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IRAN : LES PASDARANS AFFIRMENT AVOIR ÉLIMINÉ MILITAIREMENT LE PJAK

Le 3 septembre, les Gardiens de la révolution annonçaient « la reprise des opérations contre les rebelles kurdes » dans la zone frontalière avec le Kurdistan irakien », notamment dans la région de Sardasht, sans préciser si l'armée iranienne avait, une fois de plus, violé la frontière. De leur côté, les responsables locaux du Kurdistan d'Irak confirmaient la reprise des bombardements iraniens, qui ont tué un berger et détruit plusieurs maisons.

Le 5 septembre, les mêmes Gardiens de la révolution affirmaient avoir tué 22 combattants du PJAK. Sans confirmer ni infir-

mer ce bilan, le PJAK (Parti pour une vie libre du Kurdistan) demandait le même jour un cessez-le-feu temporaire :

« Nous avons pris l'initiative de proposer un cessez-le-feu pour un temps limité afin d'entamer des négociations avec la partie iranienne et régler les problèmes entre nous », a déclaré lundi à l'AFP par téléphone Sherzad Kamangar, porte-parole du PJAK.

Sur le site du PJAK, un communiqué officiel du Parti indiquait que « si l'Iran n'acceptait pas ce cessez-le feu, il serait responsable de la réponse des combattants. Les derniers événements démontrent que la guerre ne

résoudra pas nos problèmes mais va plutôt les accroître. »

Le maire de la ville kurde de Soran, Karmanj Izzat, déclarait à l'AFP qu'à « 21H00 (18H00 GMT) hier (le 4 septembre), l'artillerie iranienne a bombardé plusieurs secteurs le long de la frontière dans la région de Sidakan causant la mort d'une femme, Hamin Sadiq, et blessant deux autres personnes ». Selon le maire les bombardements se poursuivaient le 5 septembre.

Le 6 septembre, au lendemain de l'annonce du cessez-le-feu, le gouvernement iranien, par la voix des Gardiens de la révolution, a demandé des « clarifica-

tions » sur la nature et les conditions de cette trêve :

« La proposition de cessez-le feu du groupe terroriste PJAK n'est pas claire, et le gouvernement de la région autonome du Kurdistan (d'Irak) qui fait office d'intermédiaire doit la clarifier le plus tôt possible. Dès que les conditions de ce cessez-le-feu auront été clarifiées, les Gardiens de la révolution annonceront leur décision" de l'accepter ou non. »

Le communiqué des Gardiens de la révolution, publié sur leur site Web, Sepahnews, demandait notamment le retrait total des combattants du PJAK des zones frontalières « afin de permettre le rétablissement complet de la sécurité aux frontières de la République islamique ».

L'explication de cette demande de cessez-le-feu peut être liée à la mort du commandant en chef adjoint du PJAK, Majid Kavian, alias Samakhou Saraldan, survenu le 3 septembre et annoncé le 7 par l'Iran. Né en 1982, Majid Kawiyani, membre du PJAK depuis 1999, aurait été tué dans un bombardement. La mort du second du PJAK a été ensuite confirmée par le mouvement kurde, parlant d'un éclat d'obus meurtrier qui aurait atteint Majid Kavian.

Mais le cessez-le-feu a finalement été rejeté par l'Iran et loin d'arrêter leur offensive, les forces iraniennes ont témoigné de leur intention de poursuivre les com-

bats, jusqu'à l'élimination du PJAK, élimination qui, selon eux, est sur le point d'être achevée. Le général Ahmad Reza Pourdastan a ainsi promis « dans les prochains jours une totale sécurité sera instaurée à la frontière. Ce groupe est désormais en situation de faiblesse et ses activités se sont considérablement réduites. »

L'armée de terre des Gardiens de la révolution annonçait de son côté s'être emparée de « la principale base des terroristes dans les hauteurs de Jassoussan dans la région de Sardasht le long de la frontière » et que la zone occupée par le PJAK était sous contrôle.

Mais un responsable du PJAK, Saeed Khan, a nié la teneur triomphaliste de ces communiqués : « Nous avons annoncé un cessez-le-feu et nous avons vu que des dangers planaient sur le Kurdistan irakien, nous avons donc évacué les zones. Cela ne signifie pas que nous ayons peur de l'Iran et nous sommes prêts à repousser toute attaque. Nous nous trouvons maintenant en territoire iranien » (source AFP).

Le PJAK affirme également avoir tué 600 soldats iraniens.

Le repli du PJAK en territoire iranien est nié par l'Iran qui affirme, au contraire, que « les nombreuses et vigoureuses opérations des Gardiens de la révolution contre le groupe terroriste PJAK ont permis de nettoyer le nord-ouest du pays des contre-

révolutionnaires et de prendre le contrôle de toute la ligne frontière. Lors de ces opérations, les groupes contre-révolutionnaires ont subi de lourdes pertes et ont été contraints de quitter le territoire iranien » a ainsi déclaré le général Mohammad-Taqi Ossanlou, un commandant des forces terrestres des Pasdaran.

Le président de la Région du Kurdistan, Massoud Barzanî, a, dès les premiers jours de l'attaque, appelé « le PKK et le PJAK à cesser leurs opérations militaires à partir de notre sol et à abandonner l'idée qu'ils ne peuvent obtenir leur droits que par les moyens militaires. Nous sommes avec les droits du peuple kurde mais pas par le biais de la lutte armée car cela n'aboutira pas. Nous encourageons le PKK et le PJAK à les obtenir de manière pacifique. »

Au sujet des demandes répétées de la Turquie et de l'Iran d'envoyer des troupes de Peshmergas combattre leurs compatriotes, Massoud Barzanî a rejeté toute éventualité de guerre fratricide : « Deux pays nous demandent de contrôler notre frontière afin qu'il n'y ait pas de problème entre nous, mais nous avons peur d'envoyer des forces pour éviter une guerre entre Kurdes. C'est donc impossible d'envoyer des troupes. Nous essayons, avec le président Jalal Talabani, la Turquie, l'Iran, le PKK et le PJAK de trouver une solution pour mettre un terme à la guerre. »

TURQUIE : MENACES D'INCURSIONS TERRESTRES AU KURDISTAN

Les attaques du PKK n'ont pas faibli après les accrochages sanglants qui avaient incité la Turquie à intervenir une fois de plus au Kurdistan d'Irak. Le 12 septembre, des

attaques simultanées, notamment d'un commissariat de police et d'une caserne ont fait 5 victimes à Semdinli, dans la province de Hakkari, et une dizaine de blessés. Le gouverneur de Hakkari a fait état de 2 combat-

tants kurdes tués dans les assauts, en indiquant qu'une « opération de représailles » était en cours.

Dès le lendemain, le ministre turc de l'Intérieur, Idris Naim

Şahin a déclaré à la presse qu'une incursion terrestre pouvait succéder aux bombardements aériens, alors qu'une rencontre à Bagdad entre responsables irakiens, turcs et kurdes avait eu lieu récemment.

Mais derrière les promesses de représailles et la « ligne guerrière » volontiers affichée par Ankara dès qu'il s'agit du PKK, la diffusion d'enregistrements sonores faisant état de rencontres secrètes en 2010, entre le gouvernement turc et le mouvement kurde, sans intermédiaire mais sous patronnage norvégien, a été largement commenté par la presse. Répondant aux journalistes, le président du Parlement de Turquie, Cemil Çiçek, qui était vice-premier ministre à l'époque, loin de nier, a pris en exemple la Grande-Bretagne et ses négociations avec l'IRA, ainsi que l'Espagne et ses rencontres avec l'ETA : « L'Etat turc et ses institutions font ce qu'ont fait des pays comme la Grande Bretagne ou

l'Espagne concernant le terrorisme, c'est tout ».

Même si elles brisent un tabou en Turquie, celui d'une quelconque « reconnaissance » d'une force kurde avec laquelle il faut négocier, ces rencontres avouées, pour le moment, n'ont abouti qu'à un échec et depuis les élections parlementaires et l'emprisonnement de membres du BDP, la solution politique semble au point mort, ce qui se traduit par une recrudescence de la violence.

Le 22 septembre, une autre attaque, dans la province de Van, faisait deux morts du côté des forces turques, et trois blessés. Dans le même temps, à Diyarbakir, un tireur isolé, armé d'une kalachnikov, a fait feu sur des policiers en plein centre ville, en tuant un et blessant l'autre (il devait succomber à ses blessures peu de temps après), ainsi que deux passants. Le tireur ayant pris la fuite, il est difficile d'apprécier

les raisons de son geste, ni même s'il s'agit de l'acte d'un déséquilibré ou d'un militant.

Mais l'attentat qui a fait le plus de bruit, le même jour, revendiqué cette fois par l'énigmatique groupe des « Faucons de la Liberté du Kurdistan » (TAK) qui semblent souvent agir en dehors de tout contrôle du PKK, a fait 3 morts et 15 blessés, dans le centre de la capitale turque cette fois, et non plus en terre kurde. Dans un mail adressé à l'agence de presse Firat News, pro-PKK, l'organisation affirme que cette attaque « n'est qu'un début et que d'autres suivront dans les villes turques ».

Le 23 septembre, des avions turcs bombardaient une fois de plus la zone frontalière du Kurdistan d'Irak. Le porte-parole du PKK, Dozdar Hammo, déclarait à l'AFP que les bombardements, qui visent le mont Qandil, n'avaient fait aucun blessé.

KURDISTAN D'IRAK : BRAS DE FER ENTRE ERBIL ET BAGDAD SUR LA LOI PÉTROLIÈRE

L'exploitation des ressources en hydrocarbures au Kurdistan est un sujet de conflit permanent entre Bagdad et Erbil, l'Irak voulant imposer des décisions centralisées, la Région kurde défendant au contraire la libre gestion de ses propres richesses. Un nouveau projet de loi sur les hydrocarbures, approuvée par le gouvernement irakien le 28 août dernier, a déclenché de vives réactions du côté kurde et le président de la Région kurde a réclamé son retrait :

« La présidence de la région du Kurdistan condamne cette manœuvre et demande au conseil des ministres de retirer ce projet immédiatement car il est contraire à la Constitution. Nous

appelons le président du Parlement à rejeter ce projet présenté par le gouvernement et à poursuivre le travail législatif (sur l'ancien projet de loi présenté en 2007) en prenant en considération les amendements de toutes les parties y compris les réserves de l'Alliance kurde. »

L'élaboration de cette loi et son adoption est un feuilleton à rebondissements interminable entre les deux gouvernements, et achoppe principalement sur les accords pétroliers que les Kurdes concluent de leur propre chef avec des groupes étrangers, ainsi que sur la répartition des coûts et des bénéfices de ces opérations. En mai dernier, un accord avait pu être trouvé sur la répartition, mais la volonté des Kurdes, plus enclins à faire preuve de souples-

se sur le partage des recettes générées par l'exploitation des hydrocarbures, se fait déterminée lorsqu'il s'agit de garder le contrôle de leurs ressources, de leur exploitation et des contrats passés avec les compagnies étrangères.

Sur le terrain, les Irakiens ne peuvent guère imposer leur contrôle manu militari au Kurdistan. Le bras de fer se joue pour le moment sur le papier : les contrats passés avec le Kurdistan sans l'accord de Bagdad ne sont pas validés par le gouvernement central ce qui placent les sociétés étrangères devant un dilemme : passer outre l'approbation de l'Irak les expose à des mesures de rétorsion et de représailles en leur fermant la porte aux gisements du

sud de l'Irak; d'un autre côté, la Région du Kurdistan est, actuellement, la seule région de l'Irak qui connaît une activité économique constante et prospère et qui attire les sociétés internationales.

Le conflit se règle donc à coup de veto et d'interdictions mutuelles. Le 11 septembre, le gouvernement irakien a même annoncé que le Kurdistan avait décidé de stopper toute exportation du pétrole extrait de son sol, alors que l'exploitation, un temps interrompu, avait redémarré en février dernier, et que la production, qui était de 135.000 barils par jour, devait atteindre, selon les objectifs kurdes, 200.000 barils. Cette reprise de l'exploitation en février mettait fin à un gel des exportations kurdes qui durait depuis octobre 2009, Erbil et Bagdad ne parvenant pas à s'entendre sur la rémunération des compagnies étrangères exploitantes.

Lors de cette reprise, en février, le Premier ministre irakien Nouri al-Maliki avait accepté que son gouvernement avalise les contrats déjà passés par les Kurdes sans l'accord de Bagdad. Mais la loi approuvée le 28 août dernier est considérée par les Kurdes comme une énième tentative de reprendre le contrôle de l'exploitation des richesses du Kurdistan par un gouvernement central qui, tout au long de son histoire, s'est peu soucié du développement au Kurdistan. De plus, le climat de méfiance mutuelle et les tensions politiques avivées par le prochain retrait des troupes américaines n'offrent guère un terrain favorable à un accord.

Dans une déclaration faite à l'AFP le ministre irakien du Pétrole, Abdelkarim al-Luaybi affirmait : « Le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan a cessé aujourd'hui ses exportations pétrolières, sans fournir de

motif. C'est une grande perte pour l'économie irakienne, ainsi que pour les peuples kurde et irakien en général. »

Mais le Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan irakien a vite démenti, dans un communiqué, « avoir décidé de suspendre les exportations par l'oléoduc reliant l'Irak à la Turquie. Ce sont de sérieuses difficultés techniques rencontrées ces deux derniers jours par la Compagnie pétrolière du nord (NOC, public) qui ont causé l'interruption temporaire des exportations du Kurdistan et toute autre interprétation est fautive », a répondu le ministère des Ressources naturelles du gouvernement kurde, dans un communiqué. « Le gouvernement kurde reste attaché à l'accord intérimaire signé avec le gouvernement fédéral d'Irak sur l'exportation du pétrole à partir des champs pétroliers situés au Kurdistan jusqu'à ce qu'une solution définitive soit trouvée. »

SYRIE :

LA CONDITION DES KURDES APATRIDES RESTE DIFFICILE

Len 1962, le gouvernement syrien avait décidé de procéder à un recensement de toute la population dans la province de Hassaké, sous prétexte de déterminer qui était entré 'illégalement' en Djezireh depuis 1945, en fait pour 'arabiser' le plus possible de terres frontalières. La province étant habitée par une large communauté de Kurdes, en majorité paysanne, beaucoup n'avaient aucun document à avancer pour prouver leur citoyenneté ou leur titre de propriété. Il faut noter que la Djezireh, du temps du Mandat français, avait accueilli nombre de réfugiés fuyant les massacres ottomans, Kurdes, Arméniens, syriaques, et même, dans les années 30, d'autres Syriaques fuyant les représailles après le

départ des Anglais d'Irak. Mais seuls les Kurdes furent inquiétés et le recensement ne durant qu'une journée (beaucoup n'étaient même pas avertis), des centaines de milliers de Kurdes se retrouvèrent du jour au lendemain apatrides, tandis que les terres qui leur étaient confisquées revenaient à des colons arabes.

Ces Kurdes « sans papier » sont de deux sortes en Syrie : ceux inscrits lors du recensement de 1962 mais qui n'ont pu fournir assez de documents pour prouver leur citoyenneté sont considérés comme « étrangers » (*ajnabi*). Ils ont une pièce d'identité spéciale indiquant qu'ils ne sont pas syriens et font face à des restrictions dans leurs accès à l'éducation, l'emploi, le mariage ; les

'*maktoumin*' (non-enregistrés) n'ont pas du tout été recensés en 1962 et ont encore moins de droits que les premiers : ils ne peuvent obtenir aucun diplôme et sont souvent soumis à des restrictions concernant leur déplacement dans le pays et même dans leur propre province.

Le nombre total des Kurdes en Syrie est difficile à établir car ils ne sont pas officiellement dénombrés comme tels. Certains chercheurs estiment qu'ils forment 10% de la population syrienne. Parmi eux le nombre des Kurdes déchu de leur nationalité en 1962 pouvait être autour de 120 000 et l'ONU estime qu'ils pourraient être aujourd'hui autour de 300 000. On avance ainsi les chiffres de 140 000 '*ajnabi*' et 160 000 '*maktoumin*'.

Alors que l'année 2011 célèbre le 50ème anniversaire de la Convention visant à réduire le cas des apatrides, un reportage du journal kurde Rudaw revient sur le sort de ces Kurdes démunis de nationalité dont Bachar Al Assad s'est finalement décidé à réhabiliter certains dans leur citoyenneté au printemps dernier, sans que toute la question soit résolue. Comme il est indiqué dans l'article, l'octroi ou non de la citoyenneté fut tout à fait fantaisiste. Un Kurde interviewé explique ainsi que son « grand-père et ses enfants étaient nés en Syrie. Mais tandis que certains de ses frères et sœurs gardèrent leur nationalité, mon grand-père et deux autres de ses frères travaillaient aux champs, et n'en firent pas la demande. »

Paradoxalement, le statut d'apatride est héréditaire via le père, mais pas les biens des apatrides eux-mêmes : « Alors que j'ai automatiquement hérité du statut d'apatride de mon père, je ne pourrai hériter de ses biens quand il mourra. Nos terres ont déjà été confisquées et remises à des colons arabes. Le gouvernement syrien critique les Israéliens au Sud, mais ils font la même chose au Nord. »

Être apatride ferme aussi la voie à beaucoup d'emplois, alors que la Syrie connaît une grave récession : « Même si j'ai eu assez de chance pour entrer à l'université grâce au directeur du collège, mes études ne serviront à rien et je n'aurai pas un diplôme valide. Je ne pourrai pas travailler dans le secteur

public ni créer une entreprise à mon nom. »

Le décret présidentiel en mars dernier a rendu la nationalité à quelques 6000 Kurdes (sur environ 300 000) et leurs noms n'ont toujours pas été inscrits au registre national des citoyens, de sorte qu'ils n'ont pas droit à un passeport, seulement à une carte d'identité, comme en témoigne l'un d'eux :

« Je suis content d'avoir ma carte d'identité, mais tant que le processus n'est pas achevé, je ne fais pas confiance à leur action. Avant que ma carte ne soit délivrée, j'ai dû avoir un entretien, répondre à beaucoup de questions, et d'intimidations, avec la Sécurité d'État. La citoyenneté ne doit pas être un privilège. C'est mon droit. »

CULTURE :

LA RESTAURATION DU PALAIS D'ISHAQ PASHA ACHEVÉE EN 2013

Le ministre de la Culture et du Tourisme en Turquie a indiqué que la restauration du Palais qui surplombe la ville de Beyazit (Dogubeyazit en turc), restauration qui avait été entreprise en novembre de l'année dernière, serait achevée en 2013. Le coût total de ce sauvetage s'élèvera à 8 millions de liras turques.

La construction de ce palais a été ordonnée en 1685, par le prince kurde Abdi Pasha et n'a été totale-

ment achevée qu'en 1784, par son petit-fils, Ishak Pasha, près d'un siècle plus tard. L'édifice, candidat au Patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO, comprend 116 pièces, une mosquée, des salles d'audience, des appartements privés (harem) et un mausolée. Il était agrémenté par un système de chauffage central. Son décor extérieur, très sculpté, est une survivance du style médiéval de Djezireh, foisonnant et baroque, que l'on voit tout autant sur les mosquées, comme à Sivas, Erzurum ou Divrigi, que sur les architectures chrétiennes, Akhtamar

ou Deir ez Zafaran à Mardin. Les motifs végétaux et animaliers abondent, avec des réminiscences de motifs mésopotamiens et ourartiens (les restes d'une forteresse d'Ourartu sont visibles à côté). Dans les bâtiments les plus tardifs, une certaine influence de l'architecture occidentale se fait sentir.

En face du palais s'élève le tombeau d'Ahmedê Khanî, le grand poète kurde qui fut un contemporain des princes de Beyazit, et qui mourut bien avant que le palais ne fût achevé.

PASCAL BONIFACE, CHERCHEUR EN GÉOPOLITIQUE

«UN RÉGIME SYRIEN ISOLÉ NE DURERA PAS»

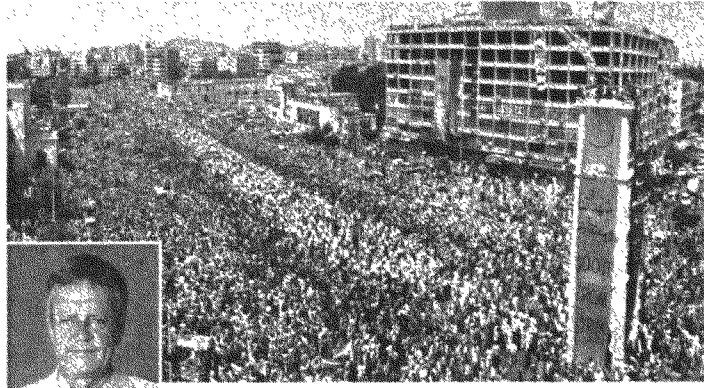
Contrairement à ce que le président Bachar al-Assad avait promis le mois dernier, la répression se poursuit en Syrie. Depuis mars, elle a fait plus de 2 200 morts. Pour Pascal Boniface, directeur de l'Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques (Iris)*, une intervention militaire occidentale n'est toutefois pas la solution.

Depuis le début de la crise, la situation a-t-elle évolué ?

Rien n'a changé et c'est cela qui change tout : malgré la répression féroce de la part du régime, les Syriens continuent à manifester, au péril de leur vie. Auparavant, une répression de ce type aurait été suffisante pour les faire taire. S'ils tiennent bon, c'est parce qu'il y a les exemples tunisien et égyptien. Et ils savent que s'ils cèdent maintenant, il y a aura une glaciation politique durable en Syrie.

Sur le plan diplomatique, les condamnations et sanctions semblent inefficaces...

Le problème est que d'une part, il faut du temps pour que des sanctions soient efficaces ; d'autre part, il faut que l'en-



AP

Ci-contre, Pascal Boniface. Ci-dessus, manifestation à Hama, le 22 juillet dernier. Plus d'un million de Syriens étaient dans la rue.

semble des grandes nations y soit associé. Si elles ne sont qu'occidentales, les sanctions sont limitées car les pays occidentaux n'ont plus le monopole de la puissance. Il faut qu'ils travaillent à la création d'un front commun avec les pays arabes, mais aussi la Chine et les pays émergents. L'ampleur de la répression ne laissera pas intacts les soutiens à al-Assad et un régime isolé ne durera pas éternellement.

Encouragée par le cas libyen, la communauté internationale peut-elle s'engager militairement en Syrie ?

La Libye est un cas à part. Kadhafi était diabolisé dans le monde alors que Bachar al-Assad garde des soutiens. On savait que l'armée libyenne ne présentait pas un grand danger. Les armées occidentales ne peuvent pas intervenir de la même manière en Syrie.

REPÈRES

15 mars. Un rassemblement a lieu à Damas suite à un appel sur Facebook.

23 mars. La répression fait 100 morts à Deraa, foyer de la contestation.

21 avril. Al-Assad annonce la levée de l'état d'urgence. La répression continue.

18 mai. Washington sanctionne al-Assad, suivie par l'Europe.

18 août. Barack Obama et ses alliés occidentaux appellent al-Assad à partir.

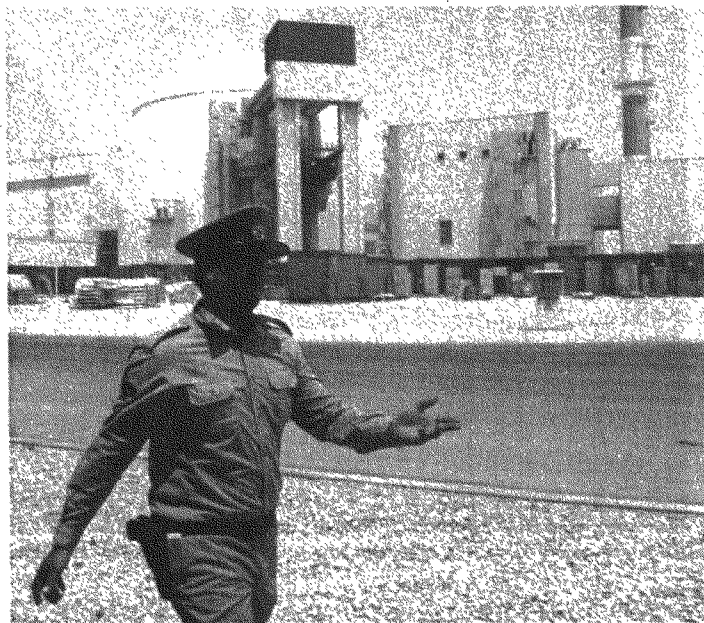
La Syrie, montrée du doigt, va-t-elle se rapprocher de l'Iran ? Non, au contraire. L'Iran et la Syrie sont des alliés, mais Téhéran a ces derniers temps pris ses distances avec al-Assad et engagé des contacts directs avec l'opposition syrienne. L'important pour l'Iran est de garder des liens avec la Syrie quel que soit son dirigeant. •

* Auteur de *Les intellectuels faussaires* (éd. Gawsewitch).

FACE À LA MENACE NUCLÉAIRE

SARKOZY ÉVOQUE DES FRAPPES CONTRE L'IRAN

Nicolas Sarkozy hausse le ton contre l'Iran. Devant la conférence des ambassadeurs réunie hier à Paris, le président français a une nouvelle fois dénoncé l'attitude de Téhéran, soupçonné de développer l'arme nucléaire, et laissé la porte ouverte à une intervention militaire. Les «ambitions militaires, nucléaires et balistiques [de l'Iran] constituent une menace croissante qui pourrait conduire à une attaque préventive contre les sites iraniens, qui provoquerait une crise majeure dont la France ne veut à aucun prix», a averti le chef de l'Etat. Avant de plaider, comme il l'a fait à plusieurs reprises par le passé, pour un renforcement des sanctions. Téhéran, qui affirme que ses ambitions nucléaires ne concernent que le domaine civil, avait déclaré cette semaine qu'elle ne discuterait plus d'un échange de combustible avec les grandes puissances, et qu'elle entendait bien continuer à enrichir son uranium elle-même, ce qui contribue à alimenter la suspicion. •



La centrale nucléaire iranienne de Bouchehr.

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Offensive iranienne contre des rebelles Kurdes, 30 morts



TEHERAN (Reuters) - L'armée iranienne annonce avoir tué au moins 30 rebelles kurdes dans une nouvelle offensive lancée contre des repaires des séparatistes dans une région montagneuse à la frontière avec l'Irak.

L'offensive est menée depuis vendredi par des unités des Gardiens de la Révolution, corps d'élite de l'armée iranienne. Des témoins et des responsables locaux ont signalé de violents combats dans les montagnes de Kandil et des bombardements autour du village irakien de Sone, samedi.

Un commandant iranien a précisé que ces opérations interviennent après une période de grâce d'un mois liée au ramadan et qui devait laisser aux rebelles le temps de se retirer des régions frontalières du nord-ouest de l'Iran.

"Les unités des Gardiens de la Révolution ont tué ou blessé 30

membres du groupe terroriste du PJAK (Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan) depuis vendredi après-midi", a déclaré le colonel Hamid Ahmadi à l'agence officielle Irna.

Ces opérations de l'armée iranienne interviennent quelques jours après une série de frappes aériennes conduites en territoire irakien par la Turquie contre les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) qui ont fait près de 160 tués parmi les insurgés.

Depuis la mi-juillet, des centaines de personnes ont fui leurs habitations et se sont réfugiées dans des petits camps de fortune.

Mi-août, l'Iran avait annoncé avoir tué plusieurs dizaines de membres du PJAK, une émanation du PKK actif en Turquie.

Les autorités iraniennes accusent le PJAK d'être responsable d'actes de sabotage contre des oléoducs et d'embuscades visant des soldats.

Un porte-parole du PKK a

confirmé les événements qui se déroulent en Iran.

"Les forces iraniennes ne visent pas seulement le PJAK mais prennent pour cible tous les Kurdes et leurs réalisations. Pour cette raison, nous annonçons qu'à partir de maintenant nous nous lançons dans un combat contre les forces iraniennes aux côtés des combattants du PJAK", a déclaré Dozdar Hamo à Reuters.

"A partir de maintenant, nous allons collaborer pour apporter un soutien direct au PJAK et ensemble nous allons défendre les réalisations du peuple kurde", a-t-il ajouté.



Un policier turc et sa femme tués par le PKK dans l'Est

TUNCELI, Turquie - 5 septembre 2011 - (Reuters)

DES SÉPARATISTES kurdes ont ouvert le feu sur des policiers qui jouaient au football à Tunceli, dans l'est de la Turquie dimanche soir, tuant un officier et son épouse et faisant huit blessés, rapporte la presse locale.

L'un des assaillants a trouvé la mort. Il s'agit du troisième acte de guérilla commis en trois jours dans cette région de Turquie, où les violences séparatistes se sont multipliées cet été. Deux militaires et deux membres d'une milice rurale avaient trouvé la mort ce week-end dans des attaques imputées au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

L'aviation turque a bombardé dimanche des positions séparatistes dans le nord de l'Irak. En août, les raids aériens de repré-

sailles ont fait 145 à 160 morts parmi les combattants du PKK, selon l'état-major turc. Une quarantaine de membres des services de sécurité turcs avaient été tués en juillet.

Les autorités iraniennes ont en outre annoncé samedi la mort de 30 membres du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan (PJAK), émanation locale du PKK, dans une opération menée par les gardiens de la Révolution.

Ces derniers ont rejeté lundi un cessez-le-feu du PJAK, annoncé dimanche sur le site internet www.pjak.org. "Nous voulons qu'ils (les combattants du PJAK) quittent nos frontières", a déclaré à l'agence Fars le colonel Hamid Ahmadi. "Sans cela, annoncer un cessez-le-feu n'a aucun sens".



Irak Le gouvernement du Kurdistan contre le projet de loi sur le pétrole

ERBIL (Irak), 5 septembre 2011 (AFP)

LE GOUVERNEMENT régional du Kurdistan irakien a condamné et demandé le retrait lundi du projet de loi sur les hydrocarbures approuvé il y a une semaine par le gouvernement fédéral de Bagdad.

"La présidence de la région du Kurdistan condamne cette manœuvre et demande au conseil des ministres de retirer ce projet immédiatement car il

est contraire à la Constitution", affirme un communiqué.

"Nous appelons le président du Parlement à rejeter ce projet présenté par le gouvernement et à poursuivre le travail législatif (sur l'ancien projet de loi présenté en 2007) en prenant en considération les amendements de toutes les parties y compris les réserves de l'Alliance kurde", ajoute le texte.

Le gouvernement irakien a approuvé le 28 août un projet de loi sur le pétrole et le gaz destiné à réglementer les activités de la principale res-

source du pays, après des années d'impasse sur ce sujet.

Le texte, qui doit encore être approuvé par le Parlement, doit régir le secteur des hydrocarbures et répartir les responsabilités de la production entre Bagdad et les provinces.

Le vote d'une telle loi a été retardée régulièrement depuis 2007 en raison de divergences entre le gouvernement central de Bagdad qui souhaite avoir la haute main sur la gestion des ressources pétrolières et les autorités provinciales du Kurdistan, région riche en hydrocarbures, qui entendent garder le contrôle de leur richesse.

L'Irak produit environ 2,7 millions de barils par jour, dont environ 2,1 millions

sont exportés. Le pays tire 90% de ses revenus de son secteur pétrolier.

Le gouvernement central est entré en conflit avec la région autonome du Kurdistan sur la nature des accords pétroliers qu'elle a conclus avec des groupes étrangers, et la répartition des coûts et des bénéfices de ces opérations. Un "accord provisoire sur la répartition des recettes" a néanmoins été conclu en mai.

Le Kurdistan, qui a recommencé début février à pomper son pétrole pour l'exportation, espère porter sa production à 200.000 bj à la fin de l'année, contre 135.000 bj en mai.



Erdogan menace Israël militairement !!

Jeudi 08 septembre 2011

par Shraga Blum

Le Premier ministre mégalomane de Turquie, Recep Tayyip Erdogan doit sans doute se prendre pour un Sultan régnant sur 127 provinces. Il continue à souffler sur les braises dans toutes les directions et cette fois-ci, c'est sur le plan militaire qu'il ose menacer Israël. Lors d'une interview accordée à la chaîne Al-Jazeera, il a déclaré « que la prochaine expédition maritime vers Gaza serait escortée de bâtiments mili-

itaires turcs pour forcer le blocus israélien ». D'autre part, il a annoncé « que la Turquie ne permettrait pas à Israël d'exploiter à lui seul les ressources sous-marines de la Méditerranée orientale ». En cela, Erdogan se poste aux côtés du gouvernement libanais sous contrôle du Hezbollah, qui avait annoncé « qu'il empêcherait par tous les moyens Israël de forer dans les zones que le Liban considère comme sa propriété ». Mercredi, c'était Chypre qui était menacé militairement par la Turquie concernant des forages en mer, ce qui a



provoqué immédiatement une réaction ferme de la Grèce qui demande à Ankara « de se comporter de manière responsable ». Par ailleurs, Ankara et le Caire ont annoncé de prochaines manœuvres navales communes.



Réponse ferme de Lieberman aux Turcs

Vendredi 09 septembre 2011

par Shraga Blum

Le ministre des Affaires étrangères Avigdor Lieberman sauve un peu l'honneur du gouvernement israélien qui fait silence radio depuis quelques jours alors qu'Erdogan ne cesse de rallonger chaque jour des mesures de rétorsion envers l'Etat juif.

Lieberman est en train de préparer une série de mesures de représailles, et notamment un rapprochement avec l'Arménie et les Kurdes, ennemis jurés de la Turquie. Jeudi se sont réunis des

hauts responsables du ministère des Affaires étrangères afin d'ébaucher un plan d'action et ils le soumettront la semaine prochaine au ministre. On parle notamment d'une reconnaissance officielle du génocide arménien par les Turcs entre 1915 et 1918, et une aide militaire aux rebelles Kurdes, peuple réel celui-ci, et dont le territoire national est occupé depuis des siècles par la Turquie, la Syrie, l'Iran et l'Irak. Des rencontres entre délégués israéliens et kurdes sont prévues sur le territoire européen. Par ailleurs, Israël compte déployer une activité diplomatique contre la Turquie et surtout, il est ques-



tion d'une action judiciaire contre Ankara devant les instances internationales à propos de l'expédition pro-terroriste du « Marmara » maintenant qu'il a été établi par l'ONU que le blocus israélien contre Gaza était conforme au droit international. Le gouvernement aura-t-il le courage d'aller jusque là ?



5 septembre 2011

Kurdistan : l'Iran rejette la trêve des séparatistes

Téhéran rejette le cessez-le-feu unilatéral proposé par les rebelles kurdes du Pjak, le Parti pour une vie libre du Kurdistan, basé en Irak.

La télévision iranienne affirme qu'au moins 30 combattants séparatistes kurdes ont été tués ce dimanche dans le nord de l'Iran, à la frontière avec l'Irak. Les Gardiens de la révolution bombardent la zone depuis la mi-juillet.

Téhéran appelle en vain Bagdad à déployer des forces le long de leur frontière commune pour empêcher les infiltrations de rebelles.

Mêmes revendications côté turc. Ce week-end, Ankara a mené de nouveaux raids aériens dans le nord de l'Irak contre des positions retranchées de la guérilla du PKK, le parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan.

Depuis la mi-août, l'armée turque affirme avoir tué 160 séparatistes kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak.

En réponse à cette offensive, le PKK menace de nouer une alliance avec le Pjak.

Iraq cracks down on Iran-backed Shiites

BAGHDAD

Baghdad gets serious about pushing back foes as U.S. withdrawal looms

BY MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT

Under increased pressure from the United States, an Iraqi crackdown on Iranian-backed Shiite militias has helped produced a previously elusive goal: For the first time since the American invasion of Iraq, an entire month has passed without a single U.S. service member dying.

The milestone is particularly remarkable because it comes after 15 troops were killed in July, marking the deadliest month for the Americans in three years; and it has occurred amid a frightening campaign of suicide bombings and assassinations from Sunni insurgents that has killed hundreds of Iraqis, resurrecting the specter of the worst days of sectarian fighting.

"If you had thought about a month without a death back during the surge in 2007, it would have been pretty hard to imagine because we were losing soldiers every day, dozens a week," said Col. Douglas Crissman, who is in charge of American forces in four provinces of southern Iraq and oversaw a battalion in Anbar Province during the surge. "I think this shows how far the Iraqi security forces have come."

That none of the roughly 48,000 U.S. troops in Iraq were killed in August is a remarkable if fragile achievement, officials said. In all, 4,474 American soldiers have died here since the United States invasion in 2003.

American military commanders attribute the drop in deaths to the Iraqi government finally pushing back on Iran and the Shiite militias, as well as

aggressive unilateral strikes by United States forces. If the Americans are correct, and August is not just a statistical blip, it may also be connected to the ongoing negotiations between American and Iraqi officials over whether to leave some troops behind after the end of the year, experts said. Though all sides in Iraq have said they want the Americans to leave, each has some interest in seeing that some troops stay behind.

The Iraqi government continues to rely on American forces and expertise to preserve security. Shiite militias would lose some of their rationale for existence and Al Qaeda and Sunni insurgents could lose a useful foil.

For the United States, domestic polit-



U.S. soldiers on a joint patrol with Iraqis in Sadiyah early this week. Currently there are 48,000 American troops serving in Iraq, and 4,474 have died since the invasion in 2003.

ical concerns would also make it easier to sell an extension to a war-weary public if there were fewer casualties.

"The groups involved are being paid by the Iranians to make trouble for the Americans, and that means that their main objective is no longer there if the Americans withdraw all their troops and there is no reason for them to exist," said Joost Hiltermann, the International Crisis Group's deputy program director for the Middle East. "It doesn't mean they won't exist altogether, but their violence will be harder to justify. So they will either fade away or become part of the political process. There's the outside possibility that the Iranians keep them around as one of many levers to use and deal with Maliki, but I would be surprised if that happened."

American military and diplomatic officials said Iraq has not only pressed the militias, but also sent word directly to Tehran to back off on attacks. The Iranians had used the militias, which are primarily based in the southern part of the country and Baghdad, to wage a proxy battle with the Americans for dominance and influence in Iraq. Those militias were responsible for 13 of the 15 deaths in June, many the result of rocket or mortar attacks on military bases.

American officials increased pressure on Iraqis to clamp down after the spate of attacks in June, and Iraq responded. The government increased its counterterrorism operations against the militias, brought judges from Baghdad in to the southern part of the country to

ensure those captured were not summarily released and replaced generals who were seen to be performing poorly, officials said.

In July, nearly two-thirds of the Iraqi counterterrorism missions were aimed at Iranian-backed militias, compared to just a fifth of all missions in the first six months of the year. In the first half of the year, the Shiite-led government focused on Al Qaeda and other Sunni insurgent groups, according to Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan, the military's top spokesman in Iraq.

Counterterrorism operations and diplomatic efforts, according to American

For the first time since the invasion of Iraq, a month has passed without a single U.S. service member dying.

officials, significantly reduced the number of rocket attacks on military bases, particularly in southern Iraq where the militias most frequently operate. In one single day in July, a base in the southern province of Maysan was rocketed 43 times. The attacks in southern Iraq were so bad in July that the U.S. military took the unusual step of bombing open swaths of desert with a C-130 gunship and an Apache helicopter in the middle of the night to try and deter the militias.

"We used them out here as a demonstration to say these are the capabilities we have and we are willing to use it to

protect ourselves," said Col. Crissman.

That may have helped, too. In August, there were days when none of the American bases in southern Iraq received incoming fire.

"I wish U.S. service members could take full credit for being responsible for this, but it's absolutely a combination of things coming together, particularly the Iraqis acting against the militias," Col. Crissman said.

Ali al Moussawi, an adviser to Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, said "part of the reason for the drop in troop deaths has been the growth and development of the Iraqi security forces."

"Providing security for the citizens

and every one inside of Iraq is the duty of the government, even the foreign troops that are in Iraq legally," said Mr. Moussawi. "The security breaches we've had in Iraq are not because of the militias. The security breaches we've had have been suicide bombers and other kinds of attacks. That is what worries us now."

Col. Crissman and other military officials cautioned that the August figures did not mean that Iraq was suddenly safe, either for the U.S. military or for Iraqis.

They said that as the United States begins to withdraw its troops in the coming months, there will likely be a re-

surgence in attacks as militias and insurgents try and claim responsibility for pushing the Americans out of Iraq.

As much as the Iraqis have clamped down on the militias, their security forces are still struggling to thwart attacks from Al Qaeda and other Sunni insurgents. On Aug. 15, those insurgents pulled off a devastating series of coordinated attacks across Iraq, killing over 90 and wounding over 300. None of those attacks, however, targeted Americans.

Since then, there have been several suicide bomb attacks, including one inside a mosque on Sunday that killed more than 30 Iraqi civilians.

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2011

Ayatollah warns West against seeking gains from Arab revolts

BY RICK GLADSTONE

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, admonished the West and Israel on Wednesday not to seek advantage from the antigovernment uprisings convulsing the Arab Muslim world.

Ayatollah Khamenei delivered the warning in a televised speech that appeared to reflect new unease in Tehran over the course of events among its strategic neighbors, particularly Syria.

"The events taking place in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain and certain other countries today are decisive and destiny-making for the Muslim nations," Ayatollah Khamenei said. But, he added, "if the imperialist and hegemonic powers and Zionism, including the U.S. tyrannical and despotic regime, manage to use the ongoing conditions in their own favor, the world of Islam will definitely face big problems for tens of years."

The speech by the Ayatollah Khamenei, given at Tehran University to commemorate Id al-Fitr, the Muslim holiday, was described in Iran's state-run press as a respectful tribute to the revolutionary movements that have reawakened Muslim populations to "their genuine Islamic identity."

But the speech included a caveat that suggested Iranian leaders are worried about the possibility of outcomes that diminish their influence as these movements progress.

The omission of Syria in the ayatollah's remarks was especially conspicuous, underlining Iran's own ambivalence about how to deal with events unfolding there. Iran has been the strongest ally of President Bashar al-Assad throughout the five-month antigovernment uprising in Syria, which Mr. Assad has sought

brutally to suppress in the face of growing international isolation.

But in recent days even Iran has asked the Assad regime to find a way to accommodate demands of the protest movement, worried that Mr. Assad's downfall could harm Iran's own strategic interests in the Middle East.

On Saturday, the Iranian foreign minister, Ali Akbar Salehi, called on Mr. Assad's government to recognize the Syrian people's "legitimate" demands, the first such remarks to come from Iran since the Syrian uprising began.

Iran relies on Syria to help facilitate arming and financing Hezbollah, the powerful political, social and military movement in Lebanon, as well as Hamas, the militant Islamist group that governs Gaza. Both are avowed enemies of Israel and are considered terrorist groups by Israel and the United States.

Ayatollah Khamenei's speech also illustrated the awkward line that Iranian leaders have walked in commending the uprisings that have toppled or threatened autocratic leaders in neighboring countries while suppressing antigovernment demonstrations at home, particularly since the disputed 2009 Iranian presidential election that Iranian dissidents say was fixed to ensure victory for the hard-line president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The ayatollah appeared to acknowledge Iran's own election difficulties, saying they had always been a "challenging issue" in the 32-year history of the Islamic republic. But he also warned Iran's dissidents, who have been relatively silent for months, not to make trouble in advance of the next presidential election, to be held in 2013.

"Elections are the manifestation of

religious democracy," he said. "However, enemies seek to misuse elections to harm the country."

The Assad regime got something of a boost on Friday from its ally in neighboring Lebanon, the Shiite militant group Hezbollah.

The group's leader, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, echoed the regime's claims that the unrest in Syria was being driven by a foreign conspiracy seeking to destabilize the regime because of its support for anti-Israel resistance groups, The Associated Press reported.

"Those who are pushing toward sectarian strife in Syria want to destroy the country," Sheik Nasrallah said in a televised speech to mark the last Friday of Ramadan.

Meanwhile, in Paris on Wednesday, President Nicolas Sarkozy used a speech before French ambassadors to deliver harsh criticism of Mr. Assad, whom he had once courted.

The Syrian leader had caused "irreparable" damage to his credibility and France would do everything "legally permissible" to bring about his downfall, Mr. Sarkozy said. "The powers in Damascus are wrong to think they are protected by the people."

While France supports stronger economic sanctions against Syria, it opposes any military action, as in Libya, without a clear mandate from the U.N. Security Council, where Russia and China have refused to even consider economic sanctions against Damascus.



September 2, 2011 Fars News Agency

Commander: Iran Close to Complete Annihilation of PJAK

2011-09-20 Fars News Agency

TEHRAN (FNA)- Commander of the Iranian Army Ground Force Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Pourdastan expressed confidence about the full eradication of the PJAK terrorist group by Iranian forces in the near future.

"The scroll of the terrorist group PJAK will be rolled up in coming days and full security shall be restored to the border areas," Pourdastan said.

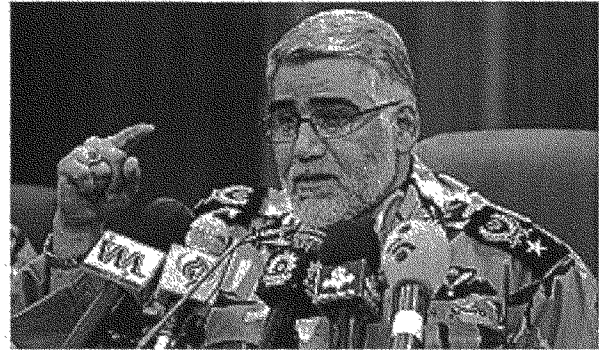
PJAK rebels "are now in a weak position and their activities have been greatly reduced," Pourdastan told the Iranian daily, Vatan Emrooz, adding the group was no longer considered a "threat".

PJAK, a militant Kurdish nationalist group with bases in the mountainous regions of Northern Iraq, has been carrying out numerous attacks in Western Iran, Southern Turkey and the Northeastern parts of Syria where Kurdish populations live.

The separatist group has been fighting to establish an autonomous state, or possibly a new world country, in the area after separating Kurdish regions from Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria.

Iranian intelligence and security officials have repeatedly complained that Washington provides military support and logistical aids for such anti-Iran terrorist groups.

In July, the IRGC arrested several teams of PJAK, who inten-



ded to infiltrate Iran to stage terrorist operations in the country.

In response, Iran deployed about 5,000 military forces in the Northwestern parts of the country along its joint border with the Iraqi Kurdistan region.

During the operations, the IRGC forces killed, injured and arrested tens of terrorists and destroyed their headquarters in the bordering areas of Alvatan near Sardasht city in Northwestern Iran.

But, upon a request by Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the group was given a one-month grace period during the Muslims' holy fasting month of Ramadan to retreat from the Northwestern borders of the Islamic Republic and stop its terrorist acts in these regions.

The IRGC resumed military operations against the Iraq-based PJAK terrorist group after its one-month deadline to the terrorist group ended.

Senior Iranian political and military officials have always underlined that the IRGC will continue operations against the terrorist group in a bid to defend Iran's territorial integrity.



September 4, 2011

Report: Iranian forces kill, injure 30 Kurdish rebels

(CNN) -- Iranian forces have launched a fresh offensive against Kurdish rebels, with a senior military commander telling a state-run news agency Saturday that 30 rebels were killed or injured in the operation.

Col. Hamid Ahmad, with the Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards corps, told the official Islamic Republic News Agency that the effort began Friday afternoon in the northwest part of the Middle Eastern nation in an area bordering Iraq. He described the mission as ongoing.

"The major operation against (Party of Free Life of Kurdistan, or PJAK) agents in the northwest borders will continue until the purification of the region from terrorists," Ahmad said.

It was not clear in the state-run news agency report whether the rebels crossed from Iraq into Iran.

Iranian forces have repeatedly shelled the border area between Iran and Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, tar-



A Kurdish man holds a banner reading 'Iranian troops out of Kurdistan' during a protest in Sweden on September 3, 2011.

geting Kurdish rebels who say they want their own independent country.

Blaming PJAK for violating a ceasefire, Ahmad said that two Kurds who were protecting the group's members had been killed in the latest offensive.

Revolutionary Guard troops also "killed, injured and arrested tens of terrorists" and destroyed a rebel camp near the city of Sardasht, the news agency

reported.

Sardasht is a predominately Kurdish town that sits on the Iran-Iraq border.

The military operation includes about 5,000 Iranian troops in the northwest part of the country, and comes two months after Iranian forces reportedly captured "several teams of PJAK (members) who intended to infiltrate Iran to stage terrorist operations," claims IRNA.

Like Turkey and Iraq, Iranian forces have had repeated battles with ethnic Kurdish fighters. The PJAK group is part of an alliance of Kurdish rebel groups that includes the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which conducts attacks against Turkey from northern Iraq.

This group is considered a terror group by the United States, though the IRNA report claims that Iranian officials repeatedly have complained such Kurdish rebels are being supported by Washington.

Syrian official details killings and torture

BEIRUT

Hama's attorney general steps down and describes abuses by Assad regime

BY NADA BAKRI

The attorney general of the central Syrian province of Hama has resigned in protest as he detailed hundreds of killings, arrests and torture by the government of President Bashar al-Assad.

The man who resigned, Mohammed Adnan al-Bakkour, is the highest official to leave the government over its brutal crackdown on protests and could represent a major blow to Mr. Assad.

The Syrian government says Mr. Bakkour was kidnapped and forced to make the video recording announcing his defection.

In the video released late Wednesday, Mr. Bakkour listed various reasons for his decision to quit. He said he was forced to falsify reports as security forces killed hundreds of jailed, peaceful demonstrators and buried them in mass graves. He said 10,000 people had been arbitrarily arrested.

He said 72 prisoners, including demonstrators and activists, were killed on July 31 when troops backed by tanks attacked the city of Hama, one of the most restive in Syria since the uprising against Mr. Assad started in March.

Antigovernment protesters across Syria have been bolstered in recent days by the downfall of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi in Libya. Rebels there broke through the loyalist defensive lines around Tripoli, the Qaddafi capital, and

are pursuing the former leader as they try to consolidate control over the country. Representatives of some 60 nations gathered Thursday for a conference in Paris to help the new Libyan authorities restore stability and a functioning economy in a country ravaged by rebellion after 42 years of dictatorship.

But Syrian activists caution against parallels. Unlike Libya, they hold no cities. Few, if any, seek Western intervention, and the military and security forces engaged in a brutal crackdown against them show little sign of fracture — underlining the importance of the resignation of the attorney general.

His resignation is the first by a senior Syrian government official.

Damascus denied that Mr. Bakkour had resigned, saying he was kidnapped along with his driver by an armed group on Monday and forced to give the statement. Mr. Assad has so far dismissed all criticism of his crackdown on opposition activists and ignored calls by various countries to step down.

In the video, Mr. Bakkour said he had been forced to issue a report saying that more than 420 people who were killed by security forces and buried in mass graves had been killed by armed gangs. The government has blamed Muslim extremist groups for the unrest and said it is facing a foreign conspiracy to divide the country.

Mr. Bakkour said in the video that 320 people had died from torture at police stations and that the army had leveled houses while their occupants were still inside.

Omar Idlibi, an activist with the Local Coordination Committees, a group of activists who have been helping to organize and document the uprising, said Mr.

Bakkour left the city earlier this week and was in hiding.

"He knows every single detail about the crimes committed by the authorities," Mr. Idlibi said. "With these information and details, we will be able to take the regime to the International Criminal Court."

The Syrian Army, along with security forces and other troops, raided Hama on July 31, the eve of the holy month of Ramadan, in an attempt to crush opposition there.

The United Nations has said that at least 2,200 people have been killed in Syria since the beginning of the uprising, and a Syrian human rights group said that 551 were killed during the month of Ramadan alone, 250 of them in Hama, which was the scene of a ferocious crackdown in 1982.

In Hama, residents welcomed the news of Mr. Bakkour's resignation, which came a day after tanks returned to the town and troops conducted house-to-house raids looking for activists involved in planning demonstrations.

"It is a scandal for the government," said Abu Ayham, a resident in Hama.

Another resident, who gave his name as Ahmad, said, "It will have huge repercussions, God willing."

Although activists in Syria say their revolution is substantially different from others in the Arab world, they emphasize the lessons that absolute power can no longer go uncontested and that repression alone will not clear the streets.

Hwaida Saad contributed reporting.

REUTERS

Kurdish rebels kill two Turkish police at soccer game

TUNCELI - 5 September 2011, (Reuters)

KURDISH guerrillas opened fired on a group of Turkish policemen playing football in the eastern city of Tunceli late on Sunday, killing a senior officer and his wife, and wounding eight other police officers, Turkish media reported.

The police were playing at an artificial pitch in the city centre when four or five rebels arrived by car and opened fire with long-range rifles.

One rebel was shot dead as police returned fire.

It was the third attack in two days in southeast Turkey, where two soldiers and two village guards also died in separate assaults by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants, amid an heightened

level of violence in the region.

Turkish warplanes bombed Kurdish guerrilla positions in Iraq on Sunday where PKK fighters operate from camps in the Qandil mountains in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq.

Turkey's armed forces have said between 145 to 160 militants were killed in air and artillery strikes on PKK bases in northern Iraq in August.

On Saturday, Turkey's southeastern neighbour Iran said its troops had killed or wounded 30 members of the PJAK (Party of Free Life of Kurdistan), an offshoot of the PKK.

The PKK has said it believes Turkey and Iran are coordinating attacks in the region and says it will join forces with the PJAK in response.

The PKK took up arms against the Turkish state in 1984 and is listed as a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States and the European Union. More than 40,000 people have died in the separatist insurgency.

The recent wave of cross-border air strikes came after PKK fighters killed more than 40 Turkish security personnel in July.

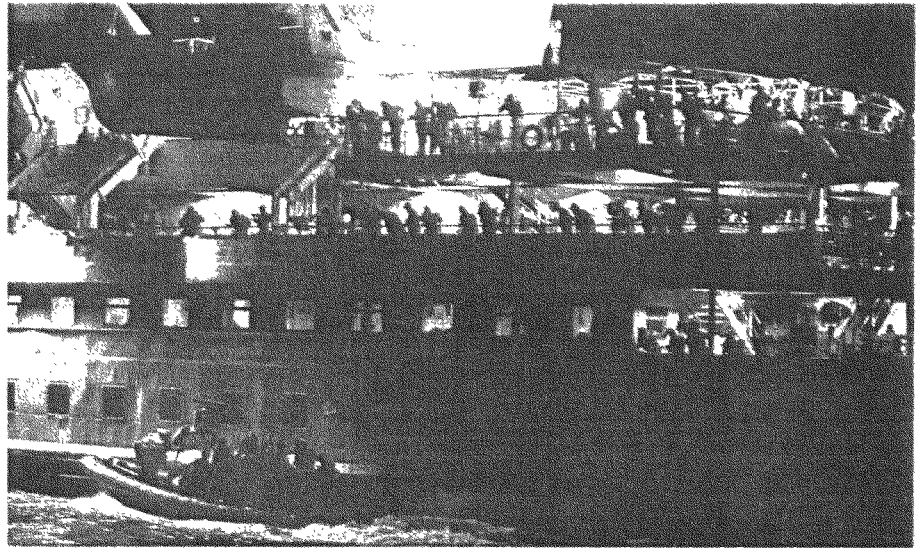
La Turquie durcit sa politique vis-à-vis d'Israël

Expulsion de l'ambassadeur israélien en poste à Ankara, suspension des accords militaires, saisine de la Cour internationale de justice (CIJ) : tout juste rentré de la Conférence internationale sur la Libye qui se tenait la veille à Paris, Ahmet Davutoglu, le ministre turc des affaires étrangères, a annoncé, vendredi 2 septembre, une série de mesures de rétorsion contre Israël. Motif : le refus israélien de s'excuser pour le raid mené, le 31 mai 2010, contre le *Mavi-Marmara*, principale unité de la flottille humanitaire qui cherchait à briser le blocus de Gaza. L'intervention des commandos israéliens avait causé la mort de neuf Turcs et porté un coup sévère aux relations israélo-turques mal en point depuis deux ans et demi.

Ces mesures de rétorsion sont en elles-mêmes moins surprenantes que le moment choisi pour les annoncer, soit quelques jours avant que le rapport Palmer des Nations unies ne soit officiellement publié : ainsi, l'expulsion de l'ambassadeur israélien n'aura « physiquement » pas lieu puisque celui-ci séjourne actuellement en Israël ; Ankara a réduit – et non suspendu, ce qui avait été un moment envisagé – le niveau de ses relations diplomatiques avec Israël ; lancées en 1996, les manœuvres militaires communes en Anatolie ou dans le Néguev sont déjà au point mort depuis l'opération « Plomb durci » menée par Israël sur Gaza en décembre 2008 ; et voilà plusieurs mois que la Turquie a pris possession du dernier des dix drones (Heron) commandés à Israël et qui lui sont fort utiles dans la guerre qu'elle mène contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le Kurdistan irakien.

La menace de saisine de la CIJ à propos de la légitimité du blocus de Gaza constitue, en fin de compte, la plus sérieuse mesure. En revanche, M. Davutoglu n'a pas touché aux relations économiques entre les deux pays, lesquelles se sont plutôt renforcées ces derniers temps, malgré la désaffection notable des touristes israéliens pour la Turquie.

C'est, selon l'analyste turc Menur Akgun, la « fuite » du rapport



Le 31 mai 2010, des commandos israéliens lançaient un raid contre le « Mavi-Marmara », de la flottille pour Gaza, faisant 9 morts parmi les passagers. WIREIMAGE

de l'ONU dans le *New York Times* en date du 2 septembre qui aurait conduit la Turquie à activer son « plan B » de sanctions contre Israël. Comme si Ankara réagissait non pas tant contre Israël que contre le contenu même du rapport – qualifié, également vendredi, de « nul et non avvenu » par le président turc Abdullah Gül –, alors que, selon l'AFP, Israël l'adopterait en émettant quelques réserves. « Ankara reproche au rapport Palmer de faire l'impasse sur les excuses israéliennes exigées par la Turquie, et de reconnaître une légalité internationale au blocus maritime sur Gaza », écrit Kadri Gursel, éditorialiste à *Milliyet* (centre gauche). Selon le *New York Times*, le rapport

Palmer dénonce un usage de la force « excessive et déraisonnable » de la part des commandos israéliens lors du raid qu'ils ont effectué sur le *Mavi-Marmara*, mais suggère également que ces derniers ont été confrontés à la « résistance violente

La précipitation avec laquelle Ankara a annoncé ces mesures paraît étrange

et organisée d'un groupe de passagers ». Une manière de mettre

en doute la principale ligne de défense, pacifique, turque.

« Logiquement, le gouvernement aurait dû attendre la publication du rapport puis les réactions israéliennes », suggère, à Istanbul, Gareth Jenkins, expert en affaires militaires et stratégiques. « Il n'est pas exclu – même si très peu probable – qu'en position de force après la publication de ce rapport, le gouvernement de Benjamin Nétanyahou ait alors fait un geste supplémentaire à l'égard de la Turquie », explique M. Jenkins

La précipitation avec laquelle M. Davutoglu a annoncé ces mesures de rétorsion paraît étrange. Mais en réagissant de manière offensive avant même la publication officielle d'un rapport que son gouvernement conteste, le ministre turc des affaires étrangères table sur le très large consensus anti-israélien qu'a fait naître en Turquie la mort de ces neuf militants. Il anticipe l'humiliation que ces conclusions – pour certaines jugées défavorables à la Turquie – pourraient produire dans son opinion publique.

Alors même que les printemps arabes mettent à mal la nouvelle politique étrangère turque telle que conceptualisée par Ahmet Davutoglu – en Syrie, la main tendue turque n'a pas eu d'effet sur la

répression menée par Bachar Al-Assad et en Libye, la Turquie se voit voler la vedette par la France – ces mesures de rétorsion contre Israël peuvent donner le change et assurer au gouvernement musul-

man conservateur de Recep Tayyip Erdogan un regain de popularité dans le monde arabe.

Et puis, quelques heures après qu'Ahmet Davutoglu eut détaillé auprès des médias les mesures de rétorsion turques vis-à-vis d'Israël, un porte-parole de son ministère annonçait, lui très discrètement, l'accord d'Ankara au déploiement du bouclier antimissiles de l'OTAN sur le sol turc. En adoptant publiquement une ligne dure contre Israël, Ankara espère peut-être minimiser les éventuelles critiques du monde musulman que pourrait lui valoir sa décision de laisser l'Alliance utiliser son territoire contre l'Iran. ■

Ariane Bonzon



Turquie: 2 soldats, 2 policiers, 2 miliciens tués dans des combats avec le PKK

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 4 septembre 2011 (AFP)

DEUX SOLDATS, deux policiers et deux miliciens ont été tués lors de trois accrochages ce week-end avec des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans l'est et le sud-est de la Turquie, ont annoncé dimanche des responsables locaux.

Un lieutenant et un sergent de l'armée turque sont morts dans des combats avec des membres du PKK alors qu'ils participaient samedi à une opération de ratissage dans une zone rurale proche de la ville de Tunceli, dans la province du même nom, a déclaré le gouvernorat de Tunceli dans un communiqué cité par l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Une opération disposant d'un soutien aérien a été lancée pour retrouver les assaillants, indique le communiqué.

Deux policiers ont été tués et neuf autres blessés dimanche dans la même

province quand un groupe de rebelles à mitrillé le terrain sur lequel les agents jouaient au football à la sortie de la ville de Munzur, selon des sources locales de la sécurité.

Deux "gardiens de village", une milice mise en place par Ankara pour lutter contre le PKK, ont par ailleurs été tués dimanche au cours d'une attaque à la grenade et au fusil d'assaut menée par les rebelles dans la zone de Daglica voisine de l'Irak, dans la province de Hakkari, a annoncé son gouverneur Muammer Türker à l'agence Anatolie.

Un gardien de village et trois ouvriers travaillant sur un chantier de construction ont été blessés dans cette attaque, a ajouté M. Türker.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, s'est engagé dans une lutte séparatiste armée en 1984. On estime que ce conflit a fait 45.000 morts depuis cette date.



Irak: Massoud Barzani demande au PKK et au PJAK de cesser leurs attaques

ERBIL (Irak), 6 sept 2011 (AFP)

LE PRÉSIDENT de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien Massoud Barzani a demandé mardi aux rebelles kurdes d'Iran et de Turquie de cesser leurs attaques à partir de son territoire et de chercher à obtenir leurs droits par des moyens politiques.

"J'appelle le PKK et le PJAK à cesser leurs opérations militaires à partir de notre sol et à abandonner l'idée qu'ils ne peuvent obtenir leur droits que par les moyens militaires", a-t-il affirmé s'adressant aux représentants du gouvernement du Kurdistan irakien à l'étranger.

Le mouvement indépendantiste armé kurde de Turquie PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) affirme être présent depuis 1984 dans les monts Qandil, à cheval sur l'Irak et la Turquie. Les rebelles kurdes iraniens du Parti pour une vie libre du Kurdistan (PJAK) sont issus du PKK et ont fondé leur parti en 2004.

Le PKK mène régulièrement des attaques meurtrières en Turquie et le PJAK fait de même en Iran.

"Nous sommes avec les droits du peuple kurde mais pas par le biais de la lutte armée car cela n'aboutira pas. Nous encourageons le PKK et le PJAK

à les obtenir de manière pacifique", a ajouté M. Barzani.

Il a reconnu être dans une situation compliquée. "Deux pays (l'Iran et la Turquie) nous demandent de contrôler notre frontière afin qu'il n'y ait pas de problème entre nous, mais nous avons peur d'envoyer des forces pour éviter une guerre entre Kurdes. C'est donc impossible d'envoyer des troupes", a-t-il souligné.

"Nous essayons, avec le président (irakien) Jalal Talabani, la Turquie, l'Iran, le PKK et le PJAK de trouver un solution pour cesser la guerre", a-t-il souligné.

L'Iran a lancé en juillet une série d'opérations de son côté de la frontière mais également en territoire kurde irakien. Selon les autorités, plusieurs dizaines de combattants du PJAK ont été tués et plusieurs bases détruites, dont trois en territoire irakien

En juillet, Bagdad avait sommé l'Iran de cesser ses bombardements, mais les Gardiens de la révolution ont affirmé que les opérations contre le PJAK se poursuivraient jusqu'à ce que l'Irak déploie des forces le long de la frontière commune pour empêcher l'infiltration de rebelles.

La Turquie mène également des raids contre les bases du PKK dans le Kurdistan irakien.



Turquie: quatre personnes enlevées par les rebelles kurdes

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 8 sept 2011 (AFP)

DEUX MILICIENS et deux civils ont été enlevés mercredi soir dans le sud-est de la Turquie par des rebelles kurdes, ont affirmé jeudi des sources locales de sécurité.

Les quatre hommes ont été interceptés par un groupe de rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans une zone rurale proche de la localité de Beytüşebap, dans la province de Sirnak, nveraine de l'Irak,

alors qu'ils revenaient d'un mariage, ont indiqué ces sources.

Une cinquième personne, elle aussi membre de la milice des "gardiens de village", financée par Ankara pour l'aider dans sa lutte contre le PKK, est parvenue à s'enfuir, ont-elles ajouté.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et de nombreuses capitales, a souvent eu recours à des enlèvements dans sa lutte pour l'autonomie du sud-est anatolien, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes.

Le mois dernier, les rebelles ont enlevé un soldat et un fonctionnaire dans la province de Diyarbakir. En juillet, ils ont kidnappé deux militaires et un personnel de santé, dans la même province.

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

Irak: le président kurde demande le maintien des troupes américaines dans le pays

SOULEYMANIEH, Irak (AP) — Le puissant président de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien Massoud Barzani s'est prononcé mardi pour le maintien des forces américaines en Irak au-delà de 2011, estimant que leur départ risquait de favoriser l'émergence de nouvelles violences confessionnelles.

Si les Kurdes sont généralement favorables au maintien des troupes américaines en Irak, c'est la première fois que M. Barzani se prononce publiquement en ce sens. "A mon avis, si les forces américaines se retirent, il y aura un risque de guerre civile", a-t-il averti dans un discours télévisé.

M. Barzani a appelé le gouvernement irakien à signer un accord avec les Américains pour le maintien de troupes dans le pays.

En vertu d'un accord de sécurité conclu en 2008 par Washington et Bagdad, l'ensemble des forces améri-



caines doivent quitter l'Irak d'ici au 31 décembre. Mais la persistance de l'instabilité et la crainte d'une montée en puissance de l'influence iranienne dans le pays a conduit certains responsables américains et irakiens à reconsidérer cette date-butoir.

Quelque 45.000 soldats américains sont actuellement en Irak. Début août, des dirigeants irakiens ont annoncé qu'ils ouvriraient des négociations sur

le maintien d'une force américaine résiduelle chargée d'aider à former les forces de sécurité irakiennes

Par ailleurs, les autorités américaines ont informé le Premier ministre irakien Nouri al-Maliki que le retrait des forces américaines avait officiellement commencé, ont déclaré mardi à Bagdad deux responsables du gouvernement.

Cette annonce devrait inciter les dirigeants irakiens à trancher rapidement la question de savoir s'ils veulent demander à Washington le maintien de troupes américaines dans le pays. Les Etats-Unis seraient prêts à accéder à une telle demande, mais celle-ci doit être formulée officiellement et Bagdad doit préciser le rôle qu'il souhaite voir les forces américaines jouer, ont expliqué à plusieurs reprises les autorités américaines.



Les séparatistes kurdes proposent un cessez-le-feu à l'Iran

Erbil (Irak), 5 septembre 2011 (AFP)

LES SÉPARATISTES KURDES d'Iran ont proposé un cessez-le-feu à Téhéran, qui a engagé une offensive contre les rebelles kurdes dans des zones frontalières entre l'Iran et l'Irak dans laquelle, selon les Gardiens de la révolution en Iran, 30 combattants du Pjak ont été tués.

"Nous avons pris l'initiative de proposer un cessez-le-feu pour un temps limité afin d'entamer des négociations avec la partie iranienne et de régler les problèmes entre nous", a déclaré lundi à l'AFP Sherzad Kamangar, un porte-parole du Pjak (Parti pour une vie libre du Kurdistan), basé en Irak.

Il n'a pas précisé la durée de cet éventuel cessez-le-feu.

Un communiqué mis en ligne dimanche soir sur le site du mouvement séparatiste indiquait que "si l'Iran n'acceptait pas ce cessez-le feu, il serait responsable de la réponse" des combattants du Pjak, basés dans la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien.

Le communiqué précise que l'arrêt unilatéral des combats doit commencer lundi à 12H00 (09H00 GMT).

"L'importance de l'attaque a poussé ce groupe terroriste à appeler à un cessez-le-feu mais l'Iran n'a pas encore pris de décision à ce sujet", a réagi le colonel Hamid Ahmadi, un officier des Gardiens de la révolution, cité lundi par l'agence iranienne Fars.

Il a rejeté toute trêve avec les combattants du Pjak, estimant qu'elle n'aurait "aucun sens" si les rebelles ne se retiraient pas au préalable des zones frontalières avec l'Iran, avant de discuter "si nécessaire".

Selon M. Ahmadi, "plus de 30 rebelles du Pjak ont été tués et 40 blessés

dimanche à la mi-journée, selon nos informations" dans l'offensive des Gardiens de la révolution. Ce bilan pourrait être plus lourd dans la mesure où les bases arrière des rebelles ont été visées. Il n'a pas précisé si une partie des opérations a été menée du côté irakien de la frontière.

Auparavant, la télévision d'Etat iranienne avait indiqué que des unités des Gardiens de la révolution iranienne ont tué 22 combattants du Pjak.

Un responsable kurde irakien a annoncé qu'une femme avait été tuée et deux autres personnes blessées dimanche du côté irakien par un bombardement iranien le long de la frontière, et que les bombardements se poursuivaient lundi.

Ces opérations, lancées vendredi, vont se poursuivre "jusqu'à l'élimination de tous les éléments contre-révolutionnaires et terroristes", a affirmé le colonel Hamid Ahmadi, cité par la télévision iranienne.

Samedi, les médias iraniens avaient annoncé la mort de deux membres des Gardiens de la révolution la veille dans des opérations contre le Pjak.

L'Iran a lancé en juillet une série d'opérations de son côté de la frontière mais également en territoire kurde irakien. Selon les autorités, plusieurs dizaines de combattants du Pjak ont été tués et plusieurs bases de rebelles ont été détruites, dont trois en territoire irakien.

En juillet, Bagdad avait sommé l'Iran de cesser ses bombardements, mais les Gardiens de la révolution ont affirmé que les opérations contre le Pjak se poursuivraient jusqu'à ce que l'Irak déploie des forces le long de la frontière commune pour empêcher l'infiltration de rebelles.

Kurd president calls for US forces to stay in Iraq

By YAHYA BARZANJI (AP)

SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq—The powerful leader of Iraq's Kurdish autonomous region made his first public appeal for American forces to stay in Iraq, saying on Tuesday that if they leave sectarian violence may erupt

Messoud Barzani rules the three northern provinces that make up the Kurds' self-ruled region. While Kurds generally want American forces to stay in Iraq, Barzani's speech Tuesday marked the first time he's taken a public stance in favor of keeping an American troop presence in Iraq into next year.

During a televised speech, Barzani said that, if American troops leave, the sectarian violence that plagued Iraq after the U.S.-led invasion might erupt anew. He called on the Iraqi government in Baghdad to sign an agreement with the Americans to keep forces in the country.

"In my opinion if the American forces withdraw there will be a possibility of civil war," he said.

Under a 2008 security agreement between Washington and Baghdad, all U.S. troops are slated to leave by Dec. 31, 2011. But continued instability and fear of growing Iranian influence in Iraq has prompted some Iraqi and U.S. officials to reconsider the deadline.

Iraq also does not have a powerful enough military to defend its borders and protect itself, Barzani said.

"Iraqi security forces are still not prepared to secure protection for Iraq and the Iraqi army is not prepared to guard borders and the air force possesses nothing," Barzani said.

There are currently about 45,000 U.S. troops in Iraq. At the beginning of August, Iraqi leaders announced that they would begin negotiations with the American government to keep a residual force in Iraq to help train Iraqi security forces.

Iraq's main political factions supported the decision with the exception of the virulently anti-American followers of Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. But so far, no formal request has been made and the U.S. military is preparing to withdraw its forces as planned.

Two Iraqi officials said Tuesday that U.S. authorities have informed Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki that the American military withdrawal has officially begun.

The notice puts pressure on Iraqi leaders to decide quickly if they will ask some U.S. troops to stay. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release the information. A U.S. Embassy spokesman declined to comment.

The U.S. has stressed repeatedly that Iraq must formally request the American military to stay longer and describe specifically what type of role they would like the American military to play.



"That's really up to the Iraqis. At what point do they want to ask?" said U.S. Lt. Gen. Frank G. Helmick, the second-highest ranking American military officer in Iraq. Then the U.S. must decide whether they want to fulfill that request, he said.

But Helmick, speaking during an interview with The Associated Press Monday night, said the longer Iraq goes without making a decision, the more difficult it becomes for the American military to fulfill whatever it may be that the Iraqis ask.

"It's not to say that we can't turn it around or we can't stop. It just gets more difficult as time goes on. Would we like a decision six months ago? Yeah, sure. But we don't have it," he said.

Keeping U.S. troops in Iraq even just to train their nascent Iraqi security forces after more than eight years of war is widely unpopular among Iraqis, whose leaders are weighing whether the security risks are worth the political backlash.

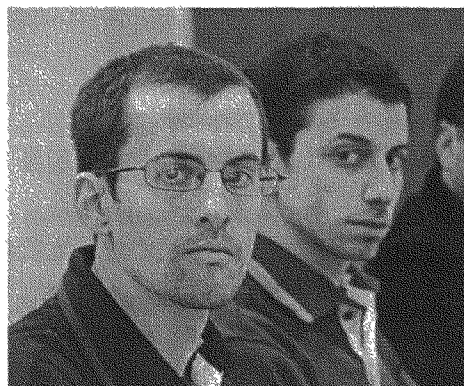
REUTERS

U.S. men in Iran to be freed soon with Talabani help: Iraqi envoy

TEHRAN - September 15, 2011 - (Reuters) By Rosalind Russe

TWO U.S. CITIZENS convicted of spying in Iran will be freed soon after Iraqi President Jalal Talabani negotiated their release with Iranian officials, an Iranian daily quoted an Iraqi envoy to Tehran as saying.

Shane Bauer, 28, and Josh Fattal, 29, were arrested on the border with Iraq in 2009 where they said they were hiking.



They were found guilty of illegal entry and espionage and were sentenced last month to eight years in prison.

On Wednesday, Iran's judiciary rejected President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's announcement that Bauer and Fattal would be freed "in a couple of days."

"The Iraqi president contacted top Iranian officials after the pair's families asked for his mediation ... They will be handed over to the Swiss embassy in Tehran early next week," the Thursday edition of Sharq daily

quoted Nazem Dabbagh as saying.

The Swiss embassy represents U.S. interests in Tehran since Washington broke off diplomatic ties after the 1979 Islamic revolution that toppled the U.S.-backed Shah.

During a meeting with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William Burns on Thursday, Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari confirmed Baghdad's intervention in the two men's case.

"The Iraqi government has made intensive efforts to obtain the release of the two Americans. We sent letters, many times, to a high level (in Tehran)," Zebari said in Arabic.

"It was the (Iraqi) president, PM and foreign minister who did that. They (Iranian officials) promised us more than once to release them. Now we have a clear promise and we are waiting for them to be released."

Relations between Iran and Iraq, which fought an eight-year war in the 1980s, have improved since the ousting of Saddam Hussein in the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

Many Iraqi politicians, mainly Shi'ite and Kurdish, spent years in exile in Iran when Saddam was in power.

The United States accuses Iran and its elite Revolutionary Guards of funding, training and equipping Iraqi militias.

Iran denies a role in the violence, which it blames on the presence of U.S. troops, and says it wants a stable neighbor.

The lawyer for the U.S. men said on Tuesday the two would be released on \$500,000 bail each. Iran's judiciary said their release was under review.

Bauer and Fattal were arrested on July 31, 2009, along with a third American, Sarah Shourd. She was allowed home on \$500,000 bail in September 2010.

Washington has denied they were spies and on Tuesday U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said she was encouraged by Ahmadinejad's remarks.

The release of the two could ease tension between Tehran and Washington, particularly before Ahmadinejad visits New York next week to attend the United Nations General Assembly.

Iran and the United States are at odds over the Islamic state's disputed nuclear program, which Washington says is a cover to build bombs.

Tehran denies this, saying its nuclear program is aimed at generating power and has so far refused to halt its nuclear work.

Telegraph 08 SEPTEMBER 2011

Oil and Gas

Tony Hayward's Vallares confirms £2.5bn Kurdish oil deal

Vallares, the cash shell of Tony Hayward and Nat Rothschild, has confirmed it will buy a Kurdish oil explorer in a £2.5bn deal that gives shares worth £181m to management and hands half of the new company to two of Turkey's richest men.

By Rowena Mason, and Helia Ebrahimi

Newly-listed Vallares will pay for the all-share deal with Genel Energi by issuing another £1.25bn of equity to the Turkish owners. This gives a 14.5pc stake and a "key executive role" to Mehmet Sepil, Genel's chief executive, who was fined a record £1m by the Financial Services Authority for insider dealing last year.

Mehmet Karamehmet, a co-founder of Genel, who is currently appealing an 11-year jail sentence for embezzlement in Turkey, will get a 28pc stake. The sentence will not be confirmed until after an appeal and Mr Karamehmet is strongly fighting the case.

Vallares, which will be known as Genel Energy, has taken some steps to limit the influence of the founders. Neither will sit on the board, although they have nominated representatives, including Mr Karamehmet's daughter. Their voting rights will also be limited to 29.9pc, just under the threshold for listed company takeovers in the UK.

On Wednesday, Julian Metherell, finance director of Vallares, defended the key role of Mr Mehmet in what is expected to become a FTSE 100 company. "He built the business and has a unique knowledge of Kurdistan," he



Tony Hayward is a former chief executive of BP Photo: Getty Images

said. "He will be a key member of the leadership."

Genel owns stakes in valuable oil fields in Kurdistan, currently producing 42,000 barrels per day for the Turkish market. The new management, led by former BP boss Mr Hayward as chief executive, is planning to double output. "We want to be producing 110,000 barrels per day by 2012 and by 2015 the expectation is 150,000 barrels," Mr Metherell said.

Syrian Kurds unite amid onslaught

Kurdish leadership is still hesitant to join rebellion against Assad; Syrian Kurds meet in Stockholm to make roadmap for future in Syria.

By ARIEH O'SULLIVAN /
 THE MEDIA LINE

Assaulted by Turkish and Iranian forces, Kurdish rebels are starting to unite, but Syrian Kurds remain reluctant to move for the autonomy that their Iraqi brothers have obtained.

Over the weekend, Syrian Kurds met in Stockholm to hammer out a roadmap of action against the Syrian regime of President Bashar Assad. Virtually all of the 50-odd participants were Diaspora Syrian Kurds and their goal was to prod the Kurds back at home to be show more defiance against Assad's regime.

"We want to provide a clear vision and practical projects to activate the Kurdish role inside Syria and abroad in toppling the regime of Bashar Assad and realize the peaceful transition of power to the people," conference organizer Massoud Akko, a Kurdish human rights activist living in Norway, told The Media Line.

Until now, the estimated 1.7 million-strong ethnic Kurdish minority in Syria has not openly challenged the Syrian regime, which has been struggling to quell anti-government protests for the past six months. While they are more organized than other opposition groups, they have been reluctant to take action, not just out of fear of Damascus's heavy hand, but out of uncertainty that a new regime would be any better.

"If Syrian Kurds would rise up against Assad's regime Damascus would be much more harsh and brutal and that has been on the minds of every Kurd," Jawad Qadir, executive editor of the Kurdish Globe, told The Media Line.

Based in the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region of northern Iraq, which was set up in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War, Qadir explained that Syrian

Kurds are waiting to see whether the risk of defying Assad would be worth the gains.

Assad's regime has suppressed Kurdish culture and language, expropriated their land and deprived many of them of full citizenship. But in early April the regime moved to placate the Kurds, who make up some 10% of Syria's population, by offering hundreds of thousands citizenship, a move yet to be implemented.

"Kurds have been tricked and fooled in the past by many leaders in all the areas where they have been living - Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria," Qadir said. "Even if Assad is removed, the fear is that someone will come to power who is as undemocratic as he was, just like it was in Iraq."

Numbering some 38 million dispersed among four main countries, the Kurds speak their own language and most practice Sunni Islam. When the allies carved up the Middle East into states after the First World War, the Kurds didn't get a state and attempts to form one unilaterally were put down by Turkey, Iraq and Iran.

So far, the Syrian regime has been cautious about antagonizing the Kurdish minority.

"The regime wants to maintain quiet and has a vested interest in the modus vivendi," Peter Harling, project director for the Middle East Program of the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, told The Media Line.

"The Kurds have been reluctant to be at the forefront of the confrontation against the [Assad] regime. They would like to see this regime fold, but it they take a too proactive stance, it will turn into a confrontation and they will pay a high price," Harling said. "The secret ambition of all Kurds, I think, is to have a Kurdish state of their own. But I'm not sure that is



feasible."

While Syrian Kurds remain hesitant about joining the fight against the regime, the onslaught has brought the Kurds in northern Iraq together. Over the weekend, the PKK, the outlawed Kurdish Workers' Party fighting Turkey, announced it would join forces with the PJAK, the Iranian Party for Free Life in Kurdistan.

Both groups have been hammered recently by Turkish and Iranian forces. Iran has said it has killed over 30 of the Kurdish rebels along the Iraqi border and Turkey had killed twice that many in air strikes against the rebels. In August Turkey said it killed over 150 PKK rebels.

"From now on we will fight on the side of the fighters of PJAK against the Iranian attacks that are trying to enter the Kurdistan region of [northern] Iraq, especially in the Kandil [Mountains] area," said PKK spokesman Dozdar Hammo.

"There have been clashes that are continuing until now, and we see the goal of Iran is eliminating the Kurdish people, and not the PJAK party, and these are the reasons that led us to make this decision," Hammo was quoted as saying by the Agence France-Presse (AFP).

"Theoretically, you can carve up Syria in to different tribal nations like the Kurds in the northeast who have a lot in common with other Kurds in Turkey and Iran and obviously

in Iraq," said Aluf Benn, editor of the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

"Even if Syria is not carved up, if Assad falls we will see more and more demands for ethnic or tribal autonomies. And why not? I don't see the counter force," he told The Media Line.

While Syrian Kurds may be looking at their Iraqi brethren in Iraqi Kurdistan as a model, the leadership and media in quasi-state of Kurdistan have been careful not to voice support for the revolt against Assad due to the sensitive ties with Damascus.

"The fact that Iraqi Kurdistan doesn't incite people to participate actively doesn't mean that they are satisfied with Damascus politics," Qadir said.

He added that the Syrian Kurds have yet to push for their own enclave, but should they eventually chose that path, they would be a formidable foe for the Syrian military. They had close links with the PKK and could become heavily armed, which would have regional ramifications.

"Turkey fears that Syrian Kurdish participation would immediately affect the Kurds in Turkey and there would be Kurdish uprisings in two countries," Qadir said. "If the Syrian Kurds ever declared independence, Assad wouldn't be the first to invade, but the Turks because that would spark a revolt by the 17 million Turkish Kurds." ■

In Iraq, a new breed of returning exile

By Annie Gowen

KIRKUK — On a blistering day in the middle of the Iraqi summer, Najmaldin Karim, the provincial governor of Kirkuk, climbed in his armored car and went down to Republic Street, a small strip of fruit stands and shops in the heart of this dusty oil town north of Baghdad.

Give Kirkuk time, Karim says, and Republic Street will return to the way he remembers it as a boy: an oasis of tea-rooms and movie theaters where the melting pot of local ethnic groups mixed with ease.

A little over a year ago, Karim, 62, was a neurosurgeon with a thriving practice in suburban Washington, living with his wife in an expansive brick house in Silver Spring.

After 35 years in the United States, Karim, an American citizen, decided to return to Iraq after he saw that American forces and an entrenched local bureaucracy were making scant progress toward reconstruction. Unlike other Americans who rushed to help in Iraq and Afghanistan in the early days of combat, Karim is a new breed of returning exile who won the support of his countrymen on his own, without the support of the U.S. military — something that's seen here as a plus.

He has come back to right the shambles of his home town at a time when Kirkuk's future is as clouded with uncertainty as Iraq itself.

On this summer day, Karim could hardly walk a few paces outside, flanked by a security detail so large it overwhelmed the narrow street. Shopkeepers and customers stopped to stare. In a place where Islamic extremists have assassinated 10 police officers and politicians this year and, according to police, kidnapped 45 wealthy locals in the past year, the tension in the open air market was palpable.

The sunbaked city of 900,000, sitting atop a fifth of the country's oil supply, has simmering ethnic tensions that go back decades.

The 4,500 U.S. troops who have helped



— Iraqi governor: Najmaldin Karim left his practice to help rebuild his home country. Now he is provincial governor in Kirkuk, where he was born.

keep the peace among the city's three major ethnic groups — Kurds, Arabs and Turks — are on their way out. U.S. officials say Kirkuk will be watched closely in the coming months as a bellwether of the country's fragile democracy. If Iraq descends into chaos after the Americans leave, some experts say, its fracture point may be Kirkuk.

'We can't be afraid'

Zozan Karim, Najmaldin's wife of more than three decades, says her husband never asked her whether he should return to Iraq. He had been a well-known lobbyist for Kurdish causes on Capitol Hill for decades and had founded the Washington Kurdish Institute, so it was almost expected.

"He just showed me his ticket and went," she recalled with a laugh. "I always knew he would go back. I knew it when I married him."

She has stayed behind while their youngest son finishes up his studies at the University of Maryland.

Karim returned in 2010, winning a seat in parliament representing Kirkuk — where he grew up with 10 siblings, the son of a teacher. He was appointed governor this spring.

Several visits during the war "made me realize I could do more," Karim said during a recent interview in his office in

the provincial government building.

Karim spends his days navigating the competing interests of rival ethnic groups while trying to restore a city ravaged by eight years of war. He eats dinner alone in a heavily guarded compound ringed with concrete blast walls. He lives in the only house that was secure enough, a tan-and-salmon-colored villa that once belonged to Gen. Ali Hassan al-Majeed, a cousin of Saddam Hussein who became known as "Chemical Ali" for ordering poison-gas attacks on Kurdish civilians.

"We can't be afraid," Karim said. "We get threats every day, sometimes more than once an hour some days, from terrorists. ... To do this job, you have to stand up to those people and not be afraid."

As he spoke, Karim flipped a string of red worry beads, a relaxation practice common among his countrymen that he has adopted. Not long after he took office in April, a car bomb exploded two blocks away, injuring 13 people.

When Karim arrived in Kirkuk, residents had only four to six hours of electricity a day and water service was intermittent. Refugees squatted in abandoned buildings, as many as six families to a room.

In the past five months, he has helped negotiate a complicated deal that disconnected the city from Baghdad's troubled

electrical grid and linked it to Kurdistan's, increasing electrical service to 18 hours a day. The city is building two new pumping stations for water and 700 housing units for refugees.

After the U.S. invasion in 2003, Kurds who had been expelled by Hussein and replaced by Arab families returned by the thousands, hoping to reclaim their lost homes. Disputes over land rights are common, and many are still homeless. Soldiers from all three ethnic groups help keep the peace — and sometimes end up in tense standoffs themselves.

Over it all hangs the central question: Should Kirkuk remain part of Iraq proper or be governed by the semiautonomous region of Kurdistan to its north? Plans for a census to determine who lives in Kirkuk and a referendum to decide its governance, promised by the Iraqi constitution, have stalled.

U.S. Gen. Ray Odierno, a former top commander in Iraq, has called the Kurdish-Arab conflict the chief threat to Iraq's stability. And many Middle East scholars agree.

Joost Hiltermann, an Iraq analyst for the International Crisis Group, said that the Americans' work setting up joint patrols

and checkpoints in disputed areas such as Kirkuk has helped keep the peace between the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government but that without their help, things could worsen.

"There is potential for these small provocations and clashes to escalate into a broader conflict, a potential that is only increased if the transition to a post-U.S. troop era is not carefully managed," Hiltermann said.

Karim dismisses the oft-used descriptions of his home town as a "tinderbox" or a "powder keg" that could ignite at any moment. "There's a danger," he admitted. "But it's not so explosive that the day they leave, everybody starts killing each other."

He has reason to be optimistic. Despite assassinations, kidnappings and twin bomb attacks in May that killed 27, violence in Kirkuk has decreased this year. But there's no doubt Karim wants U.S. troops to stay.

A promise of change

After his short trip to Republic Street, Karim climbed back in his armored car for a tour of the city's construction proj-

ects, including a \$25 million mall and hotel complex being built by an Austrian company. The car sped past low-slung concrete buildings and piles of rubble, date palms and scrub pines, impossibly clean yellow taxis and dust-caked sedans.

"Come back here in two years and Kirkuk is going to be a totally different city," Karim promised.

If things stay peaceful?

"I think they will," he said softly. His worry beads clicked.

Early the next day, near Karim's office, a car bomb ripped through St. Ephraim Syrian Orthodox Church, reducing part of it to rubble. It was the city's third church bombing in a month. A little while later, a booby-trapped motorcycle and another car bomb exploded in the southern part of the city; killing one bystander and injuring three.

Special correspondent Aziz Alwan in Baghdad and staff researcher Magda Jean-Louis in Washington contributed to this report.

REUTERS

Syria's Kurds see better lot if Assad goes: activists

AMMAN — September 5, 2011 — Reuters

SYRIA'S MINORITY KURDS support the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad because it could usher in democracy but long-standing grievances have to be addressed in any post-Assad order, Kurdish activists said.

In a declaration issued on Monday at the conclusion of a conference in Stockholm to unify Kurdish efforts against Assad, the activists said they will strengthen backing for Kurdish protests against Assad, led by a younger generation of street leaders critical or elders in established Kurdish parties.

"The Kurdish people, as a part of Syria's diverse mosaic, are a main component of the revolt against the regime and it is in their full interest for the regime to fall," the statement said.

With Syria's one million Kurds concentrated in the oil-producing northeast, the Kurdish issue would loom large if Assad, who is struggling to contain a five-month uprising against his rule, was removed, with regional implications for Turkey, which also has a large Kurdish minorities, and Iraq, where Kurds have a large degree of autonomy.

Syria's overall population is around 20 million.

Pro-democracy protests have spread to Kurdish areas in Syria, but the authorities, mindful of a 2004 Kurdish uprising crushed by force, have not used the same level of deadly violence employed to crush protests elsewhere.

The two-day conference at the Swedish Parliament building, which drew 50 participants, was the first to bring a broad group of Kurdish activists since the uprising. Among the participants were Kurdish writer Massoud Akko, who fled Syria several years ago and now resides in Norway, and dissent Mohammad Sida, who lives in Sweden.

The statement said the removal of Assad and his ruling Baath Party could allow for a new political system that divulges power to the provinces and "free of racist and extremist ideology.. a nation where tolerance would prevail."

"The Syrian revolution will not be complete without a just solution to the Kurdish cause," the statement said, adding that any new constitution should recognize Kurdish as an official language and that Kurds have a right to seek compensation for "historic discrimination and persecution."

A month into the uprising in April, Assad sought to placate Syria's Kurds by issuing a decree to grant thousands of disenfranchised Kurds Syrian nationality and easing discrimination on the transfer of properties in Kurdish areas.

But activists and Kurdish politicians said little progress has been made on the ground, with only a fraction of the stateless Kurds becoming citizens and a multitude of other laws that still discriminate against Kurdish language and customs, as well as heavy secret police presence in Kurdish areas.

Irak: le mouvement rebelle kurde annonce la mort de son numéro deux

ERBIL (Irak) (AFP) - Le commandant militaire adjoint du Pjak, principal mouvement séparatiste kurde engagé dans la lutte armée contre le régime de Téhéran, a trouvé la mort lors d'un bombardement iranien, a indiqué cette organisation sur son site.

"Majid Kawiyan, connu sous le nom de camarade Samkou, adjoint du commandant en chef des forces du Parti pour une vie libre du Kurdistan (Pjak) dans l'est du Kurdistan (Iran) a été tué lors d'un violent bombardement iranien" samedi, affirme un communiqué de ce mouvement sur son site.

Selon l'éloge funèbre, M. Kawiyan, né en 1982 en Iran, appartenait au Pjak depuis 1999.

Plus tôt, les Gardiens iraniens de la révolution, en première ligne dans la lutte contre les rebelles kurdes aux frontières de l'Iran, avaient annoncé cette mort sur leur site Sapanews, citant un communiqué du Pjak.

"Majid Kavian, alias Samakhou Saraldan, était engagé dans des opérations terroristes en Iran" depuis 2003, ont-ils assuré.

L'Iran a lancé en juillet une vaste offensive militaire contre le Pjak, qui mène régulièrement des actions contre les forces iraniennes depuis le territoire irakien et est accusé par Téhéran d'être responsable de nombreux attentats au Kurdistan iranien.

Les Pasdaran ont par ailleurs affirmé que la mort de Majid Kawiyan avait été confirmée dans un communiqué du Pjak précisant que le chef rebelle kurde avait été tué "par un éclat d'obus" lors d'un bombardement iranien.

Les forces iraniennes ont sévèrement bombardé vendredi et samedi des "bases rebelles" du Pjak en territoire kurde irakien, affirmant avoir tué au moins une trentaine de combattants kurdes.

Téhéran accuse les autorités kurdes d'Irak d'avoir laissé le Pjak s'implanter dans un "sanctuaire" de 3.000 km² en territoire irakien le long de la frontière et les forces iraniennes bombardent régulièrement cette zone.

Malgré les protestations de Bagdad, les responsables militaires ira-

niens ont affirmé leur intention de poursuivre leur offensive contre le Pjak, notamment les bombardements en territoire irakien, jusqu'à ce que l'Irak déploie des forces à la frontière pour empêcher l'infiltration de rebelles kurdes en Iran.

Le président de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien Massoud Barzani a demandé mardi aux rebelles kurdes d'Iran et de Turquie de cesser leurs attaques à partir de son territoire et de chercher à obtenir leurs droits par des moyens politiques.

Mais il a estimé "impossible d'envoyer des troupes" pour contrôler la frontière comme le réclame Téhéran afin de ne pas déclencher "une guerre entre les Kurdes".

Le Pjak a proposé lundi un cessez-le feu aux forces iraniennes, mais les Gardiens de la révolution ont demandé des "clarifications" sur cette proposition aux autorités kurdes irakiennes qui ont servi d'intermédiaire.

Le maintien de la présence américaine en Irak débattu au Congrès

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Plusieurs élus du Congrès proches du lobby de la Défense ont plaidé mercredi pour le maintien d'une importante présence militaire américaine en Irak après le retrait programmé de l'US Army d'ici la fin 2011.

Le sénateur républicain Lindsey Graham, officier de réserve de l'armée de l'air, qui a fréquemment rendu visite aux troupes américaines en Irak et en Afghanistan, a estimé qu'au minimum, les Etats-Unis devraient maintenir 10.000 hommes en Irak car l'Iran tenterait selon lui de déstabiliser le pays.

Le président de la commission de la Chambre des Forces armées, Howard

McKeon, qui se bat contre les réductions de dépenses militaires, s'est dit "peu ravi" par le chiffre de 3.000 à 4.000 hommes que Leon Panetta, le chef du Pentagone, envisagerait selon les médias.

La Maison blanche dit ne pas avoir encore pris de décision. Elle souligne que dans tous les cas de figure, aucun accord n'a été conclu avec le gouvernement de Bagdad sur le maintien d'une partie des 46.000 soldats américains encore présents en Irak au-delà de la date-butoir du 31 décembre 2011 inscrite dans l'accord de sécurité entre les deux pays.

Depuis l'accession à la présidence de Barack Obama en janvier 2009, le

contingent américain en Irak est passé de 140.000 à 46.000 hommes.

Les responsables américains, qui n'ont pas exclu de maintenir une mission d'entraînement en Irak, pressent Bagdad de prendre une décision.

Mais le Premier ministre Nouri Maliki est à la tête d'une coalition fragile divisée sur la question.

Si les partis kurdes sont réputés favorables au maintien des Américains, comme certaines formations de la minorité sunnite, l'imam chiite Moktada Sadr, membre de la coalition, menace de résister militairement à leur présence prolongée.

La Syrie sème la zizanie au Proche-Orient



International
Alain Frachon

Chez ses voisins, Bachar Al-Assad a de moins en moins d'amis. Il est vrai qu'il n'en n'a jamais eu beaucoup : peu portée sur les sentiments, la famille Assad a une réputation douteuse au Proche-Orient. Mais le président syrien disposait tout de même de soutiens solides, qu'il est en passe de perdre un par un – ce qui n'est jamais bon signe pour un dictateur.

Cinq mois de répression sanglante d'un irréductible soulèvement populaire ont isolé la Syrie. La carte des alliances régionales au Proche-Orient s'en trouve chamboulée.

Minoritaire dans le monde arabe, parce que appartenant à la secte des Alaouites, le président syrien comptait sur deux alliés non arabes : la Turquie et l'Iran. Cet axe-là, Damas-Ankara-Téhéran, s'effondre.

Bachar Al-Assad a perdu son partenaire turc. Depuis le début du « printemps arabe », les islam-conservateurs du Parti de la justice (AKP), au pouvoir à Ankara, ont choisi leur camp : contre les autocraties. Ils sont avec la rue, à Tunis, au Caire, à Tripoli, quitte à abandonner, en de rapides retournements de veste, des régimes avec lesquels ils entretenaient jusqu'alors les meilleures relations, notamment économiques.

Il y a une logique à cette ligne. Sous la houlette de son chef, le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, l'AKP a été la formation qui, ces dernières années, a le plus contribué à démocratiser la Turquie. Même si cette évolution est loin d'avoir été menée à terme – et si elle est aujourd'hui menacée par les penchants autoritaristes d'Erdoğan –, elle n'en a pas moins prouvé une chose : l'islam est soluble dans la démocratie ; un grand

pays musulman – au passé très particulier, il est vrai – peut être démocrate. Et, leçon peut-être plus importante encore pour le Proche-Orient, l'essentiel du chemin a été accompli par une formation islamo-conservatrice, venue de l'islamisme militant.

Pour beaucoup d'Arabes, l'AKP, c'est la modernité : dans les frontières de l'ex-Empire ottoman, qui jusqu'en 1918 a dominé la région, « Sultan Erdoğan » a redoré le blason de la Turquie. A Tunis, au Caire, demain sans doute à Tripoli, les islamistes, qui vont participer au pouvoir, se réclament du modèle turc. Avec ses deux compagnons de bataille politique, Abdullah Gül, aujourd'hui président, et le ministre des affaires étrangères, Ahmet Davutoglu, le premier ministre a été fidèle à ce qu'il représente. Il soutient les révolutions arabes, quitte à saborder ses relations avec la Syrie d'Assad.

Celles-ci avaient pourtant franchi un cap en 2009 avec la signature d'un partenariat stratégique entre Ankara et Damas. Au programme, une coopération militaire, politique et économique poussée : les deux armées font des manœuvres communes ; les produits turcs inondent les marchés syriens ; pour franchir leurs frontières, les ressortissants des deux pays voyagent sans visa.

Depuis le début de la rébellion syrienne, Erdoğan appelle le pouvoir à dialoguer avec ses opposants. Ahmet Davutoglu se rend à

Damas pour convaincre Bachar Al-Assad de mettre un terme à la répression. En vain. En août, exaspéré, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan somme le président syrien de « faire taire les armes ». Toutes les exhortations turques vont rester lettre morte. Entre-temps, la Turquie a

accueilli les réunions des opposants au régime de Damas, elle reçoit des milliers de Syriens fuyant la répression et elle a fait arraisonner une livraison d'armes iraniennes destinée à Damas.

Les Iraniens ont tout fait pour aider Bachar Al-Assad à conduire une répression impitoyable dans son pays

Fin août, le président turc vitupère le pouvoir syrien en des termes qui sonnent la mort du partenariat de 2009 : « Il n'y a plus de place dans le monde d'aujourd'hui pour ces régimes de parti unique, autoritaires, fermés (...). Tout le monde doit savoir que nous [les Turcs] sommes avec le peuple syrien. » La rupture est presque consommée.

Il reste un grand allié, l'Iran. Depuis sa fondation en 1979, la République islamique a tissé des liens étroits avec la Syrie. L'Iran est un pays qui appartient à la branche minoritaire de l'islam, le chiisme. Dans un monde arabe où domine le sunnisme, la branche majoritaire de l'islam, le régime syrien fait figure de vilain petit canard : la famille Al-Assad est membre d'une secte dissidente du chiisme, les Alaouites.

L'alliance avec Damas est le pilier central de la stratégie de Téhéran au Proche-Orient, sa porte d'entrée dans un monde arabe qui voit avec terreur le voisin perse et redoute les velléités de prépondérance régionale d'un pays en train de se doter de l'arme atomique. C'est par la Syrie que la République islamique d'Iran peut entretenir son protégé arabe, le

Hezbollah libanais, parti chiite islamiste.

Les dirigeants iraniens ont salué le « printemps arabe » en Tunisie et en Egypte ; lorsqu'il a gagné la Syrie, ils n'y ont vu que l'expression d'un abominable « complot américano-sioniste ».

L'effondrement du pouvoir de Bachar Al-Assad serait un coup très dur porté à Téhéran. D'où l'appui constant que la République islamique n'a cessé de dispenser à Damas. Entre hommes qui font tirer sur la foule, on se comprend : depuis cinq mois, les Iraniens ont tout fait pour aider Bachar Al-Assad à conduire une répression impitoyable dans son pays – aide financière conséquente et continue, envoi d'experts en espionnage électronique, etc.

Pourtant, depuis quelques semaines, le discours a changé. La République islamique ne souhaite sûrement pas le départ de Bachar Al-Assad, mais elle appelle, à son tour, à un dialogue avec la rébellion syrienne.

C'est un ton nouveau, sinon encore un tournant politique. Tout se passe comme si l'Iran évaluait le coût de son soutien à la Syrie. Cela lui vaut une impopularité croissante dans les opinions arabes. Cela l'a conduit à une brouille avec la Turquie d'Erdoğan, allié rare (membre de l'OTAN!) et précieux, sur lequel l'Iran comptait beaucoup. C'est cher, même pour qui aime beaucoup Bachar Al-Assad. ■

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Iran: trois indépendantistes kurdes tués par les forces de l'ordre

TEHERAN, 12 septembre 2011 (AFP)

LES FORCES IRANIENNES ont tué la semaine dernière trois membres du parti indépendantiste kurde Komaleh, dont un accusé de la mort de trois policiers, selon le ministre du Renseignement Heydar Moslehi cité lundi par le site de la télévision d'Etat.

"Trois membres du groupe terroriste Komaleh ont été tués lors d'un affrontement avec les forces des services de renseignements il y a deux nuits", a indiqué M. Moslehi à l'issue d'un conseil des ministres dimanche soir.

Les trois hommes "préparaient une action terroriste mais nous l'avons déjouée", a ajouté le ministre, en précisant que l'un d'eux était "responsable de la mort de trois policiers il y a un an".

Il n'a pas précisé le lieu ni les circonstances de l'affrontement.

Le Komaleh, d'inspiration marxiste, est l'un des deux principaux mouvements indépendantistes kurdes iraniens menant une lutte armée contre le régime de Téhéran, après le PJAK (Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan)

lié au PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) turc.

Les Gardiens de la révolution iraniens mènent depuis juillet une vaste offensive contre les bases du PJAK dans les régions frontalières avec l'Irak, au nord-ouest de l'Iran mais aussi en territoire kurde irakien où le mouvement rebelle dispose de bases d'où il lance ses opérations contre l'Iran.

Interrompues en août pour le ramadan, les opérations contre le PJAK, ont repris début septembre avec une intensité nouvelle, faisant des dizaines de victimes des deux côtés.

Les différents bilans publiés par Téhéran ont fait état de plus de 30 morts, dont le commandant adjoint du PJAK, et 40 blessés dans les rangs des rebelles depuis la reprise des combats le 2 septembre.

Au moins 20 Gardiens de la révolution ont également été tués dans les combats, selon les informations éparses publiées dans la presse iranienne depuis cette date.



Irak: le Kurdistan cesse ses exportations de brut

AMMAN, 11 septembre 2011 (AFP)

LE GOUVERNEMENT RÉGIONAL du Kurdistan irakien a cessé dimanche ses exportations de pétrole, quelques jours après avoir demandé le retrait d'un projet de loi sur les hydrocarbures approuvé par le gouvernement fédéral de Bagdad, selon un ministre irakien.

"Le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan a cessé aujourd'hui ses exportations pétrolières, sans fournir de motif", a dit à l'AFP à Amman le ministre irakien du Pétrole, Abdelkaïm al-Luaybi.

"C'est une grande perte pour l'économie irakienne, ainsi que pour les peuples kurde et irakien en général", a ajouté le ministre qui participe à une conférence sur le pétrole.

Un responsable du ministère irakien du Pétrole a pour sa part affirmé à l'AFP que les exportations de brut du Kurdistan qui s'élevaient à 150.000 barils de brut par jour avaient "baissé au cours des deux dernières semaines à environ 55.000 barils" par jour.

Le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan irakien a démenti "avoir décidé de suspendre les exportations par l'oléoduc reliant l'Irak à la Turquie".

"Ce sont de sérieuses difficultés techniques rencontrées ces deux derniers jours par la Compagnie pétrolière du nord (NOC, public) qui ont causé l'interruption temporaire des exportations du Kurdistan et toute autre interprétation est fautive", a affirmé un communiqué du ministère des Ressources naturelles du gouvernement autonome kurde.

"Le gouvernement kurde reste attaché à l'accord intermédiaire signé avec le gouvernement fédéral d'Irak sur l'exportation du pétrole à partir des champs pétroliers situés au Kurdistan jusqu'à ce qu'une solution définitive soit trouvée", ajoute le ministère.

Selon lui, le Kurdistan avait commencé à exporter son pétrole en février et la moyenne des sept derniers mois se situait autour de 130.000 b/j.

Le gouvernement autonome avait condamné et demandé le retrait lundi du projet de loi sur les hydrocarbures approuvé une semaine plus tôt par le gouvernement fédéral de Bagdad, le jugeant "contraire à la Constitution".

Le texte, qui doit encore être approuvé par le Parlement, doit répartir les responsabilités de la production entre Bagdad et les provinces.

Le vote d'une telle loi a été retardée régulièrement depuis 2007 en raison de divergences entre Bagdad qui souhaite avoir la haute main sur la gestion des ressources pétrolières et les autorités provinciales du Kurdistan, région riche en hydrocarbures, qui entendent garder le contrôle de leur richesse.

Le gouvernement central conteste la nature des accords pétroliers que le Kurdistan a conclus avec des groupes étrangers et la répartition des coûts et des bénéfices de ces opérations. Un "accord provisoire sur la répartition des recettes" avait néanmoins été conclu en mai.

L'Irak produit environ 2,7 millions de barils par jour, dont environ 2,1 millions sont exportés. Le pays tire 90% de ses revenus de son secteur pétrolier.

Les autorités nationales visent une capacité de 12 millions de b/j en 2017, bien que le FMI ait douté que ce chiffre pourra être atteint.



La Turquie en pourparlers avec les Etats-Unis pour des drones (ministre)

ISTANBUL, 12 sept 2011 (AFP)

LA TURQUIE est en discussion avec les Etats-Unis pour obtenir le stationnement sur son sol des drones Predator utilisés en Irak après le retrait américain, a déclaré lundi le vice-Premier ministre turc, cité par l'agence de presse Anatolie.

"Je sais que le ministère des Affaires étrangères travaille à l'obtention de ces drones Predator par la Turquie", a dit Bulent Arinc lors d'une conférence de presse à Ankara, alors qu'il était interrogé sur la possibilité que la Turquie accueille les drones américains sur son territoire.

"La Turquie bénéficie et pourra bénéficier de ces drones à des fins de ren-

seignement", a dit M. Arinc, ajoutant que le "travail" du ministère des Affaires étrangères à ce sujet n'était pas encore terminé.

Dans sa lutte contre les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), la Turquie a déjà obtenu des renseignements grâce aux drones américains.

L'armée turque fait face à une flambée de violence des séparatistes du PKK qui utilisent leurs bases arrières dans le nord de l'Irak, pays voisin, pour lancer des attaques contre des objectifs en territoire turc, près de la frontière.

A Washington, le retrait des troupes américaines en Irak est en discussion à la Maison Blanche. Selon un pacte bilatéral signé par les deux pays, les forces américaines doivent se retirer à la fin de l'année, sauf si les deux parties conviennent d'un nouvel accord.

Gunmen hit bus carrying Iraqi troops; 9 are killed

BAGHDAD

BY MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT

Insurgents attacked a minibus filled with Iraqi Army soldiers in Anbar Province on Tuesday, killing eight soldiers and the driver, another episode in a wave of violence that has roiled Iraq in recent weeks.

Attacks across Iraq, particularly in the western province of Anbar, have increased significantly as insurgents have deployed ambushes, improvised explosive devices and car bombs to kill civilians and Iraqi security forces. The recent increase has raised fears about a resurgence of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, which had appeared significantly weakened.

Around 10 a.m., the minibus, which was transporting soldiers back to work from days off, approached two vehicles that were blocking the main highway near the district of Haditha, about 160 kilometers, or 100 miles, west of Ramadi.

As the minibus slowed, gunmen fired on it, killing everyone inside. The gunmen then burned the bus and fled, according to local officials.

No group claimed responsibility for the attack. But Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, which once controlled large swaths of Anbar, said in August that it would conduct 100 attacks to avenge the killing of Osama bin Laden.

A journalist living in Haditha said the district's residents had received threatening letters on Tuesday from Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia. "We are coming back soon," the letter said, according to the journalist. "We have no mercy."

The U.S. military's spokesman in Iraq, Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan, said in a recent e-mail that Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia "has increased its tempo and volume of operations over the past several weeks." General Buchanan said that over the past two years, counterterrorism operations had significantly weakened the terror group at all levels.

Zaid Thaker and Yasir Ghazi contributed reporting from Baghdad. An employee for The New York Times contributed reporting from Ramadi.

Russia reaffirms backing for Syria as Iran speaks up

BEIRUT

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Russia said Thursday that it was deploying its Middle East envoy to mediate the conflict in Syria even as Iran, the closest ally of the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, called for an end to its violent crackdown.

"There should be talks" between the Syrian government and its opponents, Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said late Wednesday in a live interview in Tehran with the Portuguese broadcaster Radiotelevisão Portuguesa, according to a simultaneous Portuguese translation of his comments. "A military solution is never the right solution."

The Russian envoy, Mikhail V. Margelov, made clear Moscow's support for Mr. Assad and said the West should be wary that the ouster of another secular leader in the Middle East could open the way to radical Islamic forces.

Mr. Assad "is young, he is well educated, he is broad minded and we think that he has a chance for modernization in his country if the ruling class of Syria becomes more open minded, more receptive to new ideas," Mr. Margelov told journalists on Thursday while attending an international policy forum in Yaroslavl, Russia. "We should not forget that moving from medieval-style societies like many Arab states are today to democracy of the Western type, you have to be very careful."

Russia opposes a draft U.N. Security Council resolution backed by European nations and the United States that would impose an arms embargo and other sanctions on Syria. Russia has introduced a rival resolution calling for Mr. Assad's government to halt its violence against protesters and expedite reforms.

On Thursday, anti-government activists in Syria said there were reports of machine-gun fire and explosions as military vehicles stormed an area near the Turkish border.

The Syrian opposition, which is disparate and largely disorganized, has

generally ruled out dialogue while Mr. Assad's forces continue the crackdown, which the U.N. estimates has killed 2,200 people since March.

The crackdown has led to broad international isolation for Damascus, but Mr. Assad's allies in Iran have generally followed the Syrian regime in focusing on a "foreign conspiracy" driving the unrest in Syria. Mr. Ahmadinejad's comments are a clear departure from that line and appear to reflect Iran's growing impatience with Mr. Assad.

Late last month, Iran's foreign minister, Ali Akbar Salehi, urged Mr. Assad to listen to some of his people's "legitimate demands." The relationship with Iran is key to Mr. Assad's regime. The United States and other nations have accused Iran of aiding Mr. Assad's

Ahmadinejad urges talks between Damascus and foes.

crackdown. Last month, the European Union imposed sanctions against the Quds Force, an elite Iranian unit of the Revolutionary Guards Corps, saying that it was providing equipment and other support to help the crackdown.

There also has been speculation that Tehran is providing funds to cushion Mr. Assad's government as it burns through the \$17 billion in foreign reserves that the government had at the start of the uprising early this year. But Iran cannot prop up the regime indefinitely, and Mr. Ahmadinejad's comments on Wednesday were sure to contribute to the growing unease in Damascus.

Protesters in Syria take to the streets every week, despite the near-certainty that they will face a barrage of bullets and sniper fire by security forces. But the regime appears in no imminent danger of collapse, leading to concerns that the violence will escalate.

Syria has banned foreign journalists and restricted local news outlets, making it difficult to independently confirm reports. Amateur video and other witness accounts have become vital lines of information out of Syria.

U.S. considers plan to keep small force in Iraq for training

WASHINGTON

BY ERIC SCHMITT
AND STEVEN LEE MYERS

Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta is supporting a plan that would keep 3,000 to 4,000 U.S. troops in Iraq after a deadline for their withdrawal at year's end, but only to continue training security forces there, according to a senior military official.

The recommendation would break a longstanding pledge by President Barack Obama to withdraw all U.S. forces from Iraq by the deadline, but would still involve significantly fewer forces than proposals presented at the Pentagon in recent weeks by the senior U.S. commander in Iraq, Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, to keep as many as 14,000 to 18,000 troops there.

The smaller force — if approved by the White House and the Iraqi government, which is not yet certain — reflected the shifting political realities in both countries. The recommendation also reflected the tension between Mr. Obama's promise to bring all U.S. forces home and the widely held view among commanders that Iraq is not yet able to provide for its own security. And it reflected the mounting pressures to reduce the costs of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, both wars that have become increasingly unpopular as the 10th anniversary of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, approaches.

Even as the military reduces its troop strength in Iraq, the C.I.A. will continue to have a major presence in the country, as will private security contractors working for the State Department.

In Iraq, a lingering American military presence is hugely contentious, even though some political leaders, especially among the Kurds and Sunnis, would like some U.S. troops to stay as a buffer

against what they fear will be Shiite political dominance, coupled in turn with the rising influence of neighboring Iran.

Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, a Shiite, has also indicated he would consider allowing American trainers to stay beyond the deadline, negotiated by President George W. Bush. At the same time, he owes his position as prime minister to

the political followers of the Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr, who vehemently opposes any Americans' remaining.

The Iraqi cabinet authorized the beginning of talks over a U.S. military presence, but insisted that they be limited to a training mission, a senior administration official said Tuesday. Mr. Panetta's recommendation fell "within



JOSEPH SYWENKIJ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

American soldiers, like this one in the village of Sadiya last month, could remain in Iraq as part of contingent of 3,000 to 4,000 U.S. troops after the deadline for their departure.

the confines of what the Iraqis said they need," the official said.

Mr. Panetta himself, in comments to reporters on Tuesday as he traveled to New York for a commemoration of the memorial for the September 2001 attacks, said no decisions had been made about the number of troops who would remain in Iraq after the end of this year.

But despite the reluctance of several administration officials to publicly get out ahead of a formal recommendation and a final presidential decision on such a sensitive matter, as a practical matter Mr. Panetta has almost run out of time for the military to plan the logistics of a withdrawal by the end of the year.

A recommendation to keep 3,000 U.S. troops, first reported on Tuesday by Fox News, is a token force where many commanders had hoped to see a robust presence continue in a region that is viewed as strategic to American interests.

Mr. Obama has steadily withdrawn troops from Iraq since taking office — to fewer than 50,000 now from more than 140,000 in January 2009 — without the drastic deterioration of security that many predicted along the way.

With the deadline for a final withdrawal now less than four months away, the debate over what if any to leave has intensified. Iraq remains deeply unsettled, if less violent than during the worst years of the war in 2006 and 2007. In the last several weeks, a string of bombings and attacks has intensified the violence,

renewing fears about Iraq's ability to maintain security without American backup. Its political system, though democratic, remains riven by sectarian conflicts and crippled by corruption.

Underscoring the sensitivity of the question at home and in Iraq, the senior administration official referred to any potential post-2011 force as "a small, temporary military presence." Even that might be difficult for Mr. Maliki to sell. The security agreement Mr. Maliki's government negotiated with the Bush administration outlined, among other things, the legal protections for U.S. forces in the country. Those protections expire with the agreement on Dec. 31, and U.S. officials have long said they will have to negotiate new ones to cover any soldiers who remain.

In some ways, the debate over a U.S. military presence is a rhetorical one. The administration has already drawn up plans for an extensive expansion of the U.S. Embassy and its operations, bolstered by thousands of paramilitary security contractors.

It has also created an Office of Security Cooperation that, like similar ones in countries like Egypt, would be staffed by

civilians and military personnel overseeing the training and equipping of Iraqi security forces. Even without an extension of the deadline after 2011, that office is expected to be one of the largest in the world, with hundreds if not thousands of employees. Officials have previously

suggested that keeping U.S. soldiers in this office might not require a new security agreement to replace the expiring one since they would be covered by the same protection offered to diplomats.

All this year U.S. officials have repeated the vow to withdraw all American troops but left open the possibility of an extended mission — if the Iraqi government requested one.

With the year-end deadline looming large because of the lead time the Pentagon needs to withdraw forces from Iraq, the combination of these pressures has been forcing military commanders in Iraq to come up with options that call for fewer and fewer U.S. troops. For example, in just the 10 days before Tuesday, U.S. military planners reviewed what kind of missions could be carried out with

5,000 to 10,000 service members, one senior American military officer said.

The various mission options under consideration include training Iraqi forces, providing security in specific, limited instances, and quick-reaction troops.

Elisabeth Bumiller contributed reporting from New York, and Michael S. Schmidt from Baghdad.

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune SEPTEMBER 8, 2011

Turkey faults Israel on defense deal agreements

ANKARA

Erdogan's criticism raises tension another notch between former allies

FROM NEWS REPORTS

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused Israel on Wednesday of failing to meet its obligations in defense deals, adding to tensions that have escalated since an Israeli raid on a Gaza-bound flotilla killed nine people last year.

Angered over the refusal by Israel, its former ally, to apologize for the raid that killed eight Turks and one Turkish-American, Turkey expelled top Israeli diplomats last week, suspended all military deals and vowed to step up Turkish Navy patrols in the eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey also promised to lobby for support of the Palestinians' bid for state recognition at the United Nations and

warned that more sanctions against Israel could follow.

Asked to comment on Turkey's decision to suspend defense industry deals, Mr. Erdogan told reporters Wednesday that Israel was not keeping to the terms of defense agreements and accused it of not returning drones that Turkey had bought from Israel and sent back for maintenance.

"They are not loyal to agreements between us in the defense industry," Mr. Erdogan said. "There might be problems, you may not be speaking to each other, but you have to fulfill your responsibility under international agreements."

Turkey has purchased 10 Heron drones from Israel, following the lease of a number of pilotless spy planes from the country. It was not clear how many of the drones were in Israel for maintenance.

Turkey uses the drones to spy on Kurdish rebels, who maintain bases in northern Iraq and have escalated their attacks on Turkish troops and police officers lately.

Turkey's sanctions against Israel — once a top military trading partner — follows a U.N. report on the flotilla raid that accused Israel of using excessive force but also described Israel's blockade of Gaza as legitimate.

Turkey has rejected the report, while Israel accepted it with some reservations.

Israel has expressed regret for the loss of lives aboard the flotilla but has refused to apologize, saying that its forces acted in self-defense. It has also said that it was time for the two coun-



Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Israel had not returned Turkish drones.

tries to restore their former close ties.

In a televised speech Tuesday night, Mr. Erdogan did little to defuse mounting tensions, comparing Israel's behavior to that of a "spoiled child" and insisting that Turkey would ensure safe navigation in the eastern Mediterranean.

On Wednesday, he said Turkey was determined to keep up its stance toward Israel at any cost.

"We don't care if it costs \$15 million or \$150 million," the prime minister said. "We will not allow anyone to walk all over our honor."

Mr. Erdogan reiterated that Turkey was planning possible new sanctions against Israel, but declined to disclose what they could entail. He said Turkey intended to increase the Turkish Navy's surveillance of the eastern Mediterranean, adding that parts of it were Turkey's "exclusive economic zones."

Turkey's main opposition has criticized plans to increase patrols in the eastern Mediterranean, saying it could lead to a confrontation with Israel. (AP, IHT)

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune SEPTEMBER 16, 2011

Turkey warns Cyprus against offshore drilling

ANKARA

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Turkey warned Cyprus on Thursday against proceeding with activities related to offshore oil and natural gas drilling, saying that it would move to complete an agreement with Turkish Cypriots to mark out undersea borders if the preparations continued.

The undersea boundary has been one of the most contentious issues in Greek-Turkish relations, because of its implications for the exploitation of oil and mineral deposits in the Aegean Sea. A move by Turkey to declare such a border would worsen relations with Greece and with Cyprus, which is divided into a Greek south and a breakaway Turkish north.

The announcement, by the Turkish Foreign Ministry, came a day after Cyprus's president, Dimitris Christofias, said the American company Noble Energy would soon begin exploratory drilling to confirm deposits beneath the sea bed off the southern coast of Cyprus despite Turkey's attempts to prevent such a move.

The Cypriot authorities did not immediately issue a statement reacting to Turkey's announcement. A Greek Foreign Ministry spokesman, Grigoris Delavekouras, said Cyprus was merely exercising its right to explore and exploit its natural wealth.

Turkey does not recognize Cyprus as a sovereign country and strongly objects to the Greek Cypriot search for mineral deposits inside the island's exclusive economic zone.

Turkish and Turkish Cypriot officials met in Ankara on Thursday and agreed to conclude "a continental shelf delimitation agreement" between them if Cyprus did not stop plans to start drilling activities.

Iranian sniper shoots dead young shepherd in northern Iraq, Iraqi Kurdish official says

by: YAHYA BARZANJI , Associated Press

SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq – A young Kurdish shepherd was killed Saturday by an Iranian sniper, local officials said Saturday amid concern about a spike in violence along the Iraq-Iran border.

Both Iranian and Turkish forces have increased shelling and airstrikes this summer against Kurdish rebels with bases in Iraq who for years have battled for autonomy in Iran and Turkey.

The shepherd was killed early in the morning, said Maghdeed Ahmed, the mayor of Haj Omran, a town in northern Iraq's self-ruled Kurdish region.

The mayor of a nearby village of Choman, Abdul-Wahid Gwani, confirmed the death.

Iran also shelled the border, Ahmed said. The shelling appeared to target bases of the Iranian Kurdish rebel group PEJAK, which has been involved in sporadic cross-border clashes with Iranian forces in recent

years. PEJAK says it's fighting for greater rights in Iran. The rebels deny recent Iranian accusations they have taken up positions inside Iran.

Iran's official IRNA news agency said Iran's Revolutionary Guard announced a new military offensive intended to drive PEJAK from positions in Iran.

Tehran also maintains it has the right to attack PEJAK's bases in Iraq and has accused residents of Iraq's Kurdish north of providing a safe haven for the rebels. Iraqi Kurds control three provinces in northern Iraq that make up their autonomous region.

Along the Turkish border, Kurdish rebels from the Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, have battled Turkey for years. Turkey has recently carried out a barrage of airstrikes on the Iraqi border against the PKK, who use northern Iraq as a base for hit-and-run attacks on Turkish targets.

The New York-based Human Rights Watch said Friday that Iran's and Turkey's cross-border attacks have killed at least 10 civilians and displaced hundreds since mid-July.

The casualty figure did not include the shepherd who died later.

The organization called on both Turkey and Iran to protect civilians and specifically criticized Iran, suggesting that the shelling may be an attempt to push some Iraqi civilians out of the border area.

"Iran and Turkey should do all they can to protect civilians and their property from harm, no matter what the reason for their attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan," said Joe Stork, from Human Rights Watch.

An umbrella group that represents all Kurdish rebels announced Saturday that the PKK is officially joining forces with PEJAK against the Iranian offensive. The two groups share similar aims and have worked together in the past but this announcement marks a noticeable increase in their cooperation.

"Orders were issued that PKK fighters to support the PEJAK in resisting any attack on their areas," said Dazdar Hama, a media official for the Kurdish group.

AP Associated Press

5 dead in southeast Turkey after Kurdish attacks

ANKARA, Turkey -- September 12, 2011- Associated Press

KURDISH REBELS attacked a police station and a paramilitary police headquarters near Turkey's border with Iraq, killing five people, including three civilians, the region's governor said Monday.

The Kurdish rebels, who are fighting for autonomy from Turkey, have stepped up attacks on Turkey's military and police, killing dozens of security forces since July, but this was the first civilians deaths in the conflict in recent months.

Turkey responded to the escalated attacks with air raids on suspected rebel positions in northern Iraq last month.

Gov. Muammer Turker said three civilians, a police officer and a soldier died late Sunday after the guerrillas opened fire on the two buildings in the town of Semdinli. The town is located in the mainly Kurdish province of Hakkari, which borders Iraq.

Ten other people, most of them soldiers, were injured in the raids by members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, he said.

The pro-Kurdish Firat news agency, however, said the civilians were killed by shots fired by the police and said the dead included a 14-year-old. The agency, which is close to the rebels, did not cite a source.

Turker said the military immediately launched an operation to catch

the rebels, which the private Dogan news agency said was being backed with attack helicopters.

Dogan said the attack touched off a two-hour-long clash with the security forces and that the civilians died in the crossfire.

Video footage from Dogan showed people at an open-air wedding near one of the buildings that came under attack running and huddling for safety amid gunshots. None of the wedding guests appeared hurt.

The PKK, which has been designated as a terror organization by the United States and the European Union, is fighting for autonomy in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast region, often using bases in northern Iraq for attacks in Turkey. Tens of thousands of people have died in the conflict since 1984.

Meanwhile, a U.S. official said Sunday that Turkey and the United States were discussing how to keep cooperating against terrorist targets in northern Iraq after U.S. forces leave Iraq in December, including the possibility of basing U.S. Predator drones in Turkey.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

The U.S. currently is sharing Predator surveillance data with Turkey as part of a joint effort to combat the PKK. The Predators, capable of transmitting video, are flown from bases in Iraq.

Many Iraqis worry about post-U.S. reality

BAGHDAD

BY MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT

Sheik Kamal Maamouri, who leads one of the largest Shiite-dominated tribes in Iraq, used to call the U.S. troops occupiers, demanding that they withdraw because he said they killed and imprisoned innocent members of his tribe.

But now he is not so sure he wants the Americans to go, at least not yet. Like many others across Iraq, he said, he felt conflicted, and a bit frightened, after it was revealed last week that the United States might keep 3,000 to 4,000 troops in Iraq next year.

"The political changes that have occurred here and the security problems have led a lot of Iraqis, including me, to change our minds about the withdrawal of U.S. forces," Sheik Maamouri said. That was a view that few Shiites, empowered by the fall of Saddam Hussein's Sunni government, would ever

American troops "bring a balance to Iraqi society."

have spoken when it seemed that the United States was never going to go. "They bring a balance to Iraqi society," he said of U.S. troops.

Although Iraqis have called for Americans to leave from the start of the occupation in 2003, the prospect of such a drastic drawdown, from the 48,000 troops here now, has revealed another side of the Iraqi psyche. This is a nation that distrusts itself, with little faith in the government's own security forces or political leaders. It is as if people here never actually believed that the United States would leave, so all along demands for a pullout were never carefully weighed against the potential fallout.

This is not to say that Iraqis no longer want to be liberated from a foreign military, which of course they say they do. But Iraqis who once cheered the fall of a dictator recall all too vividly the chaos and bloodshed that came after Mr. Hussein's iron rule was broken.

The politics of occupation have not changed. For months, U.S. officials

warned the Iraqis that if they did not issue a formal request to stay, and soon, it would become logistically impossible to slow the pullout. After months of stalling, the government agreed to open negotiations to leave some forces behind.

Then last week it was revealed that the U.S. defense secretary, Leon E. Panetta, supported a plan to keep as few as 3,000 soldiers in Iraq, enough to provide some training to Iraqi forces, and not much else. Many Iraqis said that they were shocked by such a small number and feared that the Americans would become irresistible targets for violence, unable to safeguard themselves, let alone Iraq.

"If the Americans withdraw, there will be problems because there will be no great power in the country that everyone respects," said Mateen Abdullah Karkukli, a 43-year-old Turkmen from Kirkuk. But, reflecting his own mixed feelings, he said, "If they stay, there will be a bigger problem because insurgents and militias will have justification to resume their armed activities."

It is not altogether surprising that Kurds or Sunnis, minorities in a Shiite-majority nation, would be more apprehensive about a U.S. pullout. Kurds worry that a strong Shiite-dominated government would upset their virtual autonomy in the north. And Sunnis worry about violence from Shiite militias.

But there is also anxiety in unexpected places, like Babil, a Shiite-dominated city where residents have bitterly complained about midnight raids by U.S. forces since 2003. Those feelings have not diminished, but they have been overshadowed for some by concerns that the Iraqi government will not be able to fill the vacuum the U.S. forces would leave behind.

"The leading parties now in the government tend to act like dictators," said Sheik Maamouri, the tribal leader. "I am afraid if the Americans withdraw from Iraq, these parties will act even more like dictators. Three thousand troops will not be enough to deal with any of the threats facing Iraq."

Iraqis have little faith in their government's ability to preserve modest gains and restore stability because of bombings, assassinations and rocket attacks

that are still carried out on a daily basis. And to a large extent they blame the United States for rupturing their society, and then planning to pull out before repairing the damage it caused.

Analysts say the Iraqi security forces have concentrated so much energy on trying to stop violence within the country's borders that they failed to guard against an external threat. The two ministries in charge of ensuring security — Interior and Defense — have been without permanent leaders for a year and a half because of political infighting.

"The Iranians believe they have achieved something because the Americans are only going to keep 3,000 troops here," said Mithal al-Alusi, a secular Sunni who used to be a member of Parliament from the Iraqi Nation Party. "The Iranians and their agents are celebrating."

Yasir Ghazi, Zaid Thaker and Omar al-Jawoshy contributed reporting from Baghdad, and employees of The New York Times contributed from Anbar Province, Kirkuk and Babil.

Sadr urges halt to attacks

Moktada al-Sadr, the anti-American cleric, has called on his followers to cease their attacks on U.S. military forces in Iraq, saying that he did not want the Americans to have an excuse to remain in the country, said a statement posted on a Web site of his political party.

But if the U.S. troops do not leave by year-end, the attacks should resume, the statement said. It could not be independently confirmed that the statement, issued Saturday, was from Mr. Sadr.

Mr. Sadr, whose militia twice fought major battles with U.S. and coalition forces, gained more prominence after candidates loyal to him won 39 seats in the parliamentary election last year.

In the statement attributed to him, Mr. Sadr said, "I am concerned about the complete independence of Iraq and the withdrawal of the occupying forces from our holy lands." He added, "And if the withdrawal is not completed and Iraq remains unstable, the military operations will resume in a new and stronger form."



12 septembre 2011

Turquie: cinq morts dans une attaque des rebelles kurdes

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie) (AFP) - Cinq personnes dont trois civils ont été tuées dimanche soir dans une attaque de rebelles kurdes contre un commissariat de police et une caserne de gendarmerie dans

le sud-est de la Turquie, ont affirmé lundi des sources de sécurité.

Un policier et un gendarme figurent parmi les victimes de l'attaque menée par des rebelles

du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), à Semdinli, une localité de la province de Hakkari, aux confins de l'Irak et de l'Irak, ont déclaré ces sources, ajoutant que 10 soldats et policiers ont été blessés.

Le PKK a lancé quatre attaques simultanées dans le secteur de Semdinli, a rapporté l'agence de

presse Anatolie.

Le gouverneur de Hakkari, Muammer Türker, cité par l'agence, a affirmé que deux rebelles ont été tués dans des combats, qui sont à présent achevés. L'armée a lancé une opération et a "commencé à capturer des terroristes", a-t-il ajouté.

Israël tente d'éviter une détérioration de ses relations avec l'Égypte et la Turquie

Jérusalem
Correspondant

Dans un Proche-Orient rendu volatil par le « printemps arabe » et alors qu'une grande incertitude règne sur les conséquences de la démarche des Palestiniens aux Nations unies pour obtenir la reconnaissance de leur Etat, Israël juge prudent de faire baisser la tension qui s'est brusquement accrue avec deux pays-clés de la région qui furent longtemps ses alliés stratégiques, l'Égypte et la Turquie.

Ces efforts ne préjugent pas de l'évolution des relations avec Le Caire et Ankara, tant il est évident que les conflits et différends en cause ne seront pas réglés de sitôt, mais les dirigeants israéliens sont conscients de l'urgence à garder la situation sous contrôle.

Cette crainte d'une escalade diplomatique risquant de déboucher sur des initiatives plus belliqueuses se traduit par un ton plus conciliant, lequel trouve un écho en Égypte et, dans une moindre mesure, en Turquie.

Le premier ministre israélien, Benyamin Nétanyahou, a rendu hommage, dimanche 11 septembre, à l'action des commandos égyptiens, qui ont exfiltré, vendredi soir de l'ambassade d'Israël au Caire, les six gardes de sécurité

qui étaient menacés par les manifestants. Le gouvernement israélien a signifié son intention de renvoyer son ambassadeur « aussitôt que possible », ce qui risque de prendre un peu de temps.

« Je suis heureux de constater qu'il y a d'autres forces en Égypte, notamment le gouvernement, qui sont désireuses de faire avancer la paix », a souligné M. Nétanyahou,

Les dirigeants israéliens s'inquiètent de ce qu'ils estiment être une influence grandissante de l'islam radical au Caire

en marquant la volonté de son pays de « préserver la paix » signée en 1979 avec son voisin du Sud. Cette insistance est d'autant plus justifiée, estime-t-on à Jérusalem, au moment où les Frères musulmans égyptiens réclament une « révision » des relations bilatérales.

Les dirigeants israéliens s'inquiètent cependant de la tournure des événements au Caire, notamment de ce qu'ils estiment être une influence grandissante de l'islam radical, incarné par les Frères et les mouvements salafistes, et d'une perte de crédibilité de l'armée.

La volonté de sauvegarder autant que possible une coopération avec la hiérarchie militaire égyptienne – qui a permis à Israël de maintenir l'étau sur la bande de Gaza – n'empêche pas les critiques : c'est, semble-t-il, parce qu'il n'arrivait pas à entrer en relation, dans la soirée de vendredi à samedi, avec le maréchal Mohammed Tantaoui, président du Conseil suprême des forces armées égyptiennes, que M. Nétanyahou s'est résolu à réclamer l'intervention du président américain, Barack Obama.

Le premier ministre israélien a trouvé ainsi une bonne occasion de remercier le chef de la Maison Blanche et de se féliciter de l'« alliance forte entre Israël et les Etats-Unis », un rappel qui n'est pas anodin au moment où l'Etat juif, qui va être sur la sellette à l'ONU, ne peut guère compter que sur le soutien diplomatique de Washington.

Pour M. Nétanyahou, il n'y a aucun lien entre l'isolement diplomatique croissant d'Israël et la question palestinienne. Le Proche-Orient, estime-t-il, « fait l'expérience d'un tremblement de terre [politique] de proportions historiques ». En réalité, en Égypte comme en Turquie, la guerre menée par Israël contre la bande de Gaza du 27 décembre 2008 au 17 janvier 2009 a marqué la population.

Si le régime du président égyptien Hosni Moubaraka de facto été complice du siège de Gaza, c'est bien l'opération militaire israélienne « plomb durci » qui a joué un rôle déterminant dans la rapide dégradation des relations entre Israël et la Turquie.

Ces derniers jours, l'escalade verbale entre les deux gouvernements s'est faite menaçante. A tel point qu'il a été jugé prudent, de part et d'autre, d'y mettre une relative sourdine. La menace du gouvernement turc d'envoyer des navires de guerre pour escorter une prochaine « flottille humanitaire » à destination de Gaza a été « citée hors de son contexte », a-t-on insisté à Ankara. De même, Israël n'a pas l'intention d'aider le mouvement kurde PKK, bête noire du gouvernement turc, comme cela a été écrit par la presse israélienne, insiste-t-on au ministère israélien des affaires étrangères.

Ces propos accommodants pourraient permettre d'apaiser dans l'immédiat les relations d'Israël avec ses deux puissants voisins. A plus long terme, l'environnement stratégique de l'Etat juif risque de s'assombrir d'autant plus vite que s'accroît le rapprochement entre l'Égypte et la Turquie. Le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, était d'ailleurs attendu lundi au Caire. ■

Laurent Zecchini

Le Point 13 septembre 2011

L'Iran bombarde un village kurde en Irak

La République islamique a lancé, depuis juillet, une vaste offensive militaire contre le mouvement séparatiste kurde Pjak.

Le village kurde irakien de Haj Omran a été bombardé depuis l'Iran voisin, mardi après-midi, a indiqué le maire de la localité voisine de Choman. « Les tirs iraniens ont commencé à 16 heures (heure de Paris) aujourd'hui sur un village kurde. Selon nos informations, les tirs ont visé Haj Omran », au nord-est de l'Irak, a déclaré le maire, Abdelwahad Gwaan. L'Iran a lancé en juillet une vaste offensive militaire contre le mouvement séparatiste kurde Pjak (Parti

pour une vie libre du Kurdistan), qui mène régulièrement des actions contre les forces iraniennes depuis le territoire irakien et est accusé par Téhéran d'être responsable de nombreux attentats au Kurdistan iranien.

Le Pjak a reconnu la semaine dernière que son commandant militaire adjoint Majid Kawiyani avait trouvé la mort lors d'un bombardement iranien. Téhéran accuse les autorités kurdes d'Irak d'avoir laissé le Pjak

s'implanter dans un "sanctuaire" de 3 000 km² en territoire irakien le long de la frontière et les forces iraniennes bombardent régulièrement cette zone. Malgré les protestations de Bagdad, les responsables militaires iraniens ont affirmé leur intention de poursuivre leur offensive contre le Pjak, notamment les bombardements en territoire irakien, jusqu'à ce que l'Irak déploie des forces à la frontière pour empêcher l'infiltration de rebelles kurdes en Iran. (AFP)



13 SEPTEMBRE 2011

Après les révolutions arabes, Recep Tayyip Erdogan en quête d'imperium

En visite en Egypte, le Premier ministre turc se voit en leader musulman du Moyen-Orient.

Par **MARC SEMO**

Fin du suspense: le Premier ministre turc a fait savoir, hier soir, qu'il n'irait pas à Gaza. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui a entamé hier au Caire une visite de quatre jours dans les pays du printemps arabe (Egypte, Tunisie, Libye), assurait la semaine dernière vouloir être le premier chef de gouvernement à se rendre dans ce territoire palestinien depuis sa prise de contrôle en 2007 par le mouvement islamiste Hamas. «*Nous poursuivons nos préparatifs comme si le*

Premier ministre Erdogan venait à Gaza», confiait

ANALYSE

dimanche sans illusion le «Premier ministre» du Hamas, Ismaïl Haniyeh, à l'agence turque Anatolie. Les autorités égyptiennes n'étaient guère favorables à une initiative qui aurait envenimé encore un peu plus leurs relations avec l'Etat hébreu après l'attaque de l'ambassade au Caire vendredi, et surtout aurait conforté la grande popularité d'Erdogan dans le monde arabe. La visite était peu probable, mais le symbole demeure. Le Premier ministre islamo-conservateur d'un pays pilier de l'Otan et négociant son adhésion à l'Union européenne est devenu un des critiques les plus virulents d'Israël, «*enfant gâté [...] qui ne veut pas reconnaître ses erreurs ni que le monde a changé*», comme il le confiait au quotidien égyptien *al-Shorouk*.

Les relations entre les deux pays, longtemps alliés par un partenariat militaire, sont désormais au plus bas, aussi bien sur le plan diplomatique que militaire et commercial, après le refus du gouvernement israélien de s'excuser pour les neuf citoyens turcs tués en mai 2010 lors de l'assaut des commandos de Tsahal sur le *Mavi Marmara*, qui tentait de forcer le blocus de Gaza. Le Premier ministre turc a menacé de faire escorter des bateaux d'aide humanitaire pour Gaza par des navires de guerre. L'administration américaine se dit «*inquiète*».

OUMMA. Les autorités d'Ankara n'en continuent pas moins leur su-

renchère verbale, à la grande joie des opinions arabes. Les Turcs sont tout aussi ravis, même s'il y a des voix dissonantes, tel Kadri Gürsel éditorialiste du quotidien libéral *Milliyet*, préoccupé de voir «*Gaza devenir une cause nationale au travers du prisme idéologique de l'Oumma [la communauté des croyants, ndlr] des musulmans sunnites*». Mais même un commentateur généralement proche de l'AKP, le parti islamo-conservateur au pouvoir depuis 2002, comme Ahmet Altan, du journal *Taraf*, n'hésite pas à ironiser sur

la politique d'un Premier ministre «*qui n'arrive même pas à contrôler les montagnes de son propre pays [où agit la rébellion kurde] et veut maintenant dominer la Méditerranée orientale*».

Cette visite au Caire est la première depuis quinze ans d'un Premier ministre turc, et Recep Tayyip Erdogan rencontrera aussi bien les militaires au pouvoir que les jeunes de l'université et les représentants de la Ligue arabe. «*Après sa troisième victoire consécutive aux élections [législatives], en juin, Recep Tayyip Erdogan a tous les leviers en main dans son propre pays et il veut s'affirmer comme le leader du monde musulman et du Moyen-Orient*», souligne Gareth Jenkins, analyste britannique basé à Istanbul. Cette diplomatie «*néo-ottomane*» - c'est-à-dire se déployant dans l'espace géopolitique de l'ancien empire - dont Recep Tayyip Erdo-

REPÈRES

«Les navires de guerre turcs seront chargés de protéger les bateaux turcs acheminant de l'aide humanitaire vers la bande de Gaza.»

Recep Tayyip Erdogan lors d'une interview, jeudi, à la chaîne de télévision Al-Jezira



Pour affirmer ses ambitions régionales, le Premier ministre turc joue sur la fibre anti-israélienne, évoquant une visite à Gaza.

PHOTO UMIT BEKTAS. REUTERS

«Les cas libyen comme syrien ont montré que la diplomatie du zéro problème avec les voisins signifiait surtout zéro problème avec les régimes en place.»

Sinan Ulgen de l'institut de recherche Edam

gan et son ministre des Affaires étrangères, Ahmet Davutoglu, sont les piliers, joue autant de l'attrait du dynamisme économique de la Turquie (8% de croissance cette année) que de son modèle politique combinant islamisme et démocratie. Mais il s'agit surtout de rattraper le terrain perdu depuis le début des révoltes du printemps arabe, qui ont pris Ankara à contre-pied. «*Le cas libyen comme le cas syrien ont montré que la diplomatie du zéro problème avec les voisins signifiait surtout zéro problème avec les régimes en place et que la politique étrangère de la Turquie était soumise à ses*

intérêts économiques», souligne Sinan Ulgen, de l'institut de recherche Edam.

GESTES FORTS. Le gouvernement turc avait été longtemps hostile à l'intervention de l'Otan en Libye, participant à minima au contrôle maritime et ne reconnaissant finalement le Conseil national de transition que le 3 juillet. A propos de la Syrie, c'est seulement en juin qu'Erdogan a réellement durci le ton contre le régime de Bachar al-Assad. Dans un cas comme dans l'autre, les dirigeants de l'AKP, malgré les bonnes relations revendiquées avec les hommes forts en place, n'ont pas réussi à les convaincre d'amorcer les réformes. D'où ce dur retour aux réalités après plusieurs d'années d'ubris sur les succès de la Turquie comme puissance régionale émergente. D'où aussi la nécessité de miser maintenant sur des gestes forts. Gaza peut-être. Ou comme le 19 août, quand le Premier ministre turc et sa femme, Emine, se sont rendus dans un camp de réfugiés à Mogadiscio pour alerter le monde - et en premier lieu le monde musulman - sur les ravages de la famine touchant la Corne de l'Afrique. ◆

«Il y a une rivalité pour le leadership régional entre l'Egypte, plus en position de jouer ce rôle, et la Turquie, qui pousse son avantage.»

Zdel Soliman du Centre international d'études stratégiques, au Caire

Que peut espérer la Turquie au sein du monde arabe ?

Par Christian Makarian

La stratégie d'Erdogan, qui a entamé ce lundi au Caire une tournée dans les pays du "Printemps arabe" est pleine de contradictions.

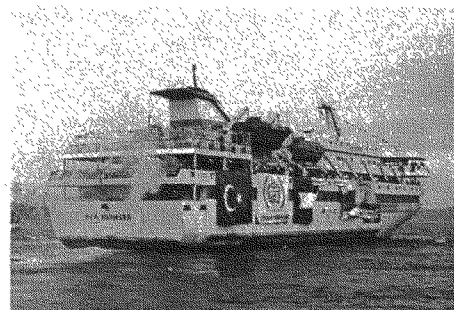
Son prestige va croissant, mais son embarras tout autant. Depuis le déclenchement des révolutions arabes, la Turquie, qui a tant investi au sud de la Méditerranée, navigue entre les écueils. Après avoir exprimé de vraies réticences lors de l'intervention de l'Otan en Libye, Ankara a opéré un retournement et a apporté son appui au Conseil national de transition. Même attitude envers la Syrie: embarrassés au début des manifestations hostiles au pouvoir, les hauts responsables turcs ont progressivement infléchi leur position, jusqu'à condamner maintenant, sans ambages, la ligne répressive et sanglante suivie par Bachar El-Assad. Ajoutons que c'est à Istanbul que les différentes forces de l'opposition syrienne ont procédé à leur jonction.

En réalité, il n'y a guère que lors du "printemps" égyptien que le Premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a pris fait et cause pour les manifestants dès les premières heures du soulèvement. Ce qui résulte d'une conjonction précise. D'une part, Moubarak, qui entendait jouer un rôle majeur en Méditerranée en raison du poids de son pays, faisait quelque part concurrence à Erdogan ; d'autre part, les Frères musulmans, dont les théories ont partiellement inspiré les islamistes turcs, ne pouvaient que bénéficier du renversement de régime.

Le paradoxe veut que l'AKP turc

jouisse d'une immense aura auprès des populations arabes, jusqu'à apparaître aux nouveaux leaders tunisiens, égyptiens ou libyens comme un modèle ou un exemple à suivre, mais qu'en même temps le printemps arabe vienne remettre en question les liens serrés que la diplomatie turque a su tisser dans les dernières années avec des régimes arabes désormais honnis. En cause, donc, le travail accompli par le patient et rusé ministre des Affaires étrangères, Ahmet Davutoglu, infatigable voyageur et théoricien du "bon voisinage", doctrine qui a produit un important rapprochement avec la Syrie d'El-Assad et l'Iran d'Ahmadinejad. Raison de plus pour mettre les bouchées doubles. Tantôt Erdogan recommence à défier Israël et exprime le souhait de se rendre à Gaza ; tantôt il effectue une tournée triomphale en Egypte, en Tunisie et en Libye. Au-dessus de cet activisme plane la volonté farouche de se poser en géant mondial. Avec une croissance économique flamboyante (8,9 % en 2010 et au moins 7 % attendus en 2011), la prospérité turque exerce une réelle force d'attraction, et pas seulement sur le monde arabe. Car la Turquie n'est pas un simple pont entre l'Orient et l'Occident, elle est le centre d'un triptyque, Europe - Moyen-Orient - Asie, qui désigne des enjeux majeurs.

Deux réserves régionales marquent toutefois les limites de la stratégie internationale d'Erdogan et soulignent de fortes contradictions. La première, de taille, concerne les relations avec Israël. En s'engageant toujours plus avant au côté des Palestiniens, non seulement Ankara a compromis pour longtemps sa relation hier encore cruciale avec Jérusalem, mais de plus, elle risque de s'enfoncer dans un chemin dont les Palestiniens



La Turquie a annoncé le 2 septembre plusieurs sanctions contre Israël pour son refus de présenter ses excuses pour l'abordage meurtrier d'un ferry turc en route pour Gaza par un commando israélien, le 31 mai 2010.

REUTERS/Emrah Dalkaya

eux-mêmes ne savent pas où il mène. Pour un bénéfice à court terme, cette politique se heurtera à un moment au fait que la Turquie, membre de l'Otan, entend par ailleurs rester l'alliée des Etats-Unis. La seconde, de bien moindre importance stratégique mais essentielle au plan des principes, vise Chypre - où l'armée turque compte toujours une force d'occupation de 40 000 soldats - et l'Arménie - avec laquelle les pourparlers de paix ont été stoppés sans lendemain. Ce sont là deux conflits historiques, dont la cristallisation ne montre ni un grand sens de la modernité ni une profonde conviction démocratique.

Finalement, c'est vis-à-vis de l'Union européenne que la Turquie devra faire preuve de la plus grande persuasion pour s'imposer comme vraie puissance en Méditerranée. Ce qui lui laisse encore une marge de manoeuvre, vu l'état de l'Europe...

Iraqi Kurdistan draws bidders

The National / UAE.

April Yee

On the surface, Iraqi Kurdistan is every oil explorer's dream.

Nearly untouched until recently, relatively secure and ruled by a local government eager for foreign partners, the semi-autonomous region has become a target for fresh investment. Among the most recent investors to place bets are the UAE company RAK Petroleum and Tony Hayward, the former BP chief executive who called Kurdistan "one of the last great oil and gas frontiers".

But underlying the promise of the region's estimated 40 billion barrels of reserves is a long-running dispute between the regional government in Kurdistan and the federal seat of power. At the heart of the disagreement is who gets to decide the future of Kurdistan's oil riches - Erbil or Baghdad.

"Constitutionally, Iraq is a federal state. Practically speaking, it's not," said Luay Al Khateeb, the executive director of Iraq Energy, an organisation that promotes the development of the oil industry. "This is what's creating rather challenging issues between federalists and centralists, leaving them to futile debates with no outcome."

The volleys began in 2009, when Kurdistan halted oil exports because Baghdad

deemed the contracts between it and foreign producers illegal. This year, Erbil resumed exports and some companies began receiving their first payments from Baghdad for exports. But this week, after the oil flow fell from 160,000 to 50,000 barrels per day (bpd), each side offered a different explanation.

Abdul-Kareem Luaibi, the Iraqi oil minister, told Reuters that the stoppage would hurt the national economy, while the government in Erbil blamed it on "serious technical difficulties".

Throughout the dispute, US\$10 billion (Dh36.72bn) in foreign investment has come to Kurdistan, according to the regional government. Traditionally the domain of small, risk-taking producers, Kurdistan is seeing interest grow from larger companies such as Marathon, Repsol and Hess.

OMV, the Austrian producer in which Abu Dhabi holds a one fifth stake, drills in three fields there and has stakes in two more.

RAK Petroleum finalised a deal this month to take on a larger stake in DNO International, the Norwegian producer that was among the first to strike oil in Kurdistan. And last week, Vallares, the energy investment vehicle backed by Mr Hayward and Nat Rothschild, a British-born financier, announced that its first target would be Genel Enerji, a Turkish producer in the region.



Iraqi Kurdistan is estimated to have 40 billion barrels of oil reserves. *Essam al Sudani / AFP*

Those companies - along with Heritage Oil, Gulf Keystone and other producers - have chosen to throw in their lot with Erbil, knowing that they risk being denied access to fields in the south because the oil ministry in Baghdad has said such companies would be blacklisted from field auctions. The ministry is offering concessions with an estimated 10 billion barrels in reserves to more than 40 bidders in what it says will be its last auction for some time.

For such companies, the risk of being denied entry to southern Iraq is outweighed by a more open investment climate in oil and other sectors, said Mr Al Khateeb.

"In terms of local regulations, the way they legislate companies, the level of bureaucracy, attractiveness - it's all different from Baghdad," he said from London. "It's less bureaucratic and more safe. Investment incentives are more attractive." They are waiting for a national oil law to clarify the relationship between Baghdad and Erbil. A draft submitted to the parliament last month drew ire from

Kurdistan, which said it had not been consulted on the document.

"The country politically is not settled yet," said Hazim Sultan, the former director general of the oil ministry's reservoirs and fields development directorate who now runs a consultancy in Amman. "Unless an oil law is finally approved by the parliament, things will continue to be volatile." Amid the disagreements, oil companies are taking a wait-and-see approach.

"It makes sense for all parties for the issues to be resolved," Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani, the chairman of RAK Petroleum and DNO International, said in July.

"The trick is to have staying power, to behave in a responsible and transparent way, and at the end I think this will be a very, very successful foray into Kurdistan."

Spare the innocent Iraqi Kurds

Turkey and Iran's military offensive is about scuttling the Kurdish dream of an independent state

By **Mohammad Akef Jamal**,
Special to **Gulf News**

Border areas in Iraqi Kurdistan are being shelled almost daily. Turkish and Iranian forces also carry out other land and air offensives, as though Iraq were a country without sovereignty. As a result of these military operations, many villages adjacent to the Iranian and Turkish borders have been destroyed and their inhabitants forced to flee, leaving everything behind.

Turkey sees its national security as being supreme even if that means trespassing into its neighbour's territory. The same applies to Iran. But how about Iraq, a brutalised country?

For a moment, let us overlook the political targets behind the ongoing military operations in the Iranian-Turkish-Iraqi border triangle. Let us talk about the hardship faced by the people living in the Iraqi villages in the area.

Let us — for a moment — turn a deaf ear to official claims of these three political entities on the assumption that they are biased, although Iraq is almost mute regarding this military action. Let us try to seek a neutral party concerned with the human rights of people.

In this context, on September 2, Human Rights Watch described the situation in this border triangle, based on evidence and reports it received: "The evidence suggests that Turkey and Iran are not doing what they need to do to make sure their attacks have a minimum impact on civilians, and in the case of Iran, it is at least quite

possibly deliberately targeting civilians."

Innocent Kurds living in border areas have suffered for years as a result of the shelling and military action. These people are not responsible for some Turkish and Iranian Kurds crossing international borders and using mountainous locations in Iraq as a base to carry out insurgency operations against their countries of origin.

The blame must lie with Iraqi officials — whether in the province of Kurdistan or the central government in Baghdad — for failing in their duty to guard the country's borders.

The suffering of these people has doubled because the Iraqi authorities have always turned a blind eye to these military actions. This has also infuriated the Iraqi people and civil society organisations in the border governorates.

They have carried out protest marches and gained a lot of sympathy in the rest of Iraq. This embarrassed the Iraqi government and forced it to come out with a timid condemnation of the military operations on Iraqi soil.

However, there is a more important issue than just their own Kurdish separatists for Turkey and Iran to attack Iraqi Kurdistan. The target is the Iraqi province itself, and the Kurdish dream of an independent state.

Both Turkey and Iran are against the Kurdish project which proved to be successful in Iraq, where the Kurds set up their regional and federal entity inside the country. The success of the Iraqi Kurdish model has



Both Turkey and Iran are against the Kurdish project which proved to be successful in Iraq, where the Kurds set up their regional and federal entity inside the country. Image AFP

become an inspiration to the Kurds in other countries in the region. Kurds in Turkey and Iraq make up the second-largest ethnic group, while they are the third-largest ethnic group in Iran.

After the downfall of the Ottoman empire and the redrawing of the region's map, the Kurdish question became one of the time bombs that could easily explode, threatening the stability of many countries.

The Kurds lost the chance of gaining their own country after the war due to the interests of the western powers. The four countries with a significant Kurdish population (Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and Iran) are opposed to any independent Kurdish state.

Over the past decades, the nationalistic ideology of the biggest ethnic group dominated policies in these countries, thus marginalising other ethnic groups along with their rights.

And although the refusal of all that is Kurdish was the common denominator in these countries, Iraqi Kurds were more daring in their opposition to the status quo, and they took part in armed struggle initiated by Mahmoud Al Hafeed before the establishment of modern Iraq.

The political situation in Iraq makes the Kurdish pro-

vince closer to being an independent state than a federal entity. Iraqi Kurdistan has a separate constitution, budget, cabinet, judiciary, and executive authorities. It also has its own armed forces on the border.

Iraqi Kurds were successful in setting up political relationships with strong allies such as the US. They have also grown in strength and are a force to reckon with.

Countries that are worried about Kurdish ambitions in their territories regard Iraqi Kurds with suspicion and consider them responsible for the activities of Kurdish nationalist organisations at home.

The dual Turkish-Iranian shelling and military offensive in Iraqi Kurdistan gives the impression that there is an undeclared agreement between the two countries to deal with the Kurdish problem which is seen as a major threat to their national security, despite the fact that both Turkey and Iran represent two very different political trends in the region.

*Dr Mohammad Akef Jamal
is an Iraqi writer based in
Dubai.*

Kurdish-Christian Tensions Emerge in Syria

By **WLADIMIR van WILGENBURG**
RUDAW

AMSTERDAM, the Netherlands — Non-Kurdish residents of northeastern Syria consider Kurds troublesome intruders and fear that the area region could become part of a larger “Kurdistan region”, according to a US embassy cable from March 2009.

US Public Diplomacy officers visited Deir al-Zur, Al-Hasaka and Al-Qamisli between March 10 and 13, 2009 during the fourth anniversary of the Kurdish uprising according to a US embassy cable published recently by Wikileaks.

Seda Altug, an expert on the Al-Jazirah region in northeastern Syria from Utrecht University, agreed that there were tensions between privileged Christians and marginalized Kurds.

“Tension was revealed in private conversations as opposed to public rhetoric which praises harmony between races and religions,” said Altug, who blamed “the Baath state’s divide-and-rule policies.”

However, Altug noted that the tension played out through the groups not interacting “rather than an open, armed or other conflict between the Christians and Kurds.” Furthermore she emphasized that there are many lower class Christians who do not share the anxieties of middle class establishment Christians, who enjoy good ties with the Baath-regime.

The Christian community blamed the Kurds damaging over US\$2 million in public property during a Kurdish uprising in 2004 but the did not tell US officials that Syrian security forces opened fire on crowds of unarmed Kurds fleeing riots provoked by anti-Kurdish chants, the former ambassador to Syria, Maura Connelly, noted. In these clashes, around 30 Kurds were killed.

Both Muslim Arabs and Christians told US officials that Kurds were taking advantage of Syria’s generosity.

“They came during the last 50 years;” a doctor in Al-Qamishli told US officials. “They knew nothing and had no skills; we taught them our handicrafts and artisanal skills; the government gave them education, housing, and health care. Now they are very rich and hold the majority [sic] of govern-

Syrian Christians attending a Sunday mass in Damascus, May 2011. Photo AFP.



ment positions. They have all their rights. We do not understand what they want or why they cause trouble.”

None of the people US officials spoke with mentioned efforts to improve relations.

“To the contrary, there was a heavy sense of resentment against Kurdish sentiments in favor of autonomy and even an independent country,” the cable mentioned.

In Al-Hasaka, a Syriac Christian human rights activist told US officials that, “Al-Jazirah is not Kurdistan,” and that the non-Kurdish population would never support breaking away from Syria, claiming independence was the ultimate goal of the Kurds.

Another Christian told US officials that in the past, the Jazirah region was 80-90 percent Christian, but that due to Christian emigration, immigration by Kurds and others and high Muslim birthrates, the Kurds now dominate and Christians form only 35 percent of the population.

Robert Lowe, an expert on Syrian Kurds at the London School of Economics, told Rudaw that there is indeed suspicion among non-Kurds.

“Some communities, notably the Christian ones, are long settled in the area and consider the Kurds to be more recent arrivals, whether this is true or not. There is sensitivity toward Kurdish political and cultural aspirations as these people do not share these [goals].”

He added that the fears are heightened because of the large numbers of Kurds in the region.

“However, I would think that the wording of the cable is a little strong, and that the dislike or fear is not unanimous,” Lowe argued.

Khalaf Dahowd, co-chair of the Support Kurds in Syria Association, told Rudaw that these fears are unfounded.

“Any fear is illogical, based on unrealistic expectations,” he said. “They have nothing to fear from Kurds. Kurds have no practical policy to separate the land from Syria, and whilst they may have some power in the area, they are certainly not in a position to make such changes. Kurds would like to have some level of autonomy in that area, and would ensure Christians and Arabs will have their rights protected.”

According to Sherkoh Abbas, president of the Kurdistan National Assembly of Syria and a founding member of the Syrian democratic opposition group known as the Syrian Democracy Council, Christians shouldn’t fear Kurdish aspirations.

“In my view as Kurd, we want to remain part of Syria; however, Kurds and other minorities in Syria should get their rights in terms of federalism or autonomy. Kurds, Assyrian, Christians, and Arabs — the original people — are brothers and do not hate each other,” he said.

Dahowd fears that the tensions between Kurds and Christians could give rise to hostility in the wake of anti-regime demonstrations.

“Some Christians and Arabs in the region are loyal to the regime, and have been for a long time,” he said. “They are treated in a privileged way by the current system. At this moment these people are pro-Assad, although they may change their allegiance when the regime changes. They are actually afraid of losing their privileges, not of Kurds.”

□□□

Turkey agrees to host U.S. radar site, a key piece of Europe missile shield

By Craig Whitlock

The Obama administration signed accords this week with three NATO allies to host cornerstones of a missile shield over Europe, including a highly sought-after deal with Turkey that will allow the installation of a U.S. radar station close to Iran.

After nearly two years of talks with Washington, Turkey's Foreign Ministry announced Wednesday that it would allow the U.S. military to operate a high-powered X-band radar station in Malatya province, about 400 miles west of the Iranian border. Along with similar radars deployed on U.S. Navy ships in the Mediterranean Sea, the station is intended to provide early warning of missile launches from Iran.

Turkey signed the agreement despite heavy political pressure from Iran and another neighbor, Russia, which have criticized the missile shield as a stalking horse to neutralize their own defenses. Iran's Foreign Ministry assailed Turkey's decision, saying it would "create tension" and cause "complicated consequences."

Turkey has sought to maintain friendly relations with Russia and Iran under its self-described "no problems with neighbors" policy. In this instance, however, the government in Ankara sided with the United States and its other NATO allies. Turkey has been a member of the military alliance since 1952.

Obama administration officials portrayed the radar accord as a coup not

only for their missile defense plans but also their efforts to bolster ties with Turkey, which had soured because of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

"This is probably the biggest strategic decision between the U.S. and Turkey over the past 10 to 15 years," a senior Obama administration official said Thursday, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss details of the negotiations.

With a booming economy, Turkey has become an increasingly influential force in diplomatic and business circles in the greater Middle East. In recent years, however, Turkey has burnished ties with Iran and Syria while cooling toward Europe, prompting concern in Washington.

Turkey's deteriorating relations with Israel posed another hurdle in the talks with Washington.

Turkish officials had insisted that the U.S. military not share data from the radar with Israel, which sees itself at much higher risk of an Iranian missile attack. Turkey's stance raised hackles on Capitol Hill, however, where several senators urged the White House to reject such restrictions.

Another senior administration official, also speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the signed agreement with Turkey does not bar the United States from indirectly providing radar data to Israel.

"It's understood that data from any U.S. radars and sensors around the world may be fused with other data to maximize the

effectiveness of our missile defenses worldwide," that official said. "Nothing in any of the agreements restricts our ability to defend the state of Israel."

Although the early-warning radar in Turkey will primarily support NATO's missile defenses in Europe, the station will be owned and operated by the U.S. government. The U.S. military operates a similar radar station in Israel and is looking to place another near the Persian Gulf.

Administration officials said there was "no quid pro quo" as part of the Turkey radar agreement. The United States and Turkey are holding separate talks over basing U.S. drones in Turkey to guide attacks against Kurdish militants — a high priority for Ankara.

Development of a European missile shield accelerated under the George W. Bush administration. In September 2009, President Obama announced plans to construct a more extensive system in Europe that will be built in phases through 2020.

Under that system, a total of 48 missile interceptors will be based in Romania and Poland, starting in 2015 and 2018, respectively. The State Department finalized agreements with those countries this week.

At the same time, the Obama administration and NATO have been talking with Russia about the possibility of cooperating on missile defense. Moscow has been historically hostile to the idea of a missile shield in Europe, and the discussions have slowed recently.

"Our bilateral dialogue with Washington, and with Brussels within the NATO framework, has been increasingly stalled," said Alexander Lukashovich, a Foreign Ministry press spokesman, according to the Interfax news agency.

AP Associated Press

Turkish prime minister confirms contact with Kurdish rebels

ANKARA, Turkey - September 16, 2011 - Associated Press

Turkey's prime minister confirmed reports that government officials met last year with representatives of Kurdish rebels in Europe.

The secret talks came to light after some websites this week posted an audio recording from an alleged 2010 meeting in Oslo, Norway.

On Friday, Turkey's state television, TRT, cited Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan telling reporters on his way to Tunisia that an investigation was launched to determine how the recording became public.

Last year, Turkey confirmed contacts between state officials and the rebel's imprisoned leader, but it was the first time officials confirmed that meetings were also held with exiled rebel leaders.

Kurdish rebels have been fighting for autonomy in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast region since 1984.



Le Kurdistan irakien suspend ses exportations de pétrole

Reuters

La région autonome du Kurdistan irakien a suspendu dimanche ses exportations de pétrole, ce qui entraînera des pertes importantes pour l'économie nationale, a déclaré le ministre irakien du Pétrole, Abdoul Karim Louaibi.

Adel Barwari, conseiller du Premier ministre Nouri al Maliki pour les affaires kurdes, a précisé que les autorités régionales kurdes

avaient pris cette décision pour marquer leur colère de n'avoir pas été consultées avant l'adoption à Bagdad d'une nouvelle loi sur le gaz et le pétrole.

"Les autorités kurdes sont très contrariées par l'adoption en conseil des ministres d'une loi aussi importante, sans qu'aucune discussion n'ait été organisée auparavant avec les principaux partenaires du gouvernement", a-t-il dit à Reuters.

Le ministre du Pétrole du Kurdistan irakien, Ashti Hawrami, a déclaré pour sa part n'avoir aucun commentaire à faire.

Les relations sont tendues entre les autorités de Bagdad et le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan, qui siège à Erbil, en raison du dossier pétrolier mais aussi d'un différend territorial.

En 2009, les autorités du Kurdistan avaient déjà décidé de suspendre leurs exportations de pétrole, qui n'avaient repris qu'au bout d'un an.



Des Kurdes occupent l'Agora du Conseil de l'Europe à Strasbourg

STRASBOURG, 13 septembre 2011 (AFP)

UNE CINQUANTAINE de militants kurdes ont occupé mardi pendant deux heures l'Agora du Conseil de l'Europe à Strasbourg, une annexe de l'organisation paneuropéenne, pour demander des garanties sur l'état de santé du chef du PKK emprisonné, avant d'être expulsés par la police, a constaté un journaliste de l'AFP.

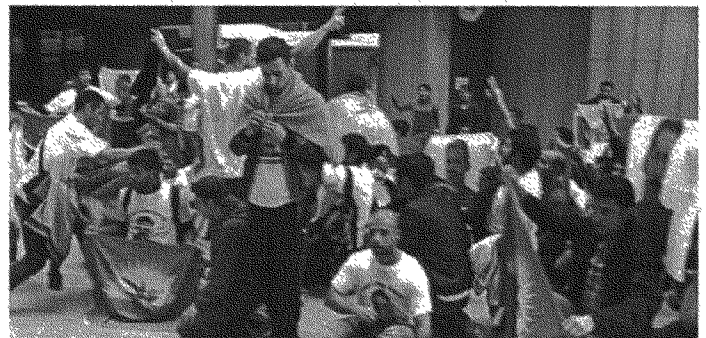
Les militants et sympathisants du chef historique du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) Abdullah Öcalan, emprisonné à vie depuis 1999, s'étaient rassemblés en début d'après-midi devant le bâtiment général du Conseil de l'Europe, situé en face du Palais de l'Europe où siègent les représentants des 47 Etats membres.

Brisant une porte vitrée à l'entrée du bâtiment, ils se sont ensuite assis dans le hall aux cris de "Libérez Öcalan !" et "Solidarité avec le peuple kurde !", demandant au Conseil de "prendre en compte leur existence".

"Notre leader Abdullah Öcalan est en prison depuis douze ans. Sa situation est critique, cela fait plus de 47 jours qu'on ne peut pas aller le voir", a expliqué à l'AFP Jian Akdogan, une étudiante.

"Si le CPT (Comité contre la torture du Conseil de l'Europe) ne réagit pas, s'il n'y a rien qui change, il ne faut pas s'étonner que les jeunes réagissent de cette manière", a-t-elle affirmé.

Les négociations entamées par un responsable du Conseil de l'Europe ont rapidement tourné au dialogue de sourds. Les manifestants ont refusé de sortir du bâtiment en échange d'une discussion avec deux membres du



CPT, qui visitent régulièrement les prisons turques.

Les manifestants ont été expulsés du bâtiment vers 16H30 (14H30 GMT) par une trentaine de policiers.

"La police est intervenue sur réquisition de l'établissement pour faire sortir les Kurdes qui étaient opposés à leur expulsion du bâtiment", a expliqué à l'AFP Didier Mazoyer, le directeur départemental de la sécurité publique, assurant que les forces de l'ordre avaient "utilisé la force adaptée à cette situation".

Certains manifestants pourraient être poursuivis pour rébellion, a-t-il ajouté.

Fin juillet, le chef rebelle kurde a affirmé vouloir mettre fin à son dialogue entamé en 2009 avec le gouvernement turc qu'il a accusé d'intransigeance dans le conflit kurde et demandé sa libération.



Ankara pourrait lancer une offensive contre le PKK avec l'Iran

ISTANBUL, Turkey - 16 septembre 2011 (Reuters) Daren Butler

LA TURQUIE pourrait lancer une offensive conjointe avec l'Iran contre la base arrière des activistes kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak, rapportent plusieurs journaux turc vendredi.

Interrogé sur les relations de la Turquie avec l'Iran et la coopération contre les activistes du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), le Premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a déclaré à quelques journalistes en marge de sa tournée en Afrique du Nord: "Ça se passe bien. Nous pourrions agir ensemble dans le Kandil".

Les montagnes du Kandil, à la frontière entre l'Irak et l'Iran, sont le refuge des combattants du PKK, qui commettent souvent des

attentats contre les symboles de l'Etat turc, et parfois sur le territoire iranien.

Le ministre turc de l'Intérieur a tenu dans la semaine des propos encore plus affirmatifs. "Ces choses-là, on n'en parle pas, on les fait", a rectifié le Premier ministre turc.

En août, la Turquie a mené une série de frappes aériennes et de tirs d'artillerie contre les rebelles dans le nord de l'Irak, qui ont fait entre 145 et 160 morts selon Ankara. Le PKK a parlé de quelques victimes seulement dans ses rangs.

La Turquie réclame plus de coopération de la part de l'Irak, où vit une forte minorité kurde, concentrée dans le Nord et influente politiquement.

Le Monde
14 septembre 2011

Les ambitions d'Ankara en Méditerranée orientale

Le premier ministre turc effectue une tournée en Egypte, en Tunisie et en Libye, qui conforte sa stature régionale

Istanbul
Correspondance

C'est un Recep Tayyip Erdogan sûr de sa popularité, qui a commencé, lundi 12 septembre au soir, une tournée de quatre jours en Afrique du Nord, sur les terres du « printemps arabe », en Egypte, en Tunisie puis en Libye. Accompagné de 250 hommes d'affaires, le premier ministre turc sera le premier chef de gouvernement à se rendre à Tripoli, depuis la chute du régime de Mouammar Kadhafi. L'occasion de vendre le « modèle turc » et de conforter une influence grandissante dans la région. Le dirigeant turc arrive en Egypte auréolé d'une réputation de « champion du monde musulman », après une semaine de fortes tensions entre la Turquie et Israël. Ankara a décidé de geler ses liens diplomatiques et militaires avec l'Etat juif, le 2 septembre.

Depuis, M. Erdogan a annoncé, entre autres mesures de rétorsion, son intention de renforcer la présence militaire turque dans les eaux de la Méditerranée orientale. La Turquie se pose en garant de la « liberté de navigation » dans la zone. « Les navires de guerre turcs seront chargés de protéger les bateaux turcs, acheminant de l'aide humanitaire à destination de Gaza », a précisé le premier ministre dans un entretien, le 8 septembre, à la chaîne qatarie Al-Jazira. « Nous ne permettrons plus que ces bateaux soient la cible d'attaques, comme ce fut le cas avec le Mavi-Marmara. Si cela se reproduisait, Israël ferait alors face à une riposte appropriée. »

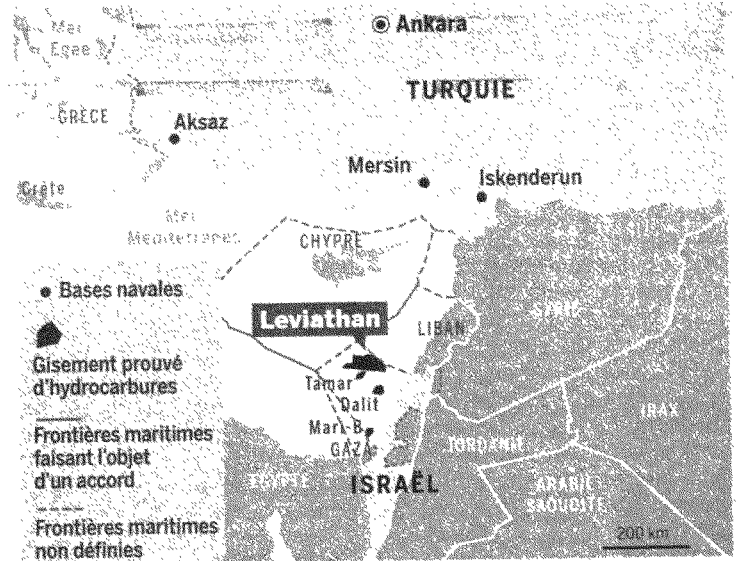
Le Mavi-Marmara, affrété en mai 2010 par l'IHH, une puissante ONG caritative liée au gouvernement islamiste-conservateur, avait pris la tête d'une flottille humanitaire destinée à briser le blocus imposé par Israël contre le territoire de Gaza. Le navire avait été arraisonné dans les eaux internationales le 31 mai 2010 par un commando israélien et neuf de ses passagers tués. « Israël se comporte dans cette région comme les pirates dans le golfe d'Aden. Personne n'a

le droit d'annexer ces eaux. S'ils le font, ils recevront une réponse de notre part », a ajouté le ministre des transports, issu d'une famille d'armateurs, Binali Yildirim.

En Turquie, les commentateurs s'interrogent sur la réalité du risque de confrontation entre les armées turque et israélienne, les plus puissantes de la région, dans les eaux méditerranéennes. Le nombre des frégates turques envoyées patrouiller dans les eaux internationales va être doublé, passant de deux à quatre. Ankara pourrait être tenté d'utiliser l'arme humanitaire, en envoyant de nouveau le Mavi-Marmara, sous escorte cette fois, à l'assaut du blocus contre Gaza. « Pour le moment, une nouvelle flottille n'est pas à l'ordre du jour », affirme Hüseyin Oruç, porte-parole de l'IHH. Le navire devait prendre part à une seconde expédition en juin, mais celle-ci a été annulée, officiellement pour raisons techniques, mais surtout pour préserver les chances d'une réconciliation avec Israël.

Le redéploiement des forces navales turques en Méditerranée envoie un signal fort à l'Etat juif, mais il conforte surtout une stratégie d'expansion que la Turquie, membre de l'OTAN, a laissée entrevoir ces dernières années. « C'est la Turquie qui possède les plus longues côtes de cette partie de la Méditerranée », a justifié le ministre des affaires étrangères, Ahmet Davutoglu. En 2010, l'état-major a créé une « task force navale méditerranéenne ». Plus récemment, la marine turque a déployé quatre frégates, un sous-marin et un navire de soutien aux évacuations au large des côtes de Bengazi, dans le cadre des opérations menées par l'OTAN en Libye. Le gouvernement veut aussi accroître la coopération maritime avec l'Egypte. En faisant ainsi étalage de sa puissance de frappe navale, la Turquie dévoile ses ambitions dans cet espace maritime à fort enjeu stratégique.

La motivation énergétique n'est pas la moindre. Le premier ministre turc l'a clairement laissé entendre : « Nous ne laisserons pas Israël exploiter seul les ressources de la Méditerranée. Ils ne pourront pas s'arroger ce droit. Nous avons



pris des mesures », a lâché M. Erdogan, le 9 septembre. Israël a récemment découvert d'importants gisements de gaz offshore, ceux de Tamar et Leviathan. « Israël soutiendra et sécurisera ses plates-formes en Méditerranée », a répondu dimanche Uzi Landau, le ministre israélien de l'énergie. La zone, qui a

« Israël se comporte dans cette région comme les pirates dans le golfe d'Aden »

Binali Yildirim
ministre turc des transports



Recep Tayyip Erdogan

très peu été explorée, regorgerait d'hydrocarbures. Et Ankara se montre surtout attentif aux explorations menées dans les eaux chypriotes. L'île de Chypre, divisée depuis 1974 et occupée, dans sa partie nord, par l'armée turque, est située à une centaine de kilomètres des côtes israéliennes.

En 2008, une concession gazière a été accordée par Nicosie à la compagnie américaine Noble Energy, en partenariat avec un groupe israélien, le même consortium qui opère en Israël. Les forages d'exploration doivent débuter en octobre. En décembre 2010, Israël et Chypre ont signé un accord pour délimiter leurs frontières en mer et les zones d'explo-

tation d'hydrocarbures, déclenchant la fureur turque.

Mais la Turquie ne reconnaît pas la légitimité de ce qu'elle nomme « l'administration grecque de Chypre » et réclame d'inclure les Chypriotes turcs dans une éventuelle négociation. Le ministre des affaires européennes, Egemen Bagis, a estimé « qu'il [était] illégal [de la part des Chypriotes] d'explorer des eaux qui ne leur appartiennent pas ». « C'est pour de telles raisons que les pays entrent en guerre. C'est pour cela que nous entraînons une armée », a menacé le ministre. ■

Guillaume Perrier

Syrie : L'opposition laïque lance une coalition

Les partis d'opposition laïcs ont lancé, hier, une coalition prônant l'instauration d'un Etat laïc, si Bachar Al Assad quitte le pouvoir, déterminés à ne pas laisser les islamistes dominer l'opposition syrienne en exil, rapporte l'AFP.

Chrétiens, assyriens ou syriaques, musulmans sunnites kurdes ou arabes, tous laïcs, une quarantaine d'opposants syriens venant de Washington, de Berlin, du Qatar ou de Norvège, se sont réunis samedi et dimanche à Paris au sein de la toute nouvelle Coalition des forces laïques et démocratiques syriennes (CFLD). «La Syrie de demain doit être pluraliste et pas dominée par les islamistes», a indiqué Randa Kassis, porte-parole de la coalition et membre du parti Hadatha. «Il s'agit de montrer qu'il n'y a pas que les islamistes, les fanatiques, il y a nous aussi», a confirmé Bassam A Bitar, un chrétien syrien membre d'Alenfetah, un parti basé à Washington. Après des mois de contestation sans précédent réprimée dans le sang par le régime du président syrien Bachar Al Assad, il est toujours très difficile de mesurer le poids de chaque courant d'opposition dans les rues de Damas, Hama ou Homs.

Les observateurs retiennent communément la prépondérance de trois mouvements, à savoir, les «nationalistes» arabes, les «libéraux» et les «islamistes». «Le problème des islamistes, c'est l'aspect répressif de leur idéologie. Nous n'allons pas remplacer l'esprit répressif (de Bachar Al Assad) par un autre», a déclaré Randa Kassis. Bassam A Bitar met en cause le soutien des Turcs aux Frères musulmans, estimant qu'Ankara ne veut pas de l'« émergence d'un Etat laïc syrien ». Mais conscients que l'opposition a tout à gagner à unifier ses forces, certains opposants laïcs prônent un dialogue constructif avec les «éléments les plus modernes» parmi les islamistes. «Laïcs et islamistes n'arrivent pas à se mettre d'accord pour l'instant, c'est un processus lent, mais il y a des éléments des deux côtés qui peuvent réussir à faciliter le dialogue», a observé Bassam A Bitar.

Cette coalition laïque apparaît alors que deux instances de l'opposition ont récemment vu le jour en Turquie. Le «Conseil national», créé fin août à Istanbul, et qui, selon les laïcs, est majoritairement composé d'islamistes. Réuni jeudi dans cette ville, il a dévoilé une partie de la liste de ses 140 membres. Le Conseil national de transition syrien, né fin août à Ankara, est lui dirigé par l'une des personnalités les plus en vue de l'opposition syrienne en exil, Burhan Ghalioun, reçu vendredi au Quai d'Orsay. Ce dernier a demandé à la CFLD de mettre la « question de la laïcité dans le contexte de la révolution », manière de les appeler à ne pas se tromper d'ennemi et à arriver à une opposition unifiée.

Des lignes de fracture existent également entre Kurdes et Arabes, ainsi qu'entre chrétiens et musulmans. Nombre d'opposants kurdes, dont la communauté représente 20% de la population syrienne, ont ainsi claqué la porte du Conseil national qui proposait une «République arabe syrienne». «Les Arabes sont mes frères, mais je ne suis pas arabe. Je suis syrien et kurde, je ne pouvais pas accepter une telle dénomination», a expliqué hier un chef tribal kurde, Murshid Al Kheznawi. «C'est le problème de la culture nationaliste arabe», a relevé un politologue libanais Ziad Majed. «La tolérance religieuse est plus forte que la tolérance ethnique et il n'y a pas assez d'efforts du côté arabe», estime-t-il.

La coalition laïque a appelé les minorités à s'unir contre le régime alors qu'elles hésitent à se joindre au mouvement de contestation par peur des représailles du régime et de l'arrivée d'islamistes au pouvoir. «Nous encourageons les minorités religieuses à participer à la révolution syrienne», a déclaré Bassam A Bitar. «C'est le moment d'unifier toutes nos



La coalition laïque a appelé les minorités à s'unir contre le régime alors qu'elle hésite à se joindre au mouvement.

forces», a indiqué Randa Kassis. Par ailleurs, l'opposant syrien, Radwan Ziadeh, a appelé les pays occidentaux à «utiliser leur influence» pour faire adopter une résolution à l'ONU estimant que «personne ne soutient le combat pour la liberté» en Syrie, car il n'y a «pas de pétrole», dans un entretien publié hier dans Libération et repris par l'AFP. «Il est très frustrant de voir que comme on n'a pas de pétrole, personne ne soutient le combat des Syriens pour la liberté», a déclaré dans cette interview au quotidien français R. Ziadeh, fondateur du Centre de Damas d'étude des droits de l'homme, alors que s'ouvre mardi la session annuelle de l'Assemblée générale des Nations unies à New York.

Les pays occidentaux «pourraient davantage utiliser leur influence pour faire enfin adopter une résolution aux Nations unies », affirme Ziadeh qui vit à Washington. «Les Européens devraient davantage travailler avec l'opposition syrienne, l'aider à opérer depuis l'étranger. Américains et Européens peuvent aussi pousser la Ligue arabe pour l'amener à une position plus conséquente : en Libye, la Ligue arabe a été fauteur de roi et en Syrie, elle ne fait rien. Les Occidentaux pourraient également envisager de rompre leurs relations diplomatiques avec la Syrie» et «Paris

devrait prendre l'initiative sur la Syrie comme elle l'a fait en Libye», poursuit-il. R. Ziadeh a indiqué que les opposants syriens commencent à « envisager le recours à une protection internationale.

Ce pourrait être une no fly zone (zone d'exclusion aérienne, ndlr) avec la création d'une zone de sécurité à la frontière avec la Turquie» dont la protection serait assurée par les forces turques et de l'OTAN. «Mais la Turquie ne le fera pas sans couverture : il faudrait une demande de l'opposition syrienne, de la Ligue arabe, du Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies», a-t-il dit. «Nous encourageons les Etats-Unis et l'Europe à pousser Ankara à prendre une position plus dure». La révolte en Syrie va être au menu des discussions mardi, en marge de l'Assemblée générale de l'ONU, du président américain, Barack Obama, et du Premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Face aux protestations de toutes parts et à l'appel du secrétaire général de l'ONU, Ban Ki-moon, à une action internationale «cohérente» en vue de l'arrêt des violences en Syrie, le régime reste inflexible, ses forces de sécurité et son armée poursuivant ratissages, perquisitions et arrestations.

Turk leader presses for Palestinian state

CAIRO

BY DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK
AND RICK GLADSTONE

Capitalizing on Turkey's growing stature and influence across the Middle East at a time of regional upheaval, its prime minister ramped up the pressure on Israel and the United States on Tuesday, telling Arab League ministers they must vote for Palestinian statehood at the United Nations this month.

"Recognition of the Palestinian state is the only correct way," the prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, said in a speech to members of Arab League in Cairo on the second day of his so-called Arab Spring tour. "It is not a choice but an obligation."

Mr. Erdogan's support of Palestinian statehood was certainly no surprise. But the commanding tone of his message, coupled with his increasingly hostile attitude toward Israel — which once considered Turkey its close friend — underscored how Turkey has now cast itself as a leader in the region.

His remarks also constituted a new challenge to both Israel and the United States, which has promised to oppose any move at the U.N. General Assembly to grant statehood to the Palestinians on Israeli-occupied lands. The American position on the Palestinian statehood question threatens to leave the United States increasingly isolated.

"Let's raise the Palestinian flag and let that flag be the symbol of peace and justice in the Middle East," Mr. Erdogan said. "Let's contribute to the establishment of peace and stability in the Middle East that it deserves."

Mr. Erdogan also repeated his contention that Israel is the aggressor in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and said Turkey-Israel relations would not be normalized unless the Israelis apologized and paid financial compensation to relatives of the victims killed in the May 2010 Israeli raid on a Gaza-bound Turkish flotilla, which had been trying to circumvent an Israeli blockade.

Mr. Erdogan's tour, which began Monday, includes plans to visit Libya and Tunisia in addition to Cairo. He is seeking to enhance his regional stature and bolster Turkey's standing as a potential role model for Arab states fitfully inching toward democracy. His visit comes at a moment when the revolutions of the Arab Spring have thrown into question much of the established order that has prevailed in the region for



Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, left, and his Egyptian counterpart, Essam Sharaf, at a news briefing in Cairo on Tuesday.

the last 30 years, including the terms of Israel's uneasy peace with its neighbors, in particular, Egypt.

Turkey accelerated its growing stature in the Arab world — and further upended the regional order — when it downgraded diplomatic relations with Israel and expelled its ambassador this month after Israel refused to issue an apology over the Gaza flotilla incident. But even before the recent flare-up with Israel, Mr. Erdogan was lionized across the region for his commitment to Islamist politics, pluralistic constitutional democracy and energetic economic development. In Egypt, aspiring Islamist politicians often try to sell themselves as "the Egyptian Erdogan."

Even before any diplomatic meetings in Cairo, he opened his visit with an appearance Monday night on a popular television talk show, where the host, Mona el-Shazly, introduced him as "a man who is admired not only by a large sector of Turkey but also by a large sector of Arabs and Muslims."

"The Turkish state is in its core a state of freedoms and secularism," Mr. Erdogan said, explaining Turkey's support for the Arab revolutions. "The world is changing to a system where the will of the people will rule. Why should the Europeans and Americans be the only ones that live with dignity? Aren't Egyptians and Somalians also entitled to a life of dignity?"

"As a Turk," he added, "I didn't want to be watching this situation from afar as if I was watching a football game."

He also arrived in Cairo just days after a mob's invasion of the Israeli Embassy brought relations between Egypt and Israel to a level of tension not seen in the three decades since the Camp David accords.

Mr. Erdogan seemed to present himself as a spokesman for the backlash against Israel unleashed by the revolts across the region. "Israel is the West's spoiled child," he said. "To this day it has never executed a decision by the international community."

Mr. Erdogan also sought to sign on to the attempts, in anticipation of a statehood bid, to broker a reconciliation between the secular Palestinian Authority, which controls the West Bank and the Islamist militant faction Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip. Some reports had suggested that Mr. Erdogan planned to visit Gaza on his tour in a symbolic snub to the Israelis and a boost for Hamas. But in the television interview Mr. Erdogan said he preferred to visit together with Mahmoud Abbas, the leader of the Palestinian Authority, and his Hamas counterpart, Ismail Haniya.

Rick Gladstone reported from New York. Sebnem Arsu contributed reporting from Istanbul.

ICG: PKK must end attacks, Turkey should push on with reforms

TODAYS ZAMAN, ISTANBUL

The Turkish authorities should be looking to control the escalation of terrorist attacks and push on with democratic reforms rather than resorting to military action to solve the issue at a time of heightened activity on the part of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a think tank report suggested on Tuesday.

The PKK must immediately end its new wave of terrorist and insurgent attacks, and the Turkish authorities must control the escalation with the aim to halt all violence, said the International Crisis Group (ICG), a US-based think tank aiming to prevent conflict worldwide, in a study released on Tuesday titled Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency.

The more than 40-page-long report addresses in detail the current circumstances in Turkey, where it suggested, citing a speech by President Abdullah Gül, that the PKK problem and the related issue of the status of ethnic Kurds was the main domestic problem in the country.

A hot war and militaristic tactics did not solve the Kurdish question in the 1990s and will not now, the report firmly stated, as it proposed Turkish authorities should advance constitutional, language and legal reforms of the past decade that have gone part way to giving Turkish Kurds equal rights, referring to the democratic opening the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) initiated in 2009.

Although the report pointed to several gaps and halts in the democratic opening process, it suggested that the program remained the best way forward to bring a solution to the clashes between members of the terrorist organization and Turkish security forces, which have caused the deaths of tens of thousands of lives in almost three decades.

That initiative counts as Turkey's most credible attempt to heal the open wounds of conflict between the state and its estimated 15-20 percent Kurdish-speaking population, the report stated and added

The outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, which continues to escalate tension in the country, attacked a mosque in Hakkari's Semdinli district earlier this month.



that the opening brought on more than a dozen solid steps towards increasing rights and restoring freedoms of ethnic Kurds in the country, such as the right to make political speeches in Kurdish and broadening access to Kurdish language television, some of the issues that frequently resulted in legal suits being brought against Kurdish politicians and businessmen in the past.

The report also gave clear advice to the Kurdish nationalist movement in the country saying that it should commit to a legal and non-violent struggle and realize that attacks targeting civilians, civil servants, police or military on routine patrols do not help bring about change in the country that will satisfy Kurds seeking greater rights for the community. Stressing heavily the responsibility of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), a key player in the resolution of the Kurdish issue with an ambivalent relationship to the PKK, to assist the government in widening the democratic opening, the report indicated that the elected representatives must take up their seats in Parliament, the only place to shape the country-wide reforms that can give Turkish Kurds long-denied universal rights. BDP deputies, although a record number of 35 were elected in the June general elections, resisted taking the parliamentary oath and joining the sessions on grounds that large numbers of local Kurdish politicians were being held in jail for non-violent expression of their ideas regarding the Kurdish situation in the country.

Elaborating on the arrests of Kurdish politicians and activists, the

report suggested that Turkey should amend the laws that label non-violent expression of hard-line opinions as a terrorist act, but accused Kurdish nationalists of exploiting the large-scale amnesty in October 2009, a move it dubbed should have been the centerpiece of the democratic opening. To warm up the domestic atmosphere toward a better deployment of the opening, the report also insisted that Turkish public opinion should be shaped to understand the need to resolve the Kurdish question. AK Party leaders, it said, must speak out to convince mainstream Turkish opinion that granting universal rights is not a concession; Turkish is not being undermined as the country's official language; and almost all Turkish Kurds wish to continue living in a united Turkey.

The report warned that Turkey, as justified as it may be to act on stopping the escalated PKK attacks, should nevertheless avoid falling into the trap of tit-for-tat escalation, while recognizing that the Turkish media had generated enthusiasm for a ground incursion into northern Iraq in search of terrorists. It suggested that as the more powerful party, Turkish authorities should instead take the lead in creating opportunities to end the fighting. Authorities were also advised to capture terrorists whenever possible, so that legal enforcement may replace military tactics even in containing the PKK's terrorist activities.

The Washington DC-based ICG, which has its international headquarters in Brussels and numerous offices across the world, boasts being recognized as the world's lea-

ding independent, non-partisan source of analysis and advice to governments, and intergovernmental bodies such as the UN and the EU, on the prevention and resolution of deadly conflict. PKK violence in Turkey has claimed at least 30,000 lives since the terrorist organization took up arms in 1984, reducing activities at times through seasonal cease-fires and increasing them at others. Particularly after the June elections, more than 60 Turkish soldiers and police and close to 200 PKK members were alleged to have been killed in escalated clashes. The

escalation threatened a return to past failures, the report claimed, warning that a Turkish focus on military means and Kurdish refusal to end its reliance on terrorist tactics were natural results of policies that might again be in store for the country.

French police raid homes in anti-PKK operation

French police raided the headquarters of an association linked with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the homes of suspected members of the terrorist group in an anti-terror operation in Marseille, a news

report said on Tuesday. The raids took place early on Tuesday morning on orders from prosecutors investigating the PKK's illegal activities in France, the private NTV television station reported. F1rat news agency, close to the PKK, reported that one asylum seeker was detained during the operation.



9 SEPTEMBER 2011

Israel to 'punish' Turkey

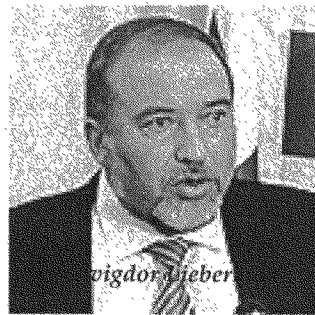
Jerusalem fights back: Foreign Minister Lieberman formulates series of tough moves in response to Turkish steps; Israel to cooperate with Armenian lobby in US, may offer military aid to Kurdish rebels

Shimon Shiffer
ynetnews.com

Jerusalem to punish Erdogan: Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman has decided to adopt a series of harsh measures in response to Turkey's latest anti-Israeli moves, Yedioth Ahronoth reported Friday.

Senior Foreign Ministry officials convened Thursday to prepare for a meeting to be held Saturday with Lieberman on the matter. Saturday's session will be dedicated to discussing Israel's response to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's recent threats and his decision to downgrade Ankara's diplomatic ties with Jerusalem.

Following Thursday's meeting, officials assessed that Turkey is not interested in an Israeli apology at this time and prefers to exploit the dispute with Jerusalem in order to promote Ankara's status in the Muslim world. Lieberman therefore decided there was no point in seeking creative formulas for apologizing, instead choosing to focus Israel's efforts on punishing



Turkey.

The Foreign Ministry has now decided to proceed with the formulation of a diplomatic and security "toolbox" to be used against the Turks. The first move would be to issue a travel warning urging all Israeli military veterans to refrain from traveling to Turkey. The advisory will be especially harsh as it will also urge Israelis to refrain from boarding connections in Turkey.

Another planned Israeli move is the facilitation of cooperation with Turkey's historic rivals, the Armenians. During Lieberman's visit to the United States this month, the foreign minister is expected to meet with leaders of the Armenian lobby and propose anti-Turkish

cooperation in Congress.

The implication of this move could be Israeli assistance in promoting international recognition of the Armenian holocaust, a measure that would gravely harm Turkey. Israel may also back Armenia in its dispute vis-à-vis Turkey over control of Mount Ararat.

'Turkey better show respect'

Lieberman is also planning to set meetings with the heads of Kurdish rebel group PKK in Europe in order to "cooperate with them and boost them in every possible area." In these meetings, the Kurds may ask Israel for military aid in the form of training and arms supplies, a move that would constitute a major anti-Turkish position should it materialize.

However, the violent clashes between Turkey and the Kurds only constitute one reason prompting accusations that Ankara is violating human rights. Hence, another means in Lieberman's "toolbox" vis-à-vis Erdogan is a diplomatic campaign where Israeli

missions worldwide will be instructed to join the fight and report illegal Turkish moves against minorities.

The tough response formulated by Lieberman stems, among other things, from the foreign minister's desire to make it clear to Erdogan that his anti-Israeli moves are not a "one-way street."

Officials in Jerusalem also noted that Turkey's global status at this time is not promising as it is, adding that Ankara is embroiled in tensions vis-à-vis NATO and Greece, while Erdogan's relations with Syria and Iran are also not favorable.

"We'll exact a price from Erdogan that will prove to him that messing with Israel doesn't pay off," Lieberman said. "Turkey better treat us with respect and common decency."

Explosion kills 3, wounds 15 in Turkish capital

ANKARA (Reuters) - An explosion from a suspected car bomb ripped through a street in the Turkish capital Ankara on Tuesday near a neighborhood housing government buildings, killing three people and wounding 15, Interior Minister Naim Sahin said.

The blast struck the central Kizilay neighborhood less than a kilometer from the prime minister's office, the headquarters of the chief of general staff and several ministries.

Sahin said a parked car had exploded, setting off a chain of blasts as other vehicles blew up on a busy street. The vehicles, like many in Turkey, were powered by liquefied petroleum gas, making them more likely to explode, he said.

"It is highly probable that it's a terror attack," he said. "The explosion took place in a parked car, and was followed by explosions of other cars because they had LPG."

President Abdullah Gul, visiting Germany, condemned what he said was a terrorist attack.

"Those who have had no share of humanity carried out a terror attack against civilians in Ankara. We have fatalities. I send them my condolences and with hatred condemn the terror,"



Flames are seen in a street after a blast in central Ankara September 20, 2011. (REUTERS/Omer Kaya/Files)

Gul said, according to state-run Anatolian news agency.

A plume of thick smoke rose above the heart of the city after the blast. Reuters reporters at the scene said a line of parked vehicles had been destroyed and an adjacent row of shops was damaged, across the street from a primary school.

Ambulances and fire engines rushed to the scene and police set up a security cordon while bomb disposal teams' sniffer dogs searched for any possible secondary device.

Sahin said the three people who were killed had been in nearby buildings. Of

the 15 people who were wounded, five were in a critical condition.

"Kumrular street is a busy place in terms of human and vehicle traffic. It's seen that the explosion mainly targeted people," he said.

Kurdish separatists, leftists and Islamist militants have carried out bomb attacks in Turkish cities in the past.

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan was in the United States and was due to hold talks with President Barack Obama later in the day.

Four civilians die in PKK attack in SE Turkey

SIIRT - Hurriyet Daily News

Alleged members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, attacked a civilian vehicle near a police college in the southeastern province of Siirt on Tuesday, killing four women Doan News Agency, or DHA, reported.

One PKK militant was killed in a subsequent firefight between the police and the militants. Two other civilians were wounded in the attack.

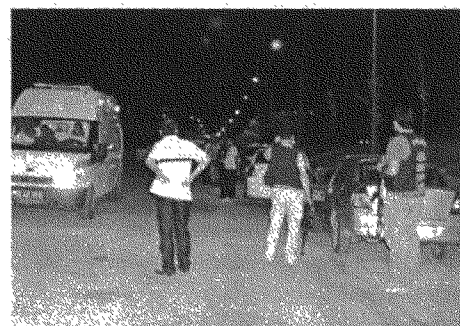
The militants attacked a civilian vehicle, mistaking it for an undercover police vehicle, the report on Hurriyet

daily website said, in which six women were headed to a wedding.

Militants ambushed the vehicle 100 meters away from the police college, spraying it with machine gun fire and launching a rocket at it.

Police officers on duty at the police college responded to the attack and a clash between the militants erupted. Special police forces were deployed in the area to stop the militants from escaping under cover of darkness.

One PKK militant was killed in the firefight while the rest of the assailants escaped. Security forces launched an



operation to apprehend the escaped PKK members, while checkpoints were deployed at roads leading to Siirt.

The women who were injured in the PKK attack were rescued from the wrecked car and taken to Siirt State Hospital, where Zeynep Evin, Nergis Evin, Kevser «ekin and Nurcan OlgaÁ died due to their injuries, while G,ıcan OlgaÁ and Nuran Evin remained in critical condition.

Turkish president says PKK meets part of Kurdish solution

ISTANBUL - Hurriyet Daily News

Turkish President Abdullah Gul has admitted that talks between the National Intelligence Organization, or MIT, and senior members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, were a part of the solution process of the country's "most important issue."

"Every state goes through processes and negotiations like these," Gul said. "There is nothing more natural than MIT being involved in these issues. The aim is to end terrorism. All the methods of ending terrorism develop within strategies, and MIT does its part."

Last week, a recording of secret talks between Turkish officials surfaced on the Internet, causing political bickering in Ankara when the opposition accused the government of deception. Despite their critical



stance on the leaked tape, however, none of the opposition parties have openly criticized the fact that officials with the MIT met with senior members of the PKK.

The first official statement from the government came from Deputy Prime Minister Besir Atalay, who had said problems could not be solved without taking risks, referring to the Kurdish issue in the country. According to the recordings, the MIT and the PKK met at

least five times in Oslo, Norway, under the presence of a representative from the coordinator country.

The Turkish Republic is doing the same as what Britain, Spain and other countries that suffered from terror have done in the past. That's how I read this, Parliament Speaker Cemil Çiçek told reporters on Thursday.

The audio tape, posted Tuesday on video-sharing sites, is a recording of conversations purportedly including Fidan, then Erdogan's deputy undersecretary; now retired deputy MIT chief Afet Gunes; prominent PKK militants Sabri Ok, Mustafa Karasu and Zubeyir Aydar; and an English-speaking representative of a coordinator country.

The person identified as Fidan describes himself as a special representative of the prime minister and assures the others that Erdogan is serious and sincere about solving the Kurdish question. He also says the PKK's observation of a cease-fire would be crucial to deepen the negotiations.

The Washington Post SEPTEMBER 21,

Turkey says it struck more suspected Kurdish rebel targets in Iraq

By Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey on Wednesday reportedly bombed the main Kurdish rebel base in northern Iraq and chased rebels in a mountainous area in Turkey's southeast in response to escalated attacks by the autonomy-seeking guerrillas.

The military said Wednesday its warplanes have bombed at least 20 more suspected Kurdish rebel targets since late August, vowing to continue with its strikes. It gave no other details but the pro-Kurdish Firat news agency said the jets bombed the main rebel base on Qandil Mountain deep inside northern Iraq on Wednesday. Authorities would not comment.

About 2,000 Turkish troops, meanwhile, launched a massive operation against Kurdish rebels in the mountainous Tunceli province after a large group of rebels was detected in the area, said CNN-Turk television,

citing unnamed military sources. The television said it was the largest anti-rebel operation in Tunceli, which is far from the Iraqi border.

The rebels, who are fighting for autonomy in Turkey from their bases in northern Iraq, have escalated attacks in recent months, killing dozens of members of the security forces and at least seven civilians since July. Suspicion also fell on Kurdish militants following Tuesday's car bomb explosion in Ankara that killed three people and wounded 34 others. No one has claimed responsibility, however, and Islamic and leftist militants are also active in Turkey.

Turkey is monitoring the movements of the rebels with Israeli-made Heron drones and also receives intelligence from U.S.-operated Predator drones about rebel activities inside northern Iraq.

The military on Wednesday said it would launch airstrikes whenever it

pinpoints the rebel targets in northern Iraq. Turkish warplanes had already bombed 132 targets in an air campaign between Aug. 17-23 and Wednesday's announcement put the total number of targets that have been hit since the beginning of the campaign at 152.

In the latest reported violence in Turkey, suspected Kurdish rebels attacked a van carrying a group of civilian women, killing four, and separately killed a cadet at a police training school.

The attack on the women in Siirt occurred close to another police training school, leading to speculation that the assailants may have mistaken the van for a police vehicle. The women were on their way to celebrate with a friend who was leaving to start school in another province, said provincial governor Musa Colak.

Tens of thousands of people have died in the conflict since 1984.



Iran: le groupe rebelle kurde PJAK sur le point d'être éliminé (général)

TEHERAN (AFP) - L'offensive des forces armées iraniennes contre le PJAK, principal mouvement kurde de lutte armée contre le régime de Téhéran, est sur le point d'aboutir à l'élimination du groupe rebelle, a affirmé le commandant de l'armée de terre, cité lundi par la presse.

"Le PJAK arrive au bout du rouleau, dans les prochains jours une totale sécurité sera instaurée à la frontière", a déclaré le général Ahmad Reza Pourdastan.

"Ce groupe est désormais en situation de faiblesse et ses activités se sont considérablement réduites", a-t-il ajouté en affirmant que le PJAK ne pouvait plus être "considéré comme une menace".

Dans un communiqué, l'armée de terre des Gardiens de la révolution a annoncé la prise dans la nuit de dimanche à lundi de "la principale base des terroristes dans les hauteurs de Jassoussan dans la région de Sardasht le long de

la frontière", a rapporté l'agence Irna.

Le communiqué ajoute que "les soldats de l'islam ont pris totalement le contrôle de la zone".

Interrogé par l'AFP depuis Erbil en Irak, un responsable du PJAK, Saeed Khan, a qualifié les "menaces" iraniennes d'"inutiles et sans importance pour nous".

"Comme vous le savez, nous avons annoncé un cessez-le-feu et nous avons vu que des dangers planaient sur le Kurdistan irakien, nous avons donc évacué les zones", a-t-il ajouté.

"Cela ne signifie pas que nous ayons peur de l'Iran et nous sommes prêts à repousser toute attaque. Nous nous trouvons maintenant en territoire iranien", a-t-il ajouté. Selon lui, le PJAK a "tué 600 soldats iraniens lors des derniers combats".

Les Gardiens de la révolution soutenus par l'armée de terre ont lancé à la mi-juillet une vaste opération contre le



L'offensive des forces armées iraniennes contre le PJAK, principal mouvement kurde de lutte armée contre le régime de Téhéran, est sur le point d'aboutir à l'élimination du groupe rebelle, a affirmé le commandant de l'armée de terre, cité lundi par la presse. (© AFP Behrouz Mehri)

PJAK dans les zones frontalières du Kurdistan irakien, au nord-ouest de l'Iran, où le groupe rebelle menait depuis des années des actions armées et des attentats.

Les affrontements ont fait des dizaines de morts des deux côtés, dont le numéro deux du mouvement rebelle kurde tué début septembre par des bombardements en territoire irakien où le PJAK a installé ses bases arrières.

Le PJAK a proposé un cessez-le feu mais les Gardiens de la révolution l'ont rejeté, affirmant que les rebelles kurdes n'avaient pas d'autre choix que de déposer les

armes ou quitter les régions frontalières.

Malgré les protestations de Bagdad, les responsables militaires iraniens ont toujours affirmé leur intention de poursuivre leur offensive, notamment les bombardements en territoire irakien, jusqu'à ce que l'Irak déploie des forces à la frontière pour empêcher les infiltrations de rebelles en Iran à partir du Kurdistan irakien.

AP Associated Press

Le Premier ministre turc confirme des contacts avec les rebelles kurdes

ANKARA, Turkey - 16 septembre 2011 - Associated Press

Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a confirmé des informations selon lesquelles des responsables du gouvernement avaient rencontré l'an passé des représentants des rebelles kurdes en Europe.

Le voile a été levé sur ces discussions secrètes après la mise en ligne cette semaine sur plusieurs sites web de l'enregistrement audio d'une rencontre présumée en 2010 à Oslo, en Norvège.

Vendredi, la télévision publique turque TRT a cité M. Erdogan déclarant à des journalistes dans l'avion qui l'emmenait en Tunisie, qu'une enquête était lancée afin de déterminer comment l'enregistrement avait pu être rendu public.

L'an passé, Ankara avait confirmé des contacts entre des repré-



sentants de l'Etat et le leader des rebelles en détention. C'est la première fois que sont confirmées des rencontres avec des dirigeants rebelles kurdes en exil.

Les militants kurdes luttent pour l'autonomie dans le sud-est de la Turquie depuis 1984. AP

LE FIGARO

samedi 17 - dimanche 18 septembre 2011

Les désertions se multiplient dans l'armée syrienne

DELPHINE MINOUI

ENVOYÉE SPÉCIALE À WADI KHALED (NORO DU LIBAN, PRÈS DE LA FRONTIÈRE SYRIENNE)

IL A TROQUÉ son uniforme militaire contre une longue tunique blanche. Dans sa maison-refuge de Wadi Khaled, au bord de la rivière Nahr el-Kebir qui sépare, au nord, le Liban de la Syrie, Hassan Abdul Karim al-Hamad peut enfin parler à visage découvert. Loin des « ennuis », mais toujours proche de « l'action ».

Ce jour-là, l'ex-premier lieutenant syrien, exilé depuis deux mois au pays du Cèdre, est en pleine discussion avec d'autres soldats déserteurs. Assis en tailleur autour d'un café turc, ils parlent de « missions nocturnes » de l'autre côté de la frontière. « Je repars toutes les nuits à Homs pour protéger les manifestants et pour encourager d'autres militaires à lâcher le régime », nous confie, en aparté, le lieutenant repent, aujourd'hui porte-parole de « l'Armée syrienne libre ».

Faut-il y voir l'ébauche d'une rébellion armée contre Bachar el-Assad, après six mois de révolte pacifique ? Ces derniers jours, les rumeurs vont bon train sur des cargaisons d'armes qui traverseraient la frontière libanaise en direction de la Syrie. Plusieurs témoins évoquent également des combats opposant les forces loyalistes à des militaires insoumis, notamment dans les villes de Homs, Idlib et Deir ez-Zor. Pour des raisons sécuritaires, Hassan Abdul Karim al-Hamad est peu disert à ce sujet, préférant mettre l'accent sur les appels à la défection que son organisation ne cesse de faire circuler. « Une de nos tactiques consiste en l'enregistrement de vidéos de repentis, postées sur l'Internet et diffusées sur les chaînes satellitaires comme al-Jezira », explique l'homme à la barbe poivre et sel, qui officia pendant 29 ans au sein des puissants services de renseignement syriens.

Lui-même s'est prêté à l'exercice dès son arrivée, en plein été, au Liban. Face caméra, on le voit présenter sa carte d'identité militaire, avant d'égrener ses griefs contre Damas. « Quand je suis entré dans l'armée, mon objectif était d'assurer la sécurité de mon pays, (...) mais la révolution a prouvé que le régime nous avait trompés avec ses slogans », s'emporte-t-il devant l'objectif, avant d'accuser ouvertement le pouvoir alaouite de « se faire épauler » par le Hezbollah libanais et les miliciens bassidjis d'Iran pour « tuer son propre peuple ».

« Des étrangers pour les basses œuvres »

Cette ingérence iranienne, condamnée par la communauté internationale, est difficile à vérifier à cause des restrictions

imposées à la presse en Syrie. Mais les descriptions supplémentaires offertes par Hassan Abdul Karim al-Hamad au Figaro recourent d'autres témoignages préalablement recueillis.

« Quelques semaines après le début de la révolte, j'ai eu pour mission de diriger, à Homs, 27 membres du Hezbollah et 23 Iraniens. Ces derniers, connus pour être d'excellents tireurs d'élite, ne parlaient pas l'arabe. Par l'intermédiaire d'un traducteur, je devais leur indiquer les positions à partir desquelles ils devaient viser les protestataires. Au début, ils portaient des uniformes noirs. Puis on leur a donné des tenues militaires, pour qu'ils soient méconnaissables », raconte le lieutenant séditieux, dégoûté par ce « recours aux étrangers pour exécuter les basses œuvres ». Mais c'est contre la « machine à tuer » syrienne dans son intégralité qu'il s'est rebellé en désertant l'armée. « Le déclic, je l'ai eu avec le massacre de la place Se'a Jadida - la place centrale de Homs - à la mi-avril. Les autorités voulaient nous faire croire que les protestataires étaient des "terroristes extrémistes" qu'il fallait éliminer. En fait, ces gens-là étaient des civils. Durant cette opération meurtrière, 300 personnes ont été tuées, dont une vingtaine de soldats qui refusèrent de tirer sur la foule. Trop, c'était trop ! », dit-il. Commencé alors une « course contre la mort », de Homs jusqu'aux montagnes du Liban-Nord, où il finit par se réfugier.

Depuis l'annonce de sa défection, en juillet, Abdul Karim al-Hamad dit avoir convaincu 55 militaires de le rejoindre

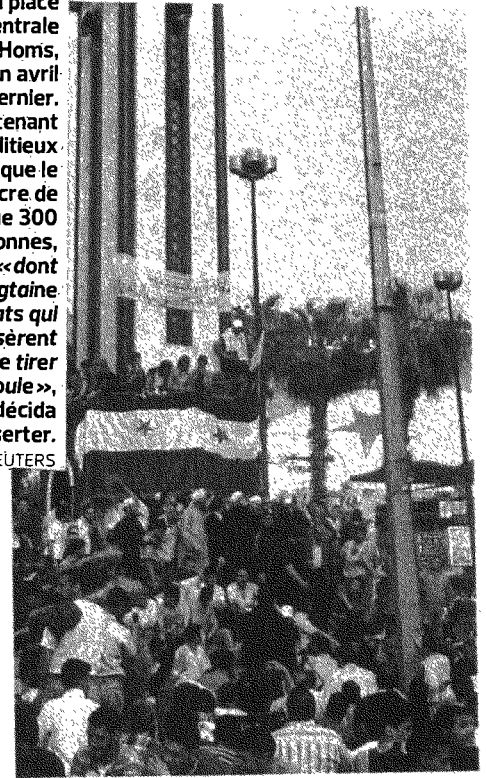
ici. D'autres ont pris le chemin de la Turquie et de la Jordanie. Selon lui, « des milliers de membres de l'armée, essentiellement des sunnites, ont abandonné l'uniforme militaire ». En réalité, le phénomène reste difficilement mesurable, la plupart des déserteurs craignant de se déclarer à cause des représailles, comme le récent enlèvement sur le territoire turc du colonel Hossein Harmouch, un des premiers à s'être dissocié de l'armée. Jeudi soir, ce déserteur - encore endeuillé par l'assassinat de son frère, quelques jours plus tôt - est soudainement réapparu à la télévision syrienne pour se livrer à des « aveux forcés ».

« Prêt à rentrer pour se battre »

« Ce régime doit tomber ! », s'emporte Eyad - un nom d'emprunt. Croisé dans un centre de réfugiés de Wadi Khaled, cet ex-conscrit de 23 ans revient de loin. Évadé il y a vingt jours de sa caserne de Homs, il a perdu trois de ses six compa-

Manifestation sur la place centrale de Homs, en avril dernier. Un lieutenant séditieux raconte que le massacre de quelque 300 personnes, « dont une vingtaine de soldats qui refusèrent de tirer sur la foule », le décida à désertier.

REUTERS



gnons déserteurs. « Les forces de sécurité ont mis le feu à la maison d'un des villages où nous nous étions camouflés », dit-il. D'une traite, les souvenirs remontent à la surface : « Dès la révolution tunisienne, en janvier, on nous a retiré nos téléphones portables. À la caserne, il était interdit de regarder la télévision. Quand la Syrie s'est enflammée, en mars, on nous a déployés dans les rues pour tirer sur la foule. Derrière nous, les forces de sécurité et les shabiha - miliciens - nous surveillaient en permanence. Un jour, un de mes amis soldat a refusé d'obéir aux ordres. Il a été froidement tué d'une balle dans la tête. Quelques jours plus tard, quand un officier a réalisé que je me contentais de tirer en l'air, j'ai pris la fuite avant qu'il ne me tue ».

D'un regard abattu, l'ex-soldat ajoute : « Aujourd'hui, il ne reste qu'une solution : la lutte armée ! » À ses côtés, Wassim, un autre déserteur, se dit lui aussi, « prêt à rentrer en Syrie pour se battre ». L'un et l'autre ont vaguement entendu parler de « l'Armée syrienne libre ». « Mais le problème, c'est que les déserteurs sont sous-équipés et pas suffisamment organisés. Ils ne feront jamais le poids face aux forces dirigées par Maher el-Assad - le frère de Bachar. À moins que les pays étrangers ne nous fournissent des armes... », murmure Wassim. ■

Turquie : la posture impériale

Dorothee Schmid

Responsable du programme Turquie contemporaine à l'Ifri* l'auteur analyse les enjeux de la lutte d'influence que mène Erdogan au Moyen-Orient.

Le premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a effectué cette semaine une tournée importante dans les trois pays du printemps arabe - Égypte, Tunisie, Libye. Il s'agissait pour la Turquie de reprendre pied dans la région en ciblant les lieux où le changement de régime est acquis. Ce voyage intervient après des mois de flou relatif d'une diplomatie turque plutôt contrariée par les bouleversements au Moyen-Orient, mais qui fait toujours preuve d'une capacité de rétablissement spectaculaire.

Premier arrivé sur place une fois retombée la poussière des révoltes, le leader turc était prêt à engranger les bénéfices à moyen terme d'une politique étrangère désormais maîtresse dans l'art des retournements, comme l'a démontré l'affaire libyenne, où la Turquie a rejoint tardivement et à contrecœur la coalition ; prêt aussi et surtout à profiter de sa popularité apparemment intacte auprès des foules arabes.

La mise en scène de la grandeur turque aurait été parfaite si un incident de dernière minute n'était venu gâcher la fête : le président français Nicolas Sarkozy, accompagné du premier ministre britannique David Cameron, a en effet devancé son rival turc à Benghazi.

Ce rebondissement de dernière minute a une forte portée symbolique. Il marque un nouvel épisode dans la compétition rampante entre Français et Turcs pour l'influence au Moyen-Orient et annonce le retour des puissances étrangères dans le jeu politique arabe en recomposition. Depuis quelques années, la diplomatie très active du gouvernement turc post-islamique issu de l'AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Parti de la justice et du développement, au pouvoir depuis 2002) taille en effet des croupières à la politique arabe de la France. Après avoir testé sur différents terrains sa capacité de médiation et assuré la croissance de ses marchés sur l'ensemble du Moyen-Orient, Iran et Israël compris, la Turquie offre aujourd'hui à un monde arabe en plein bouleversement un modèle de développement économique et de consolidation démocratique, capable d'arranger l'islam avec la modernité.

C'est bien ce « modèle turc » qu'Erdogan est venu présenter en Égypte ; un système clé en main qui ne semble pourtant plus séduire sans réserve ses interlocuteurs, puisque les Frères musulmans, public a priori le plus naturellement acquis à l'AKP,

ont cette semaine fait connaître leurs réticences face aux ambitions de leadership régional de la Turquie.

La Turquie n'est en effet pas systématiquement perçue comme une « source d'inspiration », selon l'expression préférée d'Erdogan ; elle apparaît aujourd'hui plutôt comme aspirant à l'empire. Le très créatif ministre des Affaires étrangères Ahmet Davutoglu est depuis trois ans l'architecte d'une diplomatie tous azimuts, riche d'une nouvelle vision de l'ordre international centrée sur la Turquie. Cumulant le dynamisme

d'une puissance émergente et la stature d'un ancien empire régional, celle-ci dispose de tous les atouts nécessaires pour jouer dans la cour des grands. Elle s'emploie aujourd'hui à rattraper le temps perdu pendant la guerre froide, où elle se contentait d'un rôle d'appui obligatoire aux Américains. L'ivresse de l'indépendance retrouvée et de la croissance économique sur une tendance de 8 % à 9 % cette année, une performance particulièrement rare par les temps qui courent justifient l'audace présente de la politique étrangère turque.

Une audace qui masque opportunément les contradictions et les fragilités d'une diplomatie qui cherche ses nouvelles marques. Au Moyen-Orient, la Turquie avance au culot sur des terrains minés. Réactivité, capacité à agir sur tous les fronts, déploiement de moyens, mais aussi et surtout goût de la communication, comme l'avait déjà montré le très médiatisé voyage du premier ministre turc en Somalie fin août, sous le signe de la charité islamique. Erdogan rêvait cette fois-ci de se rendre à Gaza ; la tension israélo-arabe croissante, à laquelle la Turquie a jouté son grain de sel en expulsant récemment l'ambassadeur israélien, a contrarié ce projet.

Après des mois de tergiversations sur le cas syrien, qui ont montré les limites de son influence sur un régime supposé ami, le gouvernement turc a condamné tardivement les atrocités de Bachar el-Assad. Partisan d'une solution diplomatique sur le dossier nucléaire iranien, il a accepté le déploiement des éléments du système antimissile de l'Otan sur son territoire, provoquant récemment la fureur de Téhéran. Le système de cloisonnement et d'équilibre sur lequel repose l'architecture davutoglienne au Moyen-Orient est mis à mal par les crises à répétition. Sous la rhétorique du *soft power*, pointe alors le réflexe d'un *hard power* qui insiste désormais sur ses capacités maritimes en Méditerranée orientale. Reste alors à démêler l'équation complexe des relations entre l'armée et le pouvoir civil en Turquie - un jeu certainement loin d'être terminé.



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Is Turkey the best model for Arab democracy?

Despite the country's remarkable progress, Turkey has yet to solve the 'Kurdish problem' and allow press freedom.

Opinion

Mark LeVine / Al Jazeera

Judging by the hero's welcome given to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in his just-completed tour of the Arab world, it's not surprising that, once again, Turkey is being held up as "the best model for change" across the region.

Those boosting Turkey's standing include not merely Erdogan and the country's increasingly bold leadership, but equally political commentators across the Arab world (and indeed, around the globe), and millions of Arabs hoping to establish truly democratic societies in the wake of the Arab revolutions.

There is no doubt that the Turkey of 2011 is a remarkable success story in many areas, particularly compared with the political, economic and cultural state of the country less than a generation ago.

But is the country really a model for Arab pro-democracy revolutionaries to look to, as they struggle to establish democratic political systems in the ashes of decades of dictatorship, amid political and economic marginalisation? Let's look at the record.

Democracy - less than meets the eye

At first glance, Turkey has become a model of democracy and pluralism, and is serving as a beacon for other Islamically oriented parties looking to participate in their emerging political systems. Culturally speaking, the country is, ostensibly, an equally inspiring model: Istanbul is one of the world's most vibrant and open cities, while the country's long Mediterranean coastline remains largely a (thankfully) undiscovered hybrid of local and cosmopolitan cultures.

Turkey has had several substantially free and fair elections and a national referendum in the past decade, which have seen one party - the Justice and Development Party (AKP) - achieve and maintain power, and substantively change the country's constitution, all against the wishes of the previously all-powerful military. Just as importantly, the AKP is not trying to stamp out criticism by its rivals; last year's constitutional referendum saw particularly intense debate, with Istanbul and other cities festooned with posters



Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, Turkey has taken on a leadership role in the Middle East [GALLO/GETTY]

freely comparing Erdogan to Hitler.

Yet a slightly deeper look at Turkey's record on political democracy, an examination that moves beyond the usual focus on elections, reveals a country that still has a long way to go before it can be considered fully "free".

The Economic Intelligence Unit scores Turkey 89th of 167 countries, which puts it well below the former Soviet Bloc countries of Eastern Europe, or African success stories such as Mali and Ghana - and only a few steps above Palestine and Venezuela. Freedom House's latest report scores Turkey at only a three out of seven on both political rights and civil liberties, giving it a rating of "partly free".

A core problem continues to be the large gender gap in political participation, which Turkey ranked 126 out of 134 countries by the Economic Forum in its 2010 Global Gender Gap Index. Given the problems with women's empowerment in the Arab world, this should be of serious concern to anyone looking to copy the Turkish model.

As important, corruption continues to plague the Turkish political system and economy, and is closely tied to the ongoing restrictions on political parties, on civilian oversight of the military, and press freedoms that belie claims to be a well-functioning democratic system.

Media and press freedoms still restricted

The Economic Intelligence Unit ranking in particular focused on the deteriorating media freedoms in Turkey in recent years, a crucial marker of the environment of political freedom.

Europe's main human rights and security

body, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, complained last year that more than 5,000 websites had been blocked in recent years. It called for "a very much needed reform" of Turkey's so-called Internet Law, arguing that it "considerably limits freedom of expression and severely restricts citizens' right to access information".

Opposition parties have complained loudly against the AKP's intention to further restrict internet freedoms, whose loss is evidenced by the slide in Turkey's ranking in the World Economic Forum's annual index from 50th place to 89th between 2003 and 2010. Turkey is a "country under surveillance" according to Reporters Without Borders, which places it alongside Russia and Venezuela, two countries with less-than-stellar records on a variety of democracy-related metrics.

Internet censorship is only part of the story, however. Journalists and news outlets can be prosecuted for various offences involving "insulting" the basic principles of the republic. Reporters face arrest, trial and jail terms merely for doing their jobs or expressing opinions. Turkey "still remains a dangerous place", despite clear advances in the last twenty years, with more than 40 journalists currently imprisoned for their writings or views.

The Kurdish problem, Turkey's Palestine question

The Kurds have long been among the most repressed minorities in the Middle East, whose suffering is comparable in many ways to that of the Palestinians. It is indeed hypocritical for Prime Minister Erdogan to castigate Israel for its ongoing occupation and treatment of Palestinians, as the Turkish government continues to

deny basic rights to Kurds, engages in cross-border raids into Iraq, perhaps most importantly, refuses to recognise the national rights of Kurds to some form of self-government, or even robust autonomy.

Historically, the birth of the post-Ottoman Turkish Republic saw the new state's army conquer territory that was to be allotted for Kurdish self rule by the 1920 Treaty of Sevres, an action that mirrored the British and French inclusion of much of the rest of Kurdistan into their mandates in Syria and Iraq.

The 2009 announcement by the Erdogan government to provide the Kurdish minority more freedom was welcome, but has not been followed through substantively. As Human Rights Watch describes it: "Following the Justice and Development Party government's encouraging talk of pursuing democratisation in Turkey and of trying to solve the Kurdish problem, prosecutors have turned right around and taken new menacing steps against legal Kurdish political organisations."

The gap between rhetoric and reality is also evident in the continuing government prohibition against scholars investigating the Turkish narrative surrounding the Armenian genocide, the basic realities of which Turkey still refuses to acknowledge, similar to Israel's ongoing refusal to acknowledge the basic facts of the Nakba.

Human rights still a broad concern

The Kurdish problem is at the heart of Turkey's continually troubled human rights record. Kurds have been arrested and jailed merely for being in the vicinity of demonstrations in southeastern Turkey. More broadly, despite the changes made last year to the constitution, numerous provisions restrict human rights and fundamental freedoms, with the criminalisation of opinion a continued obstacle to the protection of human rights.

"Journalists, writers, publishers, academics, human rights defenders, and officials of Kurdish political parties and associations" all continue to be prosecuted on a variety of issues, especially for investigative reporting on matters such as the conduct of the military, adds Human Rights Watch. Newspapers and websites continue to face temporary closures or large fines that are understood to be punishment for their views or reporting.

Trade union activists have been tried for supposed PKK membership merely for supporting Kurdish-language education, and senior leaders of the country's human rights NGO community have been put on trial because of their support for greater rights, especially for Kurds.

There is ongoing torture and other abuses of prisoners, while the culture of impunity towards abuses committed by security forces continues unabated. Such practices may not touch ordinary Turks or even social activists the way they once did, but they still constitute a significant drag on the country's democratic development.

An economic miracle that is hard to share

At the heart of Turkey's rise to becoming a regional powerhouse and a role model has been the rapid development of the country's economy during the past fifteen years or more. Today Turkey stands with Brazil atop the list of developing countries in the levels of development and growth of its economy.

Annual growth jumped from just over two per cent in the 1990s to well over eight per cent in the mid-2000s, as did worker productivity in the all-important manufacturing sector. The country's growing foreign trade, a position that rivals Egypt and other Arab countries, can only be viewed with envy, as does its low budget deficits and even surpluses it boasts.

However enticing, there are several reasons why the Turkish "miracle" will be hard to emulate across the Arab world.

First, the present dynamic emerged in good measure out of a severe banking crisis early in the decade, which saw the imposition of a reform plan that helped stabilise the financial sector, allowing it to weather the storm of the past few years, while banks in Europe and the US have faltered.

Second, the economy was liberalised in many ways from within, rather than neoliberalised from outside. The rise of the AKP and the period of rapid growth corresponds with the rise of a class of "Muslim" entrepreneurs, symbolised by MUSIAD, or Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association, which helped challenge the previously dominant TUSIAD, or the Turkish Industry and Business association. The latter was long tied to the state-dominated economy, which was riveted by corruption, cronyism, and a lack of farsighted economic leadership.

Beginning with the rule of Prime Minister Turgut Ozal in the 1980s, Turkey opened up as much, if not more, from within than as a result of foreign-imposed structural adjustment. These changes were part of a larger project of wresting control of the economy from the military-dominated state by the country's once proud, but long-suffering, entrepreneurial class.

In contrast, externally imposed structural adjustment reforms that are the norm in the developing world usually have no

roots in the local economy, and thus benefit only a small section of the country's population.

This economic plan allowed Turkey to chart its own path towards indigenous-generated and locally controlled growth, something most post-revolutionary Arab countries (with the exception of Libya and its huge petroleum reserves) will have a hard time copying, given their much weaker position vis-a-vis the global financial system - a key, if largely unstated, element of the "system" of which "the people" have "wanted the downfall" in this revolutionary year.

Moreover, the Turkish "miracle" would not have happened without a strong bit of historical and geographical good luck:

Turkey's opening accelerated in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, out of which emerged a group of Central Asian states with strong historical, cultural and linguistic ties to Turkey. As important, many of them were sitting on huge petroleum reserves. The sudden creation of huge potential market right next door to Turkey, with countries with whom it has centuries worth of economic and cultural links, is a situation no Arab country, whether in North Africa, the horn of Africa, or the Levant, can hope to match.

Although African and Levantine economies have significant potential for development, at this time they are simply not poised to provide markets for Egypt, Tunisia, or Syria - to take three examples - of the kind that Central Asia has provided to Turkey. Because of this, much needed economic growth in the Arab world will depend on a combination of greater trade with a weakened Europe and the developing of myriad more creative, smaller-scale economic relations with surrounding countries that won't provide the same quick jolt that Turkey's Central Asia neighbours provided it with at the start of its growth spurt.

It will also mean small producers, manufacturers and traders operating with a level of independence that the country's elites would likely not support, since they could not control operations - and in so doing siphon off some of the wealth such relations generate.

Religion and the hope for democracy

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of Turkey's political and economic rise has been the positive role of religion within the country's political and cultural systems. Given the intense debates surrounding the potential role of religion in the new constitutions being developed by post-revolutionary countries across the region, the stable leadership of an officially secular country by an Islamist party - that not too long ago was considered a threat to

democracy - is quite a development.

Indeed, to witness Erdogan telling the assembled leaders at last week's Arab League summit - not one of whom yet represents a functioning democracy, despite three seasons of revolution so far - that Egypt should become a "secular state", sends a powerful message to the region that Islamically oriented parties should not seek to create a state bounded by sharia, even as it angers local movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

Yet here again, the Turkish model is less replicable than might first meet the eye.

Erdogan might well be an "Islamist" (whatever that means), whose party has come a long way from its roots in the conservative and anti-Western Milli Gorush movement. But he operates within a political culture that is still powerfully bound by the six founding principles of the Turkish Republic, chief among them being the secular foundation of the state.

Ataturk removed the language identifying Islam as the official religion of the state in the original post-Ottoman constitution, and secularism has been enshrined in the constitution since 1937, article two of which describes Turkey as a "democratic, secular and social state governed by the rule of law".

Moreover, despite its official self-identification, Turkey is not really a secular state in the sense many people would understand the term. The state is supposed to take a position of "active neutrality" towards religion - something it's hard to imagine any newly forming Arab government having the courage to advocate - but in reality the state actively controlled religion through the Diyanet, or State Presidency of Islamic Affairs, which ensured (or perhaps better, enforced) the cooperation of the official religious hierarchy in the new system.

It is in this context of upwards of eight decades of firm state control of religious affairs, within a larger dynamic of the resurgence of a kind of "sufi republican" Islam in the public and economic spheres and the concomitant weakening of a military that still plays a powerful role in maintaining the secular order of the state, that Turkey's possible use as a model for Arab countries in transition must be assessed.

With the exception of Syria and Tunisia, no Arab states have a strong recent history of state secularism, and even in those two cases, secularism was tied ultimately to economic, ethnic and sectarian struggles for power that have ultimately undermined the kind of culture of democracy and pluralism that secularism is supposed to foster.

movements (and now political parties) such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Ennahda in Tunisia is thus occurring in a very different social and political context than that of the rise of the AKP in Turkey. There is no comparable institutional secular grounding to balance an organised and well-financed Islamist tendency. The swift post-revolt rise of the Brotherhood and Ennahda, neither of which organisationally played a significant role in their countries' revolutions, is a sign of the struggle that secular forces will face in the coming transitional period.

The increasingly cosy relationship between the Brotherhood and the Egyptian army has even led some younger members to leave the movement. In Tunis, Ennahda, whose headquarters is covered with signs and posters promoting the achievement of "liberty, justice and development" by Tunisians working "hand in hand", is clearly the best organised and financed of the myriad new political forces. No matter how hard its leaders and activists try to ameliorate concerns about its true intentions, most activists I know, even religious ones not affiliated with the movement, fear it's all double-talk.

Even as moderate Islamist movements have become adept at playing the democratic political game across the Arab world, powerful, hard to control and sometimes violent Salafi movements are threatening to rend apart still fragile public and political spheres. Not only are they attempting to wrest control of public space from society as a whole, this dynamic, ironically, reinforces the popularity of mainstream Islamist groups as a check on more extremist forces. What this dynamic means for the larger process of democratisation is, however, anyone's guess.

Just to provide some context to how difficult it would be to create a new contract between religion, politics and society at large, in the same day last week, one prominent Tunisian constitutional lawyer and long-time activist-turned-candidate for the Constitutional Assembly spent an hour telling me how the only way to control Islam would be for Tunisia to declare itself an officially Muslim state ("The most democratic states in the world, in Scandinavia, are all officially Christian," he exclaimed) and emulate the Turkish Diyanet model, while another international lawyer and human rights activist dismissed the idea as being impossible to implement.

Why? Because in the Arab world, to declare a state officially Muslim is to open the door for Sharia to play a strong role in shaping its constitution, something that is not compatible with contemporary universal norms of democracy.

seems to know this, which is why he boldly stated that the best solution for Egypt would be a secular state.

Aiming high is the best hope

The point in taking a critical look at Turkey is not to minimise the important advances Turkey has made in the past decade towards becoming a well-functioning democracy which protects the rights of all citizens equally and provides for a minimum base of their welfare (without which, as US citizens are quickly relearning, having a functioning formal democratic system isn't worth all that much). Instead, it is to point out that what problems remain are not merely incidental bumps on a steady road towards full democracy.

They are deeply structural, and will prevent Turks from developing a fully functioning democracy unless and until they are squarely addressed. The process of doing so, however, will mean taking on interests and ideologies that are deeply entrenched within the country's political and economic system. If they are slowly becoming weakened, this is thanks to a generation-long process that has been helped along by geostrategic and economic dynamics that will be very hard to repeat in the Arab world.

Given this reality, if the Arab world only looks as far as Turkey, it could well wind up not even reaching close to Turkey's achievements, because the region is starting from a much lower point of political development, has less favourable internal and regional factors to contend with, and has far less time to improve the lives of its citizens than the Turkish Republic has had, before the moment is lost - and passive revolutions begin to take shape that see the installation of authoritarian regimes in the name of stability and development.

As with the rest of the Arab revolutionary awakening, it seems that Arab societies will have to find their own models, each suited to the unique situation of the region's 22 countries. Turkey is indeed an inspiring story on many fronts, but for the sake of the millions of people who have risked so much to topple the region's despots, the emerging leaders need to aim higher still.■

Mark LeVine is a professor of history at UC Irvine and senior visiting researcher at the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Lund University in Sweden. His most recent books are *Heavy Metal Islam* (Random House) and *Impossible Peace: Israel/Palestine Since 1989* (Zed Books).

The growing power of "moderate" Islamist

Prime Minister Erdogan, to his credit,

Kurdish rebels deny Iranian military success

Erbil, September 21, 2011 (AKnews) - by Karzan Karim

KURDISH REBELS denied news reports that Iranian forces conquered one of the rebels headquarters in the mountains of the Kurdistan Region.

Mehr News, Iran's semi-official news agency, reported earlier that Iranian Revolutionary Guards had conquered the main headquarter of the rebels on the Jasuan mountain.

"This is unfounded news. The area they are talking about is under the control of the fighters of the Free Life for Kurdistan Party (PJAK) and the People's Defense Force (HPG)," said Sherzad Kamangar, a spokesman of the PJAK.

He confirmed that there had been fighting in that area. "But in ended up with the Iranian forces withdrawing," he claimed.

According to PJAK, Kurdish fighters pushed forward 80 km deep into Iranian territory.

AKnews was unable to independently confirm these information.

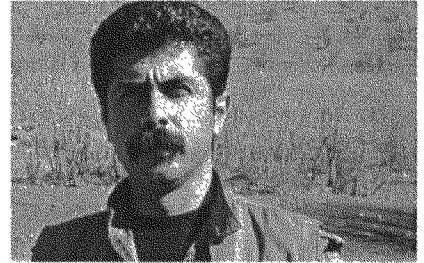
Iran has been bombing Kurdish territories for years, trying to dis-

lodge Kurdish rebel groups, such as the PJAK, from their mountainous hide-outs on the Iraqi side of the border.

Iran has increased its effort in recent months, displacing over a thousand Kurdish families. The bombardments by Iran have so far killed 6 civilians including a teenage girl last year.

On September 5, PJAK had offered a unilateral cease-fire. Although Iran did not officially agree, the bombardments stopped until yesterday.

Established in 2004, PJAK fights for the independence or self-rule of the Kurds in Iran. The group takes sanctuary in the northern mountains of Kurdistan Region, mainly in Qandil Mountain. This area is populated by civilian nomadic Kurdish families



Sherzad Kamangar, a spokesman of the PJAK.

Crisis between Kurdish leadership and Baghdad almost solved

Erbil, September 21, 2011 (AKnews) - by Fryad Mohammed

FOLLOWING weeks of heated disputes between Baghdad and the Kurdish leadership in the semi-autonomous region, tensions are easing, according to Kurdish politicians.

The crisis was solved when Iraqi Parliament Speaker Osama Nujaifi met Kurdish President Massoud Barzani and both agreed to find a solution.

Now a Kurdish delegation that was canceled last week, is going to continue negotiations with the federal government, said Fouad Massoum, a member of the Kurdish Blocs Coalition (KBC) in the Iraqi parliament.

Tensions had risen between Baghdad and the Kurdish government in Erbil after the Kurdistan Region Government (KRG) rejected the new law for the exploitation of oil and gas in the country.

The Kurds believe the new law would allow the federal government to exploit the country's oil wealth at the expense of the Kurdish Region. They also argue that the Ministers Council did not follow the legal process when it approved the law.

Last week, the KRG put negotiations with the federal government in Baghdad on hold until previous agreements were implemented.

Barzani then sent a letter to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki in which he reminded Maliki of the political agreements from last year and asked if Maliki is still committed to these agreements. The Kurds played kingmaker after parliamentary elections in the March 2010 when they lent support to the current Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki. Maliki had run second in the elections behind Sunni-backed leader Ayad Allawi, but thanks to Kurdish support he could still get a majority for his government

Back then, the Kurds presented a list of 19 demands to Maliki



Kurdistan President Massoud Barzani welcomed on Tuesday the Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives Mr. Osama al-Nujeifi and an accompanying delegation to exchange views on the challenges facing the political process in Iraq. Photo: KRG

who agreed on all but one that would have deemed the government illegitimate if the Kurds withdraw from the government. The content of the remaining 18 demands that both sides agreed on has never been fully disclosed.

However, some of the Kurdish demands were repeatedly articulated in public: the implementation of article 140 into the Iraqi constitution*, drafting a new hydrocarbon law and the integration of the Kurdish defense forces (the Peshmarga) into the Iraqi army, paid for by the Iraqi government.

The Kurds have 57 seats in the Iraqi parliament, 47 of them are organized in the KBC. The Kurds run four ministries in Maliki's government, in addition to the deputy prime minister post.

*Article 140 of the constitution would make provisions for the payment of reparations to Kurds forced from their homes under Saddam Hussein, a comprehensive census of ethnic groups and a referendum to decide if disputed areas should fall under the control of Kurdistan Regional Government.



Turquie: un soldat tué lors d'affrontements avec les rebelles kurdes

ANKARA, 18 septembre 2011 (AFP)

UN SOLDAT TURC a été tué et deux autres ont été blessés lors d'affrontements avec des rebelles kurdes, samedi soir dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a annoncé dimanche l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Les affrontements entre les troupes turques et les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont éclaté dans une zone rurale de la province de Bingol, dans le district de Genc, a déclaré le gouverneur de Bingol Mustafa Hakan.

Par ailleurs, la police a arrêté dimanche 122 personnes qui voulaient participer à une manifestation dans le centre-ville d'Istanbul pour protester contre les opérations militaires contre le PKK. Les manifestants voulaient dénoncer le fait que le dirigeant emprisonné du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, n'a

pas été autorisé à rencontrer ses avocats pendant près de deux mois.

La police a pris des mesures de sécurité strictes dans le centre de la ville pour empêcher les manifestants de se rassembler, tandis que des hélicoptères de la police survolaient les environs, a rapporté un journaliste de l'AFP.

Les violences entre l'armée turque et les rebelles du PKK ont repris dernièrement.

L'aviation turque a mené depuis le 17 août des raids contre les bases du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak, faisant plus d'une centaine de morts dans les rangs des rebelles, selon les chiffres officiels.



Turquie: 4 civils, un rebelle kurde tués dans une attaque du PKK

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 20 septembre 2011 (AFP)

UNE ATTAQUE de rebelles kurdes contre une école de police dans le sud-est de la Turquie s'est soldée mardi par la mort de quatre civils et d'un des assaillants, ont affirmé des sources locales de sécurité.

Un groupe de rebelles séparatistes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a attaqué mardi soir une école de police à Siirt, ont précisé ces sources.

Les quatre civils, qui passaient en voiture devant l'école au moment de l'assaut, ont été tués par une grenade lancée par les rebelles, ont-elles ajouté, faisant également état de deux blessés.

Des combats se poursuivaient dans le secteur, selon ces sources.

Cette attaque intervient alors que la Turquie menace de lancer une incur-

sion militaire dans le nord de l'Irak contre les bases du PKK qui a multiplié depuis le début de l'été ses attaques dans le sud-est anatolien à majorité kurde, théâtre habituel de ses opérations.

L'aviation turque a bombardé à plusieurs reprises depuis le 17 août la montagne du nord de l'Irak, où seraient retranchés environ 2.000 combattants de ce mouvement qualifié de "terroriste" par de nombreux pays.

L'attaque intervient le même jour que l'explosion d'une bombe à Ankara, qui a tué trois personnes et blessé 15 autres. Le ministre de l'Intérieur Idris Naim Sahin a déclaré qu'il s'agissait "fort probablement" d'une attaque "terroriste", terme employé par les autorités turques pour désigner les actes des rebelles kurdes.

Le PKK a pris les armes en 1984, provoquant un conflit qui a fait 45.000 morts.



Lutte contre le PKK: Erdogan a présenté des demandes d'aide aux Américains

ANKARA, 21 septembre 2011 (AFP)

LE PREMIER ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a transmis aux Etats-Unis une liste de demandes de son gouvernement en matière d'aide contre les rebelles séparatistes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), a rapporté mercredi l'agence Anatolie.

"Il y a une liste de demandes que nous leur avons transmise concernant la lutte contre le PKK," a déclaré M. Erdogan lors d'une conférence de presse à New York après une rencontre mardi avec le président américain Barack Obama, selon ses propos rapportés par Anatolie.

Le président Obama "m'a dit que les Etats-Unis sont prêts à nous apporter tout soutien dans la lutte contre le terrorisme," a poursuivi M. Erdogan.

Le Premier ministre turc a notamment évoqué le possible stationnement en territoire turc de drones américains Predator pour frapper les positions du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak: "Je crois qu'il n'y aura pas de problème concernant les Predator, ils (les Américains) vont tenter de résoudre la question".

M. Erdogan a souligné que les Etats-Unis continueraient par ailleurs à fournir à Ankara des renseignements en temps réel sur les activités des séparatistes du PKK dans le nord irakien.

Le conflit avec le PKK a connu récemment un regain de violences, après

une phase d'apaisement.

La Turquie menace de lancer une incursion militaire dans le nord de l'Irak contre les bases du PKK qui a multiplié depuis le début de l'été ses attaques dans le sud-est anatolien à majorité kurde, théâtre habituel de ses opérations.

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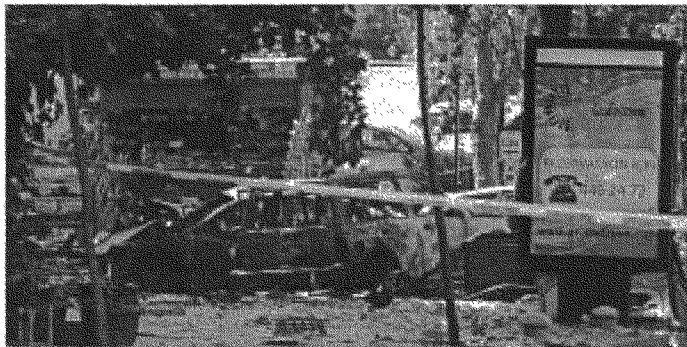
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Le PKK a pris les armes en 1984, provoquant un conflit qui a fait 45.000 morts.

Le PKK figure sur les listes américaine et de l'Union européenne des organisations terroristes.

Le Monde 20 septembre 2011

Un attentat fait 3 morts et 15 blessés à Ankara



Vue des lieux de l'explosion à Ankara, le 20 septembre 2011

Par AFP

L'explosion d'une bombe, mardi 20 septembre dans le centre-ville de la capitale turque Ankara, a fait trois morts et une quinzaine de blessés, ont annoncé les autorités turques. 'Une voiture a pris feu, selon les

informations il y avait une bombe à l'intérieur', a indiqué le vice-premier ministre Bülent Arınç devant la presse. L'explosion s'est produite dans le quartier commerçant de Kizilay, au coeur de la métropole, fréquenté chaque jour par des dizaines de mil-

liers de gens, et a été entendue à des kilomètres à la ronde, provoquant un mouvement de panique.

Elle a eu lieu devant un bâtiment officiel, la sous-préfecture de Cankaya, plus grand district d'Ankara. D'autres bâtiments publics, comme celui de la Cour de cassation, sont situés également à proximité. La déflagration a endommagé six véhicules et brisé les vitres de nombreux bâtiments aux alentours, selon des témoins, cités par les chaînes de télévision.

De nombreuses ambulances ont été dépêchées vers les lieux de l'explosion, qui ont été immédiatement bouclés par la police. Des procureurs de la branche antiterroriste de la police sont arrivés sur les lieux pour prêter main forte aux enquêteurs, selon les chaînes de télévision.

Les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui mène depuis

vingt-sept ans des actions armées, ont mené des attaques similaires dans les métropoles turques par le passé. C'est généralement un groupe kurde armé, les Faucons de la liberté du Kurdistan (TAK), organisation liée au PKK, selon les autorités turques, qui revendique les attaques dans les zones urbaines.

Les autorités turques affirment que cette organisation sert de prête-nom au PKK quand celui-ci commet des attentats pouvant encourir la désapprobation populaire, notamment quand des civils sont tués. Le PKK rétorque que les TAK sont constitués d'éléments incontrôlés ayant quitté ses rangs.



Le PKK désapprouve l'attentat d'Ankara revendiqué par un groupe kurde radical

ISTANBUL, 24 sept 2011 (AFP)

LES REBELLES KURDES du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) désapprouvent l'attentat qui a fait trois morts mardi à Ankara et a été revendiqué par un groupe radical kurde, a rapporté samedi l'agence de presse pro-kurde Firat News.

La direction du PKK a estimé dans un communiqué que ce type d'attaques était "répréhensible" et "nuisait aux demandes légitimes du peuple" kurde, selon l'agence.

L'attentat à la bombe, qui a fait trois morts et une quinzaine de blessés dans le centre-ville d'Ankara, a été revendiqué jeudi par les Faucons de la liberté du Kurdistan (TAK).

"Les métropoles turques seront notre champ de bataille. L'attaque de Kizilay (centre d'Ankara) n'est qu'un début", a souligné cette organisation dans un courrier électronique adressé à Firat News.

Le PKK affirme que les TAK sont constitués d'éléments incontrôlés, ayant quitté ses rangs.

Aux yeux des autorités turques, le TAK est avant-tout un prête-nom utilisé par le PKK quand celui-ci commet des attentats pouvant encourir la désapprobation populaire, notamment quand des civils sont tués.



La dernière attaque revendiquée par les TAK remonte au 31 octobre 2010: un attentat suicide visant des policiers en faction sur une esplanade très fréquentée du centre d'Istanbul, qui avait fait 32 blessés.

Le PKK a par ailleurs déploré samedi la mort de quatre civils dans une attaque commise par une de ses unités mardi soir à Siirt (sud-est).

Sa direction, citée par Firat News, a appelé "toutes les unités de guérilla à être plus attentives dans leurs préparatifs", assurant que "les commandants responsables d'erreurs d'application seraient tenus responsables".

Les attaques du PKK contre des objectifs militaires se sont multipliées depuis le début de l'été dans l'est et le sud-est de la Turquie, peuplés en majorité de Kurdes.

La Turquie menace de lancer une incursion militaire contre les bases du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak, où seraient retranchés environ 2.000 combattants de ce mouvement qualifié de "terroristes" par de nombreux pays. Le PKK a pris les armes en 1984, et le conflit a fait 45.000 morts.

Mahmoud Osman: US Is No Ally Of The Kurds

By HEVIDAR AHMED

In an interview with Rudaw, prominent Kurdish MP Mahmoud Osman – one of only a handful of independent lawmakers – accused the United States of “pretending” to be a friend to the Kurds, claiming Washington has done nothing to stand up for Kurdish interests. He also addressed at length deepening tensions between Erbil and Baghdad, revealing that Kurdish leaders have discussed whether to oust embattled Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

Rudaw: Relations between Baghdad and Erbil have become turbulent. Why?

Mahmoud Osman: I think the problem between the Kurds and the central government has deeper roots. We have different views on the issues. The Kurds are in favor of federalism for Iraq, but the central government strongly opposes it. Prime Minister Nuri Maliki publicly stated, “There will be terrible bloodshed if anyone attempts to create independent regions in Iraq.”

The Kurds believe in the constitution and that’s the only reason we are still part of Iraq. But Prime Minister Maliki says the constitution is full of errors and that it needs to be amended. Malki believes the constitution gives a lot of power and rights to the Kurdistan Region and that these rights and powers need to be curbed.

He also believes the central government in Baghdad should hold all of the power. We recently saw how the prime minister pushed the oil and gas legislation in the council of ministers. The bill is now awaiting a vote in Parliament. This move by the prime minister confirms the idea that the central government should hold all powers. However, this is against the constitution.

The differences between the Kurds and the central government have always existed, but when an issue comes up it fuels the conflict. I believe that Iran is behind the current tensions between

Baghdad and Erbil. As you know, the Islamic Republic invited President Barzani long ago, but he hasn’t accepted the invitation yet. They want him to go to Iran and for him to support their issues.

Rudaw: Do you think Iran is the only one behind the tensions between Baghdad and Erbil?

Mahmoud Osman: The Iranian role is obvious. On the other hand Turkey, Iraq and the US have military and diplomatic cooperation against the PKK. They put pressure on the Kurdistan Region in other ways.

Rudaw: Do you mean the pressure on Kurdistan is from multiple sides?

"The United States is not only silent, but it’s involved in the conspiracy"

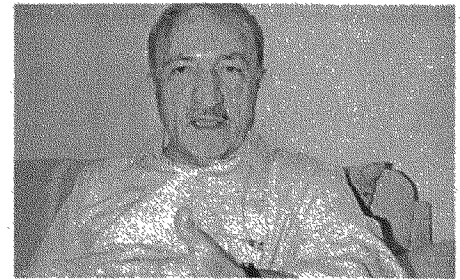
Mahmoud Osman: Yes, since 2003, and now the pressure is more than ever. Baghdad is not the only one behind the pressure. It’s a regional pressure and the US is involved in it as well.

Rudaw: Why is there all this pressure now?

Mahmoud Osman: Right now the excuse for Iran, Turkey and the US is the rebels of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK). But the truth is, they all want to limit the KRG’s power so that it loses control over its oil and gas resources. They all agree on this.

Rudaw: The United States is still responsible for Iraq’s security. Why is the US silent despite all the shelling and military pressure by Iran and Turkey on Iraqi Kurdistan?

Mahmoud Osman: The United States is not only silent, but it’s involved in the conspiracy. The United States supports



Kurdish MP Mahmoud Osman. Photo Rudaw.

Turkey in its military actions. Many US officials have stated before that the Turkish military’s operations in Iraqi Kurdistan are only in self-defense. The US is also silent about the Iranian attacks, which also mean some kind of indirect support for their actions.

Rudaw: The Kurdish deputies in Baghdad had a meeting with the Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani. What decisions were made in that meeting?

Mahmoud Osman: For over nine months the Kurdish representatives had not held any meetings, which was a mistake. We should have had more meetings like that one. In the meeting, we said that we must meet regularly instead of just meeting when an issue comes up. Anyway, it was a positive meeting.

First, it was decided to send a Kurdish delegation to Baghdad. After all the negative statements that came from offi-

"Malki is the reason Iraq has not had a successful government"

cials in Baghdad it was obvious that it wasn’t the right time to go. It was decided to postpone the visit until the Kurdish representatives there have negotiated with the central government and prepared for the visit.

We have to see if Baghdad pulls the new oil and gas legislation or not. Next, we have to know what they mean by the statement that the Iraqi military has the right to go wherever they want in Iraq. Also, what are the motivations behind the prime minister’s statements and actions? Is this just a political game or

are these tactics against the Kurds?

Rudaw: Why don't the Kurds tell Maliki that he hasn't met Kurdish demands and that he's avoiding the Erbil agreement?

Mahmoud Osman: It's all the KRG's fault. Ten months had passed since the agreement between the Kurds and the government. The Kurds haven't yet addressed their issues with the central government regarding the previous conditions that the Kurds gave Maliki in exchange for being part of his government. I believe the Kurds should have investigated which of the conditions Maliki favors and which he is avoiding.

This is a shortcoming on the part of the Kurds. We have a document which is signed by Prime Minister Malki that contains 19 Kurdish demands. We still have the Erbil agreement and the consti-

"When Shiite interests are in danger, they are united despite their disagreements"

tution to go back to. The Kurds didn't investigate why the central government isn't meeting their demands. If you notice the Kurds hold many high positions in the Baghdad government such as president, deputy prime minister, minister of foreign affairs, commander of the military, deputy head of Iraqi parliament, as well as the Kurdish MPs in Iraqi parliament. If you look from the outside it seems the Kurds are in control of some of the main posts in the government. The Kurds should have seriously addressed their concerns with the government.

Rudaw: What is in the Erbil agreement, which the Kurds are threatening to reveal to the public?

Mahmoud Osman: I, as a Kurdish MP in Iraqi Parliament who is close to the Kurdish leadership, still don't know the content of the agreement. Most of the Kurdish MPs in Iraqi Parliament don't know it either. They have just threatened to reveal it. Why don't they reveal it already so we all know what this is

about? Another interpretation of the situation is that President Massoud Barzani should have visited Baghdad -- considering he is the one who made the agreement possible in the first place -- to see why it has not been executed yet.

Rudaw: Do you think the tensions between Baghdad and Erbil have reached the point of no return?

Mahmoud Osman: No, I think later there will be serious negotiations with positive outcomes.

Rudaw: Some of the Kurdish representatives in Baghdad believe the KRG has to consider suspending its ties with the Maliki's bloc. Is there a possibility of the Kurds doing something like that?

Mahmoud Osman: We considered that possibility in the meeting, of withdrawing our support for Maliki and creating a new government by appointing someone else from his party as prime minister. That would be a good option, but the chance of it succeeding would be very low. In that case, it's possible that all the Shiite parties would unite to support him despite all the support from Iran and Shiite clerics. Malki is the reason Iraq has not had a successful government.

Rudaw: But the Shiite groups like the Sadr Movement and the Supreme Islamic Council in Iraq aren't strong allies of Maliki's party.

Mahmoud Osman: That's not true. When the tensions emerged between the KRG and the central government Muqdata al-Sadr called for protests in support of Nuri al-Maliki's government. When Shiite interests are in danger, they are united despite their disagreements. They don't want to lose power.

Rudaw: Have you considered withdrawing your support for Maliki?

Mahmoud Osman: We said if this is a possible option, then let's do it. In order to do this you have to calculate carefully to see how many people vote in favor of your decision. If you can get enough votes I would say do it today. But I'm sure we can't get enough votes, because not all Iraqi MPs vote in favor of the decision. They were recently divided and have 80 votes now. Even if the current coalitions merge -- the

Kurds included -- their votes still won't be enough. We need at least 163 votes to make this possible, but I still think the Kurds should seriously consider this option.

Rudaw: These issues have emerged just as the US troop withdrawal nears. It is said that if the US troops pull out, civil war will erupt and the situation for the Kurds will get worse.

Mahmoud Osman: No, it's in the Kurds' interest for the US troops to pull out. The presence of US troops in Iraq causes more problems for the Kurds. The Kurds haven't benefitted at all from the US troops so far. We're even accused for sympathizing with the Americans. Do American troops even exist in Kurdistan? No! And they weren't even helpful for the Kurds in the disputed territories.

I wouldn't say that if the US troops pull out the situation will get worse for the Kurds. That's just a rumor to confuse people.

You can see that we're being attacked by Turkey and the US supports it. We are continuously being bombed by Iran and the US is silent. In the disputed territories, Kurds get killed and are being forced to leave; the US hasn't done anything about it. The US hasn't done anything to push for Article 140 to be implemented. So what's the benefit of them staying? For more than eight years they've been confusing people by pretending they're our friends. That's absolutely not true.

Halting Kurdistan oil reminds Baghdad of Kurdish dominance in north

FROM Shwan Zulal

Kurdistan Region-Iraq - On Sunday, oil export from Kurdistan Region dropped significantly and Iraqi Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki's adviser on Kurdish affairs told Reuters "the stoppage was a reaction to central government approving a new oil and gas law without consulting Kurdish leaders". A few hours later the KRG(Kurdistan Regional Government) said in a statement that "the Ministry of Natural Resources of the KRG would like to state that there has been no policy decision for suspending oil exports from Kurdistan via the Iraq-Turkey pipeline". Furthermore, the KRG added, "there have been a number of technical difficulties resulting from the management of the pipeline and the pumping export system ...".

As the 46 oil and gas companies set to take part in Iraq's next oil and gas auction round in January were about to get the first glimpse of the contracts on offer in Amman-Jordan, the airwaves were filled with the news that oil production from Kurdistan Region has been halted. Iraqi officials including the oil minister were quick to jump into conclusion that the reduction was motivated by politics rather than technical difficulties.

While in Amman and trying to attract IOCs (International Oil Companies), by promoting Iraq's oil and gas contracts for January 2012 bid, Iraqi oil minister, Abdul-Kareem Luaibi's ineptitude was on show for everyone to see. Luaibi was trying to score a quick political point by accusing the KRG of playing politics with oil exports but was proved wrong by the Kurdish Natural resources minister, Ashti Hawrami. Hawrami did not comment but later released a statement explaining export reductions and saying, "The KRG Minister of Natural Resources has already spoken to the Oil Minister

in Baghdad, and reported to him these unexpected serious problems. The Oil Minister has agreed to check it out and to have more cooperative contacts to avoid similar problems in the future".

The KRG has locked horns with Baghdad over many issues, including revenue sharing, disputed territories and Oil Law among many other issues. The KRG has backed a version of the Hydrocarbon law forwarded by the parliamentary Energy Committee, which enable KRG to have a greater say over the future of the Kurdish PSCs. However, the Iraqi Cabinet has approved its own version of the law, which infuriated Kurdish officials. Al-Maliki's Kurdish cabinet members complained that they did not get a chance to examine the amended Bill before been forwarded to parliament. The original Bill was first introduced in 2007 and yet to make it to the statute books.

As tensions are rising between Baghdad and Erbil, Kurdistan President, Mas'ud Barzani, has called a meeting for the Kurdish Bloc that will be held tomorrow in Erbil and the main theme of the discussions will be Kurdistan Region's disputes with Baghdad.

Needless to say that in the KRG previously halted exports which lasted over a year in 2009 and the same issue which resulted in suspending exports -payments to the IOCs in Kurdistan- is coming back at the forefront of the political agenda. Although the temporary halt in oil production is reported to be a technical issue and set to resume within days- Norwegian DNO already said production at Tawke field was back to around 50,000 bpd after a pipeline malfunction on Sunday- it is a remainder to Baghdad that the oil export from the northern pipeline is under the KRGs control and it can be suspended at anytime.

The Washington Post SEPTEMBER 22, 2011

Turkish Car Bomb Attack: Kurdish Militant Group, Kurdistan Freedom Falcons, Claims Responsibility

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — A Kurdish militant group on Thursday claimed responsibility for a car bomb attack near a school in the Turkish capital that killed three people and wounded 34, a pro-Kurdish news agency reported.

The Firat news agency said the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons, an offshoot of the autonomy-seeking Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, claimed Tuesday's attack and threatened more bombings in Turkish cities, warning that the explosion in



Ankara was "a start."

The Kurdistan Freedom Falcons also

claimed responsibility for a small bomb attack in the Mediterranean resort town of Kemer that wounded 10 people, including four Swedes on Aug. 28, Firat said.

The group vowed more assaults in retaliation for what it called Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government's "war" against the rebels, according to Firat.

Turkish warplanes have carried out airstrikes on suspected PKK targets in northern Iraq — where the guerrillas maintain bases — following

stepped up attacks by Kurdish rebels in recent months. Dozens of members of the security forces and at least seven civilians have died in rebel attacks since July.

The PKK itself has denied any role in the Ankara bombing. The main Kurdish rebel group has always distanced itself from violent attacks by the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons in Turkish cities. The militant Kurdish group was responsible for a series of bombings in Turkish resorts in the 1990s.

Earlier, suspected PKK rebels killed

one policeman and wounded another one in an attack in the country's southeast, authorities said.

The rebels opened fired on the policemen as they chatted with shop owners in Diyarbakir, the largest city in the Kurdish-dominated southeast, said city's governor, Mustafa Toprak. Two civilians were also wounded in the shooting.

The attack came a day after Kurdish rebels killed one soldier and two pro-government village guards in an ambush in the eastern Van province, according to the governor's office in

Van. That was hours after about 2,000 Turkish troops launched an operation against Kurdish rebels in the mountainous Tunceli province, further west, and Turkish jets reportedly bombed rebel bases in northern Iraq.

In an expanding crackdown on Kurdish rebel sympathizers, police on Thursday detained 30 people in the Aegean port city of Izmir, the state-run Anatolia news agency said. Police have rounded up more than 50 Kurdish suspects in the southeast earlier this week.

First undergrad Kurdish department opens in SE

MARDİN -Doğan News Agency (dha)

Mardin Artuklu University has been running a master-level Kurdish program under its Living Language Institute for the past two years. However, the new department will be Turkey's first undergraduate Kurdish Language and Literature program.

The Higher Education Board, or YÖK, has granted Mardin's Artuklu University permission to open a Kurdish Language and Literature Department after having previously ruled that the language could only be taught as part of a "Living Languages Institute."

The new department is a first not only for Turkey, but the whole world, said Kadri Yıldırım, Artuklu's deputy rector and the head of the Living Languages Institute. "The development has been expected by all of the Kurdish community." The institute teaches Kurdish, along with Arabic and Syriac.

Twenty students have already applied to join the new department, according to reports.

Yıldırım said their only wish was that all the legal obstacles against the Kurdish language would be removed and that the language also be taught in the elementary and high school system.

Kurdish language and literature teachers

Opening a Kurdish language department is an important step toward providing education in mother tongues, the institute head said.

Calling on more students to apply to the department,



Mardin Artuklu University has been running a master-level Kurdish program under its Living Language Institute for the past two years. However, the new department will be Turkey's first undergraduate Kurdish Language and Literature program.

Yıldırım said he was waiting for people to become Kurdish Language and Literature teachers.

Yıldırım expressed his gratitude to the government, but also said they were now suffering from a lack of textbooks.

"The pressure on this language, which has been continuing for many years, as well as regulations [aimed at] assimilation, have not allowed any language books to be prepared," Yıldırım said.

"More than the textbooks, however, even people who wrote letters or articles in Kurdish were punished; as such, there are deficiencies in the curriculum."

Although he said the new department was not a threat to Turkey's unitary nature, the deputy rector added that they were still expecting some negative reactions to the establishment of the department. □

Les gisements de gaz au large de Chypre aiguïssent les appétits de Nicosie et d'Ankara

Le début des travaux d'exploration, une « provocation » selon la Turquie, fait craindre une escalade militaire et diplomatique entre les deux pays

Istanbul

Correspondance

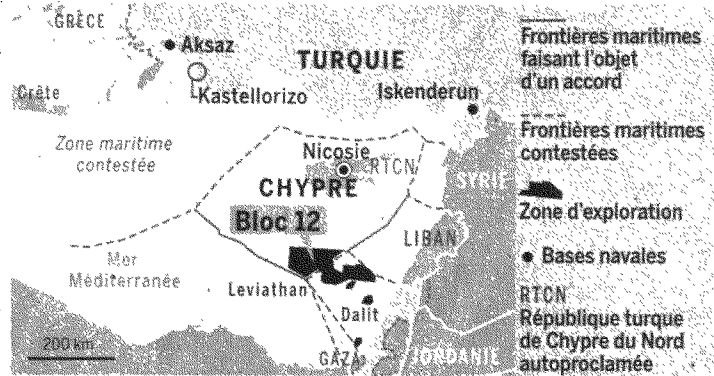
L'île de Chypre sera-t-elle le théâtre d'une prochaine guerre du gaz ? La découverte de vastes réserves d'hydrocarbures dans les eaux de la Méditerranée orientale aiguïssent les appétits. Les tensions sont montées d'un cran lundi 19 septembre, après l'annonce du début de travaux d'exploration au large des côtes de Chypre. La compagnie américaine Noble Energy a procédé à ses premiers forages dans la nuit de dimanche à lundi, sur la plateforme Aphrodite, a annoncé mardi le directeur des affaires énergétiques chypriotes, Solon Kassinis.

Ce passage à l'acte, qualifié de « provocation » par le ministre turc de l'énergie, Taner Yildiz, fait planer le risque d'une dangereuse escalade diplomatique et militaire dans cette région et compromet sérieusement les difficiles négociations menées à Chypre en vue d'une réunification de l'île, après un demi-siècle de conflit. « Nous voulons que les Chypriotes grecs stoppent immédiatement ces travaux », a précisé M. Yildiz.

En réaction, la Turquie va mettre sa menace à exécution et conduire ses propres recherches, au large des côtes nord-ouest de l'île et de la partie qu'elle occupe militairement depuis l'invasion de 1974. « Nous allons nous aussi franchir ce pas avec la République turque de Chypre-Nord [RTCN].

Peut-être dès cette semaine, il est possible que nous commençons les travaux exploratoires dans cette zone économique exclusive », a confirmé, lundi, le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Ankara a mobilisé la compagnie pétrolière turque TPAO pour conduire ces recherches dans les eaux chypriotes. Un navire norvégien a également été envoyé en reconnaissance autour de l'île grecque de Kastellorizo. « Des plateformes pétrolières pourraient suivre, même si nous ne souhaitons pas en arriver là », a précisé M. Yildiz. Les navires de prospection pourraient être escortés par la marine turque,



selon M. Erdogan. Ankara avait annoncé, début septembre, son intention de renforcer sa présence militaire en Méditerranée et notamment dans les zones contestées autour de l'île de Chypre.

Le chef du gouvernement turc a réitéré son opposition déterminée aux frontières maritimes telles qu'elles ont été tracées par Chypre. Nicosie a signé en décembre 2010 un accord frontalier avec Israël, les deux pays délimitant leurs zones économiques exclusives pour l'exploitation des gisements d'hydrocarbures. Mais la Turquie estime que ces accords violent les droits des Chypriotes turcs.

« Nous avons des approches différentes sur les zones économiques exclusives... Nous surveillerons cette région avec des avions, des frégates et des vedettes lance-torpilles », a prévenu M. Erdogan. Dimanche, les avions de chasse F16 turcs ont déjà survolé la zone où se situe la plateforme Aphrodite.

Le gouvernement chypriote se montre déterminé à poursuivre ses travaux d'exploration sur le « Bloc 12 », duquel pourraient être extraits 283 milliards de mètres cubes de gaz naturel, selon les simulations réalisées par les géologues. « Je ne pense pas que la Turquie envoie des navires de guerre dans la zone d'exploration pour commettre un acte qui serait contraire à la charte des Nations unies et qui compromettrait son objectif d'accession à l'Union européenne [UE] », a soutenu le ministre chypriote des affaires étrangères, Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis, dans une interview au quotidien turc *Milliyet*, samedi dernier.

Pourparlers avec l'UE

Le président de la République, Dimitris Christofias, rendu impopulaire par la crise économique que traverse Chypre, se montre sourd aux menaces d'Ankara. « Nous continuerons à exercer nos

droits souverains, y compris l'exploitation de nos ressources naturelles, toujours dans le cadre de la loi internationale », a-t-il déclaré dimanche. Pour lui, la manne pétrolière et gazière bénéficiera à tous les Chypriotes sitôt qu'un accord sera trouvé sur une réunification de l'île. De nouveaux appels d'offres vont être lancés pour une dizaine d'autres champs d'hydrocarbures.

Mais cette escalade vient sérieusement compromettre les chances d'un accord politique à Chypre, alors que les deux leaders locaux doivent se retrouver en octobre à New York pour un sommet de la dernière chance avec Ban Ki-Moon. Elle pourrait également ternir les pourparlers d'Ankara avec l'UE, qui, au second semestre 2012, sera présidée par Chypre. « En cas d'échec des négociations à Chypre, nous pourrions alors geler nos relations avec l'UE », a laissé entendre le vice-premier ministre Besir Atalay. ■

Guillaume Perrier

L'opposition syrienne se structure dans la douleur

Après plus de trois mois de rencontres sans lendemains, d'atermoiements, de portes claquées et de tentatives avortées, l'opposition syrienne est sur le point de mettre sur pied une structure représentative crédible. Il s'agit du Conseil national syrien (CNS), lancé officiellement le 15 septembre à Istanbul. Encore en cours de constitution, cette nouvelle instance veut incarner politiquement le soulèvement syrien et devenir un interlocuteur de la communauté internationale, qui manque cruellement de partenaire.

L'émergence d'une structure est d'autant plus urgente que le mouvement de protestation en Syrie, qui a débuté le 15 mars, est à un moment charnière : épuisés par une implacable répression qui a déjà causé au moins 2700 morts, les manifestants commencent à désespérer quand ils ne sont pas tentés par le recours aux armes.

« Jusqu'à présent, l'opposition a eu du mal à s'organiser parce que

chaque courant cherchait à se peser, explique Bassma Kodmani, une porte-parole du CNS: *La force du Conseil national est de n'avoir ni chef ni composition définitive. Tout reste ouvert, chacun est bienvenu.* » Comme la plupart des personnalités à l'origine du CNS, cette chercheuse en sciences politiques est sans affiliation politique.

Epuisés par une implacable répression qui a fait 2700 morts, les manifestants syriens commencent à désespérer

Jusqu'à présent, le CNS est formé de 140 personnalités dont la moitié vivent en Syrie et restent donc inconnues pour raison de sécurité. L'émergence du CNS vient après une demi-douzaine de tentatives de structurations. D'Antalva

(sud de la Turquie) à Damas, en passant par Istanbul, Doha, Paris ou Bruxelles, plusieurs rencontres de l'opposition ont débouché sur une multiplicité d'instances toutes restées, pour l'instant, lettre morte.

Les clivages sont multiples : entre les islamistes et la gauche laïque, entre Arabes et Kurdes, entre la majorité sunnite et les autres communautés minoritaires (chrétiens, alaouites, druzes), entre l'opposition de l'extérieur et celle de l'intérieur, entre les coordinations de terrain et les formations traditionnelles, entre les partis interdits et ceux tolérés par le régime...

« Après cinq décennies de dictature et d'inactivité, l'opposition syrienne était en sommeil, analyse le politologue Salam Kawakibi, du think tank Arab Reform Initiative (ARI), basé à Paris. *Toutes ses réunions n'ont peut-être pas débouché mais elles ont servi à apprendre à se connaître, à accepter l'autre. C'était une étape nécessaire.* »

Les méfiances sont tenaces, surtout celles de la base des manifestants, inquiets de voir leur révolution confisquée par des politiciens qu'ils connaissent peu, voire pas. Le poids et les intentions des Frères musulmans en particulier, accusés d'avoir tenté de prendre le pouvoir par les armes au tournant des années 1970-1980, fait débat en l'absence d'instruments fiables de mesure de l'opinion.

La question du leadership aiguise aussi les susceptibilités. L'avocat et défenseur des droits de l'homme Haytham Al-Maleh a dirigé l'éphémère Conférence de salut national, lancée en juillet à Istanbul, puis l'universitaire Burhan Ghalioun, enseignant à Paris-III, s'est vu propulsé, fin août, sans même être prévenu, à la tête d'un Conseil national de transition en sommeil depuis.

Après un aller-retour infructueux à Istanbul le 15 septembre, durant lequel il n'a pas quitté l'aéroport, M. Ghalioun, 66 ans, est en discussion avec le CNS, qui désire le rallier à sa cause. Ses hésitations irritent. « *Burhan Ghalioun est notre Karl Marx. Mais en ce moment, nous avons besoin d'un Che Guevara* », s'agace un observateur. « *C'est une personnalité très respectée, notamment par ceux qui n'osent pas descendre dans la rue. Il est indispensable* », tranche un autre.

Les manifestants ont aussi la

hantise de devenir les jouets d'influences étrangères. Les promoteurs du CNS ont soigneusement évité l'appellation de « conseil de transition », trop associée au cas libyen et à l'intervention de l'OTAN. La Turquie est soupçonnée de pousser en avant les Frères musulmans, idéologiquement proches du premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Les Etats-Unis travaillent de plus en plus activement à l'après-Assad, ce qui n'a pas manqué d'alimenter les soupçons sur les membres de la diaspora syro-américaine, dont nombre sont à l'origine de la création du CNS. C'est à Paris qu'a vu le jour une Coalition des forces laïques et démocratiques syriennes (CFLD), samedi.

Enfin, le Qatar a été soupçonné de faire la part belle à l'opposition « tolérée » par le régime – surtout les nassériens et les nationalistes arabes – en organisant une rencontre à Doha au moment où la Ligue arabe annonçait une initiative de sortie de crise. Ces opposants se sont à nouveau retrouvés à Damas, mi-septembre, avec des personnalités indépendantes comme Aref Dalila ou Michel Kilo. « *Cette opposition de l'intérieur est plus encline au compromis, analyse un observateur syrien. Elle demande la chute du régime répressif sans pour autant réclamer le départ du président Bachar Al-Assad. Elle ralentit tout le processus car elle sait que son avenir est derrière elle.* »

Le CNS, lui, milite pour un changement total de régime. Pour apaiser les craintes des comités de coordination, qui sont le véritable moteur de la révolution, 60% des sièges ont été réservés aux représentants de « l'intérieur » : « *Les comités locaux ont effectué un énorme travail d'agrégation ces deux dernières semaines* », souligne Bassma Kodmani, qui a bon espoir de rallier les Frères musulmans et les signataires de la Déclaration de Damas. « *Le temps presse, conclut Caroline Donati, auteur de l'Exception syrienne (La Découverte, 2009). Car le régime cible les têtes pensantes du mouvement. Leur disparition laisserait la place à une génération nettement plus jeune et radicale, qui s'est politisée ces six derniers mois.* » Le CNS a l'intention de se réunir de nouveau le 30 septembre au Caire afin d'annoncer sa composition définitive. ■

Christophe Ayad

Un danger de radicalisation lié aux désertions

LES COMITÉS DE COORDINATION de la révolution syrienne ont décidé de placer l'appel hebdomadaire à manifester, vendredi 23 septembre, sous le slogan de « *l'unification de l'opposition* ». Des témoignages concordants venant de Syrie et de l'étranger font part d'une moindre mobilisation des manifestants après six mois d'une répression qui a causé plus de 2700 morts, selon le Haut-Commissariat de l'ONU aux droits de l'homme. « *Une partie des manifestants est tentée par le recours à la violence*, estime Caroline Donati, spécialiste de la Syrie. *Par endroits, à Deraa et à Homs, on assiste déjà à des affrontements armés.* » Ils seraient le fait de militaires ayant déserté pour rejoindre les rangs de la révolution.

Une telle évolution pourrait, à terme, voir la révolution syrienne sombrer dans la guerre civile. Un risque confirmé par l'ambassadeur américain à Damas, Robert Ford, pour qui « *la violence gouvernementale suscite des représailles* »

et « *accroît le risque de conflit d'origine religieuse* ». Selon M. Ford, cité par l'agence Reuters, le rythme des désertions s'est accéléré depuis la mi-septembre et « *l'économie aborde une phase plus difficile* », même s'il ne pense pas que « *le régime soit près de s'effondrer* ».

Barack Obama a appelé mercredi à des sanctions contre le régime syrien, depuis la tribune de l'Assemblée générale de l'ONU. La Turquie, dont le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, s'est entretenu avec M. Obama à New York cette semaine, envisage également des sanctions : Ankara est le premier partenaire commercial de Damas. Parallèlement, l'Union européenne devrait imposer de nouvelles sanctions, après l'embargo sur le pétrole et le gaz syriens décidé début septembre. Ces mesures, qui devraient être adoptées samedi, prévoient l'interdiction d'investir dans le secteur pétrolier et d'alimenter la banque centrale syrienne en pièces et billets. ■

C. A.

Turquie: le rendez-vous manqué de l'AKP avec les Kurdes

Par Matthieu Chaumet

Premier parti au pouvoir à prôner une ouverture vis-à-vis des Kurdes, l'AKP n'est pas parvenu à imposer la "question kurde" dans le débat public et à instaurer un dialogue national. Pire, ce gouvernement, comme bien des prédécesseurs avant lui, laisse la gestion du problème aux seuls policiers et militaires.

"Il n'y a plus de problème kurde". Lapidaire et tranchant comme à son habitude, le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan fermait en mai 2011 le livre qu'il avait ouvert le 12 août 2005. Lors d'un discours tenu à Diyarbakir, la "capitale du Kurdistan turc", il était pourtant le premier dirigeant en exercice à reconnaître qu'il existait en Turquie un "problème kurde".

L'AKP, fêtera bientôt ses neuf ans aux commandes du pays. Le parti a été reconduit au pouvoir pour quatre années supplémentaires, après sa victoire incontestable -49,9% des suffrages- aux législatives du 12 juin. Et si en 2002 et particulièrement en 2007 Recep Tayyip Erdogan et l'AKP avaient su séduire l'électorat kurde, aujourd'hui le torchon brûle.

La spirale de la violence, à nouveau

Depuis le scrutin de juin c'est l'escalade militaire. Le PKK (Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan), qui avait annoncé en février la fin d'une trêve unilatérale de six mois, a repris le harcèlement des forces de sécurité turques, multipliant les embuscades meurtrières. La guerre débutée en 1984 -qui a causé 45 000 morts- reprend de plus belle. Chaque jour ou presque a son lot de morts. Le gouvernement turc est poussé au durcissement de sa position par une opinion publique dont le désir de vengeance croît à mesure



Le Premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan en campagne à Ankara le 16 avril 2011.AFP/ADEM ALTAN

que les obsèques de soldats font la "Une" des médias.

Les représailles ne se sont pas fait attendre. A la mi-août, malgré la trêve que constitue traditionnellement le ramadan, le Premier ministre a fait bombarder les positions du PKK en Irak, causant la mort, selon l'Etat-major turc, d'une centaine de rebelles. Et le 13 septembre, le ministre de l'intérieur Naim Sahin menaçait de s'enfoncer plus avant dans la voie militaire. "Une opération au sol, à l'instar d'une opération aérienne, pourrait être menée à tout moment", une première depuis la dernière incursion dans le nord de l'Irak en 2008.

Refus de prêter serment

Du côté des militants de la cause kurde, autonomistes et partisans du PKK, les dernières élections ont laissé un arrière goût amer. Leur portedrapeau politique, le BDP (Parti pour la Paix et la Démocratie), qui milite pour le droit à l'enseignement en langue kurde, est parvenu à faire élire 35 députés à la Grande Assemblée Nationale de Turquie.

Mais ces parlementaires fraîchement élus ont refusé -et refusent toujours- de prêter serment et de siéger à Ankara. Ils protestent con-

tre le maintien en détention de plusieurs d'entre-eux accusés de "collusion avec une organisation terroriste". Emprisonnés, ils avaient pourtant été autorisés à se porter candidat aux élections, sans pour autant pouvoir faire campagne.

Une campagne électorale dans un climat tendu

La campagne électorale a été électrique, avec son florilège d'invectives, de diatribes nationalistes, d'arrestations, et de violences de part et d'autre. Côté kurde, le BDP a lancé une vaste campagne de désobéissance civile appelant à boycotter tout ce qui de près ou de loin était lié à l'Etat.

Du côté des autorités, plus de 3000 personnes ont été arrêtées au cours des trois mois précédant les élections, au motif de complicité avec le PKK. Le même argument a été invoqué, quand le Haut Conseil Electoral a invalidé la candidature de sept candidats du BDP, provoquant des manifestations violentes. Sur médiation d'Abdullah Gül, le Président de la République, certains d'entre eux ont toutefois été réautorisés à concourir.

Autre moment d'extrême tension, l'attaque à la grenade du convoi du

Premier ministre, le 4 mai, lors d'un déplacement organisé dans le cadre de la campagne électorale. Un policier y a trouvé la mort.

Triste constat donc au vu des espoirs suscités par l'arrivée aux affaires de l'AKP.

2002: le temps de l'espoir et de la confiance

L'AKP, arrivé au pouvoir en novembre 2002 a dans un premier temps su porter les attentes de divers composantes de la société turque désireuses d'une société plus démocratique. Qu'elles se définissent comme islamistes ou comme Kurdes. L'AKP a su représenter la population anatolienne et rurale, conservatrice et religieuse, sunnite, délaissée par l'Etat. A cette classe marginalisée s'opposait l'establishment urbain, occidentalisé, kémaliste, véritable détenteur du pouvoir en Turquie.

L'AKP a d'abord donné des gages aux réformateurs. La condamnation à mort du chef du PKK Abdullah Ocalan commuée en prison à vie. L'abolition de la peine de mort et la suppression des tribunaux spéciaux et la fin de l'état d'urgence au Kurdistan. Sur le plan culturel également: les partis politiques kurdes ont été autorisés à faire campagne en langue kurde, langue introduite à la télévision publique, avant la création, en 2009, d'une chaîne d'Etat uniquement en Kurde, chose inimaginable 10 ans plus tôt.

Mais malgré ces avancées, le compte n'y est pas pour de nombreux Kurdes. En effet la répression, exercée par l'armée qui constituait jusqu'en 2010 un véritable

Etat dans l'Etat, se poursuivait au Kurdistan.

Un premier avertissement en mars 2009

Lors des élections municipales de mars 2009, l'AKP est sorti vainqueur, mais a perdu du terrain par rapport aux scrutins précédents. Le parti pro-kurde de l'époque, le DTP (Parti de la Société Démocratique) a obtenu 5% des voix à l'échelle nationale, et jusqu'à 80% dans certaines provinces.

Comme une piqûre de rappel, ce creux électoral a poussé l'AKP à faire montre de plus de volontarisme sur la "question kurde". Le gouvernement a annoncé la préparation d'un plan "d'ouverture démocratique". C'était chose faite en novembre 2009, quand le Premier ministre a présenté en grande pompe au parlement le fruit de "quatre mois de travail" et "quatre ans de préparation". Mais le résultat n'était pas à la hauteur des attentes, malgré l'annonce de l'autorisation de la langue kurde à l'école. A peine si le mot "kurde" était prononcé dans l'enceinte parlementaire.

La rupture

De la déception donc, de la colère un mois plus tard, en décembre, quand la Cour Constitutionnelle a dissous le DTP pour liens avec le PKK. En septembre 2010, le fossé s'est creusé davantage quand les Kurdes, à l'appel du BDP, ont boycotté en masse le référendum constitutionnel. Un mois plus tard s'ouvrait le procès KCK (Union des communautés du Kurdistan) où 151 élus et responsables politiques kurdes étaient accusés de "saboter

l'unité et l'intégrité de l'Etat".

Par stratégie ou par dépit, le Premier ministre s'est peu à peu tourné vers l'électorat nationaliste, qu'il a dragué tout au long de la campagne électorale pour les législatives de juin 2011.

Pour autant, jusqu'en juin, la paix semblait envisageable. Un appel du pied d'Abdullah Ocalan, quelques signes d'ouverture au sein même de l'AKP et des négociations secrètes avec le PKK le laissaient espérer. Le travail parlementaire à venir sur la nouvelle constitution -dont un des objectifs est de garantir davantage les libertés individuelles et les droits des minorités ethniques et religieuses- constituait l'occasion idéale d'une ouverture de la part du Premier ministre. Mais rien n'est venu de sa part.

Un tournant autoritaire

C'est un nouveau cycle de violences qui s'est ouvert. L'AKP a échoué à ramener la paix. Parti majoritaire devenu hégémonique, parvenu à placer l'armée sous la tutelle des civils, l'AKP et son chef, Recep Tayyip Erdogan concentrent aujourd'hui tous les pouvoirs ou presque.

La manière toujours plus autoritaire par laquelle Recep Tayyip Erdogan dirige la Turquie interroge, au moment où il se place en modèle pour les révolutions arabes. Aujourd'hui, celui qui est arrivé aux commandes de l'Etat en tant qu'opposant détient tous les leviers du pouvoir. Alors qu'il veut mettre en place un régime présidentiel dont il brigue le mandat, va-t-il s'orienter vers le modèle



Turquie: Un mort dans une explosion près d'Antalya

ANKARA, Turquie - 30 septembre 2011 - Reuters

UNE EXPLOSION D'ORIGINE indéterminée a fait un mort et deux blessés légers vendredi à Goynuk, dans la banlieue résidentielle de la station touristique d'Antalya, sur la côte méditerranéenne dans le sud de la Turquie, rapporte l'agence de presse officielle Anatolie.

L'explosion s'est produite près d'un point de contrôle de la gendarmerie à l'entrée de Goynuk, selon l'agence de presse privée Dogan.

Des groupes séparatistes kurdes, des militants islamistes ou d'extrême gauche ont revendiqué ces dernières années plusieurs attentats dans des villes turques.

La semaine dernière, l'explosion d'une voiture piégée a fait trois morts et une quinzaine de blessés à Ankara, la capitale. Cette attaque a été revendiquée par les Faucons de la liberté du Kurdistan (TAK), un groupe séparatiste kurde qui a promis d'autres attentats.

Some Kurdish Leaders Suspicious of Syrian Opposition Council

By BASAM MUSTAFA / Rudaw



Representatives of the Syrian National Council. Photo AFP.

ERBIL, Iraqi Kurdistan -- Some Kurds remain suspicious of a new Syrian opposition council that could play a vital role if the regime falls.

Syria's fractured opposition groups formed a National Council aimed at unifying their efforts to oust Bashar al-Assad's regime in Istanbul on September 15.

Of the 140-member council, just 60 are in Syria. While some Kurds reportedly joined the council a group of Kurdish independent figures were among those boycotting it, a sign of the deep divisions inside the opposition.

"Any council that fails to gain the support of opposition forces inside Syria can't represent the Syrian revolution," said Ibrahim Yusuf, director of Maf Human Rights Organization in Syria. "This National Council should cooperate with the previous opposition councils and form a united council that includes all groups of Syrians."

"We are in a very delicate phase," he said. "People are killed every day. The opposition is weak and can't act

as a united front against the Syrian regime."

However, Bisma Qedmani, a member of the National Council argued that the group "consists of all the major opposition forces, political parties and independent figures that represent the Syrian opposition. Many of the members are from inside Syria. We don't deny that other opposition forces exist, but our goal is to create a national framework for the Syrian opposition."

At least 2,700 people have been killed since the start of protests in Syria in mid-March, according to the United Nations, while thousands more have been detained. The Syrian government reports that 1,400 people have died in the unrest.

The opposition has held at least six conferences in Turkey aimed at uniting the opposition against the regime and planning for a post-Assad Syria. The events were supported and organized by Turkey's moderate Islamist government.

Shalal Gedo, a leader of the Leftist Kurdish Party in Syria, told Rudaw,

"The meetings being held in Istanbul are organized by opposition parties in Syria that are mostly Islamic because Turkey supports the Islamists in Syria and puts them out front. These Syrian opposition meetings in Turkey prevent the creation of a democratic, pluralistic Syria in which the rights of the Kurds are constitutionally protected and they are recognized as the second largest ethnicity in the country."

Gedo also expressed suspicions that Turkey is manipulating the Syrian opposition by offering to host their meetings in Istanbul.

"Turkey has its own agenda and interests in Syria," Gedo said. "It aims to protect its interest by getting involved in Syrian affairs, and by hosting all the Syrian oppositions it plans to put all of them under the service of Ankara."

"The Kurds of Syria will upset Turkey by gaining their rights (in Syria)," he said. "They're afraid that the Kurds in Syria will form an independent region like the Kurdistan region in Iraq."

the guardian

SEPTEMBER 23, 2011

Kurdish activists invade offices of the Guardian

Protesters call for coverage on alleged human rights abuses by government against Kurdish minority in Turkey

Shiv Malik

Over a dozen protesters from the London-based Kurdish Youth group, forced their way into the offices of the Guardian on Friday afternoon.

The 15 activists remained peaceful but shouted slogans. They were stopped before entering the main newsroom by security staff.

Police officers who attended the scene stood aside as the protesters met editor-in-chief Alan Rusbridger to talk about their concerns.

In front of dozens of members of staff, Mark Campbell, an activist on

Kurdish issues read out a statement on behalf of the group, accusing the Turkish government of perpetrating a war on the Kurdish ethnic minority, who mainly live in the the eastern half of the country, on the border with Iraq.

Campbell, 49, who has been an activist on Kurdish issues for 18 years, also criticised the Guardian in the statement for not covering the plight of the Kurdish people and that of the leader of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers party), Abdullah Ocalan.

Ocalan has been held in prison since 1999 for leading the PKK in a violent struggle against Turkish authorities but



Mark Campbell reads a statement on behalf of the Kurdish activists, as Alan Rusbridger (l) looks on. Photograph: Linda Nyland for the Guardian

was spared a death sentence after intervention from the EU. ■

Herald ^{INTERNATIONAL} Tribune

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2011

U.S. makes plans for fall of Assad in Syria

WASHINGTON

Officials seek to avoid the fissures that ripped apart post-Hussein Iraq

BY HELENE COOPER

Increasingly convinced that President Bashar al-Assad of Syria will not be able to remain in power, the United States has begun to make plans for its policy in the region after he exits.

In coordination with Turkey, the

NEWS ANALYSIS

United States has been exploring how to deal with the possibility of a civil war among the Alawite, Druse, Christian and Sunni sects in Syria, a conflict that could quickly set off other tensions in a volatile region.

While other countries have withdrawn their ambassadors from Damascus, U.S. officials say they are leaving in place their ambassador, Robert S. Ford, despite the risks, so he can maintain contact with opposition leaders and the leaders of Syria's myriad sects and religious groups.

Officials at the State Department have also been pressing Syrian opposition leaders to unite as they work to bring down the Assad government, and to build a new government.

Syria was sure to be discussed at a meeting Tuesday between President Barack Obama of the United States and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey on the periphery of the U.N. General Assembly meeting in New York, U.S. officials said. A senior U.S. official said the abandonment of Mr. Assad by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and European countries would increase his isolation, particularly as his military became more exhausted by the lengthening crackdown.

Another U.S. official said that with 90 percent of Syrian oil exports going to Europe, shutting the European market to Damascus could have a crippling ef-

fect on the Syrian economy and could put additional pressure on Mr. Assad's government.

"Back in the 1990s, if Syria wanted credit and trade and loans that they couldn't get from the United States, they went to the Europeans," said Ray Takeyh, a senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and a former Obama administration official. Now, Mr. Takeyh said, Europe has joined the United States in imposing sanctions on Syrian exports, including its critical oil sector.

Aside from Iran, he said, Syria has few allies to turn to. "The Chinese recognize their economic development is more contingent on their relationship with us and Europe than on whether Assad or Qaddafi survives," he said, referring to the deposed Libyan leader, Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi.

Eight months ago, the thought of Syria without a member of the Assad family at the helm seemed about as far-fetched as the thought of Egypt without Hosni Mubarak or Libya without Colonel Qaddafi.

But intelligence officials and diplomats in the Middle East, Europe and the United States increasingly believe that Mr. Assad may not be able to beat back the gathering storm at the gates of Damascus.

The Obama administration is determined to avoid a repeat of the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Though the United States did not stint in its effort to oust Saddam Hussein, many foreign policy experts now say that the undertaking came at the expense of detailed planning about how to manage Iraq's warring factions after his removal.

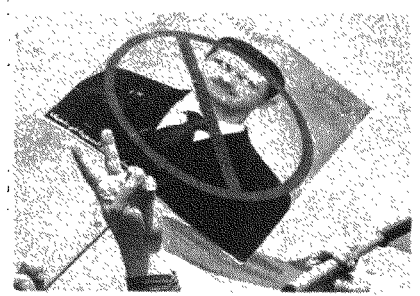
Mr. Obama's call last month for Mr. Assad to step down came after months of internal debate, which included lengthy discussions about whether a Syria without Mr. Assad would lead to the kind of bloody civil war that consumed Iraq after the fall of Mr. Hussein.

The shift moved the administration from discussing whether to call for Mr. Assad's ouster to discussing how to help bring it about, and what to do after that.

"There's a real consensus that he's beyond the pale and over the edge," the senior U.S. official said. "Intelligence services say he's not coming back."

To be sure, Mr. Assad may yet prove as immovable as his father, Hafez al-Assad, was before him. Many foreign policy analysts say that the longer Mr. Assad remains in power, the more violent the country will become. That violence, they say, could unintentionally serve Mr. Assad's interests by allowing him to use it to justify a continuing crackdown.

Many factors may make his exit more difficult than the departures of Mr. Mubarak in Egypt and President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia. For one thing, the United States and Europe



FRANCOIS LENOIR/REUTERS

A defaced poster of the Syrian leader at a rally at NATO headquarters in Brussels.

have become more distracted in recent weeks by their economic crises.

Furthermore, while Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and even Yemen all imploded, those eruptions were largely internal, with their most significant ramifications limited to the examples they set in the Arab world. A collapse in Syria, on the other hand, could lead to an external explosion that would affect Iran, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and even Iraq, foreign policy experts say, particularly if it dissolves into an Iraq-style civil war.

"The Sunnis are increasingly arming, and the situation is polarizing," said Vali Nasr, the author of "The Shia Revival: How Conflicts Within Islam Will Shape the Future."

"Iran and Hezbollah are backing the regime," Mr. Nasr said. "There's a lot of awareness across the regime that this is going to be pretty ugly."

That awareness is fueling the desire to plan for a post-Assad era, U.S. officials say. "Nobody wants another Iraq," one official said Saturday, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

At the same time, the United States does not want to look as if it is trying to orchestrate the outcome in Syria, for fear that the image of American intervention might do the Syrian opposition more harm than good. In particular, U.S. officials say that they do not want to give the Iranian government — which has huge interests in the Syrian government and is Mr. Assad's biggest supporter — an excuse to intervene.

But one administration official pointed to the remarkable call this month by the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, for Mr. Assad to ease up on his crackdown as a sign that even Iranian leaders are worried about the Syrian president's prospects.

War and Peace in Kurdistan

MOIGN KHAWAJA

London, (Pal Telegraph) - The late bomb blast in Ankara, as well as an escalation of violence in the recent weeks in south-eastern Turkey and northern Iraq, a region dominated by Kurds and infested by the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK), has raised many uneasy questions about the conflict in Kurdistan and the way Turkish government is handling it. The deadly attacks are often triggered when Turkish security forces deployed in the region are attacked by Kurdish guerrillas who have bases spread across the mountains.

Critics of the Ankara's anti-terrorism campaign aimed at the PKK fighters accuse the Turkish military of using brutal tactics and excessive force, including air strikes and carpet bombing, to eradicate the armed Kurdish autonomy movement. On the other hand, supporters of the anti-PKK operation declare Turkish offensive as an act of self-defence aimed at ending the long-term terrorist campaign of PKK's separatist movement.

Kurdistan is one of the most complex and bloodiest conflicts in the Middle East, awaiting a solution despite the lapse of more than eight decades. A constant denial of the history, geography, demography and ethnography of one of the most central regions of the Middle East has resulted into warfare, displacement, humanitarian crises and human rights abuses on a massive scale, affecting millions of people in the region, especially the Kurdish nation.

The following photo-feature looks at the latest round of violence in the light of the 33-year-old conflict between Turkish state and the Kurdish rights fighters and finds out the answers to the Kurdish question that has claimed the lives of over 40,000 souls, mostly Kurds.

The name Kurd comes from the ancient Sumerian word kur, meaning mountain. Historians claim the word was first used more than 5,000 years ago. The word kur-ti (kur – mountain;



ti – affiliation) and the meaning of mountain tribe or mountain people. The Luwians, a nation that settled in western Anatolia about 3,000 years ago, called Kurdistan Gondwana in their native language which meant land of the villages. In Kurdish language, gond is still used as the word for village. During the reign of Assyrians, the Kurds were called Nairi, which means people living by the river.

The Middle Ages saw the reign of the Arab sultanates under which the Kurdish areas were referred to as beled ekrad. The Seljuks were the first who used the word Kurdistan, land of the Kurds, in their official communications. The Ottoman sultans also referred to the settlement area of the Kurds as Kurdistan. Until 1920s, Kurdistan was the official name for the region. After the establishment of Turkish Republic in 1923, the existence of the Kurds was denied and Kurdistan no longer existed as a region on the official maps.

Kurdistan is spread across an area of around 450,000 square kilometres, surrounded by Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. It is one of the most mountainous region in the Middle East, and is blessed with rich forests and water resources with vast fertile plains on top of it. Agriculture has been at the heart of Kurdish life for thousands of years. It was in Kurdistan that the Neolithic civilisation began when hunter-gatherers settled down and began farming the fields. Thanks to the unique geographical position of Kurdistan, the Kurds have been able to protect their existence and identity as a distinct ethnic group until today.

The Kurdish language reflects the influence of the Neolithic civilisation, which is believed to have begun in the region of the Zagros and Taurus mountains. It belongs to the Indo-European family of languages. The Kurdish language uses three different writing systems. It is written using a modified version of the Arabic alphabet in both Iran and Iraq. Whereas in Turkey, Syria and Armenia, Kurdish is written using the Latin alphabet.

Historians first mentioned the Kurds as an ethnic group in about 3,000-2,000 BC. They presumed the Hurrians as the predecessors of the Kurds, who lived in tribal confederations and kingdoms together with the Mitannis, Nairis, Urartians, and Medes. These ethnic groups lived under rudimentary political structures. Women enjoyed a prominent position in the ancient Kurdish society, a tradition still prevalent today.

Kurdish history has been shaped by Zoroastrianism which was practised by the majority of the Kurds between 700 and 550 BC. It was due to Zoroastrianism that men and women enjoyed equal rights in the society and worked next to each other in the fields or in the mountains. The Kurds have a deep love of animals and are fiercely independent integral components of the Zoroastrian religion.

The decline of the Zoroastrian Sassanid Empire paved the way for Islam (650 AD) which changed the fundamentals of Kurdish society. The strong influence of the Arabs helped the Kurdish society to become one of the strongest social and political formations in the Mesopotamia region. Sultan Salahuddin Ayyubi, an ethnic Kurd, established the Ayyubid dynasty (1175 - 1250 AD) which was one of the most potent dynasties of the Middle East that defeated the European Crusaders and increased influence of the Kurds in the region.

Kurdish influence reached new heights under the Seljuks. Dynasties of Kurdish descent like the Sheddadis, Buyidis, and Marwanides (990 - 1090) developed into feudal petty states and principalities. The Kurdish ruling class enjoyed wide-ranging autonomy under the Ottoman Empire.

However, the decline of the Ottoman Empire encouraged several Kurdish uprisings against the Sultan in ↪

⇒Constantinople to push for the establishment of an independent homeland. Kurdistan witnessed numerous rebellions against the Ottomans which were brutally crushed by the ruling Turks.

The unique opportunity to form an independent Kurdish state was aborted by the imperialist British and French empires who carved the pieces of Ottoman empire-controlled Kurdistan and handed them over to the Kemalist Turkish republic, the Persian emperor, the Iraqi monarchy and the Syrian-French regime respectively.

Turkey welcomed the Kurdish minority by imposing strict assimilation laws that interpreted the Kurds as a nation of the Turkish stock, and later, mountain Turks who forgot who they were. The founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Pasha, ordered the extermination of any culture other than the Turkish and banned the use of Kurdish language in all walks of life.

Things were not so different for Kurds living in the neighbouring countries. The Pahlavi dynasty of Iran suppressed the rights of the Kurds and imposed restrictions on Kurdish identity. A rebellion waged by the Kurdish tribal leaders which sought to liberate the occupied Kurdish Republic of Mahabad was brutally crushed. The Shah, with the help of secret service Savak, imposed a terror regime of fascist proportions that aimed at restoring the glory of Persia at the cost of Kurdish and other ethnic groups.

France and Britain, the imperial powers in Syria and Iraq, usurped Kurdistan with the help of their Arab proxies under the banner of Pan-Arab nationalism. They established a bloody colonial regime that incessantly ignored the existence of Kurdish nation and denied their basic rights of citizenship.

The plot of denying Kurds their basic human rights only thickened when hegemonic powers in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria denied their status as a distinct ethnic group. People of Kurdish origin were systematically punished for displaying their ethnic background, promoting their culture and speaking their own language. Kurdish was banned as a language in Turkey at all forums, including educational institutions, and so was the literature and traditions. Anyone found engaged in subversion i.e. promoting or preserving Kurdish language and values faced

lengthy prison terms and banishment from public life. The slogan one language, one nation, one country became the political order. Under the banner of the superior Turkish identity, the entire society was made to pledge allegiance to an aggressive form of nationalism.

The Iranians went a step further and declared Kurds an ethnic subgroup of the great Persian nation. The only way for Kurds to demand rights was to accept that they're Persians, the majority ethnic group of Iran. On the other hand, the Arabs in Iraq and Syria, denied the existence of a Kurd nation. They insisted that all the issues have been resolved after the advent of Islam. Officially, Islam was the only nation. And this nation was Arab.

After the 1960 military coup in Turkey, a very liberal constitution was adopted that included substantial protections for democracy, freedom of expression, and human rights. Kurds from both sides of the political spectrum took advantage of this new change. Radical groups with Marxist-Leninist affiliations emerged, with Workers Party the most prominent that called for an end to the oppression of Kurdish minority.

Meanwhile, the increasing strength of Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) led by Mullah Mustafa Barzani in northern Iraq had a profound impact on the rise of Kurdish nationalism and bolstered right-wing Kurdish outfits in Turkey. From the 1960s onward, the Kurds set themselves on a path of clear ideological division. A Marxist-Leninist wing was active in the Turkish part of Kurdistan while a more nationalistic wing worked in Iraqi part of Kurdistan that identified closely with Barzani's KDP.

The leftist Kurds wanted the socio-economic restructuring of the Kurdish society into a more equitable society through the dismantling of tribal institutions by the creation of a socialist system. This agenda rang alarm bells in the right-wing camp as they were closely linked to the tribal hierarchy. Apart from the challenge by left-wing Kurds, the right-wing Kurdish nationalists suffered two main setbacks: inter-tribal bloodshed that weakened their strength and appeal; and the 1971 Turkish military intervention that forced their leaders into exile in northern Iraq and their eventual assassination.

The 1970 military coup in Ankara also

intensified the process of building a state within the state. A network of policeman, army generals, bureaucrats, judicial officials, laicist intellectuals etc. from leftist, nationalist and conservative backgrounds blended and backed a wave of crime in the country. They indiscriminately killed prominent intellectuals, political leaders and ordinary people to create an atmosphere of fear so they can manage the nation with an iron-fist. Their radical pro-military policies split the whole society into different hostile factions with Turks, Kurds, Muslims, Alevites, and other people belonging to different ethnic and religious groups locked into a fierce battle for power and authority for years to come.

In 27 November 1978, a group of 22 people, led by Abdullah Ocalan, formed an independent Kurdish political organisation. They acted on the assumption that Kurdistan, being a classic colony where the population was forcibly refused their right to self-determination, needed a peaceful but powerful voice that can help achieve long usurped basic human rights of the Kurds. The new political development drew strong opposition from the Turkish army which overthrew the civil government and seized power on 12 September, 1980.

Thousands of young Kurdish volunteers from Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran joined the training centres in Syria and Bekaa valley in Lebanon and transformed PKK into a powerful militant organisation. It launched an attack on the military facilities in Eruh and Semdili on 15 August, 1984 which marked the beginning of an armed resistance. The Kurdish fighters, known as Peshmergas (Pesh front, merg death), literally mean the ones who face death. These forces include women in their ranks, fighting alongside men and often taking commanding positions.

Though the PKK emerged as the sole credible Kurdish challenger to the Turkish state, the Kurds of Turkey were left with few choices. Being neutral was not an option. They either had to side with the state by submitting themselves as Turkish citizens at the price of suppressing their ethnic identity or join the PKK and fight against the state. Anyone going against the two options and peacefully advocating Kurdish rights was attacked with impunity by both the state and the PKK.

The PKK failed to establish itself as ⇒

⇒ the sole legitimate Kurdish group due to several reasons. It upset the deeply Islamic elements of the Kurdish society by enforcing its Communist ideology. It violently crushed any other emerging Kurdish movements thus alienating the very population it claimed to represent.

In addition to the above mentioned reasons, PKK founder Abdullah Ocalan's megalomania also contributed to the party's unpopularity among the masses. The Kurdish guerrilla leader silenced his critics and developed a true personality cult around himself which estranged other Kurdish leaders.

Jalal Talabani, the leader of the northern Iraq-based Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and current President of Iraq, once famously said: Ocalan is possessed by a folie de grandeur . . . he is a madman, like a dog looking for a piece of meat. The other Iraqi Kurdish leader, Massoud Barzani of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, compared him to the former Ugandan dictator Idi Amin.

The mid 1990s saw the worst part of the conflict between the PKK and Turkish security forces, during which both sides committed various atrocities and war crimes. Human rights groups and many officials of today's Turkish establishment openly talk about the extra-judicial killings committed by the Turkish military during the massive counter-insurgency campaign which claimed the lives of around 40,000 people, most of them Kurds. According to Amine Tuna, a Turkish humanitarian worker, there were many Kurdish families that lost their children serving in the Turkish army or PKK. Both Turks and Kurds lost their loved ones in this bloody conflict. You simply can not draw a line between the good guys and bad guys here, she added while speaking to Outernationalist.

PKK insists it offered the Turkish state a peaceful solution through negotiations but Ankara insisted on a military solution. Abdullah Ocalan, the chairman of the PKK, made several offers for ceasefire which were responded by more intense military actions. He was abducted in a suspected Mossad operation in Kenya and brought to Turkey on 15 February, 1999. He is kept under solitary confinement on the Turkish prison island of Imrali ever since.

After the arrest of the PKK founder, the

Kurdish rights movement has declared a unilateral ceasefire and asked the Turkish government to start peace talks with the Kurds. The political change in Ankara ushered a new era in 2002 when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan came to power and lifted the state of emergency the same year.

AKP fundamentally changed the official definition of secularism and broadened the official definition of national identity. In 2003, Erdogan government promulgated legal reforms that lifted most of the bans on the Kurdish language and culture. Prime Minister Erdogan has openly acknowledged the excesses committed by the state and promised a fair solution. The Turkish statesman, much to the displeasure of the Turkish establishment, emphasises on a more open and pluralist Turkey, in which not everybody was Turkish, but Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Circassians, and other ethnic identities living side by side.

As part of the what AKP calls the Democratic Opening, a 24-hour state TV in Kurdish was opened after a lot of political bickering. The government also lifted bans on the Kurdish language. The AKP has made inroads in Kurd-dominated southeastern Turkey thanks to its grassroots approach and welfare policies that appeal the Kurdish working class, pro-Islamist families, peasants, land owners and youth.

The growing popularity of AKP and becoming the most Kurdish-friendly mainstream political party in Turkish history has deeply offended the PKK. Suspected PKK militants attacked more than a hundred AKP bureaus in the Kurdish southeast during the election campaign of 2011. However, the violence failed to intimidate AK Party's supporters. Around 80% voters in Hakkari district voted for AKP, 73% in Sirnak, 61% in Mardin, 62% in Diyarbakir (the capital of the region), 51% in Batman, 49% in Van and 44% in Mus, thus enabling Erdogan a landslide.

Despite the rise of AKP and welcoming of the Kurds to the national fold, Kurdistan region still faces lots of socio-political challenges. The PKK has already announced its desire to renounce violence and work within the Turkish boundaries, albeit mistrusted by the Turkish establishment. Kurdish intellectuals have long demanded an amendment in the Turkish constitution to insert an article that says: The

constitution of the Turkish republic recognises the existence and the expression of all its cultures in a democratic way.

Following new steps taken by AKP which allows Kurdish language television and radio programmes with certain restrictions, Kurds have long demanded their broadcasts must be treated by the same rules and regulations as Turkish programs. They also want the same measures extended to cultural activities.

Many Kurds want elementary schools in southeastern Turkey to teach Kurdish language in government-run elementary schools so that Kurdish children can learn the basics of their mother tongue at a younger age. They also want universities in the region to lift ban on imparting education in Kurdish language and establish institutes for Kurdish language, literature, culture and history.

One of the long standing demand of the PKK has been the dismantling of the village-guard system and military-backed defence networks that operate within the state-structures. The pro-Kurdish rights movement also wants the unconditional return of people evicted from their villages during the war. Being the least developed region of Turkey, the Kurds also demand the initiation of a development program that helps the Kurdish population earn a decent living and improve their standard of life.

Turkey's emergence as a regional power and a champion of freedom and democratic values in the Middle East is incomplete until Ankara musters the strength of its own people by empowering its minorities, including the Kurds, who form around 15-20% of the country's population. It should not forget that until a few years ago, the Turkish establishment pursued policies which denied the reality and eventually brought the nation to the brink of war and separation.

■ ■ ■



22 septembre 2011

Les Kurdes pénalisés par un projet de loi sur le pétrole en Irak

Reuters

Un projet de loi sur les hydrocarbures en Irak, dont Reuters a obtenu copie, accroît le contrôle de Bagdad sur les ressources pétrolières, au risque de raviver des tensions entre le gouvernement central et la région autonome du Kurdistan.

Le projet, approuvé fin août par le gouvernement fédéral, doit permettre de réglementer et de répartir les ressources pétrolières du pays.

Mais son adoption au parlement

pourrait être retardée au vu des vifs débats que le texte risque de susciter, a prévenu le président du Parlement, Osama al Noujaifi. Les amendements à la loi de 2007 devraient en effet donner lieu à un bras de fer entre le gouvernement du Premier ministre, Nouri al Maliki, et les Kurdes, partenaires de la coalition au pouvoir.

«Le projet amendé accorde au gouvernement central et au ministère du Pétrole l'autorité pour signer des contrats pétroliers alors que la région kurde tente d'obtenir plus de pouvoir

dans le processus de signature de contrats", a indiqué à Reuters Osama al Noujaifi.

«La seule façon de trouver une solution passe par le dialogue et les discussions, ça va être très compliqué», a-t-il prédit.

Le gouvernement fédéral et le gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan se disputent depuis des années le contrôle des ressources pétrolières du Kurdistan.

L'Humanité.fr 28 SEPTEMBRE 2011

Syrie : Crainte de guerre civile

L'opposition syrienne met en garde contre les actions armées de déserteurs et les appels à une intervention de Washington et ses alliés, qui pourraient conduire à une militarisation de la révolte.

Six mois et demi après le début des manifestations à Deraa, le 15 mars, la Syrie connaît une dangereuse évolution. Désertant les rangs de l'armée, de plus en plus de soldats se sont organisés dans la région de Homs, principalement à Al-Rastan, et mènent des actions de guérilla. Il y a moins de trois mois, la chaîne qatarienne Al Djazira a diffusé plusieurs reportages sur ces soldats et officiers syriens, déclinant leurs grades et montrant face à la caméra leurs cartes militaires, affirmant appartenir au mouvement des officiers libres! Ces derniers disposent d'un site Internet qui diffuse des vidéos d'officiers expliquant pourquoi ils ont rallié l'opposition et appelant leurs collègues à la révolte. Pour l'heure, on sait peu de chose sur l'ampleur de ce mouvement de désertion, qui est principalement le fait de soldats de confession sunnite. Des informations évoquent « des opérations armées limitées sous forme de guérillas, d'embuscades, de tirs de snipers visant des shabihas (milice du régime) et des soldats, et des heurts armés dans des forêts et des vallées dans les zones frontalières », rapporte Riad Kahwaji, directeur exécutif d'Inegma (Institution pour l'analyse militaire au Proche-Orient et dans le Golfe), cité par l'AFP. Des actions que les États-Unis ont qualifiées de « normales ». Toujours est-il que le pouvoir syrien, qui semble avoir pris la mesure de la menace, affirmant que 700 soldats et policiers ont été tués depuis le 15 mars, cherche à l'enrayer en décidant de faire la chasse aux déserteurs. Lundi, quatre « déserteurs » ont été tués et sept autres arrêtés près de la frontière turque.

Les appels lancés sur les réseaux sociaux

Ces désertions semblent faire écho aux appels lancés sur les réseaux sociaux par certaines fractions minoritaires de

l'opposition syrienne à une militarisation de la révolte et à l'intervention militaire occidentale. C'est le cas de Bassam Bitar, ex-diplomate, membre du parti Infatih (ouverture), qui s'est déclaré « partisan d'une intervention aérienne rapide contre le palais présidentiel, le ministère de la Défense » ainsi que contre « l'ensemble des sièges » des « services de renseignements, de la politique et militaires ». « Face à la recrudescence des tueries, des arrestations et des tortures, les voix appelant à la militarisation commencent à être entendues » s'inquiète Omar Idlebi, représentant des Coordinations des comités locaux (LCC) qui animent le mouvement de contestation syrien. Avertissant toutefois que « si la révolution s'écarte de son parcours pacifique (...), elle sera vidée de son sens ». Un avis du reste partagé par la majorité des acteurs de l'opposition pour qui cette militarisation de la révolte, à laquelle pousse objectivement le régime de Bachar, mènerait inéluctablement à la « guerre civile ».

En attendant, l'opposition syrienne commence à être visible. Outre, le Conseil national syrien créé à Istanbul (Turquie), dont les Frères musulmans sont la principale force, soutenus par une partie des Coordinations des comités locaux et qui a l'aval de Washington et Paris, il en existe trois autres : le Comité national pour le changement démocratique, qui regroupe des partis marxistes, nationalistes arabes, kurdes, animés par Michel Kilo et Aref Dalila, fondé à Damas; le Conseil national de transition, présidé par Burhan Ghalioun, créé en août à Ankara; la Coalition des forces laïques et démocratiques. Et si, pour l'heure, l'opposition au pouvoir en place est le seul lien qui fédère ces différentes coalitions, en revanche, ces dernières tardent à s'unir et à coordonner leurs efforts pour préparer l'après-Assad au cas où ce dernier annoncerait son retrait du pouvoir. En outre, en raison d'un implacable verrouillage sécuritaire et d'un contexte répressif sanglant, sur fond de manipulation de rivalités confessionnelles, cette opposition a du mal à la fois à investir le centre de Damas ou Alep, et à rallier massivement à sa cause les minorités alaouite, druze, chrétienne et kurde, voire chiite. Sans doute, est-ce là le maillon faible de l'opposition syrienne face à un pouvoir redoutable et redouté et qui semble disposer encore de ressources.

Hassane Zerrouky



Turquie: Trois tués, 6 blessés dans des combats avec le PKK et une attaque

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 22 sept 2011 (AFP)

TROIS MEMBRES des forces de sécurité turques ont été tués et six autres personnes ont été blessées dans des combats et une attaque des rebelles kurdes dans l'est et le sud-est, ont affirmé jeudi des sources locales de sécurité.

Un premier incident, des accrochages, s'est produit tard mercredi à Catak, sous préfecture de la province de Van (est), a-t-on souligné de même source.

Un soldat et un supplétif kurde pro-Ankara ont perdu la vie dans les combats dans cette zone, théâtre des opérations du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Trois autres membres de forces de sécurité ont été blessés.

Des combats se poursuivaient dans le secteur, selon ces sources.

Dans un incident séparé à Diyarbakir, principale ville du sud-est peuplé majoritairement de Kurdes, un homme armé d'une Kalachnikov a tiré jeudi dans le centre-ville sur des policiers en faction, en tuant un et blessant le second. Deux passants ont également été blessés, selon des sources de sécurité qui attribuent l'attaque au PKK.

L'assaillant a réussi à prendre la fuite.

Les combats entre forces turques et les rebelles kurdes se sont multipliés considérablement depuis le début de l'été, après une période d'accalmie.

La Turquie menace de lancer une incursion militaire dans le nord de l'Irak contre les bases du PKK.

L'aviation turque a bombardé à plusieurs reprises depuis le 17 août cette région, où seraient retranchés environ 2.000 combattants de ce mouvement qualifié de "terroriste" par de nombreux pays.

Le PKK a pris les armes en 1984, et le conflit a fait 45.000 morts



Turquie/attaque du PKK: le bilan passe à 6 soldats et 3 rebelles tués

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 25 sept 2011 (AFP)

LE BILAN D'UNE ATTAQUE menée samedi soir par des rebelles kurdes dans le sud-est de la Turquie est passé à six soldats et trois rebelles tués, ont affirmé dimanche des sources locales de sécurité.

Les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont pris pour cible une petite caserne de gendarmerie dans le village de Belenoluk, proche de Pervari, dans la province de Siirt, tuant six soldats et en blessant onze autres, a affirmé le gouvernorat de Siirt dans un communiqué.

Trois combattants du PKK ont également été abattus au cours des affrontements, qui se poursuivaient dans le secteur, a indiqué cette source.

Un précédent bilan faisait état de cinq soldats tués et quatre autres blessés.

Les attaques du PKK contre des objectifs militaires se sont multipliées depuis le début de l'été dans l'est et le sud-est de la Turquie, peuplés en majorité de Kurdes.

A Siirt, une attaque du PKK contre une école de police s'est soldée mardi

par la mort de quatre civils et d'un assaillant. A la suite de cette opération, la direction du PKK a appelé samedi "toutes les unités de guérilla à être plus attentives dans leurs préparatifs" pour éviter les morts de civils.

Mardi, c'est une bombe qui a explosé dans la capitale Ankara, tuant trois personnes et en blessant une quinzaine d'autres dans un attentat revendiqué par un groupe kurde radical, les Faucons de la liberté du Kurdistan (TAK).

Le PKK a désapprouvé samedi cet attentat contre des civils, estimant qu'il était "répréhensible" et "nuisait aux demandes légitimes du peuple" kurde.

Mais les autorités turques considèrent les TAK comme un prête-nom utilisé par le PKK pour commettre des attentats pouvant encourir la désapprobation populaire, notamment quand des civils sont tués.

Face à cette recrudescence des violences, la Turquie menace de lancer une offensive militaire contre les bases du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak, où seraient retranchés environ 2.000 combattants de ce mouvement qualifié de "terroristes" par de nombreux pays.



Turquie: trois rebelles et deux civils tués lors de combats PKK/police

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 27 sept 2011 (AFP)

TROIS REBELLES et deux civils, une femme enceinte et un enfant de six ans, ont été tués tard lundi au cours d'un accrochage entre rebelles kurdes et policiers dans le sud-est de la Turquie, ont affirmé mardi des sources locales.

La fusillade est survenue à Batman, lorsqu'une unité de la police antiterroriste a pris en chasse une voiture dont les trois occupants étaient suspects d'être des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), ont affirmé des sources locales de sécurité.

Les rebelles ont ouvert le feu avec des fusils d'assaut en direction des policiers, et une voiture transportant des civils a également été atteinte par les balles, ont-elles ajouté.

Une femme enceinte de huit mois et sa fille de six ans ont été tuées, tan-

dis que son mari et sa deuxième fille, âgée de huit ans, ont été blessés, a affirmé le gouvernorat de Batman dans un communiqué, ajoutant que le bébé avait été sauvé. Un policier a été blessé dans ce premier accrochage, selon le communiqué.

Les rebelles ont ensuite été encerclés à l'intérieur d'un bâtiment en construction, où les combats se sont poursuivis pendant plusieurs heures, selon les sources de sécurité.

Les trois membres supposés du PKK ont été tués et deux autres policiers ont été légèrement blessés dans ces affrontements, indique le gouvernorat.

Les attaques du PKK contre des objectifs militaires se sont multipliées depuis le début de l'été dans l'est et le sud-est de la Turquie, peuplés en majorité de Kurdes.

Une attaque du PKK contre une petite caserne de gendarmerie samedi dans la province de Siirt, voisine de celle de Batman, s'est soldée la mort de six soldats et trois rebelles.

Face à cette recrudescence des violences, la Turquie menace de lancer une offensive militaire contre les bases du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak, où seraient retranchés environ 2.000 combattants de ce mouvement qualifié de "terroristes" par de nombreux pays.



PKK: Paris et Ankara signeront en octobre un accord antiterroriste

ANKARA, 28 sept 2011 (AFP)

LE MINISTRE FRANÇAIS de l'Intérieur Claude Guéant est attendu début octobre à Ankara pour signer un accord de coopération contre le "terrorisme" qui vise surtout les rebelles kurdes, au moment où ils intensifient leurs attaques en Turquie, a-t-on appris mercredi de source turque.

L'accord, qui sera signé le 6 octobre entre M. Guéant et son homologue Idris Naim Sahin, permettra aux deux pays de coordonner leurs efforts et de renforcer leur coopération dans la "lutte contre le terrorisme", a souligné cette source proche du gouvernement turc, sous couvert d'anonymat.

Le journal pro-gouvernemental turc Zaman a affirmé que cet accord sera le premier du genre jamais signé par Ankara avec un pays influent de l'Union européenne et qu'il pourrait permettre l'extradition de membres importants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit), arrêtés sur le sol français.

M. Guéant sera aussi reçu par le président Abdullah Gül et le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Principal opposant avec l'Allemagne à l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne (UE), la France entretient des relations compliquées avec les autorités d'Ankara.

La visite interviendra dans le contexte d'une importante recrudescence des violences attribuées au PKK en Turquie. Le gouvernement menace de riposter par une opération terrestre dans le nord de l'Irak, où ce mouvement dispose de bases arrière.

Elle aura lieu en outre après une série d'interpellations dans les milieux proches du PKK en France.

La justice française doit se prononcer le 2 novembre sur le sort de 18 Turcs, arrêtés en 2007 et soupçonnés d'appartenir au PKK.

Parmi les prévenus, suspectés d'avoir financé l'organisation, figurent Riza Altun et Nedim Seven, respectivement considérés comme le représentant du PKK en Europe et le "trésorier" du mouvement à l'époque des faits.

Le PKK, considéré comme un mouvement terroriste par Ankara, l'UE et les Etats-Unis, a déclenché en 1984 une rébellion armée pour la défense de l'importante communauté kurde en Turquie. Les combats ont fait plus de 45.000 morts depuis cette date.



Les députés kurdes de Turquie décident de revenir au Parlement

ANKARA, 28 septembre 2011 (AFP)

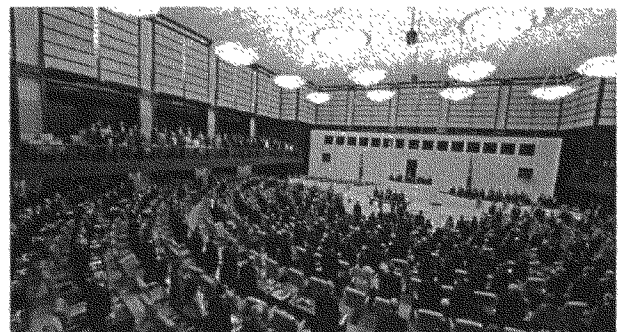
LES 35 DÉPUTÉS kurdes du Parlement turc renouvelé lors des élections de juin ont annoncé mercredi leur décision de mettre un terme à leur boycott de cette assemblée, dans un climat politique tendu avec la multiplication des violences attribuées aux rebelles kurdes.

"Nous avons éprouvé le besoin de procéder à un changement d'attitude et pour défendre la paix contre la guerre (...) nous avons décidé de participer aux travaux du Parlement", a indiqué devant la presse le co-président du Parti pour une société démocratique (BDP, principale formation pro-kurde), Selahattin Demirtas.

Il a accusé le gouvernement du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, issu de la mouvance islamiste) de vouloir torpiller les efforts pour une solution du conflit kurde en ordonnant des arrestations massives de militants kurdes à travers le pays, ces derniers mois.

Le boycott s'était traduit par le refus des 35 députés appartenant à un collectif de partis et d'organisations pro-kurdes de prêter serment au nouveau Parlement, qui compte 550 sièges.

Leur action, qui visait à dénoncer l'invalidation par les autorités électorales d'un siège revenant à un militant kurde connu et emprisonné, Hatip Dicle, a



Le Parlement turc lors de la prestation de serment en juin

été symbolique car la nouvelle législature ne débute que le 4 octobre.

Les députés feront leur entrée samedi au Parlement, où ils pourront siéger après avoir prêté serment, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

La décision des députés Kurdes intervient alors que les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) multiplient leurs attaques meurtrières contre les forces de sécurité, tuant aussi des civils, dont des enfants.

Le gouvernement envisage de mener une opération militaire contre les repaires du PKK, dans le nord de l'Irak.

Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a appelé mercredi la population kurde de Turquie (environ 13 millions des 74 millions de Turcs) à "résister" au PKK, accusant le BDP de collusion avec les rebelles et de profiter de l'atmosphère de violences.



Turquie: deux soldats tués dans des combats avec les rebelles kurdes

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 30 sept 2011 (AFP)

DEUX SOLDATS ont été tués jeudi soir dans des combats avec les rebelles kurdes dans le sud-est de la Turquie, ont affirmé vendredi des sources locales.

L'accrochage s'est produit à Beytüşebap, dans la province de Sirnak, riveraine de l'Irak, où un groupe de rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a attaqué une unité des forces de sécurité, selon ces sources, précisant que trois personnes ont été blessées.

Les attaques du PKK contre des objectifs militaires se sont multipliées depuis le début de l'été dans l'est et le sud-est de la Turquie, peuplés en majorité de Kurdes, certaines opérations se soldant par la mort de civils.

Face à cette recrudescence des violences, la Turquie menace de lancer une offensive militaire contre les bases du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak, où seraient retranchés environ 2.000 combattants de ce mouvement qualifié de "terroristes" par de nombreux pays.

Le PKK a affirmé que l'aviation turque avait mené jeudi de nouveaux raids contre ses bases irakiennes.

Iraqi radical at a crossroads

BAGHDAD

Islamic social effort hints at path similar to that of Hezbollah and Hamas

BY TIM ARANGO

In a classroom in Sadr City, the bustling Baghdad neighborhood of the Shiite poor, dozens of men in white shirts and black pants received the most basic of Islamic religious instruction: how to wash before praying.

"After you wash your left hand, you must be sure to avoid any water drops on the right hand," the instructor declared.

The men, once members of the Mahdi Army, the militia of the radical Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr, fought the Americans in the first years of the occupation and said they would again if he gave the order.

But for now they have come to wage a different battle in the ranks of the Mumahidoon, the militia's successor, which, besides offering its members lessons in the Koran, organizes soccer teams, provides circumcision for the babies of poor families, picks up trash after religious pilgrimages and teaches computer literacy.

On the eve of what is likely to be a nearly complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq, one of the great questions is what Mr. Sadr is going to do. The Mumahidoon is one possible direction.

Created after Mr. Sadr disbanded the Mahdi Army in 2008, it is a lesser-known spoke of an Islamist movement that, like Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank, has used political, military and social arms — with financial support from Iran — to galvanize a Shiite underclass and stake out a prominent role in public life.

But Mr. Sadr also seems to be trying out several other roles, including street provocateur and vocal resister of American influence. The direction he decides on will determine in great part the immediate future of Iraq as the U.S. military role diminishes.

Mr. Sadr was perhaps the most mercurial public figure to emerge after the U.S.-led invasion, and his influence has evolved over several iterations: from street fighter to exiled religious figure to kingmaker in a triumphant return after parliamentary elections last year.

"There is a general belief that Sadr is trying to figure out what his next move is and where his organization fits in the future of Iraq," said Col. Douglas Crissman, a U.S. Army commander who



Members of the Mumahidoon, many of them former fighters, in Koran class in Sadr City in July. The Mumahidoon succeeded the Mahdi Army, which Mr. Sadr disbanded in 2008.

closely follows Mr. Sadr's activities in the Shiite-dominated south and has noticed fewer recent anti-American messages emanating from local Sadrist offices.

Most believe that his main goal is to create a state-within-a-state like Hezbollah until he can take power in Iraq.

"There's definitely the desire to be the Iraqi version and model the movement on some of the same things Hezbollah has done in Lebanon," said Marisa Cochrane Sullivan, deputy director at the Institute for the Study of War in Washington.

Sadrist leaders acknowledge the comparison to Hezbollah but emphasize their movement's local roots.

"There are similarities because we are Shia and we resist," said Munhaned al-Gharawi, a top Sadrist official in Baghdad. But "we always say that Hezbollah is different. Moktada al-Sadr is an Iraqi man who takes his fatwa from his father, and everyone knows that."

Mr. Sadr's father was Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, a top Shiite religious leader who was assassinated by Saddam Hussein's henchmen in 1999.

The activities of the Mumahidoon in the capital were recently suspended after a property dispute between rival factions resulted in the burning of houses in Baghdad. This episode, combined with several recent contradictory communiqués from Mr. Sadr, suggests a considerable degree of internal strife. But no one doubts the potential influence of the group, not to speak of Mr. Sadr himself.

As unpredictable as he may be, Mr. Sadr wields significant power through

the governorship of Maysan Province and his political bloc in Parliament, a foundation of the governing coalition.

Less than a year ago, Mr. Sadr helped establish the current government when he backed Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki for a second term. That support helped end more than eight months of stalemate after last year's parliamentary elections, and gave the Sadrists control of some important ministries.

Mr. Sadr's vocal opposition to the presence of U.S. troops and his threats of violence if they stay beyond this year have kept that issue unsettled with just over three months until all U.S. forces

Moktada al-Sadr's role is seen as pivotal in the future of Iraq.

are mandated to leave. But he has delivered a mixed message.

Communicating mainly by edicts from Qum, Iran, where he spends most of his time studying religion, Mr. Sadr had standing orders for his remaining militia, the Promised Day Brigade, to violently resist what he still terms an American occupation. It did so, killing numerous U.S. troops in southern Iraq before he recently called a halt to such attacks. He said he would reconstitute the Mahdi Army if U.S. troops stayed in Iraq, then said he would not.

And in a nation where few politicians endear themselves at the grass-roots level, Mr. Sadr still has substantial sway over the Iraqi street. His decision in February to keep his followers from

joining protests against the government neutralized rising anger against corruption, poor services and a lack of job opportunities and protected Mr. Maliki from an Arab Spring-like uprising.

But in recent weeks Mr. Sadr has reversed course on this, too, issuing demands of Mr. Maliki's government for jobs and improved services and a greater share of oil wealth. After prayers last Friday in several Sadr strongholds in Baghdad and the southern cities of Najaf and Basra, his followers railed against the government and held up broken household appliances to symbolize a lack of electricity.

The prospect of Mr. Sadr's exhorting his followers into the streets is deeply troubling to Mr. Maliki — even if the Friday rallies were short, just 20 minutes in Sadr City, and lacked the enthusiasm of previous Sadr rallies, like one this year against the presence of U.S. troops that included the burning of American flags.

"Maliki is very worried about that possibility," one Western diplomat said of the possibility of mass street protests by the Sadrist.

The men of the Mumalidoon say they are peaceful and are trying to counter what they describe as rising anti-Islamic sentiment in the West. In Arabic, the militia's name means "to pave the way" — an expression that anticipates the re-emergence of Imam Mahdi, who disappeared in what is now Iraq in the ninth century and whose expected return is central to the theology of Shiite Islam.

One member, Abdella Amir, said the goal was "to give another view, that Islam is not only violence." The members who spoke to a reporter said they would take up arms again against the Americans if Mr. Sadr gave the order.

"With all respect to the people of America, they are just people," said another member, Sheik Farhan al-Husayni, an engineer. "Their leaders and their government, their troops, the occupiers, are against the countries, especially the Islamic world."

The invasion upended the old order of Sunni dominance and allowed the political enfranchisement of the Shiite majority and the Sadrist movement. But the Sadrists never saw the Americans as their benefactors, and say they will oppose any presence of U.S. troops beyond this year, no matter how small.

"We never trusted America," Mr. Husayni said. "As long as America treats people this way and tries to control the destinies of countries, we do not think we can live with them in friendship."

Duraïd Adnan and Michael S. Schmidt contributed reporting.

Ahmadinejad lets loose at U.N., sparking walkout

UNITED NATIONS

BY NEIL MACFARQUHAR

Iran's president delivered a bombastic anti-Western tirade at his General Assembly speech on Thursday, blaming the United States, Israel and Europe for the global recession and a litany of other ills. The speech provoked what has become a ritual large-scale walkout of delegations led by the United States.

The president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said poverty, homelessness and the denial of basic rights were traceable to "greed for materialism in the United States and Europe."

The Islamic Republic has been estranged from the United States since the Islamic Revolution more than 30 years ago, and Mr. Ahmadinejad's speech has become something of a signature event at the annual General Assembly session. There were no surprises in either his criticisms or his singular interpretation of world events.

As he has done in previous speeches, Mr. Ahmadinejad raised questions about the Holocaust, blaming the West for using it as an excuse for unwavering support for Israel and for the oppression of the Palestinian people.

"They threaten anyone who questions the Holocaust and Sept. 11 with sanctions and military action," he said.

By the time he got to that line in his 30-minute speech, the low-level American and European diplomats who had been there were no longer around.

The United States delegation was the first to leave when Mr. Ahmadinejad referred to the Sept. 11 attacks as "mysterious," going on to suggest that Osama bin Laden's hasty burial at sea rather than being brought to trial was designed to hide the truth of who sent the planes to attack New York and Washington.

"Is there any classified secret that must remain a secret?" he said.

After the Europeans walked out, the hall, not terribly full in the first place, was mostly empty. Oddly, King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa of Bahrain, whose government has repeatedly blamed Iran rather than domestic ills for inflaming the Shiite population there, stuck around.

As usual, Mr. Ahmadinejad talked a lot about the domestic economy of the United States while barely mentioning his own country, or the current turmoil in the Middle East.

The United States mission to the United Nations issued a brief statement condemning the speech.

"Mr. Ahmadinejad had a chance to address his own people's aspirations for freedom and dignity, but instead he again turned to abhorrent anti-Semitic

slurs and despicable conspiracy theories," said Mark Kornblau, the spokesman for the mission.

The Iranian leader, whose previous annual visits to New York have been contentious, generated less interest this year. While he did inspire protests outside the United Nations and his midtown hotel, his power clashes at home with Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, have cast some doubt over the extent of his authority.

That doubt, in turn, has made him personally a less threatening figure, despite significant international concerns about important issues like the possibility that Iran is developing nuclear weapons.

Mr. Ahmadinejad's speech followed an apparent gesture by his government, as two American hikers imprisoned on espionage charges were released Wednesday after days of conflicting signals.

The men, Shane M. Bauer and Joshua F. Fattal, both 29, were released from Tehran's notorious Evin Prison at dusk and whisked by a diplomatic convoy to a plane that took them to Oman, where they raced down the stairs of the aircraft to hug waiting family members.

The men have said their odyssey through Iran's judicial system began when they wandered over the border from Iraq by mistake with a friend. Their case, however, was quickly entangled with Iran's foreign and domestic politics. In the latest chapter, the Americans' fate became part of what analysts called a power struggle between Mr. Ahmadinejad and the conservative establishment he has angered.

Mr. Ahmadinejad promised last week that the men would be freed as a humanitarian gesture "in a couple of days." The announcement appeared calibrated to win favorable attention for the Iranian leader before he flew to New York for his U.N. speech.

But soon after his statement, Iran's judiciary, which answers to the country's supreme leader, denied that the men would be freed imminently, saying it had exclusive authority to order their release. The statement struck a very public blow to the president's standing.

Analysts said they believed that Mr. Ahmadinejad's conservative critics were willing to allow the release Wednesday because they wanted Iran to project a magnanimous image as it takes to the world stage. Analysts also say they wanted to deliver a message to the president that he is not fully in charge.

"In the end, they were not going to undermine completely the president of the country, but they made their point," said Vali Nasr, a professor at Tufts University and an expert in Iranian affairs.

Turkey and the Arab spring

A flawed example

ANKARA /
Turkey will be a better model for its region if it fixes its Kurdish problem

FRESH from a triumphant tour of the post-revolutionary countries of the Arab spring, Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was brimming with confidence as he prepared for talks with Barack Obama on September 20th in New York. Not for long. Hours before the meeting a bomb exploded in central Ankara, killing three civilians. Soon afterwards four women died in an attack in the province of Siirt, in Turkey's mainly Kurdish south-east. The next day gunmen opened fire on a police academy in Bitlis, another south-eastern province, killing a policeman. All three attacks are thought to have been carried out by militants from the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), although the group denied responsibility for the Ankara bombing.

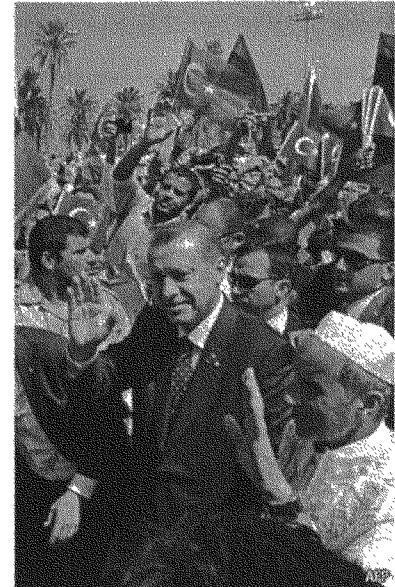
In recent months Western and Arab pundits have swooned over Turkey as a model for aspiring Arab democracies. With its secular democracy, booming economy and growing international clout, Turkey has become an inspiration for Muslims around the world. Mr Erdogan, and his conservative Justice and Development (AK) party, can take credit for this. Yet as the recent bloodshed shows, the Kurdish problem and Mr Erdogan's increasingly hawkish stance over it could unravel the government's achievements. Over 100 people have died in PKK-related violence since AK was returned to power in a general election in June. The government has responded with a wave of air strikes against PKK strongholds in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq. These have not made a spot of difference. The rebels continue to operate unhindered inside Turkey, including, worryingly, in urban areas.

When he took office in 2003 Mr Erdogan set about reversing Turkey's decades-old policy of Kurdish repression. He eased restrictions on the long-banned Kurdish language and blunted the army's influence. He authorised secret talks with the PKK's imprisoned leader, Abdullah Ocalan, and other senior Kurdish militants in Europe and Iraq. A recently leaked recording of a 2009 meeting between the man who is now Turkey's intelligence chief and various PKK types shows how close Mr Erdogan came to peace.

He now seems to be moving in the opposite direction. There are rumours that the Turkish army may soon move into northern Iraq. Hundreds of Kurdish activists have been arrested in recent weeks for alleged PKK links, joining 3,000 others, including six members of parliament, who have been locked up, many on scant evidence. Mr Ocalan has been denied access to his lawyers since July. Soli Ozel, a political scientist, says that if the government does not change course it may soon be faced with a "Kurdish spring."

PKK terrorists are hoping to provoke Turkish troops into escalating the violence. Mr Erdogan seems to be walking into their trap. Yet some pro-government screeds are blaming Israel for the PKK attacks, claiming it is "seeking revenge" for Mr Erdogan's recent expulsion of the Israeli ambassador over Israel's refusal to apologise for killing several Turks aboard a flotilla heading for Gaza last year. More excitable pundits are even baying for war against the Jewish state.

Officials dismiss such talk. Yet a new dispute in the eastern Mediterranean has alarmed some. Turkey has



Touching the hem of his garment

threatened to retaliate should Israel continue to drill for oil and gas along with Cyprus. Turkey dispatched three frigates this week, and on September 21st Mr Erdogan signed a deal with Turkish-controlled north Cyprus to begin drilling itself.

America is jumpy about the falling-out of its two biggest allies in the region. Mr Obama is said to have pleaded with Mr Erdogan to mend fences with Israel. America needs Turkish help as it maps the future of the Arab spring, most critically in Syria. Yet Mr Erdogan owes his popularity on the Arab street partly to Israel-bashing.

Still, Turkey's anti-Israeli rhetoric is no match for the diatribes of its regional rival, Iran. And Turkey's vibrant, if imperfect, democracy has trumped the mullahs, at least for now. Peace with the Kurds would ensure that Turkish democracy endures.

Turkey, Iran Undertake Joint Military Offensive Against Kurdish Rebels

SELCAN HACA OGLU, (AP)

ANKARA, Turkey -- Turkey's prime minister on Sunday signaled a joint military offensive with Iran against their common enemy: Kurdish rebels based in northern Iraq.

Turkey and Iran were working together and "determined," Recep Tayyip Erdogan said.

"There is no question of any postponement," Erdogan said in a clear reference to a possible joint military operation against the main Kurdish rebel base on Qandil Mountain which sits on the Iraqi-Iranian border deep inside northern Iraq.

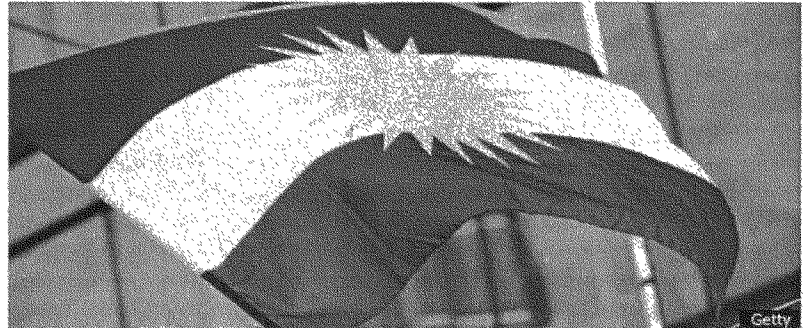
"I regret to say this but there will be a price for it," Erdogan said, apparently referring to possible military losses in a cross-border offensive against the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has been waging a war for autonomy in Turkey's southeast.

It was not immediately clear if the two countries are planning a highly risky and difficult ground offensive at Qandil, which has reportedly been turned into a mine field by the rebels to protect themselves.

The Party of Free Life of Kurdistan, or PEJAK, which is an offshoot of the PKK that the U.S. and the European Union have labeled a terrorist group, is also struggling for autonomy for Iran's Kurds because of alleged Tehran government discrimination. Kurds make up 14 percent of Iran's population.

Iranian artillery units often fire salvos at Qandil, and Turkish warplanes stage bombing raids against suspected rebel bases there, but the rebels reportedly rush into deep caves when they hear the whistling shells or the roar of the jets.

The Kurdish provinces of northern Iraq are the country's most stable and prosperous area. But to neighboring Iran and Turkey, both with large Kurdish minorities, they are something else: an inspiration and a support base for the Kurdish



A man holds the Kurdish flag on September 4, 2011 during a demonstration in Stockholm against operations by Iran and Turkey against Kurdish separatist rebels in Iraq.

rebels in their own countries.

Turkey has already been pressing the U.S.-backed Iraqi government to clamp down on Kurdish guerrillas who use Iraq as a base. The Iraqis and Turks fear Kurdish success in creating an autonomous region in northern Iraq, and the prosperity of their enclave, encourages their own Kurdish minorities.

The U.S. has been providing Turkey with intelligence from its Predator drones and now Erdogan says Washington is likely to agree to the deployment of Predators on Turkish soil once its troops leave Iraq at the end of this year. Turkey already operates some Israeli-made Heron drones to stage pinpoint attacks against the rebels.

Kurdish rebels have dramatically escalated their attacks in Turkey since July, killing dozens of security personnel and at least 10 civilians -- including three people in a car bombing in the Turkish capital last week.

On Saturday, the rebels attacked a Turkish army outpost, killing six soldiers and wounding 11 in the country's southeast, authorities said. Three rebels also were killed in the ensuing clash near the town of Pervari in Siirt province.

The attacks came after Turkish warplanes started to bomb suspected Kurdish rebel hideouts in neighboring northern Iraq, including the main rebel base on Qandil, in mid-August in response to the surge in rebel violence. Turkey's military claimed to have killed up to 160 rebels in airstrikes in August, but the

rebels disputed it.

Erdogan said Friday that Turkey would only halt its military drive if the rebels "lay down their arms," days after confirming reports that government officials met with representatives of Kurdish rebels in Europe. The secret talks, which apparently failed to produce any tangible results, came to light after some websites posted an audio recording from an alleged 2010 meeting.

On Sunday, Erdogan left the door open for dialogue, while saying his country would maintain its fight against "terrorism."

"We say it very clearly: we will struggle against terrorism until the end, but we will also negotiate with those who prefer politics," Erdogan said. "Those who prefer politics can talk to us, others can't."

Turkey has long realized that it can't finish off the rebel war through military measures alone, and the government has granted more cultural rights to the Kurdish minority such as broadcasts in the once-banned Kurdish language on state television.

However, the rebels and the country's Kurdish political movement insist on autonomy and Kurdish education in schools which Turkey fears could divide the country along ethnic lines.

The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people in Turkey since the rebels took up arms in 1984.

Turkey's calm postseason to Arab Spring

ISTANBUL

Country is axis for vision that may emerge after turmoil on 2 continents

BY ANTHONY SHADID

Not so long ago, the foreign policy of Turkey revolved around a single issue: the divided island of Cyprus. These days, its prime minister may be the most popular figure in the Middle East, its foreign minister envisions a new order there and its officials have managed to do what the Obama administration has so far failed to: position themselves firmly on the side of change in the Arab Spring.

No one is ready to declare a Pax Turkana in the Middle East, and indeed, its foreign policy is strewn this year with missteps, crises and gains that feel largely rhetorical. It even lacks enough diplomats. But in an Arab world where the United States seems in retreat, Europe ineffectual and powers like Israel and Iran unsettled and unsure, officials of an assertive, occasionally brash Turkey have offered a vision for what may emerge from turmoil across two continents that has upended decades of assumptions.

Not unexpectedly, the vision's axis is Turkey.

"Turkey is the only country that has a sense of where things are going, and it has the wind blowing on its sails," said Soli Ozel, a professor of international relations at Istanbul Bilgi University.

The country's foreign policy has seized the attention of many in the Middle East and beyond after Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's tour last week of the three Arab countries that have witnessed revolutions: Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Even Mr. Erdogan's critics were impressed with the symbolism of the trip. Though many criticize his streak of authoritarianism at home, the public abroad seemed taken by a leader who portrayed himself as the proudly Muslim leader of a democratic and prosperous country that has come out forcefully on the side of revolution and in defense of Palestinian rights.

One Turkish newspaper, supportive of Mr. Erdogan, called the visits the beginning "of a new era in our region." An Egyptian columnist praised what he called Mr. Erdogan's "leadership qual-



Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, in Egypt. One newspaper called his visit the beginning "of a new era in our region."

ities." And days later, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu spoke boldly of an axis between Egypt and Turkey, two of the region's most populous and militarily powerful countries, that would underpin a new order in the region, one in which Israel would stay on the margins until it made peace with its neighbors.

"What's happening in the Middle East is a big opportunity, a golden opportunity," a senior Turkish official said in Ankara. He called Turkey "the new kid on the block."

The trip was a pivot for what many had viewed as a series of setbacks for a country that, like most of the world, utterly failed to predict the revolts in the region.

After long treating the Arab world with a measure of disdain — Israel and Turkey were strategic allies in the 1990s — Turkey had spent years cultivating ties with Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi in Libya and President Bashar al-Assad in Syria. More than 25,000 Turks worked in Libya, and Syria was seen as the gateway to Turkey's ambitions to economically integrate part of the Middle East. Even after the uprisings erupted, Turkey opposed NATO's intervention in Libya. Until last month, it held out hope that Mr. Assad, despite evidence to the contrary, could oversee a transition in Syria.

Though Mr. Erdogan came out early in demanding that President Hosni Mubarak step down in Egypt — at the very time that U.S. officials were trying

to devise ways for him to serve out his term — that stance came with little cost. Mr. Mubarak and Mr. Erdogan were not fond of each other, and Egyptian officials resented Turkey's growing profile.

"The old policy collapsed, and a new policy is required now toward the Middle East," said Ersin Kalaycioglu, a professor of political science at Sabanci University.

In an interview, Mr. Davutoglu, viewed by many as the architect of Turkey's engagement with the region, laid out that new policy. In addition to a proposed alliance with Egypt, he said Turkey would position itself on the side of the revolts, especially in Syria, which represents Turkey's biggest challenge. He insisted that Turkey could help integrate the region by virtue of its economy, with its near tripling of exports since Mr. Erdogan's Justice and Development Party took power in 2002.

The outline suggested an early version of the European Union for the Middle East — economic integration and political coordination — and Mr. Davutoglu said such an arrangement would eventually require at least a degree of military cooperation.

"There should be regional ownership," he said. "Not Turkish, not Arab, not Iranian, but a regional ownership. That regional ownership for us is important."

The vision is admittedly ambitious, and Mr. Davutoglu's earlier prescription of "zero problems" with neighbors

has run up against the hard realities of the region. Turkey faces a growing crisis over rights to gas in the sea off Cyprus, still divided between Greek and Turkish regions and still a foreign policy mess for Turkey. Relations with Israel collapsed after Israeli troops killed nine people on board a Turkish flotilla trying

to break the blockade of Gaza last year. Iran, Turkey's neighbor to the east and competitor in the region, is bitter over a Turkish decision to accede to U.S. pressure and host a radar as part of a NATO missile defense system. Syrian and Turkish leaders no longer talk.

But the sense of rising Turkish power and influence is so pronounced in the country these days that it sometimes borders on jingoism. It has touched on a

"Turkey is the only country that has a sense of where things are going, and it has the wind blowing on its sails."

deep current of nationalism, and perhaps a hint of romanticism, harbored by the more religious, over Turkey's return to an Arab world it ruled for more than four centuries.

"We're not out there to recreate the Ottoman Empire, but we are out there to make the most of the influence we have in a region that is embracing our leadership," said Suat Kiniklioglu, deputy chairman of Mr. Erdogan's party for ex-

ternal affairs.

Even those who bristle at what they see as Mr. Erdogan's arrogance acknowledge that he represents a phenomenon at home and abroad. He brought his populism to the Arab world, where he displayed an intuitive sense of the resonance that the Palestinian issue still commands, in contrast to U.S. officials, who have misunderstood it, failed to appreciate it or tried to wish it away. In speeches, he catered to the West and his domestic critics by embracing a secular state, even as he prayed in suit and tie in Martyrs Square, at the foot of the Old City in Tripoli.

For a region long roiled with anger at leaders submissive to U.S. and Israeli demands, Mr. Erdogan came across as independent and forceful.

There remains a debate in Turkey over the long-term aims of the engagement. No one doubts that officials with his party — deeply pious, with roots in political Islam — sympathize with Islamist movements seeking to enter mainstream Arab politics, namely the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and, more so, the Nahda Party in Tunisia.

But relations remain good with the United States, even if U.S. officials accuse Mr. Erdogan of overconfidence. Some Turkish officials worry that the crisis with Israel will end up hurting the relationship with Washington; others believe Turkey is bent on supplanting Israel as the junior partner of the United States in the Middle East.

The bigger challenges seem to be within Turkey itself. Although Turkey has opened new embassies across Africa and Latin America, its diplomatic staff remains small, and the Foreign Ministry is trying to hire 100 new employees a year. Mr. Kiniklioglu estimated that no more than 20 people were devising foreign policy.

The exuberance of Turkish officials runs the risk of backlash, too. The Arab world's long-held suspicion toward Turkey has faded, helped by the soft power of Turkish television serials and Mr. Erdogan's appeal. Yet senior officials acknowledge the potential for an Arab backlash in a region long allergic to any hint of foreign intervention. Somewhat reflexively, Egyptian Islamists, piqued last week by Mr. Erdogan's comments about a secular state, warned him against interfering in their affairs.

And across the spectrum in Turkey, still wrestling with its own Kurdish insurgency in the southeast, critics and admirers acknowledge that the vision of a Turkish-led region, prosperous and stable, remains mostly a fleeting promise amid all the turmoil.

"The image is good," said Mr. Kalaycioglu, the professor. "Whether it's bearing any fruit is anyone's guess. Nothing so far seems to be happening beyond that image."

AP Associated Press

State media: Kurdish rebels kill 5 Turkish soldiers, wound 10 in southeast

ANKARA, Turkey - September 24 2011 - (AP)

KURDISH REBELS attacked a Turkish army outpost on Saturday, killing five soldiers and wounding 10 in the country's southeast, the state broadcaster said. Three rebels also were killed.

The guerrillas attacked the post near the town of Pervari in Siirt province, said the state-run TRT television. Authorities were not immediately available for comment.

The rebels planted mines in the area to prevent or slow down army reinforcements, and also were firing on helicopters taking troops to the area, the Hurriyet newspaper said on its website, citing unidentified local sources. Three rebels were killed in the ensuing clash, said TRT television.

On Saturday night, the rebels also attacked the local police headquarters and another army post in the town of Hani in Diyarbakir province, TRT said. At least two policemen were wounded, the channel said.

Kurdish rebels have dramatically escalated their war for autonomy since July, killing dozens of security personnel and at least 10 civilians — including three people in a car bomb attack in the Turkish capital earlier this week.

The attacks came after Turkish warplanes started to bomb suspected Kurdish rebel hideouts in neighboring northern Iraq in mid-August in response to the surge in rebel violence.

The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people since the rebels took up arms in 1984.

REUTERS

Iraq Kurdish oil exports at 100,000 bpd -NOC source

ISTANBUL, September 26, 2011 - (Reuters) -

CRUDE EXPORTS from Iraq's semi-autonomous northern Kurdish region now average 100,000 barrels per day, an official at state-run North Oil Co. said on Monday.

"Crude from oilfields in the northern Kurdish region being pumped (into the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline) averages 100,000 barrels per day. It even reached 110,000 bpd three days ago," the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Reuters.

Oil exports from the Kurdish region had dropped to 50,000-60,000 barrels per day earlier this month from 160,000 bpd in August and then were halted due to technical problems, the Kurdish authorities had said.

Moyen-Orient : pas de printemps pour les Kurdes

Par Laurent de Saint Périer

Entre mi-juillet et début septembre, les armées turque et iradienne ont pilonné sans merci les positions des rebelles kurdes du PKK et du Pjak, y compris dans le nord de l'Irak.

Aux confins de l'Iran, de l'Irak et de la Turquie, un territoire montagneux est, depuis juillet, le théâtre d'une guerre aussi peu médiatisée que sanglante. Du 16 juillet au 5 septembre, les Gardiens de la révolution islamique (GRI, les Pasdarans), armée idéologique de la République d'Iran, ont pilonné à l'artillerie lourde les zones frontalières du Kurdistan irakien. Le 17 août, l'aviation turque est entrée à son tour en action, bombardant la région jusqu'au 4 septembre. Villages détruits, populations en fuite, victimes civiles: malgré les vives protestations des autorités irakiennes, l'armée turque annonce que les opérations se poursuivront « jusqu'à ce que le nord de l'Irak devienne une zone sûre et vivable ». Côté iranien, le colonel des GRI, Hamid Ahmad, déclarait, le 2 septembre, que l'offensive continuerait « jusqu'à ce que la région soit débar-



Comcombattants du PKK, à la frontière turco-irakienne, en 2007. © Mustapha Ozer/AFP

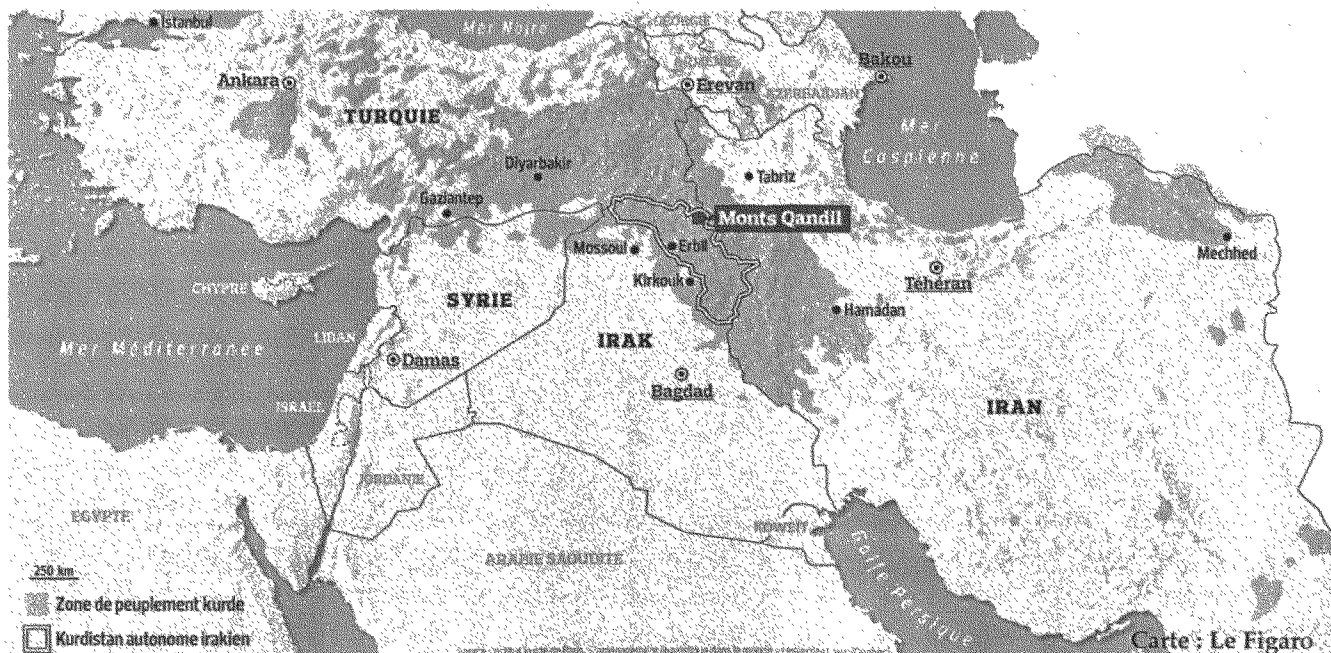
rassemblée des terroristes ».

Depuis les années 1980, le Nord irakien est la base arrière des indépendantistes armés du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) pour leurs opérations en Turquie. Retranché dans la même zone, le Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan (Pjak), émanation du PKK, poursuit en Iran les mêmes buts que le PKK en Turquie: la lutte pour l'autonomie par des actions de guérilla et des attentats contre les forces de sécurité. Dès 1991, les puissances turque et iradienne multiplient les opérations militaires pour réduire les organisations rebelles armées. Après

la première guerre du Golfe, l'autonomisation de fait du Nord irakien a profité aux mouvements kurdes, dès lors à l'abri de l'impitoyable répression de Saddam Hussein.

Opération terrestre ?

Comme Téhéran, Ankara justifie ses offensives par les nombreux attentats commis sur son territoire. Les deux États dénoncent l'incapacité de Bagdad à assurer l'étanchéité de ses frontières septentrionales. Mais le gouvernement central a peu d'emprise sur le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan, dont le prési-



dent, Massoud Barzani, refuse d'intervenir par crainte « d'une guerre interkurde ». Un analyste kurde irakien souligne d'ailleurs que Saddam Hussein, malgré une implacable campagne anti-Kurdes qui a fait près de 200 000 morts et des centaines de milliers de déplacés, n'est lui-même jamais parvenu à réduire la guérilla. Extrêmement mobile, celle-ci a établi depuis des années son principal nid d'aigle dans les monts escarpés du Qandil, massif frontalier qui culmine à 3 275 m d'altitude entre l'Irak et l'Iran. C'est sur cette région de transhumance et de contrebande difficilement contrôlable que se sont concentrés les feux des deux armées cet été. Mais d'autres zones ont également été visées: les bombardements turcs ont atteint des objectifs disséminés dans tout le Kurdistan irakien et les GRI ont mené de violentes offensives début septembre à Sardasht, en territoire iranien.

La guerre de l'information aussi fait rage. Le 29 août, l'armée turque annonçait avoir tué entre 145 et 160 séparatistes au cours de dizaines de sorties, mais, une semaine plus tôt, le PKK ne déplorait que 3 morts. De son côté, le Pjak annonçait avoir tué 300 soldats iraniens, dont 3 généraux, au cours de l'offensive des GRI du 16 au 31 juillet, et 76 autres les 2 et 3 septembre, chiffre ramené à 2 par les médias iraniens... Rare information concordante, les GRI comme le Pjak confirment l'élimination de Majid Kawiyan, alias Samkou, numéro deux du Pjak, dans un bombardement en Iran, le 3 septembre.

Une chose est sûre: malgré le déluge de bombes qui s'est abattu sur elle, la guérilla est encore active, et l'objectif annoncé par les Turcs et les Iraniens n'est pas atteint. Le 11 septembre, à Semdinli, localité turque frontalière avec l'Irak, des commandos du PKK ont attaqué un commissariat et une caserne de gendarmerie, tuant 3 civils et 2 membres des forces de sécurité. Pourtant, depuis le 5 septembre, les bombardements turcs et iraniens semblent avoir baissé d'intensité en Irak. Une accalmie avant la tempête? C'est ce que laisse présager le ministre turc de l'Intérieur, qui a déclaré, le 13 septembre: « Une opération

Assad leur fait les yeux doux

En Syrie, le Printemps arabe mobilise-t-il les Kurdes? « La jeunesse et la population participent en masse aux manifestations, alors que les chefs politiques et tribaux appellent au calme », explique le politologue libanais Ziad Majed. Ces derniers semblent avoir modéré leurs revendications devant la menace de conflit communautaire brandie par le régime, mais aussi après les concessions faites par celui-ci. En avril, le président Assad a ainsi octroyé la nationalité syrienne aux « étrangers de Hassakeh », 300 000 Kurdes qu'un recensement très superficiel en 1962 a laissés sans état civil. Le pouvoir cherche ainsi à gagner le soutien d'une communauté qui avait massivement manifesté son rejet du système baasiste en 2004 et 2005, malgré une répression féroce. Les chefs ont acquiescé, mais les aspirations de la jeunesse kurde sont les mêmes qu'à Deraa. Avec une dimension supplémentaire: ils souhaitent que la « République arabe syrienne » devienne la « République syrienne ». Saladin, le plus grand héros national, n'était-il pas kurde?

terrestre pourrait être menée à tout moment. » Depuis quelques semaines, les troupes turques ont été considérablement renforcées sur la frontière irakienne. Alors que le cessez-le-feu proposé le 5 septembre à l'Irak par le Pjak a été rejeté.

Ennemi commun

Y a-t-il eu coordination entre Ankara et Téhéran? De nombreux médias le supposent, mais les autorités militaires ne se sont pas exprimées sur ce point, et certains commentateurs avancent qu'une telle coordination est aujourd'hui peu probable. Force est toutefois de constater la synchronisation des attaques en Irak. Sans échanges de renseignements, les pilotes turcs auraient pu confondre les forces iraniennes avec des troupes rebelles. Enfin, s'il est peu probable qu'un état-major mixte ait été formé pour l'occasion, les deux puissances avaient tout intérêt à partager leurs informations pour donner la chasse à l'ennemi commun.

À cheval sur l'Irak, l'Irak, la Turquie et la Syrie, le Kurdistan est un enjeu essentiel depuis les guerres qui ont opposé la Perse safavide et l'Empire ottoman dès le XVI^e siècle. Réprimés par les autorités locales, les indépendantistes kurdes ont souvent été instrumentalisés par les puissances voisines en conflit. Avant de le pourchasser, l'Irak a longtemps aidé le PKK et ses alliés contre l'ennemi commun en Irak, Saddam Hussein. En 1998, la Turquie avait failli déclarer la guerre à la Syrie, qui soutenait alors le PKK. À l'opposé,

l'entente entre États s'est toujours faite au détriment des mouvements kurdes: le traité de Saadabad conclu en 1937 entre l'Irak, l'Iran et la Turquie, comme les accords d'Alger de 1975 entre le chah et Saddam Hussein, visaient à coordonner la lutte contre les indépendantistes. Aujourd'hui, les relations plutôt apaisées entre les quatre États sont de mauvais augure pour les mouvements rebelles, comme l'illustrent les opérations récentes.

Le traité de Sèvres de 1920 avait prévu la création d'un État kurde. Trois ans plus tard, le traité de Lausanne redessina le Moyen-Orient, octroyant ces territoires à la Turquie kémaliste. Les Kurdes – 25 à 35 millions de personnes réparties sur 503 000 km² – sont aujourd'hui la plus grande des « nations sans État ». Si la plupart d'entre eux n'espèrent plus l'indépendance, ils rêvent de pouvoir un jour vivre librement sur leur terre. Mais un peuple qui utilise trois alphabets, parle trois dialectes, compte de nombreuses minorités religieuses et une multitude de partis politiques soumis à toutes les influences peut-il créer un ensemble homogène? Du reste, la voie prônée aujourd'hui par le Pjak, le PKK et la plupart des Kurdes est celle d'une autonomie régionale au sein des États existants. Combinée à une modernisation de la langue sur le modèle de l'arabe et à la libre circulation des biens et des personnes, cette autonomie pourrait être le fondement d'une unité retrouvée.



Irak: le PKK fait état de nouveaux raids turcs, dit détenir des "militaires"

Erbil (Irak), 29 septembre 2011 (AFP)

DES AVIONS TURCS ont mené jeudi de nouveaux raids contre des bases arrières des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak, a indiqué le PKK en disant "détenir" des militaires et des civils soupçonnés de "crimes" contre les Kurdes.

"Des avions turcs ont bombardé les zones de Khuwa Kork, Khnera et Zap à 09H00 (06H00 GMT) et les tirs ont continué jusqu'à 11H00, mais nous n'avons pas d'informations sur des pertes à ce stade", a déclaré à l'AFP un porte-parole du PKK, Ahmed Denis.

Les zones visées se trouvent au nord-ouest d'Erbil et au nord-est de Dohouk dans le Kurdistan irakien, a-t-il précisé.

Il a par ailleurs indiqué que le PKK avait "arrêté des personnes, dont des responsables militaires, un maire et 12 professeurs pour enquêter sur des crimes commis par eux contre des Kurdes en Turquie".

"Ils ne sont pas des otages comme le prétend le gouvernement turc, mais ils sont sous surveillance, font l'objet d'une enquête et sont en bonne santé. Lorsque l'enquête sera finie, ils seront remis en liberté s'ils sont innocents", a-t-il poursuivi.

Il n'a pas donné d'autre détails sur l'identité des personnes.

Interrogé sur les lois qui pourraient être appliquées à leur rencontre, M. Denis a répondu: "nous avons nos propres lois (...) Nous respectons les droits de l'homme et nos lois ne prévoient pas la peine de mort".



29 septembre 2011

L'Iran affirme avoir tué 180 rebelles kurdes du PJAK

TEHERAN, (AFP) — Les forces iraniennes ont tué 180 rebelles du PJAK, principal mouvement kurde de lutte armée contre le régime de Téhéran, dans des opérations menées cet été à la frontière irano-irakienne, selon un responsable militaire iranien cité jeudi par l'agence Fars.

"Nos combattants ont tué 180 rebelles armés et blessé 300 autres", a

déclaré le général Abdollah Araghi, commandant adjoint des forces terrestres des Gardiens de la révolution, les forces armées d'élite du régime islamique.

Il a indiqué qu'un "certain nombre de combattants iraniens sont tombés en martyrs" lors de ces combats, sans toutefois donner de chiffre.

Les Gardiens de la révolution ont lancé à la mi-juillet une vaste opération contre le PJAK dans les zones frontalières du Kurdistan irakien, au nord-ouest de l'Iran, où le groupe rebelle menait depuis des années des actions armées et des attentats.

Le numéro deux du PJAK a été tué début septembre par des bombardements iraniens en territoire irakien où le

mouvement rebelle a installé ses bases arrières.

Les Gardiens de la révolution ont affirmé la semaine dernière avoir achevé de "nettoyer" les zones frontalières au nord-ouest de l'Iran des groupes rebelles kurdes armés, "contraints de quitter le territoire iranien".

M. Araghi a encore ajouté que l'Iran avait fait savoir aux "membres du groupe terroriste (...) de s'éloigner d'un kilomètre de la frontière iranienne" et "qu'ils n'avaient pas le droit de mener des actions armées" sur le territoire iranien.

Selon lui, "ce groupe terroriste a accepté toutes les conditions de la République islamique".



29 septembre 2011

Irak: 2 morts et 36 blessés dans un attentat à Kirkouk

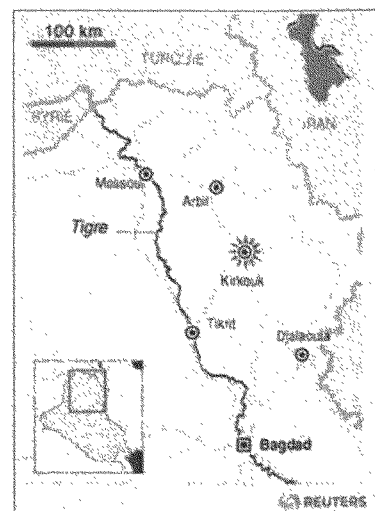
Kirkouk - Reuters

L'EXPLOSION d'une bombe à Kirkouk, dans le nord de l'Irak, a fait au moins deux morts et 36 blessés jeudi, ont indiqué des sources policière et hospitalière.

La bombe a explosé devant une banque au moment où des policiers venaient récupérer leur salaire. La télévision locale montrait une large

fumée noire s'élevant du centre de Kirkouk, où les services de secours portaient les blessés jusqu'aux ambulances.

Kirkouk, à 250 km au nord de Bagdad, est divisée entre arabes, kurdes et turkmènes, ce qui en fait une ville sujette aux violences. Les attentats en Irak visent essentiellement les symboles de l'État et la police ou l'armée, dans le but de déstabiliser le gouvernement de Nouri al Maliki.



Iraq alters oil law draft to erode Kurdish powers

*** Draft law to give Baghdad more control over oil**
*** Kurds promise political battle**
*** Law would create Iraqi National Oil Co.**

By Ahmed Rasheed

BAGHDAD - Iraq's leadership has changed the draft of a long awaited oil and gas law in a way that would give central government more control over the country's vast crude reserves and provoke a clash with the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region.

The law, a copy of which was obtained by Reuters, would give Baghdad more power to manage and develop the OPEC member's petroleum resources, the world's fourth largest.

It alters a 2007 version agreed among political blocs that gave regional powers partial authority over their reserves.

The amendments are set to provoke a political fight between Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's government and the Kurds, who are part of his ruling coalition and wield considerable clout in the Iraqi legislature.

Iraq's Arab-dominated central government, led by Maliki, and the Kurdish region have for years disputed control of Kurdish fields. The row shut down exports from Iraqi Kurdistan from October 2009 to February of this year.

"We're still giving space to discussions to resolve this issue. We have not reached the moment of opening fire on Maliki's government," a senior Kurdish lawmaker told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

The amended law, approved by the cabinet in late August, has been sent to parliament for final passage, but the legislature's speaker Osama

al-Nujaifi said talks to resolve the dispute could take a long time.

"The amended draft concentrates authority to sign oil deals in the hands of the central government and the oil ministry, while the Kurdish region sought more power in the process of signing contracts," Nujaifi told Reuters.

"The only way out of this issue is dialogue and discussions ... it will be very complicated," he said.

NEW POWER

The amended law would give the oil ministry authority to hold bidding rounds for most oil and gas fields, leaving currently producing fields and discovered but undeveloped fields close to them in the hands of a newly created Iraqi National Oil Company (INOC).

The 2007 draft version restricted the ministry to auctions for discovered, undeveloped fields.

The changes could result in the inclusion of Kurdish fields in future auctions, which the Kurds say they will not accept.

"The amendments to the draft infringe on the constitution, which stipulates that the central government and regional authorities should jointly run oilfields," said Bayazed Hassan, a Kurdish MP and a member of parliament's energy panel.

Kurdish and central government officials are discussing the amended law at high levels, and the Kurds have made clear they could review their support for Maliki's government if a resolution is not found, officials said.

The new oil law has long been considered vital to securing foreign investment to boost Iraq's oil output, now at around 2.75 million barrels a day, and rebuild its shattered economy. International energy companies want a stable legal framework for oil and gas deals.

Iraqi officials have said petroleum resources belong to all sects and ethnicities in Iraq, and logically the central government should manage

them. The Kurdish region and the provinces, particularly oil-rich Basra and Sunni-dominated Anbar, have argued for more local control.

"Enacting a new oil law is essential to develop Iraq's energy sector and we are seeking to have new legislation, away from political wrangling," Oil Ministry spokesman Asim Jihad said. "Any disputed details in the draft should be left for technical teams to resolve, not politicians."

SEAT FOR SHAHRISTANI

The new draft calls for INOC to control coveted, already-producing oilfields -- Kirkuk's 2.3-billion-barrel Bai Hassan, and the 6-billion-barrel Nahr Bin Umar field in the south, for example.

The law would create a federal oil and gas council as the ultimate policy-setter. It would give the council power to approve policies proposed by the oil ministry, agree procedures for negotiating and contracting during bid rounds, and ratify drilling, development and production contracts.

Under the old version, the federal council could only draw up policy and issue instructions.

The new law eliminates a clause that required the council to have Shi'ite, Sunni and Kurdish representation, and adds a clause reserving a council seat for the deputy prime minister for energy -- now former Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani.

Kurdish officials see Shahristani as a major obstacle in the tense relationship between Baghdad and Kurdistan on energy issues. He has called for oil contracts signed by the Kurds to be reviewed by Baghdad and turned into service contracts.

The Kurdistan Regional Government adopted its own oil and gas law in 2007 and signed more than 40 production-sharing contracts with foreign firms, which Baghdad deems illegal.

☆☆☆

Kurds in Syria seek autonomy or federation

IPEK YAZDANI
ISTANBUL- Hürriyet Daily News

Kendal Efrin, a Syrian Kurd opposition member and representative of the Alliance of Syrian Liberals in Europe, said having an independent Kurdish state is a natural right of the Syrian Kurds, and Syrian Kurd dissidents living abroad have already started to organize meetings to discuss the issue.



"Some Kurds want autonomy and some want federalism. Right now they are trying to draw a clearer line on their final aim," Efrin told the Hürriyet Daily News in a Friday interview. Syrian Kurds should create their own "peshmerga army," Efrin said, adding that he made a call to Syrian Kurds to create their own army otherwise

they would be wiped out by the official Syrian army or the dissident Sunni Arabs' "Free Syrian Army." Two days of clashes between Syrian troops and forces opposed to President Bashar al-Assad in a rebellious central town have killed seven soldiers and policemen, a Syrian military official said Friday. The official said 32 Syrian troops were wounded in the fighting as government forces conducted a "qualitative" operation on Thursday and Friday in the town of Al-Rastan in the central Homs province, the Associated Press reported.

Kurdistan calls sadr to lean to Constitution's Article 140 to settle differences

ARBIL / Aswat al-Iraq: A spokesman for north Iraq Kurdistan Region's government has said on Tuesday that Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution "is considered the only guarantee to settle differences," in a comment on recent statements by the Chairman of the Shiite Sadr Trend, Muqtada al-Sadr, who warned against the merger of northeast Iraq's Khanaqin Township to Kurdistan Region.

"The main trend of the Kurdistan Region's government is to implement Article 140 to settle differences according to the Iraqi Constitution," pointing out that "the Kurds in Khanaqin and its surrounding areas are facing compulsory immigration out of their home areas, thing that the Kurdistan Region's government won't allow," Kawa Mahmoud told Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

Mahmoud said that the Kurdish Peshmerga forces have been spread in Khanaqin "in order to protect its Arab, Turkomen and Kurdish inhabitants and to prevent any demographic change in the area, because such trend does not cope with Iraq's new policy," adding that "Kurdistan Region's government is committed to the Constitution and other forces and parties must be keen to its implementation."

The satellite position of the Political Committee of the Sadr Trend had quoted Sadr to have said, in his reply on calls to merge Khanaqin and its surrounding areas to Kurdistan Region, thing that the Sadr Trend said it had "warned from and confirmed that the Federalism would take steps that won't please anybody."



The Kurdistan Region's government had spread its Peshmerga forces around the areas surrounding Khanaqin to achieve "protection" for the inhabitants of those areas, after the escalation of violence acts the Kurds say they were targeted against their inhabitants, mostly belonging to the Kurdish Community.

Kurdistan Region's President, Massoud Barzani, has met on Sept.

22 the Mayor of Khanaqin township and other Kurdish personalities and citizens, in which he said that "the main target for spreading the Peshmerga forces in the areas belonging to Khanaqin aims at achieving protection for the inhabitants of the Township, belonging to Arab, Kurdish and Turkomen Communities," adding that "their security missions does not aim to protect a certain community against another."

Syria's Christians fear the worst if Assad should fall

SAYDNAYA, SYRIA

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Abu Elias sat beneath the towering stairs leading from the Convent of Our Lady of Saydnaya, a church high up in the mountains outside Damascus, where Christians have worshiped for 1,400 years. "We are all scared of what will come next," he said turning to a man seated beside him, Robert, an Iraqi refugee who escaped the sectarian strife in his homeland.

"He fled Iraq and came here," said Abu Elias, looking at his friend who arrived just a year earlier. "Soon, we might find ourselves doing the same."

Syria plunges deeper into unrest by the day. On Tuesday, government troops attacked the rebellious town of Rastan with tanks and machine guns, wounding at least 20 people. With the chaos growing, Christians visiting Saydnaya on a recent Sunday said they feared a change of power could usher in a tyranny of the Sunni Muslim majority, depriving them of the semblance of protection the Assad family has provided for four decades.

Syria's Christian minority is sizable, about 10 percent of the population, though some here say the share is actually lower these days. Though their sentiments are by no means monolithic — Christians are represented in the opposition, and loyalty to the government is often driven more by fear than fervor — as a group they help explain how President Bashar al-Assad has held onto segments of his constituency, in spite of a brutal crackdown aimed at crushing a popular uprising. For many Syrian Christians, Mr. Assad remains predictable in a region where unpredictability has driven many of their brethren from war-wrecked places like Iraq and Lebanon, and where many have felt threatened in post-revolutionary Egypt.

They fear that in the event the president falls, they might be subjected to reprisals at the hands of a conservative Sunni leadership for what it saw as Christian support of the Assad family. They worry that the struggle to dislodge Mr. Assad could turn into a civil war, unleashing sectarian bloodshed in a country where minorities, ethnic and religious, have found a way to co-exist for the most part.

The anxiety is so deep that many ignore the opposition's counterpoint: The government has actually made those divisions worse as a way of dividing the country and ensuring the rule of the Assad family, which itself springs from a Muslim minority.

"I am intrigued by your calls for freedom and for overthrowing the regime," wrote a Syrian Christian woman on her Facebook page addressing Christian fe-



A portrait of President Bashar al-Assad hanging in a convent in Maalula, Syria. Many Christians worry that the struggle to dislodge Mr. Assad could unleash sectarian bloodshed.

male protesters. "What does freedom mean? Every one of you does what she wants and is free to say what she wants. Do you think if the regime falls (God forbid) you will gain freedom? Then, each one of you will be lamenting those days."

The fate of minorities in a region more diverse than many recognize is among the most pressing questions facing an Arab world in turmoil. With its mosaic of Christians and heterodox Muslim sects, Syria has posed the question in its starkest terms: Does it take a strongman to protect the community from the more dangerous, more intolerant currents in society?

The plight of Christians in Syria has resonated among religious minorities across the Middle East, many of whom see themselves as facing a shared destiny. In Iraq, the number of Christians has dwindled to insignificance since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, driven away by bloodshed and chauvinism. Christians in Egypt worry about the ascent of Islamists. Christians in Lebanon, representing the largest minority by share in the Arab

world, worry about their own future, in a country where they emerged as the distinct losers of a 15-year civil war.

This month, Lebanon's Maronite Catholic patriarch urged Maronites, the single-largest community of Christians in the country, to offer Mr. Assad another chance and to give him enough time

to enact a long list of reforms that he has promised but never carried out.

The comments by the patriarch, Bishara Boutros al-Rai, prompted a heated debate in Lebanon, which lived under Syrian hegemony for 29 years. A prominent Syrian (and Christian) opposition figure offered a rebuttal from Damascus. But Mr. Rai, who described Mr. Assad as "a poor man who cannot work miracles," defended his remarks, warning that the fall of the government in Syria threatens Christians across the Middle East.

"We endured the rule of the Syrian regime. I have not forgotten that," Mr. Rai said. "We do not stand by the regime, but we fear the transition that could follow. We must defend the Christian community. We, too, must resist."

It is a remarkable insight into the power and persuasion of fear that the status quo in Syria these days remains preferable to many. The United Nations estimates that more than 2,600 people have died since the uprising erupted in mid-March in the poor southern town of Dara and, given the desperation of some, even activists warn that protesters may resort to arms. Estimates of arrests run into the tens of thousands. Indeed, the toll has proven so grave that not all Christians express fear alone.

Some Christians have joined the ranks of the uprisings, and Christian intellectuals like Michel Kilo and Fayeza Sara populate the ranks of opposition figures. An activist in Damascus recalled over

coffee at the upscale Audi Lounge how a Christian friend found himself hiding in the house of a conservative Muslim family in a town on the outskirts of Damascus. His friend was marching in a demonstration, along with others. When security forces arrived at the scene shooting randomly at people, they ran for cover, hiding in the nearest houses and buildings, he said.

When the tumult was over, his new host asked him what his name was. Scared, he thought for a moment about lying, but, worried that they might ask for his identification papers, he told the truth. To his surprise, the host and his

"We do not stand by the regime, but we fear the transition that could follow."

family and all those hiding in the house began cheering for him. He had joined their ranks.

The formula often offered of the Syrian divide — religious minorities on Mr. Assad's side, the Sunni Muslim majority aligned against him — never captured the nuance of a struggle that may define Syria for generations. Even some Alawites, the heterodox Muslim sect from

which Mr. Assad draws most of his leadership, had joined protesters. When a few came to the central Syrian city of Hama to join huge demonstrations in the summer, they were saluted by Sunni Muslims with songs and poetry.

But while the promise of the Arab revolts is a new order, shorn of repression and inequality, worries linger that Islamists, the single most organized force in the region, will gain greater influence and that societies will become more conservative and perhaps intolerant.

"Fear is spreading among us and anyone who is different," said Abu Elias, as he greeted worshipers. "Today, we are here. Tomorrow, who knows where we will be?"

StarTribune

28 September 2011

Kurdish lawmakers announce end to boycott of Turkey's parliament

by SELCAN HACA OGLU (AP)

ANKARA, Turkey - A pro-Kurdish party on Wednesday said it is ending its four-month-old boycott of Turkey's parliament, even as tensions grow over a surge in attacks by Kurdish separatist rebels.

The lawmakers of the Peace and Democracy Party have been refusing to take an oath of office following their election in June as they pressed for the release of five pro-Kurdish legislators held on charges of rebel ties. They also wanted another Kurdish politician, Hatip Dicle, whose election was canceled due to a conviction for rebel links, to be allowed to take office.

Selahattin Demirtas, chairman of the party, however, said Wednesday that it decided to end the boycott to be able to work for peace more effectively. The party has 29 lawmakers, and those who remain free will take their oath when the 550-seat parliamentary session opens Saturday, he said.

"We hope to pave the way for democratic politics and start negotiations with all related bodies in a healthier environment to resurrect an opportunity for peace," Demirtas read from a statement in Diyarbakir, the largest city in the country's Kurdish-dominated southeast.

Kurdish rebels have been fighting for autonomy in the southeast since 1984 and keep bases in northern Iraq.

Lawmakers are to vote to extend a mandate authorizing the military to launch cross-border operations against Kurdish rebel bases in Iraq soon after parliament resumes Saturday following summer recess.

The current mandate expires on Oct. 17. The measure is expected to be swiftly



approved despite strong opposition of the pro-Kurdish party.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has signaled a joint military offensive with Iran against the rebels. A wing of the Kurdish rebel group is also fighting against Tehran.

Turkish warplanes have bombed suspected rebel targets in airstrikes since Aug. 17. Turkey's last major ground offensive against rebel bases was in 2008.

Earlier on Wednesday, Erdogan called on "all political parties to join preparations on the constitution with equal representation." The government has said drafting a new constitution to replace the current one, a legacy of the 1980 military coup, would improve rights and freedoms.

But the pro-Kurdish party insists the right to education in the mother tongue must be recognized as a constitutional right — a demand that the Turkish government fears could deepen the ethnic divide in the country.

Kurds make up some 20 percent of Turkey's 74 million people.

The government has taken steps toward wider Kurdish-language education by allowing Kurdish-language institutes

and private Kurdish courses as well as Kurdish television broadcasts. But it won't permit lower-level education in Kurdish.

The European Union, which Turkey is striving to join, has pushed Erdogan's government to grant more rights to the Kurds. But EU countries also have urged Kurdish lawmakers to distance themselves from the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which is considered a terrorist group by the U.S. and the EU.

Erdogan slammed a spate of Kurdish rebel attacks and kidnappings that have claimed the lives of at least 14 civilians along with dozens of members of the security force since July, saying "murdering innocent people does not serve any cause."

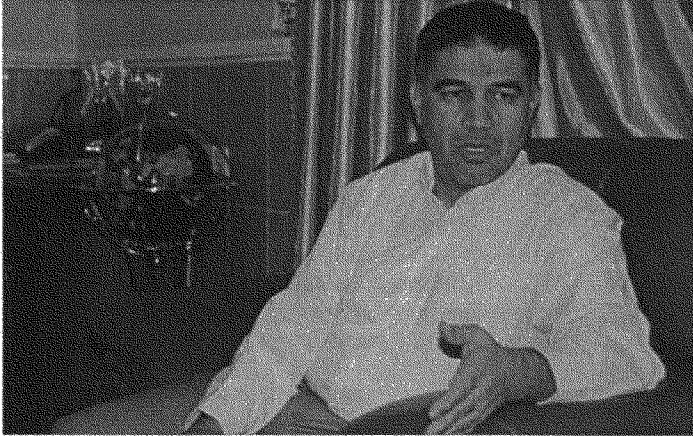
Erdogan has admitted talks with Kurdish rebel representatives and even left the door open for future talks while vowing to crush perpetrators of "terrorist attacks."

The rebels, who are increasingly targeting state employees in their fight for autonomy in the Kurdish-dominated southeast, kidnapped five teachers and one pro-government village guard late Tuesday, authorities said. Four of the teachers were abducted in Elazig province and one in neighboring Diyarbakir province. The village guard was abducted in Tunceli province.

The guerrillas also shot and killed an engineer in Hakkari province, bordering Iraq and Iran, in a separate attack on Tuesday, authorities said.

The attacks follow the killing of a pregnant woman and her 6-year-old child by the rebels during an attack on police in the city of Batman on Monday. The woman's baby, which was delivered after the attack, died Wednesday, authorities said.

Iran And Kurdish Rebels Agree to Ceasefire



Iranian
Consul
General in
Erbil Sayed
Azim
Husseini.
Photo
Rudaw.

RUDAW

ERBIL, Iraqi Kurdistan -- Iran and Kurdish rebels appear to have reached a ceasefire deal brokered by former Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani that stipulates the KRG is responsible for deploying forces to secure the volatile border with Iran if fighting flares again between the two sides, Kurdish and Iranian officials say.

A Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) official who spoke to Rudaw on condition of anonymity said the agreement stipulates that the Kurdish rebel

“If we have not negotiated with them then how could we get assurances from them now?”

group the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK) “will end its attacks on Iran and its fighters will not infiltrate Iran. In return Iran will end its shelling on the borders. So far both sides have committed to the agreement, and no attacks have been carried out by either side for the last 10 days.”

“We declared a ceasefire and hopefully the Iranian government will have a positive response and take steps toward a peaceful solution for the Kurdish issue,” Seid Khan, public relations liaison of PJAK told Rudaw. “That’s in the best interest of both Iranians and the Kurds.”

The agreement comes following months of bloody clashes between Iranian Revolutionary Guards and PJAK, a militia based along the Iraqi-Iranian border that fights Iran for Kurdish rights.

The Jasusan mountain range was the main area of armed clashes between the PJAK fighters and the Iranian artillery. Nazm Dabbagh, KRG’s representative in Tehran, said that the Jasusan Mountain has now come under Iranian control.

“PJAK has withdrawn its forces in Jasusan and handed over the area to PKK,” Dabbagh told Rudaw, “Jasusan is part of Iran and it is under Iran’s control right now. The Iranian side of Jasusan is part of Iran and the KRG side is part of Kurdistan Region.”

The fighting displaced hundreds of villagers, killed at least four civilians in Iraqi Kurdistan and caused a diplomatic crisis for Kurdish officials who enjoy strong relations with Tehran and criticize Kurdish rebels but have refused to fight PJAK and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK).

From the start of the border tensions in July, Iranian authorities urged the KRG to deploy Peshmarga forces near the border to keep PJAK fighters at bay, but Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani rejected the idea, arguing that the deployment of Peshmarga may lead to war between the Kurds.

Under the agreement, however,

Peshmarga or Iraqi forces could be deployed to the border.

The Iranian Consul-General in Erbil, Sayed Azim Husseini, reported that Iran reached a “satisfactory agreement” with both Baghdad and Erbil – both of which, he said, pledged to stop cross-border attacks.

“The KRG must deploy its forces on the borders,” he said. “It’s up to the KRG how it manages this, if they either deploy Peshmarga forces or if they will come to an agreement with Baghdad to deploy Iraqi border guards. That’s their domestic issue.”

The KRG official confirmed that all sides had agreed to allow Peshmarga forces to guard the border.

“According to the agreement, whenever Peshmarga forces have orders to deploy on the border areas they will go,” the KRG official said. “Peshmarga forces have not been dispatched yet to the borders because they didn’t want to deal with a confrontation with PJAK. Now, PJAK won’t oppose Peshmarga forces from being deployed there.”

While he appeared optimistic about the agreement easing border tensions, Husseini denied that the agreement was between PJAK and Iran as well as PJAK’s claims that the rebels negotiated directly with Iranian officials.

“(PJAK’s) agreement was only with the KRG,” he said.

“We don’t have any agreements with the PJAK and PKK,” he said. “If we have not negotiated with them then how could we get assurances from them now?”

However, Husseini said that there is a firm understanding between Iran and both Baghdad and Erbil on the border issue.

“We reached an agreement. The KRG and the central government assured us that they won’t allow anyone to use Iraqi soil to attack Iran. They promised that won’t happen again,” he said.

However, a senior PJAK leader told Rudaw, “In the coming days, we will issue a detailed statement regarding that meeting, and all the efforts that have been made to ease the border tensions. There was a direct negotiation

between Iran and PJAK.”

In August, Nechirvan Barzani, who now serves as deputy head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), visited Iran to discuss the recent clashes and artillery shelling across the border. According to the Iranian consul, Barzani's visit led to the agreement.

“Nechirvan Barzani's visit to Iran had a

huge impact on finding a solution for the border issues,” Hussein said. “The border issue was significant for (Iraqi) President Talabani as well. We all insisted on practical solutions for the issue. We were all tired of the issue being up in the air, and we wanted to reach an agreement.”

Khan, the PJAK spokesman, confirmed that “the agreement is the outcome of

Nechirvan's visit to Iran. We view the KRG and its success as a huge achievement for all Kurds in the other parts of Middle East. Its Parliament is not only representing the Kurds of Iraq, but the Kurds in the other countries as well.”

☆☆☆

KURDISHGLOBE

17 SEPTEMBER 2011

Kurdistan to file lawsuit against Turkey and Iran

Kurdish Globe
Qassim Khidhir

Bombing victims' families plan for justice

Sherwan Hussein Mustafa had seven family members killed, including his mother and father, last month "in a massive raid by Turkish warplanes" against the hideouts of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) guerillas inside Iraqi Kurdistan Region territory. Mustafa told The Kurdish Globe he will do anything, "no matter how many years it takes", to get justice for his family.

Mustafa was living in Britain when he received the news that almost his entire family had been killed by Turkish warplanes. He has since returned to Kurdistan Region, and says his only mission in life is "to bring those who are behind the killing of my family to justice."

Mustafa's family was working on the farm in the mountainous area of Qandil. As they heard Turkish warplanes bombing the Qandil Mountains, the family decided to leave the farm to go to their second house in Ranya city, near the Qandil Mountains. On the way to Ranya in their pickup truck, "Turkish warplanes targeted them and turned their bodies into many small pieces." Their

deaths created a furious anger across the Region and led to tens of demonstrations. A mass funeral was held for the family in Ranya.

A committee of lawyers, members of Parliament and civil society activists has formed to take the Iranian and Turkish violations of the Kurdistan Region to international courts. A well-known Kurdish lawyer and member of the committee, Abdulrahman Zebari, said the committee will investigate the killing of civilians by Iranian and Turkish bombardments and collect as much evidence as possible, with the aim of changing the case from "local crime to international crime".

Zebari has seven years of experience in cases of genocide and crimes against humanity; he defended Kurdish people at the Iraqi Special Tribunal against Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. He said after collecting enough evidence, he will take the case to the United States, because according to the Status of Forces Agreement between Iraq and the U.S., it says there must be judicial cooperation between the two countries.

Zebari criticized the Iraqi government for not respecting its people or defending them. "Unfortunately, the cheapest thing in Iraq is the life of human being. The Iraqi people have lost faith in justice." He added, "Now the biggest problem in



Sherwan Hussein Mustafa and his brother speak about filing lawsuits against Turkey for the death of their entire family in an air strike.

Iraq is not about democracy; there is democracy in Iraq. The biggest problem is justice."

Another lawyer, Fawzia Faqe, blamed the Kurdistan Regional Government for not taking concrete actions or using all cards available against the Turkish and Iranian violations. Shockingly, Turkey has not apologized for killing civilians and also denies it, Faqe noted.

"Look what Turkey has done to Israel after Israel refused to apologize to Turkey for killing eight Turkish citizens [for the May 2010 Mavi Marmara flotilla incident]," she said. Kurdistan has a strong trade card in its hand and it should use it to punish Turkey and Iran, she added.

Immediately, after the killing of the seven civilians, the Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutolu, denied that

the families had been killed by Turkish warplanes. He said "the family was killed by a landmine."

Mustafa was extremely angry and shocked at the Turkish foreign minister's statement. He said the statement made him decide to dedicate his life to getting justice.

In the meantime, Zebari said the committee has a lot of evidence to prove the family was killed by Turkish planes. "We have 10 witnesses who saw when the missile hit the family's vehicle. We have the remains of the missile that hit the vehicle and the way the vehicle was hit it also explains that it was hit by a missile, not a landmine."

The committee believes in patience, even if it takes five to 10 years to get justice for the family.

Neo-Ottoman Erdogan and the plight of the Kurds

Andrew Penny

Should the Palestinians gain statehood recognition at the UN in the coming weeks, Mahmoud Abbas will not be the only Middle Eastern leader smiling about it.

The event will also mark a triumph for Turkish PM Recep Erdogan in consolidating his regional influence. Not since Suleyman the Magnificent has a Turkish leader been so willing to project power abroad.

Having timed the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador and his visit to Egypt, Tunisia and Libya to coincide with the Palestinians push for recognition, Erdogan is having great success furthering his ambition to see Turkey once again, as in Ottoman times, the most powerful state in the region. On September 13, the Turkish PM addressed the Arab League in Cairo, saying: "It's time to raise the Palestinian flag at the UN." While warmly received by the Egyptian people, in particular the Muslim Brotherhood which sees Mr Erdogan's moderate Islamist AKP (Justice and Development Party) as a model, the Egyptian generals appeared to be uncomfortable at this reminder of the power of the Ottoman empire, an empire that only collapsed after WW1.

Yet as Mr Erdogan urged support for the just struggle of the Palestinians for statehood, no-one seemed to notice the Turkish PM's blatant hypocrisy in continuing the Turkish tradition of denying the existence of the Kurdish people and their rights, or of the ongoing conflict in the Turkish and Iranian parts of Kurdistan. Erdogan and the ruling AKP party are playing a complex game in the region – reaching out to the Arabs but at the same time



Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan. (Reuters: Murad Sezer)

using such a world role as a smokescreen to launch fresh offensives against the Kurds. As the 'Arab Spring' receives wide coverage in the world media there is little mention of this dirty war, where the Iranian and Turkish armies have been pounding Kurdish guerrilla bases in northern Iraq in recent months, killing dozens of Kurdish civilians in the process. Is Erdogan using his leading role in the Arab Spring as a smokescreen to push the cause of Kurdish autonomy back decades?

Ostensibly Erdogan talks peace. Two years ago PM Erdogan launched a "Kurdish initiative" with great fanfare, with the stated objective of resolving the Kurdish question. The initiative included removing restrictions on the use of Kurdish in private schools, the ending of the ban on the use of Kurdish in political campaigning and reform of the constitution, which does not recognise the existence of Muslim minorities. However, the initiative has utterly failed to gain the support of Kurds in Turkey, the introduction of a Kurdish language TV channel by the state-run TRT being seen as mere window-dressing.

Furthermore, the AKP still sees the mainstream Kurdish movement as a threat. The pro-Kurdish BDP (Party for Peace and Democracy) which stands

for Kurdish autonomy within Turkey, won an unprecedented 35 seats at the Turkish general elections in June this year, demonstrating the continuing support amongst Kurds for national rights. But Mr Erdogan's government has done its utmost to ostracise the BDP, threatening that they will suffer if they fail to condemn guerrilla attacks by the PKK, the guerrilla army based in northern Iraq, engaged in armed struggle.

Bizarrely, while attacking non-violent Kurdish parties, there is little secret that the Turkish government has engaged in talks with the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party). Details of contacts between representatives of the PKK and the Turkish intelligence service, MIT, have recently emerged in the Turkish press. A tape has been leaked of talks between a PKK representative and high-ranking Turkish intelligence officials. In the tape mention was made of proposals discussed at the meeting being taken to the imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. This has confirmed the widely held supposition that efforts have been made by the Turkish government to come to an agreement with the PKK (despite it being continually condemned as a 'terrorist organisation'), which has been waging an armed struggle against the Turkish army since 1984. This struggle

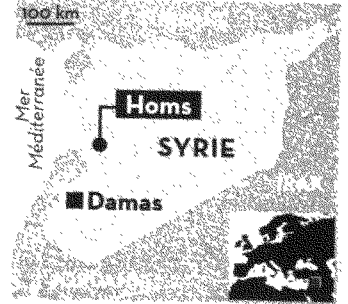
had been in abeyance following the capture of Abdullah Ocalan in 1999, with a long period of ceasefire being declared by the organisation. However, since the breakdown of talks guerrilla attacks have increased and military operations intensified.

The next few months may prove to be a crisis point. The Turkish government is now demanding permission from the Iraqi government for a cross-border operation in pursuit of the PKK. The Hurriyet Daily News of September 15 reported that the foreign ministry undersecretary had met Iraqi officials in Baghdad, including president Jalal Talabani, to discuss the situation. The Turkish government has a mandate to carry out cross-border incursions until October 17, which is expected to be renewed. Kurdish-Turkish tensions are also rising in Turkey itself. During the holy month of Ramadan there was serious disorder in the Istanbul neighbourhood of Zeytinburnu, with clashes between Turks and Kurdish supporters of the BDP. Kurdish workers in the eastern city of Erzurum were attacked and forced to return to Diyarbakir. Will Mr Erdogan be able to continue gaining the admiration of Arab leaders and the Arab street by declaring support for the 'Arab Spring' and Palestinian rights while using repression and military power to defeat Kurdish aspirations in his own backyard? Will Erdogan the Magnificent find that building an empire is a way of crushing a nation?

Andrew Penny is a London-based activist and translator, who has been involved with the Kurdish human rights movement for many years.



Des chabbiha à Lattakya, fin mars 2011. Ils sont payés environ 2 000 livres syriennes (30 euros) par jour, dans un pays où le salaire mensuel moyen est de 150 euros. PHOTO S.L.N. CHAM NEWS NETWORK



2700

C'est le nombre de morts provoqués par la répression sanglante du régime de Bachar al-Assad depuis mars, selon le haut-commissaire aux droits de l'homme à l'ONU. Par ailleurs l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme estime à 70 000 le nombre de personnes en prison.

Syrie: les chabbiha, ces hors-la-loi qui font la loi

Des mercenaires se substituent à l'armée semant la terreur dans le pays.

Par HALA KODMANI
Correspondante à Damas (Syrie)

Leurs visages tuméfiés sous leurs cheveux blancs ont fait la une des médias arabes et des sites de contestation syriens la semaine dernière. Soulevant bien plus d'émotion que les chiffres des morts et des blessés quotidiens de la répression. Mamoun al-Jandali et sa femme, Lina, 77 et 64 ans, ont été tabassés chez eux, à Homs, par trois hommes de main du régime. «Voici les photos de mes chers parents, sauvagement agressés par les chabbiha pour se venger de ma participation à une marche de la liberté à Washington, en soutien au courageux peuple syrien», a écrit

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en légende Malek al-Jandali, un célèbre musicien syrien, résidant aux Etats-Unis. «Vous n'avez pas su bien élever votre fils!» disaient les miliciens en frappant le vieux couple, cassant le mobilier et pillant leur appartement, avant de les laisser enfermés dans leur salle de bain.

POINTE. Les chabbiha sont au cœur de tous les récits et de toutes les formes de répression en Syrie. Ces brutes qui sèment la terreur parmi la population gagnent en nombre et en importance à mesure que la situation économique se dégrade et que les forces de sécurité régulières se fatiguent. Force d'appoint au début de la révolution, chargée de surveiller les habitants dans les villes et surtout de disperser tout attroupement, ces redoutables miliciens qui circulent en 4x4 blindés

noirs, sont de plus en plus à la pointe de la lutte contre les mouvements de protestation. Vendredi, après la défection de dizaines de soldats de l'armée qui refusaient de mater les manifestations dans plusieurs localités, 300 miliciens ont été appelés d'urgence à Hama pour remplacer les troupes régulières, considérées de moins en moins fiables par le régime. «Ils sont désormais les premiers à attaquer, raconte un jeune manifestant d'une banlieue de Damas.

Chômeurs, étudiants, repris de justice, malades mentaux de toutes confessions, y compris des fonctionnaires du parti Baas qui se font un extra le vendredi, deviennent des chabbiha.

Puis ils ouvrent la voie aux forces des différents services de sécurité, et enfin à l'armée qu'ils tiennent à l'œil pendant la confrontation.»

Payés en moyenne 2 000 livres syriennes (30 euros) par jour, dans un pays où le salaire mensuel moyen tourne autour de 150 euros, ces mercenaires sont recrutés largement au-delà des seuls miliciens alaouites loyaux à la famille Assad.

Chômeurs, étudiants, repris de justice, malades mentaux, de toutes confessions, y compris des fonctionnaires du parti Baas qui se font un extra le vendredi, deviennent des chabbiha sous les ordres de chefs originaires des villages alaouites de la côte. L'histoire de ces derniers remonte aux années 80, quand l'un des neveux de Hafez al-Assad et cousin de Bachar a constitué des grou-

pes de gardes du corps armés pour protéger les membres de la famille, et surtout les trafics de drogue ou d'armes organisés avec le Liban où la guerre civile faisait rage. Ces gangsters avaient pratiquement disparu au milieu des années 90 quand le régime a cherché à préparer la succession d'Assad père en assurant la stabilité politique et la confiance économique dans le pays. Réapparus avec le début du mouvement des «crâneurs» ou des «fantômes», selon les traductions possibles de la racine du mot en arabe dialectal, les chabbiha symbolisent aujourd'hui un modèle, un comportement et une culture, estime la romancière opposante Samar Yazbek, réfugiée depuis quelques semaines en France pour échapper à «ces monstres» qu'elle a vu à l'œuvre dans les rues et les goëles de Damas.

«LOYAUTÉ.» Les tâches de ces partisans zélés du régime se sont diversifiées. Ils ont pris l'initiative de tabasser les intellectuels et artistes qui s'expriment contre le régime, comme le caricaturiste Ali Ferzat dont ils ont brisé les mains. Les Syriens parlent de «chabbiha électroniques» pour désigner ceux qui pourchassent les opposants sur la Toile afin de les faire arrêter quand ils sont dans le pays ou menacer leurs familles s'ils sont à l'étranger. «Mais leur loyauté première va à l'argent», précise Samar Yazbek. Quand le régime ou les hommes d'affaires qui lui sont proches n'auront plus les moyens de financer leurs services, ils redeviendront de purs gangsters. Le monstre échappera alors à ses créateurs. ◆

LE FIGARO jeudi 29 septembre 2011

Moins nombreux, les rebelles syriens se radicalisent

Face à la cruauté de la répression, les plus déterminés sont tentés par le recours aux armes contre Assad.

GEORGES MALBRUNOT

MOYEN-ORIENT Même les responsables de l'opposition en conviennent : les manifestations appelant à la chute du président Bachar el-Assad attirent moins de monde qu'avant le ramadan. « Ces derniers vendredis, ils étaient 10 % seulement par rapport aux chiffres de la fin juillet, soit environ 30 000 personnes à travers la Syrie », affirme Haitham al-Manah, un opposant en exil à Paris, proche du soulèvement.

Le quadrillage des villes rebelles par l'armée, ajouté aux arrestations des cadres du mouvement, ont conduit à son essoufflement. « Les services de renseignements ont réussi à noyauter les comités de coordination », assure un homme d'affaires en contact avec un responsable de la police secrète du régime.

Cette décrue ne signifie pas, pour autant, la fin de la contestation, qui a coûté la vie à 2 700 personnes. « Au contraire, avertit al-Manah, ceux qui descendent dans la rue sont de véritables kamikazes. Ils sont prêts à tout ». Près de sept mois après son lancement, la révolte est en train de changer de nature. Une guerre d'usure s'est enclenchée entre un pouvoir qui ne tombera pas demain et un courant radical, partisan de renoncer au caractère pacifique des manifestations. Les ultras de la rue composent un mélange de sympathisants pro-américains qui attendent une intervention extérieure sur le modèle libyen, d'autres qui refusent toute négociation avec un pouvoir qui leur a trop menti, et d'autres encore soutenus par des déserteurs de l'armée, qui espèrent tenir des quartiers ou des bourgades face à l'appareil sécuritaire loyal au clan Assad.

Des islamistes venus du Liban

Encore minoritaires, des appels aux armes ont été lancés dans la presse et les réseaux sociaux, à Homs notamment, où la répression est la plus cruelle, trois personnalités ayant trouvé mystérieusement la mort ces derniers jours. « À Homs, certaines protestations sont armées, et c'est très dangereux », déplore un autre oppo-



2700
morts
Le nombre
des victimes
de la répression

Manifestation d'opposants au régime dans les rues de Homs, mardi dernier. REUTERS

sant en exil. Car « les gens ont peur de sortir manifester, craignant d'être tués par l'un des deux camps », poursuit cet activiste. Ces derniers mois, des combattants armés sont arrivés à Homs en provenance de Tripoli au Liban, infiltrés par le Hezb al-Tahrir, un groupuscule islamiste qui organise des manifestations hostiles au clan Assad dans la grande ville du Liban-Nord. « Ces gens-là nous embarrassent, regrette l'activiste. Lorsque le pouvoir trouve leurs papiers quand ils sont tués, ils appellent les dignitaires de Homs pour leur dire : mais regardez qui sont ces individus. Le régime en profite. » Deux mille islamistes seraient cachés à Homs, selon Khaled al-Ahmad, un consultant proche du régime, cité par l'AFP.

Sûr de sa stratégie répressive, le pouvoir pense être sur le point d'écraser la fronde, quitte à ce qu'elle bascule dans une guerre civile entre communautés.

Conscients du piège qui leur serait alors tendu, des cadres de l'Intifada s'activent pour éviter cette militarisation. « À Telkalah, au nord-ouest, la situation est difficilement contrôlable, concède un responsable du soulèvement, joint par téléphone. J'ai fait verser 90 dollars par famille pour qu'elles ne touchent pas aux armes, mais avec les trafiquants en provenance du Liban, l'attrait est grand. À Idlib, nous avons aussi du mal à nous faire entendre. En revanche, dans les régions frontalières avec la Turquie et l'Irak, les tribus avec lesquelles nous discutons ont promis qu'elles n'utiliseraient pas leurs armes dans les manifestations. » « La révolte est clairement menacée, constate Haitham al-Manah. Mais si on arrive à maintenir nos trois principes - pas d'armes, pas de guerre confessionnelle et pas d'intervention extérieure - on parviendra, jure-t-il, à sortir de cette mauvaise passe. » ■