

INSTITUT
KURDE
DE PARIS

Information and liaison bulletin

N°434

MAY 2021

*The publication of this Bulletin enjoys a subsidy
from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture & City of Paris*

This bulletin is issued in French and English
Price per issue : France: 6 € — Abroad : 7,5 €
Annual subscription (12 issues) France : 60 € — Elsewhere : 75 €

Monthly review
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ISBN 0761 1285

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TURKEY: FAILING GOVERNMENT STEPS UP REPRESSION

In May, the AKP-MHP regime pursued the repression launched months ago against the “pro-Kurdish” Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), while ensuring that its former co-chairman, Selahattin Demirta, imprisoned since November 2016, would remain incarcerated: the Turkish Court of Cassation has indeed confirmed his sentence to four years and eight months in

prison. This relentlessness shows to what extent Demirta, despite his imprisonment, continues to frighten the Turkish power... The latter still ignores the two binding judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) which ordered his release.

The month of May began very symbolically with the arrest in Istanbul of 220 people who dared to march for Labour Day on 1st of

May. The pretext given was the failure to respect the rules of confinement. Then on the 18th, the so-called “Kobanê” mega-trial resumed in the Sincan prison complex, near Ankara. The 108 defendants, all HDP leaders or elected representatives, are charged with supporting the 2014 demonstrations, the repression of which left 38 dead, mostly HDP members or supporters murdered by the government, its security

forces and their Islamist supporters. Shrinking from no ignominy, the government now tries to make the accused responsible for these deaths that it itself ordered. The objective is clear: to make the HDP disappear from the political arena before the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections by banning the party and imposing numerous aggravated life sentences. The first hearing was held on 26 April in a partially empty room for “sanitary reasons”, but where 300 police officers occupied so many seats that the defence lawyers and the defendants had to protest to gain entry. The defence was denied the right to speak and later withdrew in protest at this travesty of justice. Forced to participate remotely from his cell through the infamous SEGBIS video transmission system, Selahattin Demirtaş denounced the trial as “a case of political revenge against the HDP”, while the real masterminds of the massacre were “the state and government officials” standing behind “the governors, district governors and police chiefs” who committed it. At the next hearing, on 20 May, the former mayor of Diyarbakir, Gültan Kışanak, also intervening remotely from her cell in Kandira, in turn denounced a parody of justice, directly attacking the judges to demand their recusal because of their lack of independence: “*The aim of this trial is to make us disappear from democratic political life and from Parliament. You have shown very well that you do not follow an independent jurisdiction or any law. For this reason, I ask for the recusal of your Court*”. Recalling that those responsible for the killings on 6-8 October 2014 during the protests against the siege of the Syrian Kurdish town of Kobane have not been investigated by any court, Ms. Kışanak asked: “Who killed these people and why, who gave

orders to these provocateurs? I wish that instead of judging us there would be a judicial investigation into these issues”. The HDP said that the trial was an unprecedented spectacle of “a Turkish court defending ISIS”. The trial was adjourned to 14 June.

On 28 May, an Ankara court again sentenced Demirtaş to a prison term, this time two years and six months, for “insulting” a prosecutor close to the Turkish president, Yüksel Kocaman: accusing him of having drafted the indictment against him and other Kurdish politicians “in defiance of the principles of the law”, Demirtaş had said in his defence that he would “hold him to account” (AFP). Again, this is clearly a pretext to keep him incarcerated. Kocaman, who had exposed for all to see the appalling state of his judicial “independence” when he visited the Presidency for his wedding last September, obligingly filed a complaint against the jailed Kurdish leader (*Turkish Minute*).

Using the HDP as a scapegoat is also a way for the regime to divert attention from its own failures: a catastrophic economic situation and the calamitous management of the pandemic, whose figures, with 200 to 300 deaths per day, are reaching new heights. The president did not hesitate to contradict his health minister, who announced a shortage of vaccines (*Bianet*), before announcing on the 12th a new three-week general lockdown, from which foreign tourists are nevertheless excluded: given the collapse of Turkish lira, this influx of foreign currency must be preserved! If public opinion admits the necessity of such measures, the brutal use of presidential decrees to impose them, their inequitable character (the presidential party escaped any health restriction during its gigantic meetings), the inclusion

in the rules of a ban on the sale of alcohol... all these elements have only reinforced popular discontent. As vaccination stalls, a recent *tweet* sums up the general feeling: “If you don’t vaccinate me, I’ll bite the tourists!” (*Washington Post*).

The repression of the HDP and civil society has thus further intensified, sometimes taking petty forms. For example, HDP MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, imprisoned since March in Sincan, was refused the distribution of newsletters sent by his party, as the prison administration deemed them to come from “risky” media. His son, Salih Gergerlioğlu, who made his father’s situation known in an interview with *Firat* news agency, recalled that “the right to information, to receive news [...] is a fundamental right” (*Ahval*). On the 24th, police arrested more than 60 people, mostly HDP members, in Diyarbakir (16 arrests), Adana (20 arrests), Antalya, Ankara, Mardin, Mersin, Dersim, Sirnak and Istanbul. Among those detained are several local HDP leaders. In Adana, politicians and musicians are among the 20 people arrested, including Kurdish artists Jiyan Savcı (Koma Qerin) and İlyas Arzu (Koma Pel), members of the *Dem* music centre. On the 28th, four of those arrested were remanded in custody on charges of “terrorism” on the basis of anonymous testimonies, a practice that has become infamous in the Turkish judicial system under the orders of the President, while the others were kept in custody.

As for civil society activists, the courts have not forgotten them. On 21 May, the Istanbul Criminal Court began the retrial of Turkish philanthropist Osman Kavala and 15 others for their role in the 2013 nationwide protests to preserve Istanbul’s Gezi Park. Kavala and eight others accused of organising

the protests were acquitted of all charges in February 2020, but an appeals court overturned that ruling in January. Kavala, who has been jailed for three-and-a-half years, is also accused of espionage in connection with the 2016 coup attempt. These fabricated charges were combined with the Gezi case in February. Addressing the judges *via* the SEGBS system, Kavala compared the definition of espionage presented in the indictment to the “concept of *Landesverrat* (betrayal of the country) used for espionage charges in Germany during the Nazi period”... The court ruled by majority vote that Kavala should remain in custody, with the senior judge offering a dissenting opinion. The next hearing in the case will take place on 6 August (*Duvar*).

Finally, the Turkish state is still notable for its continuous anti-Kurdish exactions. Everyone remembers the case of those two Kurdish peasants thrown out of a military helicopter last September after a clash between the Turkish army and the PKK... This 8 May, it is a young man from Dersim, Murat Yildiz, descendant of Seyid Reza, the leader of the 1938 Dersim Revolt, who was victim of the military. Before setting off by car to collect mushrooms in the Ovacik district, Yildiz had taken care to ask the authorities for permission and to choose an authorised area: access to certain areas remains forbidden because of regular clashes between the army and the PKK. His father bore witness that the young man had not realised that he was being watched by a Turkish drone, which opened fire on his vehicle: “It was deliberate. [...] They [attacked] him when they saw that there was another passenger in the vehicle”. Turkish commanders reportedly told Yildiz’s family that they had destroyed the vehicle because it was carrying PKK

fighters; the Turkish Interior Ministry said its forces had killed three Kurdish fighters in clashes with the PKK in the same district. Dersim HDP MP Alican Onlu visited the family of the deceased (*Rûdaw*).

Besides, three ultra-nationalists attacked the HDP office in Ankara with stones on the night of the 14th, causing material damage (*WKI*).

On the 10th, the Öüt family’s lawyers appealed to the Constitutional Court against the Supreme Court of Appeal’s decision to acquit three military officers in the case of the death of nine members of the family, including seven children, in the fire in the village of Altinova (Vartinis) in 1993. On 2 October 1993, after the death of a non-commissioned officer during clashes with the PKK, the gendarmes had accused the local villagers of hiding the Kurdish fighters responsible. Driving through the village of Altinova to bring back the body, they had fired shots in the air and threatened to return in the evening to burn the village. When the village was actually burnt down at around 3 *a.m.*, the villagers at first thought it was a PKK attack... The soldiers prevented them from putting out the fire. While most of the villagers were able to leave their homes, two adults and seven children from the Öüt family were burned to death in their homes. The only survivor was Aysel Öüt, who was sleeping at neighbours’. It was she who brought the case to court shortly after the incident. Unsuccessfully: the public prosecutor’s office did not find grounds for a trial, claiming that the attack had been carried out by terrorists and that the real perpetrators were unknown. Aysel Öüt returned to court in 2003. This time, as the

defendants were still on duty, the case was transferred to military justice, which buried it. In a fourth attempt in 2011, four officers, including the captain who ordered the fire, Bülent Karao lu, were acquitted by a high criminal court. The lawyers then went to appeal, and this time the Supreme Court of Appeal found Karao lu responsible for the deaths, but acquitted three other officers who were also at the scene. If the Constitutional Court does not rule before October 2023, the case will be dropped (*SCF*). One can measure the degree of obstinacy needed to seek justice when you are a Kurd in Turkey...

Other traumas from the same period were brought back to the surface this month when it was reported that bulldozers had started digging up the Newala Qesaba (the “Valley of the Butchers”) in the Bitlis region. This entire valley is a huge mass grave where the remains of many Kurds killed extra-judicially in the 1980s-1990s by JITEM and at least 300 PKK guerrillas, including one of its main commanders, Mahsun Korkmaz (“Egîd”), were buried. It should also be recalled that this valley had already been used as a mass grave during the Armenian genocide of 1915, although there is no precise idea of the number of victims buried there. No announcement has been made about the reasons for the work that has begun, but according to the research of journalist Oktay Candemir, it is to build a police academy on the site. It was the province’s governor Osman Hacibekta o lu, appointed in an authoritarian way to replace the democratically elected mayors Berivan Helen Iık and Peymandara Turhan, who were removed from office and arrested, then placed under house arrest, who authorised this work (*Kurdistan au Féminin*). It is necessary to recall what was

JITEM, *Jandarma stihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele*, in English “Gendarmerie Intelligence and Anti-Terrorism Service”. At the beginning, the very existence of this service, which carried out numerous extrajudicial killings against the Kurds, was denied by state officials. It was not until the Susurluk scandal in 1996 that former Prime Ministers Bülent Ecevit and Mesut Yılmaz admitted its existence.

However, the families of all the victims of this state and illegal organisation, the true incarnation of the “deep state” (*derin devlet*), are now experiencing new hope. Perhaps in connection with the revelations broadcast for several weeks by the exiled mafia leader Sedat Peker, the Turkish Court of Appeal overturned on the 23rd the decision to acquit 19 people who were prosecuted for the enforced disappearance and arbitrary execution of 19 Kurdish civilians in the 1990s. The then Interior Minister Mehmet A ar and his co-accused are expected to be retried.

While the spotlight is on Turkish military operations beyond the borders, in Iraqi Kurdistan or in Rojava, clashes between the Turkish army and the PKK also

continue on Turkish territory. In the middle of the month, the army imposed a curfew of several days in the district of Kulp (Diyarbakir), while several Kurdish sources reported the launch of an anti-PKK operation in the area. On the 19th, the PKK announced that it had launched a “high impact” air attack on the Diyarbakir air base during the night, without divulging any details. The Turkish authorities confirmed an attack using model aircrafts, claiming that there were no casualties. On the evening of the 20th, a military drone base in Batman was attacked in the same way, as well as an infantry base in ırnak (*Rûdaw*). At the end of the month, the Turkish army launched an anti-PKK operation near the town of Hizan (Bitlis).

The military continues to show little respect for civilians in its area of operations. On 18 June in Derecik (Hakkari), two young men named ahap endol (23) and Celil Ekinci (17) were injured by the military. The former had two fingers amputated, while the latter had to undergo three operations for serious back injuries. On the 23rd, an 18-year-old Kurdish shepherd, Mehmet Dinç, was seriously injured in the leg by

soldiers in the same area while grazing his flock of sheep. He had to be hospitalised. Derecik is a heavily militarised area. A military garrison there houses Syrian mercenaries brought to support the invasion operation launched by the Turkish army against South Kurdistan (Iraq), on the other side of the border (*RojInfo*).

On a less military note, the HDP launched a campaign this month to defend the Kurdish language in Turkey. The party has collected millions of signatures to demand recognition of the language as the country’s second language after Turkish, which is currently the only language officially recognised in the constitution. The HDP issued a declaration on Kurdish language day on the 15th. This campaign is linked to the petition launched on 22 February by the “Kurdish Language and Culture Network” with the slogan “Make Kurdish an official language of instruction in Turkey”. To increase the impact of the campaign, several events have been announced for June by the Network in the Kurdish provinces of Diyarbakir, Van and ırnak. The first rally will be held in Cizre, followed on the 4th by another in Van, and then on the 7th in Diyarbakir.

IRAQI KURDISTAN: INVASION, LOOTING AND OCCUPATION OF BORDER AREAS: IS ANKARA AIMING FOR ANNEXATION?

The news in May was dominated in Iraqi Kurdistan by an extremely worrying resurgence of ISIS terrorist attacks, particularly in the territories disputed between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Iraqi Federal Government.

Perhaps more worryingly, some of the attacks have taken place in

the greater Baghdad area. Between 28 April and 1st of May, four jihadist attacks cost the lives of 18 Iraqis, mainly soldiers, according to security sources (*AFP*). On the evening of 28 April, in Tarmiya, 20 km north of Baghdad, an attack on a military convoy caused the death of 2 officers and 2 soldiers. The reinforcements called in, also attacked as soon as they arrived, lost 1 officer and 2 soldiers.

Meanwhile, in Pirde (Altun Kopru), in the disputed territories north-west of Kirkuk, 6 peshmerga lost their lives in another attack, while near the Syrian border, an officer and an Iraqi soldier were killed by an improvised explosive device as their convoy passed. Finally, on the Iranian border east of Baghdad, in Diyala province, another bomb killed a soldier while two other fighters were

injured in a separate attack (*Le Monde*). Although ISIS has not claimed responsibility for any of these attacks, its modus operandi is recognisable: ambushes at night, carried out in rural areas and targeting law enforcement (*RFI*). “The terrorists of ISIS have taken advantage of the security gap between the peshmerga and Iraqi forces, which is five kilometres long and 20 kilometres wide”, Nouri Hama-Ali, head of the Kirkuk-Pirde front line, told *Kurdistan-24*. “We have [...] established security sites in the areas where there is a security vacuum, but the Iraqi government has not allowed the Peshmerga to stay there, so it is their responsibility”, he added. The KRG has renewed its call to form a joint body between Kurdish fighters and the Iraqi army (*RFI*). On 1st of May, Peshmerga Chief of Staff Jamal Eminki said that the security vacuum between Kurdish and Iraqi troops remained a sanctuary from which jihadists could launch their attacks on security forces, and regretted that Baghdad “did not take seriously” warnings about this. According to Eminki, the KRG and the Iraqi Ministry of Defence did agree to establish four joint security centres between Peshmerga and Iraqi forces, but the agreement has still not been implemented... (*Kurdistan-24*).

In Kirkuk, a suicide bomber was killed before he could detonate his device outside the city’s security building. Meanwhile, west of Khanaqin, jihadists kidnapped two shepherds and clashed with *Hashd al-Shaabi* (*WKI*) militiamen. The pan-Arab newspaper *Al-Arabi Al-Jadid* reported on the night of the 5th three deadly attacks using light arms against the army, police

and oil fields within a few hours in a 50 km radius of the city of Kirkuk (*Courrier International*). A policeman was killed and two others injured in the attack on the Bay Hassan oil field, where two wells were set on fire – the fire was quickly brought under control (*AFP*).

These numerous and simultaneous attacks, the presence of terrorists even in the outskirts of Baghdad, all show that, despite the loss of its territory, ISIS is rapidly reconstituting its capabilities. On the 18th, a Peshmerga general, Sirwan Barzani, warned the international community: “This war did not end with the fall of Mosul. The jihadists are too weak to undertake a full-scale offensive like in 2014 but they have the means to create instability and insecurity through their constant harassment. In 2019 alone, we have suffered 400 attacks by ISIS. The facts are clear: ISIS is out for revenge! [...] The international community has responsibilities and we need the international coalition” (*Le Point*).

In addition, on the 23rd and 24th, unidentified arsonists burned hundreds of hectares of Kurdish farmland in the Laylan and Dibis districts (Kirkuk), as they had done the previous summer. Suspicions are raised about ISIS and Arab nationalists, who have both tried thus in the past to force Kurdish farmers to abandon their land in the disputed territories (*WKI*).

In the face of such an upsurge in jihadist attacks, it seems that something has finally started to happen in the disputed territories. Mid-May, several joint operations commands between Iraqi and Peshmerga forces, which had been set up

but not yet activated, were finally activated in Kirkuk, Makhmur and Khanaqin. While those in Erbil and Baghdad began to function several weeks ago, the activation of another one was announced in Mosul... However, there is still a long way to go: the peshmerga have only a symbolic presence there, with only a few officers assigned to each command.

On the 31st, ISIS released a video showing the execution of a Kurdish policeman, Jalal Baban, captured 19 months earlier near Garmiyan. The cousin of the murdered officer, kidnapped at the same time as him, had been released for ransom, but the jihadists preferred to shoot Baban because of his membership of the local police (*Kurdistan-24*).

Still on the subject of ISIS, the draft law aimed at establishing a special criminal court for crimes committed by the jihadist organisation passed its first reading in the Kurdistan Parliament on the 4th. It should be definitively approved by a majority in the next session, Khadija Omar, a deputy member of the Law Committee, said on the 7th: “The inclusion of such a law in the legal system of the Kurdistan Region, especially for crimes committed by ISIS against the population of the Kurdistan Region and Kurdish areas outside the administration of the Kurdistan Region [disputed territories], is a very important step towards justice”. She also recalled the scale of the group’s crimes against the Yezidi community. The law will allow the head of the tribunal to request support from the international community by sending judges or investigators experienced in crimes against humanity.

In addition, the head of UNITAD, the UN investigative team tasked since September 2017 with looking into the crimes of ISIS, claimed on the 10th before the members of the UN Security Council that he had gathered evidence of the genocide of the Yezidis. Karim Khan, also a future ICC prosecutor, said he had “clear and irrefutable evidence”. The details he provided are literally chilling: using the laboratories of the University of Mosul, the jihadist group first developed chemical weapons using chlorine from water treatment plants, before testing thallium and nicotine-based compounds on prisoners, thus provoking their death (UNITAD)...

Another subject that has been preoccupying the media this month is the deterioration of human rights in the Kurdistan Region, where several journalists, but also citizens who criticised the authorities or demonstrated against them, have been arrested and then tried since the beginning of the year (AFP). On 16 February 2021, Shivan Said, an activist with a small opposition party, was sentenced to six years in prison for “undermining the security” of Kurdistan. Another activist, Harwiyan Issa, and three journalists, Ayaz Karam, Kohidar Zebari and Sherwan Sherwani, editor-in-chief of the monthly *Bashur*, were given the same sentence. The international organisation *Human Rights Watch* pointed to the “lack of access to a lawyer during interrogation and trial”, which KRG adviser Dindar Zebari denied in a letter to the Committee to Protect Journalists. He said that the journalists sentenced on 16 February “had access to lawyers” and that “an appeal is pending”. Kurdish activists claim that the *Asayishi* (Kurdish Security) sometimes arrest without a warrant, only

informing the courts afterwards. Criticism of the KRG’s health management seems to be one of the causes of tension: according to an annual report by the US State Department, between January and September 2020, “eight complaints were filed by various officials against the independent journalist Hemin Mamand, who had criticised the management of Covid-19 in Kurdistan on Facebook”. Mr. Mamand was detained for 34 days for “misuse of electronic devices”, a charge regularly used against journalists and activists. In his aforementioned letter, Dindar Zebari refuted any political interference: “The Kurdish government does not interfere in judicial proceedings”, he wrote. On the 4th, the Court of Cassation upheld the six-year prison sentences of the five journalists and activists, accused by the authorities of “relations with foreign entities and with the PKK”. This harsh verdict has heightened the concern of human rights defenders about what appears to be a security crackdown, especially as some of the evidence used in the trial is based, according to HRW, on the testimonies of “secret informants” whom the defence was unable to interview... The five convicts are facing multiple charges: in addition to the “misuse of electronic devices” already mentioned, there is “incitement to demonstrate and destabilise the Region”, “espionage” and “armed” struggle. The journalists had covered the protests against the delayed payment of civil servants’ salaries at the start of the 2020 school year, and the activists had participated in them (AFP).

In another unprecedented development in Kurdistan, the Court of Cassation report alleges that American and German diplomats paid money to the defendants for spying missions.

The German consulate called those accusations “absurd”, and the US consulate released a State Department statement to the Kurdish media that recalled Washington’s “commitment” to “freedom of expression” and “respect for the law, including for the judicial process” and called on host countries to respect the work of “American diplomats who – like journalists – meet with different people to do their job”... Canada, France and the European Union have also expressed their concern (RFI), followed on the 12th by the UN (AFP).

Finally, the Turkish military presence in the border areas of the Kurdistan Region is increasingly taking on the appearance of a real invasion. The Kurds of Iraq are now worried that this could lead to a permanent occupation, as has happened in neighbouring Rojava... At the beginning of the month, while the Turkish army was installing at least 2 additional outposts near the village of Kesta, the Turkish Interior Minister, Süleyman Soylu, announced his intention to establish a new military base in Iraqi Kurdistan. At the same time, the Turkish army continued to demonstrate its usual indifference to the collateral damage it caused in the course of its operations: the head of the Kani Masi sub-district told the Kurdish channel *Rûdaw* that at least 160 hectares of farmland had been destroyed by Turkish air and artillery strikes. Over the next two weeks, Turkey increased its incursions, with air strikes and artillery fire forcing the evacuation of at least ten more villages. In particular, the Turkish air force struck several areas of the Mawat (Suleimaniyeh) district on 8 August. The Turkish Defence Minister, Hulusi Akar, also published a report on the elimination of PKK fighters, which was immediately rejected by the PKK. The Kurdish organisation

accused the Turkish army of using chemical weapons against it (WKI).

The Turkish invasion of Iraqi Kurdistan was further intensified in the week of the 11th, when Turkish forces launched a barrage of air strikes on the village of Kista that forced a full evacuation. PKK General Commander Murat Karayilan again accused Turkey of using chemical weapons in Avashin and Metina.

In addition, Turkish border guards regularly fire from their side of the border at people moving inside Iraqi territory. On the 18th, they shot and wounded two young Kurds from Turkey who had crossed the border to retrieve horses that had escaped and were trying to return to their village on the Turkish side. According to Sait Dede, HDP deputy for Hakkari, the soldiers thereafter refused to assist the wounded, letting them bleed, and when, after an hour, villagers who had come to help the wounded asked for a vehicle to transport them, the soldiers accused them of being terrorists.

The father of one of the injured youths told *Rûdaw* that his son was unarmed at the time of the incident and that this was not the first incident in the area. He said that the military later denied firing.

In the third week of the month, the Turkish army launched new air strikes near the village of Kista, which it had just occupied, and in the district of Amêdî (Dohouk). Many civilians were again injured, including a 20-year-old girl in Kani Masi and two teenagers in Mergasor. Turkish operations continued in Kani Masi until the end of the month, but also in Batifa and Avashin, where clashes

with the PKK took place. At the same time, photos and videos show the cutting down of thousands of trees by the Turks, an action denounced by legislators from Erbil. Other reports from Kurdish media sources calculated that Turkey was exporting from Iraqi Kurdistan for sale on its domestic market around 450 tonnes of trees per day: these state plundering activities are reminiscent of those taking place in Rojava in the Turkish-occupied areas, notably in Afrin with olive trees and olive oil.

In an assessment of the Turkish presence in Iraqi Kurdistan published on 11 May, the *Washington Kurdish Institute* (WKI) counted at least 41 military bases and headquarters spread up to 25 kilometres deep in the territory administered by the KRG. These permanent settlements extend over the entire border areas of Kurdistan, from a few kilometres from the Iranian border in the east to almost the Syrian border in the west: in fact, silently, Turkey has set up a real “security zone” similar to the one it occupies in Rojava. These activities, accelerated from May 2018 under the pretext of fighting the PKK, have elicited very little reaction from Iraq or the United States, and more broadly from the international community, while the Turkish military contingents present in Iraq now greatly exceed in number those in the occupied areas in northern Syria. This absence of reactions undeniably constitutes a success for the “neo-Ottoman” policy of the Turkish president, who has skilfully exploited the geographic isolation of the KRG, the weakness of the Iraqi state, and the Erbil-Baghdad tensions. His all-out anti-Kurdish policy, accompanied by permanent support for jihadism, including

ISIS, has so far also fulfilled its domestic role of distracting from the appalling state of the Turkish economy... For its part, the Lebanese newspaper *L'Orient-Le Jour* quotes Nicholas Heras, a researcher at the *Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy*, who explains that the Turkish presence has intensified over the past year: “What is different now is the pace of Turkish military operations and the increase in the number of small bases managing Turkish forward operations in the northern regions of Iraqi Kurdistan”. This increased presence “leads to more frequent Turkish resupply and reinforcement activities in Iraqi Kurdistan, which gives the impression that Ankara is quietly annexing parts of Iraqi Kurdistan to a Turkish military zone”...

Finally, the Sindjar region, located on the Syrian border and disputed between Baghdad and Erbil, remains a focal point of regional tensions. Ankara has been threatening to intervene there for months. Unlike most Turkish areas of operation in Iraq, it is under at least nominal control of the Iraqi federal government. In fact, it remains an area disputed locally between different armed groups, including pro-PKK militia, which have been present since the party rescued large numbers of Yazidis from ISIS in 2014. In particular, they oppose the implementation of the October 2020 agreement between Baghdad and Erbil, which provided for Baghdad to take over the security of Sindjar with the recruitment of local forces. The local situation increases the risk of Turkish military intervention, but if the Turkish army were to carry out its threat, it would be confronted by the pro-Iranian *Hashd al-Shaabi* militias that are also deployed in the area...

ROJAVA: TURKEY TAKES ADVANTAGE OF THE DROUGHT TO INCREASE ITS PRESSURE

In Rojava, the decision to increase the price of petrol, announced on the 17th by the Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria (AANES) dominated by the PYD Kurds, provoked demonstrations the next day in several towns, including Qamishli and Hasakah. “The administration was forced to raise prices because they no longer covered production costs”, said Sadek al-Khalaf, an AANES official (AFP). It must be said that the autonomous administration is still in a difficult economic situation. Impacted by the spread of the coronavirus, which imposed a general closure of the borders, it is also still subject to the blockade of the Damascus regime in the south and that of Turkey in the north, with trade with Iraq reduced to a minimum... While the AANES controls the main Syrian oil fields, located in Jazira, the inhabitants find it difficult to understand why they have been facing a general shortage of fuel for months. To put things in perspective, it should be remembered that the price of petrol in Rojava is currently the Syrian equivalent of 13 cents per litre, compared to 75 cents in the Damascus-controlled areas and 93 in those under Turkish occupation. The increase decided by the administration would result in a doubling and sometimes even a tripling of the current price. Demonstrations have sometimes degenerated into violence, to the point that one death has been reported. In Hasakah, the regime was quick to seize on the issue to spark protests. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), “pro-regime demonstrators” stormed a Kurdish security force position there, attracting warning shots in

retaliation. Three people were injured in the ensuing scuffles. The OSDH also reported an attack on a Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) base in Shaddadi by armed individuals. Eventually one protester was killed and five injured (AFP).

Following this violence, which finally resulted in two deaths, the AANES decided on the 19th to reverse its decision. It announced in an official communiqué the abrogation of the increases decided two days earlier (AFP).

At the same time, the SDF continued its operations against the jihadist organisation ISIS, which, as in neighbouring Iraq, is becoming increasingly active: its members are launching attacks both in north-eastern Syria, and in particular in the province of Deir Ezzor, and in the Badiyah desert, in the south of the country, against the Damascus army, supported by the Russian air force. The SDF is still supported in its operations by the anti-ISIS coalition. It announced earlier this month the capture of a jihadist commander in charge of assassinations in al-Shafaa (Deir Ezzor), and thanks to local informants, was able to defuse six homemade bombs in al-Kasrah, in the same province. These actions continued the following week on the Iraqi border, where several weapons caches were destroyed. The SDF also captured four jihadist cadres in Deir Ezzor province and a fifth in Hasakah, all of whom were involved in a recent spate of killings, and dismantled a jihadist cell that had been preparing Eid attacks. However, on the 19th, jihadists succeeded in assassinating a member of the Deir Ezzor civil council, Moayed al-Rayash, and on the 30th, another

person in Raqqa. Finally, on the 31st, a motorbike bombing in Hassakeh killed one person and injured three, all civilians.

In the camps located in the AANES territory where ex-ISIS members and their families are detained, security has improved somewhat after the police operations started in April by the SDF and the *Asayish* (Kurdish Security). However, security is not complete, as demonstrated by the shooting of two Iraqi sisters on the 19th in Al-Hol. But another concern is growing in these camps: the coronavirus has made its appearance there. At the beginning of May, there were already at least two deaths from COVID-19 in Al-Hol in the previous three weeks, and 19 positive tests. The camp houses 62,000 residents living in crowded conditions that are highly conducive to contagion. Jaber Mustafa, one of the camp's officials, told the *Independent* newspaper that the spread of the disease was difficult to avoid: “Most of the residents are children and women who move a lot from one tent to another”, he said, adding that the security situation had so far made access difficult for health assistance staff.

On the 25th, a hundred Iraqi families left Al-Hol to return to their country of origin: “On Tuesday, 94 Iraqi families, or 381 people, left the Al-Hol camp, under the escort of the Iraqi army”, an AANES official told AFP, on condition of anonymity. AFP could not immediately obtain confirmation from the Iraqi side, but the same official said that these departures were the “first wave” of returns decided thanks to an agreement between Baghdad and the anti-ISIS coalition.

Already in February, according to an Iraqi security source, a hundred Iraqi jihadists had been handed over to Baghdad. According to a UN report published in February, the Kurds are still holding some 1,600 Iraqis suspected of having fought for ISIS (*AFP*).

The AANES also continues to face constant harassment from Turkey and its Syrian mercenaries. In addition to artillery fire and ground attacks, Turkey continues to use water as a weapon against the people of Rojava, holding back large quantities of water from the Turkish side of the Euphrates River. As a result, the level of the river in northern Syria has fallen dramatically in recent weeks, sometimes by up to five metres. The AANES said that the lack of water was now affecting nearly one million people. Interviewed on 2nd of May by the Turkish website *Ahval*, residents complained that the water shortage affecting them, apart from the obvious issue of drinking water, has serious consequences for agriculture and electricity. The Turkish blockade has affected millions of Syrians by shutting down thirty water treatment plants in the region and hampering the efficiency of power plants (*WKI*). Also on the 2nd, a farmer from Rojava interviewed by Iraq's Kurdish channel *Rûdaw* spoke of a "disaster": "We used to plant tomatoes, aubergines and *isot* [chilli pepper] on this land. Now there is nothing left". Interviewed by *Voice of America* (*VOA*) by phone, Cihad Beyrim, an engineer who oversees operations at the Tishrin Dam, one of Syria's main hydroelectric facilities, which is in the AANES-controlled area, said: "The reduction in water flow has caused significant drops in the water levels behind the Tishrin and Tabqa dams in our area. We have been forced to reduce the hours of electricity from 16 to 8

hours a day". He added: "[The level] is still falling, and if this continues, we will be forced to stop electricity production altogether, as our top priority is to secure drinking water for our people". In Manbij, hundreds of residents protested against Turkey's actions and criticised the silence of the international community (*WKI*). In Aleppo, the situation for residents is considered critical; as in Deir Ezzor, two major stations supplying drinking water to several neighbourhoods in Aleppo and Raqqa are also at risk of closure.

According to the agreement signed between Ankara and Damascus in 1987, Turkey must let at least 500 m³ of water per second flow into Syria. Today, according to the AANES dam administration, the water flow is less than 200 m³ of water per second... Aykan Erdemir, Director of the Turkey Program at the *Foundation for Defense of Democracies* and a former member of the Turkish parliament, considers that Turkey has been regularly using water as a weapon for the past year by interrupting the water supply to SDF-controlled areas: "The Turkish government calculates that the use of water could be particularly effective as the current COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates public health risks in the region", he told *VOA*... But although evidence of the Turkish blockade is mounting and both the Damascus regime and AANES accuse Turkey of acting knowingly, Ankara continues to deny any use of water as a weapon against Rojava (*Ahval*) and says it is also suffering from drought. According to *NASA*, "Now, at the beginning of 2021, most of Turkey is experiencing a severe drought"; 2020 was already "the driest in the last five years" (*Rûdaw*).

On the 26th, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs expressed concern about the threat of a humanitarian disaster following the drop in the level of the Euphrates River since January, which "reached a critical point this month". In a report consulted by *Le Figaro*, a coordination of NGOs working in north-eastern Syria also expressed concern, noting a sharp increase in cases of diarrhoea and leishmaniasis, while the health committee of the Euphrates region (Kobanê and Aïn-Issa) reported on 27 May on the growing number of water-related poisonings (*Le Figaro*).

The blocking of water does not exclude the use of other means of harassment such as fire or artillery fire: earlier this month, Kurdish farmers accused the Turkish army and its Syrian mercenaries of burning their farmland in the village of Salim, 15 km west of Kobane. Arson attacks have already destroyed irrigation systems and drinking water supplies in the area. Meanwhile, mercenaries working for Ankara continued to fire on two villages near Tal Abyad / Girê Spî. In addition, the Turkish military continued the construction of a wall along the northern section of the strategic M4 highway near Ain Issa. They clearly aim to isolate the areas they occupy from the territories controlled by Damascus or the AANES (*WKI*).

There have also been intermittent clashes between Ankara's military or mercenaries and the SDF, notably in rural Aleppo and near Manbij (*OSDH*). On the 11th, Ankara announced that it had retaliated against a rocket attack on one of its supply convoys in Idlib province that left one of its soldiers dead and three wounded, without specifying the identity of the attackers. According to the

SOHR, a homemade bomb exploded as the Turkish vehicles passed by (VOA). On the 17th, the Turkish president announced the elimination on the 8th of Sofi Nurettin, the *nom de guerre* of the PKK military commander in Syria (AFP). Erdo an again accused him of being the “mastermind” of the execution of 13 Turkish nationals, mostly members of the security forces, found dead in February in the Gara cave in Iraqi Kurdistan. These prisoners of the Kurds had really been in all likelihood, along with their guards, the victims of heavy bombardment by the Turkish air force and gassing by the army of their place of detention...

Finally, more and more testimonies are emerging about the crimes against humanity perpetrated in the Kurdish region of Afrin by the Turkish occupation forces, which are known to have been covering up since 2018 racketeering, looting, abductions, torture and executions of mercenaries in their service. In particular, a young man arrested in Afrin by the Islamist *Sultan Murad* Brigade on charges of links with AANES and imprisoned for two and a half years described on condition of anonymity to the *Hawar News Agency* (ANHA) the severe torture he had suffered: “I was tortured for 27 days by the prison director, Abu Laith. After that, I was interrogated by a mercenary named Abu Khaled. I was then handed over to Ahmed Zakour of the *Furqat al-Hamzat* militia. The torture continued. There, the mercenaries and the Turkish secret service tortured me physically and psychologically. They demanded a ransom from the families of my 24 fellow detainees”. He also testifies very clearly to the involvement of the Turkish secret service (MIT) in his abuse: “They gave us electric shocks and pulled out our fingernails. They stuck needles

under our fingernails. They starved us. [...] All the interrogations took place under the supervision of MIT. They hung me upside down for a month. They beat us with truncheons. We could only wash once a month. [...] Kurds were constantly insulted. [...] Some prisoners could not bear the torture and ended their lives”. Yet the Turkish Interior Minister, Süleyman Soyly, continues to claim that there have been no allegations of torture in the last four years.

In order to further change the ethnic composition of the region, the Turkish occupier uses many methods in parallel. A policy of terror forces the Kurds to leave. The burning of hundreds of hectares of agricultural land belonging to Kurds in Afrin prevents them from surviving and allows to evict them. Finally, the occupier has revived the techniques of dispossession of the Kurds used in the 1990s in Turkish Kurdistan by resettling Turkish-speaking refugees from Afghanistan in Kurdish areas. This time it is Palestinian refugees from Syria whose resettlement has started in two settlements being built in a Yezidi village with funds partly from Qatar. In total, since the 2018 invasion, Afrin has seen its Kurdish population reduced from 99% to less than 35%.

Moreover, Ankara does not hesitate to use European funds to carry out its ethnic cleansing policy. The spokesperson of the human rights NGO Afrin-Syria, Ibrahim Sheikho, accuses: “The Turkish occupation accelerates the resettlement of Turkmen families along the border with Turkey, where they have been brought from different parts of Syria”. The occupier has also brought “[...] hundreds of *Jabhet Al-Nusra* and ISIS mercenaries from Turkistan, Uyghurs and Uzbeks, and

deployed them [...] in the villages of Sherawa district”. Their deployment “[...] is supervised by mercenaries from *Faylaq Al-Sham*, led by mercenary leader Abdullah Halawa”. Sheikho believes that the aim of this deployment is to “isolate the city of Afrin from the rest of the Syrian regions, and to encircle it with jihadist factions listed as terrorists at the international level”. Moreover, here too the occupier is using water as a weapon: it has diverted most of the water from the Maidanaki dam in the Shera district to the Turkish-occupied Syrian city of Azaz (*Kurdistan for women*)...

Finally, to complete this chronicle of the month of May, we must mention what appears as a non-event for the Kurds of Syria: the “re-election” on 28 May of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad with an official score of 95.1% of the votes. As *Libération* notes, “The Syrian regime did not even try to give an appearance of plausibility to the results” of this “presidential election”, held on the 26th only in two-thirds of a divided country which also counts 6.6 million nationals gone into exile... Neither the region of Idlib, held by Islamist rebels (4 million inhabitants), nor that administered by the AANES (3 million), voted, which makes the official results totally implausible. The West, which had contested a sham election in advance, did not recognise the results, unlike Moscow. “The failure to adopt a new constitution [during the discussions of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva] is proof that the so-called election of 26 May will be a sham”, said Linda Thomas-Greenfield, US ambassador to the UN. This failure is indeed largely attributable to the systematic obstruction of the regime’s delegation (*Le Monde*).

The AANES had indicated that it would not organise the vote and would not allow it to take place in the territories it administers. The day before the vote, it announced the closure of its border crossings with the regime “until further

notice”. The executive body of the AANES, the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), issued a statement saying that the “election” violates UN Security Council Resolution 2254: “We in the Syrian Democratic Council state that we will not [...]

participate in the presidential election process. Our position is firm that there will be no elections before the political solution per international resolutions, the release of detainees, and the return of the displaced”.

IRAN:

WAVE OF SUICIDES IN KURDISTAN; ULTRACONSERVATIVE RAISI'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION VICTORY ANNOUNCED

T According to a report by *Hengaw*, the human rights organisation in Iranian Kurdistan, the month of May was marked by a significant number of suicides in this region. This report, which covers the period from 21 April to 21 May (the Persian month of *Ordibehesht*) and covers the Kurdish provinces of Ilam, Kermanshah, Kurdistan and West Azerbaijan, counts at least 29 suicides involving 14 women and 15 men, including 4 minors. The organisation attributes these suicides to various causes: poverty, unemployment, family problems and forced marriage. The increase in the number of suicides over the past few months does not only concern Kurdistan, but the whole country. *Iran News Wire* gives the example of Tehran, where 84 people took their own lives only between 15 and 16 April, and reports the results of a sociological survey according to which the number of suicides in Iran has increased by 60% between 2015 and 2019. Most frighteningly, this rapid increase has actually decreased compared to the period 2011-2015, during which, according to the *State Khabar website* “suicide rates had increased by 66% among women and 71% among men. [...] For years, the media have not received statistics on suicide rates, as the relevant organisations refuse to publish them...”.

These figures show the daily desperation of many Iranian

families. In Kurdistan, the constant political repression and the discriminatory economic policy of the regime are certainly factors of a great loss of hope. Young Kurds victims of the repression sometimes prefer to go into exile, and those who have to stay to support their families often have no choice but to turn to the dangerous profession of cross-border porter, or *kolbar*.

Considered as smugglers by the regime's repressive forces, *kolbars* are shot on sight with impunity in the mountains, although, unarmed, they do not represent any danger. Since smuggling is only punishable by fines or prison sentences, these are extrajudicial death sentences, in other words assassinations... At the beginning of May, two *kolbars* were injured in Hawraman, and a third near Sardasht. The following week, another was injured near Baneh and another near Piranshahr on the 10th. Some lost their lives while trying to escape from the *pasdaran*, like the one who drowned in the Benar river in Urmia. Finally, near Nowsud, another *kolbar* was injured when he stepped on a mine placed by the Iranian forces. On the 15th, Iranian border guards killed one *kolbar* in Salmas and wounded two others in Nowsud, one in Kamyaran and one in Piranshahr. The Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI) reported on the 18th that 56 *kolbars* had been killed since January, while more than 200 had been injured.

Unfortunately, the list continued until the end of the month, with two more injured in the week of the 17th near Baneh, one of whom had to be hospitalised, followed by another death on the 26th in Sarpol Zahao (Kermanshah) and another injured in Baneh. At the same time, Iranian border guards beat up several detained *kolbars* who confessed to transporting goods near Nowsud and Hawraman.

Against the background of the recent strengthening of the PDKI presence in Iranian Kurdistan, and the deployment of additional security forces by Tehran in response, clashes between peshmerga and Iranian forces on the Mahabad-Bokan road on 21 October resulted in deaths on both sides. The PDKI reported that 2 of its peshmerga were killed, and that 3 Iranian intelligence agents and 2 *pasdaran*, including an officer, were also killed (*Rûdaw*).

As mentioned earlier, many young Kurds from Iran choose to go into exile. They usually start by moving to the Kurdistan Region in neighbouring Iraq. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has counted more than 10,000 Kurdish refugees from Iran currently registered with its offices in Iraq, the vast majority in Kurdistan (*Duvar*). This month was marked by the suicide of one of these asylum seekers, Mohammad Mahmoudi, aged 27, who chose to set himself on fire by dousing himself with

petrol on the 18th in front of the UN offices in Erbil. Assisted by guards from the UN office and passers-by, he was hospitalised, but despite being treated in intensive care for 6 days, he died of his burns on the morning of the 24th. Before his death he had explained to the cameras that he was a Kurdish political activist from Iran: “Are we supposed to live like I do because of my political activity? Is this life? We have been living like homeless dogs for four years!”, he said. The former peshmerga from Bokan had been sentenced to death in Iran (*RojInfo*). Working as a day labourer, he was still waiting for the processing of his refugee application filed in 2017 (*AFP*). This could be linked to his combat history, as the UNHCR “does not offer protection to anyone who has carried arms or has a criminal background”... Furthermore, the pandemic has slowed down the pace of refugee resettlements in third countries (*Duvar*).

In addition, during the month of May, the number of victims of the COVID-19 pandemic in Iran reached and then exceeded the 300,000 death mark. These are not the “official” figures of the regime, which has sought from the beginning to conceal the extent of its inability to control the spread of the virus. This figure comes from the exiled opposition National Council of Resistance (NCRI), and in particular the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), which regularly compiles its own assessment of the health situation by consolidating provincial data from various sources. According to this source, on 1st of May, there were more than 272,000 deaths in 541 cities in Iran, and by 30 May, this figure had risen to more than 302,000, which would give an estimated increase of 30,000... These figures are four times higher than those published by the

authorities. According to the PMOI, the 300,000 death mark was passed on the 29th. Given the precarious living conditions of the inhabitants of Iranian Kurdistan and the lack of economic support measures for those most at risk, it is not surprising that the region has many victims of COVID. In West Azerbaijan, the number of deaths calculated by the PMOI on 1st of May was 10,178, rising to 11,343 on 30 May, an estimated 1,165 deaths in one month (for 3 million people in 2011). In Kermanshah, with 5,454 deaths on 1st of May, there were 5,724 on the 15th, an increase of 270.

During this month leading up to the presidential elections in June, the regime’s repressive forces have been very active. Already, according to the organisation *Hengaw*, at least 28 Kurdish political, environmental and trade union activists had been arrested in April. It was reported on 1st May that in Lorestan, on 29 April, the *pasdaran* did not hesitate to use tear gas and buckshot against the villagers of the village of Kahman Aleshtar who were protesting against the felling of their walnut trees by regime agents. According to the NCRI, during his recent trip to Lorestan, the head of the judiciary, the ultraconservative Ebrahim Raisi, who is considered to be the favourite for the next presidential elections, gave orders to intensify repressive measures... On Labour Day, the security forces in Sanandaj arrested at least eight people who had tried to hold a rally in the Abasawa district in protest against the poor working conditions and high unemployment rate in Iranian Kurdistan. Only two of those arrested were released the following week, and a new Kurdish activist, Ali Allawaisi, was arrested (*WKI*).

In Marivan, a dozen people were arrested for protesting against a group of Salafists who had

attacked many people they accused of drinking alcohol. In Bokan, Kurdish environmental activist Simko Maroufi was sentenced to one year in prison and banned from travelling abroad for two years for “propaganda against the state”. Another notable conviction was that of Kurdish political prisoner Mohammed Muradi, who was sentenced to forty years in prison for “carrying weapons” and “belonging to the Kurdistan Democratic Party”. In addition, the *Human Rights Activists News Agency (HARANA)* reported that Kurdish painter from Khorramabad (Lorestan) Amin Masuri received nine months in prison for his paintings depicting the regime’s violent crackdown on protesters in autumn 2019. Masuri had previously been jailed for participating in anti-government protests... (*WKI*) On the 18th in Sanandaj, according to local sources, security forces simultaneously arrested five Kurdish civil rights activists, Reza Rezaei, Mohsen Hossein-Panahi, Keyvan Elyasi, Morteza Mohammadi and Ghaneh Khateri. No information is yet available on the reason for these arrests and their situation (*KHRN*).

At the end of the month, the *Etelaat* (Intelligence Service) carried out new arrests: Kurdish journalist Amen Mohammadi in Sirwan, activist Najaf Mehdipour in Darreh Shahr, and several other Kurds in Urmia, Mahabad and Piranshahr (*KMMK*). Also, in Mahabad, Kurdish activist Saed Husseini was sentenced to 40 years in prison for “rebellion”. *Hengaw* also reported that Kurdish environmental activist Khabat Mafakhery received four years in prison in Mahabad for “belonging to the Kurdish Free Life Party”.

The threat of capital punishment still hangs over the heads of arrested activists. After executing

champion wrestler Navid Afkari last September for participating in an anti-corruption protest in 2018, the regime is now threatening his brother Vahid with execution to force him to record a videotaped confession... (VOA)

Finally, the authorities are preparing for the presidential elections scheduled for 18 June – more precisely, they are organising the victory of the ultraconservative candidate Ebrahim Raisi. He is infamous among Kurds and all opponents of the regime for his recent supervision of numerous executions of dissidents as head of the judiciary. Moreover, in 1988, he participated in the “Death

Commission” of Tehran which pronounced thousands of executions of political prisoners, considered by human rights organisations as crimes against humanity...

The mock election that is being prepared should see the unsurprising victory of Raisi, since the Council of Guardians of the Constitution has taken care to eliminate from the ballot all competitors who present the slightest risk of taking away his victory. For the first time, the “reformist” faction within the regime announced that it had no candidate. Its conservative opponents seem assured of assuming full power, which

would allow them to drastically stifle any dissension within the regime.

Under these conditions, a rush to the polls is not expected. The process of elimination has been so severe that “*even some members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, known for their strong hostility to political dissent, have called the election undemocratic*” (New York Times). Calls for a boycott have multiplied. Former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whose candidacy for the presidency was also rejected by the Council of Guardians, also declared that he would not vote and denounced the Council.

TURKEY: VIDEOS OF A MAFIA BOSS WORRY THE AUTHORITIES

With the Turkish media tightly controlled by the government and a relentless repression preventing any public expression of discontent, it is not surprising that the videos posted on *Youtube* by the exiled mafia boss Sedat Peker, who has long been close to the circles of the AKP government and its president, have gone viral: by the end of May, his seven weekly videos had been viewed more than 55 million times (*Financial Times*), and one of them alone had registered 15 million views! Subjected to a press under orders and deprived of the possibility of expressing themselves, Turks follow the “Peker videos” like a *Netflix* series, listening to what the far-right mafia leader presents as revelations, “*which shed light on the incestuous relations between the Islamo-nationalist alliance in power and organised crime*” (*Le Figaro*). The man is all the more dangerous for the authorities as he is a former supporter of Erdoğan, with whom

he used to have his picture taken, which suggests that he does indeed know the underside of many affairs... This makes up for the fact that he only provides circumstantial evidence to support his accusations.

Why did this godfather of racketeering and drug trafficking turn against his former friends? First of all, it seems that he was side-lined by the authorities in favour of a rival, also a far-right mafioso, Alaattin Çakıcı, a protégé of MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli. In 2019, Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu, who was still protecting Peker at the time, reportedly urged him to leave the country because of a judicial investigation against him. Peker fled Turkey a few months before a police operation during which some 50 members of his criminal organisation were arrested. In April 2020, he had released a first video in which he attacked Erdoğan’s son-in-law, Berat Albayrak, then Finance minister,

whom he blamed for his disgrace. Then he kept silent for a year. But it was a police search of his wife’s house last April that seems to have enraged him. Özge Peker, his former lawyer, said that special forces police officers came to search her home with long-barreled weapons and pointed them at her children. Peker later referred in one of his videos to the “indecent behaviour” of the police officers towards his wife and daughters... However, feeling betrayed by Soylu, whom he probably hoped would help him return home, he posted on *Twitter* on 18 April the video of his talks with journalist Hadi Özisik, a former adviser to the minister. In it he said that he and his brother had acted as intermediaries between the minister and the Turkish mob (*RFI*). This was only the beginning: in his subsequent videos, posted on his *Youtube* channel and then on his own website, <http://www.sedatpeker.com/>, the

gangster set out to settle scores... In one of his first videos, he accused AKP MP Tolga A ar of the 2018 rape of a Kyrgyz student and journalist who was found dead after she filed a complaint, her death being then presented as a suicide. In his video released on May 23, he accused Erkan Yıldırım, son of Erdoğan's former prime minister Binali Yıldırım, of smuggling cocaine into Turkey from Venezuela, a country he had visited twice in early 2020... At the end of the month, he detailed how the Turkish government had used the *Sadat* company, set up by Erdoğan's former military adviser Adnan Tanriverdi, to supply arms and drones to al-Qaeda affiliates in Syria, prompting the HDP to call for a parliamentary enquiry. Meanwhile, he elaborated on the police protection the interior minister had provided him... In another video, Peker claimed that his henchmen had participated in the 2015 attack on the offices of the *Hurriyet* newspaper on the orders of an AKP deputy whose name he did not reveal.

When Peker said he had instructed his brother Atilla 25 years ago to assassinate Turkish Cypriot journalist and politician Kutlu Adalı (a mission the gangster said Atilla failed to complete, although Adalı was

indeed shot dead some time later), on the orders of former Justice and Interior Minister, ultra-nationalist Mehmet A ar, police went to arrest Attila Peker. Peker also said that A ar had ordered the murder of investigative journalist U ur Mumcu, killed in a car explosion in 1993, and of the husband of Pervin Buldan, the current HDP co-chairwoman, Sava Buldan, who was kidnapped and murdered in June 1994. Mumcu's family has asked for the investigation to be reopened, and Pervin Buldan said her husband was killed by the state and that those responsible had been acquitted, adding that she would seek to have them retried (*Reuters*).

As an indication of the government's nervousness, on 21 September, the journalist of the *Anatolia* State Agency Musab Turan was fired after he asked Industry Minister Mustafa Varank and Agriculture Minister Bekir Pakdemirli at a press conference to respond to allegations that the Interior Minister had links with Peker. The agency announced the opening of an investigation against him for "belonging to a terrorist organisation" (*Rûdaw*).

The officials involved have of course denied all. On the 24th, Süleyman

Soylu, answering a journalist's questions in a three-hour television interview, was hardly convincing, seeming above all to seek to evade the questions... (*RFI*) He then filed a complaint against Peker for insult and defamation. Erdoğan, whom Peker has so far refrained from directly implicating (he calls him in his videos "abi", "big brother"), reacted to the scandal for the first time by declaring his support for his minister. On the 27th, Turkey issued an arrest warrant for Peker (*AFP*). Tolga A ar, who is none other than the son of former minister Mehmet A ar, also mentioned by Peker, called the rape accusation "slander" on Twitter.

But Peker's videos reactivated the collective memory of the 1996 Susurluk car crash: in one of the wrecked vehicles were found, among others, the deputy chief of the Istanbul police, together with Abdullah Çatlı, leader of the Grey Wolves and MIT killer. Thus the collusion between state officials, ultra-nationalists and the Turkish mafia was concretely exposed. The Minister of the Interior at the time had to resign. His name was... Mehmet A ar.

On 24 May, Peker, after seven videos, announced that there were five more to come...



Les forces spéciales turques

Aujourd'hui engagées dans une multitude d'opérations tant en Turquie qu'en Irak ou en Syrie, les forces spéciales turques tiennent leurs origines dans les réseaux de *stay behind* créés au lendemain de la Seconde Guerre mondiale dans le cadre de l'opération « Gladio », dont l'objectif était de mettre en place une force d'action clandestine en mesure d'agir contre une potentielle occupation soviétique des pays européens.

Leur socle est créé en 1948, lorsqu'un groupe de 16 soldats triés sur le volet est envoyé aux États-Unis pour y recevoir une instruction à la guerre non conventionnelle, à laquelle s'ajoute une dimension renseignement et recrutement de sources. À leur retour en Turquie, ils mettent sur pied le STK (Seferberlik Taktik Kurulu), activé en 1952. Cette unité a joué un rôle dans la Kontrgerilla, l'organisation turque concernée par l'opération « Gladio », qui plus tard sera chargée de l'entraînement des Loups gris (branche paramilitaire du parti

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panturquiste MHP) et sera impliquée dans de nombreuses actions violentes visant les groupes communistes turcs : le coup d'État de 1971, l'opération « Kizildere » l'année suivante, le massacre de la place Taksim en 1977, ceux de Beyazit, de Bahçelievler et de Kahramanmaraş en 1978 et un second coup d'État en 1980 font partie du bilan de la Kontrgerilla. De son côté, le STK a eu lui aussi son lot d'actions clandestines, relevant de la guerre psychologique ou de la déstabilisation : l'unité a notamment provoqué le pogrom d'Istanbul en 1955 contre les minorités grecques et a créé le TMT (Türk Mukavemet Teskilati

– Organisation turque de résistance) en 1958, la résistance turque ciblant l'EOKA (Ethniki Orğanosis Kyprion Agoniston – Organisation nationale des combattants chypriotes) grecque. Le STK fut rebaptisé ÖHD (Özel Harp Dairesi) en 1967 et devint l'unité d'opérations spéciales de l'armée de terre, dont les membres sont surnommés Bordo Berelilers d'après leur béret amarante. Financée et entraînée par les États-Unis, travaillant en étroite coopération avec la CIA durant toute la guerre froide, l'ÖHD encouragea et protégea les Loups gris durant la vague d'attentats qu'ils conduisirent au cours des années 1970, ciblant les journalistes, les avocats et les intellectuels de l'opposition, de même que les syndicats, les étudiants et les Kurdes. L'ÖHD a également participé à l'invasion de Chypre en 1974 aux côtés des forces spéciales navales, et a soutenu militairement le TMT au moment de la partition de l'île.

LES UNITÉS DE GUERRE NON CONVENTIONNELLE

Au début des années 1990, les remous de la guerre du Golfe provoquèrent l'enkystement du PKK, notamment dans le nord

de l'Irak. En réponse, l'ÖHD fut dissoute, restructurée et rebaptisée ÖKK (Özel Kuvvetler Komutanligi – Commandement des forces spéciales) le 14 avril 1992, placé directement sous l'autorité de l'état-major général. L'ÖKK fut chargé de capturer des leaders du PKK en Irak en 1998 et au Kenya en 1999. En 2014, il participa à la libération de 49 employés consulaires pris en otage par l'État islamique à Mossoul, avant d'infiltrer la Syrie à partir de 2017 pour y conduire des opérations de renseignement avec le soutien de l'Armée syrienne libre. Les commandos de l'ÖKK sont constamment actifs dans le nord de l'Irak et à la frontière sud de la Turquie pour lutter contre le PKK.

Structuré en groupes de 12 hommes sur le modèle des Bérêts verts de l'US Army, l'organigramme de l'ÖKK aligne une force d'environ 500 opérateurs, soutenus par des unités de logistique, de maintenance et administratives. Il est renforcé par un groupe d'aviation spéciale disposant d'hélicoptères préparés pour les opérations spéciales et composé de pilotes entraînés au vol de nuit sous jumelles de vision nocturne, à la corde lisse et à la dépose/récupération par grappe pour

les missions d'infiltration, d'exfiltration de même qu'au ravitaillement hélicoptéré en zone non permissive.

L'ÖKK intègre également le MAK (Muha-rebe Arama Kurtarma), un groupe d'élite d'une centaine d'opérateurs officiellement spécialisés dans les missions de recherche et sauvetage au combat. Toutefois, le

« L'ÖKK fut chargé de capturer des leaders du PKK en Irak en 1998 et au Kenya en 1999. En 2014, il participa à la libération de 49 employés consulaires pris en otage par l'État islamique à Mossoul, avant d'infiltrer la Syrie à partir de 2017 pour y conduire des opérations de renseignement avec le soutien de l'Armée syrienne libre. »

MAK est également capable d'opérer dans tout le spectre de la guerre irrégulière : reconnaissance spéciale, actions directes (raid d'intervention, capture/élimination, récupération de personnel), surveillance,



Forces spéciales au cours d'une présentation dynamique à Istanbul. (© Kafeinkolk/Shutterstock)

reconnaissance, renseignement, contre-terrorisme, sabotage, recherche et destruction d'objectifs stratégiques, assistance militaire et organisation de maquis, ce qui semble en faire un groupe d'élite au sein de l'ÖKK. Contrairement aux Bordo Berelilers, qui ne recrutent qu'au sein des forces terrestres, le MAK recrute ses opérateurs parmi les soldats de toutes les branches. En outre, le MAK n'est pas à confondre avec le groupe PK (Personel Kurtarma), l'unité de commandos de l'armée de l'air turque,

« **Contrairement aux Bordo Berelilers, qui ne recrutent qu'au sein des forces terrestres, le MAK recrute ses opérateurs parmi les soldats de toutes les branches.** »

dont le rôle équivaut à celui des Special Tactics de l'US Air Force. Cette unité, dont les membres suivent une formation de 53 semaines, a pour principales missions la récupération d'équipages abattus, le contrôle aérien avancé et le guidage des appareils lors des missions de Close Air Support.

L'une des particularités de l'ÖKK réside dans le fait qu'il ne recrute que des officiers et des sous-officiers : les militaires du rang ne sont pas éligibles à la sélection. Les candidats se portent volontaires pour participer à cette dernière, qui comporte des tests écrits et des épreuves physiques. Ceux qui sont admis entament ensuite le long processus de formation et d'entraînement, qui s'étale sur une période de deux ans et demi et dont les différentes phases sont toujours éliminatoires.

En sus des stages de combat armé, corps à corps, NRBC, infiltration, reconnaissance, plongée, saut HALO jour/nuit, opérations hélicoptérées, sniping, démolition et protection VIP, la formation de l'ÖKK comporte aussi l'apprentissage de langues étrangères. Le niveau de résistance physique et psychologique est très élevé, avec des marches de 100 kilomètres accomplies avec une charge de 40 kilos. À la fin de la

formation, le dernier mois est consacré à la survie avec un entraînement à l'évasion de capture et aux interrogatoires. D'autre part, des exercices incluent des tirs de confiance sans gilet pare-balle (deux cibles en papier à traiter intercalées avec deux opérateurs immobiles, à une distance de 15 mètres), ce qui démontre le niveau d'excellence des Bordo Berelilers dans la formation au tir.

LES BRIGADES COMMANDO

La restructuration de l'ÖKK en 1992 s'est accompagnée l'année suivante de l'activation de la 5^e brigade commando Hakkari. Issue du bataillon de commandos montagne de la 1^{re} brigade commando (1 Komando Tugay), elle-même créée en 1965, la brigade Hakkari a pour mission de maîtriser le combat en montagne et de lutter contre le PKK dans la région méridionale de la Turquie. Elle aligne quatre bataillons, un bataillon d'artillerie et un groupe de soutien, répartis dans différents districts de la province de Hakkari dont elle tire son nom.

Quant à la 1^{re} brigade commando, elle est spécialisée dans les opérations aéroportées et elle est également chargée de faire passer le brevet parachutiste aux éléments de toutes les branches de l'armée turque, qu'ils fassent partie des forces spéciales ou des forces conventionnelles, tout comme les commandos de la gendarmerie qui opèrent sous ses ordres dans certaines régions. La structure de la 1^{re} brigade com-

mando diffère de celle des autres : elle aligne ainsi quatre bataillons commando : un bataillon parachutiste, un d'artillerie, un de soutien logistique, un d'instruction et un de soutien à l'instruction.

La 1^{re} brigade commando et la 5^e brigade Hakkari font partie des 12 brigades commando de l'armée de terre, dont les membres portent le béret bleu (à la différence des Bordo Berelilers de l'ÖKK). Ces brigades sont rattachées à différents corps d'armée des forces terrestres pour opérer en tant que moyens organiques dans le domaine des opérations spéciales. Un certain nombre d'entre elles n'ont été professionnalisées qu'à partir de 2010. L'armement de ces unités comprend les fusils d'assaut G3A7, HK33, M-4A1 et MKEI MPT, de même que le pistolet-mitrailleur MP5 pour les éléments d'intervention en milieu clos. En appui, elles utilisent des mitrailleuses MG3 et M-249 SAW, ainsi que des fusils de précision SVD Dragunov MKEK JNG-90, KNT-308 et Sako TRG. En double dotation, les pistolets Yavuz 14 et le Kilinç 2000, des versions turques fabriquées sous licence du Beretta 92F et du Cz75, respectivement.

LES FORCES SPÉCIALES NAVALES

La marine aligne trois unités complémentaires pour assurer l'ensemble des opérations spéciales navales, regroupées sur la base de Phocée. Le groupe SAS



▲ Présentation de matériels du SAS.
(© Yasemin Yurtman Eademir/Shutterstock)



▼ Un S-70 de la gendarmerie. Très bien équipée, elle est optimisée pour les missions de contre-guérilla dans le sud-est du pays. (© Cacar/Shutterstock)

(Su alti savunma) est spécialisé dans les missions défensives : la démolition sous-marine, le minage/déminage maritime, la protection de VIP et l'instruction d'unités alliées dans la protection des installations navales. Pour parfaire les dispositifs d'interdiction, il joue le rôle de force d'opposition en infiltration commando que leurs stagiaires doivent détecter et neutraliser. L'autre unité de plongeurs de la marine turque est le SAT (Su alti taaruz), dont l'organisation reprend celle des Navy SEAL américains et dont les missions offensives complètent celles du SAS : reconnaissance spéciale, préparation de débarquement, abordage et contre-terrorisme maritime, raids de sabotage ou de capture/élimination. Ces commandos marine, comme les autres forces spéciales turques, suivent une formation d'environ un an, au cours de laquelle ils peuvent être éliminés du cursus. La première phase, centrée sur la préparation physique, dure huit semaines. La seconde, de 27 semaines, concerne les techniques de plongée et les tactiques des nageurs offensifs. La dernière dure 15 semaines, au cours desquelles les stagiaires s'entraînent aux opérations terrestres, à l'intervention en combat urbain et approfondissent les opérations spéciales sous-marines.

Enfin, ces deux groupes sont appuyés par l'AMFIBI (Amfibi deniz piyade tugayı),

une force d'infanterie de marine plus volumineuse, apte à débarquer avec des véhicules lourds et à soutenir des équipes avec une puissance de feu importante. Ils servent notamment à sécuriser une zone d'intervention au profit des nageurs de combat pour leur éviter d'être encerclés et pour repousser les forces de réaction rapides adverses. L'AMFIBI, créé en 1966, comporte aujourd'hui trois bataillons amphibies, un bataillon de chars de marine doté de M-48A5T2, un bataillon d'artillerie de marine, un bataillon logistique et des compagnies de soutien. Le véhicule standard des compagnies d'infanterie de l'AMFIBI est le M-113. L'armement repose principalement sur le MPT-76 (version locale du HK416) et le M-4A1, les pistolets-mitrailleurs MP5 et HK33, complétés par le pistolet automatique HK Mk23. Les snipers utilisent des carabines SSG 3000, et les fusils JNG-90, Remington M-2010, Barrett M-82A1 et M-95 selon les calibres nécessaires. En armes d'appui, les mitrailleuses M-249 et M-60, le lance-grenades M-79 ainsi que les lance-roquettes RPG-7 et M-72 LAW.

LES COMMANDOS DE LA GENDARMERIE

Créé en 1991, le JÖH (Jandarma özel harekât) représente l'élite de la gendarmerie turque, avec un effectif de 20000 hommes

affectés aux opérations antiterroristes dans le sud de la Turquie. Bien que cette arme soit inspirée du modèle de la gendarmerie française, elle présente des différences cruciales, notamment par le fait que ses unités conventionnelles sont armées par des conscrits peu formés. Avec un tel volume de force, le JÖH n'est pas un équivalent du GIGN, mais plutôt une unité mieux professionnalisée, équipée et armée pour s'engager contre le PKK. Ses membres suivent une formation de 16 semaines sur l'emploi des armes d'infanterie et des mortiers, la manœuvre en montagne, le combat hélicopté, le *close quarter battle*, les missions d'infiltration, de reconnaissance ainsi que de recherche et destruction. Certains éléments se spécialisent en tir à longue distance lors d'un stage de sniping. Ils sont ensuite ventilés au sein des 26 unités du JÖH

« Le JÖH n'est pas un équivalent du GIGN, mais plutôt une unité mieux professionnalisée, équipée et armée pour s'engager contre le PKK. »

où ils opèrent sous une double chaîne de commandement : celle de la gendarmerie à Ankara, et celle de l'armée de terre dans leur région militaire d'affectation. Peu d'informations sont disponibles concernant les opérations récentes des forces spéciales turques, en particulier celles de l'ÖKK et des SAT. En 2011, ces derniers avaient libéré 24 otages à bord du ferry Kartepe, retenus prisonniers par un militant kurde armé d'un IED. Si toutes les unités ont en commun les opérations contre le PKK, la 1^{re} brigade commando avait participé à « Enduring Freedom » en Afghanistan. En 2018, la 3^e brigade commando fut engagée en Syrie lors de l'opération « Olive Branch », et en 2019, ce furent la 4^e brigade commando et des unités du JÖH qui participèrent à l'opération « Claw » dans le nord de l'Irak. ■ E.V.

Dix-huit personnes tuées dans quatre attaques djihadistes en Irak

Le groupe Etat islamique est probablement responsable de ces attaques, même si aucune revendication n'a encore été faite.

Quatre attaques djihadistes ont coûté la vie à dix-huit Irakiens, entre jeudi 28 avril et samedi 1er mai, ont fait savoir des sources de sécurité à l'Agence France-Presse (AFP). Ces attaques, qui ont principalement tué des militaires, se sont produites notamment dans la grande ceinture de Bagdad.

Dans la banlieue agricole de Tarmiya, à vingt kilomètres au nord de la capitale, « des djihadistes ont pris d'assaut un convoi de l'armée irakienne dans la soirée de jeudi et tué deux officiers et deux soldats », a rapporté un premier responsable sécuritaire, sous couvert d'anonymat. Lorsque des ren-

forts sont arrivés, ils ont à leur tour essuyé des tirs qui ont mortellement touché « un officier et deux soldats », ainsi qu'un combattant appartenant à un groupe tribal intégré aux forces régulières et « un civil pris dans les échanges de tirs », a-t-il ajouté.

Parallèlement, dans la région d'Altun Kupri, au nord de Bagdad, que se disputent le gouvernement fédéral et les Kurdes, « six combattants kurdes ont été tués, a expliqué un autre responsable de la sécurité locale à l'AFP, lui aussi sous couvert d'anonymat. Des combattants du groupe Etat islamique ont attaqué avec des armes légères (leur) position. »

Pas de revendications

Un autre attentat meurtrier a eu lieu dans le désert occidental frontalier de la Syrie, a annoncé un troisième responsable. « Un officier et un soldat ont été tués dans l'explosion d'une bombe lors du passage d'un convoi de l'armée à Akachat », a-t-il dit.

Enfin, dans la province de Diyala, qui borde Bagdad à l'est, un soldat est mort dans l'explosion d'une bombe, tandis que deux autres combattants ont été blessés dans une attaque séparée, selon un autre responsable.

Aucune de ces attaques n'a été revendiquée par le groupe Etat islamique, mais leur mode opé-

ratoire est devenu distinctif des djihadistes en Irak. Le groupe, qui a perdu le territoire qu'il tenait dans le pays à la fin de 2017, n'opère plus que de nuit, dans des zones reculées et avec des armes légères, visant presque systématiquement les forces de sécurité. Après les récentes attaques, le président du pays, Barham Saleh, a de nouveau plaidé, samedi, pour « renforcer le soutien international pour en finir avec les résidus » de l'EI. Une coalition militaire dirigée par les Etats-Unis est présente en Irak depuis 2014 pour aider à combattre l'EI, mais un vote du Parlement l'an passé a demandé le départ de toutes les troupes étrangères du pays.



01 mai 2021
Par Lucile Wassermann

Irak: le nord du pays ciblé par quatre attaques djihadistes meurtrières

En Irak, quatre attaques djihadistes ont eu lieu la nuit dernière, tuant au total 18 Irakiens, en majorité des militaires. Les autorités du pays ont appelé à un renforcement de la sécurité dans les zones attaquées, ainsi qu'au maintien d'un soutien international.

Ce fut une nuit sanglante en Irak. Près de Kirkouk, dans le nord, six combattants kurdes

ont été tués dans des affrontements avec des djihadistes. À Tarmiya, au nord de Bagdad, un convoi de l'armée irakienne a également été pris pour cible, ainsi que les renforts qui sont arrivés un peu plus tard. Sept militaires sont morts dans l'embuscade.

Puis, près de la frontière syrienne, à l'ouest, ou encore à Diyala, à l'est, des engins explosifs improvisés, ont là en-

core, ciblé et tué des soldats irakiens. Rien ne permet de dire que toutes ces attaques ont été coordonnées, mais elles sont significatives de la menace djihadiste, toujours bien présente en Irak, qui se manifeste souvent par ce genre d'embuscades, effectuées de nuit, dans des zones rurales et contre des forces de l'ordre.

Les responsables kurdes ont

immédiatement appelé à un renforcement de la sécurité, en particulier à Kirkouk, l'une des zones disputées entre le gouvernement régional kurde et celui fédéral de Bagdad. Ils appellent à la formation d'un organe conjoint entre les combattants kurdes et l'armée irakienne pour défaire l'Etat islamique. Le président irakien a également appelé à l'unité, et au maintien du soutien international dans ce combat.



May 01, 2021
By Wladimir Van Wilgenburg

Turkish court upholds jail sentence for Kurdish leader Demirtas

The Turkish Court of Cassation has upheld a four-year and eight-month prison sentence against the imprisoned former co-leader of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Selahattin Demirtas.

The Istanbul Heavy Penal Court previously sentenced Demirtas to prison due to his statement during Newroz celebrations in Istanbul on March 17, 2013, BIA net reported.

The Court of Cassation upheld this prison sentence on April 26, when the first hearing of Kobani trial was held last Monday for 108 politicians from the HDP over their alleged support for protests in 2014. He remains jailed despite the Eu-

ropean Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruling twice in favor of Turkey releasing Demirtas.

The Turkish police arrested Demirtas along with 10 other lawmakers in simultaneous night raids across several provinces on Nov. 4, 2016, with serious charges of terrorism and "separatism" being made, based on various public speeches they had delivered in the past.

Since then, he has been charged with various crimes and remained in jail despite international calls to release him.

Dr. Aykan Erdemir, senior director of the Turkey Program at the Foundation for Defense of Demo-

cracies and a former member of the Turkish parliament, told Kurdistan 24 that Turkey's ruling Islamist-ultranationalist coalition knows that Demirtas's "charismatic leadership" is "a threat to its rule."

He said Demirtas's success "in attracting not only Kurdish but also Turkish voters poses a significant threat to the government's ability to secure a majority in the upcoming elections."

"Even from his prison cell, Demirtas continues to be one of the most effective opposition figures in Turkey, wielding outsized influence beyond his own party." "Demirtas's pragmatism, which

has allowed the pro-Kurdish HDP to join forces with other opposition parties to defeat the candidates of the ruling bloc in the 2019 municipal elections, remains a major concern for Erdogan."

Erdemir said that silencing Demirtas and blocking his vision and efforts that could deliver an opposition victory in the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections "is central to the government's electoral strategy." "Given the Turkish judiciary's near-total submission to the executive branch in Turkey, it would be naïve to expect any fair treatment for Demirtas in Turkish courts," he concluded.



May 02, 2021

Syrians continue to experience water shortages as Turkey blocks dams

According to residents interviewed by NPA, the water shortage is endangering their livelihood by limiting the amount of water available for drinking, for electricity and for agriculture. One official in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor said that already two water stations have gone offline because of Turkey's control of water flowing down the Euphrates River into Syria.

In Aleppo, the situation for residents has been described as critical. Like in Deir Ezzor,

there is a risk that two large power stations which irrigate parts of Aleppo as well as Raqqa will need to shutdown soon. One farmer interviewed explained that cultivation is the livelihood for many in Aleppo and Turkey's blockages hurt many communities reliant on agriculture.

Turkey's choking of water flowing into northern Syria has been extensively documented though Ankara denies that it is purposely cutting supplies. It is accused of interfering in water

supplies as a means to undermine the control of Syrian Kurdish authorities in the northeast, which it has attacked on three separate occasions in the last five years. A researcher with Human Rights Watch labeled Turkey's policies as "human rights disaster".

Both the Kurds and the Syrian government have accused Turkey of being responsible for water shortages. Russia, Syria's main ally and a mediator in northeast Syria, has in

the past intervened diplomatically to restore water flowing into the area. In December 2019, Russia appeared to broker a deal with Turkey that saw water restored from Al-louk power station that was damaged two months earlier in Operation Peace Spring.

Water flowing from the upper Euphrates River in Turkey down to Syria is governed by international agreements which specify how much water Syria is supposed to receive.



Security improves in Syria camp, but virus threat grows

Kurdish officials say security has improved at a sprawling camp in northeast Syria that houses families and supporters of the Islamic State group

Concerns are growing of a coronavirus outbreak at a sprawling camp in northeast Syria that houses tens of thousands of refugees, including families and supporters of the Islamic State group, a Kurdish official said Monday.

At least two people at the al-Hol camp have died of COVID-19 in the past few weeks and 19 who tested positive for the virus are currently in isolation, according to Jaber Mustafa, an administrator at the crowded facility. The camp is home to some 60,000 people, many of them foreign nationals. Coronavirus cases have surged in northeast Syria since the beginning of the year. In an interview Saturday, Mus-

tafa told The Associated Press that it has been difficult to control and administer the camp amid the spread of coronavirus and a wave of violence and crime that prevailed in the past months and left dozens of people dead in the facility. He also said security has dramatically improved since a sweep last month that netted extremists and their sleeper cells.

"Most of the residents are children and women who move a lot between tents," Mustafa said of his concerns for contagion, adding that the security situation has complicated access by aid groups.

In late March, the main U.S.-backed Kurdish-led force that runs this corner of northeast Syria launched a five-day sweep inside al-Hol that was assisted by U.S. forces. At least 125 suspects were arrested. Since then, Mustafa said security has improved and only



Syria Camp (Copyright 2021 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.)

one killing and one attempted killing have taken place.

"The security and humanitarian campaign succeeded at a level of about 85% and reduced crime and brought stability and security," Mustafa said. He said that aid groups are now active again inside the camp that consists of thousands of tents. The majority of al-Hol's residents are Iraqis and Syrians, but it includes some 10,000 foreigners from 57 other countries, housed in a highly secured separate area known

as the Annex. Many of the camp's residents remain die-hard IS supporters.

Many countries have been refusing to repatriate their citizens who came from around the world to join IS after the extremists declared their so-called caliphate in 2014. The group was defeated in 2017, but the resident of al-Hol continue to languish in the camp but few countries have accepted to take back their citizens, fearing their links to IS.



Il y a 84 ans, le génocide de Dersim

Ce 4 mai marque le 84^e anniversaire du début du génocide de Dersim au cours duquel des dizaines de milliers de personnes ont été massacrées par le régime turc. Les survivants ont été exilés, Dersim a été décimée.

84 ans ont passé, et la Turquie refuse toujours de reconnaître ce génocide, à l'instar des nombreux autres qui jalonnent son histoire. Les responsables du massacre de dizaines de milliers de personnes n'ont jamais été jugés. Les familles brisées n'ont jamais eu droit à la vérité.

Le sort de milliers de personnes est encore inconnu. On ignore toujours où se trouvent les enfants kurdes enlevés par le gouvernement turc à l'époque. De nombreux autres États responsables de génocide contre leur population ont reconnu l'injustice et la douleur qu'ils ont causées et se sont excusés. Cependant, la Turquie continue à nier le génocide kurde, comme elle nie le génocide arménien. La campagne militaire contre le Dersim a été menée en réponse à un incident relativement mineur. L'armée turque a saisi un prétexte pour punir les tribus kurdes. Un jour de

mars 1937, un pont stratégique a été incendié et les lignes téléphoniques coupées. Les autorités turques ont accusé Seyyit Riza et les tribus qui lui étaient associées. L'armée a fait croire qu'il s'agissait d'un début de rébellion. Une source turque de l'époque mentionne un autre incident mineur survenu ailleurs au Kurdistan, évoquant une « coordination entre les nationalistes kurdes ».

Les premières troupes envoyées pour arrêter les suspects ont été arrêtées par des tribus armées. Les affrontements se sont rapidement intensifiés. Lorsque les tribus ont

persisté dans le refus de livrer leurs chefs, une vaste campagne a été organisée. Les opérations militaires visant à soumettre la région se sont déroulées durant tout l'été 1937. En septembre, Seyyit Riza et ses plus proches compagnons se sont rendus, mais au printemps suivant, les opérations ont repris avec une violence et une brutalité sans précédent.

Selon les estimations, 70 à 90 mille personnes ont été massacrées au cours de cette campagne génocidaire et plus de 10 000 autres ont été exilées.

Bachar Al-Assad orchestre un simulacre d'élection présidentielle en Syrie

Dix ans après le déclenchement de la guerre civile, la France, le Royaume-Uni et les Etats-Unis contestent d'avance le scrutin du 26 mai, organisé au seul profit du dictateur.

Sa réélection ne fait aucun doute et Bachar Al-Assad file sans surprise vers un quatrième mandat consécutif à la tête de la Syrie. Le processus a été formalisé par la Haute cour constitutionnelle, qui a validé sa candidature, lundi 3 mai, pour un scrutin prévu le 26 mai. Une présidentielle qui le verra l'emporter face à deux concurrents, un ex-ministre et un membre de l'opposition tolérée par le pouvoir.

Le scrutin sera le second à être organisé depuis le début, en 2011, d'une guerre dévastatrice déclenchée par la répression de manifestations réclamant des réformes démocratiques. Aidé militairement par ses alliés iranien et russe, le régime du dirigeant syrien a réussi à reprendre aux rebelles et aux djihadistes près des deux tiers du territoire au prix de combats qui ont fait près de 400 000 morts.

Elu par référendum en 2000
Agé de 55 ans, Bachar Al-Assad a accédé au pouvoir en 2000 après la mort de son père Hafez Al-Assad, lui-même à la tête de la Syrie trois décennies durant. Il avait été élu par référendum en 2000 et 2007. En 2014, deux candidats ont été autorisés à concourir contre lui pour projeter, déjà, l'image d'une situation en voie de normalisation. L'autocrate a été réélu avec plus de 88 % des voix dans ce qui fut qualifié par ses oppo-

sants de « farce » et de mise en scène organisée pour les médias occidentaux.

Cette année, outre M. Assad, concourront Abdallah Salloum Abdallah, ministre d'Etat de 2016 à 2020, et Mahmoud Mareï, membre de l'opposition dite « tolérée » à l'intérieur du pays et longtemps décrite par l'opposition en exil comme une extension du régime. Les candidats devaient obtenir le soutien d'au moins 35 députés, chacun n'étant autorisé qu'à soutenir un seul candidat.

La présence de M. Mareï, qui avait notamment participé à des négociations organisées sous l'égide des Nations unies à Genève pour tenter de trouver une issue à la guerre, est vue par un diplomate occidental comme « la seule concession faite par le régime à l'extérieur. En l'occurrence à son allié russe qui, pour des questions d'apparence, tient à un semblant de "diversité" ». L'opposition en exil, elle, est exclue de facto, la loi électorale stipulant que les candidats doivent avoir séjourné dans le pays en permanence au cours des dix dernières années.

Critiques nourries
Les membres occidentaux du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, Etats-Unis, France et Royaume-Uni en tête, ont rejeté à l'avance le résultat de l'élection. « La France ne reconnaîtra aucune validité aux élections prévues par le régime fin mai », a asséné l'ambassadeur français à l'ONU, Nicolas de Rivière, lors d'une session mensuelle du Conseil de sécurité sur la Syrie, le 28 avril. Sans inclure la diaspora, elles « se tiendront sous le

seul contrôle du régime, sans supervision internationale » comme le prévoyait la résolution 2254 (adoptée en 2015), a-t-il ajouté.

« L'échec à adopter une nouvelle Constitution est la preuve que la prétendue élection du 26 mai sera une imposture », estime Linda Thomas-Greenfield, ambassadrice des Etats-Unis à l'ONU

Son homologue américaine, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, a affiché une ligne semblable. « L'échec à adopter une nouvelle Constitution est la preuve que la prétendue élection du 26 mai sera une imposture », a-t-elle dit. Des mesures doivent être prises pour une « participation des réfugiés, des personnes déplacées et de la diaspora à toute élection syrienne ». Tant que cela ne sera pas fait, « nous ne serons pas dupes », a-t-elle averti.

L'ONU ne masquait pas ses critiques. « Les élections [syriennes] ont été convoquées sous les auspices de la Constitution actuelle et elles ne font pas partie du processus politique établi en vertu de la résolution 2254 », avait déclaré Stéphane Dujarric, porte-parole d'Antonio Guterres, le secrétaire général. Mais cette fin de non-recevoir marque aussi un constat d'impuissance.

Envoyé spécial de l'ONU pour la Syrie, le diplomate norvégien Geir Pedersen a reconnu qu'en raison du manque d'un « véritable engagement » de la part du régime syrien, le processus politique n'avait pas encore réussi à apporter de changements tangibles. Des «

élections libres et équitables », fondées sur les dispositions de la résolution 2254 du Conseil de sécurité, « semblent encore loin », ajoutait-il.

Constitution syrienne inchangée

L'attitude de Damas s'observe ainsi dans les débats du Comité constitutionnel, à Genève. C'est cet organe, formé à l'initiative de Moscou et d'Ankara, composé de représentants du pouvoir et de l'opposition, qui est censé amender la Constitution syrienne. Plus d'un an et demi après leur réunion inaugurale, en septembre 2019, les délégués n'ont pas réussi à réécrire le moindre article, en raison de l'obstruction des émissaires du régime.

Comme en 2014, le chef de l'Etat syrien a décrété, dimanche 2 mai, une amnistie préélectorale couvrant des « actes terroristes » n'ayant pas entraîné de décès. Pourraient en bénéficier des déserteurs de l'armée sommés de se rendre à la justice, ou des détenus condamnés pour des faits de contrebande et de trafics contre le versement d'amendes.

Confronté à un mécontentement croissant, provoqué par la flambée des prix et la chute de la monnaie dans les zones loyalistes, le régime a également procédé à une série de mesures, dont des augmentations de salaire et des prêts à taux réduit. Un signal adressé à sa base. A commencer par les officiers et chefs de milices démobilisés et convertis en entrepreneurs s'activant dans l'orbite du pouvoir.

Terrorisme. Daech refait surface en Irak

Depuis quelques jours, le groupe djihadiste État islamique a conduit plusieurs attaques meurtrières en Irak, notamment dans la région de Kirkouk, dans des territoires que se disputent le pouvoir central et les autorités de la région autonome du Kurdistan.

Située dans le nord de l'Irak entre Bagdad, la capitale fédérale, et Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan irakien, la province de Kirkouk est en état de "tension sécuritaire", explique le journal panarabe Al-Araby Al-Jadid.

En cause, les "attaques incessantes" menées la nuit depuis plus d'une semaine par les djihadistes de Daech dans cette région dont Bagdad et Erbil se

disputent le contrôle. Ainsi, dans la nuit du 5 mai, des combattants du groupe terroriste État islamique (EI) ont mené trois attaques meurtrières en quelques heures visant l'armée, la police et des champs de pétrole, au moyen d'armes légères, dans un rayon de 50 km autour de la ville de Kirkouk.

Des attaques similaires ont eu lieu les jours précédents, certaines d'entre elles visant également les forces kurdes.

No man's land

Le regain d'activité de l'EI dans cette région n'est pas innocent, estime le quotidien panarabe Asharq Al-Awsat : Les combattants de Daech exploitent les no man's land sécuritaires des

zones disputées insuffisamment quadrillées."

Dans plusieurs endroits du territoire irakien, les forces irakiennes et kurdes ont en effet installé des no man's land pour éviter les frictions. C'est dans ces territoires que les djihadistes de Daech, défaits en 2017 en Irak, agissent depuis plusieurs jours. Dans ces régions autour de Kirkouk sévissent également des "caïds corrompus" ainsi que "la contrebande", notamment celle "du bétail et de pétrole", précise le site irakien Al-Alam Al-Jadid.

Une tonne d'explosifs

"Ces zones se trouvent dans la province de Ninwie, à la frontière nord avec la Syrie, dans les provinces de Salaheddine

[au nord de Bagdad] et de Kirkouk, ainsi que dans la province de Diyala, à la frontière avec l'Iran", précise le journal Al-Arab.

Et visiblement, le groupe djihadiste est également présent à Bagdad. Le mardi 4 mai, les forces de sécurité irakiennes ont annoncé avoir saisi une tonne d'explosifs dans la capitale ; "une première depuis des années", explique Asharq Al-Awsat dans un autre article.

Ceci montre que les organisations terroristes et les cellules dormantes actives dans les régions du nord et de l'est de l'Irak ont encore un pied à Bagdad, frappé les années précédentes par des attentats faisant des milliers de morts."

Ahval

May 06 2021

U.S. senator calls on Biden to pressure

U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth has called on President Joe Biden to pressure Turkey "to curb its ongoing malign activities" against Syrian Kurds.

Ankara needs to fulfil its commitments as a NATO member by solving international conflicts in a peaceful manner, Duckworth said in a letter to Biden, Politico reported on Wednesday.

"America is back, and diplomacy is once again at the centre of our foreign policy," the Democrat senator said. Differences over the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a coalition of militias dominated by the Kurdish-led People's Protection Units (YPG), which spearheads the campaign

against the Islamic State (ISIS), have been a long-standing cause of tension in U.S.-Turkey relations.

Ankara regards the YPG as the Syrian offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a terrorist designate by the United States and the European Union, which has been fighting for self-rule inside Turkey since 1984.

The new U.S. administration under Biden reiterated its support for the Kurdish-led forces in their ongoing operations against ISIS, a shift in tone from the more transactional approach taken by former President Donald Trump. Duckworth called Biden to do more in support for the Syrian Kurds that stood "shoulder-to-

shoulder" with the U.S. military forces against ISIS. Duckworth also condemned Trump for encouraging Turkey's military offensive against the SDF in northeast Syria in October 2019.

"This move created a humanitarian crisis that endangered tens of thousands of civilians, risked the release of ISIS prisoners and severely damaged our international credibility," she said.

"We must restore trust and confidence in our allies and partners to achieve our national objectives."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan launched the military incursion, dubbed Operation

Peace Spring, into Syria on Oct. 9, 2019, days after Trump withdrew U.S. troops from the Syrian border.

Erdoğan vowed to resettle a large number of Turkey's 3.6 million Syrian refugees in a planned 30km deep "safe zone" cleared of the SDF and other groups linked to the PKK.

The offensive ended in nine days later after Turkey made two separate deals with the United States and Russia for the withdrawal of the SDF from along the Turkish-Syrian border.

During the offensive, Turkish forces captured the areas between Syrian border towns of Ras al-Ayn and Tel Abyad, once belonged to the Kurds.



May 6, 2021
By Sirwan Kajjo Mon

Water Drop in Euphrates River Increases Tensions Between Syrian Kurds, Turkey

A dramatic drop in water levels on the Euphrates River in recent weeks is adding to tensions between Turkey and Syrian Kurdish forces.

Kurdish officials in northeast Syria accuse Turkey of reducing the levels of water flowing downstream, causing an agricultural crisis and a major power shortage in the region.

"Areas under our control benefit greatly from the Euphrates water supply, so this is a blockade approach by the Turkish government to undermine our authority and harm our region," Badran Chia Kurd, the executive deputy president of the Autonomous Administration in North and East Syria (AANES), told local radio station Arta FM on Tuesday.

The AANES is a governing body affiliated with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish-led military alliance that has been a key U.S. ally in the fight against terrorism in Syria.

Chia Kurd said that disrupting the river's water flow into a neighboring country violates international law.

But a diplomatic source at Turkey's Foreign Ministry denied that Turkey has deliberately decreased the volume of water on the Euphrates.

"The allegations that Turkey has cut off or reduced the water of the Euphrates River are unsubstantiated," the source told VOA. "It is very well-known that Turkey has never reduced or cut off the amount of water released from its transboundary rivers for political or other purposes throughout its history."

The source, speaking on background, added that "Turkey approaches the water issue solely

from a 'humanitarian' perspective."

Turkey views the SDF and its main element, the People's Protection Units, as extensions of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, a Turkey-based Kurdish militia that Washington and Ankara have designated a terrorist organization.

In recent years, Turkey has launched several major military campaigns against the SDF in northern Syria. As a result, the Turkish military and allied Syrian militias are currently in control of several towns, including Afrin, Ras al-Ayn and Tel Abyad that were previously held by SDF fighters.

Economic impact

The 2,800-kilometer-long Euphrates is the longest river in southwest Asia, originating in Turkey and flowing southeast across Syria and Iraq. In Syria, the river is a major source of drinking water and vital to agriculture and electricity production.

Since the beginning of the year, water flow from Turkey has fallen from 500 to nearly 200 cubic meters per second, experts say, causing electricity shortages.

"The reduction of water flow has caused major drops in water levels behind the Tishrin and Tabqa dams in our region," said Cihad Beyrim, an engineer who oversees operations at the SDF-controlled Tishrin Dam, one of Syria's major hydropower facilities.

"We were forced to reduce electricity hours from 16 hours to eight hours per day," he told VOA by phone. "It's getting lower now, but if this continues, we will be forced to stop produ-

cing electricity altogether as our top priority is to secure drinking water for our population."

"With a scarce rainfall this season," Beyrim added, "more farmers are relying on water from the Euphrates for irrigation, which makes our situation even worse."

Officials in Ankara say Turkey also has been suffering drought conditions.

"We are witnessing the adverse impacts of climate change on our water resources, which have been decreasing gradually," the Foreign Ministry source told VOA. "Whereas Turkey aims at releasing the necessary amounts of water in the upcoming period, depending on climate conditions and drought, there might be decrease in some periods in the released amount of water."

Weaponizing water?

Rights groups have accused Turkey of failing to ensure adequate water supplies to SDF-held areas in northeastern Syria. Last year, New York-based Human Rights Watch said a water-pumping station in northeast Syria that is controlled by Turkish-backed Syrian groups has experienced major water supply interruptions, leaving hundreds of thousands of residents without drinking water.

But the Turkish government blamed the SDF for deliberately cutting power that supplies the water station.

"The water is supplied from the Allouk Station to Haseke region through the water pumps, which operate on electrical power," the Turkish diplomatic source said. "The most recent power cut to the Allouk Station took place in

April 18 due to a malfunctioning in Derbasiyah power substation, which is not located in an opposition-controlled area," the source added.

The station resumed its operations after its electrical grids were repaired, thus restoring the water supply on April 24, according to the Turkish government.

Aykan Erdemir, senior director of the Turkey Program at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and a former member of the Turkish parliament, said Turkey has weaponized water multiple times since last year by interrupting water supply to areas under SDF control in northeast Syria.

"The Turkish government calculates that leveraging water would be particularly effective at a time when the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated public health risks in the region," he told VOA.

Given the relative lack of mobility between Turkey and SDF-controlled territories, Ankara assumes that a coronavirus outbreak among communities who have restricted access to water in northeast Syria would not spill over to Turkey, Erdemir said.

He added that this could be a serious miscalculation "not only from a medical perspective but also politically."

"Given its potential moral and international legal ramifications, the weaponization of water may prove to be a significant diplomatic liability for Turkey at a time when Ankara is trying to alleviate its unprecedented isolation regionally and globally," Erdemir said.

Machines de chantier sur le charnier de Newala Qesaba contenant les restes des Kurdes

Des machines de chantier ont commencé à creuser la vallée de Newala Qesaba où se trouvent un charnier abritant les restes de nombreux Kurdes tués dans les années 1980 – 1990 par le JITEM turc. On affirme que l'État turc veut y construire une académie de police où il y a aussi des charniers de l'époque du génocide arménien.

Newala Qesaba ou nevala kasaba, dans la région de Bitlis / Mutki, signifie la vallée des bouchers en kurde car elle contient des charniers abritant des corps des Arméniens tués lors du génocide de 1915 et ceux de centaines de Kurdes tués par le JITEM turc (service de renseignements et antiterrorisme de la gendarmerie) dans les années 1990.

Selon l'Association des droits de l'homme, des creuseurs sont arrivés à Newala Qesaba (Vallée des Bouchers), l'immense charnier où sont enterrés au moins 300 guérilleros, dont l'un des principaux commandants du PKK, Mahsun Korkmaz (Egîd).

Les machines ont commencé les fouilles dans l'est.

Aucune information sûre n'a pu être obtenue sur les raisons pour lesquelles les fouilles en cours sont effectuées, mais selon les recherches du journaliste Oktay Candemir, une académie de police doit être construite sur le site. La nouvelle des fouilles a suscité l'indignation de la société kurde. Les organisations de droit civil ont annoncé qu'elles allaient tenter une action en justice contre le « projet de construction ».

Newala Qesaba n'était pas seulement utilisée comme fosse commune depuis les années 1980. En 1915, les corps des Arméniens qui ont été assassinés lors du génocide des Jeunes-Turcs des peuples chrétiens de l'Empire ottoman y ont été enterrés. On ne sait pas combien de personnes ont été enterrées sur le site pendant le génocide. Plus récemment, la zone a été utilisée comme décharge.

L'approbation de ce lieu comme terrain à bâtir revient au compte du gouverneur de la province turque Osman Hacıbektaşoğlu, qui a également agi en tant que



fiduciaire de l'administration de la ville depuis juin 2020. Les maires démocratiquement élus: Berivan Helen Işık et Peymandara Turhan avaient été destitués et arrêtés un mois plus tôt sur ordre du ministère de l'Intérieur. Ils ont été libérés peu de temps après, mais sont assignés à résidence depuis lors. L'inculpation dans le cadre de l'enquête préliminaire contre les deux hommes politiques du HDP pour «propagande en faveur d'une organisation terroriste», «appartenance à une organisation terroriste» et «humiliation de l'Etat turc, de ses institutions et organes» n'a toujours pas été finalisée.

Des centaines de civils et de membres du PKK ont été enter-

rés dans des fosses communes de la région de Botan après avoir été massacrés par des organes non officiels de l'État tels que JITEM (unité de renseignement et antiterroriste de la gendarmerie) à partir des années 80.

Privées de cérémonies religieuses, certaines de ces personnes ont été jetées dans les décharges tandis que beaucoup d'autres ont été placées dans des fosses communes ouvertes aux municipalités de l'époque. Newala Qesaba est l'un de ces endroits qui a été un cimetière pour les Arméniens massacrés en 1915 et au moins 300 Kurdes assassinés à partir de 1984.

bianet May 10, 2021
BAĞIMSIZ İLETİŞİM AĞI

Contradicting health minister, Erdoğan says Turkey has enough Covid-19 vaccine supplies

Turkey currently has enough Covid-19 vaccines, and no difficulties are expected in vaccine supplies, President and Justice and Development Party (AKP) Chair Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has said.

In addition to current and incoming supplies of the Chinese Sinovac and European/US BioNTech shots, talk with Russia "are ongoing currently, hopefully, the Sputnik vaccine is coming, it will

come," Erdoğan told reporters after Friday prayers in İstanbul. Turkey today granted emergency approval for Russia's Sputnik V vaccine.

The president's statement comes after Health Minister Fahrettin Koca admitted that the country would have a vaccine shortage in the next two months.

Vaccination has slowed down as the daily number of vaccinations was slightly more than 200,000

over the past two weeks whereas the ministry and medical organizations say the country has the capacity to inoculate a million people per day.

On additional supplies of the BioNTech shots, Erdogan also reaffirmed that the firm BioNTech had made a promise and that the jabs would be delivered to Turkey. He added that he will talk to Russia's President Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping

about the vaccine issue.

Minister Koca previously blamed China's Sinovac company for not delivering vaccines to Turkey in accordance with the agreement made.

As of today, Turkey has administered 22.8 million vaccine doses with 9.1 million people having received two doses, according to the Health Ministry's online tracker.

Lawyers appeal to top court for Ögüt family members killed in Kurdish village fire

Lawyers for the Ögüt family, nine members of which died in a blaze in Turkey's southeastern village of Altınova (Vartinis), have appealed to the Constitutional Court to vacate a decision by the Supreme Court of Appeals (Yargıtay) that acquitted three military officers of responsibility for the deaths, the Mezopotamya news agency reported.

The first chamber of the appeals court found Bülent Karaoğlu, a former gendarmerie officer, responsible for the burning down of the village in 1993, which caused the death of nine members of the Ögüt family, including seven children. The court, however, upheld the acquittal of the three other officers who were tried in the same case.

According to the family's lawyers, the military officers who were acquitted were present in the village at the time and also responsible for the killing of nine people.

Karaoğlu, a captain at the time, will be retried at the Kırıkkale High Criminal Court if the court agrees with the supreme court's decision. If not, the case will be brought before the Assembly of Criminal Chambers of the Supreme Court of Appeals.

At the time of the incident Karaoğlu was the commander of gendarmerie forces in the Hasköy district of the southeastern city of Muş. On October 2, 1993 a non-commissioned officer (NCO) was killed during clashes between Turkish security forces and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants. Officers claimed that the villagers in the area were responsible for hiding the militants.

The PKK has been leading an insurgency against Turkey's security forces since the '80s in a campaign that has claimed the lives of some 40,000 people. The group is listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the European Union and the US.

On their way to pick up the body of the dead officer, gendarmes passed through the village of Altınova. They fired rounds into the air and said, "We will burn down your village tonight." The village was set on fire at around 3:00 a.m. The villagers thought they were being attacked by the PKK; yet, they soon saw soldiers preventing them from trying to put out the fire.

Most of the villagers were able to leave their houses, but two adults and seven children from the Ögüt family were unable to escape and



died in the blaze. The only survivor of the family was Aysel Ögüt, who was at a sleepover at a neighbor's house. Some claimed that the door was locked by the soldiers that night.

In its decision the appeals court said according to witness testimony Karaoğlu was present during the military operation as the commanding officer. "Taking into consideration what he said after the killing of the NCO, the fire was started based on the orders of the defendant," the court added. Karaoğlu will be tried for solicitation to commit murder.

Aysel Ögüt took the case to court after the incident, but the public prosecutor's office found no grounds for trial, claiming that the attack was perpetrated by terrorists and that the actual perpetra-

tors were not known. Ögüt once again took the case to court in 2003, during a time when Turkey was undergoing sweeping human rights reforms. The public prosecutor's office referred the case to a military prosecutor in the province of Elazığ because the alleged perpetrators were on active duty, but the case was stalled.

In 2011, following another series of judicial reforms, Aysel Ögüt once again went to court. This time four officers including Karaoğlu were tried at a high criminal court and were acquitted of charges. The case has been before the Supreme Court of Appeals since 2016.

Due to the statute of limitations the trial needs to be concluded before October 2023, or it will be dismissed.



May 10, 2021
By Karwan Faidhi Dri

Descendant of legendary Kurdish leader killed by Turkish drone in Dersim: family

The Turkish army killed a young man, believed to be the descendant of a renowned Kurdish leader, in the eastern province of Dersim (Tunceli) during clashes with

the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) on Saturday, his father has told local news outlets.

Murat Yildiz went out to collect mushrooms in Dersim's Ovacik

district on Saturday after receiving permission from Turkish authorities, as public access to nearby areas is prohibited due to regular clashes between the army and the

PKK, his father Mazlum told Pirha news outlet on Sunday.

Murat was unaware that he was followed by a Turkish drone, he added, which then

bombed his vehicle. "It was done on purpose. They surveilled and followed my son. They did it [attack him] after they found out that there was another passenger in the vehicle," his father said.

Some people claimed that Yildiz was carrying three PKK fighters in the vehicle.

The Turkish interior ministry said in a statement on Friday

that their forces killed three PKK fighters in the same district during clashes with the group, the state-owned TRT Haber reported.

Yildiz's family has reportedly said that Turkish commanders had told them they bombed their son's vehicle because it carried PKK fighters.

Arti Gercek news outlet reported that Yildiz is a descend-

ant of Seyit Riza - a Kurdish-Alevi leader who led a Kurdish rebellion against the Turkish state in the 1930s. The state killed tens of thousands of Kurds in their brutal campaign in 1937. The massacre is commemorated annually on May 4.

Alican Onlu, a parliamentarian for the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) for Dersim, said in a tweet on Sunday that he visited Murat's

family, blaming the Turkish state for the death of the young man and his ancestors, referring to Seyit Riza and the Dersim Massacre. The PKK is an armed Kurdish group, fighting for the increased rights of Kurds in Turkey. Ankara considers it a terrorist organization and a threat to its national security. Turkey frequently carries out military operations against the group at home and outside the country.



10 mai 2021

Par Oriane Verdier

Kurdistan irakien: inquiétudes autour de graves violations des droits de l'homme

Les grands alliés occidentaux du Kurdistan irakien s'inquiètent des violations des droits de l'homme dans la région autonome. Cinq journalistes et militants ont été condamnés en appel à 6 ans de prison pour avoir tenté de nuire à la sécurité nationale mais aussi pour espionnage pour les États-Unis et l'Allemagne.

Voilà des mois que les familles des cinq accusés appellent la communauté internationale à réagir face à ce qu'ils décrivaient comme une instrumentalisation politique de la justice. Les journalistes Sherwan Sherwani, Guhdar Zebari et Ayaz Karam et les militants Shvan Saeed Omar et Hariwan Issa ont tous été arrêtés en octobre dernier lors d'une opération visant à étouffer les manifestations contre les autorités du Kurdistan irakien.

Leurs proches dénoncent l'utilisation de la torture et de menaces pour les forcer à signer les aveux utilisés lors de leur procès. Shirwan Sherwani y est d'ailleurs apparu blessé et incapable de se tenir debout devant la Cour selon son avocat. Il a également alors directement accusé les forces de renseignements d'avoir menacé d'agresser sexuellement sa femme et sa mère s'il ne signait pas ces aveux. Selon Human Rights Watch (HRW) le juge n'aurait pas réagi à ces accusations. Pour l'ONG il est clair que la condamnation vient d'une « volonté politique partielle ».

Sherwan Sherwani est notamment connu pour ses enquêtes journalistiques sur la corruption. Il a également critiqué publiquement le Premier ministre kurde sur les réseaux sociaux.

Vingt-neuf députés kurdes irakiens ont également dénoncé le non-respect des lois lors de l'enquête ainsi que l'absence d'avocats auprès des accusés pendant les interrogatoires.

Les cinq hommes ont dû répondre à plusieurs accusations telles que « incitation à manifester et à déstabiliser la région », « mauvais usage d'appareils électroniques », une accusation souvent portée envers les journalistes critiques dans la région. Mais la Cour de cassation qui a rejeté l'appel la semaine dernière est allée plus loin. Dans son rapport, elle affirme que des diplomates américains et allemands auraient versé de l'argent aux accusés pour des missions d'espionnage. Les deux pays mis en cause dans l'affaire, pourtant alliés de longue date du Kurdistan irakien, ont donc tous deux pris la défense des accusés.

Des accusations « absurdes » pour Berlin

Dans un communiqué envoyé par le consulat américain aux médias kurdes, Washington rappelle tout d'abord son « attachement à la liberté d'expression » et « au respect des lois notamment dans le

processus judiciaire ».

Le communiqué appelle également les pays hôtes à respecter le travail des « diplomates américains qui – tout comme les journalistes – rencontrent différentes personnes pour faire leur travail. »

Les accusations d'espionnage sont tout simplement « absurdes » du point de vue de Berlin. Elles seraient basées sur les témoignages d'informateurs secrets et sur des photos trouvées sur les réseaux sociaux montrant les accusés aux côtés de membres de la diplomatie. Pour le consulat allemand il n'y a pas de débat : « Les échanges menés avec des membres de la société civile, des journalistes et des militants font partie du travail diplomatique quotidien partout dans le monde. »

Le Canada, la France et l'Union Européenne ont eux aussi exprimé leur inquiétude quant à cette affaire. Le seul espoir pour les cinq détenus est maintenant la grâce présidentielle. Mais cela reviendrait pour le président de la région du Kurdistan irakien Netchirvan Barzani à contredire son propre cousin le Premier ministre qui a ouvertement accusé les cinq hommes de terrorisme et d'espionnage avant même que le jugement ne débute.

Une répression de plus en plus violente

Être journaliste indépendant ou simple critique des autorités n'a jamais été chose facile au Kurdistan irakien. Mais la situation semble avoir empiré avec l'épidémie du Covid-19 et la mise en place du nouveau gouvernement dont le Premier ministre Masrour Barzani est l'ancien patron des services de sécurité kurdes.

Les trois journalistes et deux militants en question ont été détenus lors d'une série d'arrestations de grande ampleur visant à étouffer le soulèvement populaire générée par des conditions de vie de plus en plus difficiles. Selon l'avocat Karzan Fadhel du Democracy and Human Rights Development Centre (DHRD) basé à Souleymanieh, il y aurait aujourd'hui plus de soixante-dix détenus politiques entre Erbil et Dohuk, les deux grandes villes sous l'autorité du PDK. Parmi eux, Badal Barwari, une figure du mouvement des enseignants qui réclame le paiement des salaires des fonctionnaires depuis plusieurs années. Ce professeur a été arrêté en août 2020 à Dohuk avec le journaliste Omed Baroshki. Tous deux sont depuis détenus à Dohuk. L'avocat de Badal Barwari s'est dit très inquiet pour la santé de son client en février dernier. Ce lundi, il a annoncé une audience prévue par la Cour de cassation d'Erbil le 17 août prochain, un an après son arrestation.

De retour du procès dit de « Kobané » à Ankara, ils témoignent

Lundi 26 avril 2021 se tenait à Ankara, en Turquie, le procès de 108 représentant.e.s du HDP (Parti démocratique des peuples), troisième formation politique du pays. Une délégation française, comprenant deux Isérois, s'est rendue sur place.

L'acte d'accusation reproche au HDP d'avoir appelé à des manifestations de solidarité avec les habitants de Kobané, une ville kurde du nord de la Syrie, qui luttait à l'époque contre les attaques de Daesh. Au moins 37 personnes ont été tuées lors d'affrontements avec la police turque dont la grande majorité étaient des partisans du HDP. Le HDP a fait des propositions pour la création d'une commission parlementaire afin de mettre au jour la vérité et trouver les instigateurs de la violence et

HDP est menacé d'interdiction. Selahattin Demirtas, candidat du HDP à l'élection présidentielle en 2014 et 2018, est toujours en prison malgré la demande de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (CEDH) qu'il soit libéré immédiatement.

À l'appel du HDP Chantal Morel et Michel Lemoine militant.e.s d'AIK (association iséroise des amis des kurdes) se sont rendu.e.s en Turquie pour assister au procès. Une vingtaine de délégué.e.s européens étaient présents à Ankara, dont cinq de France (Aiak et la France Insoumise).

« Après les difficultés d'organisation du voyage concernant notre accueil à Ankara par des militant.e.s du HDP et à la situation sanitaire actuelle nous n'avons pas rencontré de difficultés avec les autorités



Devant le tribunal, le 26 avril dernier, à Ankara.

Le matin alors que trois cents policiers occupaient une partie du tribunal, tous les avocat.e.s de la défense (1200 avocat.e.s pour le HDP et les 108 prévenu.e.s) n'ont pu rentrer dans la salle d'audience partiellement vide pour « raison sanitaire ». Les avocat.e.s ont alors protesté et ont été autorisé.e.s à rentrer.

Après la lecture de l'acte d'accusation comprenant 2500 pages les avocat.e.s n'ont pas eu le droit de parler et les déclarations des prévenu.e.s n'étaient pas audibles. Les avocat.e.s se sont alors retiré.e.s de la salle d'audience par mesure de protestation. Le procès a été ajourné jusqu'au 18 mai. Cela représente une première victoire.

« Mais les responsables du HDP nous ont indiqué ne se font pas d'illusion sur les conclusions du procès, tout est déjà décidé. C'est une parodie de justice », rapporte Chantal. « On ne peut imaginer de telles conditions d'un procès dans un pays démocratique », ex-

plique-t-elle. A moins d'une mobilisation importante de l'opinion publique et des gouvernements occidentaux, les élu.e.s kurdes pourraient être condamné.e.s à des peines aggravées de perpétuité et leur parti HDP interdit dans un pays membre de l'OTAN, alliance supposée réunir des démocraties respectueuses des droits de l'homme et des libertés publiques.

« Nous avons également rencontré une association de femmes turque dont l'une d'entre elle est assignée à résidence parce qu'elle défend les droits des femmes », indiquent les délégué.e.s. « La situation est extrêmement difficile car tout se durcit et est instrumentalisé », ont confié ces femmes. L'une d'elle peine à marcher suite aux tortures qu'elle a subi lors de son arrestation.

« Nous avons admiré le courage de toutes les personnes rencontrées qui défendent la justice la démocratie, l'égalité et la paix », conclut Michel.



Sur cette image de la délégation française, Michel Lemoine, représentant de l'Association iséroise des amis des Kurdes, est le troisième en partant de la gauche.

les meurtriers. Toutes ces propositions ont été rejetées par l'alliance AKP-MHP au pouvoir. Ce procès intervient alors que des dizaines de cadres du HDP, des maires et des députés ont été arrêtés et que le

turques », expliquent ils. « Nous avons pu accéder à la salle d'audience sans problème. »

Procès ajourné au 18 mai, une première victoire



May 11, 2021

UN experts: ISIS committed genocide against Yezidis

The head of a United Nations team investigating atrocities in Iraq announced Monday it has found “clear and compelling evidence” that ISIS extremists committed genocide against the Yezidi minority in 2014 and said the militant group successfully developed chemical weapons and used mustard gas.

Karim Khan told the Security Council the team also concluded war crimes were committed by ISIS against predominantly Shia unarmed cadets and personnel from the Tikrit Air Academy who were captured, tortured and subjected to mass execution in June 2014. He said an ISIS video released in July 2015 showing the killings “constitutes a direct and public incitement to commit genocide against Shia Muslims.”

The Security Council voted unanimously in September 2017 to ask the UN to establish an investigative team to help Iraq preserve evidence and promote accountability for what “may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide” committed by ISIS extremists, both in Iraq and the Levant, which includes Syria.

In his sixth report to the council, Khan said the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes committed by ISIS, also known as Daesh, ISIL and the Islamic State, rapidly expanded the amount of evidence it has in the last six months.

He said “significant developments” in collecting forensic evidence from mass grave sites, digital data extracted from hard drives that belonged to ISIS, digitization of case files, and use of advanced technological tools

to process and search databases has allowed the team “to establish clear timelines of activities of key ISIL members.”

Khan called it “a landmark moment” that the team, known as UNITAD, had established convincing evidence that ISIS extremists committed genocide “against the Yezidi as a religious group” with the intent “to destroy the Yezidi physically and biologically.”

This was manifest in the ISIS ultimatum applied to all Yezidis “to convert or die” and led to thousands killed, “either executed en masse, shot as they fled, or dying from exposure on Mount Sinjar as they tried to escape,” Khan said. “Thousands more were enslaved, with women and children abducted from their families and subjected to the most brutal abuses, including serial rape and other forms of unendurable sexual violence” that for many lasted years, “often leading to death.”

Khan added that crimes against the Yezidis continue, with thousands of women and children separated from their families or missing and some still with their ISIS captors or those to whom they were sold.

In 2016, the UN-mandated Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria said ISIS was committing genocide against Yezidis, and several non-governmental organizations have echoed that conclusion.

But Khan said what UNITAD has done in terms of the Yezidis is more important because the team was mandated to look at a variety of evidence that could stand up in court where the burden of proof is on the prosecution

– “and to not just draw brush strokes from a survey of victims.”

He said information from electronic devices that belonged to ISIS extremists also led UNITAD to open a new investigation “into the development and successful deployment of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL in Iraq.”

Evidence collected by UNITAD details how the militant group used laboratories at Mosul University “as the epicenter of its chemical weapons program, drawing on the expertise of scientists and medical professionals from Iraq and abroad,” Khan said.

Initially, he said, ISIS weaponized chlorine from water treatment plants captured by its fighters in 2014, and subsequently developed “toxic lethal compounds including thallium and nicotine that were tested on live prisoners, leading to death.”

ISIS then developed a system to produce mustard gas, also called sulfur mustard, “that was deployed in March 2016 through the firing of 40 rockets at the Turkmen Shia town of Taza Khurmatu,” Khan said.

Khan, who will become chief prosecutor at the International Criminal Court on June 15, said this investigation is rapidly progressing, with initial results anticipated to be completed within five months. By the end of the year, he said, the team also anticipates initial results “addressing crimes against minority Christians, Kaka’i, Shabak, Shia Turkmen and Sunni communities in Iraq, as well as the massacre of predominantly Shia inmates at Badush prison.” Khan said the next step is to use

the information and evidence collected by UNITAD “to meet the expectations of survivors” and put it before national courts to prosecute those responsible for these “horrific crimes.”

He expressed hope that Iraqi legislators will adopt a legal basis to prosecute ISIS members for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. He welcomed legislation presented to Parliament in the Kurdistan region last week to establish a court with jurisdiction over international crimes committed by ISIS.

“We must make sure that we don’t become this archive, this library,” Khan said of the team’s evidence.

He said every member of the international community should “feel this sense of urgency” for justice as if their own mother, father or child had lost their life or was not accounted for.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Nadia Murad, a Yezidi forced into sexual slavery by ISIS fighters who killed her mother and six brothers, urged the Security Council to refer the genocide against her people to the International Criminal Court or establish a court to prosecute those responsible for the atrocities.

“I ask you to start a new chapter – legal accountability for ISIS crimes would dramatically impact every action of my community’s recovery,” she said. “It is time for the international community to do, more than listen. It is time to act. If world leaders have the political will to act on this evidence, then justice is truly within reach.”

Turkey has the largest presence in Iraq and is occupying more lands

In the past two weeks, Turkish forces have occupied new areas in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). The new Turkish military campaign is part of the [Turkish expansion](#) plan led by the country's authoritarian president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The new campaign began with the same old pretext – to “end” the presence of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the Qandil Mountains. The Turkish forces deployed many soldiers to three main areas in the districts and suburbs of the [Dohuk Governorate](#), including the village of Kista and the mountainous areas of Meta and Avshin. A few days after the military operations and new occupations of Kurdish villages, the Turkish Interior Minister, [Süleyman Soylu](#), announced the establishment of a new military base in the region. Soon after that, the Turkish Defense Minister, Hulusi Akar, visited Turkish soldiers at a military base near the newly occupied areas. The new Turkish escalation against the Kurds is related to several internal and external problems inside Turkey, including economic and political failures during Erdogan's tenure.

The Turkish presence in Iraq

In 1996, Turkish forces, taking advantage of the Kurdish civil war, built their first military base in the [Bamerni sub-district](#) bordering Turkey. Since then, Turkish propaganda has claimed their presence in the region is intended to fight the PKK, a pro-Kurdish organization fighting for the rights of the Kurds in Turkey that is also listed as a terror group by the United States and the EU. Since establishing bases in the KRI, Turkish forces have been bombing Kurdish areas con-

tinuously, resulting in the death of dozens of civilians and the evacuation of the villages in the area. Today, Turkish presence in the KRI consists of at least [41 military bases and headquarters](#), 25 kilometers deep inside Kurdish lands in Iraq, extending from the west to a few kilometers from the Iranian border to the east. Turkey has formed a “security zone”, similar to its occupation of Syria. Most of the Turkish military points began to be built in May 2018, when Turkey officially announced its military operations in the KRI. These were followed by multi-phased military invasions under various names that provoked little reaction from Iraq, America, or the international community aside from press releases denouncing the moves.

The Turkish invasion of the KRI includes the presence of thousands of army elements that far exceed Turkey's presence in both occupied areas of Syria and Libya. For example, in Syria, Turkey carried out three [ethnic cleansing](#) campaigns against the Kurds and established military bases in their areas of occupation in [Jablus](#), al-Bab, [Afrin](#), Tal Abyad, and [Ras al-Ain](#). Turkey has continued to rely on jihadist mercenaries since 2011 to occupy the region, the Turkish military presence in Syria is smaller in number but more specialized than it is in Iraq. Certainly, Turkish support, especially by air, has helped the [jihadist mercenaries](#) expand and intimidate the Kurds. But they were not the main force.

Furthermore, in Libya, the Turks have relied on [jihadists linked](#) to the Muslim Brotherhood and Al Qaeda to oc-

cupy areas and support a side of the Libyan conflict. Its military presence remains dangerous but is smaller than in Iraq.

The Turkish occupation in Iraq has long-term geopolitical implications. For example, since 1996, they have not left the bases they established in the KRI, while at the same time they have been unable to defeat the PKK, as they claimed was the goal before launching their military incursions. Successive Turkish governments have failed to solve the Kurdish issue, and since 1979 the fight against the PKK has not resulted in any wins; on the contrary, it has brought more issues to the country. Nonetheless, the new occupation is another expansionist milestone laid at the expense of the Kurds.

Terminating the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)

Despite the immense Turkish economic and commercial interests in the region, Kurdistan remains forbidden as an entity or a name for the Turkish state. Historically, [Turkey has felt insecure](#) even about the word “Kurdistan,” even as Kurds suffered from ethnic cleansing and [massacres](#) undertaken by the Turkish state. Moreover, the international legitimacy granted to the KRG maintains Turkey's hostile policy towards the Kurds in Iraq. For example, after the non-binding independence referendum by Iraqi Kurds, Erdogan and his government cooperated [with Tehran and Baghdad](#) in their war on Kurdistan in the fall of 2017. They believe that weakening any Kurdish entity will facilitate the elimination of other Kurds. For example, If Turkey succeeds in thwarting the

Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East of Syria ([AANES](#)), then targeting the Kurdistan region will be much easier and vice versa. The Turkish occupation of KRG territories can be the best-case scenario for Erdogan since it has not drawn enough international attention and is considered a [hidden war](#).

So far, Turkey and Erdogan have had some success in their campaign against Kurds due to several factors. For example, the outstanding problems between [Baghdad and Erbil](#) and the lack of trust between the two sides since 2003 have led both to use Turkey as a pressure card. Furthermore, the existing weaknesses of the Iraqi state have led Turkey to become an alternative to Baghdad for the KRG and for Baghdad to weaken the Kurds. Often, Turkey invokes the Iraqi government to expel the PKK from the country. In reality, Iraq has border guards in the region consisting of Kurds but Turkey does not recognize them and sometimes [kills them as well](#). On the other hand, the return of Iraqi federal forces to the region means returning to the time before 2003, when Kurdistan suffered from the [brutality of the Iraqi army](#) under the dictator Saddam Hussein. All cases fail to solve the Kurdish issue in Turkey or the Turkish state's war against the PKK – but provide leverage for Turkey to attack Iraq.

Erdogan's government failures translate into fighting the Kurds

Since 2015, Turkey's [economic problems](#) have increased due to the [authoritarian policies](#) of Erdo-

gan and corruption in the Turkish state institutions led by the [Justice and Development Party \(AKP\)](#). Turkey's economy is on the verge of collapse, but Erdogan has not offered any reforms; rather, he has returned to his old method of diverting the country's attention by resorting to starting new wars on Kurds. For example, after Erdogan's first defeat in the parliamentary elections in June 2015, he launched a war on the Kurdish region in Turkey and ended the peace project between the government and the PKK. Sadly, his plan succeeded in weakening the voice of the Kurds in the rerun elections and he was able to win public opinion.

By mid-2016, Erdogan returned to wage various methods of persecution against the Kurds and democracy, especially after the failed coup attempt against him by right-wing Turks in July 2016. However, he took revenge on the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) for the coup, which had condemned the coup in the [first place](#). At the same time, he launched an attack on the Syrian Kurds in [August of 2016](#), as Turkey began its military campaign in Syria; its first goal was to eliminate the Kurdish forces supported by the United States who were fighting against ISIS.

In the fall of 2016, Erdogan jailed the [leaders of HDP](#) and continued his campaign to weaken the pro-Kurdish party. After several months, he succeeded in passing a referendum that turned Turkey's system into a presidential one and enthroned himself as the absolute ruler.

In every instance, Erdogan used the war on the Kurds to remain in power and mislead Turks about the "danger" of the Kurds. Erdogan was successful in hiding Turkey's economic and political issues such as high unemployment rates and the Turkish lira's dramatic fall against the U.S. dollar in both [2018 and 2019](#), when Turkey launched ethnic cleansing campaigns against Syrian Kurds.

Today, Erdogan's Turkey suffers from the same domestic issues and international crises. The economy is doing worse than ever, despite Turkey's success in occupying and helping its allies (e.g., Azerbaijan, by occupying Armenia's Nagorno-Karabakh) it has failed to gain the support of the international community. The reason is that Turkey has played a saboteur role rather than providing solutions, especially in [Syria and Libya](#). Turkey has also failed to gain anything in the [Eastern Med-](#)

[iterranean](#), which Erdogan used as a tool for a few months and was able to a lesser degree win public opinion by championing [anti-west conspiracy theories](#).

Currently, Erdogan's Turkey has given up on competing with the Arab countries, especially after Erdogan's recent attempts to reconcile with [Egypt](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#) and sell out the Muslim Brotherhood organization [residing in Turkey](#), if necessary. Erdogan's wrong foreign policy led Greece, Israel, Italy, Egypt, Cyprus, and Jordan [to unite under](#) a joint force against Turkey's expansionist ambitions. After years of illusion and wars, many [Turks realize](#) that their abysmal living conditions have been caused by the president and his regime. Erdogan has once again covered up his external and internal failures by again waging a new war against the Kurds.

The danger of Turkey remaining in Iraq

In 2015, Turkey exported their experiment from Syria to Iraq by establishing Sunni militias in the [Nineveh and Kirkuk](#) governorates. In Nineveh, Turkey established and trained a Sunni Arab group while creating a militia group among the Turkmen minority of Kirkuk. Si-

multaneously, Turkey built a military base in Nineveh's [Talar district](#). Since then, Turkey has refused to leave Iraq and begun to freely intervene in its internal affairs. Turkey's NATO membership has been the sole argument for their invasions, despite Erdogan making Turkey an enemy of NATO by becoming a Russian ally in contradiction to NATO's core principles.

The new occupation of Iraqi Kurdistan under the pretext of the PKK presence will have long-term security effects for Iraq and the region, especially the Kurds. In the last decade, Erdogan became famous for supporting [terrorist groups](#), including [ISIS](#). In Syria, thousands of jihadists are under the leadership of Turkey have been used as proxies against [Armenia and in Libya's civil war](#). Turkey can easily use the region, especially the Qandil Mountains, to deploy their jihadist proxies against the Kurds in Iraq. The terrain is a perfect place for any terror group to settle, as it is similar to Taliban hideouts in Afghanistan. Politically, the military occupation of the region will also translate into political leverage for Erdogan and the Turkish state in the KRG and Iraq as a whole, where they have a history of interference that could increase drastically.



May 11, 2021

Turkish Soldier Killed, 4 Hurt in Attack in Syria

A rocket attack on a Turkish military supply convoy in Syria's northwestern Idlib province has killed one soldier and wounded four others, Turkey's Defense Ministry said Tuesday.

Turkish forces retaliated to the attack by firing on targets they identified in the region, the Defense Ministry said in a statement. It did not elaborate or

say who was responsible for the attack late Monday.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitoring group, said a roadside bomb exploded when a Turkish convoy of seven vehicles was passing on a road between the border crossing point of Bab al-Hawa and the Syrian border village of Kfar Lousin.

The Observatory said one of the vehicles suffered a direct hit. Ambulances, it said, rushed to the areas to evacuate Turkish troops who suffered injuries.

It added that Turkish troops cordoned off the area for some time preventing people from reaching it.

Last year, Turkey and Russia

reached a cease-fire agreement that stopped a Russian-backed Syrian government offensive on Idlib - the last major rebel stronghold in Syria. Despite sporadic violations, the agreement has held since then.

Russia is the Syrian government's main military ally, while Turkey has backed the Syrian opposition.

Kurdistan au féminin 12 Mai 2021

Leyla Qasim, militante kurde pendu à l'âge de 22 ans par Saddam Hussein

Le 12 mai 1974, le régime sanguinaire du dictateur irakien, Saddam Husein, a pendu Leyla Qasim, une activiste et féministe kurde qui militait pour les droits des Kurdes et des femmes dans un Kurdistan colonisé. Aujourd'hui, 47 après son exécution, Leyla Qasim est considérée comme l'une des femmes qui ont marqué l'histoire du peuple kurde, comme ce fut le cas de Sakine Cansiz, Zarife Xatun... Son portrait orne les murs de nombreux foyers kurdes et les lieux publics au Kurdistan.

Qui était Leyla Qasim ?

Leyla Qasim est née en mai 1952 à Xaneqin, au Kurdistan du Sud (nord de l'Irak). Elle est la fille de Dalaho Qasim et de Kanî qui avaient 5 enfants. Les Qasim étaient des paysans vivant dans une grande pauvreté, dépendant des rations alimentaires et des vêtements. Leyla et son frère, Chiyako, ont appris l'arabe par leur mère quand ils avaient six et huit ans. Leyla a fréquenté l'école primaire et secondaire dans sa ville natale – Xaneqin.

Elle est partie s'installer à Hewler à 14 ans. En 1971, elle est allée à Bagdad et a étudié la sociologie à l'Université de Bagdad. Leyla était la membre fondatrice du syndicat des étudiants kurdes. Elle a un impact significatif sur les étudiants kurdes de l'Université de Bagdad. Leyla militait pour l'égalité, les droits des femmes et la sensibilisation à la question kurde.

Quand Leyla avait seize ans, Abdul Rahman Arif fut renversé



par le chef du parti Baas, le général Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr. Leyla fut frappée par la prise de contrôle violente dans la capitale. À la fin des années 1960, Leyla et Chiyako ont écrit des brochures sur les horreurs du parti Baas, dont le nouveau chef, Saddam Hussein, qu'ils ont décrit comme étant contre l'indépendance kurde.

Leyla et ses camarades ont été arrêtés à la suite d'une vaste opération des anciennes troupes irakiennes et elle a été reconnue coupable de séparatisme. Pendant son incarcération, elle a été torturée et soumise aux traitements les plus inhumains. Mais

elle n'a jamais rien avoué et a toujours été fidèle au mouvement de libération kurde. Finalement, elle a été pendue après un long procès, diffusé dans tout l'Irak.

Leyla Qasim fut la première femme à être exécutée en Irak et la quatrième prisonnière politique au monde à être exécutée. Leyla et ses quatre camarades Jawad Hamawandi, Nariman Fuad Masti, Hassan Hama Rashid et Azad Sleman Miran furent exécutés à Bagdad, le 12 mai 1974.

Leyla est considérée comme un symbole national et une force morale pour les nouvelles générations qui ont rejoint le mou-

vement de résistance kurde. Leyla a été exécutée, mais des milliers de fillettes nées au Kurdistan reçoivent encore aujourd'hui le prénom de Leyla.

Leyla Qasim est devenue le thème de nombreux poèmes et chansons kurdes. En exécutant Leyla et ses camarades, le régime Baas espérait l'éradication du mouvement de libération kurde, mais l'exécution de Leyla était un début pour de nouveaux Leyla. Une Leyla a été exécutée, mais des milliers de Leyla sont maintenant à l'avant-garde de la résistance kurde qui combat les puissances occupantes au Kurdistan et ne s'arrêteront pas avant de triompher.

Kurdish activists remain resilient despite Erdogan's crackdown

As a teenager, Elif Bulut's neighbours advised her family to keep quiet about her father's Kurdish roots because "they disliked Kurds" in the conservative Black Sea town to which they had moved.

The warning was Bulut's first realisation that her background set her apart in Turkey. "I wasn't born into politics, but if you have an ethnic identity, if you're a woman with dissenting views, you are thrust into politics," said Bulut, 44, who is now the chair of the Istanbul branch of the People's Democratic party (HDP).

Most of the 5.9m people who voted for the left-leaning HDP, Turkey's second-biggest opposition party, in a 2018 general election are Kurdish. The party campaigns for a negotiated settlement in a 36-year conflict between the state and the armed Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK), which has been designated a terror group by the EU and US.

Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has accused the HDP of being the PKK's political wing and said earlier this year there was no room in Turkish politics for a party that did not "wholeheartedly condemn" the militants. The HDP denies links with the PKK, which wants greater political autonomy for Kurds in Turkey.

The government's campaign against the HDP has been stepped up in recent weeks, with the country's top prose-

cutor seeking to outlaw the party and several of its senior politicians facing possible life sentences if convicted in a separate trial. The crackdown is testing the commitment of the party's grassroots activists.

The HDP has thousands of volunteers in Istanbul, a city with about 2m Kurdish residents.

The prosecutions cast "great black clouds over our party by criminalising it to try to weaken our bond with voters", said Bulut. But, she added: "Our voters are well acquainted with pressure and will not abandon us."

The legal blitz is the climax of a years-long campaign by the Turkish government, during which almost all of the HDP's mayors have been expelled from office across mainly Kurdish southeastern provinces, several lawmakers were stripped of their seats in parliament and thousands of party activists have been jailed. Pro-Kurdish newspapers have been banned and Kurdish-language schools and theatres shut.

Both the EU and US have criticised Ankara's move to close the party and the Constitutional Court has asked the prosecutor to remedy deficiencies in the indictment, which has delayed the start of the trial.

Another court began trying 108 senior HDP politicians last month, including its jailed former leader Selahattin Demirtas, for allegedly inciting deadly riots in Turkey in 2014

to protest against Isis's siege of Kobani, a Kurdish-run town in northern Syria, that year. HDP officials believe the case is intended to lay the legal groundwork for a ban. "People took to the streets in a cry for help when Kurds faced annihilation in Kobani," said Zubeyde Ince, 55, a retired teacher who volunteers in the HDP's voter outreach programme. Opening a court case more than six years later was proof that "Turkey is hostile to Kurds".

Ince, who has backed the Kurdish political movement for three decades, said voters' support for the HDP remained strong. "The Kurdish people and our cause won't disappear if they ban the HDP. Our party isn't a sign they can take down. We are the party."

The HDP is the latest incarnation of a movement that began in 1990 to push for greater cultural and political rights for Turkey's 14m Kurds. Five predecessors were banned, the last in 2009, and the HDP has vowed to re-form under the banner of a sister party or through another alliance if it, too, is outlawed.

Erdogan, whose stance towards the HDP hardened after the 2015 collapse of a peace process with the PKK, "thrives off crisis and enmity by disparaging the HDP", said Bulut.

Polls show the HDP's support has declined since the 2018 election, but at a slower rate than for Erdogan's Justice and Development party (AKP), which has historically

attracted the second-highest number of Kurdish votes.

Tightening the screws on the HDP helps brandish the AKP's nationalist credentials and stimulate its base, said political scientist Sezin Ozey. "The scapegoating produces the polarisation that distracts from other problems during the coronavirus pandemic," she said. "Demonising the HDP also helps neuter the rest of the opposition."

The prosecutor in the case to close the HDP is also seeking a ban from political life for nearly 700 HDP members, including 24-year-old sociology major Yagmur Yurtsever, who was drawn to the party when she began university because of its pledge to promote gender equality in its ranks.

Since then, Yurtsever has been detained by police four times over allegations ranging from violating protest bans to membership of a terrorist organisation. "Because I belong to the HDP, the state accuses me of being PKK, and because I'm accused of being PKK, they say that's grounds to close the HDP. It's a vicious cycle," she said.

"The state pushes people to war by shutting the space for politics. That frightens me, but what gives me comfort is that the HDP's commitment to peaceful struggle is resolute," she added. "War has failed to bring a new paradigm, but I genuinely believe democratic politics will."

Will we ever see an independent Kurdistan?

Last week at Yale Jackson Institute, we held a conference with Justice for Kurds, an advocacy group that seeks to raise awareness for the Kurdish cause. My panel focused on whether there should be a new US Strategy for Syria, Iraq and the Kurds. In other words, should the US help facilitate a Kurdish state?

I started working in Kurdistan before the US toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003. Like most journalists and aid workers I know who've spent time there, I've always believed that the Kurds, like all stateless people, deserve the right to self-determination.

The Kurds should have been granted their country after the First World War

But I also foresee a confrontation with Turkey, possibly a military one, if the US supported their independence. Iraq wouldn't be happy about it, nor would the Iranians or the Syrians. The only neighbour who might benefit is Israel, which has been doing deals with the Kurds for years. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu supported the referendum for independence in 2017, as well as the establishment of a Kurdish state. There's a strategy to this; Israel isn't doing it to be magnanimous. It wants a bulwark and ally on the Iranian border. There are also some 200,000 Kurdish Jews in Israel.

As for US involvement, it is a question of allegiance. During

the fight against ISIS I was reporting from the Kurdish front lines. I watched the Peshmerga's tenacity fighting alongside international forces after Iraqi troops melted away following the fall of Mosul in 2014. So when President Donald Trump made the disastrous decision to pull troops out of the Syrian-Turkish border in October 2019, leaving the Kurds to face the consequences alone, I joined most of my colleagues in calling out Trump's disloyalty and moral cowardice.

But I was also in Erbil in September 2017 for the referendum. A reported 93 per cent of voters were in favour of a separate state, but it was clear that President Masoud Barzani had pushed through the vote without listening to the warnings of his neighbours and the US, who were all urging caution. There were too many objections in the region for them ever to attain independence - at least at that stage. Syria, Turkey and Iran were all concerned that the vote would trigger secessionist movements. Even close advisors of Mr Barzani were confused as to why he pushed for it so early.

As feared, the referendum backfired. The federal government in Baghdad declared it illegal and promptly closed the airport in Erbil, shutting off the region from the rest of the world. Neighbours denounced it. Instead of boosting Kurdish power in future deal-making, it caused a di-

rect military confrontation with Iraq. Kurdish Peshmerga fighters were humiliated when Iraqi troops pushed them out of the oil-rich Kirkuk province. It is estimated that the Kurds lost around 40 per cent of the territory that they had taken after the fall of ISIS.

Watching the crackdown by Israeli authorities in Sheikh Jarrah against Palestinians during these past few days has made me think about self-determination. I do believe that the Kurds should, and one day will, have their own state. But it is not going to happen in the foreseeable future, and most likely not without US assistance.

America is not on board, or at least not for now. Their memory of the debacle of the 2003 Iraq invasion is too raw. President Biden's team is more focused on China these days than it is on the Middle East. Mr Biden wants to end wars, as he shown in Afghanistan, rather than risk outright confrontation with Turkey.

This leaves the Kurds adrift. They are the largest ethnic group in the world without a state. They should have been granted their country after the First World War when several countries were carved out of former empires. The international community owes them allegiance and assistance. But there must be a pragmatic road map and timeline, and negotiations

must include neighbours. Hollow promises will not work, such as former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's letter that promised things that the US could never implement.

At this stage I can't imagine Baghdad wanting to go down that road, although there are those who argue that the Iraqi constitution in its current form would be stronger if Kurdistan were independent.

Perhaps one of the most illuminating quotes from our conference at Yale came from Ken Pollock, now at the American Enterprise Institute and a long-time Iraq and Gulf expert, who once worked as a military analyst for the CIA. Mr Pollock is strongly in favour of US support for a potential Kurdish state, but he admits that "self-determination is good for international affairs, but not for international law".

My takeaway from the conference was that sentimentality and romanticism, including my own, has to be tempered when it comes to Kurdistan. In order to obtain independence, there must be wide regional support. Without it, the Kurds risk economic isolation, a potentially besieged country and hostile neighbours. Janine di Giovanni is a Senior Fellow at Yale Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, and the author of the upcoming *The Vanishing: The Twilight of Christianity in the Land of the Prophet*

Cemil Kırbayır's file closed due to expiry of statutory limitations

The decision to reinvestigate the enforced disappearance of Cemil Kırbayır, who was detained from his house in eastern province of Ardahan a day after the military coup on September 12, 1980, has been reversed by the Court of Cassation. Overturning the decision of the Ardahan Heavy Penal Court dated 2014, it has closed the file due to the expiry of statutory limitations.

As reported by Kemal Göktaş from Kısa Dalga, the Court of Cassation has accepted the Justice Ministry's request for "reversal for the sake of law" due to the expiry of statute of limitations in 2002.

The Court of Cassation has argued that the Constitutional amendment dated 2004 and ruling that the expiry of statutory limitations shall not be valid for the crimes of killing committed by public officials and the Constitutional amendment dated 2010 and repealing the provisional Article 15 of the Constitution that granted immunity for the crimes in the September 12 period do not prevent his file from being affected by statutory limitations.

That being the case, the promise of ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) Chair and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Berfo Kırbayır when he was the Prime Minister has not been kept.

What happened?

A day after the military coup on September 12, 1980, Cemil Kırbayır was taken into custody from his house in Okçu village in Ardahan province. His fate and whereabouts have been unknown since then.

Waging a struggle for justice after her son's disappearance, mother Berfo Kırbayır was among the Saturday Mothers invited by the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Dolmabahçe Palace in İstanbul on February 5, 2011. Upon the instruction of Erdoğan, who listened to 103-year-old Berfo Kırbayır, it was decided in the meeting of the Parliamentary Human Rights Investigation Commission on February 9 that a sub-commission be established "with the aim of investigating the fate and whereabouts of the people who were allegedly enforced disappeared."

A 350-page report was prepared following the investigation of the Commission. In the conclusion part of the report, it was written, "Our Commission believes that Cemil Kırbayır was tortured in custody, that he lost his life as a result of this torture and that his body was disappeared by the public officials who did the interrogation that led to his death."

The Commission then applied to the Kars Chief Public Prosecutor's Office and filed a complaint against the then executives and officials of the Security Directorate, National



Photo: Anadolu Agency (AA) - Archive

Intelligence Organization and Martial Law Command, sending all information, statements and documents it had about the issue to the prosecutor's office through the Ministry of Justice.

In response to this, the Kars Chief Public Prosecutor's Office launched a new investigation no. 2011/899. A decision of non-prosecution no. 2002/911 was found in the archive during the investigation. Six years after Cemil Kırbayır was disappeared in custody, the Kars Chief Public Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation, but it ended in non-prosecution in 2002.

Though the related decision of non-prosecution was not even notified to the family, the case was closed. Right afterwards, the family appealed to the Ardahan Heavy Penal Court and demanded the reversal of the

decision of non-prosecution. The court removed the decision.

On November 14, 2019, the Kars Chief Public Prosecutor's Office sent the file to the Penal Affairs Directorate of the Justice Ministry with the request for its "reversal for the sake of law" and demanded that the ruling of the Ardahan Heavy Penal Court reversing the decision of non-prosecution by the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office in 2002 be reversed.

The Justice Ministry appealed to the Court of Cassation on February 25, 2020 and requested "the reversal for the sake of law" due to the expiry of statutory limitations. The 8th Penal Chamber of the Court of Cassation has reversed the decision as requested by the Ministry and closed the file of the enforced disappearance of Cemil Kırbayır. (RT/SD)

Kirkuk Minute May 13, 2021

Kirkuk

On Friday, May 7, Iranian-backed militias held an anti-US rally in Kirkuk city for the second time in four months. The rally was sponsored by several armed groups within the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) including Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Badr Brigade, and Iraq's Hezbollah. During the rally in the Taseen neighborhood, the militants burned both US and Israeli flags on the streets. The Iranian-backed militants became powerful in the disputed territories after October 16, 2017.

A Kurdish candidate to the Iraqi Parliament of the Islamic Movement named Hassan Shiekhani was threatened with death if he would not withdraw his candidacy. The death threat was anonymous in a letter hung on his front door. Iraq is set to hold parliamentary elections on October 10, 2021. Kirkuk is divided into three electoral districts.

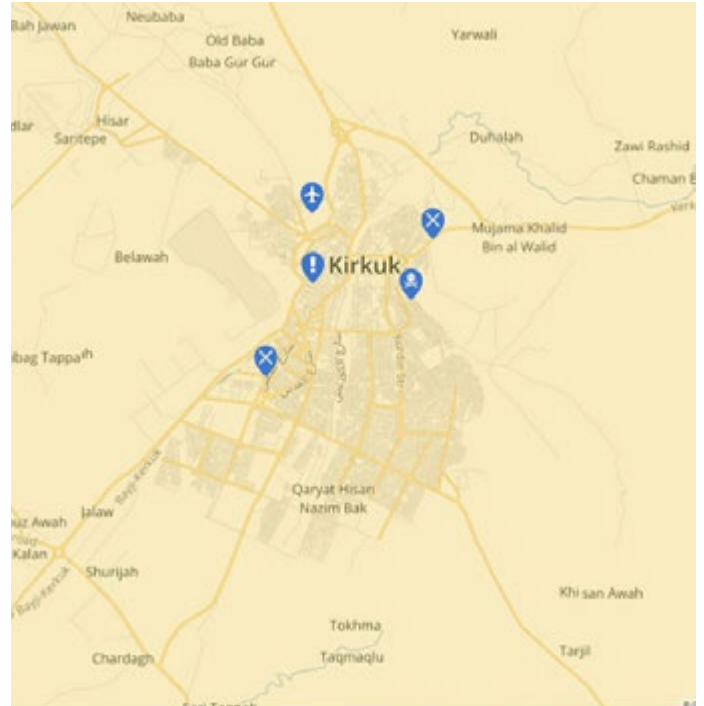
After three days of joining, the Turkmen Front withdrew from the National Progress Alliance election list headed by the Sunni politician and current Speaker of the Parliament Mohamed al Halbousi. According to a political observer in Kirkuk, the Turkmen Front withdrawal has come after pressure from Turkey, the main backer of the group, due to al Halbousi's regional ties with the Arab gulf states such as Saudi and the UAE. Over the past two weeks, ISIS (Da'esh) terrorists launched daily attacks in Kirkuk province in multi-axes including in Daquq and Hawija districts. Da'esh repeated at-

tacks on the oil fields for the second time in a month including blowing up two more oil fields (No. 177 and 183) of the Bai Hassan oil fields on Wednesday, May 5. On Saturday, May 8 the North Oil Company (NOC) extinguished the fire of the oil well No 183, producing about 1,200 oil barrels per day while the fire on well No. 177 was controlled the next day of the attack.

On Sunday, May 9, the security forces announced the arrest of three brothers affiliated with Da'esh and responsible for logistics and arms, near Daquq district.

Due to the province's security issues, Iraqi Interior Minister Othman al-Ghanmi visited Kirkuk province on Monday. Al-Ghanmi held meetings with security officials of Kirkuk. Since October 16, 2017, when the Iraqi forces and Iranian-backed militias removed the Kurdish forces and from the region, the federal and local police have suffered significant casualties in the disputed territories by Da'esh, especially in Kirkuk's Hawija district. Al-Ghanmi's Kirkuk visit is the third since he assumed office and the second since February. Furthermore, Sa'ad al Halfiy, Iraqi lawmakers, and Defense Committee member warned of "security issue" in Kirkuk before elections by Da'esh.

The Police Department to Combat Narcotics and psychotropic substances busted a drug gang consisting of five members and possessing 15 kilos of crystal meth in Kirkuk



city. Since October 16, 2017, Kirkuk has become one of the main drug traffics in the country for drug trade brought from Iran.

Tuz Khurmatu

On Tuesday, May 11, Dae'sh attacks on Peshmerga positions between Tuz Khurmatu and Kifri resulted in the death of one Peshmerga who suffered severe injuries. The terrorists used sniper rifles near Balaga village where Pehsmera's 116 Soran division is stationed.

Khanaqin

39 Candidates are running for the parliamentary elections in Khanaqin. The Independent High Electoral Commission announced that three seats are allocated for Khanaqin including one quota for women. Khanaqin has 205,557 eligible voters and

the 39 candidates consist of several independent candidates.

Makhmour

Iraq's Security Media Cell announced that Da'esh attacked the security forces seven times from May 5 to May 11, as a result, three soldiers were killed and six were wounded.

Shingal

Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plaschaert called for the full implementation of the security agreement over Shingal (Sinjar) between Baghdad and Erbil. The agreement signed by Baghdad and Erbil in December of 2020, calls for joint security coordination but it remains unimplemented due to the presence of victory of security forces.

Kurdistan au féminin 14 Mai 2021

La Turquie installe des djihadistes étrangers à Afrin avec les financements européens et des pays du Golfe

Le porte-parole de l'ONG des droits humains Afrin-Syrie, Ibrahim Sheikho a déclaré que depuis l'occupation d'Afrin, le changement démographique a été entrepris en plein essor et publiquement et continuellement à tous les niveaux par l'occupation turque et ses mercenaires.

Il a ajouté : « Cela se fait sous les noms de l'humanitaire et du secours, avec des fonds [venus] du Golfe et d'Europe, y compris de l'Allemagne. »

Sheikho a noté : « L'occupation turque accélère la réinstallation des familles turkmènes le long de la frontière avec la Turquie, où elles ont été amenées de différentes régions syriennes.

L'occupation turque pousse les mercenaires du Turkestan, des Ouïghours et ouzbeks à des lignes de contact dans le district de Sherawa. »

Concernant la présence des jihadistes à Afrin, Sheikho a déclaré : « L'occupation turque a amené



SYRIE / ROJAVA – Les financements des pays du Golfe et d'Europe accordés à la Turquie au nom de l'aide humanitaire ou de secours sont utilisés pour construire des logements pour des jihadistes installés dans le canton kurde d'Afrin et le recrutement de mercenaires ouïghours, ouzbeks et turkestans, à déclaré Ibrahim Sheikho, porte-parole de l'ONG des droits humains Afrin-Syrie.

des centaines de mercenaires de Jabhet Al-Nusra et de l'Etat islamique d'origine Turkestan, Ouïghoure et ouzbèke, et les a déployés le long des lignes de contact. dans les villages du district de Sherawa.

Le déploiement d'unités spéciales de mercenaires du Turkestan, ouïghour et ouzbeks est supervisé par des mercenaires

Faylaq Al-Sham, dirigés par le chef des mercenaires Abdullah Halawa, qui a récemment fait défection des mercenaires d'Al-Hamzat.

Dans la prochaine étape, des mercenaires djihadistes seront déployés dans les villages du district de Janders à Afrin occupé. »

Sheikho a souligné que « la plupart de ces éléments viennent du gouvernorat d'Idlib et que le but est d'isoler la ville d'Afrin du reste des autres régions syriennes, et de l'encercler par des factions djihadistes classées sur la réglementation internationale du terrorisme.

L'occupation turque coupe l'eau qui irrigue la ville d'Afrin, qu'elle soit potable ou d'irrigation, venant du barrage de Maidanaki, dans le district de Shera. »

Sheikho a confirmé que l'occupation turque modifiait le cours de l'eau du barrage et en détournait la majeure partie vers la ville syrienne d'Azaz occupée par la Turquie.

Le porte-parole de l'Organisation des droits de l'homme Afrin-Syrie Ibrahim Sheikho a conclu que L'État d'occupation turc continue à changer la démographie de la région et les crimes contre les habitants d'Afrin jusqu'à ce que le dernier citoyen soit déplacé d'Afrin et que les Turkmènes soient installés à leur place.



Mai 14, 2021
By Karwan Faidhi Dri

Three arrested in connection with attack on Erbil family in Turkey: officials

Turkish authorities have arrested three people in connection with what has been described as a racist attack on a Kurdish family from Erbil in Turkey's southern province of Mersin this week. The incident drew outrage on Kurdish social media and has been condemned by Erbil and Baghdad.

Mushtaq Mahmoud and his family were traveling in Turkey's province of Mersin on Thursday, the first day of the Eid al-Fitr holiday that marks the end of Ramadan. On the road to Antalya, a black Honda Civic vehicle blocked their way, according to an eyewitness, Cihan Kutluk, who spoke to Rudaw.

In his statement to police, Mahmoud said it began with a car accident between him in his Jeep and the Honda. "They and I came out of our cars. I wanted to see what damage [the accident] had caused."

According to the witness, three men exited the Honda and began

attacking Mahmoud and his family, who were still in car Jeep. The men beat Mahmoud and his 12-year-old son, hitting them with large rocks, according to Kutluk, who was passing by and later took the family to a police station and hospital.

During the attack, the men cursed

Kurds, told the family that they should not have visited the country, flashed the gray wolf hand sign commonly used by Turkish nationalists, and threateningly told bystanders not to report to the police, according to Kutluk.

Mahmoud said he does not remember everything that happened, he sustained a head injury, but he recalled one of the attackers saying he should not visit Turkey.

The chairman of the bar association in the Kurdish-majority city of Diyarbakir, Nahit Eren, went to Mersin after hearing about the attack to help the family pursue a court case.

"Those who attacked were speaking in Turkish... and they were willing to kill him by hitting his head with stones," Eren told Rudaw on Friday after speaking with the victims. He believes the attackers identified the family as Kurds because of the Erbil license plate on their Jeep.

Footage submitted to Rudaw by the eyewitness shows Mahmoud's wife crying over her husband who was lying in the road and bleeding. The video went viral on Kurdish social media.

"What have we done to you so that you can oppress us like this?"

Is our crime the fact that we were born Kurdish? Are you strong enough [to fight] us? If you can, then you shall fight with God who created us as Kurds," tweeted Kurdish writer and politician Ilhami Isik.

The family is in good condition and will be discharged from hospital soon, according to Eren.

Safeen Dizayee, head of the foreign affairs department at the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), said the government condemns the attack and has conveyed its protest to Turkey's consulate general in Erbil.

"We condemn the attack strongly. They are our families and have the right to go there. The fact that they spend money there is good for the economy of the country. Our economic relations with Turkey are very good," Dizayee told Rudaw.

Many Kurds from the Kurdistan Region holiday and do business in Turkey. Erbil and Ankara enjoy good economic relations, with the Kurdistan Region exporting oil to international markets through its northern neighbour and Duhok's Ibrahim Khalil border crossing connecting Turkey to Iraq.

Mersin's governor said the incident began with a "traffic accident" and that the facts have been "distorted" on social media.



Mushtaq Mahmoud and his family in hospital in Turkey on May 14, 2021. Photo: Human Rights Foundation (IHD)

"After the accident, a verbal dispute erupted between the parties, leading to a fight in which the Iraqi citizen and vehicle driver was beaten by people from the other vehicle," reads a statement from the governor's office, confirming that three people have been detained.

"The Iraqi person and his family are our guests," adds the statement, expressing "great concern" about their injuries.

Erbil Governor Omed Koshnaw condemned the attack and spoke with the family on the phone, "assuring them that we will be in contact with the relevant authorities for the arrest and punishment of the perpetrators," reads a statement from his office on Friday.

The head of the Iraqi parliament's foreign relations committee, Sherko Mirwais, also issued a statement condemning the "racist assault and attempted murder" and called on Turkey to open an investigation and punish the perpetrators.

The pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in Turkey also condemned the attack, saying "our people are not alone. We are struggling with this mentality everywhere."

This is not the first time that Kurds from the Kurdistan Region have been attacked in Turkey. A group of tourists were beaten in Trabzon province in July last year for taking photographs with the flag of Kurdistan Region. Nine people were detained but quickly released. According to Dizayee, the case was dropped by the police because the tourists did not file a complaint.

Kurdistan au féminin

17 Mai 2021

L'Iran a exécuté un jeune Kurde à Ilam

Le régime iranien a exécuté Jamal Mohammadi dans la ville kurde d'Ilam. Jamal Mohammadi, 22 ans, était accusé d'avoir assassiné un de ses officiers supérieurs qui le harcelait lors de son service militaire obligatoire il y a deux ans.

Une source bien informée a déclaré à : « Jamal Mohammadi servait dans la sixième caserne du CGRI (Corps des gardiens de la révolution islamique) située entre Ilam et Kermanshah et

avait déjà purgé 19 mois. Il y a environ un an et neuf mois, son commandant l'avait brutalisé et Jamal avait tué le commandant lors d'une dispute verbale. Sa famille avait emmené des chefs de la communauté pour demander le pardon à la famille de la victime, mais la famille l'a refusé. »

De nombreux rapports ont fait état de mauvais traitements infligés aux soldats pendant le service militaire, la société civile et les militants exigeant la sup-

pression du service militaire obligatoire.

Selon le rapport annuel de l'Iran Human Rights sur la peine de mort, au moins 211 des 267 personnes exécutées en 2020 ont été condamnées à des qisas* (représailles en nature) pour «meurtre prémédité».

Étant donné qu'aucune distinction juridique n'est faite entre le meurtre et l'homicide involontaire, qu'il soit prémédité ou pas en Iran, les personnes in-

culpées sous le terme générique de «meurtre avec préméditation» recevront la peine de mort indépendamment de leur intention et des circonstances. (Via le site Iran Human Rights)

*Qisas ou Qişās est un terme islamique interprété comme signifiant «représailles en nature», «œil pour œil» ou justice rétributive. Dans la loi islamique traditionnelle, la doctrine des qisas prévoit une peine analogue au crime.

« Sur la route des hommes sans nom » et les Kurdes

Automne 1991, Bernard-Henri Lévy se rend au Kurdistan d'Irak pour la première fois. Il arrive à Zakho, découvre une ville-fantôme tremblant sous un nuage de mort, rallie Mossoul, rencontre des Peshmergas. Sa conviction en sort renforcée que la guerre contre Saddam Hussein est un incontournable, tant le dictateur mène une guerre d'extermination contre son propre peuple. De Mossoul, Lévy se rend au camp de Cukurca, à travers les montagnes légendaires du Kurdistan, que le peuple kurde tient pour ses seuls vrais soutiens. Il arrive à l'aube. Tout n'y est que misère. Les réfugiés appartiennent pour beaucoup à l'intelligentsia kurde, hommes d'affaires, responsables politiques, membres de l'élite sociale. Tous, dans leur exode, ont emporté qui une radio, qui quelques livres. Leur dignité, leur fierté sont impressionnantes. Lévy va se faire l'avocat, par-delà l'intervention humanitaire des Alliés baptisée « Provide Comfort », d'une intervention qu'il baptise « Provide Democracy », qui assurerait la liberté et la protection des lois au noble peuple kurde.

Trente ans plus tard, les Kurdes s'accrochent toujours à leur rêve d'un Etat kurde. Le plaidoyer de Lévy en faveur de leur cause n'a pas varié d'un pouce. Il y a sept ans, se tenant main dans la main avec les Kurdes à l'un des pires moments de leur histoire, alors que Daech menaçait Erbil, il s'enrôle chez les Peshmergas aux côtés du général Sirwan Barzani, commandant du Secteur 6 qui protège la ca-

pitale du Kurdistan et tient la principale ligne de front face aux terroristes du Califat. Trois ans plus tard, à peine ces derniers vaincus, de nouveau les Kurdes se voient abandonnés en rase campagne, cette fois au lendemain du référendum de septembre 2017 sur l'indépendance du Kurdistan, tandis que la communauté internationale assiste impassible au pillage de Kirkouk par les milices iraniennes appuyées par les tanks Abrams livrés par l'Amérique à l'armée irakienne, et qu'Erdogan envahit Afrin et s'emploie – jusqu'à aujourd'hui – à nettoyer le Rojava syrien de sa population kurde.

L'engagement de Lévy au côté des Kurdes est aussi inébranlable que son activisme en faveur d'autres peuples tout aussi oubliés. Les lecteurs peuvent mesurer son parcours cinquantenaire, découvrir les sources anciennes de sa compassion militante, dans un livre publié aux Editions Grasset, intitulé *Sur la route des hommes sans nom*. Lévy y détaille les origines de ses convictions en tant qu'intellectuel engagé et ses actions sur les terrains où il n'a cessé de s'investir. Il détaille les urgences auxquelles il a tenté de répondre face à l'injustice, pourquoi il s'est senti requis sur près de cinquante ans de faire connaître la situation de peuples sous la contrainte au reste du monde. Lévy explique comment une voix intérieure, une sorte de commandement réflexe le pousse à s'élever et à agir face aux désastres humanitaires.



Près d'Erbil, le commandant Sirwan Barzani découvre la liste des soutiens du comité Justice for Kurds, la ONG co-fondée par Bernard-Henri Lévy.

Ce livre reprend ses reportages en 2020 publiés dans *Paris Match*, *the Wall Street Journal*, *La Repubblica*, *Der Stern* et de nombreux journaux européens. Tout au long de cette année étrange où le monde s'était replié sur lui-même, fermant les yeux sur tout ce qui n'était pas lié à la pandémie, Lévy a gardé les yeux ouverts. Il s'est rendu au Nigeria, en Afghanistan, en Libye, en Ukraine, en Somalie, dans le camp de Moria sur l'île de Lesbos en Grèce, au Bangladesh, au Kurdistan, ces anus mundi confrontés à la misère, au terrorisme, à la guerre, aux massacres. Il a arpenté les charniers, les champs de bataille, les camps de réfugiés, dans les coins les plus sombres de la planète.

Trente ans ont passé depuis l'Opération «Provide Comfort» et le premier voyage de Lévy au Kurdistan, trente ans durant lesquels le Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan a développé des institutions indépendantes et des infrastruc-

tures qui ont permis au pays de prospérer économiquement et de fortifier la démocratie, où règnent l'égalité entre les sexes, la liberté religieuse et la tolérance entre les confessions, tandis qu'il accueillait plus d'un million de réfugiés fuyant la guerre et les persécutions. Le Kurdistan fait figure de refuge sûr, dans un Proche-Orient en proie à l'instabilité et l'insécurité généralisées. Ces accomplissements n'ont pas été sans mal et, bien que les Kurdes aient été à plusieurs reprises abandonnés à eux-mêmes, ils ont gagné ces durs combats et établi les fondements de leur future nation. Une chose est sûre. En plus de leurs chères montagnes, les Kurdes ont eu un ami loyal et un avocat constant en Bernard-Henri Lévy. Son livre témoigne de son attachement indéfectible aux Kurdes, non moins que de sa dédicace aux peuples en déshérence aux portes de la liberté.

Traduit de l'anglais par Gilles Hertzog.

Un chef militaire kurde syrien tué lors d'une opération turque, annonce Erdogan

Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a annoncé lundi 17 mai qu'un haut responsable militaire kurde syrien avait été tué lors d'une opération des services de renseignement turcs en Irak.

L'armée turque a lancé en avril dans le nord de l'Irak une nouvelle offensive terrestre et aérienne contre des bases de séparatistes kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), une organisation considérée comme terroriste par la Turquie et ses alliés occidentaux.

Selon Recep Tayyip Erdogan, le haut responsable kurde tué, connu par le nom de guerre de

Sofi Nurettin, était le commandant militaire du PKK en Syrie. «Ce terroriste, qui a commis de nombreux actes sanglants, est aussi responsable de nombreuses attaques contre nos militaires», a déclaré Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

La Turquie avait accusé en février le PKK d'avoir exécuté 13 de ses ressortissants, membres des forces de sécurité pour la plupart, qu'il retenait en captivité dans le nord de l'Irak depuis plusieurs années. Selon le chef de l'Etat turc, Sofi Nurettin ferait partie des commanditaires de l'exécution de ces 13 personnes.

La Turquie procède régulière-



Le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. MURAT CETİNMUHURDAR / PPO / REUTERS

ment à des attaques dans les zones montagneuses du nord de l'Irak contre les bases arrière du PKK, qui livre depuis 1984 une sanglante guérilla sur le sol turc qui a fait plus de 40.000 morts. Ces raids susci-

tent des tensions avec le gouvernement irakien, mais Recep Tayyip Erdogan répète que son pays entend «s'occuper» du PKK dans ces régions si Bagdad n'est «pas en mesure de le faire».

Sirwan Barzani : « Au Kurdistan irakien, Daech cherche à se venger »

Le puissant patron des peshmergas lance un appel à la communauté internationale pour l'alerter sur la résurgence de Daech ces derniers mois.

Sirwan Barzani est l'un des hommes les plus puissants du Kurdistan. Neveu de l'ancien président du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan irakien et cousin germain de l'actuel Premier ministre, cet homme d'affaires est aussi le ministre des peshmergas, les forces militaires du Kurdistan irakien. S'il est discret sur le grave conflit

financier qui l'oppose depuis plusieurs années à Orange (le groupe français de télécoms l'accuse de l'avoir spolié et lui réclame en justice plusieurs millions d'euros de dédommagement) et à plusieurs investisseurs internationaux, Sirwan Barzani soigne ses rapports avec la communauté internationale au nom de la lutte contre Daech. Se définissant comme un bouclier anti-djihadiste, celui qui n'aime rien tant que se montrer au côté des forces spéciales françaises et américaines présentes sur le terrain presse l'Occident de ne

pas baisser la garde contre Daech et ses cellules encore en activité dans la région.

Le Point : Il y a quelques jours, des roquettes Katioucha ont visé le secteur d'un aéroport militaire kurde où sont stationnées des forces américaines.

Que s'est-il passé ?

Il n'y a eu que quelques dégâts matériels. C'est une chance. Mais ce genre d'agression est fréquent. Il y a quelques semaines, un drone a attaqué des soldats américains. Cela

prouve que Daech a toujours des moyens et que les djihadistes sortent de leurs refuges et des villages dans lesquels ils sont cachés. Il y a des attentats à Bagdad ou dans d'autres villes irakiennes. Cette guerre ne s'est pas terminée avec la chute de Mossoul. Les djihadistes sont trop faibles pour entreprendre une véritable offensive comme en 2014. Mais ils ont les moyens de créer de l'instabilité et de l'insécurité par leur harcèlement constant. Rien qu'en 2019, nous avons subi 400 attaques de Daech. Les choses sont claires :

Daech cherche à prendre sa revanche ! Et, si nous ne sommes pas vigilants, les djihadistes reconstitueront leurs forces.

Pourtant, la récente visite du pape à Mossoul, Erbil ou Bagdad s'est passée sans heurts...

Mais, justement, tout le monde était mobilisé pour qu'il n'y ait aucun incident. Les forces de sécurité étaient en alerte maximum. Et pas seulement irakiennes. Un confinement généralisé de la population ainsi qu'un couvre-feu avaient été décrétés. Et Daech n'avait sans doute ni les moyens d'organiser une opération d'envergure ni l'objectif de troubler cette visite. Leur but, c'est d'abord de créer la terreur contre les populations civiles. Il suffit de se promener dans les camps de réfugiés du Kurdistan qui accueillent des milliers de civils qui ont fui Daech. Ils ne veulent pas rentrer chez eux, ils ont peur. Daech reste présent et ils se sentent en sécurité au Kurdistan mais redoutent de rentrer à Mossoul.

Pourquoi ?

La situation au Kurdistan est beaucoup plus calme que dans le reste de l'Irak. Nous savons ce que c'est que d'être une minorité et c'est un devoir pour nous de protéger les autres mi-



Sirwan Barzani, le puissant patron des peshmergas. © BERTRAND GUAY / AFP

norités, les yézidis, les chrétiens. C'est notre devoir. Mais nous ne pouvons pas les aider seuls. La communauté internationale a des responsabilités et nous avons besoin de la coalition internationale. C'est d'ailleurs son intérêt : nous sommes un bouclier contre Daech qui n'a pas de frontières, les Français sont bien placés pour le savoir.

Vos relations avec Bagdad ces dernières années ont été particulièrement tendues. Le Kurdistan a pris la ville de Kirkouk et a organisé un référendum pour l'indépendance en 2017.

Où en êtes-vous ?

Pour Kirkouk, les choses sont claires : si nous n'avions pas été là en 2014, la ville tombait

aux mains de Daech. Elle est à nouveau dans le giron de Bagdad. Pour le référendum, les leaders du Kurdistan ont répondu à une demande de la population. Bagdad ne versait plus la quote-part du budget qui nous revenait. Nous ne pouvions plus rester dans cette situation bloquée. Mais, aujourd'hui, la situation est stabilisée. Nos relations avec Bagdad sont cordiales et pacifiées. Nous avons réglé beaucoup de nos différends.

La France est notre alliée de toujours.

Contrairement aux Kurdes de Syrie qui souffrent des offensives de la Turquie, le Kurdistan irakien entretient de bonnes relations avec Ankara.

Comment justifiez-vous cette bonne entente ?

La Turquie est notre voisin immédiat et nous entretenons de bonnes relations commerciales et pacifiques. Le souci, c'est la présence du PKK qui agresse la Turquie, ce qui nous pose de véritables problèmes. Il faut comprendre que les actions du PKK donnent des arguments à la Turquie et menacent les populations civiles au Kurdistan irakien, qui redoutent des actions militaires. Le PKK ne peut nous utiliser comme base arrière. Ce qui se passe en Syrie est différent : nous avons beaucoup de respect pour les Kurdes en Syrie, qui ont lutté avec noblesse contre Daech. Mais c'est un autre pays.

Et quelles sont vos relations avec la France qui est en conflit ouvert avec Recep Tayyip Erdogan ? Et avec les États-Unis post-Trump ?

Je sais que le président Macron et le président turc ne s'entendent pas. Ces conflits sont dommageables. C'est mauvais pour la région, qui n'a pas besoin de ça. La France est notre alliée de toujours. Pour les États-Unis, nous avons la chance que Joe Biden connaisse la région. Quand il était sénateur, il est venu au Kurdistan et connaît les défis de la région.



May 19, 2021

UN envoy urges Kurdistan Region to move ahead with Peshmerga unification

The head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) on Wednesday urged the political leadership of the Kurdistan Region to implement a program of unification and reform of its Peshmerga forces, long divided between units affiliated to the

autonomous region's two main political parties.

Actions speak louder than words," said Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert in her speech given before the University of Kurdistan Hewler (Erbil). "Beautiful declarations and speeches have

their place, but at the end of the day it is all about getting things done."

Unifying the forces has been a key concern for the Peshmerga ministry over the past decade as most fighters are aligned and under the direct command

of one of the two leading Kurdish parties: the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

"The Peshmerga Vision 2025 is one of the best and most concrete examples," said Hennis-Plasschaert, referring to a

plan aimed at integrating the forces. "It sparks the imagination. The Kurdistan Region should not remain divided between 'green' and 'yellow.' Or any other colour definitions for that matter."

The color green, in this case, refers to the PUK and yellow to the KDP, based on the parties' flags.

"It is high time for genuine reconciliation, for political stability to prevail," she stressed.

The Netherlands, the US, the UK, and Germany – leading members of the Coalition to Defeat ISIS – are all supporting the project to bring the Kurdistan Region's Peshmerga forces under a unified and non-political command.

UK Colonel Charles Sykes, the Special Defense Advisor for the Peshmerga ministry, told Kurdistan 24 that he was "absolutely delighted" to hear the senior UN representative in Iraq mention Peshmerga reform in her speech. "I think Peshmerga reform is

all about compromise and we have a lot of senior meetings at the moment as Coalition advisors on behalf of the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs with senior decision makers from both KDP and PUK to try encourage a vision for the future unified Peshmerga."

He underlined that the Peshmerga Vision 2025 is an "evolving idea that we have had with the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs to describe a vision of the Peshmerga force of the future that's a unified, effective, modern and respected Peshmerga that has helped establish a secure and stable Kurdistan Region of Iraq for the future."

In March, Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Masrour Barzani signed an executive order to approve the reassignment of the First Support Brigade of the KDP's 80th Unit forces to be put under the command of the ministry.

"The reason that the 1st support command is so important is that this is where the majority of heavy weapons of the 80th



A Peshmerga fighter stands on guard next to the flag of Kurdistan. (Photo: Archive)

are held, as well the logistics," he added about the force that employs the use of heavy weapons such as tanks and artillery.

Sykes added that he was having similar discussions with the PUK to bring a comparable force, the PUK's 70th Unit, "to be assigned under the ministry of Peshmerga affairs" as well. However, he added, such negotiations are "ongoing."

Col. Jan ten Hove, Military Advisor for the Dutch Consulate in Erbil and member of the multi-national advisory group

with the US, UK, and Germany, told Kurdistan 24 that he was very pleased to hear Hennis-Plasschaert call attention to efforts to integrate the Kurdish forces.

The Peshmerga reform is going on for a couple of years now, so if we can make some extra steps to keep the momentum, both the British, myself, and of course the US and Germany, will stay positive and optimistic," he concluded.

"Hopefully we can accelerate in the coming months, making some big steps for Peshmerga reform."



May 19, 2021

European Parliament calls on EU to add Grey Wolves to terrorist list

The European Parliament has called on the European Union to add the Grey Wolves, a Turkish far-right organization, to its terrorist list, in a move that's expected to further sour relations between the bloc and Turkey.

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In the report prepared by Nacho Sanchez Amor, the European Parliament's rapporteur on Turkey, the EU

Parliament voiced concerns over the racist and far-right group, which it said is expanding at worrying levels not only in Turkey, but also in EU countries.

Stressing that the group is tied to the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), the gov-

ernment's alliance partner, the report called for an investigation to be launched for its activities to be banned in the EU.

The Grey Wolves pose a threat for all of the groups it perceives as their opponent, mainly Kurds, Armenians and those of Greek origin, the re-

port said, adding that the group's activities must be monitored closely.

The Grey Wolves organization is regarded as the armed wing of the MHP and during the 1970s and 1980s, it committed acts of violence on the streets of Turkey, when its members often clashed with political opponents.

For decades, the Grey Wolves have become established in several European countries, creating networks of thousands of people and developing a strong influence in the various Turkish communities across Europe.

France in November of last year officially banned the group for inciting discrimination and hatred and being involved in violent actions. Its decision came after members of the group defaced an Armenian genocide monument and organized "Hunt for Armenians" marches in the country. Other European countries have also considered banning the group.

Speaking about the report that's likely to further sour re-



This file photo shows a MHP congress.

lations between Ankara and the EU, Amor said that it's the toughest one ever on the situation in Turkey.

"This is the toughest parliamentary report ever on the situation in the country and a reflection of the serious and continued backsliding in the

areas of the rule of law and human rights in Turkey in the last two years," Amor said.

"The report sends clear messages to both Turkey and the other EU institutions and member states: Without urgent progress in the human rights and the rule of law situ-

ation in Turkey, there can be no improvement in EU-Turkey relations."

The European People's Party (EPP) Group, the largest in the House, has said that it believes accession talks with Turkey must be "formally suspended if the current negative trend is not urgently and consistently reversed."

"As long as President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan continues to provoke the EU and its member-states, violates the territorial integrity of Greece and Cyprus and veers Turkey away from European standards, from the rule of law and fundamental human rights, there is no perspective for improved relations," an EPP spokesman was quoted by The Parliament Magazine as saying.

Le Monde

20 mai 2021
Par Christophe Ayad

Militantes kurdes tuées en 2013 à Paris : le poids du secret-défense pèse sur l'enquête

L'enquête sur l'assassinat de trois militantes kurdes, dans la nuit du 9 au 10 janvier 2013 à Paris, va-t-elle de nouveau achopper sur le secret-défense ? C'est la question que devraient poser les familles des trois victimes qui doivent être reçues, jeudi 20 mai, à Paris, par le juge d'instruction antiterroriste chargé de l'enquête sur cette affaire qui continue d'empoisonner les relations franco-turques.

Ces assassinats sont exceptionnels à plusieurs titres. D'abord par leur violence, qui s'apparente à un « contrat » exécuté en plein centre de Paris, rue La Fayette : chaque femme a reçu plusieurs balles dans la tête et l'une d'entre elles, Fidan Dogan, chargée de la communication en Europe du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit en Turquie), une

balle dans la bouche. Ensuite à cause de l'importance des victimes : Fidan Dogan, 30 ans, surnommée « la Diplomate » parce qu'elle connaissait tout l'établissement politique français et européen ; Leyla Saylemez, 25 ans, qui encadrait le mouvement de jeunesse du parti ; et, enfin, Sakine Cansiz, 54 ans, fondatrice du mouvement et amie personnelle de son chef incontesté, Abdullah Öcalan.

Dernière particularité : l'auteur présumé de ces assassinats a été identifié et mis en examen. Renvoyé devant la cour d'assises spéciale de Paris, Omer Güney est mort en détention d'une tumeur cérébrale, le 17 décembre 2016, avant son procès. Normalement, la procédure aurait dû s'éteindre avec lui, mais les avocats des parties civiles, forts du fait que la première juge d'instruction, Mme



Hommage, le 17 janvier 2013, à Paris, aux trois activistes du PKK tuées en pleine rue. CHRISTOPHE PETIT TESSON POUR " LE MONDE"

Jeanne Duyé, n'avait pas rendu d'avis de non-lieu pour les complices et coauteurs – regroupés sous le terme X – dans son ordonnance de mise en accusation de Güney, l'ont relancée auprès du président de la cour d'assises spéciale.

Nouveaux éléments en Belgique

Ils ont déposé, en mars 2018, une seconde plainte, avec constitution de partie civile, qui a donné lieu, le 14 mai 2019, à l'ouverture d'une information judiciaire. La plainte

reprend de nombreux éléments de l'instruction de la juge Duyé accréditant l'hypothèse selon laquelle Omer Güney était missionné par les services secrets turcs, le MIT. Güney, qui exerçait les fonctions de chauffeur pour Sakine Cansiz, s'était rapproché du mouvement kurde assez récemment, prétendant être à la recherche de ses origines kurdes. Cet homme, qui semblait en fait appartenir à la mouvance ultranationaliste des Loups gris, a mené une véritable opération d'infiltration du PKK à Paris. Les parties civiles soupçonnent le MIT d'avoir choisi Güney parce qu'il savait que son espérance de vie était très faible, du fait de sa maladie. Toujours dans le dossier de procédure figurait un l'enregistrement d'une conversation audio entre trois hommes, dont l'un a été identifié comme Güney : plusieurs projets d'assassinats en Europe sont explicitement évoqués. Cet enregistrement en turc a été mis en ligne sur Internet, en janvier 2014, par une source anonyme en Turquie en pleine « guerre de l'ombre » entre l'actuel président islamiste Erdogan – à l'époque premier ministre – et ses anciens alliés gülenistes, très introduits dans l'appareil d'Etat et engagés, à l'époque, dans un combat fratricide.

Une autre fuite, cette fois-ci un « ordre de mission » du MIT mentionnant le projet d'assassinat, était publiée à la même époque

dans la presse turque. Chose rare, l'une des signatures de ce document a été authentifiée par les services secrets allemands. C'est à cette époque aussi que Güney demande à un ami venu d'Allemagne de le voir au parloir de sa prison et de se mettre en rapport avec le MIT en vue d'une évasion. Dans son téléphone, qu'il avait réussi à cacher aux enquêteurs et à emmener en prison, ces derniers trouvent, après la clôture de la première instruction, le numéro de la direction du MIT.

Mais c'est surtout du côté de la Belgique que des éléments nouveaux viennent étayer l'appartenance d'Omer Güney à un réseau organisé para-étatique. En juin 2017, trois agents turcs présumés sont appréhendés à bord d'une Mercedes immatriculée en France alors qu'ils se livrent à des activités de surveillance des locaux du Congrès du peuple du Kurdistan (dit Kongra-GEL), à Bruxelles. La Belgique est le QG en Europe de la branche politique du PKK, dont plusieurs hauts responsables – Zubeyir Aydar, président du Kongra-GEL, et son coprésident, Remzi Kartal – ont reçu des menaces de mort anonymes. Or, l'un des membres du commando, Zekeriya Çelikbilek, un ex-militaire résidant en France, à Argenteuil, se serait vanté auprès d'un autre membre du trio, Haci Akkulak, un Kurde de Belgique, qu'« il avait joué un rôle dans l'assassinat des

femmes kurdes », selon un document du juge belge, transmis à Paris.

L'ambassadeur, un ancien des services secrets turcs

Toujours selon le document judiciaire belge, Çelikbilek « aurait un lien avec Ismail Hakki Musa », l'ambassadeur de Turquie en poste à Paris de début 2017 au 14 mars 2021, désigné comme « coordinateur » des actions du trio. Les deux hommes apparaissent ensemble sur les réseaux sociaux de l'ex-militaire lors d'une réception à l'ambassade turque à Paris. Cela n'a rien d'une preuve, mais il se trouve que M. Musa a été numéro 2 du MIT de 2012 à 2016, au moment de l'assassinat des trois cadres du PKK à Paris. Il ne pouvait ignorer une opération comme celle menée à Paris en 2013 si elle a été commanditée par son service, comme l'ont affirmé deux agents du MIT arrêtés par le PKK, en Irak, en 2017, et détenus depuis par l'organisation kurde.

Tous ces éléments convergent vers une responsabilité des services turcs dans le triple assassinat de la rue La Fayette. Mais pour que l'enquête connaisse une avancée décisive, il faudrait que le juge d'instruction puisse accéder à des écoutes réalisées par les services français de diverses personnes impliquées de près ou de loin. Il a adressé deux demandes

complémentaires de levée du secret-défense aux ministères de la défense (DGSE et direction du renseignement militaire) et de l'intérieur (DGSI) sur les personnes citées dans l'enquête belge. La défense a refusé, l'intérieur n'a pas encore répondu. « Cette histoire de secret-défense est intolérable pour les familles, qui n'ont jamais été reçues par l'Etat français », déclare Me Jean-Louis Malterre, avocat des proches de Sakine Cansiz.

Autre piste éteinte : celle d'Ismail Hakki Musa, qui a quitté la France. Selon une source proche de l'enquête, « le départ de l'ambassadeur n'est pas étranger à l'enquête du juge. Il s'appropriait à le convoquer pour lui poser des questions ». La démarche n'aurait pas manqué d'aggraver les relations franco-turques très tendues ces derniers temps mais en cours d'apaisement depuis le début de l'année. Paris ne peut rompre avec Ankara, notamment à cause des djihadistes françaises que la Turquie détient chez elle. Il reste la piste belge : à Bruxelles, l'enquête a été clôturée et le parquet a transmis son réquisitoire final à la chambre du conseil, qui doit décider de la tenue d'un procès ou pas. Une audience complémentaire doit se tenir vendredi 21 mai. La décision sur un éventuel procès devrait être annoncée deux semaines plus tard.

Le Monde

20 mai 2021
Par Christophe Ayad

Le PKK à nouveau dans le viseur de la justice antiterroriste

En mars, une vaste opération menée par la DGSI a mené à l'arrestation de dix personnes, une première depuis 2013.

Cela n'était pas arrivé depuis début 2013, autant dire une éternité. Dix personnes, neuf hommes et une femme, ont été arrêtées et placées en garde à vue le 23 mars en une vaste opération antiterroriste

menée par la DGSI, principalement à Marseille. Ces dix arrestations ont été suivies, quatre jours plus tard par neuf mises en examen pour « financement terroriste » et « extorsion en bande organisée en relation avec une entreprise terroriste ». Seules deux personnes ont été laissées en liberté, sous surveillance électronique ou judiciaire. Ce coup de filet a été effectué sur demande

d'un juge antiterroriste, dans le cadre d'une information judiciaire portant sur des activités en lien avec le PKK, le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan. A l'exception d'une alerte en 2020 avec la mise en examen de quatre personnes dans le Sud-Ouest pour le même motif et un gel des avoirs visant deux personnalités kurdes en France en 2019, le PKK n'était plus inquiété en France depuis

2013 malgré sa désignation comme organisation terroriste sur la liste européenne.

Difficile de savoir si cette soudaine accalmie des poursuites judiciaires était due au remplacement de Nicolas Sarkozy par François Hollande à l'Elysée ou au départ d'un juge particulièrement hostile à la cause kurde de la galerie Saint-Eloi, qui abritait alors les bureaux des magistrats antiterroristes.

ristes au vieux palais de justice. Ou encore aux conséquences de l'assassinat, en janvier 2013 à Paris, de trois femmes haut placées du PKK.

Alliés contre l'EI

Entre 2006 et 2012, plus de 700 militants kurdes en France sont passés par une garde à vue, selon le décompte tenu par le Conseil démocratique kurde en France (CDKF). Alors que Nicolas Sarkozy fermait la porte de l'Union européenne à la Turquie, il donnait des gages à Ankara dans sa guerre contre le mouvement séparatiste kurde.

Mais l'émergence de la menace

constituée par l'organisation Etat islamique (EI) a tout changé. A partir de 2014, le mouvement kurde est devenu le principal allié au sol des Occidentaux dans leur guerre contre l'hydre djihadiste, rejoint par des milliers de ressortissants européens et français. Les forces armées du PYD, la branche syrienne du PKK – ou son organisation jumelle – ont combattu l'EI en première ligne, parfois avec l'aide directe des forces spéciales occidentales, jusqu'à la chute de Rakka, capitale syrienne du « califat » autoproclamé de l'EI, en octobre 2017, puis à celle de Baghouz, dernier bastion syrien de l'EI, en mars 2019.

« Etant donné les services que nous avons rendus, nous sommes étonnés d'être encore traités comme des terroristes, s'étonne Agit Polat, porte-parole du CDKF. Les autorités françaises savent très bien que le PKK est financé par la diaspora kurde. Ce n'est pas un scoop. » La position de la France est particulièrement inconfortable, coincée entre le PKK et Ankara qui se livrent une guerre féroce et obligée d'entretenir de bonnes relations avec les deux à cause de sa lutte contre le terrorisme djihadiste. Or, la Turquie comme le PKK détiennent des djihadistes français, par centaines pour les forces kurdes apparentées au PKK dans le nord-est de

la Syrie et en plus petit nombre côté turc.

Après des mois de tension avec la France en Libye et en Méditerranée orientale, le président turc Erdogan, qui avait beaucoup attisé la haine antifrançaise dans le monde musulman, est dans une phase d'apaisement avec Emmanuel Macron. Les deux hommes se sont parlé début mars, pour la première fois depuis six mois, et se sont engagés à coopérer dans la lutte contre le terrorisme. Ils n'ont pas précisé lequel.



21 Mai 2021

Révélations. Sedat Peker, le baron de la pègre qui fait trembler le pouvoir en Turquie

Après avoir été proche du pouvoir et fervent partisan du président Erdogan, Sedat Peker, célèbre mafieux turc, multiplie, depuis début mai, les révélations embarrassantes pour le pouvoir, plongeant l'establishment politique dans plusieurs scandales.

Viol, homicides, trafic international de cocaïne, trafic d'influence... Les accusations du célèbre parrain de la pègre Sedat Peker, en fuite à l'étranger, pleuvent depuis plusieurs semaines à l'encontre des députés du parti au pouvoir, l'AKP, d'anciens ministres ou de figures proches du pouvoir et dressent le portrait accablant d'un État failli, d'une police corrompue et d'une justice aux ordres.

Avant sa cavale, Sedat Peker, très connu en Turquie depuis les années 1990 et figure du crime organisé, connu pour son militantisme à l'extrême droite et spécialiste du racket et du trafic de drogue était



Sedat Peker, le 10 mars 2014, à Istanbul (Turquie). PHOTO / ISLAM YAKUT / ANADOLU AGENCY / ANADOLU AGENCY VIA AFP.

pourtant au faite de sa gloire et de sa puissance.

Devenu un fervent supporter du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan, il est photographié en sa compagnie et n'hésite pas à organiser des meetings politiques dans la ville natale du

président. Pourtant, il tombe rapidement en disgrâce. Il faut dire que le caïd a beaucoup d'ennemis, dont un autre nom célèbre du banditisme turc, Alaattin Çakici, emprisonné pour une série de meurtres (dont celui de sa femme) et libéré en avril 2020 à la de-

mande expresse et répétée du leader du parti d'extrême droite, le MHP, devenu l'allié indispensable du pouvoir d'Erdogan. Plus grave, il entretient des rapports conflictuels avec les frères Albayrak, dont l'un, Berat, est le gendre d'Erdogan et ancien ministre de l'Économie, et l'autre, Serhat, le patron de Turkuvaz Media, qui compte notamment le quotidien Sabah et l'influente chaîne de télévision A Haber, décrypte Ahmet Sik, ancien journaliste devenu député de la gauche radicale, dans les colonnes de T24. Le journaliste retrace :

Il y a deux ans, informé du dossier monté contre lui, Peker fuit d'abord dans les Balkans, d'où il publie une première vidéo dès mai 2020 dans laquelle il rend Berat Albayrak responsable de sa chute."

Puis le mafieux se fait un peu oublier, jusqu'au mois d'avril 2021.

"Opération contre l'organisa-

tion criminelle de Sedat Peker”, titre alors un article du quotidien Milliyet, le même journal qui avait pourtant organisé une cérémonie en son hommage en 2017, lui remettant le prix du meilleur entrepreneur et mécène de l’année. Cinquante-quatre de ses hommes de main sont arrêtés, les domiciles de sa femme et de ses filles sont perquisitionnés. C’est la goutte de trop pour le bandit qui, depuis début mai, publie des vidéos à charge sur les réseaux sociaux.

Le sceau du secret rompu

“Un trépied et une caméra, voilà ce qui causera votre chute !” promet alors le voyou, en s’adressant aux plus hauts responsables de l’État turc, rapporte notamment le média en ligne Medyascope, qui analyse le discours du mafioso truffé de références islamiques. “C’est une preuve très intéressante concernant les rapports de pouvoir en Turquie, le fossé entre l’idéologie et la pratique. Au-delà du

contenu même des révélations qu’il fait, ce qui est passionnant, c’est de voir le sceau du secret rompu par quelqu’un de l’intérieur du système. On voit des gens [accusés par Peker] qui parlent continuellement de ‘synthèse turco-islamique’, de ‘la parole du Dieu tout-puissant’ et puis qui se retrouvent mêlés à des trafics internationaux”, analyse le rédacteur en chef, Rusen Çakir. Et ses révélations pourraient coûter cher au caïd :

“Il affirme que la Turquie, pour obtenir son extradition, aurait même proposé de livrer des drones à certains pays. Après avoir quitté la Macédoine pour le Maroc, l’on apprend qu’il s’est enfui aux Émirats arabes unis [un des pays rivaux de la Turquie sur la scène régionale].”

Consultées des millions de fois chacune, distillées tous les quatre ou cinq jours, ses vidéos sont très suivies par l’opinion publique turque. “L’on

attend la prochaine vidéo YouTube de Sedat Peker comme l’on attendrait le prochain épisode Netflix de Narcos, la série sur le trafiquant colombien Pablo Escobar”, écrit un journaliste du quotidien Sözcü, qui interroge : la Turquie ne vivrait-elle pas un retour aux années 1990, où milices paramilitaires, criminalité organisée, réseaux d’extrême droite marchaient main dans la main avec les services de l’État ? Et de poser la question à Mehmet Eymür, ancien responsable du contre-terrorisme au sein du MIT, les services secrets turcs :

La situation actuelle est pire que dans les années 1990. À l’époque, on essayait quand même de faire notre travail, on était soutenus. Aujourd’hui, je constate que le procureur n’a ouvert aucune enquête sur les révélations qui sont faites, nous n’avons jamais atteint un tel niveau d’ignominie.”

Dernier visé par les révélations, Süleyman Soylu, le mi-

nistre de l’Intérieur, avec lequel Peker comptait s’arranger pour obtenir une possibilité de retour en Turquie. S’estimant trahi par celui qui, jadis, lui fournissait des policiers en guise de gardes du corps, Peker fulmine. “Je n’ai rien à voir avec cet individu, si quelqu’un prouve le contraire, je suis prêt à accepter toutes les sanctions, y compris la peine de mort”, déclarait en réponse le numéro 2 du pouvoir turc, rapporte le quotidien Evrensel.

Le 18 avril, Peker publiait sur Twitter ses conservations filmées avec le journaliste Hadi Özisik, ancien conseiller de Soylu, confirmant que lui et son frère servent d’intermédiaires entre le baron de la pègre et le ministre : “Je préviens tous ceux qui sont visés dans mes déclarations, ne démentez pas où vous serez ridiculisés à votre tour”, assène le mafieux vengeur.

Le Monde

21 mai 2021

Par Marie Jégo et Benoît Vitkine

Entre Vladimir Poutine et Recep Tayyip Erdogan, l’entente brutale

L’un est calculateur au sang froid, l’autre tribun exalté. Mais les présidents russe et turc ont en partage leur aversion pour l’Occident et leur soif de pouvoir. Héritiers d’empires rivaux, tous deux tirent aujourd’hui parti de leur relation.

Dans l’un des nombreux vestibules du Kremlin, la forteresse symbole du pouvoir russe, une délégation turque conduite par le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan attend d’être reçue par le maître des lieux, le président Vladimir Poutine. En ce jeudi 5 mars 2020, les Turcs sont nerveux. Huit jours plus tôt, 34 de leurs militaires ont été tués,

victimes d’une frappe aérienne dans la province d’Idlib, dernier fief de la rébellion contre Bachar Al-Assad dans le nord-ouest de la Syrie. La bombe – un engin à guidage laser – était russe ; elle a pulvérisé le bâtiment où les soldats s’étaient réfugiés, après un bombardement sur leur convoi. La tension entre Ankara, protecteur des rebelles syriens, et Moscou, principal allié de Damas, est à son comble.

Le malaise des hôtes turcs est palpable. Les visages sont crispés, les regards se portent machinalement sur les portraits qui ornent les murs, ceux des généraux tsaristes tom-

beurs de l’armée ottomane lors des multiples conflits qui ont opposé les deux empires. Las, Erdogan s’écroule sur une chaise. La délégation est enfin invitée à entrer dans la pièce où Vladimir Poutine reçoit. Le décor est soigné. Sur une cheminée de marbre trône une horloge mettant en scène la victoire de l’armée tsariste sur la Sublime Porte dans les Balkans, en 1878, tandis que sur la droite domine la statue de l’impératrice Catherine II, qui arracha le khanat de Crimée à l’Empire ottoman en 1783.

C’est sous le bronze de la Grande Catherine, justement, que la délégation s’est rassem-

blée, station debout, pour assister aux discussions. Les deux présidents sont assis côte à côte devant la cheminée. L’entretien peut commencer. C’est bien connu, Vladimir Poutine aime se faire désirer. Rien d’exceptionnel donc, sinon que cette séquence a ensuite été diffusée en boucle sur les chaînes de télévision russes. Il s’agit de souligner comment le maître du Kremlin a rabaissé son hôte, en lui rappelant lequel des deux empires, tsariste et ottoman, avait été le plus fort, jadis, sur les champs de bataille.

A cet instant, la relation russo-turque paraît vacillante. Mais,

face à Erdogan, livide et visiblement excédé, Poutine sait trouver les mots : non, la frappe n'était pas destinée aux militaires turcs. D'ailleurs, l'état-major russe n'avait pas été informé de leur mouvement à Idlib. Sur la cheminée, la pendule qui rappelle la défaite des Ottomans égrène les heures. La discussion s'éternise. Finalement, un compromis est trouvé, sous forme d'un cessez-le-feu à Idlib, où des milliers de soldats turcs sont déployés et que Bachar Al-Assad brûle de reconquérir grâce au soutien aérien de Moscou. L'accord est précaire, l'impasse syrienne reste entière, mais l'essentiel est là : l'escalade est évitée.

La capacité des deux dirigeants à surmonter leurs divergences ne cesse d'étonner. Quel est le secret de leur alliance ? Jusqu'ici, elle a su résister à toutes les épreuves. Pourtant, les intérêts divergent. Anciennes rivales historiques à l'époque des empires, la Turquie et la Russie sont loin d'être toujours sur la même ligne. En Syrie, en Libye, en Ukraine, dans le Caucase, elles soutiennent des camps opposés.

Vieil ordre mondial « dépassé »

Difficile à qualifier, le nouvel atelage russo-turc, mêlant adversité et coopération, s'impose comme un événement géopolitique majeur de la décennie. Il a bousculé le statu quo en place depuis la fin de la guerre froide, interrogeant sur l'avenir de la Turquie au sein de l'OTAN. Enthousiaste, le politologue russe Fiodor Loukianov y voit « un prototype de partenariat qui s'avérera déterminant dans les années à venir ». Il en est sûr, la relation Poutine-Erdogan « servira de modèle aux futures relations internationales ». Le vieil ordre mondial est dépassé, les règles du jeu ont changé. La diplomatie est transactionnelle, avant tout. « Nombreux sont les Etats qui cherchent aujourd'hui des relations souples,



Vladimir Poutine (à droite) reçoit Recep Tayyip Erdogan au Kremlin, le 5 mars 2020. Sur la cheminée, l'horloge met en scène la victoire de l'armée tsariste sur l'Empire ottoman dans les Balkans, en 1878. MIKHAIL SVETLOV / GETTY IMAGES

sans beaucoup d'engagements, non tributaires d'alliances rigides », affirme l'analyste, réputé proche du Kremlin.

Dans une étude publiée par l'Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI) et intitulée « Russia and Turkey. Strategic Partners and Rivals » (« Russie et Turquie. Partenaires stratégiques et rivaux »), le chercheur Pavel Baev est plus mesuré. Il souligne le décalage entre la relation telle qu'elle est affichée par les officiels des deux Etats et la réalité. Sous les ors du Kremlin, il est question d'une alliance ambitieuse, sécuritaire, énergétique, économique. Mais, sur le terrain, la coopération laisse à désirer. Dans le dossier syrien, les partenaires ne cessent de vanter la « désescalade » militaire, sans avoir jamais réussi à avancer vers la paix, se contentant de gérer les dérapages.

Quant aux échanges commerciaux, malgré des annonces tapageuses, ils restent modestes – 20,8 milliards de dollars en 2020, loin de l'objectif affiché de 100 milliards. La Turquie, grande consommatrice de gaz, se fournit désormais davantage auprès de l'Azerbaïdjan que de la Russie. Le 8 janvier 2020, le gazoduc TurkStream, destiné à alimenter la Turquie et le sud de l'Eu-

rope en gaz russe via la mer Noire, avait pourtant été inauguré en grande pompe par les deux dirigeants. La même année, les importations turques de gaz russe chutaient de 40 % par rapport à l'année précédente.

M. Baev résume bien ces contradictions. « Moscou peut se réjouir qu'Ankara soit désormais perçu à Paris, Berlin et Washington comme un grand fauteur de troubles, écrit-il. Mais il se trouve trop souvent en difficulté face aux tentatives turques de démonstration de force. » A l'automne 2020, le soutien militaire massif turc à l'Azerbaïdjan, dans sa guerre contre l'Arménie pour reprendre le contrôle de l'enclave du Haut-Karabakh, a mis sens dessus dessous l'équilibre géopolitique du sud du Caucase. Or, la Russie voit cette région comme son arrière-cour, un endroit où, depuis près d'un siècle, nulle autre armée que la sienne n'a pu mettre le pied.

Là aussi, un compromis a été trouvé. Ecarté du cessez-le-feu supervisé par le seul Kremlin dans le Haut-Karabakh, le 9 novembre 2020, Erdogan a reçu quelques compensations de son « ami » Poutine. La Turquie pourra construire une voie d'accès permettant de relier l'Anatolie à la mer Caspienne, et obtient le feu vert russe pour

l'envoi, en Azerbaïdjan, de 60 militaires en mission d'observation. Vladimir Poutine s'était ensuite répandu en louanges sur son homologue turc. « Avec le président Erdogan, nous avons parfois des divergences, mais c'est quelqu'un qui tient parole, un homme, un vrai ! », déclara-t-il lors de sa conférence de presse annuelle, le 17 décembre 2020.

« Je reconnais à Vladimir Poutine les mêmes qualités et je souhaite que notre bonne relation se poursuive », répondit l'intéressé. La guerre dans le Haut-Karabakh a pourtant failli mettre à mal la « bonne relation ». En soutenant militairement son allié azerbaïdjanais, musulman et turcophone, la Turquie était peut-être allée trop loin.

L'OTAN, organisation honnie

Quelques mois plus tôt, les images de destruction, par les drones turcs, des chars russes utilisés par les forces arméniennes avaient soulevé une vive émotion parmi l'élite « à épauettes » de Moscou, les hommes des services de sécurité et de l'armée. Vladimir Poutine calma le jeu. L'important n'était pas là. Un autre événement était à même de rasséréner la partie russe : alors que les drones turcs, les conseillers militaires et les mercenaires syriens envoyés par Ankara étaient en pleine action dans le sud du Caucase, l'armée d'Erdogan testait, pour la première fois, les batteries de missiles anti-aériens S-400 achetés à la Russie.

Conclue en 2017, la vente de ces missiles s'est révélée être un coup de maître de Moscou, avide d'affaiblir l'OTAN, l'organisation honnie, dont la Turquie est le pilier oriental depuis 1952. En s'équipant avec du matériel russe, techniquement incompatible avec le système de défense de l'Alliance atlantique, la Turquie a semé le doute chez ses alliés traditionnels et s'est exposée à de lourdes sanctions de Washing-

ton. En janvier, elle a ainsi été évincée du programme de fabrication des F-35, les avions furtifs américains de dernière génération, sur lesquels son armée comptait pour renouveler sa flotte devenue obsolète. Désormais, il est question d'acheter des avions de chasse russes. Poutine jubile.

Pour Erdogan, l'acquisition de ces missiles est au contraire présentée comme un acte d'indépendance. Il veut montrer que son pays n'est plus l'allié docile des Occidentaux. Son idée-phare, selon laquelle il faut en finir avec « la bride mise au cou de la Turquie par l'Occident », a l'assentiment de ses partisans, pétris de rancœur contre l'Europe et les Etats-Unis. L'islam politique turc entend bien rompre avec les choix des pères fondateurs – Atatürk en tête – qui avaient décidé d'arrimer le pays à l'Occident, à son système de sécurité et à ses valeurs.

La livraison des S-400 a eu lieu le 12 juillet 2019, soit trois jours avant les commémorations de l'échec du coup d'Etat du 15 juillet 2016 en Turquie. La date n'avait pas été choisie au hasard par Vladimir Poutine, désireux de rappeler qu'il avait été le premier à soutenir le président Erdogan au moment du putsch raté. Nul ne sait ce que les deux hommes ont pu se dire au téléphone cette nuit-là, mais une chose est sûre, l'initiative du maître du Kremlin a été appréciée. L'Europe, plus lente à réagir, fut accusée par Ankara de manquer d'empathie, et Washington carrément désigné comme complice...

Le rapport personnel qu'entretiennent les deux hommes est la clé de l'équilibre entre leurs pays. « Entre la Turquie et la Russie, il n'existe pas de mécanismes institutionnels de "déconfliction", explique le politologue indépendant Kerim Has, à Moscou. Les problèmes se règlent uniquement à travers les rencontres en face à face et les appels téléphoniques entre Erdogan et Poutine. »

L'entente n'a pas toujours été aussi cordiale. Le dossier de la guerre en Syrie a toujours été un point sensible. Le 24 novembre 2015, la Turquie abat un avion de chasse russe au-dessus de la frontière turco-syrienne, causant la mort de deux pilotes russes. Entre Ankara et Moscou, le ton monta, Erdogan dénonçant « les crimes de guerre » commis par la Russie en Syrie, Poutine évoquant « un coup de poignard dans le dos, asséné par ceux qui soutiennent le terrorisme ». Moscou imposa des sanctions, annula les vols des touristes russes en direction des plages turques et bloqua l'importation de produits agricoles, les tomates surtout.

Acculé, Recep Tayyip Erdogan finit par envoyer une lettre d'excuses à Poutine en juin 2016, déplorant l'avion abattu et adressant ses condoléances aux familles des pilotes disparus. Les contacts s'intensifiaient avec, en point d'orgue, la conversation téléphonique survenue au moment du coup d'Etat raté de juillet 2016. La réconciliation est solide. Elle va résister aux chocs.

Le 19 décembre de la même année, Andreï Karlov, l'ambassadeur de Russie à Ankara, est abattu d'une balle dans le dos par un policier turc, alors qu'il prononçait un discours dans une galerie d'art. Les analystes prédirent aussitôt la fin du rapprochement. Pourtant, Moscou ne broncha pas, accepta les explications des autorités turques selon lesquelles le meurtre avait été planifié par le mouvement du prédicateur Fethullah Gülen. Cet ancien allié d'Erdogan, installé depuis 1999 aux Etats-Unis, est devenu son pire ennemi puisqu'il est accusé d'avoir fomenté le coup d'Etat.

Issus de la même génération – Poutine est né en 1952, Erdogan en 1954 –, les deux présidents ont en commun d'être aux manettes de leurs pays respectifs depuis une vingtaine d'années. Pour le reste, l'espion communiste et le jeune adepte de l'islam politique

n'ont ni les mêmes références ni le même parcours. Leurs caractères sont à l'opposé. Autant Erdogan est émotif, emporté et sans limites, autant Poutine, malgré quelques dérapages verbaux, est un animal à sang froid, calculateur.

Doté d'un fort instinct politique, Recep Tayyip Erdogan est un tribun éprouvé. Militant islamiste depuis son plus jeune âge, il a gravi une à une les marches du pouvoir jusqu'au sommet. A l'inverse, Vladimir Poutine, formé à l'école du KGB, la police politique soviétique, s'est vu offrir le pouvoir sur un plateau. Dès 1999, il fut choisi par son prédécesseur, Boris Eltsine, qui avait flairé sa nature « décisive et robuste ».

Tous deux sont adeptes du multilatéralisme, avec une forte aversion pour l'« hégémonie du dollar ». Tels des prophètes ou des illusionnistes, ils appellent leurs peuples au réveil patriotique et spirituel, mettant en garde contre le déclin de la civilisation occidentale. Tous deux estiment que « les droits de l'homme et la démocratie sont des paramètres inexistantes », précise le politologue russe Fiodor Loukianov.

La même soif d'autoritarisme les anime. Réécrire la Constitution au pas de charge, disperser violemment les manifestations, jeter les opposants en prison, museler les médias et toutes les voix critiques... Les modes de gouvernance sont analogues. A Ankara comme à Moscou, le président est le soleil autour duquel évoluent toutes les planètes institutionnelles. En cas de nécessité historique, lui seul est habilité à lancer des purges, à faire enlever ou à éliminer des opposants – y compris à l'étranger.

En interne, chacun joue la carte de l'« homme providentiel », celui qui a permis au pays de relever la tête. Tous deux aiguillonnent le ressentiment et les rêves de grandeur de leurs populations, trop heureuses de pouvoir ainsi oublier

la chute du niveau de vie, la corruption des élites, le délitement des institutions. Erdogan et Poutine font de l'histoire un instrument au service de cette mission.

Pour autant, les systèmes politiques des deux pays sont différents. Si la scène politique russe ne connaît pas la concurrence, la turque est encore sujette à des batailles électorales. Au printemps 2019, le parti présidentiel, Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP), a perdu les municipales à Istanbul, Ankara et dans plusieurs autres grandes villes côtières. Les islamo-conservateurs ont perdu Istanbul, leur fief depuis vingt-quatre ans, au profit de l'opposant Ekrem Imamoglu, du Parti républicain du peuple (CHP), vainqueur du scrutin. La chose aurait été impensable en Russie, où jamais Vladimir Poutine ne laisserait son principal adversaire, Alexeï Navalny, participer à la moindre élection.

Des félures dans la cuirasse

Dans l'arène internationale, Poutine et Erdogan sont comme larrons en foire. La Russie a envoyé ses « petits hommes verts » et ses mercenaires, notamment en Crimée, dans le Donbass (Ukraine) et en Libye. La Turquie a déployé des milliers de combattants syriens en Libye, des dizaines en Azerbaïdjan. Moscou fait pression sur les gouvernements européens dépendants de son gaz. La Turquie instrumentalise la question des réfugiés. Tous deux jouent sur la potentialité du conflit, en Ukraine pour Poutine, en Méditerranée orientale pour Erdogan.

Adeptes du rapport de force, ils aiment à afficher leur capacité de nuisance face à un Occident indécis. On se souvient de l'accueil peu diplomatique réservé par les Russes à Josep Borrell, le chef de la diplomatie de l'Union européenne. En visite à Moscou, le 5 février, il apprit l'expulsion de trois diplomates européens en

poste en Russie au moment même où il sortait de son entretien avec son homologue russe, Sergueï Lavrov, lequel s'était bien gardé de lui en souffler mot. Ou de l'impolitesse faite à Ursula von der Leyen, la présidente de la Commission européenne, laissée sans siège officiel, contrairement à son collègue masculin Charles Michel, le président du Conseil européen, lors de leur entrevue avec Recep Tayyip Erdogan, le 6 avril.

La cuirasse russo-turque a ses fêlures. Les conflits éloignés de Moscou – Libye, Syrie – paraissent peu susceptibles de remettre en cause la bonne entente. La Libye, où Moscou a soutenu en sous-main le maréchal dissident Khalifa Haftar, n'est pas un dossier prioritaire pour le Kremlin, tout au plus une source d'opportunités et un levier de négociations, avec les Occidentaux comme avec Ankara. Que des mercenaires russes y aient trouvé la mort,

ciblés par des avions ou des drones turcs, n'est qu'une péripétie, rapidement noyée sous les déclarations d'amitié, les marques d'attention. Dernière en date : la commande par la Turquie de 50 millions de doses du vaccin contre le Covid-19 Spoutnik V, un dossier particulièrement cher à Vladimir Poutine.

En revanche, les conflits régionaux situés dans ce que Moscou considère comme sa sphère d'influence – Ukraine, Haut-Karabakh – sont les ventres mous de la relation. Moscou n'apprécie guère les intrusions de son partenaire dans sa chasse gardée post-soviétique. Si l'aide militaire turque à l'Azerbaïdjan passe encore, la coopération militaro-industrielle avec l'Ukraine, en revanche, inquiète.

Depuis 2019, Kiev achète des drones à Ankara et multiplie les échanges de technologies pour la fabrication de turbopropulseurs, de moteurs d'avions

et de missiles, de systèmes radars, de liaisons satellitaires.

Autre sujet douloureux pour la Russie, lors de la visite le 10 avril à Istanbul du président ukrainien Volodymyr Zelensky, Erdogan a réaffirmé son soutien à la candidature de l'Ukraine à l'OTAN. De quoi faire monter la moutarde au nez de Vladimir Poutine, qui se sent encerclé par l'Alliance atlantique. Il fallait sévir. La veille de la visite du chef d'Etat ukrainien, Moscou a décidé de suspendre, jusqu'au 30 juin, ses liaisons aériennes vers la Turquie. Officiellement pour raison sanitaire, pandémie oblige, mais plusieurs officiels russes ont vendu la mèche, l'un d'eux évoquant un « test de patriotisme » pour les touristes privés de vacances sur la côte turque de la Méditerranée.

Pour le gouvernement turc, qui comptait justement sur le tourisme et ses revenus en devises pour renflouer les caisses de l'Etat, c'est une

mauvaise nouvelle. La piètre situation économique en Turquie (hausse du chômage et de l'inflation) et la mauvaise gestion de la crise liée au Covid-19 ont attisé le mécontentement de la population, en particulier dans le secteur touristique. Si, contrairement à leurs habitudes, les Russes ne viennent pas passer leurs vacances dans les stations balnéaires turques cet été, la grogne va s'amplifier. Moscou commence à craindre pour son hégémonie. « Erdogan peut vendre ses armes à l'Ukraine, à condition de ne pas renforcer outre mesure les capacités de l'armée ukrainienne », explique Fiodor Loukianov. Une limite que le président turc « comprend parfaitement ». La relation « ne sera pas amicale, mais elle sera gérable », veut croire le politologue. Jusqu'à ce qu'une crise imprévue, en mer Noire, dans le Caucase, à Idlib, ne la mette à nouveau à l'épreuve.



May 21, 2021

Turkish bases attacked by 'model aircraft': ministry

Two bases in Turkey's southeast were attacked by "model aircraft" late on Thursday night, the defence ministry announced early Friday morning. There were no casualties. A similar incident earlier in the week was claimed by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

"Model aircraft" were used in an attempt to attack bases in Batman and Sirnak, "no damage or casualties occurred," the defence ministry tweeted.

"Measures have been increased among troops," it added.

Three model planes were used in the attack on the Batman drone base, according to the governorate's office. The Sirnak base houses an infantry brigade.

On Wednesday, the PKK announced it had carried out an air attack on a Turkish military base in Diyarbakir. Turkey's Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu said two model aircrafts "were neutralized" and there no casualties.

The PKK is an armed group struggling for increased rights of Kurds in Turkey. It has not immediately commented on the Batman and Sirnak attacks



A Turkish military base in Batman was attacked by 'model planes' on May 20, 2021. Photo: Anadolu Agency

Révélations. Sedat Peker, le baron de la pègre fait trembler le pouvoir en Turquie

Après avoir été proche du pouvoir et fervent partisan du président Erdogan, Sedat Peker, célèbre mafieux turc, multiplie, depuis début mai, les révélations embarrassantes pour le pouvoir, plongeant l'establishment politique dans plusieurs scandales.

Viol, homicides, trafic international de cocaïne, trafic d'influence... Les accusations du célèbre parrain de la pègre Sedat Peker, en fuite à l'étranger, pleuvent depuis plusieurs semaines à l'encontre des députés du parti au pouvoir, l'AKP, d'anciens ministres ou de figures proches du pouvoir et dressent le portrait accablant d'un État failli, d'une police corrompue et d'une justice aux ordres.

Avant sa cavale, Sedat Peker, très connu en Turquie depuis les années 1990 et figure du crime organisé, connu pour son militantisme à l'extrême droite et spécialiste du racket et du trafic de drogue était pourtant au faite de sa gloire et de sa puissance.

Devenu un fervent supporter du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan, il est photographié en sa compagnie et n'hésite pas à organiser des meetings politiques dans la ville natale du président. Pourtant, il tombe rapidement en disgrâce. Il faut dire que le caïd a beaucoup d'ennemis, dont un autre nom célèbre du banditisme turc, Alaattin Çakıcı, emprisonné pour une série de meurtres (dont celui de sa femme) et libéré en avril 2020 à la demande expresse et répétée du

leader du parti d'extrême droite, le MHP, devenu l'allié indispensable du pouvoir d'Erdogan. Plus grave, il entretient des rapports conflictuels avec les frères Albayrak, dont l'un, Berat, est le gendre d'Erdogan et ancien ministre de l'Économie, et l'autre, Serhat, le patron de Turkuvaz Media, qui compte notamment le quotidien Sabah et l'influente chaîne de télévision A Haber, décrypte Ahmet Sik, ancien journaliste devenu député de la gauche radicale, dans les colonnes de T24. Le journaliste retrace :

Il y a deux ans, informé du dossier monté contre lui, Peker fuit d'abord dans les Balkans, d'où il publie une première vidéo dès mai 2020 dans laquelle il rend Berat Albayrak responsable de sa chute."

Puis le mafieux se fait un peu oublier, jusqu'au mois d'avril 2021.

"Opération contre l'organisation criminelle de Sedat Peker", titre alors un article du quotidien Milliyet, le même journal qui avait pourtant organisé une cérémonie en son honneur en 2017, lui remettant le prix du meilleur entrepreneur et mécène de l'année. Cinquante-quatre de ses hommes de main sont arrêtés, les domiciles de sa femme et de ses filles sont perquisitionnés. C'est la goutte de trop pour le bandit qui, depuis début mai, publie des vidéos à charge sur les réseaux sociaux.

Le sceau du secret rompu

"Un trépied et une caméra,

voilà ce qui causera votre chute!" promet alors le voyou, en s'adressant aux plus hauts responsables de l'État turc, rapporte notamment le média en ligne Medyascope, qui analyse le discours du mafioso truffé de références islamiques. "C'est une preuve très intéressante concernant les rapports de pouvoir en Turquie, le fossé entre l'idéologie et la pratique. Au-delà du contenu même des révélations qu'il fait, ce qui est passionnant, c'est de voir le sceau du secret rompu par quelqu'un de l'intérieur du système. On voit des gens [accusés par Peker] qui parlent continuellement de 'synthèse turco-islamique', de 'la parole du Dieu tout-puissant' et puis qui se retrouvent mêlés à des trafics internationaux", analyse le rédacteur en chef, Rusen Çakir. Et ses révélations pourraient coûter cher au caïd : "Il affirme que la Turquie, pour obtenir son extradition, aurait même proposé de livrer des drones à certains pays. Après avoir quitté la Macédoine pour le Maroc, l'on apprend qu'il s'est enfui aux Émirats arabes unis [un des pays rivaux de la Turquie sur la scène régionale]."

Consultées des millions de fois chacune, distillées tous les quatre ou cinq jours, ses vidéos sont très suivies par l'opinion publique turque. "L'on attend la prochaine vidéo YouTube de Sedat Peker comme l'on attendrait le prochain épisode Netflix de Narcos, la série sur le trafiquant colombien Pablo Escobar", écrit un journaliste du quotidien Sözcü, qui interroge : la Turquie ne vivrait-elle pas un retour aux années

1990, où milices paramilitaires, criminalité organisée, réseaux d'extrême droite marchaient main dans la main avec les services de l'État ? Et de poser la question à Mehmet Eymür, ancien responsable du contre-terrorisme au sein du MIT, les services secrets turcs :

La situation actuelle est pire que dans les années 1990. À l'époque, on essayait quand même de faire notre travail, on était soutenus. Aujourd'hui, je constate que le procureur n'a ouvert aucune enquête sur les révélations qui sont faites, nous n'avons jamais atteint un tel niveau d'ignominie."

Dernier visé par les révélations, Süleyman Soylu, le ministre de l'Intérieur, avec lequel Peker comptait s'arranger pour obtenir une possibilité de retour en Turquie. S'estimant trahi par celui qui, jadis, lui fournissait des policiers en guise de gardes du corps, Peker fulmine. "Je n'ai rien à voir avec cet individu, si quelqu'un prouve le contraire, je suis prêt à accepter toutes les sanctions, y compris la peine de mort", déclarait en réponse le numéro 2 du pouvoir turc, rapporte le quotidien Evrensel.

Le 18 avril, Peker publiait sur Twitter ses conservations filmées avec le journaliste Hadi Özisik, ancien conseiller de Soylu, confirmant que lui et son frère servent d'intermédiaires entre le baron de la pègre et le ministre : "Je préviens tous ceux qui sont visés dans mes déclarations, ne démentez pas où vous serez ridiculisés à votre tour", assène le mafieux vengeur.



May 21, 2021
By Sura Ali

UN: Over 10,000 Iranian refugees registered in Kurdistan

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) said on Friday there are more than 10,700 refugees from Iran registered with the organization in Iraq, with the vast majority in the Kurdistan Region.

Firas al-Khateeb, a spokesperson for the agency, told Rudaw in a television interview that the UNHCR's main mission is to protect refugees. "There are many asylum seekers from Iran who have been in the Kurdistan Region for decades and they do enjoy their rights," Khateeb said. Dozens of Kurdish refugees

from Iran gathered in front of the United Nations office in Erbil on Thursday to demand further rights, days after a Kurdish refugee from Iran self-immolated in front of the office over his living conditions.

Protestor Rasul Rahim Pirot, told Rudaw he had been in the Kurdistan Region for years and received only 480,000 IQD from the UN once, adding he was unemployed. Pirot said Kurds from Iran had lived in the Kurdistan Region for years and "haven't received help here."

Khateeb said the financial aid

the UNHCR grants to refugees is not sufficient for everyone, and is distributed according to priority.

He stated the deputy director of the UN commission met with representatives from Thursday's protest and heard their demands.

Some Iranian refugees were able to obtain resettlement in a third country but the number has decreased over the past two years due to the coronavirus pandemic, according to Khateeb.

"The UNHCR is keen to pre-

vent the refugee from returning to his/her country forcibly, and there are lawyers who represent refugees in the event that they are exposed to legal problems," Khateeb said, adding that the agency "does not provide protection to anyone who was armed or has a criminal history, so we are keen to check refugee records."

The spokesperson noted that there are 80 million displaced people around the world, including 255,000 Syrian refugees and 50,000 non-Syrian refugees in the Kurdistan Region alone.



May 21, 2021

Turkish court keeps Osman Kavala in jail, chief judge submits dissenting opinion

An Istanbul court on May 21 ruled to keep renowned human rights activist Osman Kavala behind bars by a majority of votes as the chief judge submitted a dissenting opinion.

The next hearing into the case will be held on Aug. 6.

The Istanbul 30th Heavy Penal Court on May 21 began the retrial of Kavala and 15 others over their role in nationwide protests in 2013.

Kavala and eight others accused of organizing the 2013 Gezi Park protests were acquitted of all charges in February 2020 but an appeals court overturned that ruling in January.

Kavala, who has been kept in jail for three-and-a-half years, is also facing espionage charges in con-

nection with the 2016 failed coup attempt. Those charges were combined with the Gezi case in February.

Espionage charges resemble legal basis utilized in Nazi Germany: Kavala

Kavala addressed the judges via the judiciary video-conferencing system SEGBİS saying that the definition of espionage presented in the indictment "resembles the concept of 'Landesverrat' (treason against the country) which was also utilized for charges of espionage in Germany during the Nazi period."

"During that period, the duty of the judge was to sentence the person, whose action was regarded incompatible with the 'public conscience', by picking the law most convenient to enable the sentenc-

ing even if the act of the accused person did not fit the description of the crime in the law," he said.

Kavala also said that the judicial process against him has entered "a new stage" with the merging of the Gezi and coup-related cases.

"Given that the fiction of Gezi events being a conspiracy has been adopted and politically utilized by the government, I was not surprised that the acquittal decisions that belie this narrative were overturned," he told the judges.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) called in December 2019 for his release on grounds the detention aimed to silence him. But Turkey has not abided the ruling despite repeated calls by the Committee of Minis-

ters of the Council of Europe. "Each phase of this case is riddled with injustices, inconsistencies and illogical and unlawful procedures," said a campaign group called Free Osman Kavala.

Re-opening the Gezi case has become "a source of embarrassment not only for the government and the judiciary but also for the country as a whole," it said.

The case of seven others who were abroad during the initial trial was joined again this month for the re-trial.

Some of the defendants had also been acquitted in 2015 of charges related to the Gezi protests, meaning they are being tried over the same events for a third time.

Kirkuk Minute May 20, 2021

A weekly brief of events and news occurred in the disputed territories.

Kirkuk

On Thursday, May 13th tensions arose between elements of the Iraqi Army and Iranian-backed militias of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) near Pirde (Altun Kopri) district. The tensions started when three militants of the PMU refused to leave a cafe after army elements attempted to impose a lockdown in the province due to the increase of COVID-19 cases. Following the scuffle, the PMU refused to hand over the violators to security forces, leading the Iraqi army to deploy troops and surround the PMU building. After a while, the PMU surrendered the militants. The PMU militants had caused similar issues [including attacking](#) on-duty emergency police. Since [October 16, 2017](#), the PMUs have been deployed largely in Kirkuk including many groups that are on the [US terror list](#).

The Second Deputy Speaker of Iraqi parliament, Bashir Haddad accused Kirkuk's administration of a "failure" and called upon the federal ministries to "quickly intervene due to the governorate's failure to provide services." Haddad also called for more financial allocations "to help the people of Kirkuk, who have been suffering from lack of basic services despite the oil resources of the rich province." Several [videos](#) of people burning their waste went viral on social media amid the dysfunctionality of the municipality and lack of solutions by the administration. Moreover, Kirkuk is one

of the top provinces in the country in terms of electricity cuts.

The Iraqi interior ministry announced the seizure of \$16 million USD worth of counterfeit 100 dollar bills. The ministry statement said the suspect confessed to the crime and a currency printer was found in his home.

ISIS (Da'esh) terrorist attacks continued to increase in the disputed territories despite the deployment of more security forces in the region. On Friday, May 14th, near Khabaza village of Riyadh sub-district, Da'esh IEDs disabled two electricity towers which were used to connect power between Kirkuk's southwest and Saladin province.

On Monday, May 17th, the US-led coalition struck Da'esh positions and hideouts near Rokhana valley. The airstrikes reached near the Hamrin mountains, an area that has been used by terror groups as a base to launch attacks since 2003.

Following a visit from the Iraqi Interior Minister to Kirkuk, the Defense Minister Juma Inad also visited the province where he held meetings with security officials and followed the recent security operations in the province. Furthermore, the Iraqi Military is set to launch joint operations with the Peshmerga forces in the disputed territories after agreements between Baghdad and Erbil backed by the US-led coalition. A joint security command will be established in several areas

including Kirkuk. No date has been announced for the implementation of the agreement.

On Wednesday, the security forces in Kirkuk announced the arrest of six Da'esh terrorists in several neighborhoods of Kirkuk city.

Internal competition within the Turkmen Front led to more friction in recent weeks after replacing its former leader Arshad al Salihi with Hassan Turan. Salahi is backed by Turkey's ultra-nationalists while Turan has been backed by the ruling Turkish Islamist party of Justice and Development Party (AKP). Salihi has been accused by Sunni Turkmen of giving more leadership rules to the Shia Turkmen than the Sunnis who are now in control of the group.

Tuz Khurmatu

On Monday, security forces confiscated 180,000 liters of smuggled kerosene on its way to Kifri in five tanker trucks. The police launched an investigation looking for the involvement of government officials.

Makhmour

Despite constant security sweeps and raids, Da'esh terrorists appeared again in the Qara Chokh Mountains near Makhmour. The US-led coalition has launched hundreds of airstrikes on the area since the physical defeat of the caliphate in March of 2019.

Khanaqin

On Monday, May 17, Iranian-backed militias of the PMU stormed a security building (Asayesh) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) office. The assault came after PUK Asayish in Sulaymaniyah city arrested a PMU militant named Hazim Shakarchi whose name was similar to another person wanted by the security office. Upon his release and return, Shakarchi rallied several PMU militants of al-Badr brigades and attacked the PUK buildings in Khanaqin. After police intervention, the situation was contained. Khanaqin has been under the control of Iraqi forces and the PMU since October 17, 2017.

On Tuesday, the first joint command between the Peshmerga and Iraqi forces was launched. The joint security operation aims to fill the vacuum between the two forces in the area. Six more joint commands are set to form in Kirkuk, Makhmour, and Shingal (Sinjar).

Shingal

Since Sunday May 16th, the security agreement between the federal forces and the Peshmerga forces has gone into effect despite actual occurrences on the ground. [The agreement](#) signed on October 9, 2020, calls for all security forces and militias to leave the town and hand over the security file to the local police while both the Iraqi Army and the Peshmerga will jointly settle outside of the town.



David Phillips
May 22 2021

What Biden must tell Erdoğan at next month's NATO summit

There have been strong words coming out of Turkey ahead of a planned bilateral meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden. Last week, a senior adviser to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan threatened to “cut off the heads” of Turkey’s challengers and warned Biden: “This June’s (NATO summit) meeting is the last chance for our beloved ally, America.”

Erdoğan went even further, **accusing** Biden of having “blood on his hands” for supporting Israel. Any other world leader would simply cancel the talks, scheduled on the margins of the NATO summit on June 14.

Biden and Erdoğan are sure to have a contentious conversation. The Turkish premier is still fuming over Biden’s recent statement **affirming** the Armenian genocide. The NATO meeting is still, however, an opportunity to discuss the rules-based international order. But as well as expressing U.S. concerns over Turkey’s aggressive behaviour in the region, Biden should also highlight Erdoğan’s poor human rights record at home.

For example, Turkey should repeal Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Act and Article 301 of the Penal Code, which make it a crime to “denigrate Turkishness” and are used to target political opponents.

Turkey should also release **Osman Kavala**, the chair of Anadolu Kultur, a nonprofit arts and cultural organisation, who has been charged with espionage and a growing number of other offenses since 2017. Releasing Kavala and other political prisoners would boost confidence within Turkish civil society, which is increasingly disillusioned under the Erdoğan government.

Erdoğan may try to establish a link between the issues and the extradition of Fethullah Gülen, whom he blames for the failed coup in July 2016. Gülen, who has lived in the U.S. state of Pennsylvania since 1999,

must not be extradited without irrefutable evidence linking him to the coup.

Turkish state-owned lender Halkbank, which ran a scheme to circumvent sanctions on Iran, is another sticking point. Erdoğan wants to **influence** the trial so Halkbank can avoid a big financial penalty. However, the case is being held in the Southern District of New York, where judges will determine Halkbank’s guilt or innocence.

Treatment of the Kurds is another major concern. Since 1980, Turkey has banned five major Kurdish political parties. It is currently **exploring** a new closure case against the pro-Kurdish People’s Democratic Party (HDP). Turkey should release HDP leaders including former co-chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ. Over 150 elected HDP officials, removed from local government and replaced by government “trustees”, should also be reinstated.

More than 40,000 people have died during conflict between the state and the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK), which aspires to greater political and cultural rights for Kurds within Turkey. There is no military solution to the Kurdish question. Instead, Erdoğan should renew the peace process with international mediation.

Erdoğan’s former foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, espoused a policy of “zero problems with neighbours”. But today, Turkey finds itself in conflict on all sides. In the **eastern Mediterranean**, Turkish warships challenge claims by Greece, Cyprus and Israel to natural gas reserves. Biden should urge Turkey to avoid confrontation, respect the territorial integrity of neighbouring countries and cease destabilising cross-border military operations.

In Syria, Turkey has imposed a 20km ‘security buffer’, where its jihadi mercenaries continue to **attack** the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the

United States’ boots-on-the-ground. Similarly, the 2018 Turkish invasion and **occupation** of the neighbouring Afrin region killed hundreds and reduced Kurds from 90 percent to less than 35 percent of the local population.

An accountability mechanism is urgently needed for jihadist mercenaries – Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the Syrian National Army (Hamzat, Sultan Murad, and Al-Amshat divisions), and Samarkand – who loot, extort, rape and commit murder. The U.N. Commission of Inquiry **reports** more than 150 cases of abduction, rape and/or murder in Afrin, including the rape of 30 women in February 2020.

Turkey blocks humanitarian aid to northern Syria and **disrupts** water and electricity supplies to the local population. It is also pushing for the SDF to be excluded from international peace negotiations, including the U.N.-led Constitutional Committee. And at the same time, Turkey is **discouraging** U.S.-backed unity talks involving the SDF and the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria.

In Iraq, 41 Turkish military bases have been set up and 50 local villages destroyed under the pretext of fighting the PKK. Turkish warplanes have **targeted** the U.N. refugee camp at Makhmour, home to about 13,000 Kurds. Turkish F-16s and drones have also **attacked** the Sinjar region, the historic home of the Yazidi minority, which is still struggling to recover from genocide at the hands of the Islamic State (ISIS).

Biden should tell Erdoğan that if Turkey continues bombing, the United States will enforce a no-fly zone in the skies above Iraqi Kurdistan. He should also warn Erdoğan to stop supporting proxies such as Sunni Turkmen militias in Kirkuk Province and Sunni Arab militia forces in Ninewa.

The transfer of drone technology from Turkey to Azerbaijan also needs to be halted.

Turkish drones have been increasingly **used** by Azerbaijan since it invaded the ethnic-Armenian territory of Nagorno-Karabakh on Sept. 27, 2020.

Russian mediation helped bring an end to the conflict, with a statement that included a call for all prisoners of war and affected people to be able to return to the region. Instead of complying, Azerbaijan has invaded Armenia itself. Last week, it penetrated 3.5km into Armenian territory, displacing more of the local population.

Russia’s problematic intervention sidelined the OSCE Minsk Group, the traditional international forum for resolving the conflict, and marginalised the United States. Meanwhile, Russian “peacekeepers” continue to tolerate Syrian and Libyan mercenary forces **deployed** by Turkey alongside Azerbaijan.

Turkey uses NATO membership to excuse its bad and bellicose behaviour. To suppress U.S. criticism, it threatens to revoke access to **Incirlik air base** in southeast Turkey, a major staging ground for counter-terrorism operations.

Upping the ante, Erdoğan has threatened to seize fifty tactical nuclear weapons stored at Incirlik. The United States has alternatives to Incirlik, such as facilities in Cyprus, Jordan, Romania, and aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean, which must be considered with growing urgency.

NATO is more than a security alliance. It is a coalition of countries with shared values. Biden must make this clear when he meets Erdoğan, whose government is Islamist, supports terror groups, violates human rights, and shows contempt for the West.

If Turkey applied for NATO membership today, its application wouldn’t even be considered.

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

Négligée et pillée, une église arménienne de 500 ans est sur le point de s'écrouler

L'église arménienne de 500 ans, Surp Sarkis, vit ses derniers jours. Les pierres de basalte de l'église qui est sur le point de s'écrouler et se trouvant dans la ville kurde d'Amed, ont été pillées.

Les lieux historiques du Kurdistan du Nord sont pillés par l'État turc et menacés de destruction. L'église Surp Sarkis, qui a été construite au 16ème siècle et est connue sous le nom d'église Çeltik (Hızır İlyas), a été utilisée comme grenier par les seigneurs locaux pendant le génocide arménien. En raison de la négligence, elle est maintenant devenue une ruine fréquentée par des toxicomanes et des chasseurs de trésors.

La croyance dominante en Turquie étant l'islam, les lieux de culte de croyances différentes sont soit utilisés à d'autres fins, soit menacés de disparition en raison de la négligence. L'un de ces endroits est l'église Surp Sarkis, située dans le quartier Alipaşa d'Amed / Diyarbakir, avec une histoire de 500 ans.

Un lieux fréquenté par des toxicomanes

Après le génocide arménien de 1915, cette église historique a été utilisée comme grenier par les seigneurs de cette période. L'église, également connue sous le nom d'église de Çeltik parmi la population locale, a été laissée sans sur-

veillance et négligée pendant environ 20 ans. Beaucoup de ses pierres ont été volées et pillées par les chasseurs de trésors.

Seules les colonnes du bâtiment historique sont intactes. L'église historique, détruite à 70%, est ainsi devenue un lieu fréquenté par les toxicomanes. Plusieurs réunions ont eu lieu avec la Fondation arménienne et la Chambre des architectes et ingénieurs pour la reconstruction et la restauration du bâtiment.

Des pierres taillées dans le basalte noir

Étant donné que l'église historique a été négligée, de nombreuses parties de celle-ci ont été démolies

et d'énormes trous ont été percés dans les murs restants. Toutes les pierres inscrites à l'intérieur des murs de l'église ont été enlevées et volées. A cause d'une telle destruction et négligence, il n'est également possible de voir la magnificence de l'église uniquement sur les photographies. L'église historique a été construite avec des pierres de basalte noir se trouvant uniquement dans la région d'Amed. Des pierres de basalte, parfaitement taillées, ont été utilisées dans les arcs, portes, contreforts et fenêtres du bâtiment historique. A l'entrée de l'église, il y a la section rituelle, la salle de baptême et la cour ont été détruite.



May 22, 2021
By Layal Shakir

Turkish journalist fired after asking about alleged government mafia connections

A state-owned Turkish media outlet fired one of its reporters after he asked questions to government ministers about their colleague's alleged mafia connections in a press conference on Friday.

Anadolu Agency (AA) reporter Musab Turan was fired after he asked Industry Minister Mustafa Varank and Agriculture Minister Bekir Pakdemirli to respond to allegations that the interior minister has connections to the exiled Turkish mafia leader Sedat Peker. Anadolu has said in a statement that, "Musab Turan has been terminated from employment by the General Directorate of Anadolu

Agency for his actions in the press conference, which violated journalistic ethics and principles and involved political propaganda by broadcasting the conference live from his social media account."

In response to the statement, Turan shared a video on Instagram saying, "I apologize for getting emotional when I asked the question, but I don't apologize for asking it."

Peker is a well-known Turkish mafia leader. He left Turkey in 2019 after he was convicted twice on organized crime charges. He has also been accused of rape and drug dealing.

Peker has shared videos on YouTube describing alleged incidents involving crime, corruption, and state secrets since the beginning of May. He also accused members of the government and the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) of corruption and other crimes, as well as betraying him in his videos.

He claims in a video shared on May 13 that Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu offered him protection and informed him of an investigation that was being prepared into him before he fled the country.

Soylu responded to the video

saying, "I surrender to justice," on Twitter.

Turan will be investigated about whether he is a member of a terrorist organization or not, according to Anadolu.

Fahrettin Altun, head of communications for the Turkish presidency, said that Turkey is a "serious" state and anyone who undermines it will "pay the price."

"Those who attempt to humiliate the government, which is the representative of the nation, with the language of terrorism, can not stay under Anadolu Agency's roof," he added.



May 22, 2021
By Loyal Shakir

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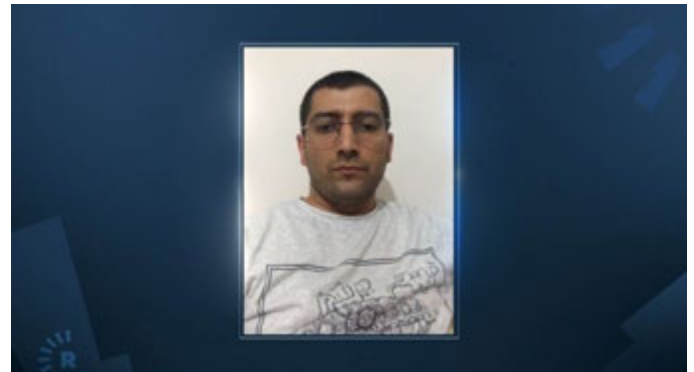
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Turan responds to his termination from Anadolu on Instagram. Photo: Musab Turan/Instagram

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May 23, 2021

At least 29 Iranian Kurds, including minors, committed suicide in the past 30 days

There have been at least 29 suicides in the past 30 days among Iranian Kurds in northwestern and western Iran.

According to the Statistics and Documentation Center of Hengaw Organization, the 29 Iranian Kurds consisted of 14 women and 15 men, including 4 minors. The reasons behind the suicides included poverty, unemployment, family related issues, and forced marriage. The suicides were carried out in the Persian month of Ordibe-

hesht, from April 21 to May 21.

The Kurdish human rights group said the suicides were carried out in Ilam, Kermanshah and Kurdistan in western Iran, and in Western Azerbaijan Province in northwestern Iran.

According to the report, the suicides were carried out by hanging, swallowing (pesticide) pills, self-immolation, jumping into a river and using a gun.

Rise in suicides

There has been a severe rise in suicides in Iran in the past months. In April, the state-run Rokna reported a total of 84 people who committed suicide in Tehran alone from April 15 to 16.

In February, Dishmok District in southwestern city was dubbed "city of suicides and self-immolation" following reports of 60 suicide attempts in the past 4 years.

According to a report by social science researchers, from 2015 to 2019, Iran's suicide

rate has increased by 60% meaning.

The state-run Khabar Online website wrote, "suicide rates in Iran are increasing in an astonishing way."

"From 2011 to 2015, suicide rates increased 66% amongst women and 71% amongst men", Khabar online wrote.

"For years now, the media have not been given stats when it comes to suicide rates as relevant organizations refuse to publish them," the website added.

Nouvel espoir pour les familles des victimes du JITEM

La cour d'appel turque a annulé la décision d'acquiescement de 19 personnes qui étaient poursuivies pour la disparition forcée et l'exécution arbitraire de 19 civils kurdes dans les années 1990. Le ministre de l'intérieur de l'époque, Mehmet Ağar et ses co-accusés seront jugés de nouveau. Namik Erdoğan, l'une des 19 personnes disparues de force et exécutées à Ankara dans les années 90, et Savaş Buldan, homme d'affaire kurde et époux de la politicienne Pervin Buldan, retrouvé mort le 4 juin 1994, après son enlèvement la veille à Istanbul sont parmi les victimes pour lesquelles Agar et ces 18 co-accusés doivent être jugés.

Le procureur turc avait exigé en décembre 2019 l'acquiescement des accusés dans l'affaire de « JITEM – Ankara » ou « JITEM – Susurluk ». (Le JITEM* est accusé de la disparition forcée de nombreux Kurdes dans les années 1990.) L'accusation a soutenu qu'Ayhan Çarkın (ancien membre de l'équipe spéciale de JITEM qui a décidé de faire des aveux) n'avait présenté aucun élément de preuve à l'appui de l'accusation et des déclarations qu'il a faites.

Le dossier du tueur à gage Mahmut Yıldırım (Yeşil) a été séparé tandis que les autres accusés avaient été acquittés pour « manque » de preuves.

* Qu'est-ce que le JITEM ?

JITEM est le nom du service de renseignements de la gendarmerie turque. JITEM est l'abréviation de Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele (service de renseignements et antiterrorisme de la gendarmerie).

Le JITEM a été actif dans le conflit kurde en Turquie. Après le scandale de Susurluk, les anciens premiers ministres Bülent Ecevit et Mesut Yılmaz ont confirmé l'existence de JITEM.

Selon Murat Belge de l'Université Bilgi d'Istanbul, qui a rapporté avoir été torturé en 1971 par son fondateur, Veli Küçük, JITEM est une incarnation

de l'Etat profond. En d'autres termes, il est utilisé par « l'Establishment » pour faire respecter des intérêts nationaux présumés, ainsi que par l'aile militaire de l'Ergenekon, une organisation nationaliste turque clandestine. En 2008, les dénégations officielles de l'existence de JITEM ont commencé à s'effondrer devant les tribunaux, comme en témoignent les anciens membres de l'appareil de sécurité « d'État profond » turc qui ont participé à des activités secrètes et illégales au cours des dernières décennies dans le cadre de l'enquête Ergenekon. (Wikipedia)



23 Mai 2021

L'ex-chef mafieux Sedat Peker accuse à nouveau l'entourage d'Erdogan sur Youtube

En Turquie, un chef mafieux passé par la prison continue de tenir le pays en haleine avec ses vidéos publiées depuis le début du mois sur sa chaîne YouTube. En fuite à l'étranger, Sedat Peker accuse des représentants de l'État turc d'être impliqués dans divers crimes.

Il en est déjà à sa septième vidéo, mais Sedat Peker laisse entendre qu'il entre à peine dans le vif du sujet. Dans ce nouvel « épisode » diffusé sur sa chaîne YouTube, et vu en quelques heures par plus de trois millions de personnes, le

chef mafieux turc en exil prend une nouvelle fois à partie le ministre de l'Intérieur, Süleyman Soyulu.

Mais c'est cette fois-ci contre le fils d'un ancien Premier ministre de Recep Tayyip Erdoğan qu'il formule les accusations les plus graves. Sedat Peker affirme qu'Erkan Yıldırım, fils de Binali Yıldırım, est impliqué dans un trafic international de cocaïne qui l'aurait amené, à deux reprises au début de l'année, à se rendre au Venezuela. Les allégations de ce « parrain », qui étaient déjà embarrassantes pour Ankara

lorsqu'elles mettaient le doigt sur les luttes de pouvoir au sein de l'État turc et sur ses relations troubles avec le crime organisé, risquent de le devenir encore plus à mesure qu'elles prennent une dimension internationale.

Sedat Peker suggère notamment qu'il pourrait parler de la Syrie dans une prochaine vidéo. Jusqu'ici, l'homme continue d'épargner le président Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, qu'il qualifie avec respect de « abi », c'est-à-dire « grand frère ». Pour la première fois, cependant, il l'appelle à ne plus demeurer silen-

cieux face à ces accusations.

Avant sa fuite, et malgré son passé judiciaire chargé, Sedat Peker, qui était et reste un grand admirateur de Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a organisé pendant des années des meetings en faveur du dirigeant turc. Il a été photographié avec lui, a reçu des récompenses « d'homme d'affaires de l'année » de la part de médias et d'ONG proches du pouvoir. Ses accusations provoquent en tout cas des scandales au sein de la classe politique turque.

Un Kurde succombe à ses blessures après s'être immolé à Erbil

Mahmudi, ancien peshmerga au Kurdistan oriental, a dû se réfugier au Sud-Kurdistan (Irak) en raison de la condamnation à mort dont il faisait l'objet.

Le 18 mai, Mahmudî, âgé de 25 ans, s'est rendu au bureau de Hewlêr des Nations unies (ONU) pour demander de l'aide.

Mahmudî, dont la demande est restée sans réponse, s'est immolé en se versant du carburant sur son corps pour protester à la fois le Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan (KRG) et l'ONU, devant les journalistes qui ont suivi sa protestation sans agir.

Ayant subi de graves blessures, Mahmudi est décédé le matin du 24 mai, après un trai-

tement en soins intensifs pendant 6 jours.

Avant de mettre le feu à son corps, Mahmudi a déclaré : « Dois-je vivre comme je vis à cause de mes activités politique ? Est-ce cela la vie ? Cela fait quatre ans que nous vivons comme des chiens errants. »

« Si je retourne en Iran, je serai exécuté. Nous n'avons plus

d'abris ici, à part les parcs publics, les mosquées ou les chantiers », s'est-il plaint.

Mahmudi, originaire de la ville kurde de Bokan, a déposé une demande auprès de l'ONU pour obtenir un statut politique en 2017. Mahmudi a déclaré que le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) soumettait les réfugiés kurdes à la famine, l'ONU ne répondant pas à leurs demandes d'assistance.



May 24, 2021
By Halgurd Sherwani

Over 100,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines administered, says Kurdish health minister

The Kurdistan Region has administered over 100,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses since the arrival of the first batches in early March, the region's health minister said on Monday.

The autonomous Kurdistan Region began its vaccination drive when a delivery of 5,000 doses of the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine arrived in March, first prioritizing health workers who are at the greatest risk of coming in contact with the novel coronavirus. Further deliveries of Sinopharm as well as the Oxford-AstraZeneca and Pfizer-BioNTech jabs have continued to arrive through the spring.

In total, over 164,000 doses from three manufacturers have



A member of the Kurdistan Region's Peshmerga forces on Pirde Front is pictured while receiving the first shot of coronavirus vaccine, May 10, 2021. (Photo: Hoshmand Sadiq / Kurdistan 24)

been delivered, from which more than 100,000 shots have been given to residents and priority groups, Health Minister Saman Barzinji said in a press conference in Erbil.

Many of the region's residents were at first skeptical of the vaccine, mainly due to concerns of rare blood clots that were detected in a number of other countries. But health authorities say

they have not detected any irregular side effects, and the number of vaccine-seekers has surged.

The Erbil Health Directorate on Monday announced that the duration between the first and second doses of AstraZeneca would be reduced to eight weeks from the previous three-month gap, based on new guidance from the regional health ministry, its Iraqi counterpart, and the World Health Organization.

The Kurdistan Region has recorded more than 165,000 COVID-19 infections and 4,000 deaths since the advent of the pandemic in early March 2020.

Resolving the S-400 Crisis Could Revive the Turkish-American Alliance

US-Turkish relations are at their lowest since the 1974 US arms embargo imposed following Ankaras' invasion of Cyprus. Even then, no one seriously questioned Turkey's commitment to the Western Alliance system.

Today, a series of disagreements blurs relations between these two NATO allies. These disagreements range from Turkey's occupation of northern Syria and the partnership of the Americas with the Syrian Kurds to the authoritarian policies of Ankaras which have totally eviscerated human rights protections and the projections of Turkish forces in the Mediterranean. More recently, the official recognition by President Joe Bidens of the Armenian genocide of 1915 has infuriated many Turks.

However, nothing comes close to the rift created by Ankaras' decision to buy the \$ 2.5 billion S-400 anti-aircraft missiles from Russia despite persistent and strong warnings from Washington and NATO. The dispute overshadows just about everything else. Much to the dismay of mercurial Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who invested his own prestige in the purchase, Washington unusually took a hard line and demanded that Turkey get rid of these missiles, or else.

Their acquisition has already led the United States to expel the Turks from the F-35 stealth fighter program. Thus, Turkey will not be able to buy the high-end fighter that the NATO alliance has decided to replace the failing inventory of fourth-generation aircraft. Ankara also

lost its role in the production and maintenance of F-35 aircraft, an arrangement that would have allowed it to earn billions of dollars in export revenue and benefit from significant technology transfers.

Washington fears that the S-400 missiles, equipped with Russia's most sophisticated radar system, operating in a NATO country that deploys F-35 planes, would allow Moscow to gather intelligence on the stealth qualities of the planes and thus compromising its combat effectiveness.

Washington has repeatedly warned Erdogan not to proceed with the acquisition of the S-400 and has mapped out the specific sanctions that would be imposed. Erdogan chose to ignore these warnings and bought two of these systems from Russia. For the leader of Russia, Vladimir Putin, this represented a golden opportunity to further sow discord between Ankara and its allies.

Why Erdogan would risk such a break with Washington remains a mystery. There are two possible explanations. The first suggests that he was convinced that the Americans would eventually give in, as they did most of the time when there was a disagreement between the two sides. According to Washington's traditional assessment, Turkey with NATO's Second Army and a valuable geostrategic location should not be alienated. The other explanation has to do with the Erdogans' spike in the United States, especially after the failed July 2016 coup attempt he attributes to Washington. The deal with Moscow was

therefore an attempt to demonstrate its displeasure with the Americans even though the order had been placed in September 2017 under the Trump administration.

Turkey took delivery of the first of the two S400 batteries in July 2019 but, in the face of Washington's opprobrium, refrained from operationalizing them or deploying their radars. This, of course, does not satisfy Washington.

There are no easy solutions to this discord, and it, along with other disagreements, risks further eroding relationships. What is needed, therefore, is true imaginative and unconventional thinking. Senator John Thune (RS.D.) proposed that the United States buy the S-400 missiles from Turkey. The Russians immediately made it known that Ankara would need their permission to sell the missiles to a third country. In 1998, Cyprus purchased Russian S-300 missiles, which at the time were Russia's most advanced anti-aircraft missile system. Turkey, feeling threatened by radar systems that could observe movements deep within Turkish territory, threatened to drop bombs. Faced with such threats from Ankara, Washington sought to defuse the crisis by structuring a compromise which resulted in the relocation of these missiles in Crete to NATO member Greece. Much to the dismay of Muscovites, many NATO countries and other allies, like Israel, trained their pilots against its prized system. Therefore, Moscow is unlikely to allow a repeat of this incident. This rules out another such pro-

posal to move the S-400 missile system to Azerbaijan.

There is some people who believe the U.S., Turkey set to reach deal that allows missile system stay packaged and subject to periodic inspections. Others have considered storing them at Incirlik Base in Turkey where Washington is stationing its 39th Air Base Wing, making inspections easier.

Washington is unlikely to approve such proposals because it has lost confidence in Erdogan. Even if the latter consented to such an agreement, nothing prevented him from retracing his steps some time later. The American presence at the Incirlik base has become a contentious issue in Turkish politics; The expulsion of the Americas from there becomes one of the most popular refrains used by politicians and others during episodes of growing anti-Americanism, as was the case a few weeks ago after recognition by Bidens of the Armenian genocide of 1915 by the Ottomans.

From the point of view of the Erdogans, having wasted \$ 2.5 billion on missiles that end up in storage harms the image of the willful leader who does not bear any criticism or challenge from anyone, and still less than a foreign leader. He knows he cannot postpone a decision indefinitely for fear it will leave him vulnerable at a time when he is under pressure at home for economic mismanagement and growing authoritarianism. In the meantime, the lingering perception of a growing crisis between the two allies has hurt Turkey's economic prospects.

In fact, Washington has imposed sanctions on some Turkish officials through the Countering Americas Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. These were initially introduced in the dying days of the Trump presidency. Trump had resisted their adoption because of his cordial relationship with Erdogan, but he relented under pressure from Congress and the bureaucracy. Still, he managed to limit his impact. Given the current anger against Turkey among US lawmakers, there is no guarantee that these will not be revised and strengthened in order to punish Erdogan.

As solutions are sought, one thing is clear: the chances are slim that the United States and NATO risk reintegrating Turkey into the production of F-35 planes even if the deal is void. This despite the fact that the exclusion of Turkey resulted in delays and cost increases in the production of engines for F-35 aircraft. Turkey's return will be considered too risky. Even

Ankaras will revert to purchasing F-35 jets if any arrangement will have to be approached with great caution. Turkish officials have not given up, however. As recently as this week, they signaled their intention to pressure Washington to resume deliveries of the plane.

As long as the S-400 missiles are on Turkish soil, there will be no way Turkey will be allowed to buy F-35 planes. There remains a possible solution which could perhaps, at least on an ad hoc basis, help to calm the situation. Turkey has two military bases in Qatar. What if the missiles were moved there? The Turks can argue to the Russians that this is Turkish territory and that the control and operations of the S-400 would therefore remain under Turkish command. Qatar had expressed interest in purchasing the S-400, but put the idea aside for the time being due to US opposition, it could be a satisfactory outcome. Qatar is also first and foremost an

American ally. The Al-Udeid military base is the largest in the Americas in the region. It has housed F-22 planes, B-52 bombers, and F-16 planes, but no F-35 planes so far. But one of Qatar's regional rivals, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), is in the F-35 aircraft market. That sale has yet to resolve a skeptical Congress and a Biden administration that has had doubts about Trump's approval of the UAE's interest in buying them. Even if the UAE received F-35 planes, it would be a long way off.

There are other obstacles to such a deployment, as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia may be opposed to the presence of powerful missiles in their vicinity. The S-400 radar with its range of six hundred kilometers can track many targets simultaneously. Both states have criticized Turkey's and Qatar's close support for their enemy the Muslim Brotherhood. To punish Qatar, they maintained a boycott of

Qatari flights and businesses. Yet Washington can work out an arrangement, just as it did with the Cypriot S-300 missiles, that will give it indirect control and access. He can also ensure that the system never leaves Qatari soil and, to the extent that such a deal leads to an improvement in Turkish-American relations, the S-400 system could turn into a headache for Tehran.

This represents a way out for Erdogan; he could claim that he did not give in to American demands not to deploy them and that he is also helping his Qatari allies to defend themselves with a missile system that they too wanted to buy but could not buy.

This proposition may be too fanciful or perhaps even unrealistic. Nonetheless, it is presented here as an example of unconventional thinking needed to resolve an impossible crisis plaguing the Turkish-American alliance.



25 Mai 2021

Turquie: le ministre de l'Intérieur répond au chef mafieux Sedat Peker, sans convaincre

Sedat Peker, un chef mafieux turc en exil, s'en prend au régime en place sur les réseaux sociaux. Une de ses victimes, le ministre turc de l'Intérieur Süleyman Soyly, a tenté de se justifier lors d'une interview à la télévision.

Avec notre correspondante à Istanbul, Anne Andlauer

Depuis début mai, un chef mafieux turc en fuite à l'étranger multiplie sur son compte YouTube les allégations embarrassantes pour le parti du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Sedat

Peker, dont les dernières vidéos cumulent des dizaines de millions de vues, accuse des figures du pouvoir d'être impliquées dans divers crimes et délits.

Il s'en prend notamment au ministre de l'Intérieur, Süleyman Soyly, qui l'aurait selon lui protégé pendant des années. Lundi 24 mai, le ministre était l'invité d'une émission télévisée, mais sa performance a déçu ceux qui attendaient des réponses.

« Vidéos pédopornographiques »

Pendant ces trois heures d'inter-

view, le ministre turc de l'Intérieur s'est évertué à ne pas répondre aux questions des journalistes, évitant en particulier toutes celles qui concernaient les liens entre l'alliance au pouvoir et certaines figures du crime organisé. Au lieu de cela, Süleyman Soyly a présenté les vidéos du chef mafieux Sedat Peker comme une « opération » contre la Turquie et Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

L'apothéose a été atteinte lorsque, à la fin de l'entretien, un journaliste a rappelé au ministre que les vidéos de Sedat Peker étaient vues par des millions de personnes en attente de ré-

ponses. Süleyman Soyly lui rétorque alors que « des millions de personnes regardent des vidéos pédopornographiques ». « Quel est le rapport ? » s'exaspère le journaliste.

Le ministre de l'Intérieur, qui sait que les accusations du mafieux en exil créent un malaise au sein de son parti et pourraient lui coûter son poste, a assuré ne pas avoir l'intention de démissionner. Il a en revanche promis la prison à Sedat Peker. « Trente ou quarante ans s'il le faut. Il sera puni, il paiera le prix ! » a lancé Süleyman Soyly.



25 mai, 2021
Par Isabelle Choquet

Le dilemme des femmes yézidiées : capturées, violées, libérées, mais rejetées

Leurs proches et les instances religieuses acceptent de les accueillir seulement si elles abandonnent leurs enfants

Direction l'Irak et le terrible dilemme des mères yézidiées... Des femmes kidnappées en 2014 par l'État islamique qui en a fait des esclaves sexuelles. Elles ont été violées, des enfants sont nés et puis elles ont été libérées... Mais aujourd'hui, peut-on lire dans le magazine Causette, pour rentrer chez elle, on leur demande d'abandonner leurs enfants.

Ce cas de conscience, c'est celui de Layla. En ce moment, elle vit dans un foyer géré par les forces kurdes, en Syrie, avec son fils de 4 ans et sa fille aînée. "Je ne peux pas laisser mes enfants ici, dit-elle. Je les aime et je ne les considère pas comme des enfants de Daech. Ils ne sont coupables de rien, et puis ils ont déjà oublié leur père". Elle a le sourire et pourtant elle raconte l'enfer. L'assaut de l'État Islamique sur son village natal, un massacre, elle avait 17 ans.

Layla a été convertie à l'Islam et achetée par un combattant irakien qui lui a fait ces deux enfants, de force. Au bout de 5 ans, le califat est tombé, elle a alors passé un an et demi dans un camp avant d'être mise à l'abri par les forces kurdes. Ce devait être la fin du cauchemar. C'est le début d'un nouveau calvaire. "J'aimerais rentrer chez moi, dit-elle, mais ma famille n'accepte pas ma fille et mon fils, ils les considèrent



La Revue de Presse du 25 mai 2021 Crédit Image : Delil SOULEIMAN / AFP | Crédit Média : RTL

comme les enfants de leurs ennemis". Selon le dogme religieux, seuls les enfants nés de deux parents yézidis font partie de la communauté. Ceux qui ont du "sang de Daech" sont des parias. D'après les humanitaires, ils sont quelques centaines dans ce cas. Layla est dans une impasse.

Le rejet, jusqu'à regretter son bourreau

Avec elle, il y a Jihane. Elle a passé 40 jours en prison à Raqqa, puis on l'a vendue sur un marché à Palmyre. "Ils ont donné mon prix au micro", raconte-t-elle. Jihane a eu deux enfants puis son mari de Daech est mort dans une

frappe aérienne. "Nous n'avons pas d'avenir, dit-elle. J'ai contacté ma famille pour pouvoir rentrer avec mes enfants, ils ont dit qu'ils nous tueraient si je les emmenais avec moi". Son bourreau, elle le regrette presque. "S'il était encore en vie, je retournerais vivre avec lui parce que mes enfants ont besoin d'un père".

Pourtant, elle porte un tatouage sur le bras gauche, quatre lettres : le nom de son premier mari, porté disparu. Mais aujourd'hui, tout ce qui lui importe, ce sont ses deux petits. Les humanitaires le confirment : certaines survivantes font ce choix incroyable d'aller retrouver les jihadistes après

leur libération. Les autres doivent confier leurs enfants à un orphelinat. "On les éduque, on les nourrit et ils iront à l'école, dit la responsable. Mais nous n'avons pas de plan pour le long terme".

Depuis 2014, 200.000 yézidis vivent toujours en exil

Le problème semble insoluble. Le chef spirituel des yézidis, Baba Cheikh, ne veut même pas en entendre parler. Depuis 2014, 200.000 yézidis vivent toujours en exil, dans une vingtaine de camps. Alors le dossier des enfants nés de viol... "Et qu'en est-il des milliers de bébés nés depuis le début de la guerre et qui vivent dans des camps insalubres ? demandait-il. Et les enfants toujours portés disparus ? Parlons d'abord des enfants yézidis, puis on pourra parler de ceux de Daech".

Les religieux estiment avoir déjà fait un geste : normalement, les femmes mariées hors de la communauté sont excommuniées. Exceptionnellement, on les laisse revenir. "Les survivantes sont des anges, nous les acceptons et les respectons, dit Baba Cheikh. Mais ces enfants..." Ces enfants l'emportent quand même. Parce qu'à la fin, les mères s'enfuient pour les retrouver. Les yézidiées sont des mères comme les autres.

Ce parrain mafieux qui fait trembler l'État turc avec des vidéos postées sur les réseaux sociaux

Dans des vidéos suivies par des millions d'internautes en Turquie, Sedat Peker multiplie les déclarations visant de hautes personnalités de l'entourage du président Erdogan.

Un trépied et une caméra, voilà ce qui causera votre chute ! C'est la promesse réitérée de Sedat Peker, adressée à certaines figures politiques parmi les plus puissantes de Turquie. En cavale, ce caïd de 49 ans diffuse, depuis le début du mois, sur les réseaux sociaux, des vidéos consultées par des millions de Turcs. Il y règle ses comptes avec ses ennemis du monde politique, débattant par la même occasion des scandales à l'ampleur inédite.

Trafic de drogue, viols, tabassages, assassinats de journalistes : la sordide liste des révélations du parrain déchaîne une partie de l'opinion publique et des politiques. Dans les années 1990, au nom du combat contre la guérilla kurde,

on a vu se développer des liaisons dangereuses entre la mafia, des groupes d'extrême droite et des services de l'État. Cette alliance contre-nature a continué à prospérer jusqu'à nos jours. Nous n'avons cessé de la dénoncer. Mais cette fois, c'est différent : les révélations émanent d'un homme de l'intérieur de ce système, estime Sezgin Tanrikulu, député du CHP, le principal parti d'opposition.

« Une sorte de haut dignitaire »

Friand des apparitions publiques, Sedat Peker, 49 ans, est connu depuis trente ans dans tout le pays. Militant de la cause ultranationaliste, il avait fini par rallier ouvertement le camp du président

Erdogan autour de 2015. Le voyou n'hésitait pas, alors, à tenir en personne des meetings politiques, notamment à Rize, ville natale du chef de l'État. Au faite de sa gloire, il bénéficiait même d'une escorte de policiers-gardes du corps mis à sa disposition par le ministère de l'Intérieur : Ils me suivaient partout, même en visite à l'étranger, comme si j'étais une sorte de haut dignitaire », s'esclaffe-t-il.

Mais tombé en disgrâce, le bandit s'enfuit dans les Balkans, puis à Dubaï. Et en avril 2020, une opération policière vise son organisation, une cinquantaine de ses hommes de main sont arrêtés, le domicile de sa femme et ses filles perquisitionné. Depuis, il ne décolère pas, multipliant les révélations

et les accusations contre des députés de la majorité, des fils d'ex-ministres et même contre le redouté ministre de l'Intérieur, Süleyman Soylu.

Certaines des accusations les plus spectaculaires du parrain sont portées sans l'appui d'aucune preuve autre que sa parole, mais certains éléments les rendent crédibles, notamment le fait qu'il confesse sa propre participation à certains méfaits.

Bien que le mafieux s'abstienne de le citer, les accusations qui visent son entourage pourraient encore fragiliser la position du président Erdogan, déjà ébranlée par une profonde crise économique.



May 27, 2021
By Horvan Rafaat

Halabja to face water crisis next month : dam manager

A lack of water flowing from neighbouring Iran spells trouble for Sulaimani's Darbandikhan dam and those who depend on it, with the dam manager saying Halabja residents will face a drinking water "crisis" next month. Iraq's Minister of Water Resources visited the dam on Thursday, saying neighbouring countries should not withhold water to Iraq.

"We understand that all countries in the region are gripped by water shortages, [but] countries from which we get water should not withhold it and ignore us," he said.



On some days, the water flow from the Sirwan river, which originates in neighbouring Iran, "stops completely," said Rahman Khani, who nages the dam.

"When the water levels decline at Darbandikhan dam next month, Halabja will face a big drinking water crisis," he added.

Iraqi officials will meet with neighbouring countries to discuss the issue of water and borders, the foreign ministry said on Saturday.

"Water shortages can't be solved by the government's plan because they only provide temporary solutions to a very small number of people," said Akram Ahmed, general manager of the Kurdistan Region's dams. Kurdish officials have already warned that the Region is in the midst of a water crisis, a problem which is also seen in central and southern Iraq.

Torture en détention dans la région occupée d'Afrin

L'invasion turque dans la région autonome d'Afrin, au nord de la Syrie, a commencé le 20 janvier 2018. Soutenue par les résidus de l'État islamique (EI), des extrémistes de droite et des mercenaires de divers groupes djihadistes, la Turquie a envahi et occupé la majeure partie du canton. Depuis lors, la région est soumise à un régime de terreur. Les forces d'occupation turque préparent intensivement son annexion, avec l'établissement d'une administration turque, l'introduction de la langue turque et le nettoyage ethnique à l'encontre de la population kurde. Les enlèvements, tortures et exécutions sont devenus quotidiens dans cette région qui était autrefois un havre de paix.

Les victimes du règne de la terreur parlent

Il existe de nombreux témoi-

gnages des victimes de ces crimes contre l'humanité. L'un de ces témoignages est celui d'un jeune homme qui s'est confié à l'agence de presse Hawar News (ANHA) sous couvert d'anonymat. Accusé d'avoir des liens avec l'Administration autonome du Nord et de l'Est de la Syrie (AANES), I.H. a été arrêté à Afrin par la brigade islamiste Sultan Murad, qui fournit une grande partie des mercenaires supplétifs de l'armée turque. « J'ai été torturé pendant 27 jours par le directeur de la prison, Abu Laith », a-t-il déclaré. Et de poursuivre : « Après cela, j'ai été interrogé par un mercenaire nommé Abu Khaled. J'ai ensuite été remis à Ahmed Zakour de la milice Furqat al-Hamzat. La torture a continué. Là, les mercenaires et les services secrets turcs m'ont torturé physiquement et psychologiquement. Ils ont demandé une rançon aux fa-

milles de mes 24 compagnons de détention. »

Des tortures sévères sous la supervision du MIT

Alors que le ministre turc de l'Intérieur, Süleyman Soyly, prétend qu'il n'y a pas eu la moindre allégation de torture durant ces quatre dernières années, le récit d'I.H., parmi tant d'autres, révèle tout le contraire. Le jeune homme se remémore les tortures qui lui ont été infligées ainsi qu'à ses compagnons de détention : « Ils nous donnaient des chocs électriques et nous arrachaient les ongles. Ils nous enfonçaient des aiguilles sous les ongles. Ils nous affamaient. Parfois, ils nous jetaient un peu de pain sec ou quelques olives. Tous les interrogatoires avaient lieu sous la supervision du MIT [services de renseignement turcs]. Ils m'ont suspendu la tête en bas pendant un mois.

Ils nous frappaient avec des matraques. Nous ne pouvions nous laver qu'une fois par mois. Les prisonniers avaient tous des poux. La majorité d'entre eux sont morts à cause de maladies contagieuses. Les autorités pénitentiaires utilisaient aussi des drogues. Je suis resté dans cette prison pendant un an et deux mois. »

Le suicide pour échapper à la torture

Le récit d'I.H. continue ainsi : « Les Kurdes étaient constamment insultés. Les tortionnaires voulaient que les gens meurent lentement sous la torture. Certains prisonniers n'ont pas pu supporter la torture et ont mis fin à leurs jours. »

Libéré après deux ans et demi de prison, I.H. s'est enfui vers la région limitrophe de Shehba qui abrite un grand nombre de déplacés d'Afrin.



REUTERS

May 27, 2021

By Ali Kucukgocmen, Daren Butler

Court ruling, gang leader shine spotlight on murky killings in Turkey

Nearly 30 years after Kurdish lawyer Yusuf Ekinci was gunned down and his body dumped by a highway, his lawyer son is still seeking justice in one of hundreds of cases of extrajudicial killings.

The killings, and the murky ties between organised crime and politicians that they pointed to, are firmly back on Turkey's agenda following an appeals court ruling and after allega-

tions made by a convicted mob boss in videos posted on social media that millions of Turks have now watched. read more

The two, unrelated developments have reignited interest in suspected collusion between the Turkish state and criminal gangs as part of Ankara's decades-old fight with militants of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). read more

Last month an appeals court overturned the 2019 acquittal of former interior minister Mehmet Agar and security force members accused of killing Ekinci and 18 others, mostly Kurdish lawyers, businessmen and civil servants in 1994. It said the court that handled the case had not considered all available evidence.

"My father was a figure who was influential and respected in the Kurdish community. As

part of a policy of intimidation, the state went outside the law in a process to get rid of people," lawyer Sertac Ekinci told Reuters, commenting on the ruling.

Ekinci called for a parliamentary commission to investigate his father's killing, saying state archives and national intelligence files must be opened up for scrutiny.

Agar rejected the case against

him as "fantasy". Reuters was unable to contact Agar directly but his lawyer said he may make a statement once the appeals court ruling is delivered to him.

The ruling has coincided with a series of videos released on YouTube by gang leader Sedat Peker that make uncorroborated allegations against top officials regarding the extrajudicial killings, drug trafficking and other crimes.

PRESSURE FOR INQUIRY

Peker, who says he is now in Dubai, made his claims after a police operation targeting him and his suspected associates.

President Tayyip Erdogan, who says his 19-year rule has brought peace to Turkey partly by cracking down on criminal gangs, has dismissed Peker's

allegations, but they come at a difficult time for the government, whose popularity has waned in the face of economic woes and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lawyers including Ekinci, rights groups and a pro-Kurdish opposition party are pushing for a parliamentary inquiry into suspected state-mafia ties stretching back to the 1996 'Susurluk' scandal, though Erdogan's AK Party remains opposed.

That scandal erupted after a car crash involving a police chief, a lawmaker and a gangland assassin and drug dealer. Agar resigned as interior minister days after the crash. In the 2019 trial, prosecutors accused Agar and other defendants of arranging the extrajudicial killings under the guise of fighting the PKK and those aiding the group. Turkey

and its Western allies designate the PKK as a terrorist group.

Agar was sentenced to five years in prison in 2011 on a charge of forming an armed gang to commit crime in relation to the Susurluk scandal and was released in 2013. But nobody was held responsible for the killings at that time.

"There has been a complete failure to secure any accountability for these egregious crimes believed to be committed by state officials," said Emma Sinclair-Webb, Turkey director for Human Rights Watch.

"At stake is burning injustice that people have suffered for years. Prosecutors need to be able to pursue cases of this kind but what we've seen is there is enormous political pressure on the judiciary."

Investigative journalist Gokcer Tahincioglu said the claims by Peker, who intelligence agency reports indicate was once close to Agar, could shed fresh light on state-mafia ties.

"This is a process of decoding this system inside the state which has not been cleaned up since Susurluk," Tahincioglu said. "Despite what happened then, these gangs were never severed from the state."

Commenting on Peker's allegations this month, Agar was quoted as telling Sozcu newspaper that the state was welcome to investigate whatever it wanted.

"People are afraid about what they have done, not what they haven't done. Thank goodness I have absolutely nothing to be afraid of," Agar said.



May 27, 2020

Kirkuk Minute May 27, 2021

A weekly brief of events and news occurred in the disputed territories.

Kirkuk

On Wednesday, May 26, for the fifth time in 2021, hundreds of college graduates protested in front of North Oil Company (NOC), demanding employment. The protesters, consisting of predominantly engineering graduates, called upon NOC to implement the Oil Ministry's decision to hire graduates on a contract basis. After approximately an hour of protesting, tensions resulted in clashes between protestors and Kirkuk's Riot Control police which resulted in the injury of at least five people.

During an environmental conference held at the Kirkuk technical institute, speakers criticized the city's municipality for massive waste accumulation on the streets of the province. The conference

addressed Kirkuk's environmental issues and the severe decrease of green space reaching less than 1%. So far, in 2021, Kirkuk's administration has demolished three parks and two soccer fields built by locals and given them to investors to build malls and shopping centers which raised anger among locals.

• On Tuesday, May 25, many locals held a demonstration in front of the Kirkuk governorate building against the administration due filthy living conditions and lack of essential services, including electricity and water. Since the beginning of May, the administration and its municipality have faced several protests in Rahimawa, Shorija, Taseen, Wahid Huzairan, and Domiz neighborhoods.

• On Sunday, May 23, the previously agreed upon joint operation command between the Iraqi forces and Peshmerga was activated. The command is located inside the Kirkuk base, K1. The joint operation center of Kirkuk consists of ten security officers, five of each side which includes Peshmerga members of the joint divisions of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

• Turkey's-backed Turkmen Front released a statement rejecting the "return" of the Peshmerga forces to Kirkuk. The Turkmen Front said ISIS (Da'esh) increased activities in the region should not return the Peshmerga forces. The Turkmen Front's overreaction to establishing the joint operations command

is believed to be due to Turkey's pressure on the party. Simultaneously, Salman Al-Gharbawi, a Sadrist lawmaker, announced: "no issue" in the return of the Peshmerga forces to Kirkuk as long as they are under the "command" of the Iraqi forces. Al-Gharbawi said the Peshmerga forces are part of Iraq's defense system, and they should not be looked at from a sectarian angle.

• Iraq's interior ministry designated the fourth brigade of emergency police to take over the security of Kirkuk's airport. The civilian airport is set to open soon though security issues in the province might delay its operations.

• The Kurdish-owned oil company Kar is ready to return to operations

at Havana and Bai Hassan oil fields in Kirkuk. According to unconfirmed reports, talks between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Federal Government for Kar company to resume oil production which has been halted since the events of October 16, 2017 when Shia militias and the Iraqi army attacked Kurdish forces expelling them from the Kirkuk and other disputed territories. Kar company, jointly with Rosneft, is only transporting part of Kirkuk's oil via Kurdistan's pipeline to Turkey. The return of Kar company will allow Peshmerga forces to deploy in the area and protect its operations due to constant Da'esh attacks on oil fields. Recently, Iranian-backed militias also attacked several times from Erbil from the disputed territories.

According to political observers, the recent leadership change among the Turkish backed Turkmen Front has caused further divi-

sion among the party between the Shia and Sunnis. The Sunni Turkmen who control the party's leadership and are backed by Turkey's ruling-Islamist Party of Justice and Development (AKP) fear more Shia control over the party, especially if they win more seats in the upcoming Iraqi elections on October 10, 2021. In the 2018 elections, two Shia Turkmen won parliamentary seats while one seat went to a Sunni Turkmen.

- Following a Da'esh attack near Wadi al Shai, a police captain was killed on Thursday.

Khanaqin

- Unannounced negotiations have been launched between Diyala's operation command led by the Iraqi army and security officials in the Kurdistan region to reactivate Kurdish public security (Asayish). The Asayish role has been limited

to sitting in their headquarters building without the authority to contribute to actual security operations.

- Due to Iran's water cut off on the Sirwan river, the city of Khanaqin and its suburbs face severe drought. Two main water sources for Khanaqin come from the Sirwan river and the Alwand river, which both have decreased significantly in recent years due to Iran's constant interdiction of water supplies and building of dams.

Makhmour

- The joint operation command was activated on Monday, May 24th in Makhmour. The town has been one of the hottest spots for Da'esh activities who have been taking advantage of the security vacuum, especially near Qaraghogh mountains.

Shingal

- Shingal Mayor Mehma Khalil expressed that holding a fair election in the district is "very hard" due to the region's security issues. Khalil noted that the only "solution" is to implement the security agreement between Baghdad and Erbil over the Yazidi town of Shingal.

- Nearly 400 refugees who are Da'esh relatives returned to Iraq from Syria's al Hol camp. The Iraqi government facilitated their return and has settled them in al-Jad'aa camp south of Nineveh province. Several Yazidi Kurdish activists voiced their rejection and appealed to Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi to halt the return of Da'esh families. The Yazidi communities lost tens of thousands of people after Da'esh committed genocide against them in August 2014.



28 Mai 2021

Syrie : Bachar al-Assad réélu par un nombre absurde d'électeurs

Sans aucune surprise, le dictateur a été donné vainqueur de la présidentielle avec plus de 95% des suffrages. Plus de 13 millions de personnes auraient voté pour lui alors que le scrutin ne se déroulait que dans les zones contrôlées par le régime.

Le régime syrien n'a même pas tenté de donner une apparence de plausibilité aux résultats de l'élection présidentielle qui s'est tenue mercredi. Selon le Parlement, Bachar al-Assad a été réélu avec 95,1 % des voix. Il entame donc son quatrième mandat, d'une durée de 7 ans. Il avait succédé à son père Hafez en 2000, qui était resté, lui, trente ans au pouvoir. En 2014, Bachar al-Assad s'était arrogé 88 % des voix (98 % en 2007).

Les chiffres de la participation

ont encore moins de sens que les résultats. Le régime affirme que 14,2 millions de personnes ont voté, sur 18,1 millions. Un chiffre absurde : alors que la population était estimée à 28 millions en 2011, plusieurs centaines de milliers ont été tuées par le conflit, et environ 6,6 millions se sont exilés, selon l'ONU. Une majorité d'entre eux ne peut pas voter, faute de papiers d'identité à jour. Le scrutin n'a, en outre, pas eu lieu dans le nord-est, une région contrôlée par les forces kurdes et où vivent 3 millions de personnes. Il ne s'est pas déroulé non plus dans la province d'Idlib, qui compte environ 4 millions d'habitants. Même si les enfants et les adolescents avaient pu voter, le décompte du régime est impossible.

Cela n'a pas empêché la Rus-



achar et Asma al-Assad avant de voter mercredi, à Damas. (Hassan Ammar/AP)

sie, principal allié de Damas avec l'Iran, de juger la victoire de Bachar al-Assad «convaincante». Les pays occidentaux n'ont, eux, pas réagi. Ils avaient condamné en début de semaine un scrutin «ni libre ni juste», qui ne respectait pas le cadre de la résolution 2254,

adoptée en 2015, qui prévoit un règlement politique au conflit. Aucune tentative de négociation n'a abouti. Même le processus de modification de la constitution, pour permettre un début de pluralisme, n'avance pas, tout compromis étant rejeté par Damas.

Mobster transfixes Turkey with video tirade against political elite

With a smirk on his face and a gold medallion gleaming on his chest, fugitive gangster Sedat Peker has transfixed Turkey with explosive accusations hurled at the political elite in a series of YouTube videos. Peker, who spent a decade in prison in Turkey over his involvement in organised crime and who is now wanted for heading a criminal group, broadcasts from a rented room he says is located in Dubai. In seven videos that have been viewed a total of 55m times, he drops bombshell charges that certain government officials or their family members are involved in drug running, rape and murder.

Peker has not implicated president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who he affably calls Tayyip Abi, or “brother”, but his allegations of corruption and back-stabbing within the leader’s inner circle have besmirched the ruling Justice and Development party (AKP), which swept to power two decades ago with a pledge to break the hold of organised crime on politics.

The mobster began his video onslaught earlier this month following a raid at his Istanbul home in April in which he said police harassed his wife and daughter.

This week, Erdogan broke his silence to cast Peker’s claims as part of a long-running plot by shadowy foreign forces to undermine his rule. “We made Turkey, where these so-called babas [godfathers] known by pompous nicknames once swaggered, a place where the law is the only valid method,” he said in a televised speech.

Peker appears to have caught the AKP on the back foot at a time when its approval rating is at a record low over its handling of the

coronavirus pandemic and the economic fallout. Elections are due in 2023.

“The airing of the administration’s dirty laundry may lead to the public losing faith that there’s much ideology left in the Erdogan camp,” said Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkey programme at the Washington Institute of Near East Policy.

“The Peker tapes expose that it’s about self-enrichment, nepotism and ties to the mafia. Erdogan runs Turkey but he doesn’t lead it, and the aura of stability is gone. Turkey looks like a house of cards.”

Part performance art, part confessional, the videos show Peker seesawing between banter and bellowing. He offers little evidence for his uncorroborated claims — among them that an ex-prime minister’s son scoped out a new cocaine trade route from Latin America to Turkey; an AKP lawmaker raped a university student who was later found dead; and that Peker kept a former MP on a \$10,000 monthly retainer.

“I will teach the tyrants that there is no weapon more dangerous than a man who faces death,” Peker tweeted in a teaser for one video, in which he said: “You will be defeated by a tripod and a phone camera.”

Much of his ire is directed at Turkey’s interior minister, Suleyman Soylu. Peker claims he helped Soylu against a rival group within the AKP led by Berat Albayrak, Erdogan’s son-in-law, who resigned as finance minister last year.

He alleges Soylu provided him with security and tipped off a friend so he could evade arrest, but reneged on a deal allowing

him to return to Turkey after more than a year on the run.

Soylu has appeared on talk shows to deny all the allegations against him and denied, or said he had no knowledge of, those directed at others. He has filed a complaint against Peker for slander. Erdogan has defended Soylu, saying the attack targeted the whole nation

Peker’s claims offer a rare peek behind the political curtain in a country where the media is tightly controlled by the government.

“People are rushing to these videos because the government has created an environment where criticism is prohibited [and] this guy makes a fool out of the interior minister, whom everyone else fears,” said Umit Kivanc, a documentary film-maker and journalist.

The AKP’s partnership with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) over the past half decade has emboldened crime figures linked to the ultranationalists. The MHP’s leader was photographed with another mafia leader last year after successfully petitioning for his release from prison.

Peker came of age in a far-right youth group affiliated with the MHP and his nationalist credentials resonate with patriotic Turks. “He can flaunt this stuff and not necessarily face blowback because he is a darling of the ultraright. If they really went after him, it could alienate the rank and file within the MHP,” said Ryan Gingeras, a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in California and author of a book on organised crime in Turkey.

“People came to see politics as intertwined with organised crime in Turkey because gangsters like

Sedat Peker have not shied away from the spotlight,” he added. “He’s essentially a celebrity with a political agenda who happens to have a criminal record.”

Peker cut his teeth as an extortionist and by fixing football matches, according to Gingeras. His rap sheet dates back to the 1990s, when newspapers reported he decorated his cell walls with oil paintings and had washing machines and Roquefort cheese delivered to prison. He was tried for and acquitted of murder, but was convicted in 2007 for establishing a crime syndicate and released seven years later.

A year after that, he was on the campaign trail for the AKP, telling a rally he “would bathe in the blood” of intellectuals who had signed a petition urging an end to fighting with Kurdish militants. Months later he was photographed with the president at a wedding and he has picked up awards as businessman and philanthropist of the year.

Peker has now apologised to the intellectuals and complained that politicians exploit nationalism to “turn us on each other”. Speaking in the videos he has also implicated himself in a series of offences, such as arranging a botched hit on a Turkish Cypriot journalist who was then murdered by others, “breaking the bones” of a former AKP parliamentarian for insulting Erdogan’s wife and organising thugs to attack a newspaper office at the request of an AKP lawmaker. While the accusations titillate Erdogan’s critics, they have dredged up trauma for the victims. After Peker blamed a former interior minister for the unsolved murder of journalist Ugur Mumcu in 1993, his widow Guldal tweeted: “Pull the bricks down, may the wall collapse and bury whoever is caught beneath it.”

Turkey: A state sponsor of terrorism?

Turkey functions like a state-sponsor of terrorism (SST), fueling Islamist extremism domestically and deploying jihadist mercenaries to Syria, Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh. Listing Turkey as an SST should not be taken lightly. The SST designation requires mandatory sanctions by the US, which would cause deep damage to US-Turkey relations. Short of an SST listing, Western countries can sanction Turkey and Turkish security officials for supporting terrorism while providing benchmarks of good conduct so Turkey can redeem itself and restore good relations with the West.

Syria

Turkey's collusion with terrorist organizations can be traced back to the establishment of Turkish Hezbollah in the 1990s, which assassinated Kurdish politicians deemed sympathetic to the PKK.

Support for jihadis was institutionalized in August 2013 when Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons to strike the Damascus suburb of Ghouta. Artillery tipped with sarin and mustard gas killed an estimated 1729 people, including 400 children.

Erdogan was outraged by the killing of Sunni civilians and took it on himself to respond. Turkey's National Intelligence Agency (MIT) established the so-called jihadi highway that enabled 40,000 foreign fighters from eighty countries to transit through Turkey on their way to Raqqa in Syria. MIT provided weapons, money, and logistical assistance. Foreign fighters wounded on Syria's battlefield appeared in Turkish hospitals where they received emergency care – no cost and no questions asked.

Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) adopted an Islamist ideology. In July 2014, Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc gave a speech about moral

corruption. "The woman... will not laugh in public. She will not be inviting in her attitudes and will protect her chasteness."

Turkey's collusion with Islamists was well-known to intelligence agencies around the world. Vice President Joe Biden confirmed it during a speech at Harvard University on October 2, 2014: "President Erdoğan told me, he is an old friend, you were right, we let too many people through..."

Idlib in Syria's northwest became ground zero for Turkish involvement with al-Qaeda affiliated militias. Erdogan supports Idlib's Sunni fighters – Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the Al Nusra Front, Ansar al-Din, and Jaysh al-Sunna – who aspire to establishing an Islamic emirate in Syria under al-Qaeda's control.

When Turkey invaded Afrin in January 2018, a majority Kurdish town west of the Euphrates River, 6,000 Turkish troops and 10,000 jihadis were supported by armour and airstrikes as Erdogan escalated conflict with Kurds in Syria. He justified the attack, maintaining that Syrian Kurdish fighters were a branch of the PKK. Turkish-backed jihadis beheaded civilians and mutilated the bodies of Kurdish women. For Erdogan, counter-terrorism means killing Kurds. Turkey developed a military formula in Syria. Turkish air power and artillery attacked civilians before jihadi mercenaries, backed by Turkish armor and artillery, would advance to seize territory and conduct ethnic cleansing.

Libya

Having proved their mettle in Syria, mercenaries were exported to other conflict zones where their battlefield prowess could advance Turkey's strategic and ideological goals. Turkish land, air and sea forces coordinated with the Syrian National Army (SNA) in Libya. Tur-



Displaced Kurdish children who fled their hometown of Ras al-Ain play after Turkey launched an offensive targeting Kurdish forces in north-eastern Syria days after the US withdrew troops from the area in October 2019. EPA-EFE//STR

key sent 300 mercenaries from the SNA to defend the Government of National Accord (GNA) in December 2019. In less than a year, 18,000 Syrian fighters had been sent to Libya. The force includes 350 child soldiers.

Turkey's support for the GNA involved both training and operational support. Turkey used Bajraktar unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), as well as intelligence assets alongside the SNA, which helped shape the battlefield in its favor.

Turkey's deployment in Libya took place within the framework of 2019 Security and Military Cooperation Agreement between Tripoli and Ankara. Turkish troops fortified the Watiyya Air Base on the Tunisian border, as well as facilities in Misrata and a navy base in Khoms. Turkish troops stayed in their bunkers, while SNA mercenaries did the dirty work.

In May 2021, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed the presence of 6,630 Syrian mercenaries in Libya. These fighters were unwilling to return home. They demand repatriation to destinations in Europe where they represent a fifth column.

Nagorno Karabakh

Turkey treated its support for jihadis as a franchise, exporting fighters from one combat zone to the other. Battle-hardened mercenaries were sent from Libya to Nagorno-Karabakh ("Artsakh" in Armenian). Some well-known mercenaries joined the Artsakh operation, launched on September 27, 2020.

Sayf Balud, also known as Sayf Abu Bakr, led SNA's Hamza Division, which fought in Afrin as part of Operation Olive Branch (Afrin) as well as the Libyan Civil War. Balud and approximately 500 of his men were flown to Azerbaijan to join fighting in Artsakh. Balud is a Syrian Turkman who first appeared in a 2013 ISIS propaganda video. He was responsible for multiple war crimes, including kidnapping Kurdish women and brutal repression in Afrin. Beginning in 2015, Fehim Isa led the SNA's Sultan Murad Division. He was involved in Operation Euphrates Shield, Operation Olive Branch, and the Libyan Civil War. Balud, also an ethnic Turkman, is accused of multiple war crimes, such as the torturing of Kurdish soldiers in Syria and indiscriminate shelling of civilians.

Abu Amsha leads the Suleyman Shah Brigade, otherwise known as the al-Amshat militia. It gained prominence as one of the most brutal factions occupying Afrin. It confiscated property, kidnapped individuals for ransom, which generated \$12 million/year. Amsha has been accused of rape and murder.

Other Turkish-backed mercenary leaders include Ahmed Osman, another military leader of the Sultan Murad Division; Abu Jalal, is a leader of the Hamza Division and Mohammad al-Abdullah was "head of Hamza's Political Bureau; Fadlallah al-Haji heads Faylaq al-Sham, an important Turkish proxy who fought in Syria, Libya, and Artsakh. Al-Haji and his men have connections to the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaeda in Idlib.

In addition to gross human rights abuses against civilians, Turkish-backed mercenaries destroyed churches and Armenian cultural monuments, which is also a violation of international humanitarian law.

SST Listing

Does Turkey's assistance to jihadi mercenaries make it a state sponsor for terrorism (SST)?

The term SST is applied by the US Department of State to countries that have "repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism", pursuant to section 1754(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, section 40 of the Arms Export Control Act, and section 620A of the Foreign Assistance Act. Currently, Cuba, Iran, North Korea and Syria are designated SSTs. Designation requires unilateral sanctions. Being listed is not merely a technical matter. The decision is heavily politicized with listing reserved for America's most intractable opponents. Today, there is growing debate about Turkey's suitability as a NATO member. Regardless, the NATO Charter makes no provision for evicting members that have gone rogue. If Turkey applied today, it would not even be considered for

NATO membership because it is Islamist, anti-American and a serial abuser of human rights. NATO is more than a security alliance. It is a coalition of countries with shared values.

Whether it deserves to be in NATO is debatable. Turkey is an important intelligence source and early warning post for missile launches and other nefarious activities by Iran and Russia. If any other non-NATO country behaved like Turkey, it would warrant designation as an SST. Given Turkey's strategic importance, it is unlikely Washington will go this route.

Short of the SST designation, the US can signal concern by reducing its reliance on Turkey as a security partner. It could relocate assets from Incirlik Air Force Base in southeast Turkey to facilities in Cyprus, Romania or to an aircraft carrier in the eastern Mediterranean. The US could also consider moving 50 tactical nuclear weapons from Incirlik.

Additionally, the US could suspend weapons sales to the Turkish Armed Forces. It could also restrict travel to the US by Turkish officials, such as MIT Director Hakan Fidan, as well as their family members. The foreign bank accounts of Turkish officials involved in support for violent extremism could also be frozen.

The threat of SST designation may prove more effective than actual listing. The US and European allies should pursue quiet, consistent diplomacy. It should provide benchmarks, giving Turkey a way out of the penalty box. Annually, the President should certify that Turkish officials are not supporting terror groups.

Western countries want good relations with Turkey, but relations must be based on respect for the international order. Without publicly embarrassing Turks, US officials can make clear that Turkey crossed the line and will pay a price.

franceinfo: 28 Mai 2021

Syrie : comment Bachar Al-Assad a réussi à se maintenir au pouvoir grâce aux jihadistes

Le peuple syrien a élu mercredi, pour un quatrième mandat, Bachar Al-Assad à la tête d'un pays dévasté par une décennie de guerre. A cette occasion, France 5 diffuse un documentaire qui décrypte la stratégie du dirigeant syrien pour se maintenir au pouvoir malgré les pressions internationales.

C'est une Syrie en ruine que Bachar Al-Assad, victorieux de la dernière élection présidentielle, mercredi 26 mai, s'apprête à diriger pour la 21e année consécutive. Un pays ravagé par une guerre qui a fait près de 400 000 morts et jeté sur les routes des millions de Syriens contraints à l'exil.

Bachar, le maître du chaos, docu-

mentaire d'Antoine Vitkine qui sera diffusé mardi 1er juin sur France 5, revient sur les manœuvres mises en place par le dirigeant syrien pour conserver son pouvoir malgré l'intervention des pays occidentaux dans ce qui n'était, au début, qu'une guerre civile. Grâce à son habile instrumentalisation de l'Etat islamique et des jihadistes, Bachar Al-Assad va réussir à rester à la tête de la Syrie.

A l'origine du conflit syrien, les "printemps arabes", mouvements de contestation pacifiques portés par des peuples assoiffés de liberté et de démocratie, qui s'étendent à tous les pays arabes en 2011. Si nombre de nations touchés par ces révolutions populaires d'ampleur voient leurs

dirigeants chuter, Bachar Al-Assad, président de la Syrie, vaille mais ne sombre pas. Soutenu par ses alliés historiques, la Russie et l'Iran, celui qui est désormais considéré comme un dictateur met en œuvre une répression meurtrière sans limites à l'encontre de son peuple, allant jusqu'à utiliser des armes chimiques. La communauté internationale, soutien de l'opposition syrienne, choquée, réclame à corps et à cri son départ.

Mais l'arrivée de l'Etat islamique et de nombreux jihadistes, qui profitent de la déstabilisation de la région pour s'implanter dans de nombreuses villes syriennes en 2012, change la donne. Les Occidentaux reculent, de peur de voir

les islamistes s'emparer du pouvoir. Bachar Al-Assad en profite. "Bachar a compris que s'il créait un ennemi, s'il convertissait tous ses ennemis au jihadisme, progressivement l'Occident reviendrait vers lui", témoigne dans le documentaire d'Antoine Vitkine Firas Tlass, un homme d'affaires syrien en exil.

"A de nombreuses reprises, nous avons observé que le gouvernement syrien n'attaquait pas l'Etat islamique", confirme Robert Ford, ambassadeur américain en poste en Syrie de 2011 à 2014, également interrogé dans le film. Un documentaire qui dévoile les coulisses de l'âpre bataille géopolitique dont la Syrie fait l'objet depuis le début du conflit.

Iran Clears Way for Hard-line Judiciary Chief to Become President

Candidates in Iran's presidential elections have always been strictly vetted, and those deemed insufficiently loyal to the Islamic Revolution were disqualified. Within those limits, contenders held differing views on easing domestic restrictions or dealing with the West, and sometimes the victor was even a surprise.

Now even minor differences that give voters some semblance of a choice appear to have been erased.

The candidates in the election scheduled for June 18 either espouse deeply conservative positions aligned with those of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, or are little known, with no voter base and no chance to win.

And one candidate in particular is leading: Ebrahim Raisi, the current judiciary chief, appointed by Ayatollah Khamenei, who has a long history of involvement in human rights abuses, and who lost in 2017 in a surprise victory by the outgoing president, Hassan Rouhani.

With no credible challenger, Mr. Raisi is expected to win this time. Any serious competition has been winnowed from the race. Even some members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, known for their strong hostility to any political dissent, described the election as anti-democratic.

The Guardian Council, a 12-person body responsible for approving candidates, disqualified anyone who might shift the vote against Mr. Raisi, who, as a prosecutor and as a judge, has overseen the executions of minors and dissidents.

On Thursday, Ayatollah Khamenei



Presidential candidates sitting in the waiting area at the Ministry of Interior in Tehran this month, to register for the upcoming election. Credit... Arash Khamooshi for The New York Times

nei publicly endorsed the Guardian Council's final decision. He said council members had conducted their duty and called on the public to "not listen to anyone saying it's useless, don't go to the election polls, we won't go."

The council's decision and Ayatollah Khamenei's endorsement of it have rattled political circles. The reformist party announced for the first time that it has no candidate in the race.

Analysts say Mr. Raisi's presidency would finalize a plan years in the making for conservatives to consolidate power, take over all branches of the government, marginalize any reform faction and severely restrict the internal power fights within the Islamic Republic.

"Today we are witnessing an unabashed attack on any semblance of republican principles in favor of the absolute power of the supreme leader," said Abbas Milani, director of Iranian studies at Stanford University.

The appearance of an engineered victory for Mr. Raisi, 60, has prompted louder and wider calls for an election boycott and

increased voter apathy among ordinary Iranians. Polls predict a low turnout. The most recent survey conducted this week by the Student Polling Agency, ISPA, showed only 37 percent of voters want to cast ballots.

With Ayatollah Khamenei's allies already in control of the Parliament and judiciary, the takeover of the presidency could reshape the current negotiations on how to revive the 2015 nuclear agreement.

President Donald Trump renounced the pact three years ago, in what he called a "maximum pressure" campaign to squeeze more concessions from Iran, but his policy appears to have only strengthened the hard-liners.

President Biden wants to seek a wider agreement with Iran that would constrain not only its nuclear program, but also its missile development and its involvement in conflicts around the region. But Mr. Raisi and his faction oppose making concessions to the West.

What particularly astonished political circles in Iran was the

Guardian Council's disqualification of prominent political figures such as Ali Larijani, a centrist conservative and former speaker of the Parliament, and the current vice president, Eshaq Jahangiri, considered a reformist most closely aligned with Mr. Rouhani

Mr. Larijani belongs to a very prominent political family, and was appointed by Ayatollah Khamenei to lead negotiations for a 25-year economic deal between Iran and China. Mr. Larijani was seen as a candidate who could attract reformist votes.

While a former president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and a former government minister, Mostafa Tajzadeh, the leading reformist candidate, were also disqualified, their removal from the race came as little surprise. Mr. Ahmadinejad, who was once considered close to Ayatollah Khamenei, has increasingly taken the posture of an eccentric opposition figure. Mr. Tajzadeh, who was imprisoned for several years for his political activism, had called for a revision of the Constitution.

"This is an election coup," Mr. Tajzadeh said on Wednesday in a virtual town hall he hosted on the Clubhouse communal chat site, attended by at least 12,000 Iranians. "We must all speak up and say people will not accept the legitimacy of the result. People will not participate in this theater."

Mr. Ahmadinejad has also said he will not vote and has denounced the Guardian Council. "Why don't you just take out the Republic altogether and say this regime is all ours and nobody has the right to even protest?" said Mr. Ahmadinejad in a live Instagram talk he hosted on Wed-

nesday with an audience of thousands.

Even Mr. Raisi voiced some concern and said that he had lobbied with the Guardian Council to reinstate some of the candidates so that elections would be more competitive.

The council has not made public its reasons for disqualifying candidates and has only said that it approved those deemed suitable to lead the country in the current circumstances.

In early May the council announced new eligibility requirements to narrow the race, excluding anyone who holds dual citizenship, is younger than 40 or older than 75, has a detention record or lacks governing experience.

Kian Abdullahi, the editor in chief of the Tasnim News Agency, affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards, criticized the Council's final list of candidates on Twitter, a striking note of discord from a

group that has long symbolized Iran's power base.

He said candidates must be acceptable to the public and that "the people must decide."

Elections in the Islamic Republic have never been considered democratic by Western definition. Government opponents cannot run, and the process of vetting candidates and counting ballots is not transparent. In 2009, the election result was widely seen as rigged and led to months of anti-government unrest.

But even so, in elections past candidates representing different factions and policies were on the ballot, and the victor was not a foregone conclusion — rivals campaigned and competed vigorously. The public was engaged. Celebrities and pop stars were even enlisted to endorse contenders.

The months leading to presidential elections in Iran typically brought a party-like atmosphere to cities where young people ral-

lied in the streets at night carrying posters, chanting slogans and waving flags of their favorite candidate. The security apparatus tolerated these fleeting moments of open civic discourse, partly because they gave the appearance of a population that endorsed the Islamic Republic's legitimacy and participated in its elections.

This time around, election fever appears extremely subdued — partly because of the pandemic but also from an underlying apathy. Tehran and most cities are quiet, campaign posters are scarce and rallies and town halls are held online. Iranians have struggled through a year of pandemic mismanagement, slow vaccine enrollment, a collapsing economy and social oppression. "I don't know anyone around me who is voting," said Aliyar, a 44-year-old engineer who asked that his full name not be used for fear of retribution. "Because it has proved over and over to us that nothing will change with us voting. It's hopeless."

Besides Mr. Raisi, the other candidates are Mohsen Rezaee, former commander in chief of the Revolutionary Guards; Abdolnasser Hemmati, the governor of Iran's central bank; Mohsen Mehralizadeh, a former governor of Isfahan Province; Amirhossein Ghazizadeh-Hashemi, a hard-line lawmaker; Alireza Zakani, a former hard-line lawmaker; and Saeed Jalili, a hard-line conservative and former nuclear negotiator.

Mr. Raisi, Mr. Rezaee and Mr. Jalili have run unsuccessfully for the presidency before. The other candidates are not widely known.

Abdullah Momeni, a Tehran-based political activist aligned with the reform faction, said the final list showed that the hard-line conservatives had strengthened power.

The Islamic Republic, he said, had "displayed a total disregard for public opinion and it's doing it without paying any cost and crushing all potential chances of dissent."



28 Mai 2021

Adana : Six personnes placées en détention

Sur les vingt militants, politiciens et musiciens arrêtés lundi à Adana, quatre ont été placés en détention provisoire pour « terrorisme ». Les accusations sont fondées sur les activités publiques des intéressés ainsi que sur des déclarations de témoins anonymes.

Six des vingt personnes arrêtées le 24 mai à Adana ont été

déférées devant le tribunal jeudi soir. À l'issue de l'audience, quatre d'entre elles ont été envoyées en détention. Les autres personnes sont toujours en garde à vue. Les arrestations à Adana avaient été menées lundi sur la base d'une enquête du procureur local. La police avait également procédé à de nombreuses arrestations dans d'autres villes le même jour,

notamment contre des membres du Parti démocratique des Peuples (HDP). Jusqu'à présent, 16 personnes ont été arrêtées à Amed (Diyarbakir).

À Adana, les artistes kurdes Jiyan Savcı (Koma Qerîn) et Ilyas Arzu (Koma Pel), membres du centre de musique Dem, figurent parmi les personnes arrêtées. Visés à plu-

sieurs reprises par la justice turque, les deux artistes avaient déjà été arrêtés il y a un an.

Mehmet Şirin Tunç, ancien co-président adjoint du DBP (Parti des régions démocratiques), et le jeune militant du HDP Cigergun Güven figurent également parmi les personnes placées en garde à vue à Adana.

La guerre discrète de la Turquie au Kurdistan irakien

C'est « la guerre que vous ne voyez pas, celle dont personne ne parle », dénonçaient il y a quelques jours des villageois de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien dans les colonnes du journal britannique Morning Star à propos des récentes opérations militaires de la Turquie dans cette région du nord de l'Irak. Ankara a lancé en avril dernier une nouvelle offensive terrestre et aérienne contre des bases de guérilleros du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qu'il considère comme une organisation terroriste. Plusieurs habitants de la région ont cependant déclaré avoir été victimes de bombardements et ont accusé la Turquie de ne pas faire de distinction entre les civils et les combattants du PKK, tout en appelant la communauté internationale à élever la voix contre « le génocide total des Kurdes ». « Il y a moins de lumière sur l'activité militaire turque dans la région kurde et le nord de l'Irak parce que la région n'est pas une zone de guerre majeure qui attire l'attention internationale », indique Tamer Badawi, analyste au centre de recherche Carpo, basé à Bonn.

Alors que le PKK livre une guerre sur le sol d'Ankara depuis 1984, notamment depuis ses bases arrière du Kurdistan irakien principalement situées autour de la ville de Kandil, à proximité de la frontière avec l'Iran et la Turquie, cette dernière a indiqué à plusieurs reprises qu'elle entendait « s'occuper » du PKK dans cette région « si Bagdad n'est pas en mesure de le faire ». Ankara dispose ainsi d'une dizaine de bases militaires au Kurdistan irakien depuis 25 ans et mène des raids réguliers contre les combattants du PKK. Mais les récentes opérations militaires turques ont particulière-

ment inquiété le gouvernement irakien ainsi que Téhéran qui craignent que la Sublime Porte ne s'établisse petit à petit dans la région.

Impression d'annexion

« La Turquie a maintenu une présence militaire expéditionnaire dans la région du Kurdistan d'Irak pour combattre le PKK pendant plusieurs années, y compris une importante installation militaire à la base de Bachiq (située au nord-est de Mossoul). Ce qui est différent maintenant, c'est le rythme des opérations militaires turques et l'augmentation du nombre de petites bases gérant les opérations avancées turques dans les régions du nord du Kurdistan irakien », explique Nicholas Heras, chercheur au Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy. « La présence militaire turque accrue entraîne des activités de réapprovisionnement et de renforcement turcs plus fréquentes dans le Kurdistan irakien, ce qui donne l'impression qu'Ankara annexe tranquillement des parties du Kurdistan irakien à une zone militaire turque », poursuit le spécialiste. Depuis 2018, Ankara a préféré les drones, notamment ses puissants Bayraktar TB2, aux tirs d'artillerie pour affronter le PKK, ce qui aurait constitué une réelle révolution militaire sur le terrain. Ces engins permettent en effet de localiser et d'éliminer des cibles en une durée très courte. L'influence grandissante de la Turquie dans la région inquiète d'autant plus ses voisins irakien et iranien que le territoire actuel de l'Irak faisait autrefois partie intégrante de l'Empire ottoman. Si Ankara a reconnu dans le traité anglo-irako-turc de 1926 les frontières actuelles de l'Irak et abandonné ses prétentions sur

le vilayet (subdivision administrative de l'Empire ottoman) de Mossoul, la Turquie s'est appuyée sur ce texte pour intervenir militairement dans le Kurdistan irakien. L'article 10 de ce dernier prévoit en effet « 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 ». Ankara invoque cependant la « légitime défense » pour justifier ses opérations dans le nord de l'Irak face aux attaques du PKK sur son sol.

Déraciner le PKK de Sinjar

Si la Turquie a pour le moment limité ses opérations en Irak aux zones sous le contrôle du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan (GRK), dont le siège se trouve à Erbil, plusieurs rumeurs laissent craindre une éventuelle incursion militaire turque à Sinjar – située dans le nord-ouest du pays à proximité de la frontière syrienne – pour y chasser le PKK. Ce dernier y a récemment gagné en puissance alors que sa branche syrienne a combattu les jihadistes de l'État islamique durant son offensive de 2014. « Ankara souhaite déraciner le PKK de Sinjar, où se trouve la partie nord de la frontière irako-syrienne. Non seulement ces groupes mobilisent leurs troupes au Nord, mais tentent également de créer une résistance populaire dans les périphéries nord de l'Irak contre l'intervention turque », observe Tamer Badawi.

Or une telle incursion augmenterait le risque d'une crise majeure avec Bagdad mais surtout avec Téhéran. « Une opération militaire turque sur Sinjar amènerait profondément les forces turques dans le territoire contrôlé par Bagdad et sous l'influence des milices soutenues par l'Iran, ce

qui serait perçu à la fois par Bagdad et Téhéran comme une invasion de l'Irak », estime Nicholas Heras. L'Iran, qui dispose d'un passage terrestre lui permettant de viser un accès élargi à ses mandataires situés en Syrie puis au Liban, n'a pas intérêt à ce que la Turquie accroisse sa présence. « La Turquie fait face à une vive résistance de la part de groupes paramilitaires alliés à l'Iran qui tentent de dissuader Ankara de se lancer dans une campagne militaire majeure », commente Tamer Badawi. De son côté, le gouvernement irakien peine à rejeter une incursion militaire turque après l'échec de la mise en place de l'accord de Sinjar signé avec le gouvernement d'Erbil en octobre 2020. Qualifié à l'époque d'« historique », ce dernier avait pour but de mettre fin à l'emprise de « groupes étrangers » à Sinjar, en référence aux combattants du PKK. Mais « la résistance du PKK et l'opposition des groupes paramilitaires » ont mis un frein à la volonté de Bagdad et l'ont affaibli, précise le spécialiste. « Étant donné que Moustafa Kazimi (Premier ministre irakien) est dans une bataille critique avec les groupes paramilitaires alliés à l'Iran, toute position qu'il adoptera dépendra de son évaluation de l'intervention d'Ankara et de l'impact qu'elle pourrait avoir sur eux », observe Tamer Badawi.

C'est « la guerre que vous ne voyez pas, celle dont personne ne parle », dénonçaient il y a quelques jours des villageois de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien dans les colonnes du journal britannique Morning Star à propos des récentes opérations militaires de la Turquie dans cette région du nord de l'Irak. Ankara a lancé en avril dernier une nouvelle offensive.

Ce parrain mafieux qui fait trembler l'État turc avec des vidéos postées sur les réseaux sociaux

Dans des vidéos suivies par des millions d'internautes en Turquie, Sedat Peker multiplie les déclarations visant de hautes personnalités de l'entourage du président Erdogan. Sedat Peker multiplie les accusations contre l'entourage du président Erdogan.

Un trépied et une caméra, voilà ce qui causera votre chute ! C'est la promesse réitérée de Sedat Peker, adressée à certaines figures politiques parmi les plus puissantes de Turquie. En cavale, ce caïd de 49 ans diffuse, depuis le début du mois, sur les réseaux sociaux, des vidéos consultées par des millions de Turcs. Il y règle ses comptes avec ses ennemis du monde politique, déballant par la même occasion des scandales à l'ampleur inédite.

Trafic de drogue, viols, tabasages, assassinats de journalistes : la sordide liste des révélations du parrain déchaîne une partie de l'opinion publique et des politiques. Dans les années 1990, au nom du combat contre la guérilla kurde, on a vu se développer des liaisons dangereuses entre la mafia, des groupes d'extrême droite et des services de l'État. Cette alliance contre-nature a continué à prospérer jusqu'à nos jours.

Nous n'avons cessé de la dénoncer. Mais cette fois, c'est différent : les révélations émanent d'un homme de l'intérieur de ce système, estime Sezgin Tanrikulu, député du CHP, le principal parti d'opposition.

« Une sorte de haut dignitaire » Friand des apparitions publiques,

Sedat Peker, 49 ans, est connu depuis trente ans dans tout le pays. Militant de la cause ultranationaliste, il avait fini par rallier ouvertement le camp du président Erdogan autour de 2015. Le voyou n'hésitait pas, alors, à tenir en personne des meetings politiques, notamment à Rize, ville natale du chef de l'État. Au faite de sa gloire, il bénéficiait même d'une escorte de policiers-gardes du corps mis à sa disposition par le ministère de l'Intérieur : Ils me suivaient partout, même en visite à l'étranger, comme si j'étais une sorte de haut dignitaire », s'es-claffe-t-il.

Mais tombé en disgrâce, le bandit s'enfuit dans les Balkans, puis à Dubaï. Et en avril 2020, une opération policière vise son organisation, une cinquantaine de ses hommes de main sont arrêtés, le

domicile de sa femme et ses filles perquisitionné. Depuis, il ne décolère pas, multipliant les révélations et les accusations contre des députés de la majorité, des fils d'ex-ministres et même contre le redouté ministre de l'Intérieur, Süleyman Soyulu.

Certaines des accusations les plus spectaculaires du parrain sont portées sans l'appui d'aucune preuve autre que sa parole, mais certains éléments les rendent crédibles, notamment le fait qu'il confesse sa propre participation à certains méfaits.

Bien que le mafieux s'abstienne de le citer, les accusations qui visent son entourage pourraient encore fragiliser la position du président Erdogan, déjà ébranlée par une profonde crise économique.



May 30, 2021
By Wladimir Van Wilgenburg

Kurds becoming a minority in Kurdish region of Afrin: Statement

Kurds used to make up 96 percent of Afrin's population but now represent only 25 percent, over two dozen organizations said in a letter they cosigned to call on the UN and major powers to "end the Turkish occupation" of the area.

5 local civil society and human rights organizations on Friday said only about 20 percent of the original Kurdish population of northern Syria's Afrin remain in the region three years after Turkey and its allied armed groups seized the area.

After the assault on Afrin, Turkey settled thousands of Syrian Arabs there who been displaced from other areas in the country by of-

fensives conducted by the regime of Bashar al-Assad. This significantly altered the demography of Afrin.

Kurds made up 96 percent of Afrin's population before 2011 but now represent about 25 percent, read a statement cosigned by 25 organizations and published by Human Rights Organisation – Afrin-Syria (HRO). It added that 75 percent of the current residents are Arab and Turkmen settlers. The organizations accused Ankara of changing the "demographic composition" and the Kurdish identity of the region by bringing in hundreds of thousands of settlers.

They called on the United Nations

and major powers to intervene and "end the Turkish occupation."

On March 18, 2018, Turkey and Turkish-backed rebels occupied the Kurdish enclave of Afrin during their so-called Operation Olive Branch. The occupation has continued amid widespread accusations of war crimes, including ethnic cleansing, kidnapping for ransom, and gender-based violence.

According to a report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published in June 2018, permitting ethnic Arabs to occupy houses of Kurds may be an intentional attempt to permanently change the ethnic composition of the area.

Just this week, armed groups in Turkish-controlled zones kidnapped three Kurds from Afrin, the Syria-based HRO reported. One of them was Besar Osman from Kefir Cene village, whom the Turkish-backed military police abducted while he was going to Azaz and transferred to a prison in al-Rai in northern Aleppo.

The group also accused the Turkish-backed Faylaq al-Sham group of kidnapping Shewqi Mustafa (65) and Horo Ahmed (37) on May 27 in Meydan Ekbesê village in Afrin's Rajo subdistrict on charges of having links with the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES).

The New York Times

31 May, 2021
By Farnaz Fassihi

Iran removes challengers for presidency

Warnings of 'election coup' as hard-line judiciary chief becomes a lead candidate

Candidates in Iran's presidential elections have always been strictly vetted, and those deemed insufficiently loyal to the Islamic Revolution were disqualified. Within those limits, contenders held differing views on easing domestic restrictions or dealing with the West, and sometimes the victor was even a surprise.

Now even minor differences that give voters some semblance of a choice appear to have been erased.

The candidates in the election scheduled for June 18 either espouse deeply conservative positions aligned with those of the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, or are little known, with no voter base and no chance to win.

And one candidate in particular is leading: Ebrahim Raisi, the current judiciary chief, appointed by Ayatollah Khamenei, who has a long history of involvement in human rights abuses, and who lost in 2017 in a surprise victory by the outgoing president, Hassan Rouhani.

With no credible challenger, Mr. Raisi is expected to win this time. Any serious competition has been winnowed from the race. Even some members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, known for their strong hostility to any political dissent, described the election as antidemocratic.

The Guardian Council, a 12-person body responsible for approving candidates, disqualified anyone who might shift the vote against Mr. Raisi, who, as a prosecutor and as a judge, has overseen the executions of minors and dissidents.

On Thursday, Ayatollah Khamenei publicly endorsed the Guardian Council's final decision. He said council members had conducted their duty and called on the public to "not listen to anyone saying it's useless, don't go to the election polls, we won't go."

The council's decision and Ayatollah Khamenei's endorsement of it have

rattled political circles. The reformist party announced for the first time that it has no candidate in the race.

Analysts say Mr. Raisi's presidency would finalize a plan years in the making for conservatives to consolidate power, take over all branches of the government, marginalize any reform faction and severely restrict the power fights within the Islamic Republic.

"Today we are witnessing an unabashed attack on any semblance of republican principles in favor of the absolute power of the supreme leader," said Abbas Milani, director of Iranian studies at Stanford University.

The appearance of an engineered victory for Mr. Raisi, 60, has prompted louder and wider calls for an election boycott and has increased voter apathy among ordinary Iranians. Polls predict a low turnout. The most recent survey conducted last week by the Student Polling Agency, ISPA, showed only 37 percent of voters want to cast ballots.

With Ayatollah Khamenei's allies already in control of the Parliament and judiciary, the takeover of the presidency could reshape the negotiations on how to revive the 2015 nuclear agreement.

President Donald Trump renounced the pact three years ago, in what he called a "maximum pressure" campaign to squeeze more concessions from Iran, but his policy appears to have only strengthened the hard-liners.

President Biden wants to seek a wider agreement with Iran that would constrain not only its nuclear program, but also its missile development and its involvement in conflicts around the region. But Mr. Raisi and his faction oppose making concessions to the West.

What particularly astonished political circles in Iran was the Guardian Council's disqualification of prominent political figures such as Ali Larijani, a centrist conservative and former speaker of the Parliament, and the current vice president, Eshaq Jahangiri, considered a reformist most closely aligned with Mr. Rouhani.

Mr. Larijani belongs to a very prominent political family and was appointed by Ayatollah Khamenei to lead negotiations for a 25-year economic deal between Iran and China. Mr. Larijani was seen as a candidate who could attract reformist votes.

While a former president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and a former government minister, Mostafa Tajzadeh, the leading reformist candidate, were also disqualified, their removal from the race came as little surprise. Mr. Ahmadinejad, who was once considered close to Ayatollah Khamenei, has increasingly taken the posture of an eccentric opposition figure. Mr. Tajzadeh, who was imprisoned for several years for his political activism, had called for a revision of the Constitution.

"This is an election coup," Mr. Tajzadeh said on Wednesday in a virtual town hall he hosted on the Clubhouse communal chat site, attended by at least 12,000 Iranians. "We must all speak up and say people will not accept the legitimacy of the result. People will not participate in this theater."

Mr. Ahmadinejad has also said he will not vote and has denounced the Guardian Council. "Why don't you just take out the Republic altogether and say this regime is all ours and nobody has the right to even protest?" said Mr. Ahmadinejad in a live Instagram talk he hosted on Wednesday with an audience of thousands.

Even Mr. Raisi voiced some concern and said that he had lobbied with the Guardian Council to reinstate some of the candidates so that the elections would be more competitive.

The council has not made public its reasons for disqualifying candidates and has only said that it approved those deemed suitable to lead the country in the current circumstances.

In early May the council announced new eligibility requirements to narrow the race, excluding anyone who holds dual citizenship, is younger than 40 or older than 75, has a detention record or lacks governing experience.

Kian Abdullahi, the editor in chief of the Tasnim News Agency, affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards, criticized the Council's final list of candidates on Twitter, a striking note of discord from a group that has long symbolized Iran's power base.

He said candidates must be acceptable to the public and that "the people must decide."

Elections in the Islamic Republic have never been considered democratic by Western definition. Government opponents cannot run, and the process of vetting candidates and counting ballots is not transparent. In 2009, the election result was widely seen as rigged and led to months of antigovernment unrest.

But even so, in past elections candidates representing different factions and policies were on the ballot, and the victor was not a foregone conclusion — rivals campaigned and competed vigorously. The public was engaged. Celebrities and pop stars were even enlisted to endorse contenders.

The months leading to presidential elections in Iran typically brought a partylike atmosphere to cities where young people rallied in the streets at night carrying posters, chanting slogans and waving flags of their favorite candidate. The security apparatus tolerated these fleeting moments of open civic discourse, partly because they gave the appearance of a population that endorsed the Islamic Republic's legitimacy and participated in its elections.

This time around, election fever appears extremely subdued — partly because of the pandemic but also from an underlying apathy. Iranians have struggled through a year of pandemic mismanagement, slow vaccine enrollment, a collapsing economy and social oppression.

"I don't know anyone around me who is voting," said Aliyar, a 44-year-old engineer who asked that his full name not be used for fear of retribution. "Because it has proved over and over to us that nothing will change with us voting. It's hopeless."

La sécheresse menace le nord-est syrien de catastrophe humanitaire

La Turquie est accusée de retenir l'eau de l'Euphrate dont le niveau est historiquement bas. Le faible débit du fleuve menace la région de pénurie d'eau, de coupure d'électricité, et de crise économique.

L'eau de l'Euphrate ne coule presque plus. Voilà des mois que son débit a drastiquement chuté. Les photos du fleuve qui irrigue une bonne partie du Proche-Orient de la Turquie à l'Irak en passant par la Syrie montrent un lit parfois asséché, traversé par un faible cours d'eau, bien moins haut que d'ordinaire.

Sur le barrage de Tehrane, en amont de l'immense lac Assad, seuls 180 mètres cubes s'écoulent par seconde, quand le minimum observé est d'habitude de 500 mètres cubes. Dans son briefing au Conseil de sécurité sur la situation humanitaire en Syrie, le sous-secrétaire général pour les affaires humanitaires des Nations unies attirait le 26 mai l'attention sur la baisse de niveau de l'Euphrate depuis janvier qui «atteint un point critique ce mois-ci».

Catastrophe humanitaire

Dans un rapport que le Figaro a pu consulter, une coordination d'ONG travaillant dans le nord-est de la Syrie s'inquiète de voir diminuer l'activité des deux barrages qui encadrent le lac Assad. «Si les deux barrages cessent de fonctionner, les conséquences seront graves», note un humanitaire présent sur place. «Les barrages de Tishreen et Tabqa sont la principale source d'électricité pour environ trois millions de personnes dans le nord-est de la Syrie, et l'Euphrate

fournit de l'eau potable à environ 5,4 millions de personnes», rappelle un autre travailleur humanitaire de la région.

À Menbij et à Deir-ez-Zor, l'eau n'est disponible que tous les deux ou trois jours ».

Un travailleur humanitaire

«Les retours que nous avons des familles attestent de l'aggravation de la situation, note le premier. À Menbij, deux familles nous ont directement signalé que leur électricité avait diminué de 20-22 heures par jour à 8-9 heures par jour». Même constat pour l'approvisionnement en eau, qui s'avère de plus en plus complexe. «Toujours à Menbij et à Deir-ez-Zor, l'eau n'est disponible que tous les deux ou trois jours, continue-t-il. Les communautés locales achètent de l'eau privée par camion à des entreprises, ce qui est plus cher, et l'eau est pompée directement de l'Euphrate et n'est souvent pas correctement purifiée».

La dégradation de la situation sanitaire suit. La coordination d'ONG auteure du rapport note ainsi l'augmentation forte des cas de diarrhée et de leishmaniose (une maladie chronique à manifestation cutanée et/ou viscérale). Par ailleurs, le comité de santé de la région de l'Euphrate (Kobané et Ein Issa) communiquait le 27 mai sur le nombre croissant d'empoisonnement lié à l'eau. En mai, 1019 cas de maladie d'origine hydrique (dont 65 à 70 % d'enfants) ont été traités par les hôpitaux de Kobané et les centres de soins de santé primaires des campagnes. Des ressources captées par les turcs

Les autorités kurdes qui tiennent la région depuis que l'État islamique en a été chassé, accusent la Turquie de retenir l'eau de l'Euphrate qui prend sa source sur les hauts-plateaux anatoliens. Dans un communiqué envoyé à l'ONU le 24 mai, le ministère des Affaires étrangères turc dément, et affirme que la Turquie honore ses engagements de délivrer un débit de 500m3 d'eau par seconde à la Syrie. Dans son communiqué le ministère turc rejette la responsabilité sur la Syrie. «Plutôt que de demander de l'eau supplémentaire qui est au-delà du potentiel naturel du cours d'eau transfrontalier donné, les pays en aval devraient viser à relever leurs défis en matière d'eau qui découlent principalement de l'inefficacité dans la gestion de l'eau et les pratiques agricoles», est-il écrit.

«Les Turcs s'engagent à laisser passer 500 m3 par seconde, en moyenne sur l'année, mais pas de façon uniforme, note Fabrice Balanche, géographe spécialiste de la région, et maître de conférences à l'université Lyon II. Quand ils ont de l'eau, ils la laissent couler, mais quand ils en ont besoin, comme actuellement avec la sécheresse que connaît la région, ils la gardent pour eux. Ils ne feront certainement pas de cadeau aux Kurdes», commente-t-il. La Turquie est en effet ouvertement hostile au PYD kurde qui tient la région et qui entretient des liens très forts avec le PKK turc.

Dotés de moyens techniques bien plus performants les Turcs captent les eaux de l'Euphrate et puisent dans les nappes phréatiques transfrontalières. En cette période de

sécheresse, ces nappes, moins alimentées par des précipitations plus faibles, voient leur niveau baisser, et parfois échapper aux puits syriens, moins profonds, et moins sophistiqués.

Des infrastructures syriennes vétustes

La Syrie connaît des cycles de sécheresse. La dernière en date s'est étendue de 2005 à 2010. Seulement, depuis plusieurs décennies, la tendance est à la baisse globale des précipitations et une hausse généralisée des températures.

Dans ce contexte le nord-est syrien est bien fragile, ses infrastructures hydriques sont vétustes et hors d'âge. À titre d'exemples, les canaux qui irriguent les plaines au nord de Deir Ez-Zor sont en majeure partie ouverts, et donc soumis à une importante évaporation. «Pour 1 m3 d'eau apportés aux cultures, il faut 7 m3 d'eau en moyenne», explique Fabrice Balanche.

Dans une région quasiment entièrement tournée vers l'agriculture, la pénurie d'eau risque de déstabiliser une région déjà éventrée par la guerre. «Les agriculteurs se détournent de la culture du blé, trop gourmande en eau, explique Fabrice Balanche, alors que cette région était le grenier à blé du pays». «Sans politique globale de modernisation des infrastructures, la crise économique et la misère ne feront qu'augmenter, reprend-il. Autant de facteurs dont jouent les cellules de l'État islamique, toujours très présentes dans la région».

Kurds to protest for education in Kurdish

The Kurdish Language and Culture Network will hold rallies in Turkey's Kurdish-majority eastern provinces of Diyarbakır, Van and Şırnak.

The rallies will be organized as part of the petition launched by the Kurdish Language and Culture Network on February 22 with the slogan, "Make Kurdish the official* and education language in Turkey."

Accordingly, the first rally will be held in Şırnak's Cizre with the slogans "Make Kurdish language the official and education language in Turkey" and



"May the 21st century be the century of Kurdish language."

While the rally in Van province

will be held on June 4, the one in Diyarbakır province will be held on June 7, 2021.

The Kurdish Language and Culture Network have started preparations for the rallies in the related provinces.

* According to the first sentence of Article 3 of Turkey's Constitution, "The State of Turkey, with its territory and nation, is an indivisible entity and its language is Turkish." The Article 4 also stipulates that "the provision of Article 1 regarding the form of the State being a Republic, the characteristics of the Republic in Article 2, and the provisions of Article 3 shall not be amended, nor shall their amendment be proposed."



May 31, 2021
By Hiwa Shilani

ISIS executes Kurdish police officer 19 months after his abduction

ISIS militants executed a Kurdish police officer who was kidnapped, along with his cousin, some 19 months ago outside the town of Qara Tapa, northeast of Diyalá province in the unofficial administrative district of Garmanyán.

In a brutal video published by ISIS and thought to have been filmed roughly two days earlier, viewers saw the moment when a handcuffed Jalal Baban was fatally shot by his captors.

The extremist group previously released Baban's cousin after the family paid a ransom, but refused to set Jalal free because he had been working in the local police force.

Until the release of the video, Baban's family had been anxiously awaiting any news of him.

Raana Mustafa, his mother, told Kurdistan 24, "I was waiting for my son's return, and now he was martyred and I do not even know where his body is."

Ziyad Mohammed, one of Baban's cousins, said, "More than a year and a half ago, Jalal and my other cousin were sleeping in our village before ISIS kidnapped them in a surprise raid and took them to an unknown destination."

"ISIS has orphaned an entire family, he continued. "Jalal has

a wife and four brothers, including two with special needs, and his martyrdom affected the psychological condition of his mother."

The brazen, broad daylight killing shown in the video clip shocked the local public, who say it highlights ISIS militants' continued ability to operate in Iraq's disputed territories, of which the family's town is a part.

An official from the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs in Erbil revealed on Monday that cooperation between its fighters and the Iraqi military began to coordinate their monitoring of ISIS activity in the areas, disputed

by Baghdad and the autonomous Kurdistan Region. The areas have suffered from the lack of unified military communication and strategy in large tracts of land ranging from the disputed territories ranging from Khanaqin in central Diyalá province to Kirkuk and northward to multiple areas surrounding Mosul.

Since its territorial loss in Iraq, ISIS fighters have adopted many of the same guerrilla tactics if used to gain prominence prior to seizing control to large parts of both Iraq and Syria in 2014, launching attacks on security forces and the population in general throughout several districts in Diyalá province.