captured about 1,900 square miles, stretching from west of Tal Abyad to east of Ras al-Ain.

U.N. spokeswoman Danielle Moylan explained that of the number of people who have already returned—close to 102,000 went back in October—meaning approximately 83 per cent of the displaced who have returned did so in their first month of displacement. Given the deteriorating security situation, those who remain displaced are unlikely to return anytime soon.

Moylan also confirmed reports of approximately 300 families previously displaced from Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ain who have recently returned to their areas of origin from Jarabulus, in addition to 200 Syrian families returning from Turkey.

But there is no evidence these Syrian families who were sheltering in Turkey once

lived in Syria's northeast. Furthermore, the return of families who were sheltering in Jarabulus for the last few years ignores the need for the most recent wave of internally displaced people to return, too.

There is no evidence these Syrian families who were sheltering in Turkey once lived in Syria's northeast.

The secretary-general of the Austrian Association for Kurdish Studies, Thomas Schmidinger, sees the transfer of people from other areas, including Jarabulus and Turkey, as a land grab.

"Nearly no one from Ras al-Ain fled to Jarabulus or Turkey [during the most recent operation], so the people going there now come from completely different regions of Syria," Schmidinger told Foreign Policy. But they are taking over the homes most recently vacated by people who fled in October.

There has been a constant flux and various waves of internally displaced people and refugees in Syria's northeast since the start of the Syrian war. In 2012, Ras al-Ain became a front line between the Kurdish administration and Turkish-backed opposition forces and militias.

"So the Kurds fled the region west of Ras al-Ain to the region under control by the Kurds in Jazeera," Schmidinger said, referring to the eastern Syrian region that includes Qamishli.

The demographic makeup of Ras al-Ain has been fairly constant, though the most recent census—conducted in 2004—did not differentiate ethnicity. Schmidinger estimates Ras al-Ain was 70 percent Kurdish, up to 15 percent Arab, and 15 percent Christian Syrians and other minority groups, such as Chechens and Turkmen. Tal Abyad had an Arab majority before the war. In 2011, 70 percent of the population was Arab and 25 percent Kurdish, according to the Washington Institute.

**L'Orient
LE JOUR**

19/12/2019
avec AFP

Syrie : cinq morts dans l'explosion d'une voiture piégée dans une zone sous contrôle turc

Cinq personnes, dont trois enfants, ont été tuées jeudi dans l'explosion d'une voiture piégée dans un secteur sous contrôle turc dans le nord-est de la Syrie, a affirmé Ankara, imputant l'attaque aux forces kurdes.

L'explosion s'est produite dans le village de Tal Halaf à l'ouest de la ville de Ras el-Aïn, a annoncé dans un communiqué le ministère turc de la Défense, qui a accusé la milice kurde des YPG d'en être responsable. "Cinq civils innocents, dont trois enfants, ont été tués" dans l'explosion, a affirmé le ministère.

L'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme, une ONG, a pour sa part affirmé que l'explosion avait fait "deux morts et plusieurs blessés".

Ras el-Aïn et ses environs sont contrôlés par les supplétifs syriens de la Turquie à la faveur d'une offensive menée en octobre par l'armée turque dans le nord-est de la Syrie pour en chasser les YPG. Ankara considère les YPG comme un groupe "terroriste" mais cette milice est soutenue par les pays occidentaux dans la lutte contre le groupe Etat islamique (EI). L'offensive qu'a lancée en octobre la Turquie a permis à cette dernière de prendre le contrôle à sa frontière d'une bande de territoire de 120 km de longueur et d'une tren-



Des combattants syriens pro-turcs dans la localité de Ras el-Aïn, le 20 octobre 2019. Photo d'archives REUTERS/Aboud Hamam

taine de kilomètres de profondeur, allant de Tal Abyad à Ras el-Aïn.

Ankara a interrompu son opération militaire après avoir conclu deux accords avec Washington et Moscou qui prévoient le retrait des YPG de la plupart de leurs positions frontalières.

A terme, la Turquie souhaite établir une "zone de sécurité" dans le nord de la Syrie, avec l'objectif d'y installer une partie des quelque 3,6 millions de réfugiés syriens présents sur son territoire.



20-12-2019
By Fazel Hawramy

A new wave of arrests sweeps Kurdish province of Kermanshah in Iran

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region – Iranian security forces have launched a new wave of arrests in the Kurdish province of Kermanshah. Around half a dozen cultural and civil rights activists have been detained in recent days, and a senior police officer admitted on Wednesday that 250 people are being held in detention.

Kermanshah province saw fierce clashes between protesters and security forces in November as hundreds of thousands of people across the country took to the streets to condemn government austerity measures intended to overcome Iran's economic crisis.

Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN), which covers human rights violations in the Kurdish areas in western Iran, reported on Wednesday that the security forces arrested two activists. This comes after the arrest of six other activists in previous days.

Kurdish activists are often charged with links to opposition groups and labeled as separatists.

“Fouad Mozaffari and Farzad Sofrah, two literary and cultural activists, were detained in their homes by the security forces on Wednesday,” the Kurdish watchdog organization said on Wednesday, adding that there were two other raids in the same day but the activists were not present.

Tension is high in the city of Kermanshah after more than 20 people were gunned down by security forces during the November protests. Many others have been wounded. Agents from a number of intelligence



Iranian protesters, © AFP

agencies including the police, the Ministry of Intelligence and the Intelligence of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) have detained several hundred protesters from the province of Kermanshah. Wounded protesters who visited medical facilities were detained by the security forces and taken to detention centers.

“More than 250 ringleaders of last month's riots have been arrested as a result of the intelligence surveillance of the Security Police,” the head of Kermanshah's police Ali Akbar Javidan stated on Wednesday to the semi-official Mehr news agency. “The rioters are generally between 20 and 35 ...several of them have admitted to links with terrorist groups and the enemies of the revolution.”

“Upon search of the hiding places of the ringleaders in Kermanshah province, more than 30 guns with a number of bullets were discovered.”

The authorities have also arrested a number of journalists from Kermanshah in recent days.

KHRN said that Houmayoon Abbasi, a Kurdish journalist from Kermanshah, was arrested on Tuesday in Tehran by the Intelligence section of the police. Abbasi was the editor of the political publication Zhilwan, which was published every month in Kurdish and Persian and circulated in Kurdish areas and in Tehran.

Iranian human rights activist and Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi said during a meeting in Brussels on December 12 that “Separatism is a label that the Islamic Republic uses to oppress the ethnic groups.”

Ebadi criticized the European countries for dealing with Tehran at a time that the security forces have launched a wide crackdown against dissent. “The least you can do is to make trading with Iran and the start of INSTEX dependent on halting the crackdown and the freedom of political prisoners whose demands are bread and job.”

Iran is under intense economic pressure after US President Donald Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear accord (JCPOA)

and re-imposed crippling sanctions. The European countries are trying to save the deal by making a trading mechanism called INSTEX operational. INSTEX would allow Iran to use oil money to buy humanitarian goods from European companies.

Iranian authorities have refused to release figures regarding how many people have died in the protest and labeled the protesters as foreign-inspired “thugs.”

“Harrowing testimony from eyewitnesses suggests that, almost immediately after the Iranian authorities massacred hundreds of those participating in nationwide protests, they went on to orchestrate a wide-scale clampdown designed to instill fear and prevent anyone from speaking out about what happened,” said Philip Luther, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa research director.

“At least 304 people were killed and thousands were injured between 15 and 18 November as authorities crushed protests using lethal force, according to credible reports compiled by the organization.”

US authorities have condemned the Iranian government's handling of the protests and suggested the death toll could be as high as 1,000.

Speaking today at a State Department event focused on human rights violations in Iran, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo revealed new actions taken against Iran, including sanctions against two judges presiding over branches of the Revolutionary Court and visa restrictions against Iranian officials and their families.

The New York Times By Vali R. Nasr and Ali Vaez
Dec. 19, 2019

Opinion | Talk With Iran Now. Time Is Fleeting.

The tensions rising between Iran and the United States aren't a signal that diplomacy will fail. They are a warning that negotiations are a must — and soon.

The momentous protests in Iran this autumn came at a delicate time in a tense standoff between the United States and Iran. Despite the recent prisoner swap, officials in Washington may see the prospects for diplomacy dimming. But that would be wrong. Iranian elections are coming, and without any American agreement to relent on sanctions, the current relatively conciliatory government might well lose all its influence in favor of far more confrontational hard-liners.

That calculus makes this exactly the time to take diplomacy seriously. While the opportunity for success may be slim, failing to reverse rising tensions now risks a serious escalation in frictions that would be more impervious to diplomacy down the road.

At first glance, it appears that Washington and Tehran have drawn diametrically opposed interpretations of the upheaval's causes and consequences, rendering any effort at de-escalation unlikely. The unrest, triggered by an abrupt hike in fuel prices, quickly evolved into a violent nationwide revolt against the ruling order. The Trump administration saw the austerity measure as a direct result of its "maximum pressure" policy, and cried success. In their minds, the stifling impact of sanctions had prompted public ire, and could soon persuade Iran's leaders to alter their domestic and foreign policies in order to retain power.

To Washington hawks, that is a strong argument against throwing Iran a lifeline by negotiating a deal; they believe that the United States could get concessions if it were to further tighten the screws. And their perception of Iranian vulnerability is only reinforced by the anti-Iran tenor that partly characterizes popular protests now taking place in Lebanon and Iraq.

Conversely, even those among the Iranian leadership who concede that the sanctions have effectively driven a wedge between the state and society see the extensive looting and arson that occurred as the work of agitators trained by the United States and its Middle Eastern allies. The Trump administration's expressions of support for the protesters and evident satisfaction at the turmoil then gave that accusation some credibility, exacerbating Iran's paranoia. In the days after the protests broke out, official circles in Tehran began citing a claim by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey that Ankara had intercepted

intelligence regarding a plot to bring down the Islamic Republic.

Iran's rulers believe that they crushed an American plot when they crushed the unrest quickly and decisively, and that by doing that, they have rendered President Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign far less effective. The leadership is also confident that it has demonstrated its determination to defeat any challenge to its hold on power, having killed more than 300 protesters and completely shut down the internet for more than a week. This, coupled with attacks in recent months on oil tankers and energy infrastructure in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which the United States and its allies have attributed to Iran, is treated in Tehran as a demonstration of their power at home and throughout the region.

This implies that, whatever the prisoner swap accomplished, the protests have further diminished opportunities for diplomacy. But if the absence of diplomacy points toward a direct military confrontation, both Washington and Tehran should rethink their positions.

Why negotiate now? On Jan. 6, 2020, Iran is scheduled to take yet another step in rolling back its compliance with the 2015 nuclear accord that the Trump administration has left. This time it might resume enriching uranium to a 20 percent level, which is dangerously close to weapons grade. That could push European signatories to support a snapback of United Nations sanctions. Tehran has already threatened that it will counter such a step by withdrawing from both the nuclear deal and, more important, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty — steps that North Korea took before developing its nuclear arsenal.

Tehran could also continue to orchestrate attacks in the region that would not give the United States a clear case for war. Mr. Trump's aversion to responding to such provocations has taught the Iranians that their risks of backlash are limited and manageable. Some in Tehran even argue that Iran could absorb any American military retaliation, and that the closer the United States gets to the threat of all-out war with Iran, the more it will consider returning to negotiations. As the economic situation in Iran worsens, the leadership may feel it has little to lose and little to fear — a dangerous combination.

The electoral calendars in the United States and Iran add another layer of complexity. President Trump, increasingly bogged down by impeach-

ment proceedings and his re-election campaign, might be more averse to a political backlash from ordering sanctions relief. Without economic reprieve, his Iranian counterpart, President Hassan Rouhani, is bound to lose the Parliament to his hardline opposition in February, further reducing his ability to generate a consensus within the Iranian system for a deal with Washington. And Mr. Trump should not put too much stock in Iran's troubles in Iraq and Lebanon. The longer those crises drag on, the more they will turn into a problem for Washington as much as for Tehran.

If President Trump is interested in a deal with Iran, now is the optimum time. There is no immediate prospect of a change in Tehran's government structure, and further instability in Iran will only render deal-making nearly impossible. The Rouhani government remains Trump's best bet, and there is only a small window before "maximum pressure" completely sidelines it.

Iranian leaders should realize that a successful crackdown does not guarantee that protests won't break out again. They have to address the country's economic woes, and the Islamic Republic cannot expect halcyon stability under unending draconian sanctions. Public patience with economic hardship is wearing thin; the political cost of the government's "resistance economy" is onerous.

The president of France, Emmanuel Macron, and Japan's prime minister, Shinzo Abe, have tried to bring the United States and Iran to the negotiating table. Drawing on their proposals, it is still possible to pursue a narrow cease-fire, during which Tehran would agree to constructive engagement on nuclear issues and a de-escalation of tensions in the region, in exchange for a limited but meaningful reprieve from American sanctions. Such a step would be a necessary prelude to the broader deal Mr. Trump is calling for.

However, the window for diplomacy is rapidly closing. If de-escalation is not achieved before Iran's parliamentary elections in February, its odds of success are likely to drastically diminish. With both sides locked in a cycle of escalation, it can soon become too late for diplomacy to take off.

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Escalade des tensions autour des gisements de gaz au large de Chypre

Le Congrès américain a levé l'embargo sur la vente d'armes à Nicosie.
La prospection gazière fait craindre une militarisation de la zone.

La Turquie a mis en garde les Etats-Unis contre la levée de l'embargo sur la vente d'armes américaines à Chypre, susceptible de créer « une dangereuse escalade » dans la région. Le Congrès américain a adopté, mardi 17 décembre, deux projets de loi en soutien à la République de Chypre dans ses différends territoriaux et énergétiques avec la Turquie. L'un lève l'embargo imposé il y a trente ans sur la vente d'armements américains à Nicosie, l'autre renforce l'aide à la sécurité pour Chypre tout en condamnant la Turquie pour ses activités de forage au large de l'île.

Chypre est un point névralgique, sujet aux tensions. Divisée depuis 1974 entre la République de Chypre, reconnue par la communauté internationale, et la République turque de Chypre du Nord (RTCN), reconnue seulement par Ankara, l'île va au-devant de nouveaux problèmes depuis la découverte, au large de ses côtes, de gisements de gaz équivalant en volume à ceux de la mer du Nord. Faute d'accord sur la réunification, les derniers pourparlers ayant échoué en 2017, de nouvelles tensions ont surgi autour de la prospection gazière, faisant craindre une militarisation de la zone.

La Turquie compte sur son occupation du tiers nord de l'île, où plus de 30 000 soldats turcs sont stationnés, pour faire valoir ses droits de forage. Lundi, Ankara a envoyé ses propres drones de surveillance sur un aérodrome dans la partie de l'île qu'elle contrôle. Appelés Bayraktar TB2, ces drones, fleurons de l'industrie turque de défense, ont été conçus par l'ingénieur Selçuk Bayraktar, qui est aussi l'époux de la fille cadette du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Le rôle de ces drones est d'accompagner les navires turcs qui prospectent dans des eaux contestées au large de l'île. Pour le moment, le déploiement turc se limite à « des drones non armés », a précisé Kudret Ozersay, le « ministre » des affaires étrangères de la RTCN autoproclamée.

« Politique d'escalade »

Ce transfert a été largement salué par la presse turque progouvernementale. Il s'agit « d'un premier pas vers l'instauration d'une

base aérienne dans la région », a expliqué le quotidien Sabah dans son édition du 17 décembre. Pour le moment, il semble qu'Ankara ait voulu riposter à l'acquisition récente de drones de fabrication israélienne par Nicosie, qui les utilise pour surveiller sa zone économique exclusive (ZEE). « Mais on ne peut exclure une escalade des tensions et, dans ce cas-là, la Turquie pourrait en effet songer à établir une base aérienne sur l'île », explique Sinan Ulgen, président du groupe de réflexion Edam, basé à Istanbul.

La prospection gazière ouvre la voie à toutes sortes de frictions. Le 11 décembre, Mevlut Çavusoglu, le ministre des affaires étrangères turc, a déclaré que son pays pourrait utiliser la force militaire pour s'opposer aux forages au large de Chypre. La Turquie, a-t-il estimé, « a le droit d'empêcher » tout forage non autorisé dans ce qu'elle considère comme son propre plateau continental.

Invités par les autorités chypriotes grecques à prospecter les gisements gaziers, les géants de l'énergie, Total, ENI, ExxonMobil, American Noble Inc., sont désormais à pied d'œuvre au large de l'île. Ankara crie à la spoliation, accusant la République de Chypre de faire main basse sur les richesses, au détriment des Chypriotes turcs, qui se retrouvent exclus des futures retombées de la manne énergétique. Ankara ne reconnaît pas Chypre en tant qu'Etat et affirme que 44 % de la ZEE revendiquée par Nicosie est la sienne. Des navires turcs de forage ont été envoyés dans la zone revendiquée par Chypre, créant des frictions.

En novembre, des navires de guerre turcs ont ordonné à un navire de recherche israélien de quitter les eaux contestées. En février 2018, la marine turque avait bloqué l'accès d'un navire d'exploration de la firme italienne ENI à des gisements offshore. « A travers cette politique d'escalade, la Turquie veut démontrer que l'exploitation des ressources en hydrocarbures est impossible tant qu'elle s'en trouve exclue. Il s'agit de montrer que la seule vraie solution envisageable est d'accepter de négocier une répartition plus juste de ces ressources », affirme Sinan Ulgen.

Le président Erdogan a ajouté un peu à la tension en signant, le 27 novembre, un accord maritime contesté avec Faïez Sarraj, le chef du gouvernement libyen d'union nationale, reconnu par les Nations unies. Selon cet accord, les nouvelles limites du plateau continental turc apparaissent considérablement élargies, aux dépens de Chypre mais aussi de la Grèce et de ses îles (Crète, Rhodes).

Négociateur, « la seule issue »

Liés entre eux par des grands projets énergétiques, la Grèce, Chypre, Israël et l'Egypte comprennent que l'accord turco-libyen vise avant tout à mettre des bâtons dans les roues du projet de construction du gazoduc East-Med (Israël, Chypre, Grèce, Italie) destiné à acheminer le gaz méditerranéen vers l'Europe. Le partage des eaux de la Méditerranée entre Ankara et Tripoli, qui ne sont pas des Etats voisins et n'ont aucune frontière à partager, pose un sérieux défi aux relations déjà tendues entre la Turquie et la Grèce, incapables de s'entendre sur la délimitation de leurs plateaux continentaux et de leurs espaces aériens.

Seule solution, les convaincre de négocier. L'Union européenne (UE) pourrait y contribuer. A condition, selon Sinan Ulgen, « d'adopter un rôle plus neutre, ce qui n'a pas été le cas lors de la dernière déclaration du Conseil européen, très nettement alignée sur la position de la Grèce et de Chypre. Si l'Union continue sur cette voie, elle passera à côté du rôle qu'elle pourrait jouer pour faciliter la résolution de ce conflit au niveau politique ».

Négociateur « est la seule issue », estime aussi Ilter Turan, professeur de sciences politiques à l'université Bilgi d'Istanbul. Sans la Turquie, l'exploitation des hydrocarbures de la Méditerranée orientale ne sera tout simplement pas possible. « Le projet de gazoduc censé contourner la Turquie en passant sous la mer n'est pas viable, son coût est trop élevé. Tout comme le coût du gaz extrait de ces gisements. Il risque de revenir plus cher que le gaz russe, ce qui rendra difficile sa commercialisation en Europe. »



Dec 18 2019

Four more mayors replaced by Turkish government appointees

The authorities in Turkey have dismissed four more mayors on terror charges and handed their duties to government appointees, Turkish daily *Hürriyet* reported on Wednesday.

The mayors of Varto, Bulanık and Eren-tepe, three districts in the eastern province of Muş, were detained this week and are under investigation for making propaganda for and membership of a terrorist organisation, *Hürriyet* said.

Including these three, 31 mayors from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) have been replaced by government appointees since winning their seats in local elections on March 31.

The Turkish government says the HDP politicians are linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party, an outlawed group that has fought for Kurdish self-rule in Turkey since 1984. Turkey's Supreme Election Council authorised all candidates to run in the local



elections, but President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan warned before the vote was held that HDP mayors would be replaced, the continuation of a policy that saw nearly 100 mayors dismissed after the last local elections in 2014.

The fourth mayor dismissed this week, the main opposition Republican People's Party

(CHP)'s mayor of a district in Izmir, is the 32nd and only non-HDP mayor to be stripped of his authorities since the March elections.

Urla Mayor İbrahim Burak Oğuz was arrested for alleged links to the outlawed Gülen religious movement, which the Turkish government says is responsible for a failed coup attempt in 2016.

 REUTERS DECEMBER 20, 2019

Turkey detains pro-Kurdish mayor on suspected terrorism links

ISTANBUL, Dec 20 (Reuters) - Turkish authorities on Friday detained a mayor from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) due to suspected links to Kurdish militants, a security source said, the latest in a crackdown on mayors from the party since elections this year.

President Tayyip Erdogan and his government accuse the HDP of having links to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militant group, leading to prosecutions of thousands of its members and some leaders. The HDP denies such links.

Ankara has appointed acting mayors to 31 HDP municipalities in southeastern cities and districts since March elections, accord-

ing to the HDP, and 23 of the HDP's co-mayors are currently jailed pending trial.

The HDP governs many cities in the southeast of Turkey and typically appoints one male and one female co-mayor to promote gender equality.

Filiz Buluttekin, the mayor of the Sur district in the southeastern province of Diyarbakir, was detained on Friday, the security source said. Two other municipal council members were also detained.

The HDP said police had raided Buluttekin's home early on Friday. Images showed blockades around the Sur municipality building.

State-owned Anadolu agency said investigations were being conducted against Buluttekin on charges of terrorism propaganda, insulting the Turkish people, the government and the parliament.

It said Buluttekin had attended the funerals of PKK militants and joined a press conference regarding PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, jailed since 1999.

The former co-leaders of the HDP have both been jailed since 2016 on terrorism charges, with several other prominent members accused of supporting terrorism over what the government says are links to the PKK. (Reporting by Ali Kucukgocmen Editing by Ece Toksabay)

« Et tournera la roue », de Selahattin Demirtas : le feuilleton littéraire de Camille Laurens

La littérature témoigne sans théoriser et convainc sans militer, écrit notre feuilletoniste. Selahattin Demirtas, avocat des droits humains et leader charismatique du HDP, depuis sa prison turque, en témoigne.

« Et tournera la roue » (Devran), de Selahattin Demirtas, traduit du turc par Emmanuelle Collas, Emmanuelle Collas, 216 p., 16,90 €.

RÉSISTER

La liste est longue des écrivains et journalistes emprisonnés pour leurs écrits, hier ou aujourd'hui, dans beaucoup d'endroits du monde. Ne serait-ce qu'en Turquie, ils sont des dizaines : Ahmet Altan, son frère Mehmet, Asli Erdogan, Sara Aktas, et tant d'autres dont les noms ne parviennent pas tous jusqu'à nous. La persécution des Kurdes a encore contribué à remplir les geôles et les charniers. « La mort était devenue monnaie courante, si bien que les destructions et les massacres faisaient partie de la vie quotidienne », rappelle Selahattin Demirtas dans la dernière nouvelle de son second recueil, *Et tournera la roue*, paru en Turquie début 2019 et aussitôt traduit en français par son editrice Emmanuelle Collas. « Il faut croire qu'une nouvelle espèce, non humaine, s'était développée. Il existait désormais une créature détestant et méprisant l'espèce humaine, une créature qui se prenait probablement pour un surhomme. »

C'est la seule allusion politique transparente que s'autorise l'auteur, avocat des droits humains et leader charismatique du HDP, parti progressiste d'opposition prokurde, incarcéré depuis le 4 novembre 2016 pour « terrorisme ». Contrairement à d'autres, ce ne sont pas ses écrits mais ses seules prises de position antigouvernementales qui ont conduit à son arrestation. Ecrivain, il l'est devenu en prison, réussissant à faire passer au dehors, en 2018, un premier recueil de nouvelles, *L'Aurore* (Emmanuelle Collas, 2018), voué à un immense succès populaire. Quel point commun y a-t-il entre un opposant politique, orateur adulé des foules, et un écrivain soustrait à la société, de sorte que le prolongement de l'un en l'autre soit une évidence logique ? C'est le pouvoir de résister. « La résistance, c'est beau, les enfants ! C'est une loi de la physique », explique un professeur à ses élèves, non sans ironie puisqu'il vient lui-même de commettre la plus ignoble lâcheté. « La littérature permet de prendre po-

sition contre l'oppression, de manière directe ou indirecte, écrit Demirtas depuis sa cellule. Elle doit insuffler courage et espoir, sans concession, en résistance, sinon ce n'est pas de la littérature. »

L'humanisme de Selahattin Demirtas s'attache à la dimension pathétique des individus, les plus pauvres surtout, les plus



Francesca Capellini

innocents – analphabètes, simples d'esprit, « esclaves » des puissants

Certes, toutes les nouvelles du présent recueil ne procèdent pas d'une folle espérance, loin de là ; et si, comme le suggère le titre, la roue tourne, elle ne va pas toujours dans le sens d'une meilleure fortune. Quelquefois justice est faite, mais souvent aussi le malheur s'accroît. Cependant, même quand un bébé meurt de froid faute de secours ou qu'un accident décime plusieurs familles de travailleurs saisonniers qui cherchaient « une solution à la pauvreté », quelque chose dans un coin du récit, dans le sursaut d'un personnage ou dans l'esprit du lecteur, se met en marche et s'anime d'une énergie neuve, plus combative. La résistance naît de la solidarité ou de l'empathie qui s'empare des individus les plus divers. Un village tout entier pleure, « à l'agonie », quand l'un des leurs disparaît à cause de leur indifférence. Un procureur, jadis féroce, naît à une conscience morale nouvelle lorsqu'un accident lui fait comprendre la douleur de perdre un enfant. Dans un paysage glacial, des parents offrent l'hospitalité à l'ancien bourreau de leur fils. Tout être humain a accès au remords, à la honte, à la pitié ou à la révolte.

L'humanisme de Demirtas s'attache à la dimension pathétique des individus et des destinées, les plus pauvres surtout, les plus innocents – analphabètes, simples d'esprit, « esclaves » des puissants. Leur naïveté les perd quelquefois car rien dans leur vie simple ne les a préparés à l'horreur de l'oppression ; ainsi, quand des villageois se voient trahis par les représentants du pouvoir, c'est tout leur corps qui éprouve la défaite : « Si on les avait égorgés à cet instant, aucun d'eux n'aurait saigné, tellement ils étaient pétrifiés. »

La nouvelle prend parfois l'allure d'un conte ou d'un mythe, dont la mission est de faire le récit universel d'événements difficilement explicables – la misère, la souffrance, la mort. Mais l'humour ou l'ironie douce entraînent aussi la roue du côté de la légèreté, car Demirtas aime ses personnages et les croque avec bienveillance. En voilà un, victime d'un « accident du travail » en tombant du balcon où il s'était hissé pour un cambriolage (« Quel loser ! »), qui se voit comiquement comparé à un héros populaire : « C'est une sorte de Robin des bois qui ne partage avec personne, pas même avec les pauvres. » Tel autre résume sa vie amoureuse : « Les premiers jours de notre mariage – plus précisément le premier jour, ou plutôt les deux ou trois premières heures –, sans mentir, ça s'est super bien passé. »

Et c'est finalement de cette galerie de portraits intimistes ou révoltés, rôles ou touchants, que surgit l'efficacité politique. La littérature témoigne sans théoriser et convainc sans militer. La foi en l'humanité y parle d'elle-même, logée dans la réalité et chevillée à la volonté de tenir bon. Nous, lecteurs, y sommes souvent associés, mais pas toujours. « Je suppose que vous trouvez intolérable de voir l'esclave se rebeller », nous demande soudain tout à trac l'employée d'un de ces centres commerciaux que nous fréquentons tous, ici ou ailleurs. « Vous feriez mieux de vous y habituer », prévient-elle. Résister, loi humaine.

Signalons, du même auteur, la parution en poche de « *L'Aurore* », traduit par Julien Lapeyre de Cabanes, Points, 144 p., 6 €.



Dec 20 2019

Turkey accused of demographic engineering in N. Syria – Foreign Policy

Turkey promised to return Syrian asylum seekers to their homes after carving out what it calls a safe zone in a military operation in northern Syria in October, but the resettlement process is highly politicised and Kurds say they are being erased from their home region, Foreign Policy reported.

Ankara launched its operation on Oct. 9 against Kurdish militias it views as terrorists for their links to insurgent groups within Turkey. The operation swept the Kurdish fighters away from the border with Turkey, but over 100,000 locals also fled, and 75,000 remain displaced, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Turkey boasts that the operation has allowed people displaced in the eight-year Syrian conflict to return to their homes, and plans to build settlements in the area between Tel Abyad and Ras al-Ayn that it captured in October's offensive to house a large number of the 3.7 million Syrians in Turkey.

But Foreign Policy quoted Kurdish groups as saying the majority coming to the area are Arabs,



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and many of them are not natives.

“Nearly no one from Ras al-Ain fled to Jarabulus or Turkey [during the most recent operation], so the people going there now come from completely different regions of Syria,” Austrian Association for Kurdish Studies secretary-general Thomas Schmidinger told Foreign Policy.

The scholar said the area's demographics have been in a state of flux throughout years of conflict in which the Islamic State (ISIS) captured large parts of northern Syria from 2014 and

was beaten back by Kurdish-led forces in the following years.

Thousands of Arabs were then displaced as Kurdish forces recaptured areas from ISIS, leading Amnesty International to accuse the Kurdish administration of forced displacement.

But Schmidinger said many who were forced to leave were ISIS loyalists. “There was at least one village called al-Ballou where the Kurds kicked out the Arabs because the village was known for being very pro-ISIS,” Schmidinger said.

There were already some 750,000 people displaced from the region when Turkey launched its military operation on Oct. 9. Those making their way to the safe zone now appear to be Arabs who fled Tel Abyad in 2015 and people who fled other parts of Syria and sheltered in Turkey for years, Foreign Policy said.

The magazine quoted a Kurdish community leader from Tel Abyad as saying the new arrivals in the city were from Ghouta, Idlib, and Aleppo, and not natives of the area.

Meanwhile, Turkish-backed Syrian rebels that now control areas captured in the operation have been accused of human rights abuses and looting.

“The factions ruling over the area are heavily abusive, and in addition to this there are car bombs exploding also on a daily basis in the newly captured areas,” Elizabeth Tsurkov of the Foreign Policy Research Institute told Foreign Policy.

In another article published this month, Foreign Policy said many of the people coming into those areas were families of the Turkish-backed rebels.



Dr. Adnan Selçuk Mızraklı
Dec 21 2019

Turkey's Kurdish policy returns to repressive plan from 1925

Decades of attempting to solve the Kurdish issue with denial, repression, assimilation and destruction have led Turkey to a dead end. The issue has remained festering since Ottoman times, with a century of rebellions keeping it on the country's agenda. Yet it remains misunderstood by the majority of the country. This misunderstanding is down to a

conscious policy from the state, which for years has presented the issue as one of suppressing outlaws or tackling terrorism, and so the greater public sees it as a question for the country's security policy. With the issue thus detached from reality, and tinged with a dose of chauvinism, the public sees the Kurds' struggle as an illegitimate one that

merits a heavy handed response. This is how the current period of conflict transformed into one of destruction and denial.

The state's policy of assimilating the Kurdish minority stretches back to the Ottoman period. But in those days, since the predominant ideology held that the empire's entire

Muslim population were members of an ummah, or religious community, its assimilationist policies focused on Islamisation rather than Turkification.

It was only when the empire reached its end stages at the turn of the 20th century under the Committee of Union and Progress that Turkifi-

cation processes really took off, and these accelerated after the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923. It was the committee's mission to unify the different ethnicities living in these lands under a single Turkish identity and nation state.

The state employed its policies of assimilation in every institution from mosques to schools. The family institution, too, became a centre for implementing these policies.

At the root of this endeavour lies the Eastern Reform Plan, which was hatched in September, 1925, months after the Turkish military suppressed an uprising by the Kurdish leader Sheik Said in Diyarbakir.

The same plan laid the groundwork for the state's massacres of thousands of Kurds in its violent suppression of another uprising a decade later in the southeastern province of Dersim. The Turkish government would later rename the province with the Tunceli, using a Turkish name.

While there have been changes to the policies laid out in the Eastern Reform Plan over the years, it remained in action for decades, and its basic principles have informed every successive government's approach to the country's Kurdish question.

The plan consisted of 27 articles. The first stressed that a state of martial law should be implemented in Kurdish provinces after rebellions, and should remain in place until the plan's objectives have been met. The implementation of this plan in 1925 was the first example of martial policies that would be repeated more stringently after every uprising in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish southeast. So, the region has never been far from some form of emergency rule, and has never seen a normal administrative regime.

In 1986, the period of martial law ended, to be replaced by the state of emergency, known in Turkish as OHAL. This newly branded emergency rule was lifted by the ruling Justice and Development Party shortly after it came to power in the 2002 elections. The government proclaimed the end of OHAL as if it was setting in motion a revolution, yet while emergency rule ended in name, the same practices continued.



police barrier © reuters, Umit_Bektas

The Eastern Reform Plan's second article divided the Turkish Republic into a "general inspectorate" of five regions. Turkey's predominantly Kurdish eastern and southeastern provinces were assigned to the fifth of these regions. This amounted to a system of colonial governorates that continued until 1948.

Very similar dynamics can be seen in the state of emergency period after 1986.

The third article prohibited natives of the region from serving in ordinary or martial law courts, either civil or military. In other words, Kurds were barred from office. This was an explicit manifestation of the mistrust the state felt for Kurds, who were not allowed positions within the state unless they cast off their Kurdish identity.

This continues in our time in a far harsher manner. Anyone who wishes for examples can simply look at the number of doctors and other public servants dismissed from their roles due to security investigations.

The plan's eighth article stated that the region's inhabitants would pay through taxation for expenses incurred by the state as a result of rebellions. Similar measures exist today, with the state demanding payment for its expenses for conducting operations in the region.

The ninth article bestowed the government with the right to exile political and tribal leaders and their relatives to other parts of the country.

During the period after the plan was

written the authorities began campaigns displacing Kurds from their villages en masse, and this policy made a return in the 1990s. This resembled a form of genocide, as Kurds were relocated far from their homelands to new cities without being given homes or jobs.

Up to our times, security policies have had a paralysing effect on the economy in the southeast, with few opportunities for work in every sector. This, too, has caused mass migration of Kurdish youth to large cities around Turkey.

Many of the Eastern Reform Plan's articles relate to assimilationist policies, among them prohibitions against the use of the Kurdish language in government jurisdictions, including governorates, town halls, schools, marketplaces and other institutions. The same prohibitions were fully adopted in the 1982 constitution, which the military drafted after taking control of the country in a military coup two years earlier.

The language prohibitions laid out in that constitution effectively continue to this day, even though they were seemingly repealed in reforms in 2001.

This means that even now, the ban on Kurdish continues de facto in parliament. Moreover, while letters that are not in the Turkish alphabet like Q, W and X are allowed to be used in other languages like English, they are not used by the government in its record of Kurdish names and words.

So today, while shop or street signs exist around Turkey in Arabic or in English using these letters, it sud-

denly becomes a problem when a word with Q, X or W appears on a sign in Kurdish. This can only be explained as a hangover of the Eastern Reform Plan.

It is worth remembering the history of that plan, how it was formed after Sheikh Said's rebellion in 1925 and how the period after its policies were implemented was marked by further rebellions, bloody massacres and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people.

Coming to our time, we see that while the name and form of the plan has changed, it is clearly still in effect.

We witnessed this in the period of destruction after the peace process between the Turkish government and the Kurdistan Workers' Party broke down in 2015, and the government sent its tanks and heavy weaponry to Cizre, Sur, Yüksekova, Nusaybin and other Kurdish cities in the southeast. The military response left districts levelled, killed large numbers of civilians and displaced more than half a million people. The chaos still continues to this day in Diyarbakir's Sur district.

In the ongoing curfews imposed on Sur, we see the continuation of the Eastern Reform Plan.

We see the same policies at play in the Interior Ministry's seizure of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)'s municipalities in Mardin, Van, and Diyarbakir on Aug. 19, just months after we won those seats in the local elections. This time, the government uses executive decrees or a state of emergency, but the spirit is the same.

Thus the changing names of these measures signifies little. Nearly a century has passed, but the same short plan – whose length and details are insufficient to fill out a single book – is still in play.

* Dr Selcuk Mizrakli is the elected mayor of Diyarbakir. Deposed from his post, he penned this article from prison, exclusively for Ahval.

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Le Monde Par Christophe Ayad
le 21 décembre 2019

Comment le récit d'un réfugié kurde, écrit sur WhatsApp, est devenu un best-seller

Behrouz Boochani, réfugié kurde iranien, échoue en 2013 dans un camp de rétention australien. Il en livre un puissant témoignage, entre poésie et fable philosophique.

« Témoignage d'une île-prison. De l'exil aux prix littéraires » (No Friend but the Mountains), de Behrouz Boochani, traduit de l'anglais par Karine Xaragai, Hugo, « Doc », 398 p., 21,95 €.

Plusieurs romanciers ont entrepris de publier leur travail sur Twitter avant de le faire sous la forme d'un livre. Mais ce qui s'apparente souvent, dans leur cas, à un jeu littéraire, une coquetterie ou une stratégie marketing n'a rien à voir avec les conditions dans lesquelles est né *Témoignage d'une île-prison*, de l'Iranien Behrouz Boochani. Cet ouvrage, écrit depuis le centre de détention australien de Manus (Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée), a été envoyé jour après jour par l'intermédiaire de la messagerie WhatsApp, comme un samizdat de l'exil.

Témoignage d'une île-prison est un livre de chair et d'os, de sang et de larmes. C'est un livre de notre temps. « Le livre de Behrouz Boochani résiste à toute classification, explique son ami Omid Tofighian, qui l'a traduit du persan en anglais. Il relève autant de la littérature carcérale que de la fable philosophique, de la poésie kurde, des écrits dissidents iraniens ou encore de la critique anticoloniale. Il décrit comment les politiques migratoires et la violence d'Etat ont fabriqué un univers carcéral pour toute une partie de l'humanité. »

Behrouz Boochani, journaliste et écrivain kurde engagé de 36 ans, a dû fuir l'Iran début 2013 pour échapper à la prison. Il part pour l'Australie, synonyme de liberté. Arrivé en Indonésie, il est pris en charge par des passeurs qui le font embarquer, avec une soixantaine d'autres candidats à l'asile, sur un bateau de pêche. Après avoir échappé de peu au naufrage, les migrants sont récupérés par un navire militaire australien et envoyés sur l'île de Manus, terminus du voyage. L'asile en Australie est une chimère, le retour en Iran hors de question. Boochani est



Behrouz Boochani sur la mer de Bismarck, près de l'île de Manus, en février 2018. Jonas Gratzner/LightRocket via Getty Images

tombé dans un puits d'oubli. Il est arrivé quatre jours après l'entrée en vigueur de la loi anti-immigration particulièrement cruelle adoptée par les conservateurs australiens. Plutôt que d'accueillir des réfugiés et pour décourager les candidats, l'Australie sous-traite ses migrants à la Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée. Le camp de Manus, cette « prison de saleté et de chaleur », fait penser aux camps de détention japonais de soldats alliés pendant la guerre du Pacifique.

Si Boochani ne cède pas à la folie et à la tentation du suicide, fréquentes dans le camp, c'est parce qu'il réussit à se procurer un téléphone, régulièrement approvisionné en crédit par un réseau d'amis. Il l'utilise dans un premier temps pour alerter la presse, des ONG et l'ONU sur les conditions de détention inhumaines. Rapidement, le Guardian lui ouvre ses colonnes, des radios l'interviewent. L'administration du camp le met un temps à l'isolement pour le faire taire. En vain.

Parallèlement à cet activisme militant, Behrouz Boochani commence à écrire pour lui, toujours sur son mobile.

Behrouz Boochani est arrivé sur Manus quatre jours après l'entrée en vigueur de la loi anti-immigration particulièrement cruelle adoptée par les conservateurs australiens

« Au début, il n'y avait pas le projet d'un livre, raconte Omid Tofighian. Behrouz envoyait des morceaux de texte en persan inspirés de son voyage et de son quotidien à une amie, Moones Mansoubi. Mais, très vite, il est devenu clair que ces « cartes postales » avaient une portée littéraire. La rédaction du livre a pris cinq ans. » Le rituel est bien rodé : à l'autre bout du fil, Moones Mansoubi recueille les envois, phrase après phrase, les assemble en chapitres selon les instructions de l'auteur. Quand un chapitre est prêt, elle l'envoie à Omid Tofighian, qui le traduit en anglais.

Boochani termine son manuscrit un mois après la fermeture du camp de Manus, le 31 octobre 2017, décrété illégal par les autorités locales. Sans papiers et refusant de retourner en Iran, il est ensuite détenu à Port Moresby, capitale de la Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée. Son livre est publié en juillet 2018 chez l'éditeur australien Picador, sous le titre *No Friend But the Mountains* (« pas d'autre ami que les montagnes »), une référence au sort du peuple kurde. Omid Tofighian n'a pas eu de mal à convaincre l'éditrice, Mathilda Imlah, car Behrouz Boochani était déjà connu du public australien pour ses articles dans le *Guardian*, ses passages à la radio et son film *Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time* (« Chauka, s'il vous plaît, donnez-nous l'heure », 2017), tourné avec son portable et coréalisé avec le cinéaste iranien Arash Kamali Sarvestani.

Le livre de Boochani fait du bruit, d'autant que la politique australienne d'immigration est de plus en plus critiquée sur la scène internationale. Picador décide de le présenter au prix Victoria, la plus prestigieuse récompense littéraire australienne. Mais Behrouz Boochani n'est ni australien ni résident, il ne peut concourir selon les termes du règlement. « Mathilda Imlah a fait un travail de lobbying auprès des administrateurs du prix, se souvient Jane Novak, l'agent littéraire de Boochani pour les droits internationaux. Au terme d'une réunion consacrée à son cas, ils ont décidé d'inclure le livre dans la sélection car il soulève des questions essentielles pour l'identité australienne. »

En janvier 2019, Behrouz Boochani remporte non seulement le prix de non-fiction mais aussi celui de littérature générale. Son livre devient immédiatement un best-seller. Les demandes de traduction affluent : « A ce jour, le total des ventes mondiales approche 100 000 exemplaires, se félicite Jane Novak. Et plusieurs pays, comme l'Allemagne et l'Espagne, n'ont pas encore publié leur traduction. »

Le 14 novembre, Boochani a pu quitter pour la première fois depuis six ans la Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée à l'occasion d'une invitation à un festival littéraire à Christchurch (Nouvelle-Zélande). Il compte déposer une demande d'asile dans un autre pays que l'Australie. Il a désormais l'embarras du choix.

Critique

Un système carcéral avilissant

Le titre français du livre de Behrouz Boochani, *Témoignage d'une île-prison*. De l'exil aux prix littéraires, peut induire en erreur. Cet ouvrage n'est pas un témoignage ou, plutôt, il ne l'est pas seulement. Inclassable, il emprunte aussi bien à la non-fiction qu'au récit mythologique, à la poésie – des passages entiers sont en vers libres – qu'à la philosophie. Malgré ce mélange des genres, le récit est tout ce qu'il y a de plus lisible et linéaire, vivant et animé.

S'il prend une dimension universelle, c'est dû, entre autres, au fait que Behrouz Boochani refuse de nommer ses compagnons d'infortune – afin de ne pas les mettre en danger – pour les désigner par des surnoms : le Garçon aux yeux bleus, l'Imbécile édenté, l'Insomniaque et l'Hypersomniaque, le Rohingya du Myanmar, Maysam la Pute et le Premier Ministre, le Pingouin et bien d'autres. Ils forment un bestiaire digne de *La Ferme des animaux*, d'Orwell (1945), et acquièrent une dimension mythologique.

Mais le cœur du livre se trouve dans la description du système carcéral du camp, dont la fonction première est de briser l'individu, de l'avilir et de le soumettre. Behrouz Boochani nomme ce processus « le Système Kyriarcal » : une invention philosophico-littéraire tirée de la kyriarchie, un concept sociologique, à l'origine féministe, désignant un ensemble de systèmes sociaux interconnectés établis à des fins de domination, d'oppression et de soumission. D'où la question qui hante ce puissant témoignage : que reste-t-il d'humain à un homme une fois qu'on l'a privé de son humanité ?

Extrait

« La prison ressemble à une ménagerie remplie d'animaux de couleurs et d'odeurs diverses. Pendant tout un mois, ces animaux – ces hommes – ont été entassés dans une cage au sol en terre battue. Cette prison grouille de tant d'individus qu'on a l'impression de les entendre jacasser jusque dans les branches des arbres et sur le toit des sanitaires. Il y a des gens dans tous les recoins de l'enceinte – même près du petit boubier, derrière les toilettes. Au coucher du soleil, quand l'air se rafraîchit et que les palmes de cocotiers se mettent à danser, le camp devient un bon endroit pour déambuler. La plupart des prisonniers préfèrent sortir de leurs chambres. (...) C'est une jungle peuplée de gens qui se regroupent de manière étrange. » *Témoignage d'une île-prison*, page 145



Frédérique Geerdink
Dec 22 2019

Kurdish singers follow in the footsteps of dengbej-singing ancestors

When you grow up with dengbej, as is the case with all Kurds who were born and raised on their ancestral lands, it will be part of you for the rest of your life. For Kurdish singers, that is even more the case.

Acclaimed Kurdish singers Şivan Perwer and Mem Ararat talked to Ahval about the influence the old Kurdish story-telling tradition has had on their art. Even when life took them far from where their cradle stood, it is the dengbej tradition that they continued to build on.

No wonder the pair has gotten behind a recently launched campaign get dengbej on the UNESCO intangible heritage list.

“As a child, when a dengbej singer started a song, it was for me like a film was starting. I could picture it before my eyes, the mountains, the river, the fighting or the love,” Perwer explains.

The UNESCO campaign was started by opera singer Pervin Çakar, another child of Kurdistan who performs all over Europe nowadays.

“Dengbej is one of the oldest cultures in Mesopotamia. Without the dengbej singers, maybe Kurdish culture would have vanished,” she says.

So far, she has launched a [signature campaign](#), but there’s more in store “I want to cooperate with music and cultural institutions to make this happen,” she notes.

Perwer, hands down the world’s most famous Kurdish singer of our time, grew up in a village in Sanliurfa province in the south-east of Turkey in the late 1950s and 1960s.

Kurdish was the main language at home, he explained over the phone from Germany, where he is recording new songs. Perwer’s father was a laudable shepherd flute player and dengbej singer, so the sound of songs and the stories were always a part of his life.

“Kurds have always lived with betrayal, with an occupation, with sad feelings and helplessness. You try to cry but what emerges are songs,” Perwer says while speaking of the sessions taking up to four, five hours.



He described the old, pre-Islamic art that symbolises of the strong oral tradition in Kurdish culture, as a form of crying.

Ararat, who spent the first years of his life in a town in Mardin province in southeast Turkey and is now a popular singer explains dengbej as “one of the most important carriers of Kurdish memory, maybe the most important”.

“Dengbej is like an enormous memory. For example, I heard about ‘Mem û Zîn’, the immortal work of Ahmedê Xanî, for the first time in a dengbej song. Also the story of Şêx Sêîd I heard for the first time from dengbej singers,” Ararat wrote in an e-mail.

Mem û Zîn is often described as the Romeo and Juliet of Kurdish culture, written by 17th-century poet Ahmedê Xanî. Şêx Sêîd was the leader of a Kurdish uprising in 1925, two years after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, the uprising failed and Şêx Sêîd was hanged in Diyarbakir.

National ideology

Perwer did not always have a love affair with the art form.

He came to hate dengbej when he grew older, he admitted. It was the political dynamic that surrounded it that made him want to stay away from it.

“For my father, dengbej was a hobby, but I saw that the professional singers were working under the order of their feudal leader. And if you sang in Turkish or even in Arabic, the government would give you

money. I started to have patriotic friends; they talked about Kurdistan and about resisting feudal culture. Dengbej for me became something of the past,” the Kurdish singer said.

The young Perwer, drawn into a revival of Kurdish consciousness that emerged in the 1970s, decided that he wanted to sing about freedom and Kurdish national ideology, about modern times. Only later did he realise that it was wrong to denounce dengbej for the social and political situation it had existed in.

“Dengbej is actually part of the richness of Kurdish culture that we need to cherish and preserve,” he explained.

He noticed later on that he couldn’t escape dengbej in his music.

“I never wanted to be a dengbej singer, but it has, of course, influenced my music. I follow in the footsteps of the dengbej singers of my youth and take their heritage to modern times,” Perwer says.

“I have lived in many places in the world, I have travelled so I am widely influenced by other cultures and musical traditions, also by Mozart and Beethoven. That was different for dengbej singers, who had seen smaller parts of the world. So our songs are part of the culture or cultures we live in,” he adds.

Barking dogs

Ararat, born in 1981, described vividly his family returning to the village in Turkey’s southeastern province of Mardin, after they



had migrated to the west of Turkey when Mem was merely seven, eight years old.

“It was in I think November 1991 and we were on the way in a lorry. Some seasonal workers were travelling with us and we dropped them at their village. It was late in the evening, we were standing next to a mud-brick house and the driver played a cassette. A dengbej started. That song reverberated in my mind. I would swear it wasn’t coming from a tape but from the earth and the stones,” he recalls.

The rain from the day before had left the smell of freshness in the soil. The sound of dogs barking of as though they had gone mad was rising from the village and the chirping of night birds that plunged into these sounds came shooting like a spear from a magical eastern fairy tale,” he adds.

Twenty-eight years have passed since, but he still recalls the words of the song.

Dengbej is apparently connected to strong memories, as Perwer too never forgot a certain sound. As he sang some lines that he

remembered from decades ago, he suddenly made a wooshing sound, like the wind, very softly and then louder, only to fade away again.

“My mother had a great voice and she would sing to me, Lori lori, delale lori, and I would fall asleep. Her sound and her tone of voice were like the wind. That sound, I use it in my songs sometimes,” Perwer says.

Although dengbej is mainly sung by men, there have always been female dengbej singers as well.

“The sound of my mother’s lamentations is still in my ears. But she would only sing them to herself,” Ararat explains.

Current circumstances

The UNESCO bid is in its earliest stages and the Kurdish opera singer Çakar doesn’t want to give her campaign even a hint of politics, but she knows that eventually the Turkish state will have to apply for UNESCO recognition.

Under the current circumstances, with wars against the Kurdish identity going on in both Turkey and Syria, the chance that the government would take up such a bid, seems small. But who knows, how quick times can change again.

“We will talk to officials as well,” Çakar says.

For Ararat, UNESCO recognition is crucial, but not enough to preserve the dengbej culture.

“Dengbej is a very authentic cultural heritage. For a tradition to be sustainable people have to take pride in it and see its value but besides that, state politics are needed. It doesn’t look like that’s possible currently,” she says. “Unfortunately, the authorities are not sensitive enough”.

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23-12-2019
Karwan Faidhi Dri

HDP mayor of a key Kurdish town in south-east Turkey arrested

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region - Turkish authorities arrested on Monday a pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party's (HDP) mayor for the central district of Sur in Diyarbakir (Amed) province, southeast Turkey for terror-related charges after temporarily suspending her for three days.

Feyme Buluttekın assumed her role in March 2019 but was removed from her position and detained on Friday by the interior ministry for alleged links to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). She was officially arrested on Monday, according to Turkish state-owned Anadolu Agency (AA).

Founded in 2012, the HDP is accused by Ankara of being the political wing of the PKK - a Kurdish armed group, which has struggled against Turkey for decades for the cultural and political rights of Kurds in Turkey. Turkey sees the group as a terrorist organization.

Buluttekın is accused of being a member of and propagating the PKK, insulting the Turkish state and nation as well as attending the funeral of a PKK fighter, AA reported, citing security sources.

The HDP has described her detention as "anti-democratic."

"Anti-democratic attacks on HDP municipalities continue. Last night, Filiz Buluttekın, elected as co-mayor of Sur in March with 60% of the vote, was arrested in a raid on her home. Police have also blockaded the Sur municipality," it said in a tweet.



Filiz during opening ceremony of a women's counseling centre in Sur on November 20, 2019. Photo:Twitter

So far, out of 65 HDP mayors, over 30 have been removed from office since local elections in March, and several of them have been arrested. Additionally, 14 HDP candidates who won election had not been given official certification of their win by the electoral commission, according to a November report by the Diyarbakir office of the Human Rights Association (IHD).

The removed HDP officials are usually replaced with pro-government administrators or their deputies - who are mostly from the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

The HDP mediated between Turkey and the PKK before 2013 which resulted in the birth of a ceasefire between both sides, lasting two and a

half years. However, armed clashes resumed in July 2015 and many Kurdish-populated areas, including the Sur district, were partially destroyed.

Following a failed coup attempt in July 2016, blamed on Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's former ally Fethullah Gulen, Turkish security forces cracked down on dissidents, including the HDP, despite the party's condemnation of the putsch.

Both the HDP co-chairs, Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdog, and several other HDP officials and members were detained in November 2016 on terror-related charges. Most of them still remain in jail.

A report by the HDP, covering

the Turkish government's crackdown between March and November, indicates that 24 mayors have been removed and 13 detained during this period.

The party has coined the replacements as a "trustee regime."

"[W]e codify the trustees' appointments as a continuation of the denial policy against the Kurds for hundreds of years, and we call this period the name 'The Trustee Regime'. This regime is built on evil and seizure; based on memocide and culturocide; it is a misogynist and a regime that takes all kinds of unearned income, corruption and irregularities as an example," read the 31-page report.



23-12-2019

1,500 people killed in less than two weeks of unrest in Iran: Reuters

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region - Around 1,500 people were killed in less than two weeks of protests on the direct orders of Iran's supreme leader, Reuters has reported.

400 women and 17 teenagers are among the dead, alongside members of the security forces and police according to the latest toll provided to Reuters by three Iranian interior ministry officials. The figures are based on information gathered from security forces, morgues, hospitals and coroner's offices.

Protests began in November after state proposals to hike fuel prices by 300%, angering locals already hit by fresh US sanctions.

The latest figures published by Reuters are significantly higher than previous figures from various organizations including Amnesty International, whose latest toll put the number of dead at 304.



People walk past buildings that were burned during protests in Shahrivar, Iran on November 20, 2019. Photo: Valid Salemi/AP

The order to use brutal force against protesters was reportedly the result of a meeting held on November 16 between Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei, security aides, president Hassan Rouhani and members of his cabinet.

"The Islamic Republic is in danger. Do whatever it takes to end it. You have my order,"

Khamenei is said to have told the group.

Iran came under fire from Members of the European Parliament on Thursday for its use of violence, with politicians urging the country to disclose the number of protester casualties.

On December 16, Amnesty International issued a joint call

alongside regional and international organisations for the UN Human Rights Council to take action against the state suppression of protests.

Amnesty also appealed for the council to launch an inquiry into the "deadly crackdown" against protesters in Iran.

The US state department has also seen evidence pointing to the death of thousands, Reuters reported

Aside from prisons, schools and military barracks are being used to hold protesters, many of whom are detained without charge.

Fresh arrests were made by security forces in the Kurdish province of Kermanshah on Thursday, where more than 20 demonstrators were gunned down by state forces in November.



Dec 26 2019

Kurdish mayors face terrorism charges for providing aid to migrants

A prosecutor in Turkey's eastern province of Van cited blankets given to refugees and irregular migrants as evidence of aiding and abetting terrorism in the indictment against the İpekyolu district's co-mayors, Turkish news site Gazete Duvar reported on Thursday.

İpekyolu co-mayors Şehsade Kurt and Azim Yacan of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) were detained on

November 8, and arrested three days later. District governor Sinan Aslan was appointed as a replacement by the government.

The indictment against Kurt and Yacan said co-mayors gave the blankets in question the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been involved in an armed conflict with Turkey for over three decades, citing a secret witness testimony, Gazete Duvar said.

Due to its position on Turkey's border with Iran, the Van province hosts many irregular migrants, who end up sleeping on the streets or in derelict buildings.

HDP's İpekyolu municipality under co-mayors Yacan and Kurt distributed blankets to the migrants sleeping in the bus station, and provided daily hot meals and fresh fruits for 500 people as part of the Social Works Department's aid efforts,

the news site said.

Turkish police captured some 23,000 irregular migrants in the province in 2019 alone, and the last decade saw 400,000 migrants taken into custody, Gazete Duvar said citing official data.

Yacan was the 16th HDP mayor to be replaced by government appointees since the March local elections, out of a total of 32 mayors to date.



December 24-2019

Peshmerga Commanders lay wreath at Triumphal Arch in Paris

The Kurdistan flag was raised alongside the French one during a ceremony for the unknown soldier at the Arc de Triomphe monument in Paris, Dec. 23, 2019. (Photo: Kurdistan 24/Barzan Hassan)

Kurdistan Region Kurdistan Peshmerga France Paris A+AA-ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – A delegation of Kurdistan Region Peshmerga commanders visited France on Monday to lay a wreath for the unknown soldier at the Arc de Triomphe monument in Paris.

The Arc de Triomphe, also known as the “Triumphal Arch of the Star,” is meant to honor those who fought and died for France.

Major General Aziz Waisy, Commander of the Zeravani Peshmerga Command, laid a wreath



The Kurdistan flag was raised alongside the French one during a ceremony for the unknown soldier at the Arc de Triomphe monument in Paris, Dec. 23, 2019. (Photo: Kurdistan 24/Barzan Hassan)



VIDEO: Peshmerga Commanders lay wreath at Triumphal Arch in Paris

and lit a fire at the foot of the monument, describing the occasion as a “historic day.”

“We are here [in Paris]; it is a great feeling and a significant day because it is the first time in France’s history that the Kurdish

military lights the ‘triumph’ fire here for the unknown soldiers, those who are missing,” he told Kurdistan 24’s Barzan Hassan.

“With the warmth of that fire, the warm relationship between the French army and the Kurdish Peshmerga, the French govern-

ment and the Kurdistan Regional Government [KRG], and the people of both nations continues to grow,” Major General Waisy added.

“This is a significant step that has now been written in France’s history.”

Ali Dolamari, the KRG Representative to France, said he was delighted to attend the ceremony and see the Kurdistan flag raised in Paris.

“Today is a historic day. We were delighted that as Kurds, the Kurdistan flag is raised here in Paris. It is a great feeling,” Dolamari told Kurdistan 24.

“I want to congratulate the Kurdistan Region and all the people of Kurdistan on this historic day where the brotherhood and friendship between France and Kurdistan have increased.”

Construction for the Arc de Triomphe in Paris began in 1806 by architects Jean Chalgrin and Louis-Étienne Hécart de Thury. The neoclassic monument was officially inaugurated in 1836. It stands 50 meters (164 feet) tall.

(Additional reporting by Barzan Hassan)

Les noisettes de Ferrero sont en partie cueillies par des enfants en Turquie

Le géant industriel se fournit essentiellement en Turquie où des enfants sont employés pour la récolte, travaillant de longues heures pour un salaire dérisoire.

Ce sont des aliments souvent appréciés par les enfants. Et la jeunesse n'est pas la seule à consommer la pâte à tartiner aux noisettes Nutella, Ferrero-Rocher et autres Kinder, commercialisés par l'entreprise italienne Ferrero. Si ces produits sont connus dans le monde entier, on ignore pourtant qu'entre 70 et 75 % des noisettes du monde proviennent de Turquie.

Ces noisettes sont principalement cueillies par les migrants, y compris les enfants, qui travaillent une dizaine d'heures sur des pentes raides. Le travail est pourtant interdit pour les moins de 15 ans en Turquie. "On commence à travailler à 6 heures du matin. On a une heure de pause le midi pour déjeuner", explique une adolescente de 15 ans à franceinfo. Comme le précise franceinfo, les enfants représentent 8, 5 % de la main-d'œuvre.

La plupart des cueilleurs sont des migrants saisonniers originaires des régions pauvres du sud et de l'est de la Turquie, principalement des Kurdes. Ils travaillent pour un salaire très bas, rapporte la BBC dans une enquête.

Un salaire dérisoire

Le salaire officiel fixé par les autorités locales est en effet de 95 liras par jour, soit 15 euros. Calculé sur une base horaire, c'est moins que le salaire minimum net officiel turc de 2020 liras par mois, soit 321 euros, pour une semaine de 40 ou 45 heures.

Mais à ce salaire, il faut retirer le montant d'une commission de 10 % payée à l'entrepreneur en main-d'œuvre qui amène les cueilleurs, ainsi que le prix du billet aller-retour jusqu'à son domicile, précise la BBC, qui a suivi une famille pour son enquête. Il ne lui resterait donc plus que 50 liras, soit à peine 8 euros par jour. "J'emmène mon enfant de 11 ans au travail sinon je ne ramène pas d'argent à la maison", déclare un travailleur saisonnier interrogé par franceinfo.



Le géant industriel Ferrero se fournit essentiellement en Turquie où des enfants sont employés pour la récolte de noisettes, travaillant de longues heures pour un salaire dérisoire. / [afp.com/JUSTIN SULLIVAN](https://www.afp.com/JUSTIN_SULLIVAN)

La Turquie compte environ 400 000 vergers familiaux de noisetiers, note la BBC. La plupart sont minuscules, quelques hectares. Au bout de la chaîne d'approvisionnement souvent complexe se trouvent des marques de confiserie turques et internationales bien connues, dont Ferrero. Ferrero achète environ un tiers de toute la récolte turque et produit 360 000 tonnes de Nutella chaque année.

Ferrero "déterminé à prévenir et à éliminer le travail des enfants"

Interrogé par le Guardian, qui a publié l'enquête de l'ONG WeMove Europe, Ferrero a reconnu être au courant du travail des enfants turcs dans le secteur agricole mais a déclaré qu'ils étaient "déterminés à prévenir et à éliminer le travail des enfants tout au long de nos chaînes d'approvisionnement".

Ferrero a également précisé qu'elle ne possédait ni ne gérait de fermes de noisettes en Europe. "La complexité de la chaîne d'ap-

provisionnement des noisettes signifie qu'elle ne peut pas être transformée par un seul acteur", a déclaré un porte-parole de Ferrero interrogé par le Guardian. "La coopération est absolument essentielle pour s'attaquer au problème du travail des enfants", a ajouté Ferrero.

Sur son site Internet, Ferrero, précise que "la traçabilité est essentielle pour garantir les normes de qualité de la production et des produits". L'objectif de l'entreprise est de rendre ses noisettes 100 % traçables d'ici 2020. Mais, selon son dernier rapport daté de 2018, il n'a atteint actuellement que 39 % de traçabilité.

Dans une pétition, WeMove Europe, partenaire de Center for Child Rights en Turquie, qui a récolté cet été des preuves vidéo du travail des enfants, "exhorte Ferrero à mettre fin immédiatement au travail des enfants et à soutenir un prix juste et équitable des noisettes turques afin que les travailleurs perçoivent un salaire décent".

Détenue à-Téhéran, Fariba Adelkhah entame une grève de la faim

La directrice de recherche au CERI de Sciences Po et la chercheuse australienne Kylie Moore-Gilbert ont pu faire parvenir clandestinement une lettre indiquant qu'elles avaient cessé de s'alimenter. Elles sont accusées d'espionnage.

Mardi 24 décembre, après sept mois de détention à Téhéran, la chercheuse franco-iranienne Fariba Adelkhah, qui est accusée d'espionnage par la justice de la République islamique, a entamé une grève de la faim avec une de ses codétenues, l'universitaire australienne Kylie Moore-Gilbert.

Dans une lettre que les deux femmes ont pu faire parvenir de manière clandestine à l'extérieur de la prison où elles sont détenues, et qui a été relayée par le Centre pour les droits de l'homme en Iran ainsi que par des soutiens de Fariba Adelkhah à Paris, elles annoncent avoir cessé de s'alimenter « au nom de tous les universitaires et les chercheurs en Iran et au Moyen-Orient que l'on emprisonne injustement (...) pour avoir fait leur travail ».

L'information a été confirmée, jeudi 26 décembre, par Jean-François Bayart, professeur à l'Institut de hautes études internationales et du développement (IHEID, Genève) et membre de son comité de soutien, se fondant sur des déclarations du ministère français des affaires étrangères et sur des éléments apportés par des sources proches. La double nationalité, française et iranienne, de Mme Adelkhah, anthropologue, directrice de recherche au Centre de recherches internationales (CERI) de Sciences Po, n'est pas reconnue par Téhéran.

Le Ceri confirme la grève de la faim entamée par Fariba Adelkhah et sa codétenue Kylie Moore-Gilbert. En ce jour de Noël, notre solidarité et nos pensées d'espoir vont vers Fariba, Roland et tous les autres prisonnières et prisonniers de l'arbitraire. #FreeFariba #Free-Roland

Accusée de s'être livrée à des acti-



La chercheuse Fariba Adelkhah, en 2012. THOMAS ARRIVE / SCIENCES PO / AFP

tivités dissimulées de renseignement, Mme Adelkhah avait été arrêtée à son domicile le même jour que son collègue français et ami Roland Marchal, interpellé pour sa part à son arrivée à l'aéroport de Téhéran. M. Marchal, spécialiste de l'Afrique de l'Est, venait rendre visite à Mme Adelkhah. Motivés par des accusations similaires à celles qui pèsent sur sa collègue, son arrestation et son emprisonnement n'avaient pas été rendus publics avant le mois d'octobre.

Dans la lettre signée par Fariba Adelkhah et sa collègue australienne – également accusée d'espionnage –, la chercheuse franco-iranienne se plaint d'actes de « tortures psychologiques » commis à leur encontre. Un témoignage en provenance de la prison et transmis au Monde fait par ailleurs état de grèves de la faim temporaires ob-

servées en solidarité avec les deux prisonnières par d'autres femmes détenues au même endroit.

L'arrestation – et la détention – de binationaux ou d'étrangers est un levier couramment utilisé par Téhéran pour faire pression sur ses adversaires ou pour obtenir la libération de certains de ses ressortissants. Or la détention des deux universitaires – Fariba Adelkhah et Roland Marchal –, qualifiée « d'intolérable » par le président français Emmanuel Macron le 10 décembre, s'inscrit dans le contexte particulier d'une tentative désormais en sommeil de médiation française entre Washington et Téhéran.

En cette Journée internationale des droits de l'Homme, je pense à Fariba Adelkhah et Roland Marchal, nos compatriotes détenus en Iran, et à leurs familles. Leur emprison-

nement est intolérable. Ils doivent être libérés sans délai. Je l'ai dit au Président Rohani, je le répète ici.

Accroissant encore la complexité du dossier, cette double arrestation est intervenue après l'interpellation, à Nice, en février, d'un ingénieur iranien recherché par la justice des Etats-Unis. Jalal Rohollahnejad, détenu en France et dont Téhéran demande la libération, est accusé d'avoir importé en Iran des matériels sensibles, visés par des sanctions américaines.

Autre facteur entrant en ligne de compte, un diplomate iranien, Assadollah Assadi, se trouve par ailleurs incarcéré en Belgique, accusé d'avoir participé à la planification d'une tentative déjouée d'attentat en juin 2018 visant, en région parisienne, un rassemblement de l'organisation des Moudjahidin du peuple, groupe iranien hostile à Téhéran.

Intervenant dans cet écheveau diplomatique et judiciaire singulièrement tendu, les tractations discrètes menées en vue de la libération de Fariba Adelkhah et de Roland Marchal n'ont, à ce stade, pas donné de résultat, et la grève de la faim dans laquelle s'engage à présent Mme Adelkhah accroît encore la pression sur Paris.

Le ministère français des affaires étrangères a ainsi annoncé avoir convoqué vendredi l'ambassadeur d'Iran pour dénoncer « l'emprisonnement intolérable » des deux universitaires français. Paris a rappelé à l'ambassadeur « l'exigence de la France que nos compatriotes Fariba Adelkhah et Roland Marchal soient libérés sans délai et que les autorités iraniennes fassent preuve d'une totale transparence sur leur situation », souligne le Quai d'Orsay dans un communiqué.