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TURKEY: ANTI-KURDISH RACIST ATTACKS INCREASE AS A RESULT OF GOVERNMENT HATE SPEECH

In Turkey, support for Erdoğan follows the Turkish lira: it is plummeting. According to a June poll by the *Türkiye Raporu* Institute, support for the AKP, the presidential party, has fallen to 26%, but more importantly, nearly 60% of respondents say they want snap elections. Long credited with the good performance of the Turkish economy, the Turkish president is now a victim of its constant deteriora-

tion. Since he virtually gathered all the powers in his hands in 2018, the dollar has risen by 86% against the Turkish lira, producer prices have jumped by 90% and consumer prices by 53%: he therefore appears to be the main culprit in the situation. He is betting on a recovery, but this is unlikely: fuelled by the fall in the currency, inflation, which seems to be out of control, reached 42.9% in June for production costs. For consumer prices, it is

still (officially) only 5%, but given the differential with production costs, it can only jump too. *Al-Monitor* predicted on 8 July that it would be 19% by the end of the month, mainly due to increases in energy prices, gas and oil, a consequence of rising global demand. Anywhere else, the Central Bank would have reacted by raising interest rates, but the Islamist Erdoğan will not hear about it. As a result, faced with a power vacuum, foreign

investors, vital to the Turkish economy, are pulling out. And the aggressive rhetoric of the president, who for months has blamed the crisis on an “anti-Turkish plot from abroad”, is not doing anything to keep them in...

It is for these economic reasons that Mr Erdoğan has temporarily stopped his insults and provocations and returned to a more... diplomatic language. Last month, anticipating the NATO meeting on the 14th, he had pleaded for a rapprochement with Europe and the new Biden administration. This month, playing the balancing act between Russia and the West, he resumed talks with Moscow...

Inside the country however, public opinion is increasingly hostile and critical of his pharaonic projects, such as *Kanal Istanbul*, officially launched on 26 June as if nothing had happened. Even in the province of Rize, his Black Sea stronghold, inhabitants started questioning the new port under construction, as they can see no positive impact on their living conditions. *Turkiye Raporu* director Can Selcuki explains: “It is difficult for the government to justify the cost of mega-projects to the public when household finances are suffering and people are worried about their livelihoods and food expenses” (*Financial Times*).

According to the World Bank, in 2020, 10 million Turks were below the poverty line. The opposition speaks of 30 million... Moreover, the revelations of exiled gangster Sedat Peker on the corruption and sumptuous spending of AKP politicians make their speeches inciting austerity inaudible. When First Lady Emine Erdoğan, known for her taste for luxury (her \$50,000 *Hermès* bags), suggested to Turks during a campaign against food

waste to write a list before going shopping to eliminate unnecessary purchases or... to make smaller portions, the enraged citizens responded by posting on social media pictures of her husband’s huge presidential palace (*Al-Monitor*).

In this context, Erdoğan’s visit to Diyarbakir on July 9 – the first in more than two years – appears to be primarily electoral in nature. The AKP fell in the province from 35% of the vote to less than 30% last December, according to a poll by the *Rawest* company, itself based in Diyarbakir. After the loss of Ankara and Istanbul in the 2019 municipal elections, the AKP has understood the importance of the Kurdish vote. Recalling his 2005 statements in the same city, when he proclaimed “The Kurdish problem is my problem”, before launching the peace process, Erdogan claimed that he stood by those words. The failure of the process in 2015, he was careful to blame on the other side, stigmatising the HDP and “those who claim to be politicians [and who] have never distanced themselves from violence and terrorism”, [...] “their ill will, malicious intentions and secret agendas” (*Al-Monitor*). But the exclusively repressive policy of the AKP for the past five years and the very manner of the Turkish president’s visit totally contradict the will of openness he tries to represent: escorted by thousands of police officers in charge of stifling any expression of dissent, he then locked himself up with the local members of the AKP to defend his policy of repression against Kurdish politicians and to accuse, among others, the HDP of links with Israel. For the record, Turkey is the first Muslim country to have recognised the Jewish state with which, despite the recurrent diatribes of its president, it maintains flourishing trade relations.

Meeting in Diyarbakir two days later, the “pro-Kurdish” party responded through the voice of its deputy chairman Tayip Temel by rejecting any negotiation with the autocrat: “Whatever the AKP leaders and representatives say, [the Kurdish people] have nothing to do with a mentality that has left their will, conscience, justice and the democratic solution of the Kurdish question hostage to the mercy of the MHP”.

Indeed, the Turkish president appears to be increasingly prisoner of his alliance with the Turkish far right. On 1st July, after a violent repression of the Istanbul Pride March the previous weekend, Turkey formally withdrew from the Istanbul Convention on Violence against Women. Thousands of people braved police tear gas to protest, particularly in Istanbul and Ankara. The HDP denounced the decision and drew the conclusions by leaving the parliamentary commission in charge of investigating violence against women, together with the CHP and the *IYI Partisi* (“Good Party”, a split from the MHP that refused the AKP alliance).

Moreover, after the Constitutional Court agreed at the end of June to the opening of a trial against the HDP on charges of “terrorism”, the HDP is more than ever threatened with a ban. The indictment presented by the prosecutor accuses the “pro-Kurdish” party of being nothing more than a political showcase for the PKK “terrorists” – simply repeating the accusation repeated over and over again for years by Mr Erdoğan. In an interview with the *Washington Kurdish Institute* (WKI), Armenian-born HDP MP Garo Paylan, recalling that the HDP is the only Turkish party to defend minorities, to have unreservedly supported the peace

process with the PKK, and to have recognised the Armenian genocide, said: “This case was opened under the leadership of Erdoğan and his nationalist partner. It is not a judicial case. It is a political case: they did not succeed in beating us in the political field, so they are trying to close our party at the judicial level”. Accusing the government of criminalising the HDP, Paylan added: “Erdoğan wants to centralise power. We are asking for decentralisation, [which] they call terrorist activism”. Calling for international solidarity, he stressed: “This is not a struggle between Turks and Kurds. It is a struggle between an autocrat and those who fight for democracy. [...] The world needs a democratic Turkey” (WKI). Although the European Parliament condemned the opening of the trial against the HDP on 7 July by 603 votes to 2 and 67 abstentions, the EU will have to go beyond verbal condemnations if it hopes to change Ankara’s policy in any way...

In Washington, an HDP delegation that arrived on 28 June was informed by the State Department that it had been preceded from the 19th to the 26th by a Turkish parliamentary delegation which, to the surprise of the Americans, did not include any HDP member. The “pro-Kurdish” party, which participates in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Turkish Parliament, had not been informed of this visit! The HDP asked the committee for clarification.

Meanwhile, the two former co-mayors of Diyarbakir, Gülten Kışanak and Fırat Anlı, dismissed in 2019 and already imprisoned, were charged with “creating a co-chairing system in the provincial council”, a means adopted by the HDP to allow for the equal participation of women: so this would be illegal?

In Mardin, Filiz Işık, the former HDP provincial co-chair, arrested in September 2020, was sentenced to six years and ten months in prison for “belonging to a terrorist organisation”. In Istanbul, police attacked a rally commemorating the Suruç attack, attributed to ISIS, which in July 2015 had caused the death of around 30 young Kurds, and arrested 13 people, mostly relatives of the victims. Finally, Turkish authorities arrested 30 HDP members in Iğdır and two HDP officials in Şanlıurfa and Hakkari. On the 14th, the HDP office in Muğla was attacked. The assailant, who had already carried out a similar attack against the HDP in 2018, was arrested. There have been countless such attacks on HDP offices, including the one on 17 June in Izmir, where young activist Deniz Poyraz was shot and killed.

The government bears the responsibility for these aggressions. By setting up the Kurds as an “internal enemy” through his incessant hate speeches in order to preserve at all costs a power that he feels is wavering, Erdoğan, even beyond the incessant arrests of HDP members and the political trial mounted against this party, is nourishing a real systemic anti-Kurdish racism in the whole country. Indeed, on the 12th, according to the news site *Artıgerçek*, the Diyarbakır prosecutor’s office found no grounds to prosecute police officers who had beaten and injured a Kurdish woman during an anti-drug operation on 18 May: Kevser Demir, who had tried to prevent the police officers who were arresting her son from beating him, had herself several teeth and her arm broken; her daughter was also injured. The Diyarbakır Bar Association, which had afterwards filed a complaint, has indicated its intention to appeal.

More generally, a report published in January by CHP MP Sezgin Tanrıkulu states that 27,493 people were victims of torture and ill-treatment between 2002, when the AKP came to power, and 2020. Another 86 died from such ill-treatment, and the number of reported cases of torture or ill-treatment in 2002, 988, jumped to 3,534 in 2020 (SCF). The 2020 report of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV), published at almost the same time, shows that the increase in torture cases is particularly noticeable in the Kurdish regions. Despite the sanitary confinement, the rate of applications received by the TIHV for torture or ill-treatment increased by 61% compared to the previous year: 572 persons, of which 507 were detained for political, identity and/or opinion reasons. The report clearly shows the correlation between human rights violations and the Kurdish issue: although hosting only 24.6% of the total Turkish population, the Kurdish provinces of the country account for 62.6% of those subjected to torture... The report is particularly damning regarding children: 20 children aged between 3 and 10 were tortured, and all those tortured for ethnic or political reasons had Kurdish as their mother tongue. Moreover, most of the reports concerning children refer to police interventions at night, which indicates illegal procedures aimed at intimidating citizens in their homes. Finally, the applicants report numerous violations of their legal guarantees during the judicial examination, and particularly that the forensic doctors who “examine” them do not take their complaints into account in their examination, thus reinforcing the impunity of the police.

In addition, racist attacks on Kurds are increasing. On the 19th in Afyon, Kurdish agricultural

workers were violently attacked by fascists and called “terrorists” simply for speaking Kurdish. Seven Kurds, including two women, were injured. According to a witness, the attack took place after a hairdresser left two young Kurds waiting at the door of his salon for two hours, putting everyone else ahead of them... On the 20th in Ankara, another attack hit a family sacrificing an animal for the Muslim festival commemorating the sacrifice of Abraham. At least 150 people took part in the attack, which left four people with gunshot wounds, two of whom had to be hospitalised in a serious condition. The family of the injured, who were waiting outside the hospital, were ordered to disperse and then attacked with tear gas and batons, this time by the police. But it was in Konya, on the same day, that the most frightening attack took place. A crowd of 60 people shot at a car carrying a Kurdish family originally from Diyarbakir, but settled in the Meram district of Konya for twenty years. Hakim Dal, 43, was killed. His brother Hamdi told the *Mezopotamya* agency: “They did not want us because we are Kurds. They told us: “You will sell this place and leave” (*Rûdaw*). On the 23rd, the HDP listed in a statement the recent attacks and called on the government to react: “If the government does not put an end to its criminalising smear campaigns and incessant hate speech against the HDP and the Kurds in general, and if it does not succeed in effectively prosecuting the perpetrators of these acts, many more bloody attacks are likely to occur”.

But the authorities continue to

discriminate. In Bağlum (Keçiören, Ankara), Kurds whose houses and farms had been destroyed because they did not take the necessary steps with the land registry, reported that only property belonging to Kurds had been demolished... 150 families, some of whom have been settled for more than 20 years, are thus threatened. One of the victims of the destruction testified that during a visit by the First Lady to the Keçiören animal shelter on 28 July, several Kurdish women asked her to intervene. Emine Erdoğan reportedly replied: “Go to the mountains”, which in Turkey is synonymous with: “Join the PKK”...

Unfortunately, as the HDP had feared, the worst happened on the evening of the 30th in Meram (Konya). A group of armed individuals attacked a Kurdish family from Kars, who had been living in the Bahçeşehir district for 24 years. Each member of the family was shot in the head; seven people were killed, including three women, and then the house was set on fire. Last May, the Dedeoğlu family had already been attacked by a mob armed with knives, stones and sticks, shouting “We don’t want Kurds living here”. Some members of the family were seriously injured, but the assailants, after being arrested, were later released. The victims’ lawyer, Abdurrahman Karabulut, said that the release of the perpetrators of this first attack had given them a sense of impunity. Commenting on the killings, he said on *Arti-TV*: “This is an entirely racist attack. [...] The justice system and the authorities have their share of responsibility for what happened”. But Interior

Minister Süleyman Soylu blamed years of hostility between two families: “This attack has no connection with the Turkish-Kurdish issue”, he said, adding that denouncing the killings as a racist crime was a “provocation” against the country’s unity...

In such a bloody context, one hardly dares to recall two events of the month that give hope that resistance can still carry weight. On 1st July, the Turkish Constitutional Court ruled in favour of imprisoned HDP MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, finding in a ruling that his right to carry out political activities and his personal freedoms had been “violated”. The annulment of his conviction forced the Kocaeli court to release him on the 6th, and allowed him to regain his status as a member of parliament on the 16th, after the official reading of the decision in parliament (*AFP*). Was this a decision teleguided by the government to counter the EU accusations? On the other hand, on the 15th, it seems that the Turkish President had to back down: he dismissed the rector of the Bosphorus (*Bogazici*) University in Istanbul, Melih Bulu, he had himself appointed by decree six months earlier. The latter had become increasingly authoritarian: he had banned protesting students from the campus with the help of facial recognition cameras and had withdrawn about a hundred scholarships. In vain: the CHP mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İmamoğlu, substituted municipal scholarships (*Le Monde*). As the case turned to the advantage of the opposition, the Turkish president probably chose to get rid of a character who had become an embarrassment...

ROJAVA: THE SECURITY COUNCIL ENDORSES THE LOCKING UP OF THE AUTONOMOUS ADMINISTRATION (AANES), WEDGED BETWEEN DAMASCUS AND ANKARA

The region controlled by the Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria (AANES), with a Kurdish majority, is condemned to remain in isolation. It is true that on 9 July the UN Security Council unanimously extended the opening of the Bab Al-Hawa crossing point on the Turkish border for six months. This will allow humanitarian aid to be delivered to Idlib province and northwestern Syria, where four million civilians live, and everyone welcomed a “victory” that had made it possible to “avoid a humanitarian catastrophe”. But in 2019, there were five cross-border crossing points, and NGOs find Bab Al-Hawa largely insufficient. The French ambassador to the UN, Nicolas de Rivièrè, one of the only members of the Council to speak clearly about it, was clear: “The mechanism we have just renewed is and will be insufficient to meet humanitarian needs. We regret that the Bab Al-Salamah and Al-Yaroubiya crossings [abolished in 2020 under pressure from Moscow] will not be reopened, while, since last year, humanitarian needs have increased by more than 20% in the north-west and 38% in the north-east” (*Le Monde*). The Autonomous Administration has obviously denounced in a statement this decision which isolates Rojava: “We are not opposed to the delivery of aid to the Syrian people [...] but we are opposed to [this policy of] double standards. [...] This decision accentuates the humanitarian tragedy by prolonging the siege that we are suffering on all sides”.

While *Amnesty International* also

condemned this “compromise” vote (*AFP*), the regime obviously adopted the opposite position, welcoming this decision as a reaffirmation of Syria’s unity: controlling all humanitarian aid arriving in the country provides Damascus with a means of putting pressure on the territories that escape its control. Earlier this month, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov again accused the United States of encouraging the Kurds to “separatism”, a position taken up at the end of the month by his Syrian counterpart, who accused the AANES of “separatist projects” aimed at “weakening Syria”. In the same statement, Lavrov said he was ready to mediate between AANES and Damascus, a proposal that the Kurds had implicitly accepted, speaking of a “positive step towards a solution”. However, the talks with Damascus, which started in January, have been fruitless so far due to the intransigence of the regime. In June, tensions increased again between the pro-regime militias and the *Asayish* (Kurdish security), leading to cross-arrests, especially in Qamishli, followed by a relative easing of tension with the release of detainees by both parties. At the beginning of July, the soldiers of the regime’s crossing points, which control the “Security Circle” in the city (the area around the barracks and the bazaar), started to block the passage of civilians. And on the 3rd, Syrian soldiers literally stormed the homes of several AANES employees living in Zanoud, a Damascus-controlled village near Qamishli, threatening them with arrest if they did not abandon their work...

On the 20th, it was learned that a 35-year-old Kurd from Afrin, Azad Ebdulqadir Soran, kidnapped two months earlier in Aleppo at a regime checkpoint between the Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyeh districts, had been tortured to death in prison. Those responsible for his abduction are said to belong to the “Baqir Group”, supported by Tehran... (*Kurdistan-24*) Finally, according to the SOHR (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights), we learned on the 31st of the death of a man and four children from Afrin due to lack of medical care: the “Fourth Division” of the Syrian army refused to allow their ambulances passage to Aleppo hospitals for care. Following these deaths, hundreds of Afrin residents held a vigil in front of the Russian post in the village of al-Wahsheyah to demand that the military obtain from their Syrian counterparts free passage for patients to the city and, in the other direction, for humanitarian aid to the villages...

By mentioning a siege from “all sides”, the AANES was also referring to the continuing intense Turkish military harassment. The Tall Tamr region was targeted throughout the month, as well as Manbij, with about 15 rockets fired from the Turkish base of Tukhar on villages west of the town on 1st July, accompanied by clashes using small arms between pro-Turkish mercenaries and fighters from the town’s military council. In response, the latter carried out an infiltration operation on the 3rd which left one mercenary dead and five injured. Two women seriously injured by rockets had to be hos-

pitalised (SOHR). More Turkish fire killed a woman and a child in Tall Rifaat on the 4th, where a Turkish drone struck a position of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) the next day. Manbij was targeted again on the 9th, without casualties, as well as several villages in Aleppo province (WKI). On the 11th, another Turkish drone hit a house near Tall Rifaat. On the 13th, a SDF infiltration operation against pro-Turkish mercenaries near Raqqa left one dead and four injured among them (SOHR).

On the 17th, SOHR spoke of an “alarming military escalation” in Manbij, with casualties on both sides since the beginning of the month: “On many occasions, the escalation is triggered by the Turks and [mercenary] factions firing numerous artillery shells and rockets, in addition to daily clashes between the two sides with light, medium and heavy weapons”. At the same time, Turkish attacks also targeted the Tall Rifaat area, resulting in five civilian casualties, including a child, according to the SDF. In addition, for the past five months, Turkey has been pursuing its tactic of make Rojava thirsty by limiting the flow of the Euphrates, which causes water and electricity shortages and puts agriculture at risk (WKI). On the 20th, the strategic M4 highway was targeted by heavy artillery fire north of Raqqa. On the 27th, a precarious calm prevailed in the Tall Tamr countryside, but bombing resumed until the end of the month, this time prompting a response from the SDF.

On the 25th, the Turkish Ministry of Defence announced without specifying the location that an attack on a military vehicle had left two Turkish soldiers dead and two wounded (*L’Orient-Le jour*). According to media

reports, the attack took place in the region of al-Bab, a Turkish-controlled town 30 kilometres north-east of Aleppo. The very next day, apparently in retaliation, Turkish forces and their mercenaries fired dozens of rockets from their areas of control, with no response from the SDF or regime forces. On the morning of the 30th, Turkish rockets killed two fighters of the SDF-affiliated “al-Bab Military Council”, installed near this town, which it aims to recapture. Another had already been killed on the 23rd. Also on the 27th, Turkish fire resumed in Sharra (Afrin), without causing any casualties, and the SDF retaliated by shelling the village of al-Maqri near al-Bab and the western outskirts of Azaz (SOHR). Finally, on the 30th, a Turkish drone targeted two civilian vehicles south of Kobanê, without causing any casualties.

In the Turkish-occupied countryside of Afrin, infighting between two mercenary factions continued on 2nd July. On 5 July, the *Sultan Sulayman Shah* faction released for a ransom of US\$ 3,000 a 50-year-old man arrested on 27 June for “contacts with AANES”. On 6 June, members of *Liwaa al-Waqqas* set fire to orchards and olive trees near Jendires to cut down and sell the wood (SOHR). On the 9th, the *RojInfo* website reported on a damning report by the Afrin Human Rights Organisation showing that women are the first victims of the occupier’s war crimes: according to this NGO, in the last 18 months pro-Turkish mercenaries have murdered at least 83 women and abducted another 200... In an interview with the Kurdish news agency *Hawar News* (ANHA), a member of the organisation, Naile Mehmud, recalls that hundreds of thousands of crimes have been documented since the occupa-

tion of the region by Turkey, and added some recent examples: “We have documented the rape of 70 women [...]. In the last 6 months alone, 25 women have been abducted, including children [...]”. A two-year-old girl was also murdered... Suzan Mistefa, from the Kurdish women’s organisation *Kongra Star*, pointed out that for the past three years the Turkish state has systematically targeted women and children: “Many girls are forced into marriage. Some women are abducted and taken to Turkey. The situation of women in prison is appalling”. The fate of 1,200 women who have disappeared since the occupation of Afrin is still unknown. Mistefa denounced the silence of the international community in the face of these crimes against humanity. Also according to the Afrin Human Rights Organisation, at least 35 Kurds were killed in 2021 in Afrin, where at least 100 settlements have been created for non-Kurds (WKI). Finally, the SDF denounced the abduction of at least 80 of its members, who were taken to Turkey for imprisonment, in violation of international law and the Geneva Convention. Their spokesperson, Kino Gabriel, called on the 18th for the international community and the UN Security Council to react.

Without responding to the accusations of crimes against humanity against it, Turkey sought to counterattack by referring a similar accusation to the People’s Protection Units (YPG), the Kurdish militia of the PYD (People’s Unity Party), the main component of the SDF. On the evening of the 14th, the Turkish Ministry of Defence announced the discovery of a “mass grave” in the Afrin region containing 35 bodies. The next day, the governor of the Turkish province of

Hatay, Rahmi Dogan, spoke of 61 bodies and, without providing evidence, said that they were civilians executed by the YPG a few days before the start of the Turkish offensive in Afrin in 2018. The authorities in Afrin, exiled since the Turkish invasion and occupation, rejected the accusations, telling local journalists, including AFP, that it was not a mass grave but an informal cemetery created by the SDF just before the Turkish invasion. The spokesman for the Afrin Human Rights Organisation, Ibrahim Shaykho, explained that the cemetery contained remains of fighters and civilians killed during the Turkish operation and who could not be transported out of Afrin because of the siege imposed by the attackers (AFP). Following this exchange, the SDF commander Mazloum Abdi reiterated his call to the international community to “investigate the crimes committed by Turkey and the militias in Afrin and to put an end to crimes against humanity” (WKI).

On the 27th, the SOHR again reported abuses committed at the border against Syrians trying to flee the war by Turkish gendarmes (*jandarma*). The latter regularly target them with gunfire or torture them. This time, about 20 Turkish soldiers successively beat up two young Syrians who tried to enter Turkey near Derbassiyah (Hassaké) and stole their money and mobile phone before sending them back to Syria. Earlier this month, in the same place, these *jandarma* had already exchanged fire with Kurdish *Asayish*.

Meanwhile, the resurgence of the ISIS jihadist organisation continues. Earlier this month, the SDF announced the capture of an explosives expert in Shaddadi (Hassaké), and the following week, in the same location, that

of three other jihadists. In the middle of the month, the SDF dismantled a cell that was organising the escape of detainees from the Al-Hol camp to Turkey. At the end of the month, the SDF announced the death of two jihadists in a US-supported raid in Hassaké and the arrest of more ISIS members on the outskirts of that city. However, in Al-Basire, jihadists killed two women and wounded a man and two children in an attack on their home (WKI). Despite several SDF successes against ISIS, the organisation remains a real threat, particularly in Deir Ezzor province, partly due to the inability of the regime and its Russian allies to contain it in the desert south of Badiya, where dozens of soldiers and militiamen have been killed in the past three months (WKI). Notably, on the 28th, the SOHR reported a major jihadist attack in the Damascus-held part of this province, which provoked violent clashes with heavy weapons and forced the Russian air force to intervene to repel the attackers. The fighting left seven people dead on the regime side and at least five from ISIS.

Moreover, the situation remains difficult in the camps where former jihadist fighters and their relatives are held. The camp of Al-Hol, in particular, with 62,000 residents, 93% of whom are women and children, remains, despite several security operations, what the SOHR describes as a “mini-Islamic state”, as ISIS killers are still very active there. On the 6th, the SDF published its monthly report on the situation. It states: “ISIS terrorist cells continue to operate in Al-Hol camp with new killings against residents who deviate from the organisation’s extremist ideas”. The camp has seen dozens of killings, escapes and attacks on guards and aid workers in recent months, and in June alone,

“Eight people of Syrian and Iraqi nationality were shot in the head”. Despite repeated exhortations from the Kurds, most countries – especially European ones – refuse to repatriate their citizens. Some, including France, have only done so for a limited number of minors, including orphans (AFP).

The AANES authorities are trying to decrease the pressure in the camps in several ways. On the 2nd, they transferred about 30 teenagers from Al-Hol to a rehabilitation centre for children of jihadists. Abdelkarim Omar, head of foreign affairs at AANES, who deplores the fact that the international community is not taking its responsibilities, insisted on the importance of creating such centres: “The place of children is neither in prison nor in camps”, he told AFP. A first centre, set up a few years ago and currently accommodating about 120 children, is giving good results, and others are being prepared, he said, asking for international help to set up about 15 of them: “At least help us get these children out of this radical environment, because keeping them in this atmosphere will lead to the emergence of a new generation of terrorists”, he warned. Another AANES action is the repatriation of children to their country of origin. On the 3rd, Anna Kuznetsova, head of the Russian Presidential Commission on the Rights of the Child, led a Russian delegation to repatriate 20 children of Russian nationality detained in the Roj camp (AFP). Kurdish officials later announced that they had returned over 250 children to the Russian government. In other cases, AANES has negotiated with tribal leaders to return detainees from their camps to their homes. In mid-July, 82 families were able to leave Al-Hol and return to Raqqa (WKI).

However, the *Asayish* had to launch a new security operation in Al-Hol on the morning of the 30th, during which they arrested 15 civilians accused of having links with ISIS, some of whom even accused of having participated in assassinations. The killings continued in parallel with the *Asayish* operation, as three Iraqi refugees, including a

woman, were shot dead in the last few hours. There have been 22 killings since the end of the first phase of the security campaign (SOHR).

At the same time, it seems that the Iranian-American conflict has spilled over into Rojava from neighbouring Iraq. On the 7th, the SDF announced that it had foiled a drone attack targeting an

anti-ISIS coalition base near the al-Omar oil field, not far from the Iraqi border. According to the SOHR, pro-Iranian militias probably launched the drones from a rural area outside the town of al-Mayadin, southwest of al-Omar. These attacks were concomitant to the one carried out on the American base of Ain al-Assad, in Iraq (AFP).

IRAN:

EBRAHIM RAISI PRESIDENT, MOHSENI EJEI HEAD OF JUDICIARY: NOTORIOUS MURDERERS ARE IN POWER

When the new Iranian president, the ultra-conservative Ebrahim Raisi, was head of the judiciary, he distinguished himself by his ruthless repression of the November 2019 demonstrators and the impunity he granted to the repressive forces guilty of murdering hundreds of protesters. Already in 1988, as a member of Tehran sinister "Death Commission", he had participated in thousands of extrajudicial executions of political prisoners. *Reporters Without Borders (RSF)* also recalls that in 2020 he had a prisoner hanged simply for creating a *Telegram* channel... The prospect of him becoming President was already a message of terror to the whole of Iranian civil society. The Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has now added to the threat by appointing Gholam-Hossein Mohseni Ejei, another cleric also known for his human rights abuses, to succeed Raisi as head of the judiciary. "Ejei's appointment is a clear threat to Iranian civil society, given the considerable role he has played in suppressing popular protests and fabricating cases against human rights defenders and political activists", said Hadi Ghaemi, director of the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI). Mohseni Ejei, a former

deputy chief of the judiciary and former intelligence minister, has a long history of illegal actions and serious human rights violations. He notably organised the obtaining of false televised confessions through torture, and is also behind the "serial murders" of intellectuals in the 1990s, some of whom were found strangled in vacant lots. Since 2010, he has been subject to sanctions by the United States and the European Union.

RSF refers to Iran's ruling "Duo of Death", and indeed, Raisi and Ejei have worked together before. In 2009, after numerous reports of torture and sexual assault of protesters arrested after Ahmadinejad's fraudulent re-election, they co-lead a commission of inquiry. Together, denying the validity of clear evidence, they ensured the impunity of the perpetrators.

This ultra-repressive orientation will further widen the divide between Iranians and the mullahs' regime. Not only did the boycott of the elections lead to an unprecedented level of abstention: 74% in Tehran (51.8% nationally), and four million invalid or blank votes, 13% of the vote, but now, as *Le Monde* points out, the anger of the citizens is such that it is expressed without any apparent fear of the

consequences. One example among hundreds filmed with mobile phones: a woman, face uncovered, taking the audience as witness, yells at a mullah in a Tehran park: "*The children of those who chant 'Death to America' are themselves living in the United States... with the money of the people [...]. Raisi himself was the head of justice. What thieves did he punish, while he is now talking about waging a war against corruption? You are all the same shit!*"

However, the government, now fully controlled by the conservatives, is initiating worrying legal developments. In the last days of Ebrahim Raisi's tenure as head of the judiciary, a new regulation of the legal profession was approved. The licence to practice, which was previously held by the bar association, was transferred to the judiciary. The judiciary can now refuse to allow anyone to practise the profession and can also revoke an existing licence. For CHRI, which is calling for international reactions, "*This new regulation [...] empties the right to due process and a fair trial of its meaning*".

In addition, at the end of the month, the Parliament referred to an internal parliamentary committee a controversial draft law aimed at granting control of the Internet to security agencies in case of seri-

ous events, such as demonstrations. Article 85 of the Constitution allows for the adoption of a text in an internal committee, a way of bypassing the plenary debate... Once approved by the Council of Guardians of the Constitution, the text becomes law for a trial period (CHRI).

This proposal does not come about by chance; it follows the closure of the Internet ordered after protests against water shortages in Khuzestan province began on 15 July. The demonstrations quickly became anti-regime protests and began to spread outside Khuzestan, and they were ruthlessly repressed.

In Khuzestan, it all started with a prolonged drought, partly due to climate change, coupled with years of mismanagement of natural resources and a lack of interest by the state. The many dams diverting water from the province to the centre of the country, where many of the leaders come from, have added to the anger of the people. Even if the demonstrators have been careful to distance themselves from any separatism in order to avoid even harsher repression, this province, which borders Iraq and has an Arabic-speaking majority, is still marked by economic discrimination: while Khuzestan is home to 80% of Iran's oil reserves and 60% of its gas reserves, it has a very high level of poverty and unemployment, up to 50% in some places, compared with 9.6% nationally...

In the words of the Centre for Cooperation of Iranian Kurdistan Parties (CCIKP), which issued a statement in support of the protests, the government is resorting to its "usual policy [...] against the people's protests and legitimate demands", deploying its repressive forces to fire live ammunition. Videos shared on social networks show large crowds shouting

"I am thirsty!". "We kept shouting, "We want water, just water, we have no water" a street vendor said from Ahvaz in a telephone interview with *The New York Times*. "They responded to us with violence and bullets". Several videos show members of the security forces firing at fleeing protesters. But the shooting, which killed at least three young men, far from extinguishing the movement, caused it to spread to other provinces: East Azerbaijan, Lorestan, Isfahan, North Khorassan and Tehran (WKI), and provoked a change in slogans. In Izeh, Khuzestan, the videos show cries of "Death to Khamenei" and "We don't want an Islamic Republic". In Tehran and Mashhad, crowds demonstrated in solidarity with Khuzestan. In a Tehran metro station, passengers waiting for trains chanted "Death to the Islamic Republic". In Kermanshah, in Iran's Kurdistan region, dozens of Kurds protested against local power cuts while affirming their solidarity with the demonstrators in Khuzestan. According to *Hengaw*, about twenty were arrested. The regime has in fact launched arrests throughout the country in an attempt to stem the spread of the protests.

On the 20th, the *Human Rights News Activist Agency (HRANA)* reported that it had identified at least 18 arrested activists. On the 22nd, the human rights organisation *Human Rights Watch (HRW)* denounced the "excessive use of force" against the protesters. On the 23rd, the Centre for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) expressed concern about a repeat of the 2019 massacres and denounced in a statement "the total disregard for law, life and all international standards of maintaining order" demonstrated by the Iranian authorities, as well as "state-imposed internet outages to cover up its violence". On the same day, *Amnesty International* estimated in

a report that since the 15th, security forces had "killed at least eight protesters [...] in seven different cities" and that "dozens of people, including children, [had] been injured, including by birdshot", [of whom] "several are hospitalised in critical condition", while many injured protesters avoid hospital treatment for fear of arrest, making the figures a likely underestimate.

In parallel to these events, the routine repression and killings of Kurdish cross-border carriers, the *kolbars*, by border guards continued throughout Iranian Kurdistan. Earlier this month, two were shot in Hawraman, one of whom died, three were injured on the Iraqi border and one was killed in a fall while fleeing (WKI). Another group was attacked by border guards near Baneh. According to the latest report by the *Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN)*, at least 21 *kolbars* were "killed or wounded" in the border areas in June, including at least 10 shot by Iranian, Turkish or Iraqi border forces (*Rûdaw*). The following week, two porters were killed near Ouroumieh and Baneh respectively, three injured in Baneh and one in Marivan. The human rights organisation *KMMK* also reported that in Nowsud, dozens of arrested *kolbars* were tortured and their goods confiscated. Four more porters were subsequently injured in Nowsud and Piranshahr (WKI). In Baneh, after an attack on the 26th that killed one *kolbar* and injured 12 others, hundreds of people gathered in protest in front of the district administration building. On the 30th, Iraq's Kurdish channel *Rûdaw* reported that one of the injured *kolbars* was at risk of losing a leg and recalled that in its latest report on the human rights situation in Iran, the UN had expressed concern about the "excessive use of force" against *kolbars*: "According to several reports, about 70,000 Iranians, mainly from the Kurdish minority, depend on

their *kolbar* status for their livelihoods, including women, many of them female heads of household". According to the UN, about 60 *kolbars*, including children, were killed and over 170 injured in 2020.

In addition, arrests of Kurdish activists and convictions continued throughout the month. According to KMMK, on the 2nd, the authorities arrested 15 Kurds in Kermanshah on suspicion of links with Sunni groups. While Iran has harboured al-Qaeda leaders and supported the Iraqi Kurdish Islamist organisation *Ansar al-Islam*, it has recently intensified its crackdown on Sunni Islamist organisations. Earlier this month, several activists from Iranian Kurdistan went on hunger strike to protest the continued detention of Kurdish activist Kharollah Haqjoian, a follower of the Yarsan (*Ahl-e Haqq*) faith. Other activists were also arrested in Sanandaj and Piranshahr, and on the 31st, the Oshnavieh Revolutionary Court sentenced Kurdish activist Salah Barhamian to two years in prison on charges related to his ethnicity (*WKI*).

Officers of the *Etelaat* (Intelligence Service) tortured to death a Kurd named Ahmed Rahmanian after his arrest on 13 July. They also tortured two sisters of a Kurdish activist exiled in Norway, Sanar Arsazeh, in order to force him to return and face prosecution (*Hengaw*). In addition, in two days, five Kurdish prisoners were executed in the central prison of Ouroumieh (*Hengaw*). On the 4th, two prisoners were executed on drug-related charges (*KMMK*). The next day, three other prisoners were hanged for premeditated murder, including two brothers, one of whom suffered serious spinal injuries as a result of torture in prison. In Iran, there is no such

thing as manslaughter, and all murders attract the death penalty, regardless of the circumstances... Another Kurdish prisoner, Hossein Kheiri, 32, from Lorestan, is also on death row after being convicted in Tehran of *moharebeh* ("war against God"): during anti-regime protests in November 2019, he destroyed private sector property. According to *Hengaw*, Iran has executed 119 prisoners, including 21 Kurds, since the beginning of the year (*Zhyyan*).

On the 32nd anniversary of the assassination of Iranian Kurdish leader Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou in Vienna by Tehran agents on 13 July 1989, the Cooperation Centre of the Kurdistan Parties of Iran called on the international community to re-launch the investigation into the attack. The regime has never since abandoned its operations abroad to assassinate members of the opposition. For instance, a foiled attempt in Brussels in July 2018 resulted in several arrests, including that of a serving Iranian diplomat. Ironically, just a few days later, the United States issued wanted notices against four Iranian agents accused of planning the kidnapping in New York of Iranian-American journalist Masih Alinejad. She had been a target since 2014, when she launched a campaign against compulsory veiling in Iran. The plan appears to have been to transport her by fast boat to Venezuela or lure her to Turkey or Iraq, from where she could have been abducted and transferred to Iran. This was the method used in 2019 against the dissident refugee in France, Rouhollah Zam: abducted in Iraq and then transferred to Iran, he was sentenced to death and executed at the end of 2020 for his role in the anti-regime protests of the

winter of 2017-2018. In October 2020, the opponent Habib Chaab, a refugee in Sweden, disappeared during a trip to Turkey (*Le Monde*).

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to explode in Iran, now facing a fifth wave and the rapid spread of the Delta variant. On 1st July, the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), which compiles its own figures on the epidemic from regional data, estimated the number of deaths from the coronavirus in 547 Iranian cities at over 320,800; on the 16th, the calculated figure was 330,500 deaths, and on the 30th over 342,100 (*CNRI*), giving an estimated death toll of 21,300... in a single month. These figures are nearly four times higher than the official figures as reported by RFI at the beginning of the month, nearly 85,000 dead and 3,240,000 people infected. But by the admission of many regime officials, these figures are grossly underestimated. With only 6 million people vaccinated out of 81, and vaccination very slow, the country has little means of control, and has had to take new measures. On the 4th, the closure of department stores and bazaars was decided. On the 17th, in view of the explosion of cases and the predominance of the Delta variant, administrations, banks and non-essential businesses were closed for six days in the neighbouring provinces of Tehran and Alborz (almost a fifth of the population), which were isolated from the rest of the country. After having refused them for a long time, Iran was counting on the arrival of more than six million foreign vaccines to vaccinate the over-sixties (*RFI*). On the 26th, the official daily number of contaminations passed the 30,000 mark for the first time, with 31,814 new cases, for a total number exceeding 3.7 million (*Le Figaro*). The health management of the regime is increasingly criticised.

IRAQ: CONTINUING INSECURITY IN THE DISPUTED TERRITORIES, PLAGUED BY ISIS AND CORRUPTION

In the late evening of 6 July, Erbil International Airport was again targeted by a drone attack. Fortunately, there were no injuries or material damage, and the fire brigade put out the fire. The target was the American military present in the framework of the anti-ISIS coalition, which had already been targeted in Erbil on several occasions, as in the drone attack of 27 June. The day before, another drone had been shot down in Baghdad near the American embassy, while three rockets had just hit the American air base of Ain-al-Assad, in the desertic west of Anbar province. In total, 48 attacks since January. These latest attacks were certainly in response to the American strikes launched on 28 June on the Syrian border against the pro-Iranian militias of the *Hashd al-Shaabi* (Popular Mobilisation Units), which had killed a dozen fighters (*AFP*). The next day, Ain-al-Assad was hit again, this time by 14 rockets that caused three light injuries (*Le Figaro*). The message addressed to the United States is also addressed to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), their Iranian neighbour indirectly signifying them that their links with the Americans can be a source of problems... Along with Ain Al-Assad, Erbil airport is one of the two main American support points for the coalition in Iraq, and therefore a major potential target, while existing defence systems are bad at intercepting these newcomers that are the drones packed with explosives.

The next day, the Pentagon announced a rotation of troops that will see the soldiers of the Louisiana National Guard leave Erbil, replaced by some 1,800 soldiers of the *Stryker* Brigade, from

Colorado: there is therefore no word of leaving Iraq or Kurdistan. On the Iraqi side, faced with the resurgence of ISIS, Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi is not ready to do without American support. On 26 July, he led to Washington an Iraqi delegation that came in the framework of the strategic dialogue between the two countries, in which the Kurdish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fouad Hussein, and several KRG representatives participated. At the same time, the Kurdish *Peshmerga* received new logistical equipment from the coalition, while the *Peshmerga* Ministry announced the forthcoming formation of two joint brigades with the Iraqi army to restore security in the "disputed territories". Negotiations are continuing to arm and finance these brigades (*WKI*).

It is to be hoped that this announcement will be implemented quickly, as ISIS continues to reorganise itself in these territories, taking advantage of the security vacuum that still prevails there to carry out attack after attack. The *Washington Kurdish Institute* (*WKI*) estimated on the 6th that the jihadists had killed at least 25 Iraqi security personnel during the last two weeks of June, mainly in Kirkuk province. They have also kidnapped or killed many civilians.

In a new strategy clearly aimed at provoking the anger of citizens against the authorities, ISIS has since the beginning of July systematically attacked energy production or transport installations: dozens of sites, energy lines, natural gas production and power stations have been hit by homemade bombs or rockets, causing serious electricity shortages. In addition to the destruction of infrastructure, the jihadists continued their attacks against villages and security forces.

On 16 September, a Kurdish family travelling by car was killed by gunfire near a fake checkpoint in Pirde district and two other passengers were injured. On the 24th, three federal policemen were killed in an attack on their checkpoint, and the next day jihadists fired a *Katyusha* rocket into Riyadh without causing casualties, the first such attack in the region since the fall of the "Caliphate". From Tuz Khurmatu (Kirkuk) to Khanaqin on the Iranian border, the jihadist danger has become permanent. At Tuz Khurmatu airbase, two federal policemen were killed and five injured on the 3rd, and another attack on a military checkpoint left one dead and two injured. In Khanaqin, five civilians attempting to free farmers captured by jihadists were killed near Jalawla. Two of the farmers were able to flee. On 29 September, one Iraqi soldier was killed and two others injured near Nafitkhana.

The Iraqi and Kurdish security forces have not been idle. They announced the discovery of three jihadist hideouts between Hawija and Daquq, and in Erbil, the capture of a jihadist who was planning to attack a prison to free the detained jihadists. The following week, Erbil security released a video of captured jihadists confessing to planning suicide attacks during Eid. According to the Kurdistan Security Council, attacks were also planned on places frequented by foreigners. In Kirkuk, security officials announced the arrest of several jihadists in the city, including a suicide bomber. On the 18th, four caches containing drones and small arms were discovered near Riyadh. At the end of the month, the KRG announced the arrest in a camp for displaced persons of one of the jihadists responsible for the 19 July attack in Baghdad, which killed at

least 35 civilians. In the last week of the month, another cache was discovered near Dawda, between Kifri and Tuz Khourmatou. But these successes are not enough to stop the resurgence of ISIS...

As investigators from UNITAD, the UN-appointed team tasked with gathering evidence of crimes committed by ISIS in order to bring its members to justice, work hard, two bills concerning the issue have been put forward for consideration, one in the federal parliament in Baghdad, the other in the Kurdistan parliament. The one in Baghdad concerns the transmission by UNITAD to Iraq of evidence that could lead to a death sentence; in Erbil it goes further, since it aims to establish a special court with foreign judges to judge, in collaboration with UNITAD, mass crimes committed by ISIS, even if they were committed outside Iraq. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq would thus acquire, as Belgium has at present, universal jurisdiction. However, Baghdad sees this initiative as a violation of its sovereignty, and at the end of June, the Supreme Court rejected the proposal... "According to two sources [notes *Le Monde*], the Shiite parties in power are opposed to any law, for fear of seeing the militias prosecuted in turn, even if the two bills specifically target crimes committed by the Islamic State".

The disputed territories have also been the scene of numerous citizen protests against lack of services and corruption, similar to last year's demonstrations in Southern Iraq. In Kirkuk, while the heat is unbearable, electricity is cut off frequently, either because of attacks by ISIS or because Iran has stopped supplying energy to Iraq. Taxis in the city have protested against the shortage of subsidised petrol, and engineering students have gathered outside the governorate demanding work. The Iraqi oil ministry had pledged to hire 1,000 graduates, but the pro-

cess stalled due to corruption in the hiring process... In Khanaqin, people also protested against electricity cuts on 1st July. The region is facing a permanent water shortage due to the lack of rain but also to Iran's interruption of the water supply of the Little Zab. Compared to 2020, wheat production in the region has been reduced by 33%... After protesters blocked the Iraq-Iran international road, the municipality agreed to a deal giving the government ten days to improve electricity and water supplies. On the 22nd, however, as the situation had still not improved in any way, the protests resumed...

The continuing revelation of corruption cases has done little to calm the anger of citizens. While Kirkuk has been suffering from a fuel crisis for weeks, the city's police announced on the 7th that they had seized 25 tankers illegally sent by the Oil Department to a private petrol station. The pro-Iranian militias of the *Hashd al-Shaabi* have also used fuel smuggling to finance themselves, so much so that on the 11th, the Iraqi oil minister, Ihsan Abdul-Jabbar, went to Kirkuk to meet with provincial and security officials... Even more seriously, for years the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (*pasdaran*) have been using Iraq as a drug smuggling route, especially for crystal methamphetamine. A dozen people were arrested in Kirkuk and five kilos of methamphetamine were seized. On the 22nd, the Iraqi Integrity Commission reported that it had uncovered corruption cases involving the Kirkuk administration worth more than three billion dinars, US\$200 million. These include illegal construction of flats (often for the benefit of senior officials), road construction, and even misappropriation of fuel supplies by the city's federal police: they registered 303 vehicles instead of 213, so that they could sell 32,000 litres of petrol to private petrol stations each month! Fuel distribution

offices, and more broadly the oil sector, are hotbeds of corruption in Iraq. In Makhmur, the Commission issued an arrest warrant against the town's silo manager for improperly accounting for poor quality ("grade 3") wheat as "grade 1". Agriculture is second only to oil as a sector plagued by corruption...

There were also renewed attempts to Arabise Kurdish-owned land. For example, on the 7th, a village in the sub-district of Sargaran was again targeted by Arabs from outside the province, who tried to evict the inhabitants. As in previous cases, they held written "permission" from the acting governor Rakan Saed, but the Kurdish villagers prevented the takeover. After the incident, the police intervened, but the issue remains unresolved.

Another source of strong tension is the Turkish military presence and operations, which are as violent and indiscriminate as ever. In clear violation of international law and Iraqi sovereignty, air strikes by planes and drones targeted several localities in Kurdistan at the beginning of the month, including Kista, Amedi and Qandil. A vehicle in the Yezidi town of Shingal (Sinjar), possibly affiliated to the Sinjar Resistance Units (YPS), was also hit. The Turkish invasion of Iraqi Kurdistan has already resulted in the recent deaths of dozens of civilians and the evacuation of at least 38 villages, both Kurdish and Christian (WKI).

The following week, as Turkish aircraft struck a mountainous area of Sheladiz (Dohuk) and a Christian village of Chaminke, the Special Parliamentary Commission responsible for assessing Turkish military operations in Kurdistan presented its report to the Speaker of Parliament, Rewaz Fayege. First denouncing the presence of the PKK, which gives Turkey a pretext for its invasion, the report goes on

to state that the Turkish operations violate “international laws and norms”. It also denounces the Iraqi government’s silence in the face of Turkey’s continued violation of its sovereignty, and then draws up a damning assessment of Turkish military activities: hundreds of Kurdish villages destroyed, a zone of occupation 15 to 40 km deep, the establishment of 70 Turkish military bases and observation posts.

Furthermore, Turkish “diplomatic” activities in Iraq, which border on interference, have caused a scandal. On the 13th, the Turkish ambassador

Ali Riza Gunay went to Kirkuk to meet the Turkmen Front, supported by Turkey. Ankara cultivates relations with the Sunni part of this community from which it excludes the Shiite Turkmen, considered as supporters of Iran. During the meeting, several members of the Turkmen Front greeted the ambassador by unfurling the Turkish flag and forming the racist “Grey Wolves” symbol with their hands to the sound of an ultranationalist anthem. Not only did these provocative visit and attitude arouse the anger of the population, but they also led the Iraqi Ministry

of Interior to launch on the 22nd an investigation against three Turkmen police officers. Iraqi law indeed forbids Iraqi soldiers and police officers to salute foreign anthems.

Lastly, after months of back and forth between Baghdad and Erbil concerning the share of the federal budget to be given to Kurdistan and the adoption of the Iraqi budget law for 2021, the KRG announced on the 25th that it had received 200 billion dinars from Baghdad and that it could envisage the rapid payment of its civil servants without any deduction from their salaries.

TURKEY: STATE VANDALISM IN DIYARBAKIR

Article taken from: <https://www.institutkurde.org/info/vandalisme-dsetat-a-diyarbakir-1232552064>

Link to the header photo from our site

https://www.institutkurde.org/info/images/l/actualite_2228.jpg

Diyarbakir, the political and cultural capital of Kurdistan in Turkey, known in ancient times as Amida, which became Amed in Kurdish, is one of the oldest cities in Mesopotamia. It has been inhabited since the time of the Hurrians and Hittites about 5500 years ago. An important regional metropolis, built on the right bank of the Tigris, it was until the Muslim conquest in 638-39 a Roman city, then a Byzantine one, strategically located on the borders of the Iranian empire. In the 4th century, under the Byzantine emperor Constantine II, the city was surrounded by imposing walls which are still in good condition. Capital of the first Kurdish state of the Merwanids in the 10th-11th century, it was then subjected to successive Turco-Mongol invasions and served as the capital of the Turkic state of the Aq Qoyunlus (White Sheep). Diyarbakir came under Ottoman rule in 1515 and



Legend: Photo of this state vandalism: the “Turkish Toledo”.

has remained a cosmopolitan economic, intellectual and artistic centre with its Christian (Armenian and Syriac), Jewish, Kurdish, Arab and even Turkish (especially civil servants and military) neighbourhoods, and numerous mosques, churches and synagogues.

Its rich past and its exceptional

historical and architectural heritage have earned the Kurdish political and cultural capital the distinction of being included on UNESCO’s World Heritage List.

Since 2016, this jewel of history has been ransacked by the Turkish authorities.

Following the unrest between

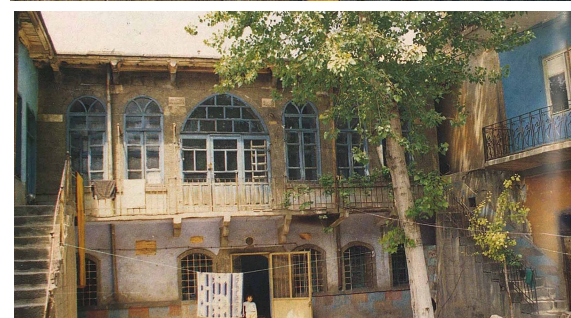
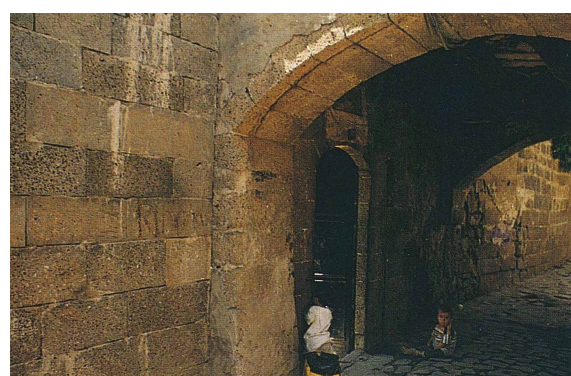
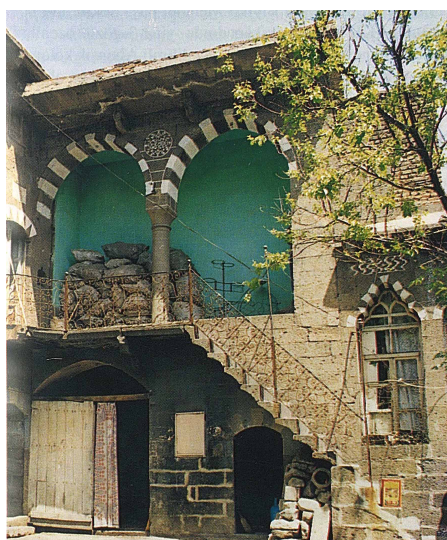
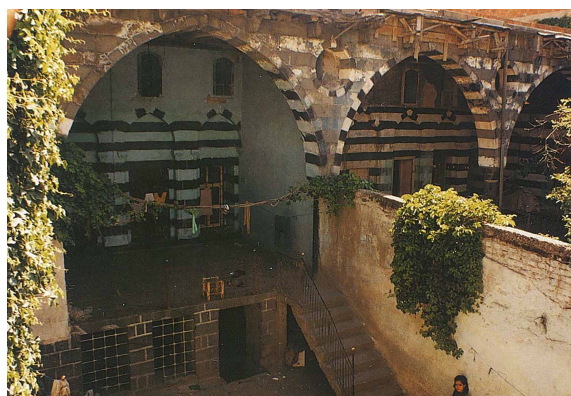
Turkish special forces armed with tanks, helicopters and heavy weapons and Kurdish militants protesting against the military control of their neighbourhoods, the Turkish government, by a decree of the 21 March 2016, taken in emergency by the Council of Ministers, decided to expropriate six neighbourhoods affected by the unrest. According to official figures, 22,323 inhabitants of these neighbourhoods were evicted by force. And the excavators went into action to completely raze these neighbourhoods “for security reasons”, erasing forever their history and an important part of the history and collective

memory of the Kurds, but also of the Armenians and Syriacs, from these neighbourhoods.

The Turkish President, who vehemently protests when some Palestinian families in Jerusalem are threatened with expulsion, unabashedly assumes this massive crime against the historical heritage, with impunity, in the silence of the international community. Even UNESCO did not have the courage to protest.

In 2016, the Turkish government, through the voice of then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, promised a “reconstruction plan” that would transform these ransacked districts into a

“New Toledo” that would attract tourists from all over the world. Six years later, we discover a series of buildings of a distressing banality built according to the official Turkish bad taste that the local Union of Architects describes as “prison blocks”. The medieval alleys have been replaced by wide pavements allowing tanks to circulate easily. Police stations are everywhere to remind of the Turkish military occupation. Multi-storey houses with paved courtyards, ornamented with ponds and wrought iron balconies, elaborate doors and windows have been replaced by ugly impersonal concrete cubes.

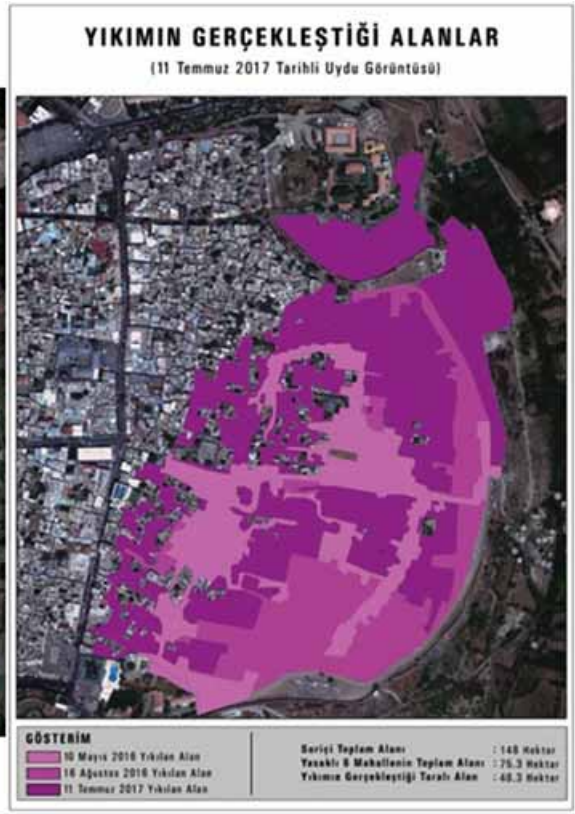


Aerial photos of razed areas

Photos from the book *Diyarbakır evleri*, Orhan Cezmi Tuncer, published by the Municipality of Diyarbakır in 1999 (Notice and cover in our catalogue:

https://pmb.institutkurde.org/opac_css/index.php?lvl=notice_display&id=639).

Aerial photos of razed areas



Here are the photos of
this state vandalism:
Toledo in Turkish style



**AFRIN:
AL MONITOR INVESTIGATION INTO CRIMES COMMITTED
UNDER TURKISH OCCUPATION**

*We reproduce below the excellent investigation published by **Al-Monitor** on the abuses committed by Syrian rebels used as proxies by Turkey, under the title: “Turkish-backed rebels leave trail of abuse and criminality in Syria’s Afrin”. The three authors are mentioned below:*

- Dan Wilkofsky (@Dwilkofsky1)
- Amberin Zaman (@amberinzaman)
- Mohammed Hardan (@_MohammedHardan)

We have produced for this paper a French translation that we made available in this month’s French-language bulletin.

July 22, 2021

Turkish-backed rebels leave trail of abuse and criminality in Syria’s Afrin

The serene topography of the Syrian enclave of Afrin belies the power vacuum and violence now afflicting many of the territories under the control of Turkish-backed forces in the war-torn country’s northeast.

During 17 days of captivity, Leila Mohammed Ahmed witnessed, helplessly, 10 young women take their own lives after being raped by members of the Sultan Murad Brigade, a Sunni rebel faction which operates under the banner of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA). The 63-year-old Kurdish woman from Afrin, the majority Kurdish enclave in northern Syria that has been occupied by Turkish-backed forces since January 2018, relayed to Al-Monitor the suffering of her fellow detainees in a telephone interview. “Some used belts to hang themselves, some pens or other sharp objects which they jabbed in their throats. Then there were the poor girls who just banged their heads against the wall until they collapsed,” Ahmed said.

Ahmed’s story is not uncommon. Across Turkish-occupied territories, a pattern of violence and criminality has been established. Turkish-backed opposition groups that once were dedicated to political causes are



Turkish-backed Syrian fighters of the Sultan Murad Turkoman brigade are pictured during a military show in the Afrin region in the rebel-held northern countryside of Syria’s northern Aleppo province on Nov. 17, 2020. - BAKR ALKASEM/ AFP via Getty Images

accused by residents of becoming criminal syndicates that kidnap for money and exploit citizens’ resources for their own gain.

“There were around 150 of us. We were given a potato with half a loaf of Syrian bread twice a day, and beaten every night from 1 a.m. to 3 a.m. Each night the men would take away a few of the girls to defile them, saying, ‘We are taking you to the doctor.’ It was like a tradition,” Ahmed

said of the detention facility in the SNA-occupied northern town of al-Rai, her voice swinging between grief and rage.

Ahmed was arrested because of her links to the Kurdish-led administration that formerly governed Afrin, a hilly, verdant region carpeted with olive groves and ancient ruins, before the Turkish army and its SNA allies captured Afrin in a bloody, two-month military campaign.

With the bulk of its Kurdish population forcibly displaced and reduced to minority status, Afrin stands as a grim testament to the Turkish-backed Syrian opposition's shift from revolutionary zeal to unfettered greed and criminality — a laboratory for Turkey's experiments in demographic engineering and cultural imperialism, underpinned by a determination to prevent Syria's Kurds from establishing self-rule.

Turkey's preening authority was on full display this week as the country's hawkish interior minister, Suleyman Soylu, went to Afrin on the occasion of the Muslim Feast of Sacrifice holiday, or Eid al-Adha.

Photos of the tour posted on his Twitter feed showed Soylu at the Turkish special forces command center. Giant Turkish flags festooned the building and portraits of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Kemal Ataturk hung on the wall.

Turkey's "Peace Spring" invasion of Kurdish-controlled territory in northeast Syria in October 2019 was greenlit by the Donald Trump administration and prompted a global outcry. SNA-affiliated brigades engaged in a litany of abuses, most memorably perhaps, the summary execution of Kurdish woman politician Hevrin Khalaf. She was pulled out of her car, shot dead, then beaten to pulp by members of Ahrar al-Sharqiyah, a brigade under the SNA's banner. Trump was denounced by politicians of both US parties as having betrayed America's Kurdish allies who had heroically helped to defeat the Islamic State, and was pressured to rescind his decision to withdraw US forces from Syria.

No such uproar was heard when

Turkey invaded Afrin on the grounds that the Kurdish administration running it was under the influence of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), the militant group that is waging an armed campaign against Turkey. The United States has argued that Afrin was outside its control, rendering America powerless to act. Russia, which holds sway over the northwest, may have let Turkey invade Afrin in order to punish the Kurds over their refusal to sever ties with the United States and submit to the authority of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Bassam al-Ahmed, a Syrian human rights activist and founder of Syrians for Truth and Justice, a nonprofit research outfit that is recording abuses by all parties in Syria's decade-long conflict, told Al-Monitor, "Almost all the world was against Peace Spring. But with Afrin there was a huge silence. What is going on now in Afrin is a deep ethnic cleansing from which Turkey and the brigades profit financially as well."

Leila Mohammed Ahmed is lucky. She was freed by Sultan Murad because "I was too old" and taken back to Afrin. Her home in the village of Matina is now occupied by a Syrian Arab with two wives and 10 children; they were bused in from the Syrian city of Homs as part of Turkey's alleged drive to ethnically cleanse Afrin of its Kurdish population. A maze of stubs is all that remains of the 150 olive trees owned by her family. She has been living in regime-held Aleppo since 2019, having bribed her way out of Afrin for \$350, a hefty sum in today's pauperized Syria.

"About a week ago a friend of mine who was being held in al-Rai came back and told me there

is a large number of women and girls still in the jail," she said.

Her account is consistent with the panoply of abuses documented in Afrin and other territories occupied by Turkish-backed SNA brigades, including rape, kidnappings, ethnic cleansing and recruiting child soldiers for Turkey's forays in Libya and Azerbaijan.

The violations these brigades engage in — from looting, to imposing "taxes" on original Kurdish inhabitants or recent Arab arrivals in the Turkish-occupied zones — are increasingly linked by a common motive: profit. Brigade commanders use the money garnered from these illicit activities to invest in property and other lucrative projects in both Turkey and rebel-held northwest Syria.

In a March report, the UN's Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic said, "After the capture of Afrin, declared in 2018 ... a security vacuum emerged, creating a permissive environment for fighters to engage in abduction, hostage taking and extortion." The report noted that similar patterns, "albeit to a lesser extent," were observed in and around the towns of Ras al-Ain and Tell Abyad following Operation Peace Spring, "mostly affecting returnees of Kurdish origin, including women."

"While detained, Kurdish (and on occasion, Yazidi) women were also raped and subjected to other forms of sexual violence, including degrading and humiliating acts, threats of rape, performance of 'virginity tests,' or the dissemination of photographs or video material showing the female detainee being abused," the report added.

Meghan Bodette, a Washington-based researcher and founder of “The Missing Afrin Women Project,” says she has documented 135 cases of women who are still missing out of 228 cases in total of reported kidnappings. She said 91 women are reported to have been released, while two were reportedly killed in custody. “From speaking to survivors directly and reading other testimonies, I assess that the real number of kidnappings and disappearances is likely higher than we know, due to the difficulties and dangers of reporting these abuses and Turkey’s refusal to allow independent media and human rights organizations access to the area,” Bodette told Al-Monitor.

On the rare occasion that Turkey did allow an international media outlet into Afrin, the result was an embarrassing whitewash. In its Feb. 16 piece, The New York Times said, “Turkey has become the only international force on the ground protecting some five million displaced and vulnerable civilians. Today, the Turkish soldiers are all that stand between them and potential slaughter at the hands of President Bashar al-Assad’s forces and those of his Russian allies.”

There was no mention of atrocities committed by Turkey’s rebel proteges. The Syrian Kurds were aghast.

Sinam Mohammed, the Washington representative of the Syrian Democratic Council, a political body overseeing the US-protected Kurdish administration in northeast Syria, said, “I was deeply upset that The New York Times was giving a very beautiful image about the people in Afrin who are committing crimes there. It was fake news showing that everything is good.”

Mohammed told Al-Monitor, “I know what is going on there. Daily they are committing abuses. Raping girls. Torturing men to death. Changing the demography.” Mohammed’s family home in Afrin has been usurped, her husband’s factories stripped of their machines and left to rot. “I and many members of the Kurdish community wrote to The New York Times. They never answered,” Mohamed said.

The UN and various rights groups say the abuses committed by the SNA-affiliated factions amount to war crimes. Yet, according to more than a dozen Turkish, Kurdish and Syrian Arab sources interviewed by Al-Monitor, the pillage and plunder persists, with several warlords getting fatter on the profits by the day. Turkish individuals with ties to Turkey’s ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) allegedly share in the spoils.

Bassam Ahmed of Syrians for Truth and Justice said, “If they didn’t know they are protected by Turkey they would never be able to do these things. Most of the top brigade commanders have Turkish nationality.”

Turkey denies the allegations. However, in a rare move, a military court of Syria’s opposition so-called interim government sentenced a member of Ahrar al-Sharqiyah over the murder of Hevrin Khalaf, according to the UN.

Zero discrimination

It’s not just Kurds who are being targeted — Syrian Arabs brought into Afrin from East Ghouta after it fell to regime control are subjected to some of the same abuses. A resident who arrived in Afrin in the spring of 2018 paints a grim picture of the once-tranquil city. He told Al-Monitor, “I

was renting a house from a Kurdish person, but the brigade in control of the area kicked me out, as well as the house owner, and confiscated the house under the pretext that the house owner was in the PKK.” The offending brigade was Ahrar al-Sharqiyah. “This happened to dozens of families from East Ghouta, who were kicked out of their homes by Ahrar al-Sharqiyah,” he said.

A Turkish researcher with deep knowledge of the SNA factions, who has traveled to Afrin several times, told Al-Monitor, “Afrin was divided up between the various brigades as spoils of war and they established mutually agreed zones and borders among themselves. They usurp property then sell it back to the original owner. None of it is legal or just,” the researcher said, on condition that he not be identified by name for fear of retribution from Turkish authorities.

The Afrin resident said, “Every neighborhood has its own brigade. The Mahmoudiya neighborhood, for example, contains 10 smaller neighborhoods, and each smaller neighborhood has a brigade in charge. Civilians who have no support from a given brigade, their property is as good as gone.”

He continued, “If you come to Afrin, as soon as you walk around you’ll be sure that only the force of arms rules this area. There’s a terrible phenomenon, the spread of stores that sell weapons. Wherever you walk, you’ll find ‘Hunter’s Gun Store,’ ‘So and So’s Gun Shop.’ It’s a really ugly sight.”

The Turkish researcher contended that the Turkish government is seeking to impose law and order in Afrin. However, the office of governor of Hatay, which administers the occupa-

tion of Afrin, securing basic services and overseeing reconstruction, has had little impact. "They seem either unwilling or unable to control the brigades," he said. "Turkey's main focus is on its own security," he added.

This includes staving off sporadic attacks by the Afrin Liberation Forces, a PKK offshoot, which is waging a low-intensity insurgency to drive out Turkish and opposition forces, to little effect. Attacks attributed to this group and its affiliates, including the bombing of a popular market in central Afrin, have claimed civilian as well as soldiers' lives.

Lay off my stash

On May 21, Turkey's security seemed to be threatened by the very same SNA-linked factions that rely on its support, when hundreds of their alleged members breached a gap in the concrete border wall separating Turkey from Syria. They poured in from Atmeh, a giant camp for displaced Syrians, and attacked a Turkish border post manned by gendarmerie forces in Hatay's Reyhanli district. Local villagers cited by the Turkish independent online news outlet, Duvar, said the Syrians set fire to their wheat crops and olive trees. One of the villagers said, "The [gendarmerie] station came under a hail of gunfire. Was it a Molotov cocktail or something else, I don't know but one of them threw an explosive. Had it not been for the concrete wall all of the soldiers there would have died." Images of people running, with clouds of smoke and a bright orange flame rising near the gendarmerie watch tower, appeared to corroborate the claims.

The villagers said they did not

know what had prompted the attack. However, Umit Ozdag, an independent lawmaker in the Turkish parliament, suggested in a tweet a week later that it was linked to the May 15 seizure at Hatay's Iskenderun port of more than a ton of Captagon pills, a stimulant drug, with a street value worth \$37 million. Turkish police said the pills were destined for the United Arab Emirates and had been concealed in bricks.

Ozdog, a vigorous advocate of expelling Turkey's estimated 4 million Syrian refugees, tweeted, "The Syrians rose up in Reyhanli. A Turkish border post was raided. The soldiers withdrew to avert a confrontation. Weapons were stolen from the border post. The reason for the eruption of the events was the narcotics operation in Iskenderun. The Syrian mafia is saying, 'Lay off my property.' Enough."

Turkish officials offered no explanation.

Sefik Cirkin, a seasoned nationalist politician from Hatay and a member of the center-right opposition İyi or "Good" Party, told Al-Monitor, "Regretfully, I can say that this story is true. One hundred percent." Cirkin declined to elaborate. Ozdag did not respond to Al-Monitor's request for comment.

Numerous other drug seizures were reported this year in Hatay, most recently in July when a cargo vessel carrying 117 kilograms (258 pounds) of cocaine was apprehended off the coast of Iskenderun. In several cases, arrests were made. But the identities and the nationalities of the suspects were not revealed. No arrests have been announced by Turkish authorities in relation to the May 15 seizure.

Elizabeth Tsurkov, a doctoral student at Princeton University and a fellow at the Newlines Institute, a think tank in Washington, is counted among the leading experts on the Syrian opposition. Tsurkov told Al-Monitor, "Several Syrian factions in areas under Turkish control are involved in the drug trade."

Tsurkov noted however that Atmeh is under the control of Hayat Tahrir Sham, the militant group that governs Idlib and is at odds with many of the the SNA factions.

Meet Abu Amsha

Mohammed Jassem is the Afrin-based commander of the SNA-affiliated Sultan Suleiman Shah brigade, named after one of the founders of the Ottoman Empire whose remains are buried in northern Syria. Jassem, or "Abu Amsha" as he is better known, is a prime example for the northwest Syria war profiteering game. The Suleiman Shah brigade, commonly referred to as the "Amshat" after their leader, has been implicated in rights abuses in Afrin, including abductions, ethnic cleansing and forcing olive farmers to pay the brigade a cut of their harvest.

Jassem's Twitter feed reads like a pledge of fealty to Turkey and its latter-day sultan, Erdogan. There are tributes to assorted Turkish ultra-nationalists, condolences for Turkey's interior minister over the loss of his mom (who died at age 75 of heart failure in March) and vows to pursue the "dogs" of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) who are "really PKK." Turkey's "Olive Branch" operation against Afrin and the ensuing "Peace Spring" operation rest on that logic — that the SDF is "the same" as the PKK.

Parroting Turkey's talking points

on the PKK — and Erdogan’s Islam-tinged nationalist rhetoric — has served as useful cover for Jassem as he expands a mini-fiefdom out of Afrin’s Sheikh Hadeed area, which he took over after helping Turkey wrest control of the enclave.

A Sultan Suleiman Shah militant speaking on condition of anonymity told Al-Monitor, “When the opposition factions took control of Afrin, the Sultan Suleiman Shah Division took over the Sheikh Hadeed area and set up its command center there. The division commander, Abu Amsha, doesn’t take orders from the Syrian National Army or the Ministry of Defense [of the Syrian opposition’s interim government based in Istanbul], he directly coordinates with Turkish intelligence.”

Rights groups assert the factions have aided Turkey’s security apparatus in illegally transferring hundreds of Syrian Arabs and Kurds accused of working for the PKK from Turkish occupied areas to Turkey. Factions routinely wield the threat of rendition to extract large sums, and those who are unable to pay are handed over to Turkey, as previously reported by Al-Monitor.

Jassem’s newfound prosperity comes from multiple sources. Control over checkpoints that charge transit fees for commercial vehicles is one. Olive oil is another. The Sultan Suleiman Shah militant explained, “In the beginning, the Sultan Suleiman Shah faction in Afrin operated like other factions in the region. It cut and sold olive trees, but it recently changed its strategy. The faction members started growing olives on confiscated land from those accused of being loyal to the SDF. They then imposed an income tax of 25% percent to 50% on landowners.” The militant

continued, “However, logging has not yet stopped as brigade members cut down trees and sell them to take advantage of their price. The faction’s leadership allows members to individually benefit from a small margin of profit in order to guarantee their loyalty.”

In Turkey, the state Agricultural Credit Cooperative buys the olive oil from the brigades through intermediaries then sells it to Turkish producers who export to Europe and the United States.

The illicit trade has been amply documented.

“Had it not been for the Afrin olives we could not have achieved this level of exports,” Turkish oil exporter Ali Nedim Gureli told German broadcaster Deutsche Welle’s Turkish language service. “In the old days, this product used to come illegally from Afrin and be sold to producers. Now the sales are being done by the state. Now the majority of Afrin’s estimated [annual production of] 30,000 tons of olive oil comes to Turkey. Afrin’s olive oil has become Turkish produce,” he crowed.

Not all Turkish producers are as pleased. According to Cirkin, the nationalist politician, a fair share of Afrin olive oil winds up getting sold locally, well below market prices through elaborate schemes. “I told the [Hatay] governor Afrin olive oil is being smuggled and sold here. I said ‘Do something. Producers are hurt.’ Nothing was done.”

Turkey’s attempts to paint a veneer of legitimacy on the olive oil trade by routing it through the Agricultural Credit Cooperatives leave international jurists unimpressed. “International law provides a

number of protections to those living in occupied territory such as those living in Turkish-occupied Afrin. Their real and personal property is protected by the Geneva Conventions,” said Roger Lu Phillips, an international lawyer and legal director for Syrian Justice and Accountability Centre, a Washington based nonprofit documenting war crimes in Syria.

“Most importantly,” Phillips added, “It is contrary to international law for an occupying power to requisition foodstuffs, particularly where the civilian population is suffering from food shortages.”

Furthermore, the occupying power, Turkey, must ensure that fair value is paid for any requisitioned goods. “If Turkey is taking olive trees and olive oil from local farmers without fair compensation, it has violated the laws of occupation, even if it has done so through the cover of armed militias under its control.”

Jassem has invested some of his gains in businesses in Turkey, according to the sources who briefed Al-Monitor on the subject.

These are said to include several restaurants and car dealerships. Al-Monitor’s correspondent rang El Safir Oto, a car dealership Jassem is said to own in the border city of Gaziantep, and asked, “Is this the car dealership that belongs to Abu Amsha?” A man responded in thickly accented Turkish, “Yes, it is. Who are you?”

Jassem “is number one in terms of business in the area,” said Ahmed Ramadan, the editor-in-chief of the Euphrates Post, a Syrian opposition outlet based in Istanbul. Ramadan, who has

investigated the factions' commercial activities, told Al-Monitor, "The entire world knows they steal, they're war profiteers, crisis profiteers. They are no longer ashamed."

The pro-opposition StepNews agency alleged in a May 17 article that Turkish security officials had raided the homes of several individuals from the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade, including Jassem's brother, in separate operations in Gaziantep, Reyhanli and Osmaniye. StepNews claimed the raids were connected to the May 15 Captagon drug bust. ASO, a news agency affiliated with the Kurdish-led administration in northeast Syria, echoed the claim.

Tsurkov said her own findings match the claims as well. "My research into the illicit activities of the factions, it appears that the Amshat are the most heavily involved in the drug trade."

Tsurkov continued, "According to my sources inside the Amshat, the drug trading effort is led by Sayf Jassem, the brother of Abu Amsha and the fighters and commanders in his personal entourage."

"Most of the drugs are smuggled from regime areas by the Syrian Army's 4th division, which is the regime apparatus leading the drug manufacture and drug-running inside Syria and cross border. The drugs are smuggled from Nubul and Zahraa, Shia towns under Hezbollah control in Aleppo into Afrin by the Amshat," Tsurkov said.

"Abu Amsha instituted a total ban on smuggling drugs into Turkey," Tsurkov added. But this does not preclude using Iskenderun for transit purposes.

Jassem's alleged involvement in the narcotics trade aside, internal resentment over his behavior has been brewing for some time.

In 2018, Isra Khalil, the wife of a fighter with the SNA's Sultan Murad brigade, alleged in a video recording that Jassem had raped her numerous times, including at gunpoint. "Abu Amsha raped me," she said. "Afterward he stood in the doorway, as he was leaving. He took me out of the room and said, 'If you say that I came to you, I'll kill your husband your brother-in-law.' I told him, 'For God's sake, mister, I haven't done anything, OK? God will keep private what he keeps private, I've never done anything to you.'" Khalil added, "It's not just me he raped. A number of women. A lot of women have been scandalized by him." Khalil described several other incidents in detail.

A week later Khalil posted another video claiming "a bad person" had offered to pay her "whatever amount of money you want, I'll give it to you if you record this video about Abu Amsha." A credible opposition source told al-Monitor that Khalil had been strong-armed into recanting her previous accusations.

Ahmed Rahhal, a general who defected from the Syrian army to join the revolution, and is a vocal critic of the factions' corruption and abuse, said Khalil's subsequent denial "didn't sit right with me."

"When I followed up with people I trust, inside Syria, they said Abu Amsha simply paid bribes, four cars, one for the judge, one to the police official, and two to others, and the issue was resolved. And the girl recorded the second video against her will. By force. I wrote about it.

That rape is wrong," Rahhal added.

Rahhal's outspokenness came at a price. In August 2020 he was stripped of his Turkish residency and jailed for 73 days, "without being formally accused of anything. It was incredibly insulting to me." He believes Jassem and his men likely made false statements against him to Turkish authorities claiming that he was an "agent for the UAE, or an agent for Saudi Arabia, or the Kurds." Rahhal says he receives hundreds of threats every day from people affiliated with the brigades, targeting him and his family, and that his life is in danger. He has publicly appealed to Erdogan, Soylyu, and Syrian Interim Government leaders for their help.

In April, Orient, another Syrian pro-opposition outlet, relayed accusations made in a video by Turkish-backed SNA fighters that Jassem "stole" the salaries that they were promised for fighting in Azerbaijan in its war against Armenia. "They were promised \$2,000 per month but received far less and with delays," Tsurkov said.

A Turkish whistleblower

Sedat Peker, a convicted Turkish mobster who lives in exile in Dubai, has been implicating current and former Turkish officials with close ties to the Erdogan government in grave crimes, including rape, drug trafficking and ferrying weapons to Syrian jihadis. The stream of tell-all videos are clocking millions of views on YouTube, and for many, ring truer because Peker, by his own admission, participated in some of the crimes. In a recent video, he claimed, "If you want to do business in Syria, you know what you have to do? There is a Mr. Metin Kiratli, let

me say the name of his office: The administrative affairs directorate of the [Turkish] presidency. You must go to him but not for small deals, like two trucks worth of stuff. I mean for the big deals.”

Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Bashar Jaafari said in a recent interview with Deutsche Welle, “I’d like to express that I confirm, affirm and verify what Mr. Sedat Peker said is completely true.” Kiratli has denied the claims and filed a criminal complaint against Peker.

Whether Peker is telling the truth or not, the commerce he describes appears to be expanding with Ankara’s blessings: A new unofficial border crossing lying between Ras al-Ain and Tell Abyad in the Peace Spring zone called Tufaha or “apple,” connecting Turkish backed opposition and SDF territories in northern Raqqa, began operating earlier this year.

Tufaha is run by Ahrar al-Sharqiyah leader Abu Hatem Shaqra, a top figure in the war profiteering racket who has been nicknamed “the Octopus” owing to his deep financial reach. Two other SNA-linked brigades, Jaysh al-Sharqiyah and Squad 20, share control over the Tufaha. Open source intelligence mined by Al-Monitor and observed by the researcher known as @obretix on Twitter showed an

oil tanker truck parked at the crossing July 13.

“The crossings between areas of different parties’ control are like treasures for the rebel brigades. Tufaha is going to be a big economic crossing point, the monthly income on it might reach \$1 million,” said Ramadan, the newspaper editor.

The Syrian Democratic Council’s Sinam Mohammed insists that United States must designate the SNA brigades that have committed war crimes as terrorists. “It is a necessary step,” she said. “Otherwise they will not stop.”

But Bassam Ahmed of Syrians for Truth and Justice said he believes that this is an unrealistic goal, saying, “The most we can hope for is that some of these warlords be individually sanctioned for their crimes.”

“It’s time the United States act against these groups,” Bassam Ahmed added.

A State Department spokesman speaking on background told Al-Monitor, “The Administration is concerned by continued reports that some elements of the Syrian National Army have violated the law of armed conflict and abused human rights in northern Syria. We continue to urge Turkey to pressure Turkish-supported opposition groups to stop human rights abuses, hold per-

petrators accountable, and take steps to prevent any future such abuses.”

The spokesman added, “The United States and Turkey share an interest in sustainably ending the conflict in Syria and we will continue to consult Ankara on Syria policy and seek areas for cooperation. The United States and Turkey have shared interests in countering terrorism, ending the conflict in Syria, and deterring malign influence in the region.”

In July, the United States added Turkey to a list of countries that are implicated in the use of child soldiers over the past year, marking the first time a NATO ally was placed designated as such.

The State Department noted in its 2021 Trafficking in Persons report that Turkey was providing “tangible support” to the Sultan Murad division which deployed child soldiers to Libya as have other parties to the conflict there. The State Department also named the SDF along with other armed groups in Syria which recruit minors for combat. Ankara was furious.

The Turkish foreign ministry said it “completely rejects” the claim and its record is clean.

Editor's Note: This piece has been updated since its initial publication.

Dérive autoritaire en Turquie «Erdogan, comme Poutine, fait le vide politique autour de lui»

La justice pourrait bannir le troisième parti du parlement, accusé de servir de vitrine aux «terroristes» kurdes.

La Turquie du président Erdogan va-t-elle bannir le HDP, troisième force politique du pays? Tout semble l'indiquer. La Cour constitutionnelle a donné la semaine dernière son feu vert à l'ouverture d'un procès contre ce parti de gauche réputé «prokurde». Selon l'acte d'inculpation présenté par le procureur, le Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP) ne serait au fond qu'une vitrine politique des «terroristes» du PKK, le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, qui mène une guérilla sanglante contre l'État depuis 1984.

«Sur le papier, rien n'est encore joué. Pour que le HDP soit banni, il faut que dix des quinze juges votent en ce sens. Mais en réalité, la séparation des pouvoirs n'est pas le point fort du système turc. Recep Tayyip Erdogan suit la même logique que Vladimir Poutine en Russie: il a mis la justice à son service et fait exploser le système politique, écartant tout rival potentiel avant l'élection présidentielle de 2023», décrypte Jordi Tejel, spécialiste des minorités au Moyen-Orient et professeur à l'Université de Neuchâtel et à l'IHEID de Genève. Même si la date du procès n'a pas encore été annoncée, les leaders du HDP savent déjà ce qui les attend: les autorités feront tout pour les museler.

Erdogan a mis la justice à son service et fait exploser le système politique, écartant tout rival potentiel avant l'élection présidentielle de 2023.»



(Photo) Manifestation des partisans de Selahattin Demirtas, le leader emprisonné du HDP, le Parti démocratique des peuples, troisième force politique de Turquie, aujourd'hui sous la menace d'une interdiction pure et simple. AFP

Visiblement, Recep Tayyip Erdogan est inquiet. Non seulement la Turquie est en pleine crise économique, mais son parti islamocconservateur AKP n'a plus la majorité absolue au parlement et a dû s'allier aux ultranationalistes du MHP pour rester au pouvoir. Or, c'est justement l'entrée dans l'hémicycle des députés du HDP qui a fini par fragiliser le président et l'obliger à former une coalition.

Lui qui avait fait preuve d'ouverture vis-à-vis des Kurdes minoritaires en 2015, leur octroyant des libertés culturelles dans l'espoir d'enranger ensuite leurs voix, a fulminé en voyant que leurs suffrages allaient à ses opposants politiques. La répression n'a pas tardé à s'abattre sur les Kurdes

et «leur» HDP. Après l'emprisonnement de ses principaux leaders, il est maintenant question d'interdire à plus de 450 élus d'exercer une activité politique... pour s'assurer qu'ils ne se représentent pas sous une autre étiquette!

«Mais le timing de ce procès laisse penser qu'il pourrait aussi servir de diversion», note le professeur. «Le pouvoir est ébranlé par la chaîne YouTube d'un ancien chef mafieux, Sedat Peker, qui diffuse des révélations en cascade sur de nombreuses affaires de corruption. La procédure lancée contre le HDP pourrait s'étaler sur de longs mois et focaliser l'attention du public sur la lutte antiterroriste.»

Les Turcs ne s'alarment-ils pas

de voir s'éroder ainsi l'État de droit? Ne craignent-ils pas pour leurs libertés? «Il faut bien se rappeler que, pour une partie de la population, l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'AKP a été vécue comme une libération des règles laïques longtemps imposées par les élites «kémalistes» du Parti républicain du peuple (ndlr: fondé par le «père de la nation» Mustafa Kemal Atatürk).

De tendance sociale-démocrate, cette formation est aujourd'hui la deuxième force politique au parlement, mais elle traîne toujours cette image étatisée, analyse Jordi Tejel. C'est donc plutôt le HDP qui est vu comme une alternative crédible, ce qui en fait l'ennemi juré du président Erdogan.»

La Turquie quitte formellement un traité sur les violences faites aux femmes

Des milliers de manifestants ont prévu de descendre dans les rues du pays jeudi, alors qu'une cour d'appel a rejeté cette semaine un recours destiné à suspendre le retrait de la Turquie de la convention d'Istanbul.

Ce geste était apparu comme une nouvelle provocation de Recep Tayyip Erdogan, à l'égard de ses partenaires européens. La Turquie s'est officiellement retirée, jeudi 1er juillet, d'une convention internationale contre les violences faites aux femmes, mettant en œuvre une décision annoncée en mars par le président turc qui a provoqué des critiques de nombreux citoyens turcs et d'alliés occidentaux d'Ankara.

Des milliers de manifestants ont prévu de descendre à nouveau dans les rues du pays jeudi, alors qu'une cour d'appel a rejeté cette semaine un recours destiné à suspendre le retrait de la Turquie de la convention d'Istanbul, premier traité international – signé... dans la capitale turque en 2011 – à fixer des normes juridiquement contraignantes dans une trentaine de pays pour prévenir les violences sexistes.

« Nous allons continuer notre lutte », a déclaré mercredi Canan Gullu, présidente de la Fédération des associations des femmes turques. « La Turquie se tire elle-même dans le pied avec cette décision. » Depuis mars, a-t-elle ajouté, les femmes et d'autres groupes vulnérables font preuve de plus de réticence à demander de l'aide et sont moins enclins à en recevoir, tandis que les difficultés éco-



« Nous allons continuer notre lutte », a déclaré mercredi Canan Gullu, présidente de la Fédération des associations des femmes turques. ADEM ALTAN / AFP

nomiques liées à la crise sanitaire du coronavirus ont accentué les violences domestiques.

Sentiment d'impunité

Les associations de défense des droits des femmes accusaient déjà le gouvernement de ne pas appliquer avec assez de fermeté les lois qui existent, ce qui, selon elles, encourage le sentiment d'impunité. Trois cents femmes au moins sont mortes sous les coups de leur conjoint en Turquie l'année dernière, selon le

groupe de défense des droits We Will Stop Femicide.

La convention d'Istanbul, négociée dans la ville turque et ratifiée en 2011, engage ses signataires à prévenir les violences domestiques et autres abus du même ordre – comme le viol conjugal et la mutilation génitale féminine –, engager des poursuites judiciaires le cas échéant et à promouvoir l'égalité. Toutefois de nombreux conservateurs en Turquie et dans les rangs du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) du président Erdogan estiment que la

convention nuit aux structures familiales protégeant la société.

Certains y voient même la promotion de l'homosexualité du fait des principes contre la discrimination liée à l'orientation sexuelle inscrits dans le texte. « Le retrait de notre pays de la convention ne va pas entraîner une lacune juridique ou pratique dans la prévention des violences contre les femmes », ont déclaré les services d'Erdogan dans un communiqué transmis mardi au tribunal administratif.

The Atlantic

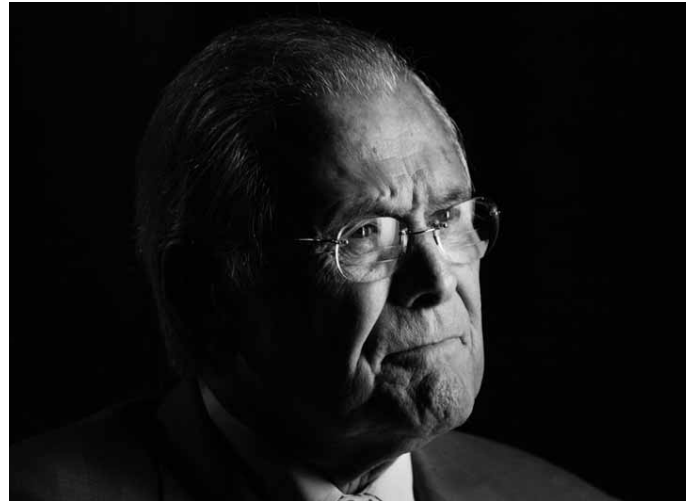
Premier Juillet 2021
By George Packr

How Rumsfeld Deserves to Be Remembered

In 2006, soon after I returned from my fifth reporting trip to Iraq for *The New Yorker*, a pair of top aides in the George W. Bush White House invited me to lunch to discuss the war. This was a first; until then, no one close to the president would talk to me, probably because my writing had not been friendly and the administration listened only to what it wanted to hear. But by 2006, even the Bush White House was beginning to grasp that Iraq was closer to all-out civil war than to anything that could be called “freedom.”

The two aides wanted to know what had gone wrong. They were particularly interested in my view of the secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld, and his role in the debacle. As I gave an assessment, their faces actually seemed to sag toward their salads, and I wondered whether the White House was so isolated from Iraqi reality that top aides never heard such things directly. Lunch ended with no explanation for why they’d invited me. But a few months later, when the Bush administration announced Rumsfeld’s retirement, I suspected that the aides had been gathering a case against him. They had been trying to push him out before it was too late.

Rumsfeld was the worst secretary of defense in American history. Being newly dead shouldn’t spare him this distinction. He was worse than the closest contender, Robert McNamara, and that is not a competition to judge lightly. McNamara’s folly was that of a whole generation of Cold War-



David Hume Kennerly / Getty

rriors who believed that Indochina was a vital front in the struggle against communism. His growing realization that the Vietnam War was an unwinnable waste made him more insightful than some of his peers; his decision to keep this realization from the American public made him an unforgivable coward. But Rumsfeld was the chief advocate of every disaster in the years after September 11. Wherever the United States government contemplated a wrong turn, Rumsfeld was there first with his hard smile—squinting, mocking the cautious, shoving his country deeper into a hole. His fatal judgment was equaled only by his absolute self-assurance. He lacked the courage to doubt himself. He lacked the wisdom to change his mind.

Rumsfeld was working in his office on the morning that a hijacked jet flew into the Pentagon. During the first minutes of terror, he displayed bravery and leadership. But within a few hours, he was already en-

tertaining catastrophic ideas, according to notes taken by an aide: “best info fast. Judge whether good enough [to] hit S.H. [Saddam Hussein] @ same time. Not only UBL [Osama bin Laden].” And later: “Go massive. Sweep it all up. Things related and not.” These fragments convey the whole of Rumsfeld: his decisiveness, his aggression, his faith in hard power, his contempt for procedure. In the end, it didn’t matter what the intelligence said. September 11 was a test of American will and a chance to show it. Rumsfeld started being wrong within hours of the attacks and never stopped. He argued that the attacks proved the need for the missile-defense shield that he’d long advocated. He thought that the American war in Afghanistan meant the end of the Taliban. He thought that the new Afghan government didn’t need the U.S. to stick around for security and support. He thought that the United States should stiff the United Nations, brush off allies, and go it alone.

He insisted that al-Qaeda couldn’t operate without a strongman like Saddam. He thought that all the intelligence on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction was wrong, except the dire reports that he’d ordered up himself. He reserved his greatest confidence for intelligence obtained through torture. He thought that the State Department and the CIA were full of timorous, ignorant bureaucrats. He thought that America could win wars with computerized weaponry and awesome displays of force.

He believed in regime change but not in nation building, and he thought that a few tens of thousands of troops would be enough to win in Iraq. He thought that the quick overthrow of Saddam’s regime meant mission accomplished. He responded to the looting of Baghdad by saying “Freedom’s untidy,” as if the chaos was just a giddy display of democracy—as if it would not devastate Iraq and become America’s problem, too. He believed that Iraq should be led by a corrupt London banker with a history of deceiving the U.S. government. He faxed pages from a biography of Che Guevara to a U.S. Army officer in the region to prove that the growing Iraqi resistance did not meet the definition of an insurgency. He dismissed the insurgents as “dead-enders” and humiliated a top general who dared to call them by their true name. He insisted on keeping the number of U.S. troops in Iraq so low that much of the country soon fell to the insurgency. He focused his best effort on winning bureaucratic wars in Washington.

Kirkuk Minute July 1, 2021

Kirkuk

Kirkuk province continues suffering from a lack of basic services. Amid an extreme heat wave in the region, citizens protested against the administration due to the lack of electricity. For the second time in two weeks, taxi drivers protested due to a lack of government supplied fuel and high retail fuel prices. Moreover, graduates from Kirkuk University's engineering department held a protest in front of the governorate, demanding employment. Previously, the Iraqi Oil Ministry vowed to hire 1000 graduates, but the process stalled due to corruption in the hiring process.

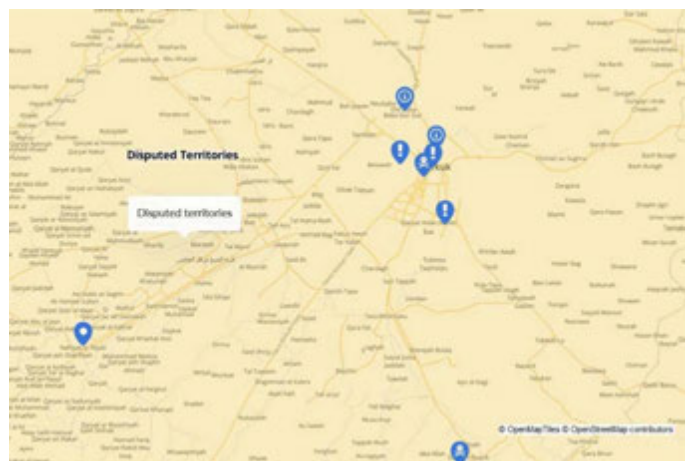
Since removing Kurdish-led administration and Peshmerga forces on October 16, 2017, Kirkuk has become the main route for drug trafficking, mainly by Iranian-backed militias. During an event organized on the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, the police department commander to Combat Narcotics and psychotropic substances, Homa Rawouf, announced that 170 people were arrested in 2021 on narcotics distribution charges. According to General Rawouf, the number of arrests increased drastically compared to the first six months of 2020.

According to the Iraqi Oil Ministry, Kirkuk's oil production reached 3,075,237 barrels in June, grossing about 217 million USD. In a separate statement, the oil ministry said it foiled a smuggling attempt of 20 tankers of crude oil after the perpetrators drilled a hole in a pipeline between Hawija and Dibis districts. On Tuesday, June 26th, the In-

tegrity Commission issued arrest warrants for the former police chief Khatab Omar and his deputy general Turhan Abdulrahman. The Integrity Commission's ruling came after Kirkuk's police filed a complaint about the "refusal of civilian employees to return their weapons owned by the police department," in the past when the two officials held their posts.

For the first time since October 16, 2017, a delegation of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (KDP) visited Kirkuk and held a meeting in the city on Tuesday. The KDP delegation met with the communist party of Kurdistan. Members of the delegation told the press that their visit was to meet with organizations and public figures. KDP plans to return to the province and participate in the upcoming parliamentary elections on October 10, 2021 if the situation in the province is normalized.

ISIS (Da'esh) continues to pose a significant security threat in the disputed territories, mainly in Kirkuk. On Friday June 25th, five Iraqi Federal Police were killed at a checkpoint following clashes with Da'esh near Shabeha village of Daquq district. Da'esh terrorists were able to damage the thermal cameras installed at the checkpoint in order to avoid detection before attacking. Following the attack, the Iraqi prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi ordered an investigation of the commander of the Federal police's fifth division in charge of the security in the area. Further, Da'esh terrorists launched more attacks in the area, including on Thursday, July first near Hassan Shalal village of in Daquq, which they



controlled after 20 minutes of clashes with the federal police. As a result, five people, including two civilians, were injured severely. On Sunday June 27th, near Riyad sub-district, Daesh terrorists attacked a security checkpoint, killing one Iraqi soldier and wounding three others. Da'esh also attacked a team of electricity technicians attempting to fix power towers that were damaged by the terror group last week. The electricity ministry announced "material damages" from the IED attack. The disabled towers connect Kirkuk's electricity to other provinces. As the security situation in Kirkuk remains unstable, a senior Iraqi security delegation visited the province on Wednesday. The delegation headed by National Security adviser Qasim al Arajy met with Iraqi security officials and the joint command operation between the Iraqi and Kurdish forces.

Khanaqin

General Mohammed Rostam, commander of the second Peshmerga axis near Qarata-pah and Hamrin, said that terror attacks have decreased by 80% since the launch of a joint command operation between

Peshmerga and the Iraqi forces.

On Thursday July 1st, an anti-government protest in Khanaqin demanded the Iraqi government provide more electricity. Khanaqin is experiencing a severe power shortage since Iran has stopped supplying power despite having an active contract with the Iraqi government to supply the area with electricity. The protestors shut down the international road between Iraq and Iran outside the town.

The agricultural department announced a 33% decrease in wheat production in Khanaqin compared to 2020 due to a drought facing the region. The drought was caused by a lack of precipitation and Iran's cut-off water supply to two main rivers in the Khanaqin.

Shingal

On Thursday, July 1, Turkish warplanes struck a vehicle believed to be of the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS) near Zardasht valley. No information has been released about the casualties. Turkey repeatedly has threatened to occupy the Yazidi town.



July 1, 2021

By Wladimir van Wilgenburg

Belgian parliament committee recognizes Yezidi genocide

The Belgian parliament's foreign affairs committee on Wednesday approved a resolution to recognize ISIS crimes against the Yezidi community in 2014 as a genocide. The resolution was submitted by Belgian opposition MPs Koen Metsu, member of the New Flemish Alliance and chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, and Georges Dallemagne of the Humanist Democratic Center party.

Metsu and Dallemagne visited the Kurdistan Region as well as the autonomous region in northeast Syria last December to assess the humanitarian

and political situation of Belgian ISIS prisoners.

"Georges d'Allemagne and myself were very keen to do something for [Yezidis]," Metsu said in a statement. "They were among the biggest victims of ISIS and today we gave the Yezidis back their dignity."

"This is a very important step in the collective healing process of the Yezidi community," he added.

In June, the Belgian parliament heard from Yezidi activist and Nobel laureate Nadia Murad and Pari Ibrahim, executive director of the Free Yezidi Foundation.

"More than 6,000 women and

children were taken captive by ISIS and over 2,800 are still missing today. Sexual violence was intentionally employed as a tactic of war," Murad said in her testimony on June 16.

"Their goal was not only to eradicate our community in Iraq but to enslave and violate Yazidi women in order to destroy the fabric of our community from within," she said. "There is no question that ISIS committed genocide. They did not attempt to hide it."

Parliament called on the Belgian government to provide more assistance to victims of

ISIS and for the prosecution of ISIS crimes.

"We are delighted that Belgium Parliament has formally recognized the Yazidi Genocide. We are grateful to MPs and the entire People of Belgium for the acknowledgement and support," Murad Ismael, president and co-founder of the Sinjar Academy, told Kurdistan 24.

"This means a lot to our people who are still recovering and in many ways still enduring the genocide."

Le Monde

2 Juillet 2021

Madjid Zerrouky, Ghazal Golshiri

La colère froide des Iraniennes et des Iraniens face aux autorités

L'élection présidentielle, largement boycottée, a libéré une parole de profonde défiance envers le régime. Le lien entre une partie de la société et le régime semble brisé.

Ce sont des affiches électorales déchirées en pleine rue devant une caméra de télévision étrangère ; des débats politiques spontanés dans les transports, les rues, sur les réseaux sociaux... des grèves et des mouvements sociaux qui se multiplient.

C'est une colère, froide, qui s'exprime dans les rues de la capitale iranienne, avant et après l'élection présidentielle du 18 juin, massivement boy-

cottée à Téhéran, qui a vu arriver au pouvoir l'ultraconservateur Ebrahim Raïssi, avec un niveau d'abstention de 74 % à Téhéran (51,8 % au niveau national). Et une parole qui se libère, un an après les manifestations meurtrières de l'année 2019, où, déjà, l'autocensure et la peur avaient laissé place à la colère.

Si les autorités admettent du bout des lèvres que la population a des raisons d'être mé-

contente, le lien entre une partie de la société et le régime semble brisé. Ce sont les « pieds-nus », la classe défavorisée iranienne, soutien traditionnel de la République islamique, qui font aujourd'hui part de leur frustration face au mauvais état de l'économie et au blocage politique dans le pays. En 2019 déjà, quand des milliers d'Iraniens se sont soulevés contre l'incurie des autorités après l'annonce d'une augmentation des prix de l'es-

sence, la majorité des centaines de manifestants tués affichait un même profil : jeunes et appartenant aux couches pauvres.

Pendant les semaines qui ont précédé le scrutin de juin, des scènes autrefois inimaginables ont été vues par des Iraniens, diffusées massivement sur les réseaux sociaux. Ces « tribunes libres », organisées dans tout le pays, dans les parcs et dans les rues, ont été

autant d'actes d'accusation adressés au régime. Filmées de près au téléphone portable, elles témoignaient d'une libération de la parole et du recul de la peur.

« Vous êtes tous la même merde »

« Les enfants de ceux qui scandent "Mort à l'Amérique !" vivent eux-mêmes aux Etats-Unis... avec l'argent qui appartient au peuple, disait une femme, visage découvert, qui prenait à témoin l'assistance, dans un parc de Téhéran, en faisant face à un membre du clergé venu lui apporter la contradiction. Raïssi lui-même a été à la tête de la justice. Quels voleurs a-t-il punis, alors qu'il nous parle maintenant de vouloir mener une guerre contre la corruption ? Vous êtes tous la même merde. »

Ou encore ce jeune homme, début juin, qui qualifiait le système politique iranien de « dictature ». « En novembre 2019, ils ont augmenté le prix de l'essence et 1 500 personnes ont été tuées dans les rues [chiffre rapporté par l'agence Reuters, alors qu'Amnesty International parle d'au moins 304 victimes]. M. Khamenei [le Guide suprême] a dit, pour seule réponse, qu'il n'était pas spécialiste de la question. Je n'irai pas voter. En mémoire de Navid Afkari [un lutteur exécuté en septembre 2020 après avoir été arrêté et condamné pour avoir manifesté], qui a été assassiné dans sa prison et enterré en pleine nuit. Je n'irai pas voter, pour ses frères, toujours emprisonnés. Je finirai peut-être moi aussi dans un sac à la fin de ma prise de parole... »

« J'irai voter pour que mes allocations sociales ne soient pas coupées. Mais j'écrirai sur mon bulletin le nom d'un acteur indien », renchérisait un vieil homme, filmé depuis la ville religieuse de Machhad (nord-est), un bastion ultraconservateur. Quand d'autres évoquaient l'impossibilité d'acheter de la viande « depuis deux ans »...



Un portrait du Guide suprême Ali Khamenei, à Téhéran, le 20 juin 2021. MORTEZA NIKOUBAZL / AFP

Le 18 juin, l'abstention, principale crainte des autorités, a en effet cohabité avec un nombre inédit de votes nuls et blancs : quatre millions, soit 13 % des suffrages exprimés. Un nouveau record. « Nous n'avons plus confiance en eux. Nous n'avons plus d'avenir, et les choses deviennent de plus en plus difficiles dans ce pays », résumait Mohammad, un comptable de 26 ans, le lendemain du scrutin à Téhéran. Problème « systémique »

Même le « bol d'air frais » auquel aspire le régime, qui serait la conséquence d'une levée rapide des sanctions internationales après un nouvel accord sur le dossier nucléaire de Téhéran, en discussion en ce moment avec les signataires à Vienne, laisse sceptique.

« J'ai bien peur qu'une partie de l'argent qui va rentrer par la porte ne ressorte pas la fenêtre, souligne l'économiste Hossein Rafghar, professeur à l'université Al-Zahra, à Téhéran. Les sanctions ont quelque part eu un impact secondaire. Nous payons de très mauvais choix économiques qui ont été faits dans le pays en interne et qui n'ont pas pu atténuer l'im-

pact des pressions extérieures américaines. A commencer par la gestion catastrophique des taux de change de la monnaie. Lesquels ont été gonflés pour couvrir les déficits budgétaires de l'Etat par exemple. » Selon lui, le problème est « systémique » : une économie de rente et un « capitalisme de connivence », oligarchique. A rebours des idéaux proclamés par la République islamique d'Iran, qui, sur le papier, a érigé la réduction des inégalités sociales en dogme.

« Ici, on travaille pour que la vie passe. Pas pour la vivre », glisse un autre Téhéranais, Amir. Ce qui ne pouvait paraître que comme un désagrément matériel lui a empoisonné la vie une semaine durant. Ce samedi du mois de juin, il patiente devant une succursale d'Iran Khodro, un concessionnaire automobile. La pièce détachée dont il avait besoin est soit importée et hors de prix, soit pas disponible sur le marché, lui avait annoncé le garagiste. Très vite, la discussion a dévié vers l'élection présidentielle de la veille, qu'ils ont boycottée, et qui ne leur inspirait qu'un mot : « Pessimisme ». « J'étais déjà pessimiste, je le suis en-

core plus ! Ces dernières années, le pays plonge. Les pauvres sont de plus en plus pauvres. Le régime a perdu toute sa légitimité auprès de nous. Comment s'en sortir ? J'habite un appartement de 70 mètres carrés dans un quartier moyen de la ville. La caution ? C'est 50 millions [de tomans, soit 1 800 euros, au prix du marché noir, soit vingt-cinq fois plus que le salaire minimum]. En plus d'un loyer mensuel de 5 millions. Rapportez cela aux salaires. »

Mais pour le sociologue Hatam Ghaderi, joint par téléphone à Téhéran, « il n'y a pas d'issue au blocage politique actuel. Ni d'alternative pour qu'un système politique démocratique, pluraliste et tolérant voie le jour ». Malgré le profond mécontentement du peuple, il considère « peu probable » l'émergence de grands mouvements de contestation, « en raison de l'absence d'un slogan commun qui fédérerait les différentes couches contestataires ». « Toutes cherchent à résoudre leurs problèmes de manière individuelle. » Selon M. Ghaderi, il est fort probable qu'à moyen terme la répression se renforce.

July 4, 2021
By Ayla Jean Yackley

Economic slide sends support for Erdogan to all-time low

Hediye Bas blames the dams, highways and network of tunnels cutting through the wooded Ikizdere Valley in north-east Turkey for choking water supplies and stunting her crops. Now work on a planned quarry is proving a breaking point and eroding her support for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Bas and other villagers in Erdogan's ancestral province of Rize are trying to stop the excavation of 20m tonnes of stone for a new port 40km away on the Black Sea coast.

Dynamite has already blasted off chunks of the mountain for an access road, briefly turning the stream where Bas' family fishes an unnatural turquoise. For the quarry to operate, up to 1m trees will be felled and explosives will turn nearby vegetable patches toxic, while biodiversity in an adjoining protected area will be imperilled, a local conservation group has warned.

Erdogan "probably thought we would support any project he undertakes here because he wins almost all of our votes. But I won't vote for him any more", said Bas. "No one from the village finds work in these projects, they just deprive us of the valley we rely on for income."

The rare protest in one of the president's strongholds is emblematic of broader discontent with his economic stewardship that polls suggest is hitting support for the ruling Justice and Development party (AKP) across the country. Inflation has been stuck in double digits for most of the past four years and unemployment is about 14 per cent.



Turkish villager Hediye Bas says locals in Rize regret not opposing earlier construction projects in the region © Ayla Jean Yackley/FT

The \$200m port is part of \$325bn of infrastructure investment planned in Turkey over the next decade. Erdogan has pinned his economic hopes on the vast construction spree, including a \$15bn shipping canal that will render half of Istanbul an island. At the groundbreaking ceremony last month, Erdogan said these projects laid the foundation for the "construction of a great and powerful Turkey".

Bas is less concerned with such grandiose ambitions and more anxious about the cost of groceries and keeping her job at an auto-parts factory after she was furloughed during the coronavirus pandemic. She said she was dismissed as a union representative after joining the protest. "It's very expensive here. When you go to the grocery store, there is absolutely nothing that you can buy with small money," she said.

The relentless drive to build has sparked dissent, with critics accusing a handful of companies of profiteering from projects, foisting the financial and environmental

costs on the rest of the country. In Rize, they point to two sea-ports already operating below capacity within 70km of the new project.

"It is difficult for the government to justify the cost of megaprojects to the public when household finances are suffering and people are worried about their livelihoods and kitchen expenses," said Can Selcuki, director of the *Turkiye Raporu* polling agency.

A series of opinion polls show support for the AKP at historic lows. A June survey by *Turkiye Raporu* found it had fallen to 26 per cent. Turkey's next election is set for 2023, but almost 60 per cent of respondents wanted snap polls. The agency's May poll showed Erdogan — long Turkey's most popular politician — lagging behind three opposition figures mooted as presidential candidates. The "fundamental consensus" behind the slump was widespread unhappiness with the economy, said Selcuki.

Erdogan has dominated Turkish

politics for two decades, overseeing a tripling of GDP that lifted millions out of poverty. But his dramatic consolidation of power in recent years has coincided with political volatility, including a 2016 coup attempt, an aggressive foreign policy that put him at odds with western trading partners and unorthodox economic policies that deterred foreign investors and hit the country's finances.

In Rize, he retains hero status. Welcome to Erdogan country, reads a billboard on the road to the provincial capital, also called Rize and home to the Recep Tayyip Erdogan University. Enormous images of the president adorn buildings in the city of 150,000, where he won 79 per cent of the vote in the 2018 presidential election.

But even here voices of dissent have emerged. Mehmet Ali Sancaktutan, who quit the AKP two years ago, said neighbours warned him to leave his home in nearby Guneyso — where Erdogan spent part of his childhood — after he was detained by police for complaining about the president's handling of the economy in a YouTube interview in June.

"I believed our president, a son of Rize, would save us, but he has lost touch with our problems," said Sancaktutan. "People are miserable, worried about putting food on the table, but we only hear about building projects."

Saltuk Deniz, the provincial chair of the main opposition Republican People's party, said his party had tripled its share of the vote in the last local election.



5 July 2021

5 Kurdish inmates executed by Iranian authorities over past 2 days

Five ethnic Kurdish prisoners were executed by the Iranian authorities in Urmia Central Prison in Western Azerbaijan over the past two days, head of Hengaw Human Rights Organization Arsalan Yarahmadi told Zhyan English on Sunday (July 5).

On Sunday, three Kurdish inmates including brothers Bahaddin Qasemzadeh and Davood Qasemzadeh and Anvar Abdollahi were hanged to death by the Iranian judiciary after they were convicted of

qisas (retribution-in-kind, or pre-mediated) murders, according to Hengaw and Iran Human Rights, another watchdog.

Davood Qasemzadeh was severely injured in the backbone under torture by the Iranian forces in the prison, according to Hengaw.

On Saturday, Naser Azmoudeh and Shahriar Amiri were executed in the prison earlier in the morning on drug-related charges, reported

by Kurdistan Human Rights Organization (KMMH).

Another Kurdish prisoner, 32-years-old Hossein Kheiri from Lorestan provinces, is also on the death row after he was sentenced to death by a court in Tehran on charges of Moharebe (War against God) by destroying private sector's property to oppose the regime during the November 2019 protests, Hengaw said.

Iran has executed 119 inmates in-

cluding 21 Kurds since the outset of 2021, Ahmadi said. Since 2021, Iran has executed 6,194 including 160 women and 63 juveniles., according to Iran Human Rights.

"There are no legal distinctions made between murder and manslaughter, whether voluntary or involuntary in Iran, those charged under the umbrella term of "premeditated murder" will receive the death penalty regardless of intent and the circumstances," added the watchdog.



July 5, 2021

The HDP Closure Case Interview with Garo Paylan

Interview with Mr. Garo Paylan, a lawmaker of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). Mr. Paylan is from the Armenian community in Turkey. He is the founding member of the HDP. However, alongside tens of his colleagues, Mr. Paylan faces prosecution by the Turkish government as part of an extensive crackdown of the opposition.

Turkey has cruelly persecuted the Armenians and the Kurds for decades. The HDP was able to unite all the minorities in Turkey under its umbrella but is currently facing closure by the Turkish government and its authoritarian president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The HDP has had thousands of its members jailed since 2015, including its former co-leaders. Additionally, under President Erdogan, Turkey has become the world's largest prison for journalists, academics, and political activists. Erdogan's recent move to shut down the

HDP is a classic tactic by the Turkish state against democracy since the former governments have banned many political parties, including five major Kurdish parties, since 1990.

Mr. Paylan spoke about many issues facing Turkey and the HDP, including the indictment against the party and HDP's struggle to remain a political entity.

The HDP closure case is not a judiciary case but a political one.

The HDP was established eight years ago. The HDP is a diverse party and could convince people for a democratic solution for the Kurdish issue, the Armenian issue, and other problems.

Unfortunately, the peace process [between PKK and the government] had ended in 2015, and for six years, Erdogan and his nationalist partner is trying to defeat the

HDP, but we are standing still. They [Government] jailed thousands of our people, but the struggle is going on.

We have faced a trial case, which has been in the Supreme court of Turkey. With the direction of Erdogan and his nationalist partner, this case has opened. This is not a judicial case. This is a political case, and they could not defeat us in the political area; they are trying to shut our party in the judiciary area. We are going to defend our party, but whatever happens, the struggle is going to go on. This is our decision.

HDP aims to decentralize power in Turkey

The HDP is a romantic party. Maybe it's the only part that has all the identities and all the movements. All the people who ask for justice and equality and justice are in the HDP.

They are trying to criminalize my party because we don't have the media coverage. Every day, they are trying to blame my party with outrageous allegations, but I think most people believe that this is an operation of Erdogan and his nationalist partner. The allegations are about our speeches. Let's say it's all about our freedom of speech. We are asking for autonomy in Turkey. They say, 'you want to divide our country,' but we ask for decentralization of power. Erdogan wants to centralize power, we are asking for this decentralization of power, but they are labeling it as terrorist activism. In international law and current Turkish law, it's not a crime, but as I said, they have full control of the media in Turkey, and they're trying to criminalize my party. But with the support of the Turkish people and with the solidarity of the international actors, I think we will get rid of these allegations, and we will save our party.

Erdogan will decide on the closure case.

Erdogan is going to decide when the constitutional court is going to give the decision, it is going to take at least five months, but it's going to extend to a year. Our struggle is going to be decisive about it, and the solidarity around us is going to be decisive when the constitutional court is going to decide if the HDP is going to be shut down or not. Erdogan is an opportunist leader. Before every decision of his, he looks at what is going to be the consequences. If the price is big, he is not going to give that decision despite his nationalist partner's demands. But if we don't have enough solidarity coming from all over the world, then he might give that decision to shut down HDP because he doesn't have the popular vote now.

The opposition wants to end Erdogan's ruling.

The opposition camp now wants to get rid of Erdogan and wants to get rid of the one-man rule of the country. Now we are around 60%, but we are [HDP] the kingmakers. We have around 15% of the vote, and he thinks if he [Erdogan] can get rid of the HDP, he can take the popular vote. We are asking from the opposition parties to have solidarity with the HDP. Still, that solidarity, unfortunately, is not enough because they are somehow nationalists, and Erdogan is blaming them for working with HDP. They say, 'no, we don't have any ties with HDP.' Because of that, we are a little bit lonely in the political area, but we are not lonely among our people.

Erdogan is trying to satisfy the Biden Administration.

Erdogan is an opportunist leader, and he saw that the Biden administration is against him. He is trying to give anything the Biden administration might want. He says, 'I'm not going to do any terrible acts in the eastern Mediterranean, I'm not going to act terrible acts in Libya or Syria, and you are withdrawing from Afghanistan, and I can stay there as part of troops of the Western countries.' I guess the Biden administration might be influenced by that. So, the Biden administra-

tion might know [how to] appease Erdogan in return for Erdogan's acts which the Biden administration might like. I guess the interest of the Western countries, civilized countries, is a democratic Turkey, not a one-man rule to country it's never going to be stable. One day Erdogan will do this, and another, he is going to do the vice-a-versa.

The world needs a democratic Turkey.

We need a democratic Turkey, of course for Turkish people's sake, but at the same time, the world needs a democratic Turkey because Turkey is a Muslim majority country, and it was a candidate to be a democratic country and could influence all the Middle East. Now we lost that dream, but we can have that dream again because there are millions of people in Turkey who are fighting for democracy. And if we can have that democracy with that, I guess the polarization in the world somehow will end from the Muslim world, and the Christian world and the Muslim world will have a democratic example, that will be very important.

It's not a fight between Turks and Kurds but between autocracy and democracy

We suffered so much just because of this nationalist ideology. We suffered the genocide, and that crime was unpunished. That unpunished crimes led to new crimes in this one-hundred-year century. Kurds are struggling for democracy. That's what I'm sure of because they are not struggling only for them. They believe even if they can get their rights, but if Armenians are not free, I can't be free as well. So this is very important; they are struggling for me as well. They are struggling for justice for the Armenian genocide; they are struggling for Alawites' rights; we are struggling together for LGBT rights. So, nobody is free when somebody is not free. We believe in that. So this is not a fight between Turks and Kurds. This is a fight between an autocrat and the ones who are fighting for democracy.

90% of the Armenian community vote for HDP

At least 90% [of Armenians] vote for the HDP because they saw that. The only party that recognizes the Armenian Genocide is the HDP. The only party which has some deputy co-chair is HDP. No, the only party which is a diverse party is HDP. The rest of the parties are some nationalists, conservative nationalists, or secular nationalists, but they are all nationalists. So most of the time, people in Turkey are about voting for HDP, but they are silent in this kind of nationalist atmosphere where they can't show their solidarity openly. Maybe I am in charge, but they have the right to be afraid because, in this kind of nationalist atmosphere, terrible provocations happened against them. So the fear factor is on the table, unfortunately, but we used to be more vocal five, six years ago when we had the peace process. So we believe when Kurds have their rights, we will have our rights as well. So we are struggling together.

The majority of Turkey were Pro the peace process

Erdogan convinced the Turkish people of the peace process, and only several years ago, when the peace process was in charge, 75% of the people who are pro-peace process and Erdogan convinced for that. But after he had the power struggle with the Gulanists, he turned his face to the status quo; he turned his face to the nationalist party. Now they are working together. If he finds another way, I guess it is so hard nowadays, but let's say the world asks him, return to democracy. Not only for him, for his party, I guess he might try it, but it's so hard for him to turn back to democracy or a peace process.

Opposition parties should establish a democratic coalition

We are asking the opposition parties to establish a democratic coalition. It doesn't mean a coalition for the elections because we need our institutions are suffering, and they are all demolished. We need a restoration period; we need to have an agreement about how we are going to restore our country. But unfortunately, there are two camps in Turkey. One is a

conservative nationalist camp, and the other camp, the secular nationalist camp. Each of them blames the other for having some relation with HDP. The two sides don't have any courage to have a coalition with the Kurds or the HDP. I am so sorry about it because we always ask the opposition, of course, we have different thoughts; there's one thing, we have a common thought is to get rid of one man rule country, and to turn back to a parliamentary system.

The HDP is against Erdogan's expansionist policies

We have been opposing that [expansionist policies] for years now. We are always opposing in the parliament. We shouldn't intervene with our neighbors' problems. First of all, we should establish peace in Turkey. We always say this is going to influence Syria, Iraq, and other neighbors as well. But if you follow nationalist policies in Turkey, how can you transfer peace to Syria or Iraq? So Turkey is the key. I'm at the budget committee. Turkey is spending so much money on sophisticated weapons, but Turkish people are unemployed, and they have economic problems. Why don't we spend our money on our people's interests and people's problems? But we are wasting money on sophisticated weapons.

We are making acts in Eastern Mediterranean, Libya, and Syria. It's not solving the problems, it's making the problems bigger. So we need to focus on peace in Turkey. I am sure if we can have it, that's going to influence all the region. Turkey is the key, and we will have that democratic Turkey with the struggle of ours and our democratic friends. I am still optimistic about it, but the world should care about democratic Turkey. I sometimes see in Washington DC and capitals they sometimes think Turkey is a lost cause. We don't like that. Turkey is not a lost cause. There are still people who are fighting for democracy in Turkey. I guess one way or the other, we are going to win that fight for democracy.

Au Kurdistan d'Irak, le PKK de nouveau la cible d'une campagne militaire turque

Dimanche 4 juillet, une manifestation en soutien aux Kurdes d'Irak contre l'armée turque a eu lieu à Paris. Depuis plusieurs mois, la Turquie a repris son offensive au Kurdistan irakien contre le Parti des travailleurs kurdes (PKK), toujours présent dans la région.

« Silence, on bombarde le Kurdistan. » Dimanche 4 juillet à Paris, des centaines de manifestants répondaient à l'appel de la diaspora kurde et défilaient dans les rues pour « défendre le Kurdistan contre l'invasion turque ». En effet, le 23 avril, la Turquie a lancé une nouvelle campagne militaire dans le nord de l'Irak, au cœur de la région des monts de Qandil, contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), une organisation considérée par Ankara et par ses alliés occidentaux dont l'Europe, l'Otan et les États-Unis, comme organisation terroriste.

Depuis les années 1980, les Turcs interviennent ponctuellement au Kurdistan irakien. Pour eux, les velléités indépendantistes des Kurdes, présents également en Turquie (ainsi qu'en Syrie et en Iran), sont une menace pour l'intégrité du territoire national. Pour s'en prémunir, ils ont fait du PKK leur cible et tentent, partout sur la ceinture kurde du Moyen-Orient, d'affaiblir leurs positions.

En 2019, l'armée turque débute une nouvelle opération militaire baptisée « Griffes du Tigre » qui vise à pénétrer plus en profondeur en territoire kurde du nord de l'Irak. Cette campagne se double en juin 2020 de l'opération « Serre d'aigle ». Et, depuis quelques mois, le Kurdistan irakien connaît une recrudescence des attaques dans le « silence assourdissant de la communauté internationale », dénon-

cent les manifestants proches du PKK.

Une cécité coupable, selon Agit Polat, porte-parole du Conseil démocratique kurde en France (CDK-F) qui déclare à l'AFP, « nous alertons la France mais aussi l'ONU : l'intégrité territoriale de l'Irak est violée par la Turquie sous le prétexte de la lutte contre le terrorisme, la Turquie essaie de se justifier avec cet argument-là. Il faut que la France rompe ce silence vis-à-vis de la Turquie ».

Une communauté internationale dans l'embarras

Il est vrai que sur ce terrain, la Turquie agit sans aucun mandat international. En pénétrant sur le sol irakien et en menant ses opérations militaires, elle viole manifestement le droit international. Sur ce dossier, la position française est plus qu'ambiguë.

Autorisant les manifestations pro-kurdes affiliées au PKK, tout en continuant de qualifier cette organisation de terroriste, la France parle deux langues, ce qui est régulièrement critiqué par Ankara. Pour Didier Billion, directeur adjoint de l'Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques (Iris), cette ambiguïté s'explique car « la véritable préoccupation de Paris sur ce dossier, ce sont les djihadistes français toujours prisonniers de groupes kurdes liés au PKK. La France ne peut pas être trop sévère vis-à-vis du PKK, en raison des



tractations secrètes qui existent entre le gouvernement français et les Kurdes du PKK quant à l'avenir de ces djihadistes ».

Du côté de l'Irak, là aussi les réactions sont ambivalentes et dépendent du climat des relations entre Bagdad et Ankara. Toujours selon le spécialiste de la Turquie, « quand il existe des tensions entre la Turquie et l'Irak, Bagdad se montre intransigeant. Lorsque au contraire les relations se réchauffent, comme en ce moment, les condamnations se font beaucoup moins vives », explique-t-il.

Les Kurdes d'Irak entre solidarités kurdes et pragmatisme

Quant aux premiers concernés, les Kurdes d'Irak, leur destin est en quelque sorte lié au PKK au nom d'une solidarité kurde. Ils ne mèneront sans doute jamais d'attaques contre eux et évitent de condamner fermement leur

présence. Toutefois, cela ne les empêche pas d'être en désaccord politique avec eux. « Le clan Barzani qui dirige politiquement le Kurdistan irakien dans le cadre de l'État fédéral d'Irak, poursuit Didier Billion, a l'espoir d'entretenir de meilleures relations avec la Turquie pour des raisons politiques et financières. Dans cette perspective, le PKK est l'empêcheur de tout. »

Si les raids ponctuels de l'armée turque visent prioritairement des bases militaires dans les régions montagneuses du Kurdistan irakien et ne menacent pas immédiatement la vie des civils, Didier Billion prévient que, « dans ses prochaines missions, la Turquie semble vouloir s'attaquer à un camp d'entraînement de combattants du PKK qui, lui, est situé près de villages habités par des civils. Le risque qu'il y ait des victimes parmi eux n'est donc aujourd'hui pas significatif, mais il pourrait le devenir ».

Irak : 14 roquettes tirées contre une base militaire abritant des soldats américains

Qatorze roquettes tirées en Irak mercredi 7 juillet ont visé la base militaire d'Ain al-Assad (ouest) abritant des soldats américains, a annoncé sur Twitter le colonel Wayne Marotto, porte-parole de la coalition internationale antiterroriste en Irak.

«À environ 12h30 heure locale, la base aérienne d'Ain Al-Assad a été attaquée par 14 roquettes. Elles sont tombées sur la base et dans son périmètre. Les systèmes de défense ont été activés. Les informations préliminaires font état de

trois blessés légers», a écrit le colonel Marotto. Auparavant, un haut responsable de l'armée irakienne avait fait état à l'AFP de sept roquettes tirées sur la base.

49 attaques contre les intérêts américains en 2021

Il s'agit de la dernière d'une série d'attaques désormais quasi quotidiennes contre les intérêts américains en Irak. La base d'Ain al-Assad, dans l'ouest désertique de la province d'Anbar, a déjà été la cible de trois roquettes lundi, et quelques heures plus tard, l'ambassade amé-

ricaine à Bagdad avait été menacée par un drone, qui a été abattu.

Mardi soir, une attaque à l'aide de drones piégés a été perpétrée contre l'aéroport international d'Erbil, au Kurdistan irakien (nord), qui abrite également une base de la coalition internationale. Au total, 49 attaques ont visé des intérêts américains depuis le début de l'année en Irak, où sont déployés 2.500 soldats américains dans le cadre de la coalition antiterroriste internationale.

L'utilisation nouvelle des drones est un casse-tête pour la coalition car ces en-

gins volants peuvent échapper aux batteries de défense C-RAM, installées par l'armée américaine pour défendre ses troupes. Ces nouvelles attaques interviennent une semaine après des frappes américaines contre des positions du Hachd al-Chaabi, une puissante force paramilitaire pro-iranienne en Irak et en Syrie, qui ont tué une dizaine de combattants. Le Hachd al-Chaabi, force incontournable en Irak, salue régulièrement le lancement de roquettes et drones piégés, mais n'en revendique jamais la responsabilité.

Kurdistan au féminin

07 Juillet 2021

Ouverture de la première école de musique kurde pour enfants

L'école de musique kurde pour enfants, « Zarok Ma » a ouvert ses portes mardi à Amed (Diyarbakir). L'établissement est situé dans le centre de musique Ma, fondé en 2017, et propose des cours pour enfants, dès la naissance jusqu'à l'âge de cinq ans. (Les parents des bébés à naître sont incités à participer aux cours pendant la grossesse.)

La cérémonie d'ouverture s'est déroulée en présence de représentants d'organisations de la société civile et de parents



intéressés. Les invités ont été accueillis par Şêrko Kanîwar et Evin Dûlek de l'équipe de Zarok Ma. Kanîwar, qui coordonne

le centre musical et fait partie du personnel enseignant de Zarok Ma, a décrit le nouveau projet comme la réalisation

des rêves des enfants kurdes et a remercié tous les supporters. « Zarok Ma est la première école de musique kurde au monde. Nous grandissons de jour en jour, vague après vague », a déclaré Kanîwar.

Les discours ont été suivis d'une représentation de l'orchestre de musique et de danses du centre MA. Le premier concert de Zarok Ma est prévu le 10 juillet.

Une attaque aux drones piégés a visé l'aéroport international d'Erbil, dans le nord de l'Irak

L'attaque n'a fait ni blessés ni dégâts matériels. Les intérêts américains en Irak sont la cible d'attaques répétées et rapprochées depuis quelques mois.

Une attaque aux « drones piégés » a été menée, mardi 6 juillet dans la soirée, contre l'aéroport international d'Erbil, proche du consulat américain de cette ville du nord de l'Irak, a rapporté l'unité antiterroriste du Kurdistan irakien dans un communiqué. Une attaque confirmée par le porte-parole de la coalition, le colonel Wayne Marotto.

L'attaque, qui s'est déroulée vers 22 h 30 (21 h 30 à Paris), n'a pas fait de blessés ni de dégâts matériels, et les pom-

piers ont maîtrisé un début d'incendie, a précisé le communiqué.

L'aéroport d'Erbil, où se trouve une base militaire de la coalition internationale de lutte contre l'organisation djihadiste Etat islamique (EI), a déjà été visé en avril par une attaque menée par un drone rempli d'explosifs.

Ces derniers mois, les intérêts américains en Irak sont la cible d'attaques répétées et de plus en plus rapprochées. Lundi, un drone piégé qui visait l'ambassade américaine à Bagdad a été abattu, quelques heures après une attaque à la roquette contre une base abritant des soldats américains dans l'ouest de l'Irak. Les Etats-Unis

accusent systématiquement les factions pro-Irak d'être responsables de ces opérations.

Depuis le début de l'année, quelque 48 attaques ont visé les intérêts des Etats-Unis dans le pays, où sont déployés 2 500 soldats américains dans le cadre de la coalition antiterroriste internationale.

Inquiétudes autour des attaques de drones

L'utilisation nouvelle des drones est un casse-tête pour la coalition, car ces engins volants peuvent échapper aux batteries de défense C-RAM, installées par l'armée américaine pour défendre ses troupes.

Ces nouvelles attaques interviennent une semaine après des frappes américaines contre des positions du Hachd Al-Chaabi, une puissante force paramilitaire pro-iranienne en Syrie et en Irak, qui ont tué une dizaine de combattants. Le Hachd Al-Chaabi salue régulièrement le lancement de roquettes et drones piégés, mais n'en revendique jamais la responsabilité.

Signe que les Etats-Unis s'inquiètent des nouvelles attaques au drone, ils ont récemment annoncé offrir jusqu'à trois millions de dollars (2,5 millions d'euros) pour des informations sur les attaques visant leurs intérêts en Irak.

THE JORDAN TIMES

July 7 2021

By Michael Jansen

Daesh taking advantage of deteriorating conditions, recruiting disaffected young people

Most of the foreign takfiri fighters held in Syria's containment camps and living in the country's north-western Idlib province are spurned by their home countries and their wives and hapless children are rejected for repatriation. Consequently, these people have nowhere to go.

Hundreds of takfiri fighters are imprisoned by the US-backed Syrian-Kurdish-dominated Democratic Forces regime in

the northeast while as many as 30,000 are stuck in Idlib.

The 70 per cent of Syria under government control does not want them. Iraq and the 50 countries from which they come reject them. This is true also for Hay'at Tahrir Al Sham, which rules Idlib with an iron hand and the Kurds who hold 25 per cent of Syria's territory. They are compelled to guard and provide for the takfiris. They are forever prisoners of an unfinished, decade-long war.

Al Hol camp in north-eastern Syria near the Iraq border houses 43,000 mainly women and children of fighters as well as low level fighters: half are Iraqis, a quarter Syrians, and the rest non-Arab foreigners. The UN children's fund, UNICEF, estimates that 22,000 are children. Since there is no schooling or sports programmes for them, they are growing up without something to do, without a homeland, without a future.

Conditions are crowded and harsh. Residents are constantly confronted by Daesh loyalists seeking to intimidate, impose control and conservative restrictions on them, and secure fresh recruits for their cause. Children as young as four or five are indoctrinated by Daesh and often verbally abuse or throw stones at camp guards and visitors. Al Hol is a hell hole.

The situation is better in the much smaller al-Roj camp in

the same area. It houses 1,400 persons, the majority Iraqis but also some Europeans. Daesh does not have a firm grip on Al Roj residents. Iraqis remain in the camp because they have nowhere to go as their villages and homes have been destroyed or former neighbours who were persecuted by Daesh do not want them to return.

Early last month, the Dutch government repatriated a woman, who faced no criminal charges, and three children who had been living in al-Roj camp. This was, however, only the second time Dutch citizens were allowed to go home from northern Syria. Two orphans were repatriated in June 2019. A British woman Shamima Begum, 21, who travelled from London to join Daesh as a teenager, was moved for her own safety from Al Hol to Al Roj. She has lost her British nationality and has been refused permission to return home. Britain is among the countries which do not repatriate their nationals.

US envoy to the anti-Daesh coalition, John Godfrey warned that those held in Syria's camps "constitute a potential threat to security in the region and beyond". The US has repatriated 28 of its citizens, of whom 12 are adults and 10 have been prosecuted or are under prosecution.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on US allies to repatriate their nationals and

described the imprisonment of 10,000 suspected Daesh fighters, some 2,000 of whom are foreigners, as "untenable".

COVID has slowed the repatriation of children. Only about 1,000 have been sent home since

the fall of Daesh in Iraq in 2017.

Ironically, the US expresses concern about the residents of internment camps in north-east Syria while Washington and its allies tolerate the rule of Al Qaeda offshoot Hay'at Tahrir Al Sham (HTS) in the north-western province of Idlib. HTS —

which operates under Turkish protection — has consolidated its grip on Idlib over the past year by forcing smaller factions to merge or dissolve and send fighters home. According to Al Monitor, HTS has now tackled Jund Al Sham, a small, mainly Chechen group, headed by Muslim Al Shishani who rejected this demand and asked HTS to allow the faction to remain independent and focus only on the battle with the Syrian army while staying out of provincial social and political affairs.

However, HTS is intent on asserting control over Idlib and eliminating other factions with the aim of establishing a one party administration and a separate, fundamentalist entity in Idlib. This would divide Syria, pose a threat to this region comparable to the false "caliphate" created by Daesh and amount to a takfiri base on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. While HTS may claim it does not intend to export its ideology or fighters, the very existence of such an entity would amount to a fundamen-

talist challenge to regional and European governments.

Meanwhile, Daesh elements are taking advantage of deteriorating conditions in Iraq and Syria to regroup and recruit disaffected young people. While post-war Syrian reconstruction and economic revival have been prevented by US sanctions, in both countries drought, poor harvests, corruption, rising unemployment and increasing poverty are creating an economic crisis. Daesh is making a come back in mountainous northern Iraq and rural western Iraq as well as desert areas of eastern Syria.

Having replaced secular Baathists in Iraq with sectarian Shiites and waged war against the Baath in Syria, weakening the anti-takfiri government, the Western powers incompetently led by the US, cannot deal with the chaos they have created. The hurried US and NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan after 20 years of failing to eliminate the Taliban can only encourage and empower takfiris.

July 8 2021
By Laurie Mylroie

US to send new Army brigade to Erbil in troop rotation

The US Army announced on Tuesday that it would send the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team to Iraq later this summer to support the anti-ISIS Coalition, formally known as CJTF-OIR (Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve.)

The Stryker Brigade will come out of Fort Carson, Colorado, and some 1,800 personnel will replace the 256th Infantry Brig-

ade Combat Team from the Louisiana National Guard, which will return to the US.

The 256th Infantry Brigade deployed to Erbil last January, when it replaced troops from the 82nd Airborne.

Over the course of 2020, CJTF-OIR consolidated its positions into two major bases: Erbil International Airport in the Kurdistan Region and Ain al-

Asad Air Base in Iraq's western Al-Anbar province.

At the same time, Coalition forces shifted from a combat role to an assist and advisory role, intended, at least in part, to reduce pressure from pro-Iranian-elements in Iraq, including Iranian-backed militias, that aims to end the US military presence there.

Nonetheless, such pressure

has continued. Over the past three days—Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday—the militias have carried out four attacks on US targets in Iraq.

On Monday, there were two assaults: an attack on Ain al-Asad Airbase, involving three rockets and an attempted drone attack on the US embassy in Baghdad. On Tuesday, there was a drone attack on Erbil International Airport, and on Wed-

nesday, there was another, bigger rocket attack on Ain Al-Asad, involving 14 rockets, and causing minor injuries.

The US has defenses against missiles and rockets, but not, so far, against the relatively new explosive-laden drones. That said, the drone targeting the US embassy was shot down, so, perhaps, the technology to shoot down drones is emerging rapidly.

In key respects, the drones pose a greater threat than the rockets, because when they use GPS technology, they can be much more accurate—which the drones used by the Iranian-backed militias now do.

Source of GPS Coordinates Used to Attack Covert Sites in the Kurdistan Region?

Earlier this year, the CIA hanger at Erbil Airport was attacked by a drone, as was the Harir Airfield, which is used by the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC.)

That the location of such sensitive sites was known to hostile forces "alarmed Pentagon and White House officials," The New York Times said.

Miriam Taha Thompson, a Lebanese-American, was based in Erbil, where she served as a



A view of the Ain al-Assad air base hosting US forces in Iraq in the western Anbar province, July 8, 2021. (Photo: Ayman Henna/AFP)

translator for US Special Forces. She fell in love with a man who had ties to Lebanon's Hezbollah and began spying for Hezbollah at his direction.

She was arrested in February 2020 and then pled guilty to charges of spying for the terrorist group. Last month, she was sentenced to 23 years in prison.

Previously, this reporter suggested that she might have been the source of the information about the location of the sensitive sites and followed the US Justice Department in suggesting that the information she passed onto Hezbollah—and by extension to Iranian intelli-

gence—could have come from her search of classified US computer databases.

But if Thompson was the source of the details about the coordinates, there is another possibility. Perhaps, she just had a smartwatch and recorded the location of each site she visited in the course of her work. In that case, every such site would now be vulnerable to drone attacks.

Mustafa al-Kadhimi to visit Washington

US officials have disclosed no date, but it is widely reported that Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi will visit Washington later this month, when

he will meet US President Joe Biden.

The Biden administration has repeatedly said that it is committed to continuing the fight against ISIS—despite the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. That point is reinforced by the announced deployment of the Stryker Brigade to Erbil.

One can expect a continuation of the Strategic Dialogue, which was begun under Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. That would, most probably, include the presence and composition of US forces in Iraq, as well as how to stop the attacks on US targets by the Iranian-backed militias in Iraq.



8 Juillet 2021

Paris condamne des "actes de déstabilisation" en Irak

La France a condamné jeudi "avec la plus grande fermeté" les attaques qui se multiplient à Bagdad, en particulier contre les intérêts américains, en dénonçant dans un communiqué des "actes de déstabilisation".

«La multiplication des attaques

contre des emprises diplomatiques et les bases de la Coalition internationale contre Daech est inacceptable", a indiqué le ministère français des Affaires étrangères dans un communiqué. "Face à ces actes de déstabilisation qui portent atteinte à la sécurité de tous les Irakiens, la France

rappelle son attachement à la souveraineté de l'Irak ainsi qu'à la stabilité de la région autonome du Kurdistan".

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nonçant dans un communiqué des "actes de déstabilisation". "La multiplication des attaques contre des emprises diplomatiques et les bases de la Coalition internationale contre Daech est inacceptable", a indiqué le ministère français...



July 8, 2021
By Goran Sabah Ghafour

Local Erbil writer works to revive ancient Kurdish philosophy

In an attempt to prove that the Kurdish people have a rich history of both philosophy and ancient wisdom, a writer in Erbil has been devoting his time to the effort of translating and analyzing the works of Surawardi, the 12th century founder of a mystical school of thought known as illumination.

Although many Eastern and Western scholars agree that illumination, sometimes called illuminationism, is one of the more significant philosophies of the period, it is not widely studied in academia. There are, however, exceptions such as Henry Corbin, the French philosopher who calls Surawardi the “Master of Illumination.”

When Shahabaddin Yehya Surawardi (1155-1191) was young, he was trained Avicennan Peripateticism, a form of Islamic philosophy. He wrote that he was later spurred by a dream-vision in which Aristotle, dead for some 1,500 years at the time, appeared to him. This caused Surawardi to reject the teachings of his youth and undertake the task of reviving an older, related philosophical tradition.

Hoshang Mohammed, a contemporary Kurdish writer and translator from the capital city of the modern-day Kurdistan Region, states that Surawardi founded his school to revive ancient Kurdish wisdom, as opposed to a more Persian-centric view.

Surawardi’s teachings, identified with theosophy, are collectively known as the “science of lights,” something he claimed

he had perfected through mystical practice, reinforced later by logic and experience.

Due to his controversial arguments, thoughts, and ideas, he was criticized by the Islamic leadership of the time, leading to his death in 1191 at the hands of Saladdin, the sultan of Egypt and also an ethnic Kurd.

Hoshang thinks that Surawardi was not truly against the core teachings of Islam, nor was he against any other religions and ideologies. He was well-versed in the standard spiritual teachings of the time, out of which he created his own.

“One of Surawardi’s sources for his works was the holy Quran,” Mohammed says, but says it clearly wasn’t the only source drawn upon.

Surawardi’s books were published in Arabic, the lingua franca of the time and region. Mohammed thinks that they might have originally been written in Kurdish, but were never published as such for reasons that are now lost to history.

Dating Surawardi’s specific works can be challenging and not all of them have firm dates attached to them. John Walbridge, an expert in Islamic philosophy, names his major works as such: A book about the journey of the soul called Temples of Light, a tome describing his own philosophy entitled Flashes of Light and Intimations (1180), Philosophy of illumination (1186), Paths and Havens (1180s), and Opposites (1180-1185), a further explanation of various issues

discussed in his previous writings. Other short works available for study to modern academics include his letters and multiple other manuscripts.

Mohammed has so far translated three modern editions of Surawardi’s output from Arabic to Kurdish: The Philosophy of Illumination (2020); From the Letters of Surawardi (2020); and a smaller scale work called The Red Angel (2020). He has also analyzed these works in a book entitled “Reading Surawardi’s philosophy of illumination (2020). He is set to publish two more books about the great thinker: One that looks at epistemology from Surawardi’s perspective and another that casts illumination as a critical contemplation from Surawardi to Nietzsche.

Mohammed has taken this responsibility to also establish a cornerstone for a school of criticism for Kurdish literature. He told Kurdistan 24 that this philosophy proves that Kurdish people had their own philosophy and had an influential place in Eastern, Western, and Islamic cultures.

Mohammed says he has collected different kinds of evidence that show that Surawardi, also known as the “murdered master,” was indeed Kurdish. He lived in Kurdish-majority areas and was accompanied by Kurdish people in the following Kurdish cities and towns: Suraward, Maragha, Amed, Mardeen, Miafarqeen, and Aleppo.

Suraward is a village that belongs to Kurdistan, he says. “Ibn Hawqal says the majority

of Suraward dwellers are Kurdish, and the village resembles Sharezoor in its beauty.”

Mohammed goes back to the 13th century’s philosopher Ibn Khalakan, who referred to Surawardi as Kurdish, as well as Ibn Taimiya, who in his masterpiece clearly states, “Surawardi is Kurdish.” Other sources, he adds, refer to the name of the village as Suhward, Suraward, or Sutrabard as a village within Kurdistan territory.

Surawardi mixed pre-Islamic gnosis with Greek philosophy and synthesized it with Islamic wisdom. He thought that the Greek philosophers such as Plato and the Egyptian Hermes shared the same ancient wisdom long before and that his philosophy of illumination was its rediscovery.

Since none of his works was translated into Latin, though, he remained unknown in the West.

“In northwestern Iran, Sohravardi (Surawardi) carried out the great project of reviving the wisdom or theosophy of ancient pre-Islamic Zoroastrian Iran,” says Henry Corbin, the French philosopher.

When asked why he has chosen to focus so much of his effort and time on the old master, Mohammed says that Surawardi’s philosophy can guide those individuals who are lost today in the materialistic world.

Not only that, he adds, Surawardi can guide them to live and think better, think critically.

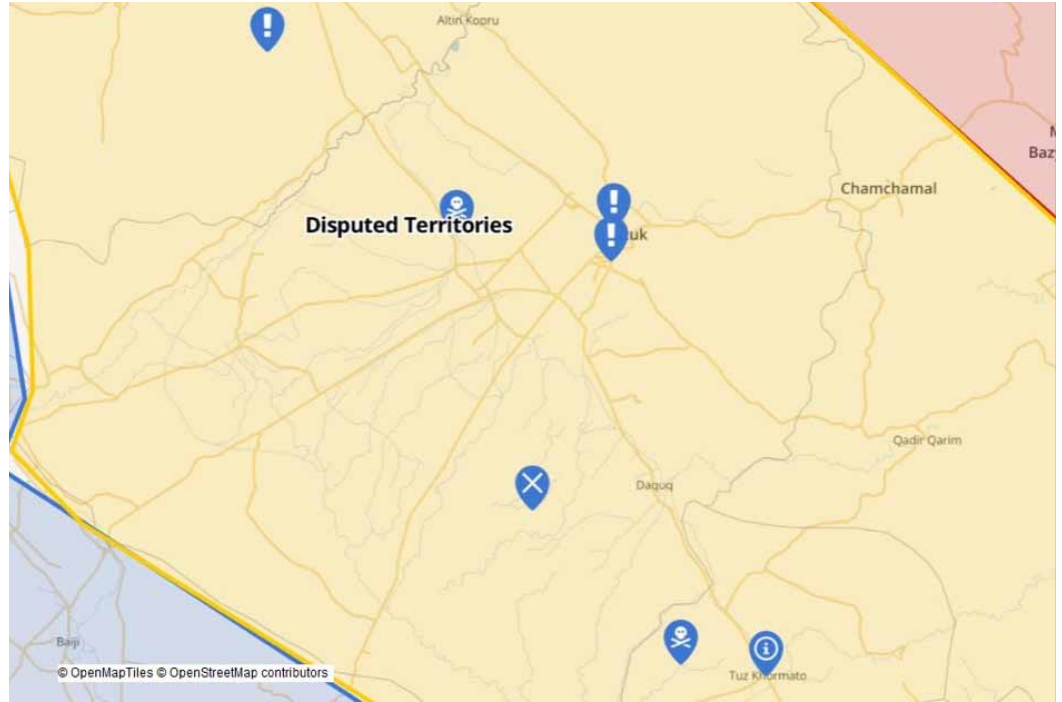
Kirkuk Minute July 8, 2021

Kirkuk

The National Security Directorate in Kirkuk prevented Ali al-Bayati, a member of the High Commission for Human Rights, from inspecting its prison. In a statement, al-Bayati said his visit was after a torture allegation by a former prisoner in Kirkuk.

On Wednesday, July 7th, a number of non-Kirkuki Arabs attempted to occupy a Kurdish village near Sargaran Sub-district. The occupiers had a memorandum signed by the acting Arab Governor Rakan Saed, permitting their act, but the Kurdish villagers prevented the takeover. After the incident, the police intervened, but the issue remained unsolved. The Arabization policies have restarted across the disputed territories since October 16, 2017.

Severe power shortages hit across Iraq, after ISIS (Dae'sh) targeted tens of towers with IEDs. Between June 30th and July 4th, several towers were down between Nineveh, Saladin and Kirkuk provinces, causing three power production stations to shut down in Kirkuk. Further, on Monday, July 5th, Da'esh terrorists blew up three more towers near the Rashad sub-district. Da'esh terrorists also shelled the North Gas Company (NGC) with rockets, the NGC produces gas used for power generation. According to a statement by NGC, the attack did not result in the loss of life or material damages. Meanwhile, the security forces announced the finding of three Da'esh hideouts between Hawija and Daquq district, an area that saw constant terror attacks in recent weeks.



The security situation in Kirkuk continues to deteriorate; a process started when Iranian-backed militias and Iraqi forces removed the Kurdish Peshmerga from the disputed territories in October of 2017.

On Wednesday, July 7th, the local police reported the seizure of 25 fuel tankers smuggled from the Department of Petroleum to a privately owned gas station. For weeks, Kirkuk has been suffering from a fuel crisis alongside other essential services.

Khanaqin

After widespread anti-government protests, the mayor's office and protestors reached a ten-point agreement providing that the government provide more electricity and water. The anti-government demonstrations shut down the international road

between Iraq and Iran due to a lack of essential services, mainly electricity and water.

Da'esh terrorists ambushed and killed five civilians, three Kurds and two Arabs, attempting to free four kidnapped Kurdish farmers near Jalawla (Golala) on Sunday. Two kidnapped farmers fled, but Da'esh terrorists drove the other two to an unknown area.

In a press conference, several civilian activists and public figures called to reduce the election campaign period from one month to ten days due to security, political, and service situations in the area. Iraq is set to hold its parliamentary election on October 10th of this year.

Tuz Khurmatu

Da'esh launched several new attacks near Tuz Khurmatu, in-

cluding Saturday, July 3rd on an Iraqi Army checkpoint resulting in the death of one soldier and two more others wounded. Furthermore, Da'esh also clashed with the federal police near the Tuz Khurmatu Air Base, killing two and wounding five more.

The Turkish-backed, Iraqi Turkmen Front warned about the lack of basic service in the town, accusing of "neglecting" Tuz Khurmatu. The Turkmen Front called for immediate intervention and solving the issues of the city.

Makhmour

On Monday, July 5th, several civilian activists protested in front of the town's management for the deterioration of basic services in the area. The activists gave a five day time limit to fix the issues, or larger protests will begin.

The New York Times

July 9, 2021
By Carlotta Gall

The Sea of Marmara, a ‘Sapphire’ of Turkey, Is Choking From Pollution

A slimy secretion has coated harbors and beaches and smothered marine life. Warming waters are part of the problem.

The Sea of Marmara, fabled for centuries for its blue waters and sparkling fish, laps the shores of Istanbul. Its perfect form inspired a 19th-century historian to describe the ancient city as “a diamond set between two sapphires.”

But the Marmara has been sickening for a long time, and this year, it suffered a paroxysm that choked its waters and suffocated marine life. In April, thousands of fish died and by May a natural secretion called mucilage emerged, smothering harbors and beaches with its slimy film.

“It’s an environmental disaster,” said Burhan Onen, 63, as he gathered his crew for a night of fishing recently in the city of Bandirma. “We have not stopped going out, but catches are down 80 percent.”

Mucilage, also known by the viscerally accurate description of sea snout, is produced naturally by phytoplankton and usually consumed by other marine life, including jellyfish and sea cucumbers. Mustafa Sari, a professor at the Maritime Faculty of Bandirma Onyedil Eylül University, blamed three triggers for causing the phytoplankton to secrete an excess of the slimy substance beginning this fall: the surface temperature of the Sea of Marmara, which has been steadily warming over two decades and is 2.5 degrees Celsius higher than the 40-year average; excess phosphorus and nitrogen from pollution; and the natural stability of the Mar-



By The New York Times

mara, which is an inland sea.

Turkey has been plagued before by mucilage, which bears some similarities to the tides of algae that spread in the Adriatic Sea in 1989 — also caused by overproduction of microorganisms that scientists have linked to warming and pollution.

The problem first came to light in November, when Mr. Sari was flooded with urgent calls from local fishermen about the mucilage.

He asked a friend to investigate. The video his friend brought back from a scuba dive was alarming, he said. Large globules of mucilage were visible in the water, and at about 100 feet deep, the scene was completely black, with zero visibility.

The slime was clinging to fishing nets, making them too heavy to pull in, said Hakan Sevgi, 52, a member of a fishing cooperative. When the mechanical pulley of one boat snapped, the crew spent seven hours hauling in the nets by hand, a job that should take half an hour.

Some crews were forced to jettison their nets and now cast them only in shallow waters for 30 minutes at a time, other fishing workers said.

During a dive this year, Mr. Sari said he found 30 sea cucumbers trying to climb off the sea floor, with one clinging to a seashell in an apparent attempt to rise above the sludge.

On a second dive, he found few left.

“We only saw three, which means the others died,” he said. The slime was diminishing the oxygen in the water, which is deadly to marine life.

December to March were lean times, but the fishing crews were holding out hope that warmer weather would dissipate the mucilage as it had in the past. But in April in Misakca, a tiny fishing village on the southern shore of the Marmara, disaster struck.

“The sand fish all turned white and died,” said Ahmet Kartal, 62. “Even the crabs died.”

“We are famous for our jumbo shrimp here, and now, there is not even one,” he added. “Fifty years I have been a fisherman, and I have not seen anything like this in my life.”

Mizgîn Tahir : Les graines de l'opéra sont les chants des dengbêj

Mizgîn Tahir est une chanteuse d'opéra kurde de renommée internationale. Après avoir un temps enseigné dans les régions kurdes de Turquie (Bakur), à Diyarbakır, elle a décidé de rentrer au nord de la Syrie, sa région natale, afin de participer à sa façon au projet politique qui s'y développe.

Une petite playlist pour écouter Mizgîn, tout en lisant son entretien...

Quand et pourquoi êtes-vous retournée au Rojava ?

Je suis revenue en 2019, avant l'occupation de Sere Kaniye [par l'armée turque et ses supplétifs syriens, ndlr]. Après mes études, je suis allée au Bakur [régions kurdes de Turquie, ndlr], ils me voulaient à l'Académie Cegerxwin. J'étais professeur et administratrice de l'Académie de musique Aram Tigran là-bas. Nous avons créé un orchestre et commencé à travailler, puis la situation au Bakur s'est dégradée 1. Je voulais revenir plus tôt, depuis 4 ans déjà, mais je ne pouvais pas quitter mes ami.es. Beaucoup d'artistes sont allé.es à Istanbul, en Europe, etc., mais je suis restée. Alors, j'ai senti que le Rojava avait besoin de moi. Si je suis kurde, je dois faire passer mon peuple en premier. Votre existence est basée sur votre identité, votre humanité et votre nationalité, si vous voulez la développer, commencez d'abord avec votre famille, vos voisins, puis votre ville et votre pays jusqu'à ce que vous atteigniez le monde.

Malheureusement, l'attaque turque vous a chassé de votre ville...



(Photo : Loez)

Trois mois après mon retour à Sere Kaniye, j'étais encore en train d'installer ma maison et mon home studio, avec les ordinateurs, le piano, les microphones, violoncelles et guitares... Quand j'ai dû partir, j'ai juste pris mon sac à main, j'ai laissé tout le reste à la maison, les souvenirs rapportés d'Amed... J'avais rapporté de chaque concert un objet, un souvenir, nous pensions que nous reviendrions. J'ai dit "arrêtons-nous sur la route pour que nous puissions revenir le soir", mais les avions ont commencé à frapper et nous n'avons pas pu résister à ça. J'ai laissé tous mes équipements professionnels qui coûtent environ 20 000 dollars. Mais nous avons l'espoir, nous reviendrons...

Mizgîn Tahir, quels sont vos projets actuels ?

J'ai étudié dans des écoles arabes jusqu'à mes 27 ans. Les personnes plus âgées élevées dans l'ancien système, comme moi, à notre insu nous avons été touchées, comme un virus dans nos personnalités. Maintenant, après 10 ans de révolution, nos élèves étu-

dient en Kurde. Cet enfant qui a grandi avec sa culture d'origine devrait nous guider. Cela m'a aidé à trouver mon objectif. Maintenant j'encadre des enfants dans l'orchestre Rojava, en travaillant également sur la culture de la région, où se trouvent Arabes, Kurdes et Arméniens. Je veux que nos enfants grandissent avec leur culture et leur musique.

À Amed, nous avons fondé l'orchestre Heskif, j'ai apporté les histoires des chansons d'opéra, des épopées. Je travaillais avec Mahmud Berazi, j'ai préparé l'épopée "Zembil Firoş". Il y a un autre projet, des chansons d'opéra des histoires de "Kalila et Dumna" qui sont racontées par les animaux. Et un autre projet aussi, quelques chansons simples de moi à enregistrer.

Est-ce que l'Administration Autonome au nord de la Syrie soutient votre travail ?

L'Administration soutient notre orchestre d'enfants, mais ses possibilités sont limitées. Nous avons besoin de plus d'instruments. Elle peut donner aux enseignant.es leurs salaires,

nous trouver un lieu, de l'électricité et de l'eau. Mais pour de grands projets comme "Kalila et Dumna", par exemple, les costumes et accessoires seuls coûtent environ 15000 dollars. L'Administration ne peut pas aider, les gens diraient qu'ils ont besoin de nourriture plus que de musique. Mais je pense que comme vous avez besoin de manger, vous avez aussi besoin de musique. Que fait Daech ? rassembler des gens, juste les nourrir et les rendre riches, à ses fins. Mais croyez-moi l'être humain ne peut pas se satisfaire uniquement de nourriture, il a besoin d'enrichir son âme par la culture.

Quel rôle jouent les Arts dans la révolution au Rojava ?

Un combattant se bat pour libérer son pays, un homme politique travaille pour le faire reconnaître dans le monde. Quand l'artiste travaille, il montre au reste du monde les mœurs et la culture de son peuple, il expose sa situation. J'ai considéré cela comme ma responsabilité. Vous êtes un être humain vivant en France, mais je vis à Serekaniye et j'ai une épopée à vous raconter. J'ai lu Hamlet, Don Juan, mais avez-vous entendu parler de "Siyabend et Xecê" ? Je veux travailler pour cela, pour que les autres connaissent ma culture. Je vis ici et c'est mon droit de raconter mon histoire, c'est ma responsabilité.

Quel est l'impact du Rojava sur la musique kurde ?

Ce peuple a le droit de vivre librement, il n'est plus acceptable d'être privé de notre culture. Les Kurdes qui ont souffert des injustices et des

inégalités, peuvent maintenant embrasser la culture des autres peuples, les Arabes, les Assyriens. Dans le passé, les émissions de télévision se concentraient davantage sur Damas et Alep.

En Europe, combien de personnes sont mortes, à quel point les peuples se sont-ils battus les uns contre les autres ? à la fin, ils ont été libérés, maintenant j'aime écouter les chansons françaises, j'aime Edith Piaf, parce que c'est une production de la douleur et de la fatigue. Les personnes qui font face à la douleur créeront de superbes choses. Nous en avons l'opportunité maintenant, l'important c'est l'humanité et l'amitié entre tous les peuples.

J'ai travaillé avec Mina Agossi, une chanteuse française, elle a chanté "la Belle et la Bête" et j'ai chanté "Sîyabend et Xecê", une fois à Alep et une autre à l'opéra de Damas. C'était tellement bien, pour un moment nous avons oublié les systèmes qui nous contrôlent. Nous sommes tous des humains, j'ai aussi des amis anglais et allemands. Nous avons une culture forte, nous nous battons pour elle, nous y trouvons notre histoire et notre force, nous sommes, y compris même les politicien.nes et les combattant.es, plus forts avec cette culture.

Comment voyez-vous le futur de la musique kurde ?

Malgré des centaines d'années d'occupation la musique kurde est restée originale et éloquente. Avec plus de liberté elle avancera, elle enrichira même la musique du monde, car, maintenant vous avez beaucoup d'histoires et d'épopées occidentales, mais vous ne savez rien des nôtres. Elles sont encore dans le cerveau d'un vieil homme ou d'une femme dans un village lointain. A propos de la musique clas-

sique occidentale, quand l'église voulait utiliser la musique, la voix des femmes était interdite. Maintenant l'Occident a la possibilité d'avancer pour se retrouver et se libérer de l'église. Georges Bizet a révolutionné la musique d'opéra mais est resté sur le mode église (majeur, mineur). Cette musique n'est que pour le Dieu, ils ont dirigé les humains vers le ciel pour qu'ils ne puissent pas voir le sol. J'aimerais plus de connexions entre les cultures, que les musiciens occidentaux viennent chez nous, que les musiciens du Rojava aillent là-bas et partagent leur culture, organisent des ateliers communs avec l'ouest. Nous avons besoin de plus d'experts en musique pour aider nos étudiant.es à progresser, plus de conférences musicales internationales.

Mizgîn Tahir, comment avez-vous décidé de vous lancer dans la musique ?

Quand quelqu'un a déjà une graine artistique dans sa famille, celle-ci va grandir. Je suis issue d'une famille d'artistes. Mon père, ma tante, mon frère et ma sœur, tout autour de moi était lié à la musique, y compris les amis de mon père, les soirées dengbêjî, les histoires quotidiennes qui étaient racontées les soirs d'hiver. Tout cela m'a influencé et a fait pousser cette graine. Je me vois comme une "mizgîn" [littéralement, une bonne nouvelle, ndlr], j'étais vraiment dans de bonnes conditions pour devenir artiste. Ma famille adorait aussi le govend [une danse, ndlr], donc, je m'y intéressais également. Mon père jouait du tembûr. Ma mère racontait de belles histoires, alors je me suis dit que j'allais être conteuse et j'ai écrit des poèmes. Tout cela m'a embrouillée.

J'étais la seule fille qui étudiait dans la famille, mais la plupart de mes frères étudiaient. Ils se

souciaient vraiment beaucoup de moi, ils me poussaient vers le haut, ils me différenciaient. Ils ne me laissaient pas entrer dans la cuisine. Ma sœur a toujours dit "Mizgîn ne doit pas être comme nous, elle est différente". Dans ma chambre, j'ai écrit, dansé, dessiné, chanté... J'ai même joué dans des pièces de théâtre. En 1994 j'ai gagné un premier prix de théâtre. C'était un festival secret, le premier festival de théâtre kurde dans les régions kurdes de Syrie. Qamishlo, Afrin, Kobanê, Alep, toutes nos villes étaient impliquées et c'était vraiment un beau festival. Mais j'ai atteint un point où je devais prendre une décision.

Et vous avez choisi l'opéra...

Oui. Il met en jeu la littérature, la musique, la danse, c'est un art très intéressant. Quand j'avais environ 6 ou 7 ans, des dengbejis comme Saed Omeri, Shikri Fafi et Cemil Bafawi racontaient des histoires et des épopées à travers leurs chansons. Un jour ils ont chanté l'histoire de Fatma Salih Axa, j'ai mis ma tête sur les genoux de ma mère et j'ai imaginé l'histoire. Comment le poème kurde pouvait-il être aussi parfait et original ? Les poèmes kurdes m'ont marqué l'esprit. Pourquoi nous ne pouvions-nous pas voir cet art si puissant à la télévision ? La langue kurde était-elle un péché ? Qu'est-ce que je pouvais faire ?

Nous sommes allé.es dans des écoles arabes. Une fois, mon professeur m'a frappée parce que je parlais kurde, j'ai demandé un élastique à un ami, mais il ne m'a pas cru. Par contre, dans nos maisons nous trouvons la liberté de faire ce que nous voulions, et en kurde. Je voulais aussi être danseuse de ballet, s'il y a un Mem u Zin, alors il devrait y avoir un ballet Mem û Zin. Il y avait nos groupes pour le Newroz, koma

Dirbessiyeh et koma Ronahi. J'avais seulement 14 ans et j'étais responsable de la musique. Je leur ai fait deux albums, j'ai apporté les paroles des poètes et fait les harmonies. Ils m'ont aussi demandé de chanter, mais je voulais être différente. Ma soeur Gulistan Sobari a une belle voix, elle sait chanter, je lui ai fait deux harmonies avec des paroles. Mais pour moi je voulais quelque chose d'autre, ce n'était pas mon atmosphère.

Est-ce que c'était difficile, pour une femme, de se lancer dans la musique ?

Après avoir terminé le lycée, j'ai décidé de voyager à Damas. Les gens disaient, "comment une fille peut-elle voyager seule ?", mais je ne suivais pas du tout les règles de la société. Vous savez, quand j'étais plus jeune, environ 12 ans, j'étais la seule fille sur tout le marché [souk, ndlr] qui travaillait à côté de son frère. Il avait un studio de photographie. Nos tribus ont appelé mon père et lui ont dit "Najm n'a-t-il pas de fils pour qu'il envoie sa fille travailler dans la boutique ?". Mon père a répondu : "ma Mizgîn vaut 100 hommes, si elle veut y aller, elle y va, et qui n'aime pas ça, laisse-le se cogner la tête contre les murs". Il m'a fortement soutenue par ses mots. Ma famille voulait m'envoyer en Russie pour étudier la pharmacie, mais je n'ai pas voulu. Ils voulaient aussi m'envoyer à Alep parce que c'était proche, mais j'ai dit non. Je voulais étudier la musique, donc je suis allée à Damas. C'était une décision forte, mais j'avais la foi. Ma sœur m'a beaucoup soutenue. Le plus important, c'est quand une femme soutient une femme. A la fin, je les ai convaincus. Je me suis inscrite à l'institut d'archéologie et je me suis dirigée vers l'Institut supérieur d'art et de musique.

Afrin: 83 femmes tuées et 200 autres enlevées par les mercenaires pro-turcs au cours des 18 derniers mois

Dans la région d'Afrin sous occupation turque, 83 femmes ont été tuées et 200 autres enlevées par les mercenaires djihadistes alliés de la Turquie, depuis le début de l'année 2020.

Depuis l'occupation d'Afrin par l'État turc en mars 2018, la population de cette région du nord de la Syrie est confrontée à des exactions quotidiennes. Voulant vider la région de ses habitants kurdes, l'État turc s'y livre à toutes sortes de crimes par l'intermédiaire de ses mercenaires djihadistes rassemblés au sein d'une formation dite Armée nationale syrienne (ANS). Les femmes sont les premières cibles de ces crimes de guerre.

Selon les données publiées par l'Organisation des droits humains d'Afrin, au moins 83 femmes ont été assassinées et 200 autres enlevées au cours des 18 derniers mois.

Dans un entretien avec l'agence de presse kurde Hawar News (ANHA), Naile Mehmed, membre de l'organisation de défense des droits humains, a indiqué que des centaines de milliers de crimes avaient été documentés depuis l'occupation de la région par la Turquie.

Abordant les crimes observés dans la période récente, Naile Mehmed a relevé que 5 femmes avaient mis fin à leur vie pour ne pas tomber entre les mains des mercenaires. « Nous avons documenté le viol de 70 femmes, a-t-elle ajouté. 25 femmes ont été enlevées au cours des 6 derniers mois seulement. Parmi elles, figurent des enfants, dont Eliye Ednan Cuma, 13 ans, et Rûya



Les femmes sont les premières victimes des crimes de guerre perpétrés par l'occupant turc à Afrin.

Mehmed Xatir, 6 ans. Une femme nommée Emine Mistefa est âgée de 60 ans ». Elle a noté par ailleurs que 216 femmes avaient été blessées dans des attaques menées par les mercenaires.

Parmi les meurtres de femmes les plus récents, la défenseuse des droits humains a cité le cas d'une fillette de deux ans, ainsi que les cas de Zeyneb Şêx Dawûd, 21 ans, Zeyneb İbrahim, 14 ans, et Heyva Şerif Qasim, 21 ans. Attirant l'attention sur le nettoyage ethnique mis en œuvre dans la région par les forces d'occupation turques, elle a ajouté : « Avant l'invasion d'Afrin, la part de la population kurde à Afrin était de 90%. Ce pourcentage a aujourd'hui chuté à 23%. C'est un grand danger. La majorité de la population actuelle d'Afrin est

constituée des familles de mercenaires amenées de différentes régions de Syrie. »

Suzan Mistefa, membre du comité de diplomatie de Kongra Star, organisation faîtière des mouvements de femmes du nord et de l'est de la Syrie, a souligné que l'État turc s'en prenait systématiquement aux femmes et aux enfants depuis trois ans : « Des crimes contre les femmes sont commis quotidiennement. De nombreuses fillettes sont contraintes au mariage. Certaines femmes sont enlevées pour être emmenées en Turquie. La situation des femmes en prison est épouvantable. »

« Selon certaines informations obtenues par téléphone, a-t-elle poursuivi, nous pouvons confirmer que de nombreuses

femmes ont été enlevées parce qu'elles sont sorties de chez elles. Des rançons sont demandées aux familles des femmes enlevées. De nombreuses familles patriotiques ont dû payer la rançon en vendant tous les biens qu'elles possédaient. De nombreuses jeunes femmes ont préféré mettre fin à leurs jours plutôt que de continuer à subir les atrocités qui leur étaient infligées. Les tortures, les meurtres et les enlèvements augmentent de jour en jour. Les viols sont désormais perpétrés dans les maisons. Nous avons appris le cas d'une femme qui avait été violée par une dizaine d'hommes. Nous en avons la preuve. De nombreuses femmes que nous connaissons ont été déportées en Turquie après avoir été libérées de prison. »

Mme Mistefa a souligné par ailleurs que le sort de 1 200 femmes disparues depuis l'occupation d'Afrin était toujours inconnu.

Et de condamner le silence de la communauté internationale face aux crimes commis par l'occupant turc : « Ceux qui disent qu'aucun crime n'est commis à Afrin devraient voir tous les documents à notre disposition prouvant le contraire. Ceux qui participent à l'occupation d'Afrin sont partenaires de ces crimes. La structure démographique d'Afrin a profondément changé. Le peuple kurde est agressé tandis que la communauté internationale observe en silence. »

July 09 2021
By Wladimir Van Wilgenburg

French square to be named after murdered Kurdish politician

The Lyon City Council unanimously voted Friday to name a square in the city Hevrin Khalaf, a female Kurdish politician assassinated late 2019 by Turkish-backed militants in northern Syria.

The French city of Lyon will name a square after the Kurdish politician, Hevrin Khalaf, who was killed by Turkish-backed groups in Kurdish-led northeastern Syria in October 2019.

The Lyon City Council unanimously voted on the name on Friday, Middle East Eye reported. An inauguration ceremony will take place later this year, on September 21, it added.

Fanny Dubot, mayor of the seventh borough of Lyon, wrote on social media that the naming of the square would be a tribute to Khalaf. "The city council of #Lyon7 has approved the name of Hevrin Khalaf for the square," he tweeted.



Hevrin Khalaf was killed by Turkish-backed groups in October 2019 (Photo: Archive)

"This pays homage to the emblematic figure of peace in a country at war. Syrian, Kurdish, and a feminist, murdered at 35 years old. A tribute."

The Turkish-backed Ahrar al-Sharqiya group summarily

executed Khalaf in mid-October 2019 as part of Ankara's cross-border offensive. Kurdistan 24 was one of the first to report on the incident on October 12, 2019.

According to the United Na-

tions Commission of Inquiry on Syria report last year, one fighter involved in the extrajudicial killing of the Kurdish politician was jailed. The same report also documented multiple verified cases of sexual and gender-based violence by Turkish-backed armed groups in Syrian areas occupied by Turkey.

Suad Mustafa, the mother of Hevrin Khalaf, told Kurdistan 24 last year that she wants those responsible for her daughter's murder to appear in front of an international court.

"A war crime has been committed against humanity, and the very same person who ordered those militants, must be held accountable in a just court," she stated.

Le Monde

10 juillet, 2021
Par Carrie Nooten

L'ONU prolonge le passage transfrontalier de l'aide humanitaire en Syrie

Le Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies a voté à l'unanimité, vendredi 9 juillet, la prorogation pour six mois renouvelables de l'ouverture du point de passage de Bab Al-Hawa – une décision rare, car prise à l'unanimité, et permise par une nouvelle entente américano-russe.

Les quinze mains se sont levées, ensemble, dans la salle du Conseil de sécurité : l'ouverture du point de passage de Bab Al-Hawa, situé à la frontière turque, qui permet de desservir la province d'Idlib et le Nord-Ouest en aide humanitaire, vient d'être prolongée. Sans ce vote, ce dernier cou-

loir sans contrôle, vital pour les populations installées dans l'enclave, aurait dû être fermé dès le lendemain, samedi 10 juillet. A l'ONU, on n'avait pas vu pareille unanimité au sein du Conseil depuis 2016 sur le volet humanitaire du dossier syrien.

L'ambassadrice américaine Linda Thomas-Greenfield a salué immédiatement la « catastrophe évitée » : chaque mois, mille camions pourront continuer à approvisionner les quatre millions de Syriens et de réfugiés de cette région. Son homologue russe Vassily Nebenzia s'est félicité de ce «

moment-pivot » dans le conflit syrien, considéré par certains experts comme un nouveau départ sur le dossier, grâce à cet équilibre américano-russe.

Suspense jusqu'au bout

Le Conseil s'est étendu sur cette « victoire », car elle contraste avec toutes les dernières sessions de vote. Tous les six mois, le Conseil se déchirait en effet entre pays occidentaux et alliés d'un côté, Russes et leur allié chinois de l'autre. « On a vu le dispositif humanitaire, qui passait encore par cinq points transfrontaliers en 2019, être réduit à peau de chagrin », rappelle une observatrice à l'ONU.

La peur était grande de perdre l'ultime couloir humanitaire vers les réfugiés syriens. Soutien principal de Damas, la Russie milite depuis longtemps pour la fin de ce mécanisme transfrontalier, au profit d'aide acheminée à travers les lignes de front à partir de Damas, afin de reconnaître la pleine souveraineté du régime sur le territoire syrien.

Surtout, le suspense a duré jusqu'au bout : la veille du vote, Moscou avait déposé un projet de texte concurrent à celui rédigé par l'Irlande et la Norvège, coordinateurs du dossier au Conseil. Un geste vindicatif, pour laisser supposer qu'elle n'hésiterait pas à aller à la confrontation. Malgré cela, les membres du Conseil ont réussi à finalement s'entendre sur une position commune.

Il y avait des signes avant-coureurs : les dynamiques ont évolué ces trois dernières semaines. On a vu tout d'abord un changement de ton chez les diplomates new-yorkais, qui jusque-là refusaient d'évoquer une distribution de l'aide contrôlée par Damas à travers les lignes de front. Pour la première fois, certains l'ont mentionnée comme une « option possible pour le futur ». De



Des camions se croisent à Bab-Al-Hawa, à la frontière entre la Syrie et la Turquie, seul point de passage autorisé pour l'aide humanitaire, le 30 juin 2021. MAHMOUD HASSANO / REUTERS

quoi décrier Moscou, même si ce n'étaient que des concessions orales, « car on sait bien que cela ne fonctionne pas du tout, le régime d'Assad refusant 50 % des requêtes pour ce type de distribution d'aide », confie un diplomate à l'ONU.

La technique de négociation a également été radicalement modifiée : pas de confrontation dure, qui aurait pu avoir comme effet de pousser la Russie dans ses retranchements ; les négociateurs ont tout fait pour « éviter le côté dramatique et les veto dans tous les sens », explique une source familière des tractations, faisant référence au vote de janvier 2020, qui a écartelé le Conseil et poussé les Russes à supprimer deux points de passage en plein hiver. La négociation s'est donc principalement déroulée entre les cinq membres permanents pour limiter les interactions – et tout risque d'accroc.

« Un symbole important »

Et puis, surtout, la négociation s'est jouée directement entre Washington et Moscou. « Si tous ont félicité l'Irlande et la Norvège pour leur médiation, personne n'était dupe, note Ashish Pradhan, analyste de l'International Crisis Group. Ce

vote, c'est bien une tractation entre ces deux poids lourds du Conseil finalement. Et c'est un symbole important, de les voir regarder dans la même direction, pour la première fois depuis longtemps. » Le représentant russe, Vassily Nebenzia, l'a présenté, lui, comme le fruit de la rencontre à Genève de Joe Biden et Vladimir Poutine. Les deux hommes se sont d'ailleurs appelés, vendredi 9 juillet, pour « se féliciter » de l'entente de leurs équipes ayant mené à un « renouvellement unanime » de l'autorisation onusienne. Des concessions ont dû être faites : les pays occidentaux, menés par les Etats-Unis, voulaient originellement élargir le dispositif à trois points de passages d'aide, en en ouvrant deux – en vain. La Russie a aussi demandé à l'ONU de fournir un rapport dans six mois pour prouver la nécessité de ce point de Bab Al-Hawa. Elle requiert enfin des Nations unies d'explorer les pistes d'amélioration du passage à travers les lignes de front – et donc sous contrôle de Damas.

Etrangement, la durée de l'extension est interprétée différemment par les Etats-Unis, pour qui elle est d'un an, et la Russie, qui considère qu'il s'agit de six mois renouvelables. Certains diplomates ont

assuré qu'un nouveau vote dans six mois n'était pas obligatoire, d'autres ont fait valoir qu'il était incontournable.

Ne pas perdre la face

Ce flottement peut aussi être lu comme une manière pour les pays occidentaux, les Etats-Unis en tête, de ne pas perdre la face, ou de devoir concéder que, encore une fois, Moscou aura mené le Conseil là où la Russie voulait aller. « Une fois de plus, elle a réussi à faire chanter la communauté internationale pour qu'elle n'autorise qu'un seul passage pour l'aide transfrontalière de l'ONU en Syrie », a d'ailleurs dénoncé l'ONG Human Rights Watch.

Les travailleurs humanitaires et les ONG, qui soulignent régulièrement les manquements et les difficiles conditions d'acheminement de l'aide, continuent à trouver insuffisant le seul point de passage transfrontalier. L'ambassadeur français a d'ailleurs été l'un des seuls membres du Conseil à rappeler cette réalité. « Le régime syrien continue d'instrumentaliser l'aide humanitaire à des fins politiques, a déclaré Nicolas de Rivière. Soyons lucides : le mécanisme que nous venons de renouveler est et sera insuffisant pour répondre aux besoins humanitaires. Nous regrettons que les points de passage de Bab Al-Salamah et d'Al-Yaroubiya ne soient pas ouverts, alors que, depuis l'an dernier, les besoins humanitaires ont augmenté de plus de 20 % au nord-ouest [de la Syrie], de 38 % au nord-est. »

Malgré tout cela, les quinze membres ont certainement raison de célébrer l'unanimité retrouvée du Conseil. « Cette unanimité n'est pas tant importante maintenant que pour le futur, en janvier et juillet prochains, note Ashish Pradhan. Cela installe le ton de la coopération au Conseil pour les prochaines négociations. »

'Erdoğan ended the resolution process for the Kurdish question'

Hatip Dicle, a member of the delegation having talks with imprisoned PKK leader Öcalan during the resolution process, has commented on President Erdoğan's statement that "the HDP ended the resolution process" for the Kurdish question.

Speaking in Turkey's Kurdish-majority southeastern province of Diyarbakır on Friday (July 9), President and ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) Chair Recep Tayyip Erdoğan accused the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) of "ending the resolution process."

Speaking about the resolution process for the Kurdish question, Erdoğan said, "We initiated the process, but it was not us who ended it. Their ill-intentioned, malevolent and hidden agendas ended the resolution process. Those going around with their so-called political identities have never distanced themselves from violence and terrorism."

Kurdish politician Hatip Dicle, who was also a member of the delegation having talks with the imprisoned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan in İmralı Prison during the mentioned resolution process, has responded to the President's claims about the issue.

Speaking to Özgür Paksoy from the Mezopotamya Agency (MA) for an interview published by daily Yeni Yaşam, Dicle has briefly said:

Both the AKP and Erdoğan see that they are going through a process of meltdown. They can detect that the meltdown on the part of the Nationalist Move-



Photo: Anadolu Agency (AA) – Archive

ment Party (MHP) is bigger.

'Perception operation'

Defining President Erdoğan's visit to Diyarbakır province as "a planned move", Hatip Dicle has said, "They are the ones who best know their problems with the Kurds. This is also a perception operation. Erdoğan's latest visit was a quest to find out how he could deceive the Kurds again and how he could increase the votes, at least at the next elections."

To the question "How do Kurds view Erdoğan," Dicle has said: Kurdish people are experienced and political people who have gone through so much pain. What has happened after the İmralı process and in the last five-six years has been fresh in the memories of our people. Our people know how hostile an attitude the appointed mayors have taken against

Kurdish, how the MHP is openly hostile to Kurds and how the AKP is also totally hostile to Kurds. For this reason, I don't think that these remarks will have an influence on the people. Will the Kurdish people be deceived by this or not? We will see it all together.

How did the resolution process end?

Hatip Dicle has also talked about President Erdoğan's statement of "It was not us who ended the resolution process". Dicle has said:

"Everything was recorded. For instance, what did Erdoğan say five-six years ago? He once said, 'We put it in the freezer.'

"When he told such lies as 'The Dolmabahçe Agreement was made without my knowledge', some channels put forward what he said and when he said them; so, all of these can be refuted in an instance.

If we are to talk about how the İmralı process came to an end... At the end of 2013, on December 17-25, Erdoğan's association with the Fethullah Gülen community in the form of a coalition came to an end. A big fight for power started between them.

"Erdoğan knew that they were a state clique. Taking this state clique on himself and coming down on the Ergenekon organization together with these Gülenists gave Erdoğan a pause; he did a u-turn.

"Some things were also sensed while the talks were ongoing. But it was completely revealed after some time. Forced by the Ergenekon and MHP, it was decided to completely eliminate the Fethullah Gülen community from the state and to end the resolution process with Kurds."/>(SD)

Erk Acarer, journaliste d'opposition turc, agressé en Allemagne

Agressé à son domicile à Berlin, le journaliste turc en exil Erk Acarer écrivait ces derniers temps sur des affaires de corruption et de trafic d'influence qui mettent en cause le gouvernement de l'AKP, le parti au pouvoir en Turquie depuis 2002.

“Le message est clair. Il s'agit de démontrer une fois de plus que l'État a le bras long, et qu'à l'aide des voyous qu'il nourrit, il est capable de frapper librement au cœur de l'Europe, dans une grande métropole comme Berlin, en attaquant un journaliste à son domicile”, s'indigne une éditorialiste du journal prokurde Özgür Politika. Le 7 juillet, le journaliste Erk Acarer a été attaqué par trois personnes à son domicile. “Ils étaient armés, mais comme des gens sont rapidement intervenus ils n'ont pas eu l'occasion de faire usage de leurs armes”, témoigne le journaliste, brièvement hospitalisé, dans une déclaration relayée par le quotidien Sözcü :

Vous pouvez me menacer tant que vous voudrez, nous continuerons à vous demander de rendre des comptes, et nous finirons par avoir le dernier mot.”

“Nous savons très bien comment ces voyous ont été organisés en Allemagne, comment ils ont été armés pour combattre les Kurdes, les alévis [une minorité religieuse hétérodoxe], la gauche, les socialistes et les opposants de toutes sortes”, poursuit Özgür Politika, désignant notamment le groupe Osmanien Germania, très proche de l'idéologie du pouvoir turc, à la jonction du club de motards et du crime or-



Un kiosque à journaux à Istanbul, le 25 juin 2018. PHOTO / YASIN AKGUL / AFP.

ganisé, démantelé depuis plusieurs années par la police allemande. Le quotidien islamiste proche du pouvoir Yeni Akit semble, lui, se féliciter de l'agression. “Le journaliste communiste en fuite Erk Acarer, qui travaille pour Birgün [journal de la gauche turque], l'organe de presse du sanglant PKK [Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan], a été passé à tabac”, rapporte le quotidien.

Nombreuses révélations

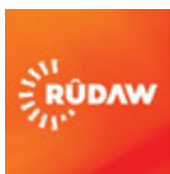
Avant son agression, le journaliste multipliait les révélations dans le quotidien Birgün à propos de la “bourse aux gülenistes”, un système de corruption mis en place par des individus issus des milieux d'affaires, de la police et de la justice turcs, et visant à accorder l'impunité à certains anciens partisans du prédicateur

Fethullah Gülen (impitoyablement pourchassés depuis la tentative de coup d'État du 15 juillet 2016) en échange de millions de dollars sonnants et trébuchants.

Dans un de ses derniers articles, il mettait notamment en cause Ismail Hakki Cirit, ancien président du Conseil d'État et proche d'Erdogan depuis plus de vingt ans. En s'appuyant sur les révélations de Sedat Peker, un mafieux anciennement proche du pouvoir désormais en fuite et qui, animé d'un désir de vengeance, multiplie les révélations. Erk Acarer soulignait aussi le rôle d'un homme d'affaires jusque-là inconnu, Cihan Eksioğlu, dont il a publié des photographies le montrant au côté des principaux ministres et figures de l'État et d'autres personnalités

devant lesquels il étalait son train de vie luxueux : “Il a amassé (par le chantage) une fortune considérable, en partageant une partie de cet argent avec des bureaucrates haut placés, des juges et des politiques, jusqu'au plus haut niveau de l'État. La famille d'Eksioğlu en a aussi profité, au point que son épouse, Katerina, se rend chez son coiffeur, situé dans une autre ville, en jet privé et partage des photos de steaks enrobés dans des feuilles d'or.”

C'est à cette figure trouble qu'il impute l'attaque dont il a été victime, en signalant dans un article paru après son agression : “Un de mes agresseurs hurlait : ‘Tu vas arrêter de publier des photos et d'écrire sur la femme et la famille des gens ! J'aurai tendance à y voir un lien.’”



July 12 2021
By Dilan Sirwan

Kolbar shot dead near Iran-Kurdistan Region border

The body of a Kurdish kolbar was found near the Iran-Kurdistan Region border a day after he was shot dead, a watchdog said on Sunday.

Hamin Aminpour, 48, was a father of six children and was shot around 4pm on Saturday, a relative told the Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, saying they found his bullet-riddled body after an extensive search.

The incident came just days after a group of kolbars were shot at by Iranian border guards in the Hangazhal area of Baneh, according to the Paris-based Kurdistan Human

Rights Network (KHRN). Kolbars are semi-legal porters who transport untaxed goods across the Kurdistan Region-Iran border and sometimes the Iran-Turkey border. They are constantly targeted by Iranian border guards and are sometimes victims of natural disasters. Many are pushed into the profession by poverty and a lack of alternative employment, particularly in Iran's Kurdish provinces.

At least 21 kolbars were "either killed, lost their lives, or injured" on the border areas in June, the KHRN said in its latest monthly report, adding that of those at least 10 were shot by Iranian, Turkish, or Iraqi border forces.

Last month, a kolbar was killed and another wounded when Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) opened fire on them in Hawraman Takht (Uraman Takht) in Kurdistan province.

Families of kolbars are among the main victims of these attacks by Iranian border guards, as the trade is their primary source of income, and Iranian forces at times raid their houses and confiscate their goods.

Amnesty International addressed the brutal treatment kolbars face in their 2020 human rights report released in April.

"Iran's border guards continued to unlawfully shoot scores of unarmed Kurdish kolbars who work under cruel and inhumane conditions, as cross-border porters between the Kurdistan regions of Iran and Iraq, killing at least 40 men and injuring dozens of others," the human rights watchdog said, sourcing Kurdish human rights organizations.

An estimated 52 kolbars were killed and 147 injured in 2020, according to data given to Rudaw English by the KHRN. Forty-six of those killed were shot by Iranian or Turkish border guards.



July 12 2021

Prosecutor finds no grounds for legal action against policemen who mistreated Kurdish family

The Diyarbakır Public Prosecutor's Office said there were no grounds for legal action against policemen who beat and injured a Kurdish family during a narcotics operation in May, Artigerçek news website reported.

Süleyman Demir was forcefully detained on May 18, and his mother Kevser Demir tried to stop the police from beating her son. The police broke Kevser Demir's arm and teeth in the struggle. Süleyman Demir's sister Fatma Demir was also lightly injured by the police. Both women were

given a hospital report confirming their injuries.

Lawyers from the Diyarbakır Bar visited the family after the incident and said witness testimonies and hospital reports confirmed mistreatment and police brutality. The Bar filed a complaint against the policemen, however the prosecutor's office said the police had used proportional force against the family.

According to the bar, the prosecutor's office did not take notice of the extent of Kevser Demir's injuries and interpreted them as

"superficial injuries that did not require medical attention".

The Diyarbakır bar will appeal to the Diyarbakır Penal Court of Peace.

Turkey has experienced a marked resurgence of torture and ill-treatment in custody over the past five years, and especially since a coup attempt in July 2016. Lack of condemnation from higher officials and a readiness to cover up allegations rather than investigate them have resulted in widespread impunity for the security forces.

According to a report released by main opposition Republican People's Party deputy Sezgin Tanrikulu in January, a total of 27,493 people were victims of torture and maltreatment between 2002, when the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power, and 2020 and that 86 others had died from such mistreatment.

While 988 cases of torture or maltreatment were reported in 2002, this figure rose to 3,534 in 2020, the report stated.

The New York Times

July 13, 2021
By Jane Arraf

After Years as a Battleground, Investment Boom Lifts Iraqi City

Ramadi was the site of some of the fiercest fighting against U.S. troops during the Iraq war, then came a devastating fight with ISIS. Now, it's emerging as one of Iraq's most stable cities.

On the banks of the Euphrates River, the iron beams and bricks are going up for a 20-story luxury hotel with swimming pools, a spa, and restaurants jutting out into the blue-green waters at the edge of the Iraqi city of Ramadi.

While a five-star hotel is nothing unusual in many places, this is the first one being built in decades in battle-scarred Anbar Province — part of a post-ISIS investment boom in an area that is now, surprisingly, one of the most stable in the country.

"In 2016 when we entered this city, it was a ghost town," said Mahdi al-Noman, the chairman of the Anbar Investment Commission, surveying the city on a drive down new highways flanked by well-tended grass and iron plant stands filled with purple and white petunias. "You wouldn't even see stray cats and dogs," he added.

"In two years, we managed to turn things around."

Ramadi, the provincial capital of Anbar, has seen waves of warfare since the United States invaded Iraq in 2003. American forces suffered their worst losses in the province after the invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein turned into an American military occupation. The final wave of battles in Anbar followed the Islamic State takeover of a third of Iraq that began in 2014.

While other parts of the country



This home in Ramadi bears the scars of damage from the five-month-long battle with the Islamic State. Credit...Andrea DiCenzo for The New York Times

have struggled to recover from those conflicts, Ramadi has begun to flourish. Along with the \$70 million hotel, construction has begun on one of the country's biggest shopping malls and companies are submitting bids for an international airport.

Anbar's population is almost exclusively Sunni Muslim, a minority group that held disproportionate power in Shiite-majority Iraq when Saddam ruled. But after he was ousted, the Sunnis were marginalized and their rage helped the Sunni-dominated terrorist group Al Qaeda gain a foothold in Iraq. It later fueled an offshoot of the extremist movement, the Islamic State, as well.

It took three years for U.S.-backed Iraqi forces to drive the ISIS militants out of the

country, and it was primarily those battles that left Ramadi heavily damaged and largely empty of civilians

Now, Iraqi investors who had focused on projects outside the country over the past 18 years are bringing some of their profits back to Anbar, while foreign companies are taking a new look at a city largely rebuilt after the fight against the Islamic State.

While some residential areas still lie in ruins, government-funded building has transformed the city. Instead of traffic-choked, potholed streets and nests of hanging electrical wires ubiquitous in other Iraqi cities, Ramadi now boasts a reorganized road system, underground electricity cables, and centralized government offices.

"We came back to destruction

and decided that any new construction must be done in a new way to keep up with modern urban planning," said Anbar's provincial governor, Ali Farhan. He said that having experienced so much destruction, Anbar residents are no longer willing to tolerate the extremist rhetoric that allowed ISIS to gain a foothold here.

When ISIS captured Ramadi in 2015, the poor in this city of half a million people fled to the desert to a squalid makeshift camp for displaced Iraqis. Government authorities, worried about ISIS infiltration — a suspicion that lingered from the past — barred most of the displaced from entering the capital, Baghdad, just a few miles away.

But many of the Ramadi residents who could afford to do so moved to Iraq's Kurdistan Region in the north, or left the country for Jordan or Turkey. When they returned, younger people in particular wanted the malls and coffee shops and hotels they had become accustomed to. In the gleaming new supermarkets of Ramadi, Starbucks coffee and gluten-free flour line the shelves.

"This will be a recreation hub, not just a hotel," said Maher Othman, the Iraqi contractor for the new Ramadi hotel, which does not yet have a name. He said his company, Jazirat al-Atta, planned to spend at least \$20 million of the total construction cost on swimming pools, restaurants, shops and a Moroccan-style spa.

On the hotel complex, workers are building 30 three-story chalets meant for families and honeymooning couples. Each will have a private garden and private rooftop pool with a barbecue area and sweeping views of the Euphrates.

Anbar, which borders Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, is known for businesspeople who made fortunes in transportation, construction and other fields. They include the owners of Al Qasas, a family firm that is building a \$70 million shopping mall in downtown Ramadi.

“When they had to flee, Anbaris did business in the places they went to whether it was Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Baghdad or Kurdistan,” said Moath Alayan, the Qasas project director who lives between the Jordanian capital Amman and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. “When they came back, they came back with money.” He said his family decided on the \$70 million mall because they believed there was a mar-

ket for it and because they wanted Anbar residents to see they were investing money in their home province.

In downtown Ramadi, a huge crane rises over the framework of what will be the skylight-topped three-story mall. The hundreds of shops will potentially employ more than 1,200 people.

At the new private Al Safwa Specialized Hospital, the director, Mohammed Mosleh, runs his phone over the bar code on a door for the patient information. The hospital has equipment, such as microscopes for neurosurgery, that is unavailable even in the more developed Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

In his office in a new government building, Mr. Noman opens a gray folder containing more than 200 investment licenses he has issued, potentially worth more than \$5 billion in investment. They include solar power plants, fertilizer factories, residential complexes and schools.

Iraqi investors account for 70 percent of the licenses and the rest are from Germany, India, Turkey and the U.A.E., among other countries.

Mr. Noman’s big dream is an international airport and the government has already allocated \$70 million to an initial planning phase.

A few miles from the edge of Ramadi near the railway station, a Jordanian-American entrepreneur, Muhannad Haimour looks out over land cleared of hundreds of explosives where he is planning to build a school that will be part of the International Baccalaureate system, a worldwide network of schools adhering to international standards.

Mr. Haimour plans to build a complex including a hotel, housing, shops and recreational facilities.

In a country notorious for corruption, he and Mr. Noman said they believed the demand

for bribes was declining while investment has been helped by stability in Ramadi.

ISIS now is largely confined in Anbar to desert hide-outs in the far west of the province near the border with Syria. American troops inside Anbar’s Ain al-Assad military base, frequently rocketed by Iran-backed militias enraged at the American military presence, are instead a source of reassurance in Ramadi. But Mr. Haimour, who organizes investment conferences for the Anbar government, still faces an uphill battle in persuading foreign investors, particularly Americans, that they would be welcomed here.

“I think there were a lot of horrible things that happened that made Anbar look like it was just a monstrous place and people were always ready to fight,” he said of the years during the U.S. occupation. “In fact, if you are a guest, Anbaris are incredibly welcoming.”



13 Juillet 2021

Augmentation des cas de torture dans les villes kurdes

Selon un rapport publié par la Fondation des droits de l’homme de Turquie, des centaines de personnes se sont adressées à la fondation après avoir subi des tortures. Le rapport attire l’attention sur l’augmentation de la torture dans les régions kurdes.

La Fondation des droits de l’homme de Turquie (TIHV) a publié son « Rapport 2020 sur le traitement et la réhabilitation. Le rapport révèle l’ampleur de la torture et des mauvais traitements dans le pays.

DES CENTAINES DE DEMANDES

Selon le rapport, au moins quatre personnes sur dix torturées en 2020 (40,7 %) ont déclaré avoir subi des abus sexuels. 572 personnes ont fait des demandes auprès de la fondation en raison de tortures et de mauvais traitements et deux personnes en raison de violations graves des droits de l’homme. 31 personnes se sont par ailleurs adressées à la fondation pour demander un traitement, une réhabilitation et des documents en tant que

proches d’une personne torturée.

Le rapport indique que 507 des 562 personnes torturées en 2021 étaient détenues pour des motifs politique, identitaire et ou d’opinion. Malgré le confinement pendant la pandémie, le taux de demandes a augmenté de 61 % par rapport à l’année dernière.

DES VIOLATIONS MAJORITAIREMENT LIÉES À LA QUESTION KURDE

Le rapport présente des don-

nées qui révèlent la corrélation entre les violations des droits de l’homme et la question kurde. Alors que les personnes nées dans le nord-Kurdistan (Sud-est de la Turquie) représentent 24,6 % de la population turque, le taux de personnes nées dans cette région parmi celles qui ont été soumises à la torture est de 62,6 %. D’autre part, une personne sur quatre ayant fait une demande auprès de la TIHV pour des motifs de torture est étudiante.

Selon le rapport, l’âge moyen des 20 enfants torturés est de

10 ans et l'âge de l'enfant le plus jeune est 3 ans. Le rapport mentionne que la langue maternelle de tous les enfants qui ont été torturés pour des raisons ethniques et politiques est le kurde.

« Le fait que les détentions et les perquisitions à domicile subis par les enfants aient eu lieu principalement à minuit montre que les autorités ont eu recours à des traitements arbitraires au

lieu d'une procédure légale, dans le but ultime d'intimider et de punir les individus. Les processus de détention des enfants n'ont pas été menés conformément au principe de « l'intérêt de l'enfant ». Les enfants ont été soumis à des pratiques arbitraires et illégales et les garanties procédurales ont été violées », indique le rapport.

PRESSION ET NÉGLIGENCE

PENDANT L'EXAMEN JUDICIAIRE

Le rapport aborde comme suit les problèmes rencontrés par les requérants pendant l'examen judiciaire :

*101 requérants ont déclaré que des officiers de police étaient présents pendant l'examen judiciaire.

*129 requérants ont déclaré

que le médecin légiste n'a pas écouté leurs plaintes.

*68 requérants ont déclaré que le médecin légiste ne s'est pas soucié de leurs plaintes.

*195 requérants ont déclaré que le médecin légiste ne les a pas examinés correctement.

*173 requérants ont déclaré que le médecin légiste ne les a pas examinés en fonction de leurs plaintes. »

Kurdistan au féminin

13 Juillet 2021

Il y a 91 ans, la Turquie massacrait des milliers de Kurdes dans la vallée de Zilan

Il y a 91 ans, des milliers de Kurdes étaient massacrés et 44 villages incendiés dans la vallée de Zilan pendant la rébellion d'Ararat. Aujourd'hui, la Turquie construit un barrage dans cette vallée pour faire disparaître les traces du massacre de Zilan.

Le 3 juillet 1930, sur ordre du Premier ministre turc, İsmet İnönü, et son gouvernement, 44 villages kurdes ont été brûlés et des milliers de civils massacrés (d'autres chassés de leurs terres) dans la vallée de Zilan, dans le district Erciş de Van. 90 ans après ce massacre, les Kurdes font toujours face à une politique d'extermination des Kurdes menée par la Turquie depuis les années 1920, comme on a pu le voir à Maras, Roboski, Cizre, Silopi, Afrin...

Selon les journaux officiels turcs, plus de 15 000 personnes ont perdu la vie dans le massacre, qui est connu sous le nom de «Geliye Zilan». Alors que certains des rares témoins de la période étaient cachés, certains ont lutté pour survivre là où ils avaient été exilés de force. Aujourd'hui, l'Etat turc détruit les traces du massacre de



Zilan en construisant un barrage sur le site Nihala hestîya (Vallée des os) abritant les ossements des victimes du massacre de Zilan.

Le massacre de Zilan a eu lieu dans la vallée du Zilan ou Zeylan situé au nord de la ville d'Erciş, dans la province de Van. Le massacre a eu lieu en juillet 1930, avant la troisième opération Ararat du 7 au 14 sep-

tembre 1930, qui était une opération militaire contre les rebelles kurdes du mont Ararat.

Le 13 juillet 1930 le quotidien Cumhuriyet prenait la relève d'İsmet İnönü, Premier ministre de la République de Turquie, et Sukrû Kaya, son ministre de l'intérieur qui avait été l'un des hommes-clefs du génocide arménien de 1915, pour annoncer le « bombardement extrême-

ment massif du mont Ararat » avant d'ajouter : « les aigles d'acier du Turc règlent leur compte aux insurgés. Le ruisseau de Zilan est entièrement rempli de cadavres ». D'autres journaux, comme le Milliyet, confirmait ces informations avant de relater les propos d'İsmet İnönü : « seule la nation turque a le droit de revendiquer les droits ethniques et raciaux dans ce pays ». Selon diverses

estimations, 44 villages furent ainsi entièrement rayés de la carte et 15.000 personnes, dont la plupart de simples villageois, trouvèrent la mort lors de cette « opération de nettoyage » qui parvint ainsi à briser la résistance kurde dont cette région fut le théâtre depuis plusieurs années. (Institut Kurde de Paris) Dans cette interview de 2019 réalisé par Barış Balseçer, historien et universitaire kurde, Sedat Ulugana décrivait le massacre de Zilan :

Quelle était la situation politique des Kurdes avant le massacre de Zilan ? Pouvez-vous décrire le processus dans son ensemble ?

« Le massacre de Zilan, avec la proclamation de la République de 1923 à 1930, fait partie du processus d'instauration du régime kémaliste au Kurdistan. La première réaction au régime kémaliste a été montrée à Koçgiri en 1921 et les Kémalistes ont perpétré le premier massacre des Kurdes au Kurdistan au moyen d'un outil hérité des Ottomans : La punition et le transfert de la population (« tedip ve tenkil »). Le processus après Koçgiri était la rébellion du Cheikh Sait en 1925, dont le vrai nom était le Mouvement Azadî (Liberté). Ce processus a entraîné un massacre accompagné des centaines de villages kurdes incendiés, notamment à Palu, Lice et Genç, à Diyarbakır. En fait, c'est la rébellion du Cheikh Sait qui a déclenché la rébellion d'Agri. Zilan est une région montagneuse, où il existe des tribus kurdes patriotes. Ces tribus ne se sont pas intégrées à l'État et ont des problèmes structurels avec l'État. Ces tribus apportent des fournitures aux insurgés d'Agri. Ils fournissent les combattants. En fait, la région du Zilan devient une base pour la poursuite de la rébellion. L'État en est conscient. Il y a un rapport des années 1920. Il dit : « Il y a maintenant trois lieux de banditisme au Kurdistan. Le premier est celui de Dersim, le deuxième est Sason et le troisième est celui du Zilan et de l'Agri. » Le gouvernement a fiché ces trois lieux. Donc en 1925 ; À 5 ans du massacre de Zilan, à 9 ans du

massacre de Sason et 13 ans avant le massacre de Dersim, le rapport indique ces régions. Ce sont des zones que le régime kémaliste ne peut pénétrer. On dit que ces régions insistent sérieusement sur la kurdicité et qu'on doit « s'occuper » de ces régions.

Pour ce faire, l'État se concentre sur Zilan, en particulier pendant le processus de résistance d'Agri. Mais au début, il ne le prend pas trop au sérieux. Ils envoient un petit nombre de soldats à Zilan et pensent pouvoir briser la résistance et envoyer le 15e régiment de gendarmerie mobile. (...) Une fois dans la région de Zilan, le régiment de gendarmerie mobile fait face à une résistance inattendue.

Quel est le rôle de la société Xoybûn dans la résistance kurde ? Quelle est la relation entre la résistance d'Agri et Cheikh Sait avant le massacre de Zilan et le Mouvement Xoybûn ?

Le Mouvement Xoybûn a été fondé en 1927 dans le Rojava actuel. Deux familles en particulier, les Cemilpaşazade et les Bedirxan, sont les plus impliquées. Au Rojava, les deux familles ont été rejointes par Haco Aga. Les intellectuels kurdes, les chefs de tribus kurdes et les cheikhs, échappés à la violence du régime kémaliste, se retrouvent au Rojava après 1920 et forment une organisation appelée Xoybûn.

Au début, İhsan Nuri n'est pas inclus dans Xoybûn. Il prend contact par la suite avec Xoybûn et il y est intégré en tant que « général du mont Ararat », puis passe à Ağrı pour le compte de Xoybûn et entame le processus connu. Xoybûn est le Mouvement organisateur de la résistance d'Agri. Après la résistance de Sason de 1934. Afin d'organiser la Résistance de Dersim de 1938, ils envoient un groupe comprenant Muşlu Hilmi. Le groupe est exécuté en route, avant d'atteindre Dersim.

Bien qu'il y ait eu beaucoup de résistance après la proclamation de la République, ils ne réussissent pas. Quels sont les princi-

aux facteurs à l'origine de l'échec de ces résistances ?

Au Kurdistan du Nord, toute la résistance de 1923 à 1938 est liée. C'est donc une tradition, des perles d'un chapelet. La rébellion de Koçgiri de 1921 reste un peu à part, mais elle a inspiré intellectuellement le mouvement de Sheikh Said.

Seyitxan, Seyitxane Kerr, Alican et Ferzande, membres du Mouvement Sheikh Said de 1925, c'est-à-dire la résistance d'Azadi, ont également combattu sur le mont Ararat. Ce sont les cadres qui organisent la Résistance de Zilan. (...) En fait, les initiateurs de la résistance d'Agri sont les guerriers kurdes qui ont survécu à la rébellion du Cheikh Said. Il y a une telle connexion. Le feu de la résistance allumé au triangle Genç, Lice, Palu a été éteint, mais cette fois, le même feu a été allumé sur le mont Ararat, à Zilan.

L'une des raisons pour lesquelles la résistance du Kurdistan a entraîné la défaite est le problème du leadership. A cette époque, il y avait le problème du leadership, ils n'avaient pas de leadership national. Le processus Tanzimat (« réorganisation » en turc ottoman) est appelé renouveau et modernisation de l'État, mais la raison principale en est la liquidation de la structure politique kurde et le transfert de la capitale kurde à Istanbul. A cette époque, tous les Mirs (chefs notables kurdes) kurdes ont été massacrés, exilés et jetés dans des prisons. Au Kurdistan, après la liquidation des mirs kurdes, un vide d'autorité est créé.

Les Cheikhs remplissent le vide de l'autorité. Ces Cheikhs disent appartenir à la « secte Khalidi ». La secte Khalidi a été fondée par Mevlânâ Khalid-i Shay Shahizor de la ville de Suleymaniyah, dans le Kurdistan du Sud.

A l'instar des Mir, plutôt que d'être constructifs, rassembleurs, les Khalidis ont une mission destructrice et disloquante au Kurdistan. Mevlânâ Khalid a été formé en Inde. Pendant ses

études en Inde, ses professeurs menaient une forte opposition au colonialisme britannique.

Avec le temps, l'opposition aux Britanniques s'est transformée en opposition et en haine des Chrétiens. Lorsque Mawlana Khalid est revenu au Kurdistan, il a en quelque sorte importé au peuple kurde l'opposition aux Chrétiens et la haine antichrétienne. Jusqu'à cette époque, les Kurdes au Kurdistan n'avaient aucun problème avec les Chrétiens ; Il y a des Arméniens, des Chaldéens, des Assyriens, des Nestoriens et des Kurdes qui s'appellent eux-mêmes des Kurdes Messiahs, sur lesquels nous ne nous attardons pas beaucoup.

À son retour, Mevlana Khalid forme beaucoup d'étudiants. Le titre du cheikh passait de père en fils à l'époque. L'Ordre du khalidisme emmène l'enfant du villageois kurde le plus pauvre à devenir « Sheikh » et lui dit « Toi aussi, tu peux emmener un élève, l'élever et en faire un cheikh » et l'envoyait dans les endroits les plus reculés du Kurdistan. Par la suite, en s'alliant aux Tibus, ils se sont rendus dans les endroits les plus reculés du Kurdistan.

J'ai trouvé un ancien livre à Erçis. C'est écrit par Mela Musa, un imam Khalidi. La date qu'il a écrite à la fin du livre était 1892 et le lieu est Zozane Elegez (Haut plateau d'Elegez). Sur le plateau, il écrit un livre. Il rend croyantes, sunnites les tribus kurdes qui n'étaient pas très religieuses jusqu'à là. S'il y a un sentiment de nationalisme, ils l'enlèvent. Ils imposent l'oumma (la communauté des Musulmans qui rejette l'origine ethnique du croyant). Si vous êtes un Kurde qui impose l'Oumma, vous vous éloignez de toute façon de la conscience nationale et de l'unité nationale. Les Sheikhs ont cet aspect sur lequel nous n'avons pas encore prêté attention.

Un autre facteur est le niveau d'éducation des Kurdes à cette époque. Ceci est lié à la désintégration du Kurdistan.

Combien de personnes ont été massacrées lors du massacre de Zilan ? Qu'est-ce qui se passait à Zilan ?

Selon les services de renseignements étrangers, environ 10 000 personnes auraient été tuées lors du massacre de Zilan. Les Français parlent de 5 000, tandis que les Britanniques disent que plus de personnes ont été tuées. Bien entendu, ces États ne disposaient pas d'un réseau de renseignement très formel au Kurdistan du Nord. Ils donnent plutôt de chiffres prédictifs. Mais il y a les chiffres donnés par la partie turque. Par exemple, le journal semi-officiel de l'époque, le Cumhuriyet Gazetisi, parle de plus de 15 000. De même, les journaux Vakit et Aksam de la même période écrivent également ce chiffre. Le journal Cumhuriyet écrit même ceci : « Notre journaliste Sabri Bey, qui est à Erçis, transmet l'information depuis la région. « La vallée de Zilan est remplie de cadavres », dit-il. Le chef de l'état-major général le dit également. Un peloton a tué plus de mille personnes en une journée. 95% des tués sont des civils. Parce que l'état-major général de l'époque parle d'environ 5 000 résistants dans la région de Zilan. Cette information est exagérée. Il n'y a pas autant de résistants. Le nombre de résistants est de mille environs.

C'est un génocide qui a été perpétré à Zilan. Il faut distinguer le massacre d'un génocide. C'est un « massacre » si vous tirez sur des gens et les tuez (...). Mais si, pour une raison politique, vous tuez plus d'une personne en faisant de la discrimination, en regardant sa religion, sa langue, son ethnique, c'est un génocide. (...) Ce qui a été fait à Zilan est un génocide. La deuxième différence entre le massacre et le génocide est que ce dernier est systémique.

Après le massacre, des dizaines de villages ont été incendiés à Zilan. Tous les habitants de ces villages ont été tués. Le nombre de personnes tuées dans ces villages est supérieur à 15 000.

La deuxième raison d'être un génocide est qu'après l'incendie des villages, les champs de blé ont été incendiés, les puits ont été remplis de terre et tout le matériel a été brûlé. En d'autres termes, l'espace vital a été détruit.

De plus, il est essentiel de ne pas laisser de témoins lors de génocide. Nous pouvons le voir [ne pas laisser de témoins] lors des génocides de Rwanda, arménien et bosniaque. La même chose est faite à Zilan. Les gens ont été massacrés à Zilan en 1930 et cela a continué jusqu'en 1938. Si l'État découvrait qu'il y avait des survivants du massacre, ils les trouvaient et les amenaient et les fusillaient. Il existe également un exemple concret de cela. Après le massacre, 15 personnes se sont réfugiées dans le village de Pertax à Erçis, qui a été renommé et transformé en village de Dinlence. Ils ont été repérés par l'Etat. On les a pris du village, emmenés dans la vallée d'à côté, les fusillés et enterrés sur place. A ce titre, il y a des dizaines d'exemples de ce genre qui avaient pour but de ne pas laisser de témoins.

J'ai parlé à une témoin nommée Hafize, qui était encore une enfant à cette époque. Elle vivait dans le village de Soskin à Erçis. Je ne sais pas si elle est en vie ou pas. Elle avait dit « Moi, ma sœur, mon petit frère et ma mère ont survécu au massacre. Mon petit frère venait d'être sevré. Nous avons eu une vache. Nous nourrissions mon frère avec le lait de cette vache. Nous avons pris notre vache et sommes partis. Nous avons commencé à vivre dans une petite tente près de la ville. Dès que les soldats ont découvert que nous avions survécu au massacre de Zilan, ils sont venus. D'abord, ils ont coupé les pies de notre vache, notre seul moyen de subsistance. » Celle qui me disait cela était une témoin (d'environ 90 ans) d'un massacre. Ils avaient fait cela pour faire mourir de faim le petit garçon. Mère Hafize n'avait pas voulu m'ne parler, mais j'ai ap-

pris de sa famille que les soldats avaient emmené sa sœur. Ils l'avaient violée et tuée.

Voici une autre raison d'être un génocide. La nécrophilie (violier un cadavre) est essentielle dans la psychologie du génocide. Ce sont des nécrophiles. Nous pouvons le voir dans l'Allemagne nazie. Il y avait un imam nommé Mela Ahmet. Je l'ai interviewé. Alors qu'il travaillait comme imam à Adilcevaz, il avait rencontré un certain Hacı Ömer. Hacı Ömer lui a dit « (...) Je livrais des fournitures aux soldats lors du massacre de Zilan. Des milliers de personnes ont été tuées à l'extérieur de la ville dans un endroit appelé Aşe Monk. Les tours étaient faites de corps inanimés. C'était l'heure du déjeuner. Je l'ai vu de mes propres yeux. Les soldats retrouvaient et violaient de jeunes corps de femmes parmi les corps inanimés. »

Ces informations sont dans mes archives et j'ai fait confirmer ces informations auprès de plusieurs personnes. Ce que j'ai trouvé le plus dans mes recherches, c'est que d'innombrables femmes ont été violées.

Zilan est un génocide car un programme politique a été mis en place. Près d'un millier de familles ont été déportées à l'Ouest [régions turques à l'ouest du pays]. Beaucoup de ces familles sont maintenant assimilées. Elles ont été exilées dans des villes comme Aydin, Sinop et Samsun. Deux familles déportées ne pouvaient vivre dans la même ville et le même quartier. En d'autres termes, un programme d'assimilation a été mis en place. Près d'un millier de familles sont jetées dans les cachots d'Adana et de Zonguldak et abandonnées à la mort.

A cette époque, il y a un mandat d'Atatürk. Ce mandat rédigé après 1933 ordonne exactement ce qui suit : « Sa Sainteté ordonne dorénavant la capture des bandits vivants. » En d'autres mots, il dit, « Ne les tuez pas, capturez-les vivants ». Ils ont attrapé et enchaîné les villageois qui se sont réfugiés

dans les montagnes et les ont envoyés dans ces cachots.

75% des personnes emmenées à Adana et à Zonguldak sont tuées. Par exemple, sur un millier de personnes envoyées dans le cachot d'Adana, seules 300 personnes peuvent revenir. 30 à 40 d'entre elles sont exécutées. La plupart de ces personnes sont condamnées à des peines de prison ; Ils meurent de maladies infectieuses telles que le choléra, la typhoïde. Certains sont tués avec une piqûre toxique. J'ai obtenu le bloc-notes d'un témoin qui a traversé cette période. Il les a personnellement enregistrés. Dans le cahier, il est écrit : « Celui qui recevait la piqûre, ne pouvait pas voir le matin ».

La plupart des personnes envoyées à Zonguldak travaillent dans des mines de charbon. La plupart d'entre eux meurent à cause de mauvaises conditions de vie. La plupart des rapatriés meurent d'un cancer du poumon dû au charbon inhalé.

Une zone de Zilan a été complètement détruite. La région de Zilan a été déclarée « zone interdite » de 1930 à 1950. Tous les villages ont été évacués. Dans la région déclarée zone militaire, les chiens mangeaient les corps de leurs maîtres décédés. Quelqu'un m'a dit : « Les chiens avaient mangé tellement de gens qu'ils avaient une taille énorme. Leur psychologie avait changé. Ils attaquaient les gens en meute. »

Nous avons vu la même chose avec Taybet Ana*. Ses enfants ont dit : « Nous avons veillé pendant des jours pour que les chiens ne viennent pas manger le corps inanimé de notre mère. » Sur le front des Kurdes, il n'y a rien de changé des années 1930 aux années 2019. »

*Taybet Inan, une femme kurde de 57 ans, a été abattue à Silopi le 19 décembre 2015 par les forces armées turques qui ont empêché pendant sept jours ses proches de prendre son corps resté dans la rue.

July 15, 2021

Kirkuk Minute

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

Kirkuk

•On Sunday, July 11th, Iraq's oil minister Ihsan Abdul-Jabbar Ismail visited Kirkuk and held several meetings with security and the governorate's officials. Ismail's visit comes after an increase in oil smuggling cases. Since October 16, 2017, Iranian-backed militias have smuggled Kirkuk's oil to fund their activities.

•On Tuesday, July 13th, Turkey's ambassador to Iraq, Ali Riza Gunay, visited Kirkuk and held a meeting with the Turkish-backed Turkmen Front. According to sources from Kirkuk, Tukey's ambassador discussed the internal issues facing the Turkmen Front, including the Shia-Sunni divide. Several members of the Turkmen Front signaled the racist gesture of the Grey Wolf radical group.

•The Police Department to Combat Narcotics and psychotropic substances arrested a dozen individuals accused of crystal methamphetamine dealing. The police announced the confiscation of nearly five kilos of crystal methamphetamine during the arrest of the defendants. For years, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) used Iraq as a main route for drug trafficking and oil smuggling.

•ISIS (Da'esh) terrorists continued large scale attacks in the disputed territories, mainly in Kirkuk province. On Friday, July 9th, Da'esh terrorists attacked a village chief (Mokhtar) named Ibrahim Khalaf in al Abbasi sub-district with light guns, resulting in his sibling's death. On the same night, Da'esh targeted federal police in Nahrawan Complex and Marim Bag village killing a police officer and injuring two more. Further,



Da'esh terrorists kidnapped an employee of the North Oil Company (NOC) while operating a drilling machine near the Sargaran sub-district. In the following days, Da'esh conducted more terror acts, including blowing up a power tower near Dibis district on Saturday and killing a federal police officer near Rashad sub-district on Tuesday.

•Kirkuk's Iraq National Security Agency branch issued a new security policy requiring a permit for public events, including weddings, seminars, and conferences held in commercial halls in the province. The permit must be applied for before the events for a "security check."

•Dozens of college graduates protested in front of the governorate, demanding employment, and called for prosecution against the Sunni-Arab lawmaker Mohammed al Tamimi. The protesters accused al Tamimi of attempting to impose 1,200 people loyal to him to the oil ministry for hire against the hiring process laws based on graduation points. In response, al Tamimi accused the "Arab side" of escalating the case. Division among Sunni Arab politicians in the province

has become overt closer to the scheduled parliamentary election on October 10th, 2021.

•The Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq replaced Kirkuk's Chief of Appeal Court, Salih al Obaidi, for breaking prosecution laws for a family member. Al Obaidi was forced to retire after he used tribal reconciliation in a case after his son and bodyguards were accused of beating several young people on June 22nd after a dispute over a soccer game. On many occasions, Iraq's judicial system has been under fire for corruption.

Khanaqin

•On Saturday, July 10th, Peshmergas of the 3rd division conducted a security sweep from north of Khanaqin to areas under the control of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The security vacuum caused by Baghdad and Iranian-backed militias allowed Da'esh terrorists to reorganize and launch attacks on Khanaqin since October 16, 2017.

•Organizers of anti-government demonstrations threatened to resume activity in Khanaqin after the mayorship failed to deliver its 10-days pledge to solve the shortage of primary services, mainly electricity and

water. The organizers said the time limit has ended, and the situation remains the same.

Tuz Khurmatu

•Two Da'esh terrorists were killed inside a workshop in the district while making IEDs. According to the police, the two terrorists died from severe wounds in the hospital. Further, the security forces conducted a large security search west of Tuz Khurmatu after daily attacks, including clashes, by Da'esh. At least two Da'esh hideouts were discovered.

Makhmour

•On Sunday, Da'esh terrorists kidnapped two shepherds near Makhour and demanded 100,000 US dollars-ransom for freeing them. The security forces announced the arrest of seven terrorists, but the area remains vulnerable to daily tracks, especially near Qara Chokh.

Shingal (Sinjar)

•The governor of Nineveh province Najim al Jabouri, said the security agreement between Erbil and Baghdad is implemented but at "a very slow pace." Al Jabouri also stressed that forming a local police force for the Yazidi Kurds is the "best security solution" for the town, noting the intervention of "many hands" in Shingal. Several forces exist in Shingal, including Iranian-backed militias, the Iraqi Army, and Yazidi local forces linked with Kurdistan's Workers' Party (PKK). Meanwhile, the KRG-backed commander of the Izadkhan forces accused the Shingal administration of having former Da'esh members who are "preventing the return of displaced Yazidis." Shingal mayor said the lack of services and security is why displaced Yazidis do not return to their homes.

En Irak, les enquêteurs de l'ONU sur les traces des crimes de masse de l'organisation Etat islamique

Au moyen d'outils haute technologie, les preuves des crimes de masse perpétrés en Irak par le groupe djihadiste de 2014 à 2017 sont rassemblées en vue de poursuivre ses membres en justice.

1006, 1109, 0614... Des dizaines de mots de passe, craqués en quelques secondes, défilent sur l'écran d'un ordinateur du laboratoire. L'expert forensique peut enfin accéder au cœur des téléphones mobiles retrouvés sur le champ de bataille et révéler les secrets de l'organisation Etat islamique (EI) cachés dans les cartes SIM. « Le jeu, maintenant, c'est de les faire parler ! », explique Adrien, qui souhaite garder l'anonymat pour des raisons de sécurité. Au cœur de la zone verte à Bagdad, le secteur ultra-protégé de la capitale irakienne, ce laboratoire haute technologie a des airs de Bureau des légendes.

L'équipe scientifique des Nations unies y traite « les preuves tangibles » des crimes commis par l'EI lors de l'occupation du nord et de l'ouest de l'Irak, de 2014 à 2017. Téléphones mobiles et disques durs portent les traces laissées par les auteurs des massacres qui ont endeuillé le pays et terrifié le monde. C'est la première véritable enquête high-tech sur des crimes de masse. Aux preuves électroniques s'ajoutent les centaines de témoignages collectés par les six équipes d'enquête sur le terrain, les analyses balistiques et celles tirées de l'exhumation des charniers. Au moins 202 fosses communes ont été découvertes par l'ONU, comme de sinistres cailloux blancs posés sur la route de l'organisation terroriste.

En septembre 2017, le Conseil



Cérémonie organisée à l'occasion du retour des dépouilles des victimes yézidis, à Kocho (Irak), en février 2021. UNITAD

de sécurité des Nations unies votait à l'unanimité la mise sur pied d'une équipe d'enquête (Unitad) chargée de recueillir, conserver et stocker les preuves de crimes contre l'humanité, crimes de guerre et génocide commis en Irak par l'EI. Le mandat dépasse la simple mission d'établissement des faits. C'est une véritable enquête judiciaire. Durant deux semaines, ses enquêteurs ont ouvert leurs portes au Monde et partagé leur quotidien sur une scène de crimes de quelque 56 000 km².

Rassembler des preuves

A « la villa », l'une des anciennes résidences du sinistre Oudaï, fils aîné de Saddam Hussein et as de cœur du jeu de cartes créé par les Américains lors de la traque des figures du régime après l'invasion de 2003, le benjamin de l'équipe doit travailler sur « des

preuves de champ de bataille ». Adrien nettoie les connecteurs d'un disque dur obstrué par de la terre et du sang. « Toute la connectique est complètement défoncée, observe l'expert forensique. Il a pu être dans une maison qui a explosé ou à l'arrière d'une voiture qui a servi dans des attaques. Ici, on extrait des informations sur des ordinateurs qui ont dix ans, qui ont passé leur vie sous 50 degrés et dans la poussière. »

Pour rassembler ces preuves, les enquêteurs travaillent en coopération avec les services de renseignement, de police et de justice irakiens. En février, un convoi de 35 personnes transportant un mini-laboratoire et 150 kg de matériel a ainsi pris la route de Mossoul. L'expert forensique est allé examiner du matériel saisi après la reconquête de la ville, en 2017, par les forces de sécurité ira-

kiennes, avec le soutien de la coalition internationale anti-EI.

« Nous avons fait des copies pures et parfaites » de disques durs et de cartes SIM saisis par les renseignements militaires irakiens, « des jumeaux numériques » conformes aux originaux et dès lors « acceptables par un tribunal », explique le Français. Ces preuves, précise Adrien, sont « la propriété du gouvernement irakien, avec lequel il a fallu bâtir des relations de confiance pour accéder aux archives ».

Et tout n'a pas été simple. Si Unitad apporte un soutien opérationnel à la justice irakienne – par des formations à l'analyse de preuves, la reconstitution digitale de scènes de crimes, l'archivage de dossiers... –, ses enquêteurs ont l'interdiction de partager des informations qui pourraient conduire à une condamnation à mort, peine prévue en Irak dans les affaires de terrorisme. Début mai, l'ambassadeur d'Irak aux Nations unies, Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom, reprochait ainsi à Unitad de ne pas transmettre ses dossiers. « L'Irak doit s'assurer de l'intégrité des données et bénéficier des résultats avant quiconque, explique Lukman Faily, chef du comité irakien de coordination avec Unitad. Il ne faut pas oublier que tout cela s'est déroulé sur le sol irakien, pas oublier, non plus, que nous avons eu les sanctions de l'ONU, l'occupation américaine, Daech [acronyme arabe de l'organisation Etat islamique]. Tout

cela tourne autour de la violation de notre souveraineté. Alors oui, nous soutenons le mandat [d'Unitad], mais nous restons prudents. »

Juger les membres de l'EI

Seule l'adoption d'un projet de loi, en discussion devant le Parlement de Bagdad, pourrait permettre de lever l'interdiction faite aux enquêteurs d'Unitad de partager des pièces pouvant conduire à des condamnations à mort. En débat depuis l'automne 2020, ce texte prévoit de juger les membres de l'EI pour génocide, crimes contre l'humanité et crimes de guerre, des crimes qui ne figurent pas dans le code pénal irakien.

Jusqu'ici, des centaines de djihadistes ont été condamnés en Irak pour « terrorisme » et beaucoup ont été condamnés à mort et exécutés. Mais « ces accusations de terrorisme ne reflètent pas la nature des crimes qui ont pu être commis », estime Christopher Gosnell, juriste principal d'Unitad. La nouvelle loi pourrait surtout laisser en suspens la question de la sentence. Ouvrant ainsi la possibilité d'obtenir, dans un second temps, la garantie qu'aucune condamnation à mort ne soit prononcée pour ces crimes-là.

A Erbil, un projet de loi établissant une cour spéciale, qui serait composée de juges nationaux et étrangers, est aussi à l'étude devant le Parlement. Il donnerait compétence universelle à la province autonome du Kurdistan irakien pour juger les crimes de masse commis par l'EI. « Ce tribunal s'occupera des criminels de l'EI dans le monde entier, pour des atrocités commises en Irak », explique le docteur Dindar Zebari, chargé du plaidoyer international au sein du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan. « Unitad sera le mécanisme permettant de les amener ici, devant les tribunaux », espère-t-il.

Mais l'initiative déplaît à Bagdad. Fin juin, la Cour suprême

a rejeté la proposition, estimant notamment que la désignation de juges étrangers serait une violation de la souveraineté de l'Irak. Selon deux sources, les partis chiites au pouvoir s'opposeraient à toute loi, de crainte de voir les milices poursuivies à leur tour, même si les deux projets de loi visent spécifiquement les crimes commis par l'Etat islamique.

Des images de têtes coupées, de victimes engagées, brûlées vives

Malgré les obstacles de la justice irakienne, Unitad avance sur un autre volet de son mandat : « encourager » les poursuites « dans le monde entier ». Les enquêteurs ont reçu les requêtes de quatorze pays, en Europe, au Moyen-Orient et ailleurs et, dans certains cas, fourni des pièces à conviction aux justices nationales, avec l'aval de Bagdad. En Europe, plusieurs combattants de l'EI ont été jugés pour des crimes en Irak.

Le 16 juin, la justice allemande a ainsi condamné une femme à six ans et six mois de prison pour avoir vendu aux soldats de l'EI de jeunes filles yézidiennes, réduites à l'esclavage sexuel. « Nous avons trouvé des preuves de trafics d'êtres humains dans les téléphones portables, des photos de jeunes femmes, avec leur description physique, leurs mensurations », raconte Eliza, qui souhaite garder l'anonymat pour des raisons de sécurité. Cette ancienne d'Interpol analyse les centaines de photos et de vidéos postées sur les réseaux sociaux par la propagande de l'EI.

Pour répondre aux requêtes des enquêteurs d'Unitad déployés en Irak ou à celles des justices étrangères, il lui faut visionner encore et toujours les mêmes images de coups, de têtes coupées, de victimes engagées, brûlées vives. Jusqu'à la nausée.

Une affaire la hante. Celle visant des frères jumeaux repé-

rés sur l'une des scènes de massacre des cadets du camp Speicher, en juin 2014. Réfugiés en Finlande, les deux hommes ont été jugés, puis finalement relaxés en 2019, les juges n'ayant pu les distinguer l'un de l'autre. Sur les vidéos stockées au laboratoire, l'un d'eux apparaît pourtant à visage découvert, coiffé d'un béret rouge, exécutant onze cadets de l'académie de l'armée de l'air. Ce jour-là, lorsque l'Etat islamique est entré dans Tikrit, le 12 juin 2014, quelque 1 700 cadets ont été exécutés. Incités par leurs commandants, les jeunes conscrits avaient quitté leurs uniformes et abandonné leurs armes avant de quitter la base. Ils ont été interceptés sur la route par les djihadistes et abattus sur plusieurs sites.

« Tuez-les tous, où que vous les trouviez »

Au rapport devant le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, le 10 mai, Karim Khan, alors conseiller spécial et chef de l'enquête [aujourd'hui procureur de la Cour pénale internationale], a dénoncé des crimes de guerre contre les cadets. Basé sur les preuves vidéos, a-t-il ajouté, « il est clair que le crime d'incitation directe et publique à commettre le génocide a eu lieu ». Le titre de l'une des vidéos, diffusée par la propagande de l'EI, parle de lui-même, a estimé le Britannique : « Tuez-les tous, où que vous les trouviez. »

Sept ans ont passé depuis le massacre de Speicher. Sous un soleil de plomb, une petite délégation d'Unitad s'enfonçait sous le pont où est commémoré le massacre, ce 12 juin. Au débarcadère, où plus de 280 recrues ont été exécutées d'une balle, la foule se masse, freinant la progression sur le mémorial du chef de l'enquête Tikrit d'Unitad. Un vieil homme au visage buriné, coiffé d'un keffieh noir et blanc, frêle silhouette dans sa dichdacha blanche, s'avance. « Où est-il ? Où est mon fils ? ».

Les yeux brillants de douleur

et les traits durcis de colère disent la tristesse de centaines de familles venues se souvenir, brandissant les photos de leur fils, mari ou frère. « Tout cela prend du temps, tente, didactique, le chef d'enquête, mais nous y travaillons. » Un homme à l'embonpoint affirmé, une tête au-dessus de la foule, capte à son tour les regards. Il accuse l'ONU, le gouvernement de Nouri Al-Maliki qui était au pouvoir lors du massacre et tous ceux à sa portée.

Après un bref discours, la petite délégation quitte le site, direction le tribunal de Tikrit. Elle est attendue par le juge antiterroriste du gouvernorat de Salaheddine, à qui Unitad propose de digitaliser les archives des procès. Une vingtaine de tribunaux à travers le pays seront bientôt équipés pour pouvoir sauvegarder ces dossiers, comme au tribunal d'Al-Rusafa à Bagdad, où le juge Yasser Al-Khozei instruit l'affaire Speicher.

« Il y a un certain nombre de suspects dans les pays européens, que nous recherchons pour leur participation dans les crimes de Speicher, et ces terroristes sont très dangereux », dit-il. Avant même le massacre des cadets, ils étaient engagés dans des actions terroristes, assure le juge qui, en douze ans dans l'antiterrorisme, a été le témoin privilégié de l'émergence d'Al-Qaïda et de l'EI. Il évoque 425 fugitifs, dont « beaucoup ont peut-être demandé l'asile dans des pays européens ». Le magistrat ne réclame pas leur extradition, de toute façon refusée par des Européens opposés à la peine de mort, mais « il faut les poursuivre, insiste-t-il, là où ils ont été arrêtés ».

L'EI a revendiqué l'horreur

Comme Ahmed Hamdan El-Aswadi, intercepté à Lisieux en mars 2018. Le dossier est entre les mains du parquet crimes de guerre et terrorisme de Paris, qui réclame des pièces à conviction à la justice irakienne et à Unitad. Le suspect

« aurait joué un rôle majeur dans le massacre de Speicher, explique Eliza. Nous essayons de récupérer des photos de lui dans la base car malheureusement, on ne peut pas voir son visage sur les vidéos ». Pour traiter cette masse colossale de données et répondre aux demandes, Unidad continue de développer ses propres outils d'analyse, en partenariat avec Microsoft. Le logiciel maison utilise l'intelligence artificielle, et doit à terme permettre la reconnaissance faciale, vocale, optique et traduire automatiquement les vidéos en anglais.

A ce jour, 875 des victimes du camp Speicher ont été exhumées de onze fosses communes et identifiées par la Commission internationale pour les personnes disparues (ICMP), la direction des charniers de la Fondation des martyrs irakiens et Unidad. « Je me rappelle qu'à Speicher, la fosse était fraîche, lâche Saleh, l'un des employés. Il y avait le cadavre d'un homme et il tenait à la main la photo de son enfant ».

Actuellement, c'est près des ruines de la prison de Badouch, au nord de Mossoul, que l'équipe onusienne exhume les corps. Près de 600 prisonniers chiites y ont été exécutés en juin 2014 tandis que les sunnites étaient libérés par les djihadistes. Sous une chaleur étouffante, l'équipe fouille le sol d'un oued asséché. Les restes exhumés sont rangés dans des sacs mortuaires blancs puis déposés dans le camion frigorifique. Il est midi, l'équipe s'est réfugiée sous un auvent. Fouad, l'un des « exhumateurs », tranche une généreuse pastèque d'un coup de poignard.

« C'est la population locale qui a découvert les fosses communes, explique Caroline Barker, chef de l'unité d'archéologie et d'anthropologie médico-légale d'Unitad. Ils ont entendu des choses. Il y a l'odeur aussi, les corps n'étaient pas sous le sol. » A Badouch, Tikrit ou Sinjar, « on



Les funérailles des victimes yézidies, à Kocho (Irak), en février 2021. UNITAD

ne pourra pas accuser Daech d'avoir dissimulé ses crimes », dit-elle. « Ils ont pris les villes et les villages. Ils bâtissaient le califat. Ils étaient là pour rester. » L'Etat islamique n'a ni enfoui les dépouilles, ni déplacé les cadavres, comme l'ont fait les soldats serbes de Bosnie à Srebrenica. Ils ont revendiqué l'horreur.

Prélever des empreintes ADN et identifier les corps

Depuis sept ans, la scène de crime a été modifiée par les intempéries, « rares mais diluviennes », les animaux et les humains. « Nous travaillons avec des images satellites, poursuit l'archéologue britannique, tous les contacts laissent une trace. En retirant ces traces une à une, comme on enlèverait les couches d'un oignon, on finit par retrouver la scène initiale. » Parallèlement, une campagne auprès des familles des victimes a été lancée dans plusieurs provinces pour prélever des empreintes ADN et identifier les corps. L'équipe chargée de l'enquête sur Mossoul a obtenu la liste des prisonniers. Des images en 3D pourront, un jour, permettre de « présenter le site à des juges » trop éloignés de l'Irak pour y organiser des reconstitutions.

Les premières exhumations auxquelles a participé Unidad remontent à mars 2019 dans la plaine de Sinjar. Après identification, 104 corps ont été remis aux proches et enterrés lors d'une cérémonie organisée

fin février dans la cour de l'école où l'EI avait « trié » les yézidies. Femmes d'un côté, promises aux viols et vendues aux enchères. Hommes de l'autre, exécutés.

A New York, début mai, Karim Khan pouvait établir juridiquement qu'un génocide a été perpétré par l'EI contre la minorité yézidie, une communauté kurde pratiquant une religion monothéiste vieille de plus de 4 000 ans. « L'intention de l'EI de détruire les yézidies, physiquement et biologiquement, se manifeste dans l'ultimatum qui a été répété dans tant de villages d'Irak : la conversion ou la mort », disait-il face aux diplomates. « Je me rappelle les funérailles de Kocho, raconte Caroline Barker. Je ne connaissais pas ceux qui étaient dans les cercueils, mais voir ce deuil collectif était bouleversant. Il est beaucoup plus difficile de s'occuper des vivants », dit celle qui côtoie les morts au quotidien.

Préparation d'actes d'accusation

Les vivants, c'est l'affaire des enquêteurs de l'équipe Sinjar. Ils ont déjà identifié 1 444 auteurs de massacres, de violences sexuelles et de transferts forcés, dont dix-huit hauts responsables. Leurs noms restent confidentiels. L'unité prépare désormais les actes d'accusation. Au pied du mont Sinjar, mi-juin, le convoi de l'ONU file à vive allure sur la route 47, axe stratégique entre

les deux fiefs de l'Etat islamique, Rakka en Syrie et Mossoul en Irak. Il dépasse Tall Afar, dont sont sortis plusieurs cadres influents de l'EI, et où beaucoup de femmes yézidies ont été parquées avant d'être vendues.

Le convoi s'enfonce vers Charaf Ad-Din, pour y rencontrer « le Lion du Sinjar ». Qassim Shesho est une figure de la résistance yézidie face à l'Etat islamique. Réfugié en Allemagne après avoir goûté aux geôles de la famille Assad en Syrie, d'où il luttait contre Saddam Hussein, il est revenu en 2014 « pour son peuple et 1 000 dunums de terres ». Après avoir combattu à la tête d'une milice qu'il a créée, il est aujourd'hui au cœur des rivalités politiques qui divisent les yézidies depuis la défaite de l'EI.

« Nous ne pensions pas qu'ils attaqueraient de façon si brutale », raconte Qassim Shesho. Dix-sept fois, l'EI a tenté de prendre le temple de Charaf Ad-Din, blotti sur le flanc du mont Sinjar, symbole de la résistance aux persécutions subies par la minorité à travers les siècles. Aux enquêteurs, il ne livrera pas un seul nom de ses frères d'armes. Et pas un seul nom de ses ennemis, ceux qui ont rejoint l'EI. Même ceux des prisonniers. « J'ai les cartes d'identité mais j'ai un travail à faire avec », lâche-t-il. Un dialogue serré s'engage avec les deux enquêteurs. Il assure avoir attrapé quatre terroristes de l'EI, remis aux Assayich, les services de renseignement du Kurdistan irakien, mais ils ont ensuite été libérés, raconte-t-il, amer.

L'un est devenu le maire d'un village proche, mais « maintenant, j'ai oublié son nom ! » esquivé Qassim Shesho. « Il y a 45 plaintes contre moi à Bagdad », dit-il de sa voix rocailleuse. Les représailles perpétrées lors de la reconquête du Sinjar, notamment par des chefs de milices yézidies, n'intéressent pas les enquêteurs. Les investigations d'Unitad visent les seuls combattants de

l'organisation djihadiste. Mais Qassim Shesho ne coopérera pas avec la justice, à laquelle il ne croit plus, qu'elle soit nationale ou internationale. « Je me battraï et je me vengerai », lâche-t-il.

« Vous avez mis un mot [génocide] sur ce qui est arrivé et nous sommes reconnaissants pour cela », dit le maire de Sinjar, Fahad Hamid Omar

Les enquêteurs poursuivent leur quête auprès d'Haider Shesho. Le neveu du « Lion du Sinjar » les accueille dans sa maison – qui était la dernière avant la ligne de front, en 2014 –, avec une petite délégation de responsables locaux yézidis. Unitad attend des preuves, des témoins, des cartes SIM, des registres de combat.

« Nous avons les données, des milliers de données, mais nous avons besoin de témoins pour

les comprendre », explique l'enquêtrice. « Tous ceux qui ont téléphoné après 11 h 30 le 15 août [2014] à Kocho sont des suspects », ajoute l'analyste de l'équipe. A ce moment-là, dans l'école du village, les djihadistes avaient dépouillé les yézidis de leurs téléphones mobiles et de leurs bijoux. Après trois heures d'entretien, les enquêteurs repartent avec des promesses de coopération.

A trente minutes de là, le maire de Sinjar, Fahad Hamid Omar, salue à son tour l'équipe d'Unitad. « Vous avez mis un mot [génocide] sur ce qui est arrivé et nous sommes reconnaissants pour cela », dit le maire, qui promet aussi sa coopération. L'équipe part ensuite à la rencontre d'un potentiel témoin, blessé dans les combats. Mais deux agents des services de renseignement irakiens tentent d'imposer leur présence. L'en-

quêtrice en cheffe dénonce « une atteinte à l'intégrité de l'enquête ». Les deux hommes sont priés de rester dehors. « Il y a beaucoup d'yeux posés sur Unitad, des sunnites, des chiites, du PDK [Parti démocratique du Kurdistan], et d'autres », commente Saad, un enquêteur yézidi. L'équipe devra renoncer à l'audition du témoin suivant.

C'est ensuite au tribunal de Tal Kayf, au nord de Mossoul, que se rendent les enquêteurs, pour y rencontrer les juges. Un procès est en cours. Le plaignant prête serment sur un Coran recouvert de film plastique, épidémie de Covid-19 oblige. L'accusée, une voisine, a été membre de la hisba, la police des mœurs de l'EI. Lors de l'occupation, elle aurait demandé au plaignant, un ancien policier, de remettre son AK-47 et de prêter allégeance au ca-

lifat autoproclamé d'Abou Bakr Al-Baghdadi.

Voilée, vêtue d'une robe noire, elle lève les mains au ciel et crie son innocence : « Je jure sur Dieu que je n'ai rien à voir, il n'y avait pas de brigades de femmes. » « J'ai condamné des dizaines de femmes pour leur appartenance aux brigades féminines de la hisba ! », rappelle le président. « Quinze ans de prison », tranche-t-il après un court délibéré. La trentenaire risquait la mort. Mais le juge explique les raisons de sa clémence aux enquêteurs d'Unitad : la condamnée est mère de quatre enfants. Et les preuves étaient insuffisantes. D'autres preuves se trouvent, peut-être, dans la gigantesque base de données d'Unitad, mais il reste aujourd'hui impossible de la partager avec la justice irakienne.

Le Monde

16 juillet, 2021
Par Marie Jégo

En Turquie, Erdogan limoge le recteur controversé de l'université du Bosphore

La nomination, en janvier, de Melih Bulu, connu pour sa loyauté au parti au pouvoir, avait suscité un mouvement de protestation inédit des enseignants et des étudiants.

Le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a limogé sans explications, jeudi 15 juillet, Melih Bulu, le recteur controversé de la prestigieuse université du Bosphore (Bogazici), à Istanbul, qu'il avait lui-même nommé six mois plus tôt à ce poste, suscitant un mouvement de protestation inédit de la part des enseignants et des étudiants.

Melih Bulu, un universitaire falot, connu surtout pour sa loyauté envers le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, au pouvoir depuis 2002), a été démis de ses fonctions



Une manifestation de soutien aux étudiants de l'université Bogazici, devant le palais de justice d'Istanbul, le 26 mars 2021 OZAN KOSE / AFP

par un décret présidentiel publié au beau milieu de la nuit

de mercredi à jeudi, deux lignes laconiques qui n'expliquent pas les raisons de ce licenciement.

La décision de démettre le recteur contesté est intervenue après une réunion du Conseil de l'enseignement supérieur (YÖK), qui a évalué ses dernières décisions. Il a également été question des allégations de plagiat concernant sa thèse de doctorat.

Harvard turc

Le revirement du président turc est inexplicable. Il intervient

après un mouvement de protestation étudiant particulièrement tenace, organisé sur le campus de cet établissement public prestigieux, considéré comme le Harvard turc, où l'enseignement se fait en anglais et où une bonne partie de l'élite politique et intellectuelle du pays a été formée.

Dès la nomination de M. Bulu en janvier, des centaines d'étudiants s'étaient mobilisés pour réclamer son départ. Déployées à l'intérieur et autour du campus, les forces de police avaient arrêté des centaines de protestataires, allant jusqu'à menotter la grille d'entrée de l'université pour empêcher les jeunes d'y pénétrer. Le président Erdogan avait alors qualifié les manifestants de « terroristes », promettant de faire « tout ce qui est nécessaire » pour stopper le mouvement.

Sourd à ces menaces, une bonne partie du corps professoral a rejoint la contestation. Depuis janvier, les professeurs mécontents par la nomination du nouveau recteur ont pris l'habitude de se rassembler en silence sous les fenêtres de son bureau, vêtus de leur toge, le dos tourné en signe de protestation. Plus largement, les

milieux académiques se sont offusqués du parachutage de ce proche du parti de M. Erdogan, considéré comme une grave atteinte à l'indépendance des universités.

Mettre au pas les milieux intellectuels

Depuis le coup d'Etat raté du 15 juillet 2016, M. Erdogan nomme les recteurs d'université sur décret, sans tenir compte de l'avis de leurs pairs, une mesure perçue comme une volonté de mettre au pas les milieux intellectuels qui lui résistent. Jadis, le conseil d'administration de l'université effectuait une présélection, une liste de candidats était alors soumise au président qui en retenait un. Désormais, le chef de l'Etat nomme qui bon lui semble.

C'est ce qui s'est passé avec Melih Bulu, choisi davantage pour sa loyauté envers le parti présidentiel que pour ses compétences universitaires. L'homme n'a pas une réputation de chercheur brillant, son niveau d'anglais laisse à désirer et sa thèse de doctorat offre de nombreuses similitudes avec des travaux universitaires publiés par d'autres chercheurs.

En prenant son poste, M Bulu avait déclaré que les protestations « ne dureraient pas plus de six mois ». Il s'est ensuite embourbé dans le tout répressif, ordonnant des descentes de police dans les dortoirs, ainsi que des arrestations musclées. Tout récemment, il a fait installer des caméras de reconnaissance faciale à l'entrée du campus, afin d'en interdire l'entrée aux étudiants jugés indésirables.

« Une victoire de la société civile »

En juin, il a supprimé les bourses d'études d'une centaine d'étudiants soupçonnés d'avoir pris une part active au mouvement de protestation. Cette décision, impopulaire, a été contrée par le maire d'Istanbul, Ekrem Imamoglu. Meilleur adversaire politique du président Erdogan, le maire a décidé d'attribuer des bourses de la municipalité aux étudiants concernés.

Bosphore Solidarité, un groupe de soutien aux étudiants protestataires, a déclaré jeudi dans un communiqué publié sur Twitter que la nomination et le limogeage de M. Bulu, aussi soudains qu'inexpliqués, attestaient de l'incompétence du

gouvernement. « Nous maintenons nos revendications, à savoir l'élection du recteur par l'université, la réouverture de l'association LGBT qui a été fermée et la satisfaction de nos aspirations démocratiques », a fait savoir le groupe.

Pour l'économiste Mehmet Altan, « l'éviction de Melih Bulu est avant tout une victoire de la société civile. Les étudiants et les universitaires de Bogazici ont bien résisté, ils ont empêché l'université de mourir, leur courage est exceptionnel ». Essayiste, ancien professeur de l'université d'Istanbul, M. Altan a passé deux ans et demi en prison pour des « messages subliminaux » suggérés, selon le parquet, lors d'un débat télévisé diffusé à la veille de la tentative de coup d'Etat de juillet 2016. En premier lieu, cette accusation l'avait fait rire. Aujourd'hui, il ne rit plus, la mainmise de M. Erdogan sur les universités le désole. « Au fond, l'éviction de Melih Bulu ne change rien à l'équation. Le président va continuer à nommer les recteurs sans concertation aucune avec les universitaires. Il reste un autocrate, et sa mise au pas des universités est un désastre pour le pays », dénonce-t-il.

Le Monde

16 juillet, 2021
Par Ghazal Golshiri

L'Iran accusé d'une tentative d'enlèvement contre une opposante aux Etats-Unis

La justice américaine a émis des avis de recherche contre quatre agents iraniens qui auraient planifié l'enlèvement de la journaliste irano-américaine Masih Alinejad.

Les tensions entre Téhéran et Washington sont montées d'un cran. La justice américaine a accusé, mardi 13 juillet, des agents de la République islamique d'Iran d'avoir planifié l'enlèvement aux Etats-Unis de la journaliste et militante irano-américaine Masih Alinejad. Cette dernière

est la cible de harcèlement sur la Toile depuis qu'elle a lancé, en 2014, une campagne contre le port du voile obligatoire en Iran.

Des avis de recherche ont été émis contre quatre Iraniens, dont un agent du ministère du renseignement, qui se trouve-

raient probablement en Iran. Une femme d'origine iranienne, vivant en Californie, a par ailleurs été arrêtée, puis relâchée sous caution. Elle est accusée d'avoir participé au financement du projet d'enlèvement présumé, notamment en engageant des détectives privés pour surveiller et filmer

Mme Alinejad et ses proches dans le quartier de Brooklyn, où cette dernière vit à New York, à partir de juin 2020.

Selon les informations révélées par la justice américaine, les quatre agents iraniens avaient étudié différents moyens de faire sortir Masih

Alinejad des Etats-Unis, notamment l'utilisation d'un bateau rapide entre New York et le Venezuela, un allié proche de Téhéran. Les agents de renseignement iraniens avaient également, toujours selon la justice américaine, exercé des pressions sur ses proches en 2018, pour la convaincre de se rendre dans un pays tiers – comme la Turquie –, dans le but de l'y enlever avant de la transférer en Iran.

Plusieurs opposants enlevés

Ce plan a échoué, car la journaliste avait été informée du projet d'enlèvement par son frère, Alireza. Ce dernier a, par la suite, été arrêté par les services iraniens dans le nord du pays et condamné à huit ans de prison. A la suite de l'échec de ce complot, Téhéran aurait, affirme la justice américaine, décidé de surveiller la militante aux Etats-Unis en vue de son enlèvement. A la chaîne persophone BBC Persian, Masih Alinejad a expliqué avoir été avertie des menaces qui pesaient contre elle par le Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), il y a quelques mois. Elle a été placée un temps en résidence protégée.



Masih Alinejad, journaliste iranienne et militante des droits des femmes, lors du sommet Women In The World à New York, le 12 avril 2019. BREN-DAN MCDERMID / REUTERS

La République islamique n'en est pas à son premier fait d'armes. Plusieurs opposants iraniens ont été enlevés dans des pays voisins. En 2019, le dissident Rouhollah Zam, réfugié politique en France, avait été enlevé en Irak et transféré en Iran. Il y a été condamné à mort et exécuté, fin 2020, pour son rôle dans les manifestations antirégime, de l'hiver 2017-2018.

En octobre 2020, l'opposant Habib Chaab, réfugié en Suède, avait, quant à lui, disparu lors d'un voyage en Turquie. Un mois plus tard, la télévision nationale iranienne diffusait les aveux de ce diri-

geant d'un groupe séparatiste arabe iranien, le Mouvement arabe de lutte pour la libération d'Ahvaz. Il confessait travailler pour les services de renseignement saoudiens et avoir été impliqué dans l'attentat meurtrier, survenu en 2018 lors d'un défilé militaire à Ahvaz, dans le sud-ouest de l'Iran, qui a tué une vingtaine de civils et de militaires.

Condamnation de la Maison Blanche

Les poursuites engagées par la justice américaine ont provoqué une vague de réactions, aux Etats-Unis comme en Iran. Mercredi 14 juillet, la porte-

parole de la Maison Blanche, Jen Psaki, a condamné « catégoriquement la tentative d'enlèvement d'une citoyenne américaine sur le sol américain », orchestrée par l'Iran. Elle a promis que Washington défendrait avec « force » ses citoyens et les intérêts nationaux, mais a toutefois confirmé la volonté des Etats-Unis de poursuivre les pourparlers avec Téhéran sur le sauvetage de l'accord nucléaire iranien.

« Nous n'avons jamais considéré l'Iran comme un bon acteur sur la scène internationale. (...) Mais il est dans l'intérêt des Etats-Unis que nous soyons présents dans les négociations en cours », a-t-elle précisé. Ne jugeant pas assez ferme la réaction de Washington, Masih Alinejad a accusé sur Twitter l'administration du démocrate Joe Biden d'« enterrer le dossier des violations des droits humains par l'Iran au profit du dossier nucléaire ». De son côté, le porte-parole du ministère des affaires étrangères iranien, Saeed Khatibzadeh, a estimé que les accusations de la justice américaine étaient « sans fondement » et « risibles », dignes d'« un scénario hollywoodien ».

Kurdistan au féminin

18 juillet 2021

ROJAVA. 80 combattants des forces arabokurdes détenus illégalement en Turquie

SYRIE / ROJAVA – Les Forces arabokurdes déclarent qu'au moins 80 de leurs membres ont été kidnappés et emprisonnés en Turquie en violation du droit international. Ils demandent au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU d'agir.

Alors qu'au moins 80 combattants des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS) sont en prison en Turquie en violation du droit international, Kino Gabriel, porte-parole des FDS, appelle la communauté inter-



nationale, les Nations Unies et le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU à agir. La majorité des membres des

FDS emprisonnés en Turquie déjà été condamnés à la réclusion à perpétuité aggravée en vertu de la loi turque. Les accu-

sations sont généralement fondées sur la législation antiterroriste de la Turquie et sur l'article 302, qui concerne la destruction de l'unité et de l'intégrité de l'État. Selon Gabriel, trois combattants du Conseil militaire syriaque (MFS) font partie des personnes concernées. Ils ont été enlevés à Serêkaniyê (Ras al-Ain) par la force mercenaire djihadiste « Armée nationale syrienne » (ASL / SNA) en Turquie au cours de l'invasion de l'automne 2019 et n'ont été condamnés que récemment à des peines de réclusion à perpétuité.

« La détention de membres des FDS en Turquie est une violation flagrante du droit international et de la Convention de Genève. Nos combattants ont été capturés et enlevés sur le territoire syrien à la suite de l'incursion illégale de la Turquie et de ses milices », a déclaré

Kino Gabriel. Il a souligné que la communauté internationale doit clairement condamner cette violation du droit et répondre par des mesures concrètes. Surtout de la part de l'ONU, une réaction brutale contre Ankara est attendue. Après tout, la Turquie est l'un

des pays signataires de la Convention de Genève.

« Bien sûr, la Turquie viole sciemment la Convention de Genève. Elle le fait pour redorer son image aux yeux du public international et pour cacher ses violations des droits de l'homme. La Turquie essaie de

créer et de maintenir l'image dans les médias internationaux que son invasion et 'occupation de la Syrie est une guerre contre le terrorisme. De cette manière, elle justifie le transfert illégal de nos membres sur le territoire turc et leur détention là-bas », a déclaré Gabriel.

Kurdistan au féminin

19 juillet, 2021

TURQUIE. Une attaque raciste anti-kurde fait 7 blessés à Afyon

TURQUIE – Aujourd'hui, des fascistes turcs ont attaqué des ouvriers agricoles kurdes en les traitant de « terroristes » pour avoir parlé en kurde à Afyon / Sultandağı Derçine: 7 Kurdes, dont 2 femmes, ont été blessés. En septembre 2020, une attaque similaire avait fait 1 mort (Özkan Tokay) et 2 blessés parmi des ouvriers kurdes du bâtiment à Afyon / Dinar. En Turquie, chaque Kurde est en danger de mort à tout moment car le racisme anti-kurde est le ciment même de cet État fasciste allié de l'Occident.

Des ouvriers agricoles kurdes venus de Diyarbakır (Amed) et Mardin (Kurdistan du Nord) dans la province d'Afyon ont été attaqués par des fascistes



devant un salon de coiffure dont le propriétaire avait refusé l'entrée disant qu'ils étaient des terroristes pour avoir parlé en kurde.

Attaqués pour avoir parlé en kurde

Nurullah Aba, le cousin des victimes, a décrit l'attaque ainsi : « L'un des travailleurs, Ismail Tan et son cousin Ali Tan, se rendent chez le jeune coiffeur pour se faire raser. Le patron veut qu'ils fassent la queue ici. Les jeunes font la queue. Cependant, tous ceux

qui arrivent après eux passent avant eux. Après 2 heures d'attente, ils ne peuvent toujours pas entrer dans le salon de coiffure. Les jeunes demandent pourquoi les autres passent avant eux et le patron attaque les jeunes en en disant : « Vous êtes des terroristes, vous parlez kurde ici. » Ils ont mis Ismail Tan, l'un des jeunes, dans une voiture et l'ont emmené dans une zone forestière. Ils l'ont frappé et ont filmé la scène. Nous savons qu'Ismail Tan a le bras cassé. Ali Tan La situation dégénère lorsqu'il informe les familles et se présente chez le coiffeur. Ici, 7 personnes, dont 2 femmes, sont blessées à coups de bâton. L'état des blessés n'est pas critique. » (Via Gazete Fersude)

La Provence

19 juillet, 2021

Syrie : Macron rencontre des représentants du Nord-Est

Emmanuel Macron a reçu ce lundi une délégation de "représentants de l'administration et de la société civile" de la Syrie du Nord-Est, une région en partie contrôlée par les kurdes et des forces

opposées au régime de Bachar al-Assad.

Au cours de cet entretien à l'Élysée, le président français a insisté sur "la nécessité de poursuivre le travail en faveur

de la stabilisation politique du nord-est syrien et d'une gouvernance inclusive", a indiqué la présidence.

L'un des responsables présents, Berivan Khaled, a af-

firmé à l'AFP que la discussion avait notamment porté sur "le soutien de la France pour la reconnaissance de l'administration autonome kurde par la communauté internationale".

Ce responsable kurde était accompagné par Elham Ahmed, le co-président du Conseil démocratique syrien, et Ghassan Youssef, l'un des dirigeants du conseil civil de la ville de Deir Ezzor.

Emmanuel Macron a notamment "salué le courage des combattants du Nord-Est syrien et les sacrifices endurés par ces derniers et la population locale dans la lutte" contre le groupe Etat islamique (EI), et "a assuré" que Paris "poursuivrait le combat contre le terrorisme aux côtés des Forces démocratiques syriennes", selon l'Elysée.



Le président français a insisté sur "la nécessité de poursuivre le travail en faveur de la stabilisation politique du nord-est syrien et d'une gouvernance inclusive", a indiqué la présidence. Photo - AFP - Thomas COEX

Il a également promis que la France "allait continuer son action humanitaire" dans le nord-est, "où plus de 100 millions d'euros ont déjà été engagés par la France depuis la

reprise de Raqa", l'ancien fief de l'EI, en 2017.

Cette rencontre s'est tenue deux jours après la prestation de serment du président syrien Bachar al-Assad pour un quatrième septennat après avoir remporté 95,1% des voix lors du scrutin du 26 mai, largement critiqué par l'Occident et l'opposition syrienne. Il a déclaré, dans son discours, que la reprise des zones échappant toujours au contrôle du pouvoir, dans la région d'Idleb et dans le nord-est, était "primordiale".



July 20, 2021
By Wladimir Van Wilgenburg

Kurdish civilian allegedly dies from torture in Syrian regime prison

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – A 35-year-old Kurdish man from the northern Syrian region of Afrin was allegedly tortured to death while being held in a detention facility by government security forces.

According to local Kurdish activist Mustafa Sheikho, Azad Ebdulqadir Soran was abducted two months ago by regime troops. He was then allegedly tortured to death in a prison run by the Political Intelligence branch of the Syrian security services.

Activist Sheikho told Kurdistan 24 that Soran was taken into custody on the road between the Ashrafiyeh neighborhood and Kurdish-controlled Sheikh Maqsoud district of Aleppo city by the Syrian government's Baqir group, which is supported by Tehran. Soran was born in Afrin's village of Xilalka of northern Aleppo province. He's the father of three children.

In the days that followed, the victim was reportedly transferred to a military hospital after being subjected to torture, but soon succumbed to his injuries.

Tensions have recently risen between the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the government in Damascus.

In April, heavy clashes took place over several days until Kurdish fighters expelled armed groups loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad from a neighborhood in Qamishlo.

"A permanent truce, mediated and guaranteed by the SDF [Syrian Democratic Forces]



Azad Ebdulqadir Soran, a Kurd from the northern Syrian enclave of Afrin, died in the custody of regime forces. (Photo: Social media)

and Russian forces, has been reached in Qamishlo city," read a statement by the internal security forces of the area, known as Asayish.

"The residents of al-Tay neighborhood who left their homes due to escalation will be as-

sisted by our forces to return to their homes."

On June 24, Syrian government security forces arrested Bassem Safar, an editor on cultural topics for the North Press Agency, a news website supportive of the SDF.

TURQUIE. Attaque armée contre une famille kurde à Ankara : 4 blessés

ANKARA – Il ne passe pas un seul jour sans qu'on assiste à des attaques fascistes visant les Kurdes en Turquie. Même quand il y a des morts ou des blessés côté kurde, la police et la « justice » turque protègent les criminels, mais jamais les victimes car ils sont Kurdes donc « terroristes ».

4 Kurdes ont été blessés lors d'une attaque armée contre une famille kurde devant l'autel d'Ankara / Altındağ où la famille sacrifiait un animal pour l'Aïd al-Adha. 2 des blessés sont dans un état grave. La famille kurde a subi des violences policières devant l'hôpital et empêchée d'entrer dans le village.

Une bagarre a éclaté entre deux familles dans l'autel du village Altındağ, à Ankara. 4 personnes de la famille Boztaş ont été blessées dans l'attaque menée par 150 fascistes turcs.



Ferit et Feyyaz, Tuncer et Halis Boztaş qui ont été grièvement blessés à la suite de l'attaque, ont été hospitalisés.

Les assaillants ont été protégés par la police

S'adressant à l'agence Mezopotamya, Ferhat Boztaş, un membre de la famille kurde, a déclaré qu'une bagarre avait éclaté avec une famille originaire de Kırıkkale après avoir disposé du fumier dans une zone située entre leur ferme et l'autre famille. Déclarant que la famille de Kırıkkale les a insultés et attaqués, Boztaş a dé-

claré : « Au moins 150 personnes nous ont attaqués. 4 d'entre eux ont tiré sur nous. 4 de mes frères ont été blessés. Ils sont remplis de haine. Tuer tous les Kurdes ne leur suffirait pas. »

Boztaş a déclaré que bien que 4 membres de sa famille aient été blessés, la police a protégé la famille qui les a attaqués.

Des proches des victimes ont été attaqués par la police turque

Déclarant que la police leur a dit de se disperser alors qu'ils

attendaient devant l'hôpital leurs proches, Boztaş a déclaré qu'ils avaient été à nouveau attaqués devant l'hôpital, cette fois par les forces de l'ordre. Boztaş a déclaré : « Mon frère était assis sur un banc devant l'hôpital. Ils ont d'abord essayé de retirer mon frère du terrain et ont attaqué alors qu'il ne bougeait pas. Nous avons participé à la bagarre afin de protéger mon frère. Police nous ont attaqués avec des gaz lacrymogènes et des matraques. J'ai encore des bleus sur le corps. Ensuite, plusieurs membres de ma famille ont été arrêtées par la police. »

La famille a été empêchée d'entrer dans le village

L'un des témoins, Aydın Yıldız, a déclaré qu'après l'attaque, les proches de la famille kurde ont été bloqués à l'entrée du village par la gendarmerie et ils n'ont pas été autorisés à entrer dans le village.



July 21, 2021
By Layal Shakir

One dead after Kurdish family attacked in Turkey

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region — One person was killed after a Kurdish family was attacked in Konya in central Turkey on Wednesday, a local media outlet has reported.

Around 60 people attacked the family, according to Mezopotamya Agency (MA), shooting at the car they were in. It described the incident as a "racist attack."

The family, originally from the

Kurdish-majority city of Diyarbakir (Amed) has been living in Konya's Meram district for twenty years.

Hakim Dal, a 43-year-old male member of the family, was killed in the attack, according to MA.

"They didn't want us because we are Kurds. They told us 'you will sell this place and leave,'" his brother Hamdi Dal told the news outlet.

An eyewitness claimed that fa-

mily had been attacked in the past.

"There have been at least three attempts to attack the family before," Mohammed Emin told MA, adding that the village chief was "provoking" locals to hurt the family.

Turkish authorities arrested three people in connection with what was described as a "racist attack" in Mersin against a Kurdish family from Erbil in

mid-May.

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

The attack drew ire and was condemned by Kurdish and Turkish officials.



21 juillet, 2021
By Karwan Faidhi

Kurdish film festival kicks off in Moscow

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region — Russia's first Kurdish film festival kicked off in Moscow on Wednesday, with 35 films and documentaries to be shown over the five-day event.

The Moscow Kurdish Film Festival (MKFF), organized by the Berphin Design Group, is also supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), according to a press release shared with Rudaw English last month.

Spectators "will see films reflecting Kurdish culture, history of the people, modern life and issues. Feature films, documentaries and short films participating in the film festival,

filmed by directors from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey and other countries, will be shown in their original language with Russian subtitles," said the press release.

Mizgin Mujde Arslan is a Kurdish director whose films will be displayed in the festival. She told Rudaw on Wednesday that the festival is significant for Kurds.

"This is a very special day for all of us because Moscow is an important place for Kurds who are living here ... This festival is a support for Kurdish films," she said.

Fifteen films and 20 documentaries from Kurds from all parts of greater Kurdistan will be



Photo: submitted

shown across the five days.

Kurds from other parts of the world have also organized similar festivals in the past, such as the Global Kurdish Film

Festival in London which screened more than 100 Kurdish films, classics and new releases online in April.

Le Monde

21 juillet 2021
Par Marie Jégo

Recep Tayyip Erdogan renforce son emprise sur la partie turque de Chypre

Le président turc, lors d'une visite de deux jours en République turque de Chypre du Nord, a réitéré son soutien à une solution à « deux Etats distincts ».

Le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a effectué, lundi 19 et mardi 20 juillet, un séjour dans la partie nord de Chypre, où il a réitéré son soutien à une solution à « deux Etats distincts », plutôt qu'à la création d'une fédération bizonale et bicommunale, pour remédier à la partition de l'île. A Lefkosa, la partie turque de Nicosie, il a assisté, mardi, au défilé militaire célébrant le 47e anniversaire de l'intervention militaire turque qui a divisé l'île en deux, avec, au sud, la République de Chypre, membre de l'Union européenne (UE), et, au nord, la République turque de Chypre du Nord

(RTCN), seulement reconnue par Ankara, qui y maintient trente mille soldats.

Durant les cérémonies, M. Erdogan a déclaré que les pourparlers de paix sur l'avenir de Chypre ne pouvaient avoir lieu qu'entre « les deux Etats » de l'île méditerranéenne. « Nous avons raison et nous défendons notre droit jusqu'au bout », a-t-il déclaré.

Après des décennies de négociations infructueuses sous l'égide de l'ONU, en vue d'une réunification, la Turquie a changé son fusil d'épaule. « Il est hors

de question de perdre cinquante années de plus » à négocier sur la base d'une fédération, a expliqué le numéro un turc devant le Parlement de la RTCN. Mais l'idée d'une solution à deux Etats est inadmissible pour la République de Chypre, la seule entité légitime, ainsi que pour l'Union européenne. En juin, Ursula von der Leyen, la présidente de la Commission européenne, a assuré que Bruxelles « n'accepterait jamais » cette éventualité.

Réouverture d'une ville-fantôme

Un brin provocateur, le numéro

un turc s'est rendu à Varosha, une ancienne station balnéaire située à la périphérie de Famagouste, promettant, comme il l'avait fait en octobre 2020, de rouvrir certains quartiers de la ville au public. Connue jadis comme le Saint-Tropez de la Méditerranée, Varosha a été abandonnée au moment de l'intervention militaire turque de 1974. Vidée de ses 15 000 habitants chypriotes grecs qui ont fui l'arrivée de l'armée turque, la ville est restée intouchée depuis, avec ses hôtels et ses villas abandonnés, ouverts aux quatre vents.

Décider d'ouvrir les plages et les

rues de la ville fantôme sans concertation préalable avec la partie chypriote grecque compromet la perspective d'une solution. Les Chypriotes grecs, qui n'ont jamais touché de compensation pour la perte de leurs propriétés, craignent de se retrouver définitivement spoliés. La création par les Turcs d'une « commission des propriétés » ne contribue pas à les rassurer.

Le président de la République de Chypre, Nicos Anastasiades, a vivement condamné la décision turque, réclamant la protection des Nations unies pour la ville. Toutefois, le fait que seule une petite partie et non la totalité de l'ancienne station balnéaire ait été promise à la réouverture prouve qu'Ankara cherche à tester les réactions de la communauté internationale.

Alors que Chypre était relativement négligée par la Turquie depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir des islam-conservateurs en 2002, la visite du président Erdogan illustre le retour de l'île en tant qu'élément géopolitique central dans la stratégie de projection de la puissance turque. « La visite prend son sens dans le contexte d'un réinvestissement stratégique du dossier chypriote », souligne Dorothee Schmid, responsable du programme Tur-

quie contemporaine et Moyen-Orient à l'Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI). A l'évidence, la Turquie souhaite renforcer sa présence sur place. « La dynamique de l'emprise turque évolue actuellement en plusieurs lieux, qui illustrent la stratégie turque du fait accompli », explique la chercheuse.

Surveillance en Méditerranée

Dans une étude finalisée en juillet, l'IFRI, associée à Prelligens, une start-up utilisant l'intelligence artificielle pour analyser des images satellites, expose cette dynamique. La décision unilatérale de rouvrir la ville de Varosha au public atteste des intentions d'Ankara. Selon les images satellites fournies par Prelligens, une rénovation des routes est à l'œuvre et une présence humaine est repérable en ville.

Par ailleurs, les Turcs ont ouvert une base de drones sur l'aérodrome militaire de Gecitkale, dans la plaine de la Mésorée. « Des drones du modèle Bayraktar TB2, vantés comme les "meilleurs avions-robots du monde" y ont été déployés », selon l'étude de l'IFRI. Bien qu'assez sommaires pour le moment, les installations témoignent de la volonté d'Ankara de surveiller ce qu'il se passe en Méditerranée,

notamment au niveau des prospections gazières et pétrolières. Enfin, souligne l'étude, « l'hypothèse de l'installation d'une base navale turque à Chypre Nord ressurgit régulièrement depuis 2018. Des amiraux turcs à la retraite ont évoqué l'importance vitale d'établir une base navale turque en RTCN, et la Turquie a commencé à travailler en juin 2019 sur un projet de "port logistique" en RTCN, destiné à répondre aux besoins logistiques des navires de guerre opérant en Méditerranée orientale. »

Gisements de gaz

La découverte de gisements de gaz, au large de l'île, décrits comme équivalents en volume à ceux de la mer du Nord, n'a fait que renforcer les tensions. Alors que Nicosie a invité les géants de l'énergie – Total, ENI, Exxon-Mobil, Noble Corporation – à exploiter ces gisements, Ankara crie à la spoliation, accusant la République de Chypre de faire main basse sur les richesses, au détriment des Chypriotes turcs qui se retrouvent exclus des futures retombées de la manne énergétique.

La Turquie perçoit les prospections comme une violation de ses droits souverains. Le fait que la République de Chypre ait noué des partenariats énergé-

tiques, notamment avec l'Egypte et Israël, contribue à renforcer la sensation d'isolement côté turc. « Les Grecs ont fourni des bases à la France, des drones israéliens ont été déployés sur l'île, le Royaume-Uni a déjà ses bases. Dans ce contexte, nous ne pouvons nous contenter d'être des spectateurs », expliquait Ersin Tatar, le président de la RTCN, quelques mois avant son élection, en octobre 2020.

La tension est montée d'un cran à l'été 2020, quand la Turquie a envoyé des navires de recherche sismique escortés par des bâtiments militaires au large de Chypre, suscitant les condamnations de Nicosie et de l'UE. La menace de sanctions, brandie lors du Conseil européen de décembre 2020, a produit son petit effet. Ankara a alors mis fin à ses prospections, craignant l'impact des sanctions sur son économie chancelante.

Mais, alors que les négociations en vue d'une réunification de l'île sont dans l'impasse et que les perspectives d'une adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE apparaissent désormais comme une vue de l'esprit, le plus vieux conflit gelé d'Europe risque de rester sans solution, contribuant à faire de Chypre une bombe à retardement en Méditerranée.

The New York Times

July 21, 2021
By Farnaz Fassihi

'I Am Thirsty!' Water Shortages Compound Iran's Problems

A prolonged drought worsened by climate change and government mismanagement has added a volatile new element to the swirl of challenges in Iran, ranging from the pandemic to U.S. sanctions.

Iran is struggling with a fifth wave of the coronavirus pandemic, an economy strained by American sanctions and stalled talks on rescuing a nuclear agreement that was once seen as an economic salva-

tion. Now the country is contending with a different but easily foreseen crisis: a severe water shortage.

A prolonged drought and rising temperatures from climate change, combined with dec-

ades of government mismanagement of natural resources and lack of planning, have turned the water crisis into a volatile incubator of protests and violent unrest.

For the past week, demonstrators have surged into the

streets of parched Khuzestan Province in the southwest, the epicenter of the protests. They have been met by security forces whose crackdowns have sometimes turned deadly — fueling more anger that is spreading elsewhere.

Khuzestan is home to an ethnic Arab population that has historically faced discrimination and that includes a restive separatist movement. But the protesters have insisted their grievance is not tied to separatism.

“We kept shouting, ‘We want water, just water, we don’t have water,’” Mohammad, 29, an ethnic Arab street vendor, said in a phone interview with The New York Times from Ahvaz, Khuzestan’s provincial capital. “They answered us with violence and bullets.”

Large crowds in Khuzestan shouting, “I am thirsty!” — captured in amateur videos and shared via social media — have demanded immediate relief and the resignations of local officials. Some protesters have gone further, denouncing top officials in Tehran including Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader.

Signaling that the protests have captured his attention, Mr. Khamenei commented on them publicly for the first time on Wednesday, saying on his Instagram channel: “Officials are obliged to address Khuzestan’s problems.”

This new challenge to the authorities, although long in the making, comes just a few weeks before an ultraconservative new president and Khamenei disciple, Ebrahim Raisi, is to take office, providing an early test of how he will respond.

Known for ruthlessness toward political dissent, Mr. Raisi, the country’s former judiciary head, faces a more delicate task in dealing with ordinary Iranians whose basic grievance is a water shortage.

The protesters have allies among Iran’s lawmakers, who like Mr. Raisi are all ardent defenders of the hierarchy that has ruled Iran since the Islamic revolution more than four decades ago.



Protests fueled in part by Iran’s lengthy drought are happening a few weeks before Ebrahim Raisi is to be sworn in as the country’s president. Credit...Arash Khamooshi for The New York Times

“Rescue Khuzestan and its oppressed people! Give back to it what it deserves!,” shouted Mojtaba Mahfouzi, the Parliament member for Abadan, an oil-rich city in Khuzestan, in a speech Monday on the floor of Parliament.

Climate Fwd A new administration, an ongoing climate emergency — and a ton of news. Our newsletter will help you stay on top of it.

It is not as if government officials can feign surprise. The consequences of an intensifying drought have been looming.

The energy minister warned in May that Iran was facing the driest summer in 50 years and that temperatures approaching 50 degrees Celsius — 122 degrees Fahrenheit — would lead to cuts in electricity power and shortages of water.

Iran’s meteorological organization warned in June that southern and western areas had suffered a 50 to 85 percent reduction in precipitation and a temperature increase of two to three degrees Celsius.

Khuzestan sits on 80 percent of Iran’s oil and 60 percent of its gas reserves, and is a critical economic pillar. Its once-lush farmlands grew sugar cane, wheat and barley. But with water scarce, crops shriv-

eling and cattle dying of thirst, the government is facing one of its most serious conundrums.

Its response so far has fit a familiar pattern: heavy-handed suppression of protests even as officials say they recognize the protesters’ complaints over water as legitimate.

Security forces and anti-riot police officers were deployed to crush the initial unrest in Khuzestan. They beat the crowds with batons, scattered them with tear gas, tracked them with drones and fired gunshots, according to witnesses and videos shared on social media.

Three young men were shot and killed by security forces, according to rights organizations. Local officials, in a typical

narrative of protest casualties said tribal gunmen were responsible for at least two of the deaths. State media reported one police officer had been killed.

Any hint that the protests were tied to the secessionist movement would almost certainly be used by the government to justify an even harsher response. But the protesters in the streets and online have made clear their grievances are about one main issue: the water shortage. And separatist groups have not seized on the protests to advance their cause.

Still, the crackdown has further inflamed the unrest and tapped into pent-up frustrations targeting the leadership of the Islamic Republic. And protests have spread to at least two major cities outside the province, Tehran and Mashhad, where crowds showed solidarity with Khuzestan.

In the Khuzestan town of Izeh, marchers clapped and chanted, “Death to Khamenei” and “We don’t want an Islamic Republic,” according to videos on social media. In a subway station in Tehran, the videos showed riders chanting, “Death to the Islamic Republic,” as they waited for trains.

A group of prominent dissidents, including Narges Mohammadi, a rights activist, were beaten and detained for a day after they had gathered outside the Interior Ministry in



A protest this week in Khuzestan, Iran, over water shortages.

Tehran in what they described as an act of solidarity with the people of Khuzestan, Ms. Mohammadi's husband said.

The government sent a delegation to Khuzestan to investigate the water crisis, and Iran's outgoing president, Hassan Rouhani, pledged relief and compensation to the province's residents. Two former presidents, Mohammad Khatami and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, also expressed support for the protesters and condemned violence against them.

But environmental and water experts said short-term measures such as trucking in tankers of water would do little to address the underlying problem. Opening dams and reservoirs would offer a temporary remedy in Khuzestan, but would cause water shortages in places like the central city of Isfahan and the surrounding province.

The protest over water exploded on social media on Friday but had been slowly brewing for weeks, according to an Arab activist and two protesters in Khuzestan.

It started July 6 when an ethnic Arab tribal sheikh from the village of Marvaneh traveled to Ahvaz with a group of farmers and ranchers to complain about their growing water crisis to officials at the province's water and electricity center.

"Look, we are not going to leave this land, you brought us floods and drought to make us migrate. We won't leave, this is our ancestral land," the sheikh, Khalifah Marwan, wearing a white dishdasha and blue checkered head wrap, shouted at officials seated at a conference table, according to a video shared with The Times. The sheikh's plea went viral on Instagram among ethnic Arabs, inflaming a long-held belief that the central govern-



A picture distributed by the Iranian news agency Tasnim in May shows a helicopter arriving to evacuate people from fires in the Zagros mountain range, near the city of Behbahan in Khuzestan province. Credit...Milad Khorasani/Tasnim News

ment had deliberately imposed policies that would force their displacement and change Khuzestan's demographics.

People began sharing their own stories and photos and videos of parched farms and dehydrated water buffalo lingering in mud. They issued calls for protests on Instagram and WhatsApp, emphasizing a focus on the water crisis and nonviolence, according to two activists involved.

Khuzestan's environmental challenges are stark: empty

"The pressure they have put on the system for a long time is more than its ecological capacity," said Kaveh Madani, a scientist in water and climate at Yale University and the former deputy head of Iran's environment agency. "Khuzestan like most of Iran is water-bankrupt right now."

Mr. Madani said consecutive governments had manipulated and depleted natural resources in favor of creating jobs. He cited, for example, a project that redirects Khuzestan's water resources through pipe-



Protesters in Tehran rallied against gasoline price increases in 2019. Credit... Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

reservoirs, dried wetlands, paralyzing dust storms, extreme heat, wildfires, and serious pollution of the air, water and soil from the oil industry.

lines and tunnels to the central desert climate regions.

Protests have flared before over water shortages in Iran. Farmers near Isfahan, for ex-

ample, demonstrated over the drying of a river that had been their agricultural lifeline. Environmentalists have railed against the drying of a landmark salt lake in Urmia, in western Iran.

But the confluence of climate change, drought, pandemic and prolonged isolation because of American sanctions have elevated worries underlining the latest protests.

"We are facing a very serious power and water shortage across the country," Sadegh Alhousseini, a prominent economist in Iran, said Tuesday at a discussion in the popular Clubhouse online forum, attended by thousands of Iranians. "If the weather doesn't improve over the next few months it will get worse."

Mr. Alhousseini attributed the problem partly to government subsidies that allow cheap rates for electricity and water, leading to excessive and wasteful consumption. But any increase in pricing risks further discontent as the majority of Iran's 85 million people struggle financially.

In November 2019, a sudden increase in gasoline prices sparked nationwide protests that quickly morphed into calls for overthrowing the government. The authorities responded by shutting down the internet for days and using lethal force against protesters. International rights groups said at least 300 people were killed and 7,000 arrested.

The residents of Khuzestan led the 2019 unrest and suffered the highest casualties.

"The system is in crisis management," said Mr. Madani, the climate scientist. "Jumping from one crisis to the other and putting a Band-Aid on each and hoping it won't come back soon."

ALLEMAGNE. Des Kurdes et des opposants turcs mis en garde contre des assassinats planifiés par des escadrons turcs

ALLEMAGNE – La police allemande a confirmé l'existence d'une liste d'assassinats de 55 Kurdes et opposants turcs (journalistes, artistes, politiciens...) réfugiés en Allemagne et a prévenu le journaliste Celal Başlangıç, qui vit en Allemagne, qu'il figurait sur cette liste et que sa vie était en danger. Les cibles accusent les services secrets turcs (MIT) d'être derrière cette affaire qui ne se limite pas à l'Allemagne mais touche toute l'Europe.

Le journaliste critique et rédacteur en chef d'Artı Gerçek et d'Artı TV, Celal Başlangıç, a reçu la visite de la police judiciaire. Les policiers ont prévenu le journaliste, originaire de Turquie, qu'il figurait sur une liste d'exécution compre-

nant 55 noms et que sa sécurité était en danger.

Ainsi, la police allemande a confirmé l'existence de cette liste, dont on parle depuis un certain temps. Il s'agirait d'une liste avec les noms de 55 personnalités de l'opposition contre le régime d'Erdoğan. Başlangıç vit et travaille en Allemagne depuis 2016, car il n'a pas pu continuer à travailler comme journaliste en Turquie. Plus récemment, le journaliste avait également examiné de manière critique les structures mafieuses au sein de l'État turc et avait, entre autres.

La police allemande enquête

Celal Başlangıç a expliqué : « On a d'abord parlé d'une liste

avec les noms de 21 personnes. Ensuite, il y a eu des informations sur une autre liste avec 43 noms, mais les noms des personnes là-bas étaient inconnus. Les policiers allemands qui sont venus chez moi ont mentionné une troisième liste et dit qu'il y avait une liste de 55 opposants d'Erdoğan qui vivaient à l'étranger et que mon nom figurait sur cette liste. D'après ce que la police a dit, nous avons compris qu'il y avait des enquêtes sur la question. (...) Notre avocat s'en occupe et essaie d'obtenir des informations. Il semble que la police allemande prenne l'affaire au sérieux. »

Persécution de la presse par les fascistes turcs

Le 7 juillet, le journaliste d'opposition Erk Acarer, qui travaille également pour Artı TV, entre autres, a été agressé et passé à tabac par trois hommes armés devant son appartement à Berlin. Bien qu'il soit depuis sous protection policière, il continue d'être menacé. Il avait parlé dans divers journaux turcs, plus récemment dans le journal critique du régime Birgün, des liens entre la Turquie et l'État islamique et était ainsi tombé dans le collimateur du régime d'Erdoğan. Le compte « jitemkurt » publiait alors qu'il y avait une liste d'exécution pour 21 journalistes d'opposition, artistes, intellectuels et écrivains en Europe.

Le Monde

22 juillet, 2021
Par Ghazal Golshiri

En Iran, le Khouzistan gagné par des manifestations contre le pouvoir

La crise de l'eau dans cette région pétrolière alimente depuis le 15 juillet une vague de colère dont la répression par les autorités a fait au moins trois morts. Ce chiffre risque de monter.

Pour la sixième nuit consécutive, des villes de la province du Khouzistan, dans le sud-ouest de l'Iran, ont été le théâtre, mardi 20 juillet, de manifestations contre la République islamique, sur fond de mauvaise gestion de l'eau par les autorités. Depuis le 15 juillet, des habitants d'Ahvaz, Shadegan, Susangerd et Izeh manifestent, scandant « A bas la dictature » et « Le peuple veut la chute du ré-

gime » en arabe, un slogan emblématique des soulèvements qui ont éclaté dans le monde arabe en 2011.

L'accès à Internet sur les téléphones mobiles a été coupé ou très ralenti, la nuit, dans les villes gagnées par les manifestations – une méthode de plus en plus utilisée par les autorités iraniennes pour empêcher le partage d'informations lors des mouvements de protestation.

Les vidéos publiées sur la Toile, filmées dans le Khouzistan, témoignent d'une répression féroce de la part de la police et des forces antiémeute, qui ont tiré à balles réelles sur la foule. L'organisation Human Rights Activists News Agency, qui documente les violations des droits humains en Iran, fait état d'au moins trois morts, tous de jeunes hommes. Des militants locaux accusent les forces de l'ordre d'être respon-

sables de leur mort. Le gouvernement a confirmé trois décès, les attribuant – comme à son habitude – à des « groupes terroristes » qui « ont infiltré » les manifestations.

Sécheresse inédite

Dans cette province pétrolière frontalière de l'Irak, les habitants – dont un nombre important est issu de la minorité arabe – se disent marginalisés et discriminés

par le pouvoir central, alors qu'ils étaient en première ligne lors de la guerre Iran-Irak (1980-1988) et en ont subi les séquelles. Jadis centre prospère de l'agriculture du pays, le Khouzistan connaît aujourd'hui une sécheresse inédite. Ses habitants souffrent du manque d'eau pour l'irrigation de leurs terrains agricoles et pour alimenter leur bétail, et même pour leur consommation.

« On n'a jamais eu d'eau potable, alors que la ville est bâtie sur le pétrole, la richesse de tout le pays », une habitante de Susangerd, au Khouzistan »

Cette année en particulier, à cause de l'augmentation sans précédent des températures (dépassant par endroits les 50 °C), de l'usure des centrales électriques et d'une mauvaise gestion, les villes iraniennes connaissent aussi des cou-

pures d'électricité, les pires depuis la guerre avec l'Irak. Le ras-le-bol contre l'incurie du régime théocratique est tel, dans le pays, que le moindre problème dans les services publics peut donner lieu à une contestation.

« Les gens sont pauvres à Susangerd, témoigne Somayeh (un pseudonyme), une ancienne habitante de cette ville de 130 000 habitants qui garde des liens étroits avec la région. Susangerd est privée de bonnes écoles et de moyens de divertissement. On n'a jamais eu d'eau potable, alors que la ville est bâtie sur le pétrole, la richesse de tout le pays. » Lors de la guerre Iran-Irak, son père, restaurateur, est resté cuisiner pour les soldats iraniens et avait même transformé son restaurant en clinique de fortune. Ses sacrifices, comme ceux des autres

habitants de la région, sont restés « sans retour », estime Somayeh. Le Khouzistan connaît un niveau de pauvreté et un taux de chômage très élevés, allant jusqu'à 50 % à certains endroits de la province, contre 9,6 % au niveau national.

Onze barrages

Une multitude de facteurs, liés à la mauvaise gestion des autorités, expliquent la crise de l'eau au Khouzistan. Depuis la révolution islamique de 1979, pour asseoir leur pouvoir, les autorités ont favorisé le développement de l'agriculture, alors que le pays manque de ressources en eau. Puis, à partir des années 1990, le pays a multiplié la construction de digues et de barrages, sans étude préalable ni prise en compte des questions écologiques. La province du Khouzistan, traversée par les cinq plus grands fleuves de l'Iran,

compte onze barrages qui empêchent les crues d'inonder les terres jadis fertiles.

Une grande partie de l'eau du Khouzistan est par ailleurs déviée vers les régions plus centrales et désertiques, notamment Yazd et Ispahan, dont sont originaires de nombreux dirigeants iraniens, pour alimenter des usines et des industries très consommatrices en eau. Les habitants y voient un « favoritisme » opéré à leurs dépens, une injustice qui alimente le mouvement actuel de colère. « Dans le Khouzistan, il semble qu'il n'y ait guère de volonté de mettre fin aux manquements et aux privations. Le seul fait de ne pas avoir accès à l'eau potable en dit long sur l'approche du pouvoir envers la population, explique Somayeh. C'est comme s'ils [les dirigeants] ne voulaient pas que les zones habitées par les Arabes progressent. »

POLITICO

July 22, 2021
By Lara Seligman

U.S., Iraqi officials to announce U.S. military shift to advisory role in Iraq by year's end

The shift would mark the official end of the U.S. combat mission in Iraq, but won't include a troop drawdown.

U.S. and Iraqi officials are finalizing a shift in the U.S. military mission in Iraq to a purely advisory role by the end of the year, marking the official end of the U.S. combat mission in the country, according to a U.S. official and two people familiar with the issue.

Officials plan to announce this shift on Monday after Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi meets with President Joe Biden at the White House, according to one of the people familiar with the discussions.

Under the plan, which the people stressed will not constitute a withdrawal of American forces from the country, a number of U.S. service

members will remain in Iraq indefinitely. These troops will provide logistics and advisory support, as well as air power, intelligence and surveillance capability in the fight against the Islamic State, which this week claimed responsibility for a suicide attack in Baghdad that left dozens dead.

The announcement will mark the culmination of a number of strategic dialogues between Iraq and U.S. officials over the American military presence in Iraq over the last few years, the person said. While the overall numbers likely won't change much -- there are roughly 2,500 U.S. troops in Iraq today -- the remaining combat forces will likely redeploy, replaced with personnel focused on the ad-

visory mission, between now and the end of the year.

The change, which is being discussed as U.S. and Iraqi officials met Thursday at the Pentagon, will mark yet another shift for the U.S. military presence in Iraq, where the United States has deployed troops for most of the last 18 years.

Kadhimi previewed the announcement in a recent interview, saying that Iraq no longer has a need for U.S. combat troops.

"Iraqis are now ready to stand up on their feet and protect themselves. We are no longer in need of U.S. combat troops," Kadhimi told Washington Post columnist David Ignatius. "At the same time,

we will continue to need intelligence support, training, capacity building and advice."

Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said in a statement to POLITICO that the meetings at the ministerial level "will reflect the breadth of this partnership and the importance with which the Biden administration views Iraq as a fulcrum for stability in the Middle East. We anticipate a number of deliverables to be announced in these areas at the close of the visit."

The Biden administration's approach to the conflict in Iraq stands in sharp contrast with the situation in Afghanistan, as America winds down its longest war. In Iraq, U.S. and Iraqi officials are seeking a

long-term military partnership; in Afghanistan, all U.S. troops are expected to leave by Aug. 31, aside from roughly 600 who will remain to help secure the U.S. embassy and the Kabul airport.

But officials say the situation in Iraq is different. The Pentagon has trained hundreds of thousands of Iraqis in recent years who have led the fight against the Islamic State, with the U.S. military providing air support and intelligence when needed. Iraqi special forces are some of the most-capable and battle-tested in the region, officials say, and played a leading role in defeating the ISIS caliphate in 2019. In Afghanistan, by contrast, the Taliban have made steady gains for years, and the Trump administration's 2020 peace deal with the group made the pullout all but inevitable, officials say.

Kadhimi is in the tricky position of trying to balance pressure from Iranian-linked political factions within his government that want American forces out entirely, and Iraq's ongoing need for critical U.S. military support to continue fighting terrorists. Adding another layer of complexity to Kadhimi's dilemma, Iranian-backed militia groups are relentlessly targeting U.S. and Iraqi troops in the country with drone and rocket attacks.

While the change on the ground

would be subtle, official recognition of the shift in mission could be portrayed as a political win for Kadhimi ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled for October.

The U.S. military has been gradually transitioning to an advisory role in Iraq since summer 2020, when American and Iraqi officials agreed in a series of communiques to reduce U.S. combat forces in the country.

In fact, in an April 7 joint statement, officials proclaimed that due to the increasing capacity of the Iraqi Security Forces, "the mission of U.S. and Coalition forces has now transitioned to one focused on training and advisory tasks, thereby allowing for the redeployment of any remaining combat forces from Iraq, with the timing to be established in upcoming technical talks."

The announcement next week will officially put an end date on the transition. But the sources stressed that a withdrawal of U.S. troops in the near future is not being seriously discussed.

The U.S. military has maintained a steady presence in Iraq since 2014 under Operation Inherent Resolve, which saw American troops return to the country due to the rise of the Islamic State. But Iraq became the proxy battleground for a tit-for-tat conflict be-

tween Washington and Tehran in 2019 following then-President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal and reimposition of sanctions the previous year.

The conflict crescendoed in America's Jan. 3 assassination of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad, which led the Iraqi Council of Representatives two days later to approve a nonbinding resolution calling for the end of the U.S. military presence in Iraq. That fall, the Pentagon formally announced a plan to reduce the U.S. military presence in Iraq by more than a third, from 5,200 to 3,000; by January 2021, the Trump administration had reduced that number to 2,500.

Still, the attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq continue, and have increased in recent weeks despite retaliatory U.S. airstrikes in February and June. In just one week in early July, U.S. troops and diplomats in Iraq and Syria were targeted in six rocket and drone attacks.

U.S. officials say the increased threat, including a spate of drone attacks in June, reflect Iran's push for America to withdraw troops from Iraq.

On Capitol Hill, Republican lawmakers suggested it was a bad idea to end the combat mission

while ISIS and Iran-backed proxies continue to threaten Iraq's sovereignty.

"As we watch Afghanistan descend into chaos and ISIS continue to lash out in Iraq and Syria, now is not the time for either the U.S. or Iraq to pretend that our shared mission is over," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said Thursday.

Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) said she was "really concerned about pulling all of our troops out without having a good solid withdrawal plan and how we'll respond to a surge in terrorism.

Republicans have largely backed Biden's retaliatory strikes against Iran-backed militants in Iraq and Syria, but have urged him to develop a strategy to push the terror groups out of those countries for good.

The House recently repealed outdated war authorizations for Iraq, and the Senate is expected to follow suit later this year. Some Republicans have argued that scrapping those authorizations would unnecessarily hinder Biden's ability to go after these terror groups in Iraq, though the measures were initially adopted to authorize military action for the first Gulf War and the effort to topple Saddam Hussein's government.



Washington Kurdish Institute
Est. 1996

Kirkuk Minute July 22, 2021

Kirkuk

•The Integrity Commission announced the seizure of several corruption dossiers in the governorate, estimated to be three billion, two hundred thirty-nine million Iraqi dinars (more than 200 million USD). The Integrity Commission said the corruption cases by Kirkuk's administration included the construction of apartment complexes and paving roads. Further, dozens of people protested the demolishing of their homes built on government-

owned lands in the Askari neighborhood. Millions of homes have been built illegally in Iraq since 2003, including many by senior officials.

•The Department of Agriculture announced the decrease in cotton production over the last four years since the federal government refuses to buy it from farmers. According to the agricultural department director, Zuhair Ali, Kirkuk was a leading province in the industry, and farmers used 200,000 acres for

cotton, but that number has since dropped to 50,000 acres.

•The interior ministry launched an investigation against three high-ranking Turkmen police officers for conducting an official salute during an ultra-nationalist Turkish anthem used by the Turkmen Front in Pirde, Kirkuk province. The officers participated in a ceremony with Turkey's ambassador Ali Riza alongside several Turkmen politicians and activists signaling racist gestures. Iraqi laws prevent military

and police officers from conducting official salutes to non-Iraqi anthems. The provocative visit of the Turkish ambassador to Iraq raised anger among the public.

•In a press conference, the director of the Archeological Department, Raed Augla warned that nearly 500 archeological sites are unprotected. Augla said the sites are facing destruction and theft due to a lack of security, and his department needs approximately 1,000

guards to secure the sites and prevent further damage. On a different note, Agula said, a Turkish company is "helping" restore the ancient graves of prophets and graves of Ottoman officers in Kirkuk's citadel.

•ISIS (Da'esh) continues to target security forces and the infrastructure in the disputed territories. On Friday, July 16th, Da'esh terrorists shot a Kurdish family inside a vehicle after driving into a fake security checkpoint near Qarabag village of Pirde district. As a result, one person was killed, and two others were severely injured. On the same night, Da'esh assaulted the 8th division of the Iraqi army stationed near Dibis district resulting in the death of

four soldiers and the injury of three others. Further, after repeated attacks on the power towers, the federal police announced the launch of drones for surveillance in an attempt to put an end to Da'esh attacks that cause a severe power shortage. Meanwhile, the security cell in Kirkuk announced the arrest of several Da'esh members in the city, among those a suicidal terrorist. On Sunday, July 18th, four Da'esh hideouts were discovered near the Ryad sub-district, including the seizure of drones and light weapons.

•The Kirkuk health department warned that the spread of the Delta variant of the coronavirus has spread in the province and

about 250 cases are recorded each day. The health department reopened temporary clinics for Covid patients after both main hospitals are used at 80% capacity. The police department gave its employees and officers 48 to get vaccinated; otherwise, they will not receive their salaries.

Khanaqin

•Organizers of recent anti-government protests announced the restart of the demonstrations after Eid al Adha due to the continuous lack of basic service. On July 4, protestors shut down the main route between Iran and Iraq, disabling overland movement between the two countries. Lack of water and electricity and unemploy-

ment sparked protests in the past months.

•Similar to the rest of the country, Covid cases have climbed dramatically in the past weeks. Khanaqi's main hospital operates at 90%, and health officials warned of an "uncontrollable situation."

•The Integrity Commission announced corruption in fuel supply to the federal police. The commission said the federal police in the town owned 213 vehicles, but it filed 303 vehicles and later sold 32,000 liters a month to private gas stations. Fuel shortage across the region is caused by smugglers and corruption in government departments, mainly in the fuel distribution office.



July 25, 2021

Turkey serving as vessel for radical Islamists - U.N. report

Uyghur, Turkmen and central Asian migrants living in Turkey serve as a significant pool for membership in radical Islamist terrorist organisations, according to a report presented to the United Nations Security Council, Voice of America Turkish reported on Saturday.

Members of the Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria's northern Idlib province see Turkey as an important gateway, according to the 22-page U.N. report detailing global terror activities in the first six-months of 2021.

Terrorist organisations such as ISIS and Al Qaeda are exerting efforts to include in their group people with Turkic nationalities living in Turkey, the report said,



while pointing out that a number of ISIS militants have been arrested attempting to enter Turkey from its southern Hatay province gate.

Turkey has long held a rep-

utation as a route for foreign ISIS fighters travelling to Syria and Iraq and has been accused of failing to prioritise threat posed by the jihadist organisation, which is believed to have carried out 300 deaths in

attacks in the country between 2014 and 2017.

The militants for years took advantage of Turkey's porous southern border.

ISIS continues to rely on "logistical hubs" inside Turkey for its finances, the U.S. Treasury said in a report in January. In April, Turkey granted citizenship to eight members of ISIS, whose assets have been seized over terror links, according to Ankara Gazetecisi news website.

There are at least 10,000 radical Islamists in Idlib, according to the report, and ISIS is resorting to guerrilla warfare tactics in some regions of Syria.

Deux soldats turcs tués dans le nord de la Syrie

Deux soldats turcs ont été tués et deux autres blessés dans le nord de la Syrie, d'où la Turquie essaie de chasser les jihadistes et les rebelles kurdes, a annoncé dimanche le ministère turc de la Défense.

Des "terroristes" ont attaqué samedi un véhicule de l'armée turque, qui a conquis cette région située au sud de la frontière turco-syrienne à la suite de son offensive "Bouclier de l'Euphrate" déclenchée en 2016, a ajouté dans un tweet le ministère, sans autres précisions.

Ankara qualifie de "terroristes" les militants du groupe Etat islamique (EI) et les mi-



Des militaires turcs déployés à la frontière avec la Syrie au niveau de la ville de Reyhanli. Photo d'archives AFP

liciens kurdes syriens, que les soldats turcs cherchent à faire fuir de cette zone, qui comprend les villes de Jarablus et d'al-Bab. Après l'attaque de samedi, "les cibles terroristes ont été frappées"

en représailles, a affirmé le ministère, là encore sans fournir davantage d'informations.

La Turquie a mené depuis 2016 trois offensives mili-

taires dans le nord de la Syrie qui lui ont permis de contrôler un territoire de plus de 2.000 km², notamment la région d'Afrine, l'un des cantons de la région "fédérale" kurde autoproclamée. Armée et soutenue par plusieurs pays occidentaux, dont les Etats-Unis et la France, la milice kurde des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG), présente dans la zone, a joué un rôle de premier plan dans la lutte contre l'EI en Syrie. Mais Ankara qualifie ce groupe de "terroriste" en raison de ses liens étroits avec le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui livre une sanglante guérilla en Turquie ayant fait plus de 40.000 morts depuis 1984.



July 25, 2021

KRG receives share of federal budget, ends salary cuts

Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq (GOV.KRD) – Prime Minister Masrour Barzani on Sunday led a meeting with the Kurdistan Region's Economic Council to address the resumption of full salary pay for government employees.

Prime Minister Barzani reiterated that the KRG pays salaries from available revenue, and that they can do so more reliably if the Iraqi government



upholds their budget commitments.

The Council stated that they are preparing to distribute full salaries without any cuts following the federal government's release of 200 billion dinars to the Kurdistan Region.

The positive effects of the KRG's efforts in internal reforms and revenue collections were another point of discussion.



What does the US-Iraq strategic dialogue mean for Iraq, especially the Kurdistan Region?

Najmaldin Karim Webinar Series

On July 23, the United States and Iraq are set to hold the fourth round of the “strategic dialogue.” The talks address security, economic, humanitarian and political relationships between the two countries but crucially, the future of the United States presence in Iraq and security cooperation. Since 2003 the United States has been under pressure and faced hostility from the Iranian-backed militias attacking them. However, after the physical defeat of the Islamic States (Da’esh) in Iraq

and the increase in the militias’ power and presence, attacks have dramatically increased against Iraqi bases housing US and other Coalition troops, as well as the American embassy. The militias have increased their attacks on US and other Coalition forces in the Kurdistan Region in the past months, trying to disrupt the safest environment for the western envoys since 1991. Due to existential threats and regional ambitions, the Kurdish parties agree on the need for a portion of the US forces to remain in

Iraq generally and in Kurdistan in particular.

What benefit will the US-Iraq strategic dialogue have in the long-term? Under what mission and how safely can the US stay in Iraq? What are ways to contain these militias? Can the Kurdistan Region remain as safe and stable as before for the US and other western envoys and troops? What are the lessons learned from the US withdrawal from Afghanistan? Does the US have more or less political leverage over Iraq?

These and many more questions answered by our distinguished speakers:

Bayan Sami Abdulrahman – Kurdistan Regional Government Representative to the United States

Michael Knights – Senior Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Kamaran Palani – Associate Fellow at Al Sharq Strategic Research

Sierwan Karim – President, Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI)

Yousif Ismael - Moderator

Kurdistan au féminin

La République à travers le regard féminin

27 juillet, 2021

Iran: Les gardes iraniens tuent un kolbar kurde et blessent 12 autres

IRAN / ROJHILAT – Dans le district de Baneh, au Kurdistan de l’Est, un kolbar kurde a été tué et 12 autres blessés par les forces du régime iranien. Les habitants de Baneh ont manifesté devant le bâtiment administratif contre le meurtre des kolbars.

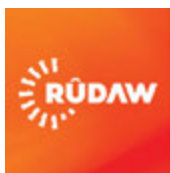
Selon le site Kolbernews, qui suit les incidents liés aux attaques du régime iranien visant les kolbars (porteurs de marchandises entre le Kurdistan d’ « Irak » et d’ « Iran »), à



la frontière d’Hengejal dans le district de Baneh, les forces du régime ont attaqué un groupe de kolbars.

Le kolbar Fereydun Salehi de Bokan a été tué et 12 autres kolbars ont été blessés dans l’attaque.

Des centaines de personnes se sont rassemblées devant le bâtiment administratif du district après l’attaque et ont protesté contre le massacre.



July 17, 2021

Kurdish singer jailed in Turkey returns to Germany

COLOGNE, Germany — A Kurdish-German singer returned to Germany this week after being jailed in Turkey on terror charges.

“I am thrilled to have returned. As a mother, I am very happy to have seen my children,” Saide Inac, better known by her stage name Hozan Cane, told Rudaw’s Alla Shaly on Thursday on her arrival in Cologne where family and friends greeted her at the airport.

“I left many of my friends behind. I hope they too will enjoy freedom. They have suffered much more than I did. They are all innocent. They are political prisoners. I want them to see freedom. I want the Kurds to see freedom,” she said.

Cane was arrested in June 2018. The singer had gone to Turkey to support the election



Filmed in Cologne, Germany on July 15, 2021

campaign of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP). She was charged with alleged links to the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), an armed group fighting for greater rights for Kurds in Turkey but deemed a terrorist organization by Ankara.

She was sentenced to six years and three months in jail,

but released from jail in October 2020 [on condition](#) she remain in the country while a court case against her continued.

Her travel ban was lifted this week, allowing her to return to Germany.

In Cologne, she said she

wants to see the international community work to free political prisoners held in Turkey.

“Turkey’s prisons are so dire. There is systematic torture,” she said. “I hope Europe and the whole world react to reach out to the jailed people. They are in need of assistance from every single human being.”

In its 2020 [human rights report](#) on Turkey, the US Department of State expressed concern about detention of political prisoners and abuse in prison. In Turkey “government agents engaged in threats, mistreatment, and possible torture of some persons while in custody. Human rights groups asserted that individuals with alleged affiliation with the PKK or the Gulen movement were more likely to be subjected to mistreatment or abuse,” the report stated.



Alla Shahly
July 26, 2021

Kurdish singer jailed in Turkey finds solidarity in Germany

RUDAW - COLOGNE, Germany — A Kurdish singer imprisoned in Turkey for her support of a pro-Kurdish political party has returned to Germany, meeting with German officials and Kurdish activists in Cologne.

“When you live your own language, sing your Kurdish songs and live a Kurdish life, you can overcome your enemy, it does not matter how

strong they are,” Hozan Cane told Rudaw.

Cane was imprisoned in June 2018 after travelling to Turkey to support the pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) in the elections. She was imprisoned on terror charges and was released in October 2020, with a travel ban that was not lifted until this month.

In Cologne, she sang and told the audience about her experience.

“Cane’s arrest reverberated with all of us. Her arrest reminded all of us of our time in jail,” said Khunaf Haji.

“When Cane spoke about Kurdish women, she spoke about her story and that reminded me of Kurdish women as a whole, those in prisons or

not. Kurdish women are all oppressed. I cried,” said Gulpari Abbas.

A German politician has said action should be taken to uphold human rights.

“We should not be afraid of the deterioration of relations with Turkey,” said Axel Schafer. “We will take this matter to parliament.”



July 28, 2021
By Karwan Faidhi Dri

US sanctions Syrian militia accused of killing Kurdish politician

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region — The United States Treasury Department on Wednesday sanctioned a Turkish-backed Syrian militia group accused of assassinating Kurdish female politician Hevrin Khalaf in 2019. The head of her party said the sanctions are a step towards bringing her killers to justice.

The Ahrar al-Sharqiya militia “has committed numerous crimes against civilians, particularly Syrian Kurds, including unlawful killings, abductions, torture, and seizures of private property. The group has also incorporated former Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) members into its ranks. These horrific acts compound the suffering of a population that has repeatedly endured mass displacement,” read a Treasury statement.

Two of the militia’s leaders were also sanctioned for “abuses against civilians.”

The militia is accused of assassinating Khalaf, who was the secretary general of the Future



Logo Ahrar al-Sharqiya militia (left), sanctioned on July 28, 2021 for crimes against civilians, including the murder of Kurdish politician Hevrin Khalaf (right) in 2019. Graphic: Rudaw

Syria Party, in October 2019 during Turkey’s military offensive against the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northern Syria.

The Treasury said the militia has “a record of human rights abuse that includes the unlawful killing of Hevrin Khalaf.”

The president of Khalaf’s party, Ibrahim al-Qaftan, told Rudaw English they welcome the sanctions, but wish they had gone further.

“Definitely, this decision is seen as a positive move by the members of the Future Syria Party, as well as the international community. It is a gateway to chase these killers,” he said. But he would like to see the US also sanction Ahrar al-Sharqiya’s supporters, “namely the Turkish government.”

“We have always called on the international community and human rights organizations to prosecute these killers – who are led by Turkish defense

minister [Hulusi Akar], Turkish President [Recep Tayyip] Erdogan, and the [former] head of the Syrian coalition Nasr Hariri,” Qaftan said.

He claimed that Erdogan had met with the militants days before Khalaf was killed.

Khalaf, who was known for her leadership on women’s rights and uniting various Syrian groups, was brutally killed on the road between Qamishli and Manbij. According to an autopsy report, she was dragged by her hair, causing her scalp to tear, and had her leg broken before she was shot multiple times.

Her murder occurred during Turkey’s invasion of areas of northern Rojava, Sari Kani (Ras al-Ain) and Gire Spi (Tal Abyad), in 2019. The military offensive forced the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and led to scores of human rights abuses.

The new US sanctions also include individuals and entities affiliated to the regime, such as its intelligence and prisons.



July 28, 2021

With his name on an ‘execution list’, writer Yavuzel attacked in Wales

Writer Gökhan Yavuzel, whose name is on an “execution list” targeting journalists, writers and politicians from Turkey living in Europe, was attacked in a park in Wales.

Writer Gökhan Yavuzel, a member of PEN International, has announced that he was attacked by

four people in Wales. Yavuzel’s name was on the “execution list” posted on the “jitemkurt” social media account

and targeting 21 people living in Europe.

Making a statement on Twitter,

he said, “I was attacked by four people today. Police came, then, an ambulance. I am taken home after giving my statement. I have

slight bruises on my back. The flunkies targeting us on an 'execution list' on social media; you will definitely pay for this."

'Assaulters were speaking Turkish'

Yavuzel has said that he was attacked in a park near the area where he lives and he knows that the police are close to the area as well.

Speaking to Artı Gerçek news website, he has said:

"I was attacked in a blind spot at the park. First, a punch came behind my back. As far as I could see, there were four people. When I fell on the ground, they started kicking my back. I passed out.

"Every one of them was swearing. They were speaking Turkish. They were hurling threats like 'Their turn will come, too.' They uttered swears and insults of 'ignobles, douches'. They said, 'We can kill you all if we want, you deserve more.' When I fell, I received a heavy punch in my eye. "Then, I received another one in my left eyebrow. I protected my-



self with my two hands at that moment. They were holding a small stick."

Police in Wales informed about the list

Indicating that after he saw that his name was on the 'execution list', he went to the police station of the area where he lives, Yavuzel has said that the police were informed about the list and they warned him.

Germany has confirmed the lists' existence

The federal government of Germany has also confirmed the existence of 'execution lists.' In-



terior Minister Helmut Teichman has answered the Parliamentary question of Helin Evrim Sommer, a member of the federal parliament, and said that "there are currently references to various lists of the people who are allegedly criticizing the Turkish government."

Erk Acarer was attacked, sent a threatening note

Especially the recent period has been marked by attacks and threats against journalists, politicians and activists from Turkey living in Germany.

Journalist Erk Acarer announced

that a threatening message was left in the yard of his home in Berlin, Germany. A few days before, on July 8, 2021, journalist Erk Acarer was assaulted by a group of people in front of his home. Announcing the attack on his Twitter account, he said he didn't have life-threatening injuries and was heading to the hospital.

Başlangıç told his life was in danger

Celal Başlangıç, the editor-in-chief of Artı TV and Artı Gerçek website, was notified by Germany's police that his life was in danger.

Two officers who visited Başlangıç at his home in Cologne also confirmed the existence of an "assassination list" consisting of the dissidents of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan living abroad, Başlangıç said.

At the weekend, it was reported that Kurdish musician Ferhat Tunç was on the "death list." He was informed by the Darmstadt police, according to Tunç. (KÖ/SD)



July 28, 2021
By Dilan Sirwan

Hawraman added to UNESCO World Heritage List

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region — The United Nations cultural organization UNESCO on Tuesday added the Hawraman region of western Iran to its World Heritage list.

The Hawraman region, located in Iran's western Kurdistan and Kermanshah provinces, is known for its stunning mountain scenery, unique culture, and history. Its addition to the heritage list was accepted with

a unanimous vote by UNESCO on Tuesday.

"Tiered steep-slope planning and architecture, gardening on dry-stone terraces, livestock breeding, and seasonal vertical migration are among the distinctive features of the local culture and life of the semi-nomadic Hawrami people who dwell in lowlands and highlands during different seasons of each year," UNESCO stated.

The Hawrami people are a Kurdish tribe that has lived in the area since about 3000 BCE, living in the rugged Zagros Mountains.

"Their uninterrupted presence in the landscape, which is also characterized by exceptional biodiversity and endemism, is evidenced by stone tools, caves and rock shelters, mounds, remnants of permanent and temporary settlement sites, and workshops,

cemeteries, roads, villages, castles, and more. The 12 villages included in the property illustrate the Hawrami people's evolving responses to the scarcity of productive land in their mountainous environment through the millennia," stated UNESCO.

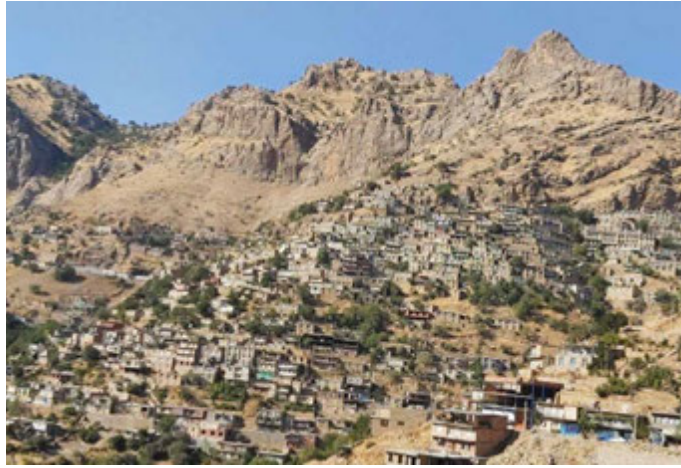
Artifacts belonging to the Paleolithic era have been found in the region.

The people of Hawraman are

seen as self-sufficient, producing their own clothing, shoes, and tools. It also boasts walnut, pomegranate, and mulberry trees. Cultural festivals annually attract thousands of visitors.

The Hawrami dialect is considered by many as one of the oldest in the Kurdish language and it has a long history of literature and poetry.

Last year, Hawraman locals campaigned to get their region added to the UNESCO list, hoping the designation would boost tourism and provide some financial security. Hawraman is the second Iranian site added to the World



Hawraman Takht village, seen on September 26, 2020, was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List on July 27, 2021. Photo: Jabar Dastbaz/Rudaw

Heritage List this week. On Sunday, UNESCO added the Trans-Iranian Railway to the list. There are total of 26 Iranian sites recognized by UNESCO.

On Monday, another site in a Kurdish area was also named to the heritage list. UNESCO added the Arslantepe Mound, located in Turkey's Malatya plain.

“Archaeological evidence from the site testifies to its occupation from at least the 6th millennium BCE up until the late Roman period. The earliest layers of the Early Uruk period are characterized by adobe houses from the first half of the 4th millennium BCE,” UNESCO said of the site.

The World Heritage List includes over a thousand sites around the world valued for their distinct cultural or natural importance.



BY MANAGING EDITOR
JULY 29, 2021

President Macron of France Meets with Officials from North and East Syria.

Top-level officials with the Syrian Democratic Council recently met with the governments of France and Belgium. In meetings in Paris and with Belgian officials in North and East Syria, European governments confirmed their commitment to counterterrorism efforts in North and East Syria and a non-military solution to the Syrian crisis. President Emmanuel Macron of France met with Executive President Ilham Ahmed and other officials from the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria in Paris in mid-July at Macron's invitation. Ahmed is the head of the Executive Council of the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), the political arm of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES).



Macron, Ahmed, and other officials discussed peace talks on Syria and the need for the democratic project in North and East Syria to be supported.

A Belgian delegation headed by Ambassador Eric de Moink visited the Foreign Relations Department recently in Qamishlo, North and East Syria.

They also visited areas within North and East Syria.

During the meeting with the Belgian delegation, officials discussed Turkey's cutting off water to North and East Syria, the need to re-open the al-Yaroubiah UN border crossing, humanitarian efforts, continued counterterrorism efforts to defeat ISIS, security in the al-Hol camp and other facilities hold-

ing ISIS fighters and their families, and the urgent need for COVID vaccines, tests, medical staff and supplies in North and East Syria. The Belgian officials emphasized their support for a non-military solution to the Syrian crisis within the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, which, they said, should be “inclusive” of all parties.

At the conclusion of the visit, Belgian and NES officials signed a document to certify the delivery and repatriation of women and children Belgian nationals who were affiliated with ISIS. The Belgian nationals had been held in detention by the Syrian Democratic Forces. The detainees were transferred into Belgian custody at the end of the visit.

Turquie : Des maisons des Kurdes démolies à Ankara/Baglum

ANKARA – Des Kurdes, dont les maisons et les fermes ont été détruites à Bağlum Köprü Mevkii, dans la province d'Ankara / Keçiören, au motif qu'il n'avaient pas fait les démarches nécessaires auprès du service de cadastre, disent qu'on a détruit seulement les biens appartenant aux Kurdes dans le cadre d'une politique spéciale anti-kurde. Par ailleurs, une des victimes de ces destructions a déclaré que lors d'une visite d'Emine Erdogan, la femme du président Erdogan, au refuge pour animaux de Keçiören le 28 juillet. Quelques femmes Kurdes ont demandé à Mme Erdoğan d'empêcher la destruction de leurs fermes et maisons. Erdogan leur aurait répondu : « Allez à la montagne [rejoignez le PKK] ».

Environ 150 familles kurdes sont actuellement menacées par la destruction de leurs maisons à Bağlum. Des familles dont les maisons ont été détruites ou sont en cours de démolition ont déclaré subir cela à cause de leur identité kurde.

Les victimes, dont la plupart ont immigré du district de Derik, à Mardin, il y a 20



ans, vivent de l'élevage ici. Expliquant qu'ils ont vendu tous leurs actifs dans leur ville natale avant de s'installer à Bağlum et d'investir dans leur résidence actuelle, les victimes kurdes ont déclaré que leurs moyens de subsistance leur avaient été retirés. 8 maisons et fermes ont été détruites jusqu'à présent. Alors que ceux dont les maisons ont été détruites vont chez leurs proches vivant dans la même zone, ils essaient de protéger leurs biens.

ILS NE VEULENT PAS DES KURDES

Déclarant que les autorités turques les forçaient à quitter la maison depuis environ

deux ans, Mustafa Ekinci qui habite ici depuis 21 ans a dit : « Nous ne savons pas quoi faire. Il y a 8 maisons et fermes détruites ici, et 8 d'entre elles appartiennent à des familles kurdes. Ils ne veulent pas de Kurdes ici. (...) Je ne suis pas d'accord. S'il y a un ordre, il doit être exécuté sans discrimination. Pourquoi choisissent-ils uniquement des Kurdes ? Ils ont détruit la maison où se trouvaient nos enfants. J'ai pleuré pendant des heures, ça devient de plus en plus difficile. »

SI VOUS NE PARTEZ PAS D'ICI, NOUS Y METTRONS LE FEU

Adil Ece, qui réside ici de-

puis 21 ans, a également déclaré qu'il vit de l'élevage mais qu'ils ne pouvaient pas régulariser leur situation en raison de difficultés financières, ajoutant : « Ils sont venus de la municipalité de Keçiören il y a environ deux ans, ils nous ont dit qu'il n'y avait aucun dossier de construction ici. Ils ont dit : 'Si vous ne sortez pas d'ici, nous brûlerons cet endroit'. Pendant un an et demi, ils ont continué à nous menacer avec des rhétoriques telles que « nous allons brûler cet endroit ». Voilà le résultat, ils font ce qu'ils disent. »



30 juillet, 2021

Iran : Plus de 341.200 décès dus au coronavirus

Saïd Namaki, ministre de la Santé : Nous nous sommes préparés à ce que les vagues deviennent violentes. (Agence de presse de l'appareil judiciaire, 29 juillet 2021)

· Agence Mehr, 29 juillet 2021 : Téhéran explose sans lit vide d'hôpital. Si vous attrapez le coronavirus, vous devez vous atteler à trouver une place d'hôpital, sauf si vous avez un passe-droit au niveau d'un vice-ministre, etc.

· Un député de la commission de la santé du parlement des mollahs : La province du Mazandaran a le plus de malades, tous les hôpitaux et services d'urgence sont pleins. Cette situation existe au Mazandaran, Golestan et Guilan, mais le Mazandaran est le pire. (Agence Isna, 29 juillet 2021)

· La faculté de médecine d'Ahwaz : le nombre de malades a augmenté de 100 % par rapport à il y a 2 semaines.

(Agence Irna, 29 juillet 2021)

· La faculté de médecine de Guilan : Le nombre de malades admis a dépassé le millier 1000. Les hôpitaux sont pleins de malades du Covid. (Agence Tasnim, 29 juillet 2021)

L'Organisation des Moudjahidine du peuple d'Iran (OMPI/MEK) a annoncé ce 29 juillet 2021 que le nombre de décès du coronavirus dans 547 villes iraniennes est supérieur à 341.200.

Le bilan des morts dans les provinces est le suivant : Téhéran 79.676, Ispahan 23.110, Khouzistan 21.696, Khorasan-Razavi 20.650, Azerbaïdjan oriental 13.448, Mazandaran 13.220, Azerbaïdjan occidental 12.468, Fars 11.607, Guilan 11.026, Qom 10.225, Alborz 9918, Sistan-Balouchistan 9605, Kerman 8383, Golestan 8005, Hamedan 7118, Hormozgan 5725, Yazd 5897 et Kurdistan 5647.



July 30, 2021
By Dilan Sirwan

Kurdish kolbar shot by Iranian border guards may lose leg: monitor

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region — A Kurdish kolbar shot in the leg by Iranian border guards on Wednesday in Kurdistan province may need to have his limb amputated, a rights group told Rudaw English on Friday.

Rasoul Molani was hit in his left leg when Iranian border guards opened fire on him and a group of kolbars in the Barvish Kani border area of Baneh on Wednesday, the Paris-based Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) reported on Friday.

Molani is currently at Salah al-Din Ayubi hospital in Baneh, and his injury is serious, according to KHRN founder Rebin Rahmani.



Two kolbars carry their loads on Tata mountain in May 2017. File photo: Fazel Hawramy/Rudaw

“His wounds are deep and several sources have told us that he is at risk for amputation, while another source told us that his leg has already been amputated. It is not cer-

tain, but we know that his wound is serious,” Rahmani told Rudaw English.

Kolbars are semi-legal porters who transport untaxed goods

across the Kurdistan Region-Iran border and sometimes the Iran-Turkey border, crossing the mountainous frontier, carrying heavy loads on their backs. They are constantly targeted by Iranian border guards and are sometimes victims of natural disasters. Many are pushed into the profession by poverty and a lack of alternative employment, particularly in Iran's Kurdish provinces.

In its latest report on the human rights situation in Iran, the United Nations raised concern over “excessive use of force” against kolbars.

“Reports estimate that around 70,000 Iranians, mostly of the Kurdish minority, depend on

being a kolbar for sustenance, including women, many of them women heads of household,” the report read.

According to the UN approximately 60 kolbars, including children were killed and more than 170 injured in 2020. On Monday, a group of kolbars were shot at from a close range by border guards in Baneh’s Hangazhal area, killing one and injuring five others.

A representative of Baneh city council Aboubakir Darvishi on Wednesday confirmed the incident to the Iranian Labour News Agency (ILNA). “This happened on Monday, 26 July, but unfortunately I do not know the details of the incident. I do not even know how old these people were,” he said.

Earlier this month, video footage sent to KHRN showed a group of five kolbars beaten

up by Iranian border guards. At least 21 kolbars were “either killed, lost their lives, or injured” on the border areas in June, the KHRN said in its latest monthly report, adding that of those at least 10 were shot by Iranian, Turkish, or Iraqi border forces.

Amnesty International addressed the brutal treatment kolbars face in their 2020 human rights report released in April.

“Iran’s border guards continued to unlawfully shoot scores of unarmed Kurdish kolbars who work under cruel and inhumane conditions, as cross-border porters between the Kurdistan regions of Iran and Iraq, killing at least 40 men and injuring dozens of others,” the human rights watchdog said, sourcing Kurdish human rights organizations.

The Washington Post

July 31, 2021

7 Kurds slain in Turkey; officials deny ethnic motive

STANBUL — Authorities said Saturday that 10 suspects have been detained over the killing of seven people from an ethnic Kurdish family in Turkey’s central Konya province. Family members say the attack was ethnically motivated, while authorities blame a long-running feud between two families.

Seven people from the De-deoglu family were killed in a brutal gun attack on Friday. A statement from the Konya prosecutor’s office said initial evidence pointed to an ongoing fight between two families who lived in the same area.

But the family’s lawyer and the pro-Kurdish opposition party say the murders were ethnically motivated. After an attack in May, one member of the family — who was among Friday’s victims — told media that they were being harassed and attacked for being Kurdish.

Lawyer Abdurrahman Karabulut said family members had been worried they will be attacked again. Officials said they had not yet apprehended the gunman.

The prosecutor’s office said in a statement that enmity between the two families dates back to 2010. Two fights in 2021 led to investigations, in which two people remain in

custody but other suspects were released. The statement rejected the claim of a racially motivated attack.

There were few details about those arrested, but media reports said the other family was not Kurdish.

The co-leader of the Peoples’ Democratic Party, HDP, said the ethnic Kurdish family members were murdered because of hate speech and linked it to a rise in “racist attacks.” Mithat Sancar accused the government of targeting the HDP and Kurds in general.

Media reports said the family’s house was set on fire after the attack.

Turkey has been fighting a Kurdish insurgency since 1984 and the conflict has claimed tens of thousands of lives, including civilians targeted by car bombs in 2016 and 2017 that were blamed on the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party, PKK. The decades-long conflict has also included discriminatory state policies and an ethnically charged atmosphere. Kurds are Turkey’s second largest ethnic group.

Interior minister Suleyman Soyulu said allegations that the murders were ethnically motivated were a “provocation” against the country’s unity.

AFRIN: Turkish-backed rebels leave trail of abuse and criminality in Syria's Afrin

During 17 days of captivity, Leila Mohammed Ahmed witnessed, helplessly, 10 young women take their own lives after being raped by members of the Sultan Murad Brigade, a Sunni rebel faction which operates under the banner of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA). The 63-year-old Kurdish woman from Afrin, the majority Kurdish enclave in northern Syria that has been occupied by Turkish-backed forces since January 2018, relayed to Al-Monitor the suffering of her fellow detainees in a telephone interview. "Some used belts to hang themselves, some pens or other sharp objects which they jabbed in their throats. Then there were the poor girls who just banged their heads against the wall until they collapsed," Ahmed said.

Ahmed's story is not uncommon. Across Turkish-occupied territories, a pattern of violence and criminality has been established. Turkish-backed opposition groups that once were dedicated to political causes are accused by residents of becoming criminal syndicates that kidnap for money and exploit citizens' resources for their own gain.

"There were around 150 of us. We were given a potato with half a loaf of Syrian bread twice a day, and beaten every night from 1 a.m. to 3 a.m. Each night the men would take away a few of the girls to defile them, saying, 'We are taking you to the doctor.' It was like a tradi-



Mohammed Jassem speaks in a video uploaded Oct. 6, 2017. (YOUTUBE)

tion," Ahmed said of the detention facility in the SNA-occupied northern town of al-Rai, her voice swinging between grief and rage.

Ahmed was arrested because of her links to the Kurdish-led administration that formerly governed Afrin, a hilly, verdant region carpeted with olive groves and ancient ruins, before the Turkish army and its SNA allies captured Afrin in a bloody, two-month military campaign.

With the bulk of its Kurdish population forcibly displaced and reduced to minority status, Afrin stands as a grim testament to the Turkish-backed Syrian opposition's shift from revolutionary zeal to unfettered greed and criminality — a laboratory for Turkey's experiments in demographic engineering and cultural imperialism, underpinned by a determination to prevent Syria's Kurds from establishing self-rule.

Turkey's preening authority was on full display this week as

the country's hawkish interior minister, Suleyman Soylu, went to Afrin on the occasion of the Muslim Feast of Sacrifice holiday, or Eid al-Adha.

Photos of the tour posted on his Twitter feed showed Soylu at the Turkish special forces command center. Giant Turkish flags festooned the building and portraits of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Kemal Ataturk hung on the wall.

Turkey's "Peace Spring" invasion of Kurdish-controlled territory in northeast Syria in October 2019 was greenlit by the Donald Trump administration and prompted a global outcry. SNA-affiliated brigades engaged in a litany of abuses, most memorably perhaps, the summary execution of Kurdish woman politician Hevrin Khalaf. She was pulled out of her car, shot dead, then beaten to pulp by members of Ahrar al-Sharqiyah, a brigade under the SNA's banner. Trump was denounced by politicians of both

US parties as having betrayed America's Kurdish allies who had heroically helped to defeat the Islamic State, and was pressured to rescind his decision to withdraw US forces from Syria.

No such uproar was heard when Turkey invaded Afrin on the grounds that the Kurdish administration running it was under the influence of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), the militant group that is waging an armed campaign against Turkey. The United States has argued that Afrin was outside its control, rendering America powerless to act. Russia, which holds sway over the northwest, may have let Turkey invade Afrin in order to punish the Kurds over their refusal to sever ties with the United States and submit to the authority of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Bassam al-Ahmed, a Syrian human rights activist and founder of Syrians for Truth and Justice, a nonprofit research outfit that is recording abuses by all parties in Syria's decade-long conflict, told Al-Monitor, "Almost all the world was against Peace Spring. But with Afrin there was a huge silence. What is going on now in Afrin is a deep ethnic cleansing from which Turkey and the brigades profit financially as well."

Leila Mohammed Ahmed is lucky. She was freed by Sultan Murad because "I was too old" and taken back to Afrin. Her home in the village of Matina is

now occupied by a Syrian Arab with two wives and 10 children; they were bused in from the Syrian city of Homs as part of Turkey's alleged drive to ethnically cleanse Afrin of its Kurdish population. A maze of stubs is all that remains of the 150 olive trees owned by her family. She has been living in regime-held Aleppo since 2019, having bribed her way out of Afrin for \$350, a hefty sum in today's pauperized Syria.

"About a week ago a friend of mine who was being held in al-Rai came back and told me there is a large number of women and girls still in the jail," she said.

Her account is consistent with the panoply of abuses documented in Afrin and other territories occupied by Turkish-backed SNA brigades, including rape, kidnappings, ethnic cleansing and recruiting child soldiers for Turkey's forays in Libya and Azerbaijan.

The violations these brigades engage in — from looting, to imposing "taxes" on original Kurdish inhabitants or recent Arab arrivals in the Turkish-occupied zones — are increasingly linked by a common motive: profit. Brigade commanders use the money garnered from these illicit activities to invest in property and other lucrative projects in both Turkey and rebel-held northwest Syria.

In a March report, the UN's Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic said, "After the capture of Afrin, declared in 2018 ... a security vacuum emerged, creating a permissive environment for fighters to engage in abduction, hostage taking and extortion." The report noted that similar patterns, "albeit to a lesser extent," were observed in and around the towns of Ras al-Ain and Tell Abyad following Operation Peace Spring, "mostly affecting returnees of Kurdish origin, including women."

"While detained, Kurdish (and on occasion, Yazidi) women were also raped and subjected to other forms of sexual violence, including degrading and humiliating acts, threats of rape, performance of 'virginity tests,' or the dissemination of photographs or video material showing the female detainee being abused," the report added.



Turkish-backed Syrian fighters of the Sultan Murad Turkoman brigade are pictured during a military show in the Afrin region in the rebel-held northern countryside of Syria's northern Aleppo province on Nov. 17, 2020. - BAKR ALKASEM/AFP via Getty Images

Meghan Bodette, a Washington-based researcher and founder of "The Missing Afrin Women Project," says she has documented 135 cases of women who are still missing out of 228 cases in total of reported kidnappings. She said 91 women are reported to have been released, while two were reportedly killed in custody. "From speaking to survivors directly and reading other testimonies, I assess that the real number of kidnappings and disappearances is likely higher than we know, due to the difficulties and dangers of reporting these abuses and Turkey's refusal to allow independent media and human rights organizations access to the area," Bodette told Al-Monitor.

On the rare occasion that Turkey did allow an international media outlet into Afrin, the result was an embarrassing whitewash. In its Feb. 16 piece, The New York Times said, "Turkey has become the only international force on the

ground protecting some five million displaced and vulnerable civilians. Today, the Turkish soldiers are all that stand between them and potential slaughter at the hands of President Bashar al-Assad's forces and those of his Russian allies."

There was no mention of atrocities committed by Turkey's

groups say the abuses committed by the SNA-affiliated factions amount to war crimes. Yet, according to more than a dozen Turkish, Kurdish and Syrian Arab sources interviewed by Al-Monitor, the pillage and plunder persists, with several warlords getting fatter on the profits by the day. Turkish individuals with ties to Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) allegedly share in the spoils.

Bassam Ahmed of Syrians for Truth and Justice said, "If they didn't know they are protected by Turkey they would never be able to do these things. Most of the top brigade commanders have Turkish nationality."

Turkey denies the allegations. However, in a rare move, a military court of Syria's opposition so-called interim government sentenced a member of Ahrar al-Sharqiyah over the murder of Hevrin Khalaf, according to the UN.

Zero discrimination

It's not just Kurds who are being targeted — Syrian Arabs brought into Afrin from East Ghouta after it fell to regime control are subjected to some of the same abuses. A resident who arrived in Afrin in the spring of 2018 paints a grim picture of the once-tranquil city. He told Al-Monitor, "I was renting a house from a Kurdish person, but the brigade in control of the area kicked me out, as well as the house owner, and confiscated the house under the pretext that the house owner was in the PKK." The offending brigade was Ahrar al-Sharqiyah. "This happened to dozens of families from East Ghouta, who were kicked out of their homes by Ahrar al-Sharqiyah," he said.

A Turkish researcher with deep knowledge of the SNA factions, who has traveled to Afrin several times, told Al-Monitor, "Afrin was divided up between the various brigades as spoils of war and they established mutually agreed zones and bor-

rebel proteges. The Syrian Kurds were aghast.

Sinam Mohammed, the Washington representative of the Syrian Democratic Council, a political body overseeing the US-protected Kurdish administration in northeast Syria, said, "I was deeply upset that The New York Times was giving a very beautiful image about the people in Afrin who are committing crimes there. It was fake news showing that everything is good."

Mohammed told Al-Monitor, "I know what is going on there. Daily they are committing abuses. Raping girls. Torturing men to death. Changing the demography." Mohammed's family home in Afrin has been usurped, her husband's factories stripped of their machines and left to rot. "I and many members of the Kurdish community wrote to The New York Times. They never answered," Mohamed said.

The UN and various rights

ders among themselves. They usurp property then sell it back to the original owner. None of it is legal or just,” the researcher said, on condition that he not be identified by name for fear of retribution from Turkish authorities.

The Afrin resident said, “Every neighborhood has its own brigade. The Mahmoudiya neighborhood, for example, contains 10 smaller neighborhoods, and each smaller neighborhood has a brigade in charge. Civilians who have no support from a given brigade, their property is as good as gone.”

He continued, “If you come to Afrin, as soon as you walk around you’ll be sure that only the force of arms rules this area. There’s a terrible phenomenon, the spread of stores that sell weapons. Wherever you walk, you’ll find ‘Hunter’s Gun Store,’ ‘So and So’s Gun Shop.’ It’s a really ugly sight.”

The Turkish researcher contended that the Turkish government is seeking to impose law and order in Afrin. However, the office of governor of Hatay, which administers the occupation of Afrin, securing basic services and overseeing reconstruction, has had little impact. “They seem either unwilling or unable to control the brigades,” he said. “Turkey’s main focus is on its own security,” he added.

This includes staving off sporadic attacks by the Afrin Liberation Forces, a PKK offshoot, which is waging a low-intensity insurgency to drive out Turkish and opposition forces, to little effect. Attacks attributed to this group and its affiliates, including the bombing of a popular market in central Afrin, have claimed civilian as well as soldiers’ lives.

Lay off my stash

On May 21, Turkey’s security seemed to be threatened by the very same SNA-linked factions that rely on its support, when hundreds of their alleged

members breached a gap in the concrete border wall separating Turkey from Syria. They poured in from Atmeh, a giant camp for displaced Syrians, and attacked a Turkish border post manned by gendarmerie forces in Hatay’s Reyhanli district. Local villagers cited by the Turkish independent online news outlet, Duvar, said the Syrians set fire to their wheat crops and olive trees. One of the villagers said, “The [gendarmerie] station came under a hail of gunfire. Was it a Molotov cocktail or something else, I don’t know but one of them threw an explosive. Had it not been for the concrete wall all of the soldiers there would have died.” Images of people running, with clouds of smoke and a bright orange flame rising near the gendarmerie watch tower, appeared to corroborate the claims.

The villagers said they did not know what had prompted the attack. However, Umit Ozdag, an independent lawmaker in the Turkish parliament, suggested in a tweet a week later that it was linked to the May 15 seizure at Hatay’s Iskenderun port of more than a ton of Captagon pills, a stimulant drug, with a street value worth \$37 million. Turkish police said the pills were destined for the United Arab Emirates and had been concealed in bricks.

Ozdog, a vigorous advocate of expelling Turkey’s estimated 4 million Syrian refugees, tweeted, “The Syrians rose up in Reyhanli. A Turkish border post was raided. The soldiers withdrew to avert a confrontation. Weapons were stolen from the border post. The reason for the eruption of the events was the narcotics operation in Iskenderun. The Syrian mafia is saying, ‘Lay off my property.’ Enough.”

Turkish officials offered no explanation.

Sefik Cirkin, a seasoned nationalist politician from Hatay and a member of the center-right opposition Iyi or “Good” Party,

told Al-Monitor, “Regretfully, I can say that this story is true. One hundred percent.” Cirkin declined to elaborate. Ozdog did not respond to Al-Monitor’s request for comment.

Numerous other drug seizures were reported this year in Hatay, most recently in July when a cargo vessel carrying 117 kilograms (258 pounds) of cocaine was apprehended off the coast of Iskenderun. In several cases, arrests were made. But the identities and the nationalities of the suspects were not revealed. No arrests have been announced by Turkish authorities in relation to the May 15 seizure.

Elizabeth Tsurkov, a doctoral student at Princeton University and a fellow at the Newlines Institute, a think tank in Washington, is counted among the leading experts on the Syrian opposition. Tsurkov told Al-Monitor, “Several Syrian factions in areas under Turkish control are involved in the drug trade.”

Tsurkov noted however that Atmeh is under the control of Hayat Tahrir Sham, the militant group that governs Idlib and is at odds with many of the the SNA factions.

Meet Abu Amsha

Mohammed Jassem is the Afrin-based commander of the SNA-affiliated Sultan Suleiman Shah brigade, named after one of the founders of the Ottoman Empire whose remains are buried in northern Syria. Jassem, or “Abu Amsha” as he is better known, is a prime example for the northwest Syria war profiteering game. The Suleiman Shah brigade, commonly referred to as the “Amshat” after their leader, has been implicated in rights abuses in Afrin, including abductions, ethnic cleansing and forcing olive farmers to pay the brigade a cut of their harvest.

Jassem’s Twitter feed reads like a pledge of fealty to Turkey and its latter-day sultan, Erdogan. There are tributes to as-

sorted Turkish ultra-nationalists, condolences for Turkey’s interior minister over the loss of his mom (who died at age 75 of heart failure in March) and vows to pursue the “dogs” of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) who are “really PKK.” Turkey’s “Olive Branch” operation against Afrin and the ensuing “Peace Spring” operation rest on that logic — that the SDF is “the same” as the PKK.

Parroting Turkey’s talking points on the PKK — and Erdogan’s Islam-tinged nationalist rhetoric — has served as useful cover for Jassem as he expands a mini-fiefdom out of Afrin’s Sheikh Hadeed area, which he took over after helping Turkey wrest control of the enclave.

A Sultan Suleiman Shah militant speaking on condition of anonymity told Al-Monitor, “When the opposition factions took control of Afrin, the Sultan Suleiman Shah Division took over the Sheikh Hadeed area and set up its command center there. The division commander, Abu Amsha, doesn’t take orders from the Syrian National Army or the Ministry of Defense [of the Syrian opposition’s interim government based in Istanbul], he directly coordinates with Turkish intelligence.”

Rights groups assert the factions have aided Turkey’s security apparatus in illegally transferring hundreds of Syrian Arabs and Kurds accused of working for the PKK from Turkish occupied areas to Turkey. Factions routinely wield the threat of rendition to extract large sums, and those who are unable to pay are handed over to Turkey, as previously reported by Al-Monitor.

Jassem’s newfound prosperity comes from multiple sources. Control over checkpoints that charge transit fees for commercial vehicles is one. Olive oil is another. The Sultan Suleiman Shah militant explained, “In the beginning, the Sul-

tan Suleiman Shah faction in Afrin operated like other factions in the region. It cut and sold olive trees, but it recently changed its strategy. The faction members started growing olives on confiscated land from those accused of being loyal to the SDF. They then imposed an income tax of 25% percent to 50% on landowners." The militant continued, "However, logging has not yet stopped as brigade members cut down trees and sell them to take advantage of their price. The faction's leadership allows members to individually benefit from a small margin of profit in order to guarantee their loyalty."

In Turkey, the state Agricultural Credit Cooperative buys the olive oil from the brigades through intermediaries then sells it to Turkish producers who export to Europe and the United States.

The illicit trade has been amply documented.

"Had it not been for the Afrin olives we could not have achieved this level of exports," Turkish oil exporter Ali Nedim Gureli told German broadcaster Deutsche Welle's Turkish language service. "In the old days, this product used to come illegally from Afrin and be sold to producers. Now the sales are being done by the state. Now the majority of Afrin's estimated [annual production of] 30,000 tons of olive oil comes to Turkey. Afrin's olive oil has become Turkish produce," he crowed.

Not all Turkish producers are as pleased. According to Cirkın, the nationalist politician, a fair share of Afrin olive oil winds up getting sold locally, well below market prices through elaborate schemes. "I told the [Hatay] governor Afrin olive oil is being smuggled and sold here. I said 'Do something. Producers are hurt.' Nothing was done."

Turkey's attempts to paint a veneer of legitimacy on the olive

oil trade by routing it through the Agricultural Credit Cooperatives leave international jurists unimpressed. "International law provides a number of protections to those living in occupied territory such as those living in Turkish-occupied Afrin. Their real and personal property is protected by the Geneva Conventions," said Roger Lu Phillips, an international lawyer and legal director for Syrian Justice and Accountability Centre, a Washington based nonprofit documenting war crimes in Syria.

"Most importantly," Phillips added, "It is contrary to international law for an occupying power to requisition foodstuffs, particularly where the civilian population is suffering from food shortages."

Furthermore, the occupying power, Turkey, must ensure that fair value is paid for any requisitioned goods. "If Turkey is taking olive trees and olive oil from local farmers without fair compensation, it has violated the laws of occupation, even if it has done so through the cover of armed militias under its control."

Jassem has invested some of his gains in businesses in Turkey, according to the sources who briefed Al-Monitor on the subject.

These are said to include several restaurants and car dealerships. Al-Monitor's correspondent rang El Safir Oto, a car dealership Jassem is said to own in the border city of Gaziantep, and asked, "Is this the car dealership that belongs to Abu Amsha?" A man responded in thickly accented Turkish, "Yes, it is. Who are you?"

Jassem "is number one in terms of business in the area," said Ahmed Ramadan, the editor-in-chief of the Euphrates Post, a Syrian opposition outlet based in Istanbul. Ramadan, who has investigated the factions' commercial activities, told Al-Monitor, "The entire

world knows they steal, they're war profiteers, crisis profiteers. They are no longer ashamed."

The pro-opposition StepNews agency alleged in a May 17 article that Turkish security officials had raided the homes of several individuals from the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade, including Jassem's brother, in separate operations in Gaziantep, Reyhanli and Osmaniye. StepNews claimed the raids were connected to the May 15 Captagon drug bust. ASO, a news agency affiliated with the Kurdish-led administration in northeast Syria, echoed the claim.

Tsurkov said her own findings match the claims as well. "My research into the illicit activities of the factions, it appears that the Amshat are the most heavily involved in the drug trade."

Tsurkov continued, "According to my sources inside the Amshat, the drug trading effort is led by Sayf Jassem, the brother of Abu Amsha and the fighters and commanders in his personal entourage."

"Most of the drugs are smuggled from regime areas by the Syrian Army's 4th division, which is the regime apparatus leading the drug manufacture and drug-running inside Syria and cross border. The drugs are smuggled from Nubul and Zahraa, Shia towns under Hezbollah control in Aleppo into Afrin by the Amshat," Tsurkov said.

"Abu Amsha instituted a total ban on smuggling drugs into Turkey," Tsurkov added. But this does not preclude using Iskenderun for transit purposes.

Jassem's alleged involvement in the narcotics trade aside, internal resentment over his behavior has been brewing for some time.

In 2018, Isra Khalil, the wife of a fighter with the SNA's Sultan Murad brigade, alleged in a video recording that Jassem had raped her numerous

times, including at gunpoint. "Abu Amsha raped me," she said. "Afterward he stood in the doorway, as he was leaving. He took me out of the room and said, 'If you say that I came to you, I'll kill your husband your brother-in-law.' I told him, 'For God's sake, mister, I haven't done anything, OK? God will keep private what he keeps private, I've never done anything to you.'" Khalil added, "It's not just me he raped. A number of women. A lot of women have been scandalized by him." Khalil described several other incidents in detail.

A week later Khalil posted another video claiming "a bad person" had offered to pay her "whatever amount of money you want, I'll give it to you if you record this video about Abu Amsha." A credible opposition source told al-Monitor that Khalil had been strong-armed into recanting her previous accusations.

Ahmed Rahhal, a general who defected from the Syrian army to join the revolution, and is a vocal critic of the factions' corruption and abuse, said Khalil's subsequent denial "didn't sit right with me."

"When I followed up with people I trust, inside Syria, they said Abu Amsha simply paid bribes, four cars, one for the judge, one to the police official, and two to others, and the issue was resolved. And the girl recorded the second video against her will. By force. I wrote about it. That rape is wrong," Rahhal added.

Rahhal's outspokenness came at a price. In August 2020 he was stripped of his Turkish residency and jailed for 73 days, "without being formally accused of anything. It was incredibly insulting to me." He believes Jassem and his men likely made false statements against him to Turkish authorities claiming that he was an "agent for the UAE, or an agent for Saudi Arabia, or the Kurds." Rahhal says he receives hundreds of threats every day from

people affiliated with the brigades, targeting him and his family, and that his life is in danger. He has publicly appealed to Erdogan, Soyly, and Syrian Interim Government leaders for their help.

In April, Orient, another Syrian pro-opposition outlet, relayed accusations made in a video by Turkish-backed SNA fighters that Jassem “stole” the salaries that they were promised for fighting in Azerbaijan in its war against Armenia. “They were promised \$2,000 per month but received far less and with delays,” Tsurkov said.

A Turkish whistleblower

Sedat Peker, a convicted Turkish mobster who lives in exile in Dubai, has been implicating current and former Turkish officials with close ties to the Erdogan government in grave crimes, including rape, drug trafficking and ferrying weapons to Syrian jihadis. The stream of tell-all videos are clocking millions of views on YouTube, and for many, ring truer because Peker, by his own admission, participated in some of the crimes. In a recent video, he claimed, “If you want to do business in Syria, you know what you have to do? There is a Mr. Metin Kiratli, let me say the name of his office: The administrative affairs directorate of the [Turkish] presidency. You must go to him but

not for small deals, like two trucks worth of stuff. I mean for the big deals.”

Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Bashar Jaafari said in a recent interview with Deutsche Welle, “I’d like to express that I confirm, affirm and verify what Mr. Sedat Peker said is completely true.” Kiratli has denied the claims and filed a criminal complaint against Peker.

Whether Peker is telling the truth or not, the commerce he describes appears to be expanding with Ankara’s blessings: A new unofficial border crossing lying between Ras al-Ain and Tell Abyad in the Peace Spring zone called Tufaha or “apple,” connecting Turkish backed opposition and SDF territories in northern Raqqa, began operating earlier this year.

Tufaha is run by Ahrar al-Sharqiyah leader Abu Hatem Shaqra, a top figure in the war profiteering racket who has been nicknamed “the Octopus” owing to his deep financial reach. Two other SNA-linked brigades, Jaysh al-Sharqiyah and Squad 20, share control over the Tufaha. Open source intelligence mined by Al-Monitor and observed by the researcher known as @obretix on Twitter showed an oil tanker truck parked at the crossing July 13.

“The crossings between areas of different parties’ control are like treasures for the rebel brigades. Tufaha is going to be a big economic crossing point, the monthly income on it might reach \$1 million,” said Ramadan, the newspaper editor.

The Syrian Democratic Council’s Sinam Mohammed insists that United States must designate the SNA brigades that have committed war crimes as terrorists. “It is a necessary step,” she said. “Otherwise they will not stop.”

But Bassam Ahmed of Syrians for Truth and Justice said he believes that this is an unrealistic goal, saying, “The most we can hope for is that some of these warlords be individually sanctioned for their crimes.”

“It’s time the United States act against these groups,” Bassam Ahmed added.

A State Department spokesman speaking on background told Al-Monitor, “The Administration is concerned by continued reports that some elements of the Syrian National Army have violated the law of armed conflict and abused human rights in northern Syria. We continue to urge Turkey to pressure Turkish-supported opposition groups to stop human rights abuses, hold perpetrators accountable, and take steps to prevent any fu-

ture such abuses.”

The spokesman added, “The United States and Turkey share an interest in sustainably ending the conflict in Syria and we will continue to consult Ankara on Syria policy and seek areas for cooperation. The United States and Turkey have shared interests in countering terrorism, ending the conflict in Syria, and deterring malign influence in the region.”

In July, the United States added Turkey to a list of countries that are implicated in the use of child soldiers over the past year, marking the first time a NATO ally was placed designated as such.

The State Department noted in its 2021 Trafficking in Persons report that Turkey was providing “tangible support” to the Sultan Murad division which deployed child soldiers to Libya as have other parties to the conflict there. The State Department also named the SDF along with other armed groups in Syria which recruit minors for combat. Ankara was furious.

The Turkish foreign ministry said it “completely rejects” the claim and its record is clean.

Editor's Note: This piece has been updated since its initial publication.



Kirkuk Minute July 29, 2021

Kirkuk

Despite ongoing security campaigns by Iraqi forces in the province, ISIS (Da'esh) continues to launch attacks against security forces and critical infrastructure. On Saturday, July 24, Da'esh assault on a security checkpoint resulted in the death of three members of the federal police near Riyad. On Sunday, Da'esh terrorists fired a Katyusha rocket on central Riyad without causing human or property losses. The rocket attack is the first in the area since the physical defeat of the "Caliphate." Further, the security forces announced the arrest of several terrorists in Kirkuk, among those two Da'esh members involved in the recent suicidal [attack in Baghdad](#).

Unknown gunmen raided the home of a former champion weightlifter named Mohammed Shamsadeen. During the attack, his wife and daughter were severely injured. Since October 16, 2017 many security forces control the province, including Iranian-backed militias.

The Kirkuk branch of Iraq's National Security Agency announced the arrest of a cell involved in COVID-19 vaccination card forgery. Thousands of fake vaccination cards and different types of health department stamps were confiscated during the arrest raid. The Delta variant of the coronavirus has widely spread across the county. The Iraqi government issued compulsory vaccinations for public employees and security personnel.

The director of Migration and Displacement, Ammar Sabah, announced that 45,000 displaced people remain in the province despite the closure of displaced camps. The displaced are Sunni Arabs from Nineveh, Saladin, Diyala provinces, and the Hawija district of Kirkuk. Since 2014, Kirkuk has hosted 120,000 displaced people, and many could not return due to aggression by the Iranian-backed militias against the Sunni population.

Disagreements among Sunni Arabs, mainly between the ruling Jabouri tribe and the opposition Obaidi tribe, reached another level before the parliamentary elections. A delegation of the al Obaidi tribe visited Baghdad and met with Sunni leaders, including Speaker Mohamed al-Halbousi, requesting a role in the local administration of Kirkuk. The delegation complained about al Jabouri's domination in government posts. In 2003, the two main Sunni Arab tribes in Kirkuk started competing with each other. Further, the Arab Political Council (PC) rejected a request by the Turkish-backed Turkmen Front to withdraw from the upcoming elections. The APC insisted on running in the polls. Meanwhile, the Turkmen Front is hoping for the delay of elections due to its Sunni-Shia division. Sunni leaders within the Turkmen Front rejected a request by senior Shia members to hold a party congress before elections. Turkey backs the Sunni Turkmen while the Shias are considered as Iranian proxies.

Kirkuk's Operation Command rejects transferring its liaison office to the K1 military base due to the presence of a variety of forces that are not under a centralized command. The K1 base is located outside of Kirkuk city, and since October 16, 2017, different factions of Iranian-backed militias have been stationed there in addition to the federal police and Iraqi Army.

Khanaqin

Anti-government protests resumed in Khanaqin, with protestors calling for the end of electricity and water shortage facing the town for months. Earlier this month, organizers of the protests threatened to take to the streets once again after the mayorship failed to deliver its [10-days pledge](#) to solve the shortage of primary services, mainly electricity and water. On Tuesday, July 27th, protestors stormed the mayor's office and water and power departments. The protests are expected to continue.

On Thursday, July 29th, Da'esh terrorists attacked Iraqi army units near Nafitkhana, resulting in the death of a soldier and the injury of two others. Da'esh attacks have increased dramatically since October 16, 2017.

Tuz Khurmatu

On Thursday, an Iraqi Army helicopter crashed near the Amirli sub-district, killing five, including two army first colonels and a major. The reasons for the crash are under investigation, but the area faces

Da'esh threats daily. Separately, the security forces conducted a sweep and announced the discovery of a Da'esh hideout and several weapons near Dawda, between Kifri and Tuz Khurmatu.

The Security Cell in Tuz Khurmatu announced the arrest of a group of drug dealers consisting of three individuals involved in dealing [with Crystal Meth](#). During the bust, the security forces seized 4.4 lb of the drug.

Makhmour

The Integrity Commission issued an arrest warrant for the head of the Silo in the town for charges related to buying grade three wheat and recording it at grade one. The agriculture industry has seen mass corruption in the past few years.

Shingal

The Mayor of Shinagal (Sinjar), Mahma Khalil, said that 3,000 Yazidis were still missing since the Yazidi Genocide by Da'esh in 2014. Khalik issued a statement saying the Yazidi Community is "disappointed" toward all sides since, after seven years, the fate of thousands remains unsolved. Further, due to political division among the Yazidi Kurds, three different genocide anniversaries will occur in the town on August 3rd. The Yazidi community is divided into several sides, including Baghdad, Erbil, Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and Iranian-backed militias.