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- **AS WELL AS ...**

A BOMB ATTACK ON THE GOLDEN MOSQUE OF SAMARA PLUNGES IRAQ INTO A CYCLE OF RETALIATIONS BETWEEN SHIITES AND SUNNIS

INTER-sectarian tensions have sharpened in Iraq since the 22 February bomb attack on the Golden Mosque of Samara, one of the Iraqi Shiite holy shrines. This attack, pitched Iraq into a cycle of retaliations between

Shiite and Sunni Arabs. It is hard to draw up a full list of the riots and attacks directed at each other by members of the two communities. The Iraqi authorities and the Americans deny that there have been more than 200 deaths while others announce

379 peoples killed in sectarian clashes. On 25 February, after four days of extreme tension, the Iraqi Defence Minister, Sa'adun al-Dulaimi suggested a figure of 119 civilians killed. On 25 February, President Bush phoned Iraqi leaders of all faiths to encourage them *"to continue working together so as to foil the efforts of the authors of violence"*. *"Given the historic, cultural and religious importance of this sanctuary, this attack is a crime against human-*

ity”, declared the US Ambassador to Baghdad, Zalmay Kalilzad and General Casey, Commander in Chief of the US Forces in Iraq. The US Ambassador, heavily involved in the haggling taking place to form an Iraqi “government of national unity” recognised that the Iraqis had “reached the edge of civil war” following this attack but that “things were improving”. For his part, the UN envoy to Iraq, Ashraf Qazi, offered UN help in reconstructing the Shiite mausoleum destroyed by the attack. *“The destruction of the Mausoleum of the Two Imams is a distressing tragedy. It is an act of sacrilege. It is an affront to all Moslems and an act of treason to all Iraqis”*, declared the UN General Secretary’s special representative to Iraq on 25 February. This was a deliberately aimed attack against peace and unity, in reality against the very future of Iraq, observed the special representative. The United Nations are ready, with the support of UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) to create, as a matter of urgency, a special reconstruction fund, with the help of the international community, for restoring the Mausoleum of the Two Imams and the other damaged mosques to their original dignity, announced the Special Envoy. The Mausoleum, which houses the tombs of the 10th and 11th Shiite Imams — Ali al-Hadi (died in 868 AD) and Hassan al-Askari (died in 874) is one of the major holy site of Shiite

Islam. The Imam Hassan was the father of the Imam Mohamed al-Mahdi, “*the hidden Imam*”, who the Shiites hope will one day return to restore justice in the world. In April 2005, the site had already been targeted by destructive acts — an explosion had destroyed the top of the spiral minaret of the al-Mutawakkil mosque.

During a televised press conference following the meeting of the principal politico-religious leaders (with the notable exception of the principal Sunni Arab alliance, the Concord Front) the Iraqi President, Jalal Talabani, devoted himself to calming the outburst of violence and to stressing that a civil war “*would spare no one*”. A curfew was imposed on the capital and the surrounding areas for three days, after the outburst of violence that followed the dynamiting of the Shiite mausoleum. The acts of violence against the Sunni Arab places of worship lasted 48 hours and as from Friday, the day of public prayer, the government transformed Baghdad into a dead city, as a sign of mourning, closing all shops and businesses and forbidding any traffic on the streets. The Ministry of the Interior announced on 27 February that the security forces had shot down 35 insurgents and arrested 487 others during a number of raids carried out after the attack in Samara. The principal Sunni religious authorities expressed unusually sharp criticisms of the Grand

Ayatollah Ali Sistani who, equally unusually, has called on the Shiite faithful to demonstrate their anger — with moderation — after the destruction of the dome at Samara. The radical Shiite chief, Moqtada Sadr, for his part affirmed that he had hurriedly returned to Iraq to take control of his militia, the Mehdi’s Army, after they had been accused of acts of violence. *“I cut short my journey and returned to take control of the Mehdi’s Army”*, he declared on the evening of 26 February, on his return to Najaf. *“The Mehdi’s Army must act in co-ordination with the government, the Army, the police and the people to guarantee the unity and solidarity of all”*, added the Shiite chief, denying that the attacks and burning of the mosques were due to actions of this militia. According to the Iraqi Islamic Party (Sunni Arab) at least 90 Sunni mosques were attacked, occupied and even set on fire — 50 of them in Baghdad alone. In the capital, three places of worship were destroyed with explosives.

In the opinion of Joost Hilterman, Iraqi expert of the Brussels based International Crisis Group (ICG) which is largely run by former senior US officials, the danger of civil war in Iraq is, today, “*extremely serious*”. According to an International Crisis Group communiqué dated 27 February Iraq could be plunged into a civil war if the Shiites, and the Kurds, winners of the last general elections, do not give the Sunni Arabs an

important role in the government and fail to disarm the militia. "There is not much time to stop the plunge into civil war", considered this influential think tank. "The bomb attack on the Shiite Mosque in Samara, the retaliations against the Sunni mosques and the assassinations of Sunnis are the latest signs that Iraq is approaching a total disaster", it added. For the ICG, "the Iraqi political parties and the interna-

tional community must act rapidly to prevent the incidents degenerating into a civil war that could lead to the disintegration of Iraq and destabilise the whole region". According to this body, "the January and December elections have brought to light the predominance of religion, the mosques have been turned into the headquarters of political parties and the clergy into politicians".

THE KURDISH PARLIAMENT UNANIMOUSLY ELECTS NECHIRVAN BARZANI PRIME MINISTER WHILE NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN FOR FORMING AN IRAQI GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY

ON 22 February, Nechirvan Barzani was unanimously chosen as Prime Minister by the 111 members of the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament meeting at Irbil. Parliament also elected Omar Fattah, a leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), as Deputy Prime Minister. The two men had previously been Prime Ministers of the Irbil and Suleimaniyah Regions, the two Regions of Iraqi Kurdistan. The Speaker of the Kurdish Parliament, Adnan Mufti, indicated that the President of Kurdistan, Massud Barzani, will ask the Prime Minister to form a government within the next month, and that this executive would include, in addition to representatives of the two main Kurdish secular parties, Turcoman, Assyrian, Chaldean and Islamist ministers. The two major parties

had signed an agreement at the beginning of February, to unify their government, which will serve until the 2007 Regional elections.

Furthermore, on 25 February, representatives of the Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish communities committed themselves to renew the formation of a national unity government, three days after the Sunni Arabs had slammed the door on the negotiations. The leaders of the main political forces reached this agreement during a meeting at Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari's official residence in Baghdad. "I am very glad and optimistic", declared Ibrahim Jaafari. "Our people is very far from civil war and everyone has agreed that the first enemy of the Iraqis is terrorism and that it is not a matter of Sunni against Shiite or Shiite against Sunni". This agreement comes as Iraq

appears to be plunging deeper into a cycle of revenge/reprisal that has already caused some 200 deaths throughout the country following the partial destruction of the Shiite sanctuary in Samara. At the height of the escalation, to express their anger at the reprisals to which they were being subjected, the Sunni Arabs had slammed the door on the talks under way with their Shiite opposite numbers to form a new government. A Sunni Arab leader, Tariq al-Hashemi, stated that all the parties had agreed that the solution to the crisis "is to form a government as soon as possible". According to a Kurdish politician, Mahmud Othman, this about turn in the situation is due, in particular, to telephone calls made on 25 February, by US President G.W. Bush to seven leaders of the Shiite, Sunni Arab and Kurdish communities.

The UK Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, arriving in Baghdad on 20 February, stressed the necessity of a government of national unity in Iraq. "Today is a crucial moment for the Iraqis. We have had the 15 December elections and we now have the final results. They show that no party, no ethnic or religious group can dominate the government of Iraq" declared the British Foreign Minister, following his meeting with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani. "This gives a new impulse to what the Iraqis had told us they wanted: a government of national unity repre-

senting all the facets of Iraqi society", he added. "The international community, and particularly those who had participated in the liberation of Iraq, have an interest in Iraq having a prosperous, stable and democratic government", Jack Straw pointed out. The US Ambassador to Baghdad, Zalmay Khalilzad, had also stressed that Washington would not accept any drift towards communalism or activism in the new government.

For his part, Ayatollah Sistani, the highest Shiite religious authority in the country, insisted that the government be formed as quickly as possible. This high religious dignitary stressed "the acceleration of the process of forming a government" when he gave audience, at his home on 20 February, to Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari, nominated to form the next government by the Shiite United Alliance, which was the winner in the elections. The formation of the government will have "to respect the criteria of competence, honesty and transparency" Ayatollah Sistani pointed out, according to his entourage. According to him, the principal task of the government must be "to serve the people and guarantee (efficient) public services". Ayatollah Sistani insisted on "the observance of the Constitution in the prerogatives given to the important positions" of the executive, such as the Presidency, the Premiership and the sovereignty of the Ministries. The Iraqi President

has recently demanded a broadening of the powers of the President of the Republic's prerogatives. Moreover, a project is being studied for the creation of a High Consultative Council, which would include representatives of all the political groups, to supervise the actions of the government and of Parliament. For his part, Mr. Jaafari stated, after

this interview, that he hoped that "formation of the government would not take as long as the first (provisional) government" which had hung fire for three months before emerging. Regarding the future of Kirkuk, whose inclusion in Kurdistan is demanded by the Kurds, the Prime Minister stated that "we will apply everything that is provided for in the Constitution".

THE 2005 HUMAN RIGHTS BALANCE SHEET DRAWN UP BY THE TURKISH ASSOCIATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS: 721 PEOPLE KILLED IN ARMED CLASHES OR SUMMARY EXECUTIONS, AS THE U.N. REPORTER CRITICISES ANKARA FOR ITS ANTI-TERRORIST LAW

ON 28 February, the Turkish Association for the Defence of Human Rights (IDH) affirmed that the year 2005 had been a disappointing year for Human Rights in Turkey, although the country had begun negotiations for membership of the European Union. A report drawn up by the Association reports 721 deaths linked to armed clashes or summary executions, mostly in the context of the fight against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Similarly, 781 people had been wounded in similar circumstances, the Association Added. "From the point of view of rights and freedom, 2005 was a lost year", explained the President of IDH, Yusuf Alatas, at a Press Conference in Ankara. Turkey's poor record in Human Rights has frequently put a brake on its

efforts to join the European Union. The negotiations for membership, that are viewed with great reservations by several countries of the Union, are not expected to be concluded until 2015, at the earliest, according to some observers.

Furthermore, at the end of a one-week visit to Turkey, Martin Scheinin, the special reported on Human Rights and the fight against terrorism, criticised the Anti-Terrorist law passed in 1991 against the PKK. The definition of terrorism in Turkey is much too vague and can lead to legal action against people who have no direct links with terrorist actions stated the UN Special Envoy to Ankara on 23 February. This law is much too vague regarding local "terrorist" groups he considered. "It defines terror-

ism by basing itself on objectives rather than reference to specific actions" the UN official stressed. The UN envoy, who also visited Diyarbakir, considered that "only a small number of the proceedings were directly linked to real terrorist actions". To increase its chances of joining the European Union, Turkey has, on a number of occasions amended the Anti-Terrorist Law, lightening, for example, penalties against the press and introducing the payment of damages to peasants forcibly displaced by the Turkish authorities and the "village protectors" (local state organised paramilitary groups). The UN envoy also remarked that the absence of "transparency and clarity" regarding the alleged terrorist organisations.

For several years, Turkey has been waging a merciless struggle against the PKK, which took up arms against Ankara in 1984, but it also struggles against any person who expresses a point of view contrary to the official Turkish thesis. This conflict has caused over 37,000 deaths, three million forcibly displaced persons and has, what's more, led to allegations of human rights violations such as the systematic use of torture or of burning down Kurdish villages by the Turkish forces.

Operations by Turkish security forces have intensified in Turkish Kurdistan in the last few months. According to the Turkish authorities, eight

PKK fighters were shot down in fighting that took place on 23 February with the Turkish Army near the hamlet of Belen, in Mardin Province. Some bomb attacks have also taken place in Turkey. A 21-year old man was wounded on 9 February in a bomb attack against an Internet café frequented by policemen in Istanbul and 15 people were wounded. An armed group, the Hawks for the Freedom of Kurdistan (TAK) claimed responsibility for this attack, which targeted a café in Bayrampasa district. The café was about 100 yards from the local offices of the anti-riot police. Another attack was perpetrated against an Istanbul shop belonging to a food stores chain owned by a member of Parliament for the Justice and Development Party (AKP – in office), causing 15 wounded, two of them very seriously. Furthermore, on 18 February, twenty-four people were detained at Van during a demonstration of Abdullah Ocalan's sympathisers, which degenerated into a clash with the police. The demonstrators, about 150 strong, were meeting to mark the 7th anniversary of the arrest of the PKK leader and threw stones and lumps of ice at the police come to disperse them. The security forces reacted by throwing tear gas bombs. The Adana Court, on the same day, ordered the detention of 39 people (37 women and two youngsters) arrested the day before during a pro-Ocalan demonstration, and charged with dam-

aging public property, resisting the police and supporting an illegal organisation. At Mersin, according to the *Anatolia News Agency*, nine demonstrators, arrested on 15 February, were jailed.

On 21 February, moreover, a PKK leader predicted a forthcoming dialogue with the Turkish authorities similar to that taking place between the Turkish authorities and the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas. "A dialogue with the PKK is not a utopian eventuality (...) Sooner or later they will meet us", declared Murat Karayilan, head of the military wing of the PKK, in an interview with the pro-Kurdish, Europe-based *Firat News Agency*. "Are the Turkish authorities refusing to meet the PKK because the Kurds carry out less suicide attacks" than Hamas, he asked, accusing Ankara of using "double standards" by dialoguing with the Palestinian radical group on the one hand while rejecting the PKK. The visit to Ankara of five Hamas members, on 16-17 February, was criticised by the Turkish media and sharply condemned by Israel, which categorically excludes any discussions with Hamas so long as it aims at the destruction of the Hebrew state.

Elsewhere, on 27 February a court in Diyarbakir gave five years suspended sentences each to 62 people, including officers, prison wardens and policemen, for their involvement in a bloody action taken against detainees in the

towns prison in 1996. However, the court decided to postpone these sentences in accordance with an amnesty, passed in 2001, that provides for exempting from incarceration people who have been sentenced to less than ten years. Seventy-two people have been on trial for nearly ten years in this long-drawn out trial. Three of them have been acquitted and seven benefited from prescription. On 24 September 1996, ten detainees were killed and

several others wounded when the security forces intervened to end a revolt of the prisoners, mostly members of the PKK. The incidents had broken out when the security forces were preparing to transfer a group of detainees to a prison in a neighbouring town. Other detainees intervened, refusing to hand their comrades over to the police, fearing that they would be isolated and tortured.

sector. In January Iraq announced two human cases of bird 'flu of the H5N1 type. Two people have died as a result of the H5N1 virus in Iraqi Kurdistan, according to analyses carried out by the World Health Organisation (WHO). They were Hamma Sur Abdallah, 40 years of age, who died on 27 January and his 14-year old niece, Shanjin AbdelKader, who died on 17 January, both of the Kurdish district of Raina, bordering on Turkey and Iran.

BIRD 'FLU COST IRAQI KURDISTAN \$5 MILLION BUT THE W.H.O. PRAISES THE TRANSPARENT ATTITUDE OF THE KURDISH GOVERNMENT

THE Iraqi Kurdish authorities feared the development of a centre of bird 'flu infection following the death of 250 domesticated fowl at the village of Jao Khaled. A quarantine line was imposed on the village to prevent any spread of the infection. The Kurdish leaders worked relentlessly to prevent the disease taking hold, even buying anti-viral medicines on the European black market. "We were just playing it by ear. We didn't have adequate laboratory equipment to diagnose the disease. Analyses made abroad take fifteen days", stated Mohammad Khushraw, Kurdish Minister of Health at Suleimaniyah. In the absence of laboratories and disinfectant, the Kurdish authorities struggled with whatever they had to hand. "We urgently bought antiviral

medicines on the European black market, paying four times the official price", admitted the Minister. The teams, in contact with the illness struggled on in the field with inadequate cloth overalls and synthetic gloves available on the local market.

This campaign, financed by the Kurdish authorities, has put a strain of their budget and could have serious economic repercussions. "We are the main suppliers of eggs and poultry in Iraq. For the moment such deliveries have been suspended and the loss of earnings is now about five million dollars", pointed out Tahsin Namek, who is leading the struggle against the bird 'flu in Suleimaniyah province. He estimated the aid needed for the agricultural sector at about a million dollars plus another million for the health

However, a delegation of eight experts from the WHO arrived in Iraqi Kurdistan on 5 February. Coming from Amman, the group landed in Irbil and was welcomed by the Kurdish Minister of Health, Jamal Abdel Hamid. The WHO delegation made a three-day visit to Suleimaniyah on 9 February to help the Kurdish authorities. "We have come, at the request of the Kurdish Minister of Health to study the means that have been set up to check the danger of a pandemic disease and to support the efforts being deployed by the local government" stated the delegation leader, Naima Hassan al-Kassir to the press. She is also WHO representative for the whole of the Near East. The delegation, which included amongst other, epidemiological experts, examined the first case of death from this disease in Iraq, the young girl Shanjin AbdelKader. "We must pay tribute to the attitude of the local government and the Iraqi authorities. They have been

totally transparent and are treating seriously the confirmed and suspected cases", she stressed. She stated that the World Organisation would provide "material, technical and logistic help". The WHO is ready to "fill the gaps", she declared. "We are going to examine Suleimaniyah's capacities for coping with this and provide our help", she added, making the point that this help would cover "sending experts, laboratory equipment and laboratory technicians to train people of the spot and hands-on training

courses". She raised the idea of equipping Suleimaniyah with a laboratory similar to the one created in Baghdad with European Union funding. "We will also supply some of the medicines needed", she said. According to her, these deliveries would be financed by the WHO, the American USAID and the Iraqi government.

Furthermore, on 5 February a pigeon breeder in Amara, in Southern Iraq, has died with symptoms of bird 'flu.

do?". Dr. Ann-Catrin Emmanuelsson, who introduced the debate, then laid out the situation of the Kurdish Diaspora in Europe with the help of a slide show and tables. This introduction was followed by contributions from people active in voluntary bodies and institutions working for the integration of Kurds in Europe as well as lawyers and specialised academics. To provide an even more precise picture, Mr. Metin Incesu, President of the Centre for Kurdish Studies (Navend) in Bonn, drew up a picture of the Kurds in Germany, which houses over 500,000 Kurds — the largest community of the diaspora. He stressed the difficulties encountered by the Kurds in a country that also houses 2 million Turks. This contribution was rounded off by Dr. Birgit-Ammann of the European Centre for Kurdish Studies in Berlin, who pointed out the difficulty of counting the Kurds in Germany since the censuses only take into account the official nationality of the residents. Mrs. Sermin Bozarlsan, President of the Federation of Kurdish Associations in Sweden explained Swedish integration policies, which tend more to take into account the cultural particularities of the Kurds, in particular by financing lessons in the mother tongues in schools and Kurdish language books and reviews. For France, Mr. Franck Cecen, a Paris barrister, presented the legal problems encountered by asylum seekers in France and the

PARIS: A SYMPOSIUM ON KURDISH INTEGRATION IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE E.U.

ON 24 February, the Paris Kurdish Institute, in partnership with the Ministry of Employment and Social Cohesion, with the Fund for Action and Support of Integration and of Struggle against Discrimination and with the Paris City Hall, organised a conference on the "*Process of integration of Kurds in the countries of the European Union*" at the Victor Hugo hall of the National Assembly. Academic specialists, actors in the life of social and voluntary organisations, leaders of Institutions working for integration and representatives of the second generation of Kurds in several European countries took part in this conference, which took place with simultaneous translation in French, English, Kurdish and German.

The conference started from the fact that the European Union has over a million residents of Kurdish origin, of which over half live in Germany and about 150,000 in France. Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Belgium Austria and Denmark also have substantial Kurdish communities. It aimed, therefore at making an inventory of the situation, of confronting the various experiences and clarifying the broader perspectives.

Mrs. Joyce Blau, Emeritus Professor who for 30 years was Professor of Kurdish at the National Institute of Oriental Languages (INALCO) opened the conference by presiding at the first Panel on the theme: "*The Kurds in Europe: Who are they? Why have they come? What do they*

painful problem of those denied the right to asylum. Ms Rusen Werdi, of the Paris Kurdish Institute described the generally peaceful integration of 150,000 Kurds in France. Dr. Khaled Salih, of the Centre for Contemporary Middle Eastern Studies at the South Denmark University, helped to clarify a number of points and to chair this Panel.

The second Panel, presided by Dr. Abbas Vali, of Swansea University, Great Britain, was entitled "Women in the Diaspora" and was introduced by Professor Theda Borde, of the Alice Salomon Hochschule in Berlin. Mrs Aso Agace, Director of the International Centre for Information and Training of Women (Hînbûn) in Berlin explained the work of her Centre in support of Kurdish women, stressing the shortcomings of the German system. Dr. Mino Alinea, from Sweden and Ms. Sève Izouli, a Paris barrister, livened the debate by attacking the social and family pressures on women, though Ms. Izouli insisted on making the point that one should not just make generalisations on this aspect and that Kurdish women are increasingly involving themselves in the voluntary as well as political organisations.

The third Panel covered the theme "*Diaspora identities and trans-national relations*". Dr. Najmaldin O. Karim, President of the Kurdish Institute of Washington presided this and widened the discussion beyond the borders of Europe

by speaking about the Kurds in the United States. Dr. Osten Wahlbeck, Professor at the Abo Académie University of Finland presented a sociological study of the Kurds in his introduction to the discussion. The debate about the Kurdish language, a major element in Kurdish identity, dominated this panel with a contribution by Reso Zilan, a linguist and Professor of Kurdish in Sweden, who revealed that more than 5,000 children were able to enjoy Kurdish language lessons in Swedish public schools. Dr. Clémence Scalbert filled out this remarks by speaking about Kurdish literature and publications in Kurdish in Sweden and Europe, while Dr. Salih Akin, of Rouen University, presented a study of Kurds in France that showed their attachment to their mother tongue, mainly used within the family circles. Mr. Khaled Khayati, researcher at the Institute for Sociological Studies of Linköping University, in Sweden concluded the discussion by presenting a sociological study of Kurds in Sweden.

Prof. Ilhan Kizilhan, a psychologist and Professor at Constance University, Germany, introduced the discussion of the fourth Panel, entitled "*The integration of new generations*" by presenting the difficulties encountered by the new generation of Kurds. Dr. Chirine Azadpour, Director of the *Mision locale* of Chatillon-Monrouge (a local government youth employment body in a Paris working

class suburb), Mr. Barzoo Eliassi of the Department of Social Work of Mid-Sweden University and Dr. Chirine Mohseni, exposed the problems of entering into socio-economic activity and employment of this generation.

The fifth and last Panel tackled the theme of "*European coordination of policies of integration*", presided by the President of the Paris Kurdish Institute, Dr. Kendal Nezan. Mrs. Khédidja Boucart, Deputy mayor of Paris responsible for the integration of non-Community foreign residents, Dr. Robin Schneider, of the Berlin Senate's Office for Integration and Migration, Mrs. Lucile Schmid, Regional Councillor of the Ile de France (Greater Paris) Region and formerly technical advisor responsible for integration at the Ministry of Social Affairs, presented the French and German approaches to the integration of immigrants, raised the crisis in traditional models of integration which often also express a crisis of identity. This is a time, nearly everywhere in Europe, of a critical debate about the crisis of models and of the drawing up of innovative approaches, taking into account the socio-cultural particularities of the recent waves of immigration and the evolution of European societies.

The conference recorded, in total, 250 participants, who reacted to the discussion by questioning the panellists at

the end of each Panel. Some of the contributions are already available on the Paris

Kurdish Institute's web site: www.institutkurde.org (section: Conférences)

MEETING OF THE CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL OF THE KURDISH INSTITUTE

TO celebrate the 23rd anniversary of the Paris Kurdish Institute, its Cultural and Scientific Council met over the weekend of 25/26 February to gather all its members, spread out over many countries of European and in the United States, and who work in many areas of Kurdish cultural, artistic intellectual and social life. The meeting enabled the exchange of views and experiences about what the role of the Kurdish Institute should be in the present situation, marked as much by an internationalisation of the Kurdish question as by the major role being played by the Kurds in the political process in Iraq and in the context of the negotiations between Turkey and the European Union. Moreover, the question of the integration of immigrants has become a crucial issue in various European countries. The meeting enabled questions to be discussed such as *"What can we do in collaboration with other Kurdish organisations for a better integration of our diaspora?"*, *"How can we mobilise this diaspora for the Kurdish cause and for the whole of Kurdistan?"*. Still more, the meeting allowed us to evaluate the Institute's recent activi-

ties and to formulate proposals for the next three years.

The Council also went on to elect its leading bodies. Thus Mrs. Sève Izouli was re-elected President of the Department of Arts, music and cultural activities and the musician Issa Hassan was elected Vice-President. The Department of Information and Human Rights elected as President Yavuz Onen, who is, incidentally, President of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey. Akil Marceau was elected Vice-President and Rusen Werdi co-ordinator.

The Department of Human Sciences unanimously elected Dr. Khaled Salih as President and Ephrem Isa Youssif, a philosopher and writer, as Vice-President.

Finally the Department of Language and Literature unanimously re-elected Mr. Reso Zilan (Sweden) as President and Dr. Salih Akin, lecturer at Rouen University, as Vice-President.

The Presidents of the four Departments will sit on the Kurdish Institute's Board of Directors, which has 12 members, 5 of whom are women. At its meeting on the 27th the reconstituted Board elected, for a three-year term, its working committee. Unanimously elected were Kendal Nezan, President, Dr. Najmaldin O Karim and Yavuz Onen, Vice-Presidents, Mrs. Joyce Blau, Treasurer and Mrs. Sève Izouli, Secretary.

IRAN: HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH AND AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DENOUNCE THE "ALARMING INCREASE IN EXECUTIONS"

ON 27 February Human Rights Watch (HRW) denounced the *"alarming increase in executions"* in Iran. On the basis of articles and news items in the Iranian press, the Human Rights defence organisation totted up 10 executions between 20 January and 20 February as well as death sentences passed on 21 other

people. HRW thus adds its voice to that of Amnesty International (AI), which expressed the same concern on 24 February. According to Amnesty, 94 executions have recently taken place in Iran, 28 of them since the beginning of 2006. Both HRW and AI evoke the hanging, on 7 February, of Hojjat Zamani, a member of the Iranian People's Mujahiddin organisa-

tion, the principal armed group opposing to the Iranian regime. Kidnapped in Turkey in 2003, he was sentenced to death the following year for having taken part in a bomb attack that had caused three deaths in Teheran in 1988. According to HRW, Zamani did not have trial that met international standards of equity, since he had never been allowed to meet his lawyers. For its part, AI describes Zamani as a "political prisoner".

HRW also fears the imminent execution of three people accused of having taken part in the hijacking of an aeroplane in 2001. The New York-based organisation notes, moreover, that one of the accused was 17 years old at the time of the events in which he is accused of taking part. The Convention of Children's Rights, signed by Teheran, forbids the execution of criminals who were under 18 at the time of the acts.

Under another heading, on 20 February a reformist paper published a drawing of Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadijad. It is 25 years since any Iranian Head of State has been caricatured in the country's press. The drawing, on the back page of the paper, *Etemad Melli*, shows him in the middle of a hall full of chickens, wearing boxing gloves and hitting out at a punch-ball decorated with a nuclear symbol. According to the caricaturist, 29 year-old Bozorgmehr Hosseinpour, it "shows Ahmadi-

jad dealing with two major domestic and international issues: the nuclear question and bird 'flu". B. Hosseinpour says he has taken advantage of the very recent green light given by the Ministry of Culture, authorising caricatures of the President. Over the last 25 years the Iranian press has abstained from doing this, presumably out of respect for its leaders, who in general, were also religious leaders. In 2000, a paper had published a caricature in which only the foot of President Mohammad Khatami was shown, saying that it did not want to draw more out of respect for his religious garments. After the Islamic revolution that overthrew the monarchy in 1979 and before it had hardened, the Iranian press frequently caricatured the first President, Abdolhasan Banisadr, a lay-man like Ahmadijad. According to the internet site of the Iranian

House of Caricatures, associated with the daily paper *Hamshahri*, the largest circulation Iran daily, published by the Teheran municipality, the best caricature on the Holocaust will be rewarded with a 12,000 dollar prize in an international competition of caricatures on the Jewish Holocaust. "This is the world's largest reward in competitions for caricatures", the site points out. "The prize-winner will receive 12,000 dollars. The second and third will receive 8,000 and 5,000 dollars respectively", adds the site, which indicates that twelve other prizes are envisaged. Soon after his election in June 2005, President Ahmadijad launched himself into a fight against the "myth" of the Jewish Holocaust. He described the State of Israel as a "tumour" and called for it to be "wiped off the map" of the region and relocated in Europe of the United States.

DAMASCUS CONTINUES TO REPRESS ANY PEACEFUL EXPRESSION OF THE KURDS AND INTELLECTUALS IN SYRIA

ON 19 February, the Syrian State Security Court, an emergency law tribunal, sentenced two Kurds to two and a half years jail for "membership of a secret organisation". Mohammad Fakhri Haj Khalil and Farid Khalil Ahmad, members of the Democratic Union Party, a banned Kurdish organisation, were found guilty of belonging to "a secret organi-

sation aiming at the annexation of part of Syrian territory by a foreign country", their lawyer, Fayçal Badr indicated. He appealed for the verdict to be quashed as it was "passed by an unconstitutional court basing itself on emergency decrees" that have been in force since 1963.

Furthermore, on 7 February the Syrian security services arrested at Tartous (Western

Syria) the writer-journalist Adel Fayad for articles he had published in the press and on Internet, indicated the human rights lawyer Anouar Bounni. Adel Fayad, who was arrested at his home, in front of his family, regularly publishes articles on Internet and in the Arab press, particularly in the Lebanese daily *As-Safir*. The lawyer also reported the arrest, ten days earlier near Damascus, of two students who, according to him, *"were thinking of forming a democratic rally of young people to discuss some of the problems of youth"*. Ali Ali and Houssam Melham are respectively students of management and of journalism at Damascus University. The security services are also looking for two other students for the same reasons, according to Mr. Bounni. *"The Syrian authorities tolerate acts of violence perpetrated by demonstrators against European Embassies while they harshly repress peaceful activities"*, he accused. This was in reference to the 4 February attacks against European Embassies in Damascus by demonstrators protesting against the controversial caricatures of the prophet Mohammad published in Western newspapers. The Danish and Norwegian Embassies were attacked and set on fire and the US Embassy in Damascus closed its gates. The French Foreign Ministry stated on 5 February that French people living in Syria had been *"specially reminded"* to be careful after the violent demonstrations in Damascus, however

adding that it had *"not taken any special measures"*.

Furthermore Iran continues to demonstrate its support for the Damascus regime. After the official visit of the Iranian President, Mahmud Ahmedinjad, in January, it was the turn of Iran's First Vice-President, Parvis Davoudi, to visit Damascus. Mr. Davoudi was taking part in a session of the mixed Iran-Syrian High Committee at which the two parties discussed the expansion of cooperation and signed eight documents. Mr. Davoudi said he had met Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Vice-Presi-

dent Faruq Shara and Prime Minister Muhammad Naji Ottri, adding that both parties *"agreed to adopt common stands on economic and political questions, taking into account the present sensitive situation in the region"*. The Iranian First Vice-President described his official three-visit to Syria as *"very useful"* on his return from Damascus on 25 February. Iran and Syria maintained close relations throughout the Iraq-Iran war of 1980-1988, during which Syria supported Iran against the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. Both countries are under US sanctions for their alleged support of terrorism.

TURKISH FILMS: AN ANTI-SEMITIC AND ANTI-KURDISH TURKISH SUPER-PRODUCTION BEATS ALL THE ATTENDANCE RECORDS IN TURKEY AND IN THE TURKISH COMMUNITY IN EUROPE

ON 21 February, a Child protection voluntary organisation filed a complaint with the Diyarbakir Court, asking that the showing of a Turkish film on the war in Iraq be banned and the grounds that it was racist and aimed at sabotaging the climate of peace in Turkey. *"The Valley of Wolves — Iraq"*, which has been beating all box-office record in Turkey since its release on 5 February, was made from *"a Hitlerite and nationalist viewpoint"* explained Nil Demirkazik to the press as she entered the Court. Ms Demirkazik is president of the Children's Defence Asso-

ciation, Cocuk-Der. *"By trying to inject racism and the morbid idea that the whole world is the enemy of Turkey, by praising one part of the population and denigrating another it is guilty in Turkey of discrimination"*, she continued.

The most expensive super-production in the history of the Turkish cinema, with a budget of 8.4 million euros, it drew in 3.1 million spectators in two weeks according to the figures given on 18 February by its production company. The film tells the story of a young Turk who went to Iraqi Kurdistan to eliminate an American captain, Sam, who had betrayed a friend,

an officer in the Turkish Army. Captain Sam is especially ridiculed — he is seen praying in moments of doubt and there is a big reproduction of the Last Supper behind his desk. The film is crammed with bloodthirsty scenes of violence and dwells particularly on a Jewish doctor who removes organs from detainees in Abu Ghraib prison to transplant them in rich patients in New York, London or Tel Aviv. As an aside the film director, on a more sober tone, also attacks the use of torture in this prison. The hero is trying to avenge his country's embarrassment by the US Army in a real incident: the arrest, in 2003, of 11 Turkish soldiers, as they were preparing an attack on the Kurdish governor of Kirkuk, by Gis who subjected them to the usual tough interrogation, blindfolded with their heads covered in jute sacking. This Turkish commando was released two days later for diplomatic reasons — to avoid conflict between the US and Ankara.

"Valley of the Wolves", shown at 472 cinemas, is virtually assured of breaking all records in Turkey. The film is also due to be shown in other countries, including Germany, The United Kingdom, Russia, the United States, Egypt and Syria. In Germany the Minister-President of Bavaria, Edmund Stoiber, has called on cinema chains not to show it. The film, openly anti-American and anti-Semitic, is attracting the

Turkish community in Germany but part of the German press fears that it will deepen the gulf between the West and Moslems. A hymn to the glory of Turkish chauvinism, but above all a rather confused lampoon against the war in Iraq, *"The Valley of Wolves"* has, in the last fortnight, sold 200,000 seats in Germany, which has the largest Turkish community in Europe. In the opinion of Edmund Stoiber, President of the Christian=Social Union (CSU) the Bavarian wing of Chancellor Angela Merkel's party, *"this irresponsible film does not encourage integration but cultivates hatred and distrust of the West"*. Several cinemas have already chosen not to show it, or continue doing so. Markus Söder, General Secretary of the CSU considers it an obstacle to Turkey's candidature to membership of the European Union. The film's distributor, Anil Sahin, links the discussion of the film to the quarrel about the carica-

tures of the prophet Mohammed in the Western Press, which aroused violent demonstrations in the Moslem world. According to him *"there's something wrong there. When a caricaturist offends billions of Moslems, it's freedom of expression — when an action film targets an American it's an incitement to hatred"*.

Some Turkish leaders were also excited by the film's realism. *"It is an extraordinary film which will go down in history"*, predicted the Speaker of the National Assembly, Bulent Arinç during a gala showing of it, attended, amongst others, by Emin Erdogan, wife of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, thus giving the film the full support of Turkish leaders.

In France, the pressure of the Turkish community has pushed the distributors to hurry its release, without any authorisation by the National Film Council.

AS WELL AS ...

• **IRAN INTENSIFIES ITS EFFORTS TO REFINE NUCLEAR FUEL DESPITE INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE.** Iran has started testing a series of 20 centrifuges in its Natanz uranium enrichment pilot plant, according to a confidential report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The report by Mohamed el Baradei, IAEA Director General, indicates that Iran has begun

major renovation of the hexafluoride treatment system (gaseous UF₆), which is transformed in centrifuges into enriched nuclear fuel. The report adds that the series of 20 centrifuges began dry run tests on 22 February. He considers, however, that the IAEA is still unable to determine whether Iran's nuclear programme is entirely peaceful since Teheran is not cooperating fully with the

UNO organisation's enquiries. *"It is regrettable and worrying that the uncertainties connected to the extent and nature of Iran's nuclear programme have not been clarified after three years of intensive checks by the Agency"*, notes Mohamed el-Baradei. *"We are still unable to conclude whether or not it is a nuclear programme with civilian aims"*, declared a senior official acquainted with the IAEA investigations. In Tokyo, the Iranian Foreign Minister Manoushehr Mottaki, assured his hearers that Teheran will not renounce its nuclear programme, but considered that the negotiations under way with Russia regarding joint uranium enrichment would calm the international community's anxieties regarding the atomic ambitions of the Islamic Republic. *"Like Japan, we would like one day to enjoy our right to possess nuclear technology — for peaceful ends, of course"*, declared Mr. Mottaki to the press after meeting the Japanese Trade Minister, Toshihiro Nikkai.

El-Baradei's report was sent on 27 February to the 35 countries represented in the IAEA Council of Governors, which is due to meet on 6 March. After the Governors' meeting, the report will be sent to the Security Council, which could decide on sanctions against Iran. Still according to this 11-page report, Teheran has indicated to the IAEA that, in the first quarter of 2006, it would start installing the first 3,000 centrifuges of the 50,000

planned. According to some experts, if 3,000 centrifuges worked without stopping for a year they could produce the 20 Kg of highly enriched uranium needed for a nuclear head. In his report Mr. el-Baradei writes that Iran has produced 85m³ of UF₆ gas at its Ispahan uranium conversion plant since September 2005. This would be enough for several atomic bombs when Iran masters, on an industrial scale, the enrichment technology.

On 27 February, Turkey called on Iran to show its transparency over its nuclear programme, whereas Teheran is suspected of wanting to endow itself with atomic weapons. Ankara says it does not want another war in an already troubled region. *"On the one hand there is growing anxiety linked to Iranian nuclear research, on the other there are Iran's affirmations"* that it is conducting a peaceful and civilian programme, observed Cemil Cicek, Turkish Minister of Justice and the government's spokesman. *"We consider that our neighbour Iran should prove its transparency to a greater extent for the good of the region, or humanity and of Iran itself"*, added Mr. Cicek. Asked if Ankara feared a war, the spokesman replied *"We don't want it"*.

• **THE TURKISH COURTS SUE TURKISH ACADEMICS AND JOURNALISTS FOR CRITICISING THE STATE AND JUDICIAL**

AUTHORITIES. On 15 February, two Turkish academics, Baskin Oran, Professor of international relations and an expert in the field of human rights, and Ibrahim Kaboglu, former president of the Consultative Committee on Human Rights, dependent on the Prime Minister's Office, were brought before a Turkish court because of a report on minorities in Turkey. The first of them said he did not understand why proceedings were being taken against him and the second deplored the fact that he was being tried for his opinions. *"It is freedom of opinion that is on trial here"*, he stated. *"This is a deplorable trial — I am in the dock charges because of opinions I expressed freely"* in the report's recommendations, he continued. The offending report described as *"paranoiac"* the threat often brandished by the nationalists, of the country's being partitioned in the event of granting fresh rights to minorities, particularly the Kurds. This trial of the writer of the report, Mr. Oran, and the President of the Committee, are a new test of the will of the Turkish authorities to broaden the freedom of expression in a country that began negotiations last October for membership of the European Union. Several European diplomats were present in the audience, alongside representatives of associations for the defence of human rights. The International Federation for the Rights of Man (FIDH) said it was *"very worried"* by the proceedings being taken against

the two intellectuals who have since resigned from their positions in the Committee, which hasn't met since February 2005.

On the other hand, on 7 February, five journalists were Turkish tried on charges of "attempts to influence the course of justice" and "insulting the Turkish nation". Ismet Bekan, Erol Katirdoglu, Haluk Sahin and Murat Belge, of the left wing paper *Radikal*, as well as Hasan Cemal, a columnist on *Milliyet*, are appearing before the Bagcilar magistrates' court, in an Istanbul suburb. The Turkish legal system accuses them of having criticised the decision of an administrative court to postpone a critical university seminar on "the Armenians at the end of the Ottoman Empire". The seminar was enabled to take place in another university, the organisers thus getting round the first court's decision. According to the Independent Communication Network (BIA), a non-governmental organisation defending freedom of expression, no less than 29 journalists are at the moment being sued in Turkey for crimes of opinion, on the basis of three articles of the Turkish Penal Code (Articles 288, 301 and 305) that are considered destructive of freedom. The new Turkish Penal Code, that came into force in June 2005 and was reformed under European Union pressure annoys the journalist who considered that they are even less protected by the new measures.

Furthermore, a petition signed by 700 academics has called on the Minister of Education to abandon the "obstacles being set up to teaching the theory of evolution". Turkish university lecturers have mobilised to defend the teaching of evolution in Turkey because of the government's efforts to advocate the thesis of divine creation of the world, pointed out by Ozgur Genc, General Secretary of the Association of University Council and one of the organisers of the petition, on 22 February. The petition demands, moreover, that references to creationism be removed from school textbooks. In the opinion of this influential association, the Islamo-conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP) government wants to "replace Darwin's theory by creationism" in the secondary schools and, in particular, to encourage teachers to cast doubts on certain aspects of evolution. Several teachers in Ankara and Mersin have suffered disciplinary sanctions for their "obstinacy" in teaching Darwin's theory, rather than teaching the creationist thesis, in state schools, according to Mr. Genc. Creationism was first mentioned in biology textbooks in 1985, but the AKP government "today wants to give preference to this thesis", states this academic. Questioned by journalists on this point the Minister of Education, Huseyin Celik, pointed out that the textbooks were prepared by scientists and promised to study

the petition.

• **A TURKISH TEENAGER KILLS A CATHOLIC PRIEST IN TRABZON.** On 7 February a young Turk of 16 was taken in for questioning in connection with the murder of an Italian Catholic priest in Trabzon (North-East Turkey). This murder was committed in the climate of violence that swept the Middle East linked to the publication in Europe of caricatures of the prophet Mohammed. The news Channel, NTV, stated that according to the first leaks from the enquiry, the young man has confessed and indicated that he had killed the priest on 5 February because of these caricatures. A 9 mm pistol was seized at the time of his arrest and, after ballistic examination was confirmed as being the murder weapon. Trabzon and the neighbouring towns are well known for their inhabitants' love of firearms, and it is an easy matter to procure them there. The priest, Andrea Santoro, 61 years of age, was born in Piverno, near Rome and was shot some hours after Mass at Saint Mary's Church in the town centre. Several theses have been put forward to explain the crime: a crime connected with the white slave trade, an attempt to get money, an Islamist protest against the priests efforts at conversion (greatly resented, especially in the very conservative North-East) or again an isolated act connected with the publication of the caricatures of Mohammed.

According to the Vatican representative in Turkey, Antonio Lucibello, the murderer had shouted "*Allah in Great*" before running away.

Pope Benedict XVI declared, on 6 February, that he was "*profoundly upset*" by the murder of an Italian priest in Turkey and expressed his condemnation of "*any form of violence*". Father Andea Santoro was a priest "*fidei domum*", that is to say sent on a mission to Turkey by the

Rome diocese. He was especially working with prostitutes of Trabzon (the mediaeval Trebizond). On 9 February, the Turkish President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, invited Pope Benedict XVI to visit Turkey at the end of November 2006. The invitation was accepted by the Pontiff, the Vatican pointed out, stating that it would take place from the 28 to 30 November. Last month the Vatican had confirmed that a date had been chosen for this visit without

further details. This visit will thus coincide with the feast of St. Andrew, the patron saint of Constantinople, the ancient capital of the Byzantine Empire. The Orthodox Patriarch, Bartholomew I, spiritual head of over 200 million Orthodox Christians, had hoped that the Pontiff would celebrate this festival with him last year, but Ankara, instead of approving this visit, issued its own invitation for 2006.



