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**WASHINGTON: THE TURKISH PRIME MINISTER SAYS HE IS “HAPPY” FOLLOWING HIS DISCUSSION WITH GEORGE W. BUSH AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF TURKISH THREATS AGAINST IRAQI KURDISTAN**

 On 3 November, Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, went on an official visit to the United States to hold discussions with US President George W. Bush in the course of the 5 November summit meeting in Washington. The Bush

Administration, while promising American support in the fight against the PKK, is urging restraint on Turkey, for fear of destabilising one of the rare regions of relative calm in Iraq. Before the meeting at the White House, the Turkish Prime Minister, who is faced with

an angry public opinion after a series of bloody attacks by the PKK, had warned that Turkish patience was “*at an end*”. Before flying to the United States, he had indicated that he expected “*concrete measures*” against the PKK from Mr. Bush. “*Our visit is taking place at a time that (Turko-American) relations are going through a serious test*”, he had declared to journalists at the airport. On 2 November, in Ankara, the US Secretary of State,

Condoleezza Rice, had promised to redouble her country's efforts to help Turkey to overcome the PKK problem, while urging the Turkish Army not to enter Iraq. She stressed that the United States was under an "obligation" to contribute to the struggle against the PKK and reaffirmed that the organisation, considered to be terrorist by the United States, was as much "the enemy" of Washington and Baghdad as of Turkey. "This will require perseverance. It is a very difficult problem (...) eradicating terrorism is tough", she added, nevertheless.

At the ends of his discussions with Mr. Erdogan at the White House, Mr. Bush announced a strengthening of military cooperation between the two countries and a new partnership between the United States, Turkey and Iraq to improve the sharing of Intelligence. "Errors of intelligence mean that we cannot resolve the problem. Good intelligence, accurate and delivered in real time using modern technology, would enable" the struggle "to be made much easier", stressed Mr. Bush. The US President also indicated that the US was ready "to go further" on the issue of the struggle against the PKK, particularly on "questions of airport transit" and "questions of money".

Shortly before the meeting between Messrs. Bush and Erdogan, some 300 to 400 Kurds demonstrated in front of the White House, the men in traditional dress, the women and children carrying flags of Kurdistan called "Stop the Turkish invasion!". "We want to sent President Bush a clear message that he must not give the green light to a Turkish invasion of Iraqi Kurdistan", pointed out Isa Shalky, spokesman of the Tennessee Kurdish Community Council, who had come from Nashville. Other Kurds came from Pennsylvania, Michigan and New York respectively.

The Turkish Prime Minister left Washington relieved and said that he was happy after his discussions with Mr. Bush at the White House. "Praise God, we have secured what we wanted", stated Mr. Erdogan. "No one told us not to carry out (military) operations", he stated to journalists at his hotel, seeming to see an implicit support for targeted strikes in the PKK hideouts in Mr. Bush's remarks. "We have decided to carry out some operations (...) We will use this authorisation, the armed forces will decide their form", he stressed. The Turkish press of 6 November saw in these remarks the sign of coming Turkish attacks on the PKK in Iraqi Kurdistan. "A

green light for an operation", headlined the daily Radikal. "It seems that here will be no going back regarding the decision to proceed with military operations", commented Rusen Cakir, a journalist on the daily paper Vatan. "Ankara should, in a few days time, carry out concrete measures part of which will be supported by Washington and others carried out without its knowledge or even against its wishes", Ms Cakir considered.

Still with the idea of discussing the situation on the Iraqi Kurdistan borders, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrived in Rome on 6 November to meet the Head of State, Giorgio Napolitano, and then the Prime Minister, Romano Prodi. On 5 November Mr. Erdogan had stated in press interviews that "if the Iraqi Government takes urgent and permanent measures against the PKK on Iraqi territory, the Turkish government might not use this authorisation". Pope Benedict XVI had, on 4 November, expressed his "anxiety" over the tension on the Kurdish borders, calling for a "peaceful solution" to the problems between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan. Mr. Erdogan returned to Turkey on 8 November at the end of his visit to Italy

**IRBIL: PRIME MINISTER NECHIRVAN BARZANI STATES THAT THE OIL CONTRACTS SIGNED WITH FOREIGN COMPANIES WILL BE CARRIED OUT**

**I**N 25 November, the Kurdistan Prime Minister, Nechirvan Barzani, declared that Kurdistan “implement” the oil contracts signed with foreign companies, despite the opposition of the central government in Baghdad. “The oil contracts signed by the Kurdistan government will be implemented. No one can cancel contracts signed by Kurdistan”, affirmed Mr. Barzani. “In the event of problems, Iraq has a Federal Court to which Mr. Shahrستاني can apply”, he added simply. In an interview on a Middle East radio station on 23 November, the Iraqi Oil Minister, Hussein Shahrستاني had stated that he had cancelled about fifteen oil contracts signed by the Iraqi Kurdistan authorities. “The Iraqi government has warned these companies of the consequences of the signing of these contracts, and the consequences are that they will no longer be able to work in Iraq”, the Minister stated in his radio interview. He assured Iraq’s neighbours that Iraq would not let Kurdistan export oil without the agreement of the central State. To which Jamal Abdullah, spokesman for the Kurdistan regional government retorted: “There is an agreement between Teheran, Ankara, Damascus and Baghdad (...) He has exceeded his authority (...) his statement will not affect out contracts with the foreign

companies (...) these statements remind us of the period before 9 April 2003” he added, alluding to the date of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime. Jamal Abdullah pointed out that the Kurds were not seeking to export oil but had signed exploration contracts with foreign companies in promising looking areas in their region.

Reacting to previous remarks by Mr. Shahrستاني during the 15 November summit of the Organisation of Oil Exporting Countries, a communiqué from the Kurdistan Regional Government dated 21 November stressed that: “for several years now, Mr. Shahrستاني has shown himself incapable of carrying through any oil project successfully. He is now trying to dissuade others from doing something for the good of the country. (...) We will not accept any kind of threat, sanctions or punishment from our partners in the Baghdad coalition government”. Iraqi Kurdistan “is a partner in Iraq, not a region that must be threatened or punished because it has exercised its Constitutional rights and wished to contribute to the country’s (...) stability”, the Kurdish authorities had remarked, describing Mr. Shahrستاني’s reaction as “stupefying”. “We believe that the period of threats against the Kurds of Iraq is long past. It is disappointing to see that Mr.

*Shahrستاني has chosen the camp of the anti-Kurdish elements of the Saddam Hussein period (...) We are not impressed (...) Experience has shown that most of the oil companies are now ignoring these declarations (by the Oil Minister) Our contracts are constitutional and legal, as defined by the Kurdish oil and gas laws. Empty chattering and senseless threats will not last”, concluded the Kurdish government. Kurdistan’s future oil production “will benefit all the Iraqis”, insisted the Kurdish Government. Amongst the recently signed contracts is one for collecting and refining natural gas intended to supply electric power stations so as to cure the region’s problem of frequent power cuts.*

In a communiqué dated 7 November, the Kurdish Minister of Natural Resources, Dr Ashti Hawrami, announced that the Kurdish Government had signed “seven new oil production sharing contracts”. Seven blocks, spread out between Irbil and Dohuk Provinces, have been allocated to the following companies: OMV Aktiengesellschaft, MOL Hungarian Oil and Gas PLC, Gulf Keystone Petroleum International Limited, Kalegran Limited and Reliance Energy Ltd or to their subsidiaries. “With these new contracts there are about twenty international oil companies that will now be operating in Iraqi Kurdistan”, declared Dr. Hawrami with pleasure. These companies will receive 15% of the income from the oil production and “85% will go to Iraq”.

In all, about fifteen blocks have been allocated by the Kurdish Government since the region passed an oil and gas law in August 2007. *“Only 17% of the income from Kurdish oil will remain in Kurdistan, the remaining 83% will benefit Iraqis living outside Kurdistan”*, the communiqué stated. Dr. Hawrami insisted that the signing of new contracts was *“a major stage in towards the objective that the Kurdish region has set itself of producing a million barrels a day”*.

An Iraqi Parliamentary Bill, regarding the respective prerogatives of provinces and central State in this strategic sector, has been under discussion for the last few months but has still not been put on the agenda for debate in full session, despite the insistence of the United States that wants desperately to see it passed. The Bill would widely open the Iraqi Oil sector, which has been nationalised since the 70s, to foreign private companies. It lays down a distribution of oil revenues between the central States and the productive provinces. Critics of this law consider that it give too generous a share to foreign companies, that would receive a guaranteed percentage of the income from oil exports to repay their investments. They insist that, as Iraqi oil is one of the cheapest to extract in the world, the investments required could be made by the Iraqi government itself without making any hole in the country's revenue. At

present, 72% of Iraq's oil comes from three Southern provinces, of which 60% comes from the Basra region alone. The bulk of Iraqi crude is also exported from the Basra terminal. However, new geological research has shown the possibility of deposits in Kurdistan and also in the West, hitherto lacking in operating oilfields. *“We have waited five months (...) the members of the Iraqi Parliament have done nothing and there is no sign that they are going to do anything rapidly”*, the Kurdish Prime Minister, Nechirvan Barzani, deplored in justification of his government's choice *“in the name of federalism”* — and to express his determination *“to set an example”*.

Iraqi Kurdistan, the sole island of peace in an Iraq extensively plunged into chaos on the strength of the wide autonomy that the Constitution gives it, has been enjoying regained economic prosperity since the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003. The Kurdish leaders have repeatedly affirmed their determination to exploit their mineral resources and are thus, with the signature of these new contracts moving into top gear. Thus early in September the regional government announced the signature of a contract with a local subsidiary of the American Hunt Oil company of Dallas and with the Impulse Energy Corporation (IEC) for exploring oilfields in the Dohuk region. According to Kiwan Siwaily, Adviser to the Kur-

dish Minister of Oil Resources, Ashti Hawrami, *“Iraq has over 12% of the worlds oil resources, 5% of which are in our region”*. Since the 1920s, for political reasons, Kurdistan has never been allowed to develop them. Saddam Hussein did not even allow Kurdish students to attend courses in oil and gas technology. In the 70s enormous oilfields were found in Iraqi Kurdistan but barely explored. Since the fall of the regime in 2003, they have attracted the covetous appetites of the international oil industry, whose representatives are gathering at Irbil the regional capital. *“We have to secure the consent of the central government to export oil but we don't have to ask anyone permission to supply our own needs”*, added Mr. Siwaily, when questioned by journalists on 16 November. *“Today we are only producing 20,000 barrels a day and we need 100,000. Its oil, its our right (...) They can discuss the federal Bill for ever in Baghdad (...) It could talk them two or three years. We have lost enough time already. We have here enough oil to supply the whole of the Middle East. Just you see — in two or three years we'll be self-sufficient”*, added Mr. Siwaily. The Kurdish authorities have stated that they would be satisfied with the quota of 17% of the eventual receipts from exports that they would be authorised to receive (under the draft Bill). At Federal level, this 17% is also the proportion of the national Budget granted to the Kurdish region.

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## **ANKARA: AMERICAN AND TURKISH GENERALS DISCUSS MILITARY COOPERATION AGAINST THE PKK**

**T**HE United States and Iraq are making every effort to dissuade Ankara from opening a second front in Iraqi Kurdistan, the only region still spared the chaos and violence reigning in the rest of the country. The American authorities have, however, agreed to supply Turkey with information regarding the PKK's positions so as to enable the Turkish Army to carry out specific and limited operations. In the course of a meeting in Ankara on 24 November, senior Turkish and American military leaders discussed cooperation in the struggle against the PKK.

The Head of the Turkish Armed Forces General Staff, General Yasar Buyukanit and the Commander in Chief of US Forces in Europe, General Bantz Craddock discussed *"cooperation in the joint struggle against the PKK terrorist organisation, including sharing of Intelligence"*, indicated a Turkish Army communiqué. General James Cartwright, Vice President of the US General Staff, and General David Petraeus, Commander in Chief of US Forces in Iraq, had already been welcomed on 20 November by the Turkish General Staff's number two man, General Ergin Saygun, and had already left Turkey for Iraq for discussions with the Iraqi central government

and the Kurdish authorities. These meetings between high-ranking officers of both countries followed on a meeting in Washington on 5 November between Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and US President George W. Bush. Some 100,000 Turkish troops have been deployed along the Iraqi Kurdistan border. Mr. Erdogan, nevertheless stated on 20 November that Ankara would not have immediate recourse to cross-border operations, although authorised by parliament.

For his part, on 21 November the Turkish President, Abdullah Gul, welcomed the measures taken by the Iraqi Kurds but warned that the option of military intervention had not been ruled out. The Baghdad authorities and the Kurds have announced measures to restrict the movements of PKK fighters. *"We see that common sense has, littler by little, started to prevail in Northern Iraq"*, declared Mr. Gul to journalists in Tbilisi, shortly before a ceremony starting the building of a railway line connecting Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. Mr. Gul's statements coincided with the threats of a PKK leader stating that his troops would create a reign of terror in Iraqi Kurdistan if the United States and the Iraqi Kurds started to help

Turkey against the PKK. *"If we wish we can create instability and endanger their interests"*, declared Cemil Bayik, quoted by the *Firat News* press agency. On 6 November, Murat Karayilan, another PKK leader, for his part called on Turkey to negotiate with his organisation, stating that dialogue, not armed confrontation, was the key to ending 23 years of struggle. *"These operations and attacks will never put an end to the guerrilla (...) Do not darken the new century by confronting the Kurds"*, he had declared to the *Firat News* agency. *"You (Ankara) insist on our leaving Iraq. Would that really be a solution? (...) Our forces are everywhere (...) We are also present on Turkish soil"*, the PKK leader had concluded.

In the course of a press conference on 20 November, at the end of a meeting with European leaders in Brussels, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Ali Babacan declared for his part: *"When the time has come and when it will be necessary, we will use all the instruments we have in our struggle with the PKK (...) Turkey possesses a certain number of tools to fight terrorism and will continue to use them. These include political dialogue, diplomatic and military tools"*. The Iraqi Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari, who was also in Brussels nevertheless considered that the danger of military intervention had diminished. Questioned about these statements, Mr. Babacan welcomed the political commitment of the Iraqi Central Government.

Since the increase of tension between the two countries, a first air raid on Kurdistan is said to have taken place on 13 November. Some Turkish helicopters are said to have attacked localities in Iraqi Kurdistan. According to Colonel Hussein Tamir, an officer of the Iraqi border guards, the bombardments took place just before dawn near Zakho, but there were no victims. *"It was only against abandoned villages, the PKK had no advanced posts"*, added Colonel Tamir. Jamal Abdullah, spokesman of the Kurdistan regional government stated, for his part *"some Turkish planes launched flares along the border area near Zakho but there was no strike or raid"*. The Commander of the Turkish Air Force denied any involvement of Turkish fighter planes in any cross-border operation. *"At the moment, our security forces are carrying out their operations inside our borders (...) there is no kind of cross-border operation"*, declared Mr. Erdogan the next day.

However, four Turkish soldiers were killed on 13 November by Kurdish fighters during a clash in Turkish Kurdistan, according to the Turkish Defence Minister, Vecdi Gonul. The Turkish media also reported on 12 November that the PKK had kidnapped seven people, including two members of an army auxiliary militia, near the village of Ogulveren, in Van province. On 21 October the PKK had attacked a Turkish position close to the border, killing 12 sol-

diers and taking prisoner eight others, who they released on 4 November in Iraqi Kurdistan. On their return to Turkey, the eight soldiers were accused by an Army court of having refused to obey orders and of having crossed the Iraqi border without authorisation — and were jailed.

On the other hand, heavy goods vehicle drivers who provide virtually all of Iraqi Kurdistan's supplies have implored their government not to have recourse to economic sanctions, insisting that they would be the first to suffer from this. Ankara has threatened the Kurdistan government with economic sanctions. According to the Turkish press this could involve restrictions in trade with Iraqi Kurdistan and power cuts. The Halil Ibrahim border post, the crossing point between Turkey and Kurdistan, considered its gateway to the world, is also the safest — even Baghdad prefers to be supplied through this border post, where there is no danger of convoys

being attacked or goods stolen. About 700 lorries enter Iraq through it and Iraq is a very lucrative market for Turkey, and the only one with which it has a positive balance of trade. Turkey exported there 1.7 billion dollars worth in the first eighth months of the year and 2.5 billion in 2006, according to official figures. At Zakho, the first town reached, some 9 Km inside Iraq, the shops are full of Turkish goods and the Turkish brand names are better known than those of their international competitors. The hotels are always full putting up Turkish drivers overnight. The restaurants and hotels have had to translate their nameplates and menus into Turkish. The regional government of Kurdistan's Trade Director, Aziz Ibrahim, estimates that about 300 Turkish firms trade with the region. *"In the event of sanctions against our region, it will be all Iraq that will suffer punishment because the goods passing through here are destined for the whole of the country"*, Mr. Ibrahim considered.

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**THE TURKISH CONSTITUTIONAL COURT WILL RULE  
ON THE BANNING PROCEDURE BEING INITIATED  
AGAINST THE PRO-KURDISH PARTY FOR  
A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY (DTP)**



ON 23 November, the Turkish Constitutional Court announced that it had not found any procedural error in the charge sheet demanding the banning of the country's main pro-Kurdish party, the Party for a

Democratic Society (DTP), and that it would hear the case. The charge sheet will now be sent to the DTP, which will have 30 days to present its defence to the Court in writing. On 16 November, the Turkish Court began legal proceedings that



may result in the banning of the party. The request filed with the Constitutional Court was against the DTP, founded in 2005 on the ashes of the DEHAP, another of a series of pro-Kurdish parties dissolved the Courts. The Court of Appeals Public Prosecutor, Abdurrahman Yalçinkaya, affirmed that *"the party has become the seat of activities harmful to the independence of the State and its indivisible unity"*. The prosecutor also demands that the organisation's leaders be banned from any political activity for five years. One DTP member of Parliament, Sabhat Tuncel, is at present on trial — despite his parliamentary immunity — *"on presumption of support for the PKK"* while the media are making capital over the news that the husband of one of the DTP's Kurdish women M.P.s, Fatma Kurtulan, is said to have joined the PKK in the 1990s. On 7 November, the Minister of Justice, Ali Sahin, had pointed out that *"public opinion thinks that they (the DTP) have links"* with the PKK and affirmed that the organisation might be banned. *"If they insist on serving the PKK's objectives in the political field (...) then they will suffer the consequences"*, Mr. Sahin had warned. The nationalist M.P.s recently demanded the lifting of the parliamentary immunity of their DTP colleagues but Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan had opposed this. In a televised speech made to a meeting of his Justice and Development Party (AKP) at Kizilcahamam, near

Ankara, on 24 November Turkey's Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan considered that the improvements in the Kurds' democratic rights will diminish support for separatism and put an end to the PKK. He pointed out that his country had reached a *"critical stage"* in its struggle against the PKK and that the Kurdish fighters were *"besieged on all sides"* thanks to international support. *"A climate of freedom is the enemy of violence and terrorism"*, added the Prime Minister. *"Let us thus maintain democratic pluralism and strengthen the climate of freedom so as to secure a decisive result in the struggle against terrorism"*, Mr. Erdogan further stated. *"Let us seek, together, the means of winning the population instead of alienating it"*, he proposed.

During a Congress in Ankara on 8 November, the DTP strongly opposed the government's *"militarist"* policy and its threats of cross-border military operations against Iraqi Kurdistan. This second DTP Congress, surrounded by the strictest security measures, elected Nurettin Demirtas to the head of the party. It was held against the background of Turkish threats of intervention into Iraqi Kurdistan, where a few thousand PKK fighters have dug themselves in. In a speech made a few hours before his election to the party leadership, Nurettin Demirtas stated that: *"the AKP's militarist policy is unacceptable. (...) Instead of spending time and energy on cross-border*

*operations, let us spend them on establishing peace in the interior"*. Mr. Demirtas, who was jailed in his youth for *"separatism"* was loudly applauded for his remarks made before a hall full of several hundreds of activists. The delegates, who arrived from all four corners of Turkey, welcomed the *"insufficient"* reforms but, on the other hand, were very critical of the operations against Iraqi Kurdistan. In 2005, Turkey began difficult negotiations for membership of the European Union, after carrying out a wide programme of democratic reforms, in particular regarding the Kurdish population. *"There have been 20 military incursions in the past and they have not put an end to the PKK's existence. Why launch another one?"* stressed Abdullah Ayham, a delegate from Iskenderun, the ancient city of Antioch.

Regarding the proceedings started against it, the DTP denounced them as an attack on democracy. Sirri Sakik, a Member of Parliament and an influential figure in the DTP, declared that: *"this is a backward step for democracy as well as for membership of the European Union"*. *"Turkey has become a graveyard of banned political parties. Closing down a political organisation does not resolve the problem"*, added Mr. Sakik. The DTP is the successor of a whole lineage of banned pro-Kurdish parties, of which the best known abroad is the Democratic Party (DEP). Four DEP Members of

Parliament serve a ten-year prison sentence from 1994 to 2004 “for links with the PKK”. One of them is Mrs. Layla Zana who received the Sakharov Prize for Human Rights in 1995. The DTP succeeded in sending 20 Members to the Turkish Parliament (550 seats in all) in the last elections last July — a first ever for struggling in the very difficult political and legal context of Kurdish rights.

The spotlights were again focussed on the party in the last few days after an ambush on 21 October that cost the lives of 12 Turkish soldiers. The attack, attributed to PKK fighters who had infiltrated into Turkey from the Iraqi mountains, increased the possibility of Turkish intervention into Iraqi Kurdistan. The AKP had succeeded in getting the National Assembly to authorise, by an overwhelming majority, the conduct of military operation beyond Turkey’s borders. “The SKP stole Kurdish votes during the last elections by saying that they were in favour of peace. Now the voting is over, all it can talk about is a across-border operation”, stressed Nursel Aydogan, a DTP leader. Pro-Kurdish parties have never managed to cross the 10% threshold needed to have seats in Parliament. At the last poll, the DTP chose to by-pass this obstacle by supporting independent candidates who then formed a parliamentary group under its banner. Several demonstrations were organised in Kurdis-

tan in protest at the proceedings against the DTP. In Diyarbakir, nearly 50,000 people protested on 25 November and the police dispersed the crowds with tear gas grenades and detained several people. In Van, 2,000 people held a rally on 17 November at the call of

the DTP and the Turkish police arrested ten of them. The police fired into the air and threw tear gas grenades at the demonstrators, who reposted by throwing stones. A journalist, hit by a stone, suffered head injuries.

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### **IRAN: THE IRANIAN SUPREME COURT CONFIRMS THE DEATH SENTENCE ON THE KURDISH JOURNALIST ADNAN HASSANPUR AND SENDS MARIVAN HIVA BOTIMAR FOR TRIAL**

**T**HE Iranian Supreme Court has confirmed the death sentence passed on the Kurdish journalist Adnan Hassanpur, accused of “espionage” and quashed the death sentence passed on a second reporter, Hiva Botimar, announced their lawyer, Saleh Nikbakht on 9 November. As well as the sentence for espionage, Mr. Hassanpur was found guilty of having “divulged information on military sites” and of having “entered into contact with an individual of the US State Department”. These crimes made him a “mohareb (enemy of God)” in the eyes of the court, which is what earned him the death sentence. His lawyer, Mr. Nikbakht, has contested this interpretation and promises to continue to struggle to save his client from the gallows. He announced that, as the death sentence on Hiva Botimar has been quashed, he will be retried by the Marivan court, in Kurdistan Province.

The death sentence passed on the two journalists on 16 July, have aroused indignation in Western capitals. The Iranian court had stated that the two men were not on trial for being journalists but for having taken up arms against the Islamic Republic. However, “none of the actions (of Adnan Hassanpur) constituted a real commitment in movements opposed to the Islamic Republic” according to their lawyer. According to the organisation for the defence of journalists, *Reporters sans Frontières*, Adnan Hassanpur and Hiva Botimar worked on the magazine *Aso* (Horizons), banned in 2005. Adnan Hassanpur dealt with the very sensitive question of Iranian Kurdistan.

Furthermore, the Iranian Intelligence Ministry announced that its forces had arrested eleven members of PEJAK, accused of “having

*committed several attacks and armed actions*", according to an official communiqué published by the semi-official *Mehr* news agency on 25 November. The members of the group had "*committed a bomb attack during an exhibition on the sacred defence (i.e. the Iran-Iraq war), attacked and set fire to a police station at Sanandaj (capital of the Iranian province of Kurdistan) and caused several bomb explosions*", the communiqué added. PEJAK, the acronym for the Party for a Free

Life in Kurdistan, is linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). On 8 November, the government daily Iran had also announced the death of three Kurdish fighters in the province of Kurdistan. For the last two years, PEJAK fighters have been multiplying their armed activities in the Kurdish provinces of Iran. The province of Kurdistan, like the provinces of Kermanshah to its South and of Western Azerbaijan to the North, is mainly inhabited by Kurds.

panic amongst the Iraqi Christians, he says with alarm, and those who could have sought refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan, "*this area of brotherhood, where they have been generously welcomed*". The Christian refugees complain, however, of the high cost of living in Kurdistan, considerably higher than in other regions. In view of the lowering of violence in Baghdad, about twenty Christian families have returned there from Einkawa, according to Mgr. Rabban.

### **IRAQI KURDISTAN WELCOMES CHRISTIAN REFUGEES**

IRAQI Kurdistan is being used as a haven of peace by numbers of Iraqi Christians who have found shelter there for a peaceful coexistence, after fleeing other regions where their churches have been targeted and their priests kidnapped. The large number of them whose families had originally come from the region, have rebuilt houses in villages that have often been long deserted, near the border with Turkish Kurdistan. Others, coming from Baghdad, Mossul or elsewhere rent housing, often at exorbitant rates, in Christian quarters, like that of Einkawa, on the outskirts of Irbil, while waiting for things to calm down enough for them to return, or envisage going into exile

abroad. Mgr. Rabban, Bishop of Irbil and Ahmadiya, estimates that "the number of Christians who have sought refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan is over 70,000". "*Over two hundred villages that had been abandoned or destroyed in the years 1987-88 during Saddam Hussein's offensive against the Kurds have been rebuilt. Those who owned land have put it to use, others rent it out*". He blames the attacks on the Christians on "*fanatical fundamentalist and the 600,000 hooligans and criminals freed by Saddam Hussein before his fall*". "*Three priests were killed in Mossul. Churches were burned, dynamited, machine-gunned. Twenty days ago two priests were kidnapped in Mossul and held to ransom*". These acts of violence have aroused a wave of

Irbil, the capital of Kurdistan, with over a million inhabitants and lying some 330 Km North of Baghdad, has a flourishing economy and has become a magnet for the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons fleeing violence in other parts of Iraq. However, faced with the influx of displaced persons coming from other provinces, the Kurdish authorities have set up a "*residential permit*" and newcomers must have a Kurdish guarantor. At the end of 2003, at the suggestion of the US Army, Irbil was surrounded by a mechanically dug ditch or moat, four-metre wide by three deep, impassable to vehicles discouraging to pedestrians. It has cut all the unobtrusive points of access to the city, blocked all diversions and forced all traffic to enter through eight strictly controlled crossing points. There is a peshmerga guard post every 500 metres all round the moat, each is full view of the others on either side.

**READ IN THE TURKISH PRESS :  
THE KURDISH QUESTION SEEN  
BY THE TURKISH GENERALS**

*“The Turkish Republic has been fighting for several years against the most important problem in its history (...) Military intervention into Northern Iraq (Iraqi Kurdistan) is again on the agenda (...) The government has obtained parliaments authorisation for cross-border intervention. Operations and fighting persist on the border. How have the Turkish Armed Forces conducted this struggle? How has this Army, which is after all a regular one, emerged victorious from this struggle called “the asymmetrical war”? What have been the repercussions of this struggle on the State, on the Turkish armed forces and on the PKK? What have been the mistakes made by Turkey during this period of struggle? Does the State, does the Army, have the same line and orientation today as at the start of the struggle in 1984? What are the views of the commanders who conducted this struggle against the PKK and led the Turkish Armed forces? What are their views of the future?”* To try and answer these questions, Fikret Bila, a Turkish journalist on the daily paper *Mil-liyet*, close to Army circles, carried out a series of interviews with five Turkish generals during the month of November. The following are extensive extracts from these interviews, published in the Turkish daily as from 3 November:

*It was 16 September 1998. Atilla Ates, commander in Chief of the Army had just made his famous speech of warning to Damascus, in Reyhanli district of Hatay. Damascus would have to hand Ocalan over to us of face the risk of war with Turkey. General Aytac Yalman, Commander of the Army’s 2nd Division, who was accompanying Ates Pasha that day, set to work as soon as his chief had left for Ankara ... What would have happened if Damascus had not taken Turkey’s threats into account? (...) We would have entered Syria. The plans were ready for going right through to Damascus. We were not joking.*

*Had Syria not taken any measures on its borders?*

*It was not in any position to stop us. The majority of its troops were stationed on the border with Israel ... Following the collapse of the USSR Russia could not come to its aid. Syria was short of spare parts: its planes could not take off, its tanks were pinned down. And we were determined. I myself knew the region very well. ... (...)*

*It was then that the news came via the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak (...). Mubarak phoned the Turkish President, Demirel, and informed him that Hafiz al-Assad had decided to send Abdullah Ocalan away from Syria. After he left Syria, Ocalan was*

*finally delivered to Turkish officials in Nairobi on 15 February 1999. The following year, Aytac Pasha became Commander of the Gendarmerie and in 2002 Commander in Chief of the Army. He retired in 2004, leaving his command to General Yasar Buyukanit (today the Chief of Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces).*

*The handing over of Ocalan to the Turkish authorities is viewed somewhat differently by Aytac Yalman: “In my opinion, the USA had already long decided to intervene in Iraq. That is why the Americans handed Ocalan over to us. They wanted to be able to rely on the Kurds when they intervened in Iraq. They had planned to carry out this intervention with the help of Barzani and Talabani. Ocalan was an alternative to Barzani and Talabani. I think the Americans delivered Ocalan to strengthen Barzani and Talabani’s margin of manoeuvre. (...)*

*Questioned on the non-military aspects of the Kurdish question, General Yalman stressed: “The social dimension of the problem is very old. In reality Turkey ought to have seen the problem and made a just interpretation of it when it was still just a social question. A solution could then have been found at that time if what was needed had been done. (...) What are the social aspects of the (Kurdish) problem?”*

*It can be described as a question of “self expression”. They want to speak their own language, sing and listen to their songs. At that time we were*

*guided by the theme "There are no Kurds". We say the Kurds as an offshoot of the Turks and in places you heard that they were called Kurds because of the sound of their feet in the snow "kart-kurt"... At the time we considered their demands as "attacks on the integrity of the State". Two things have to be acknowledged: we did not see the social aspects of things ... and assimilation was not achieved..." concluded General Yalman.*

Fikat Bila's series of interviews continued the next day with the former Head of the Turkish Armed Forces General Staff, Dogan Gures, who was in office during the First Gulf War and the setting up of the safe area North of the 36th Parallel, which banned Iraqi planes so as to protect the hundreds of thousands of Kurds hunted by Saddam Hussein. Dogan Gures explained, from the start of the interview, that he took the opportunity of the Provide Comfort operation and the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan to overfly and carry out manoeuvres North of the 36th Parallel.

*"As East Germany was dismantled, its weaponry was available. The GDR Chief of Staff, General Franz was a friend of mine. I called him to ask what they were doing with the arms. He told me that the fields were teeming with abandoned Kalashnikovs ... I told him I needed some and he authorised me to take as many as I wanted ... I sent a team and took 100,000 Kalashnikovs to distribute them to our sol-*

*diers and to village protectors ... 100,000 free Kalashnikovs ..."*

Authorised by the government to crush the Kurds, Dogan Gures had full powers to carry out military intervention in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1992. Mobilising 50,000 troops, backed with Cobra and Super-Cobra helicopters, but also M-60 and Leopard tanks, General Gures carried out an operation that, in his words *"was not a low intensity fight"*.

*"This intervention in Northern Iraq (Kurdistan) in 1992 was a concept we call sector control. An incursion in which one starts off stationing divisions of soldiers to control a sector. These soldiers are elite troops whose strike force and training are very high ... this caused the greatest losses (to the PKK)"*.

General Gures also boasted of having created the specials forces *"a kind of Turkish-style PKK"*, *"heroes hidden in the South-East"*, in his words. These farces had no hesitation about carrying out thousands of extra-judicial executions at the time. Asked how he saw the future, General Gures replied: *"Turkey is in danger of division"* and described a scene in which Dick Cheney, US Vice President, would orchestrate the redrawing of the map of the Middle East. In his opinion *"the United States and the European Union want the division of Turkey"*.

Ibrahim Hakki Karadayi, Head of the Armed Forces General Staff between 1994 and 1998 and in office during the 28 February military *coup d'état* (called the post-modern *coup d'état* in Turkey) that ousted Necmettin Erbakan's Islamic government was *Milliyet's* third guest.

General Karadayi described the PKK question as an *"uprising"*, *"organised by and enjoying the support of important foreigners"* ... General Karadayi thinks that fighting terrorists and fighting terror are not the same. That it is easy to fight against terrorists but the struggle against terror demands more scope. *"In 1980 I was on duty in Elazig, responsible the State of Emergency. I wandered at will in the region. Later I returned as commander in chief. A man approached me and asked me "why do you look for terrorists here, Pasha? You should look for them in Parliament." There was a lot a common sense in that: soldiers fight terrorists ... but fighting terror is different"*.

The former Chief of the Turkish General Staff also carried out cross-border interventions in 1995 and 1997. In this connection he stressed the importance of an offensive without any prior declarations. According to the general, the borders between Turkey and Iraq were drawn up at the time by England to harass Turkey in the future. *"Our borders with Iraq run along the summits of the mountains*

through England's decision. Wherever England has a finger one should be suspicious. In my view they decided to run the border-line over the summits, in a geography that was hard to control to create problems in the future. The borders must be changed ... not only those with Iraq but also with Syria", concluded Ibrahim Hakki Karadayi.

"We cannot finish with the PKK through cross-border interventions", said, the next day, General Hilmi Ozkok another former Chief of Staff interviewed. "For some time now, public opinion has been expecting such an intervention. As if any operation in Northern Iraq (Kurdistan) would put an end to all this. Why wasn't the PKK born there instead of here? There has been a pro-Kurdish movement and people who incite it inside and outside the country since 1984. ... After 23 years, the people have had enough and want an end to it ... or else find a solution some other way... To put an end to a movement one must put an end to hope. If there is no more hope, then the movement runs out of steam, because the solution does not just lie in eliminating the cause ... The English tried development and economic expansion in India, but they saw that all that just strengthened the separatist's demands..."

To conclude with this series of interviews of Turkish generals entitled "The Commanders of 24 years with the PKK" Fikret Bila

questioned General Kenan Evren, perpetrator of the 12 September 1980 Army coup d'état, who seized the opportunity of making some self-criticism of his years in power, knowing that he did not risk anything. "Government officials in the South-East (Kurdistan) should also know how to speak Kurdish", says, today, the general who is more famous for having declared, when he seized power "why feed them instead of hanging them?" in reference to political activists who were sentenced to death. It was he who had toughened the laws forbidding the use of the Kurdish language even in everyday speech.

When speaking about the PKK the Diyarbakir prison springs to mind, it is generally recognised that the use of torture and the ill treatment in this notorious prison had strengthened the PKK. Questioned on the matter, General Evren stormed "It really gets on my nerves when people talk about that prison. I was head of State, not manager of the prison". "As if there was no torture in police stations before the 12 September coup d'état. They all used torture, which means that as soon as you fell into the hands of the police you suffered ill treatment. After the coup d'état we left the police free to work freely ... but they did it all the same", he said with astonishment.

Why forbid the use of Kurdish, asked the journalist adding that he had visited a school at the time and

that the children spoke Turkish very badly. "Look at Belgium. The Flemings and the Walloons don't tear one another apart. When I was head of the General Staff I visited Canada, Quebec more exactly, and I wandered around with my opposite number. In Quebec they speak French, which astonished me as I asked about this. They answered that all government officials have to know both French and English to be able to serve the citizens. ... Our officials in the South-East (Kurdistan) must also learn Kurdish ..."

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## AS WELL AS ...

• **IRANIAN CONSULATES IN IRBIL AND SULEIMANIYAH ARE OFFICIALLY OPENED.** On 6 November, Iran officially opened two consulates in Iraqi Kurdistan, at Irbil and at Suleimaniyah. Hassan Kazemi Qomi, the Iranian Ambassador to Iraq, declared in Irbil: "Today we have good economic relations with Iraq (...) The two consulates have been opened in cooperation with the government of Iraq and the authorities of Kurdistan who are responsible for security". He attended a brief ceremony to inaugurate the Consulate in Irbil, together with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani. The new Irbil consulate is in premises previously occupied by Iranian officials but closed since the beginning of the year because of an operation by the

US Army, in the course of which five Iranian nationals had been arrested. The second Iranian consulate has begun its activity in Suleimaniyah. The two new consulates will enable "the strengthening of relations between Kurdistan and Iran". Parallel to the opening of the two consulates in Kurdistan, the agreement between Iran and Kurdish leaders envisages the opening of two Iraqi consulates at Kermanshah and Urmiyeh, in Iranian Kurdistan.

The setting up of these two diplomatic representations was provided for in an agreement between Teheran and the Iraqi Kurdish authorities, negotiated on 8 October to allow the re-opening of the border with Iraqi Kurdistan. On 24 September, Iran had ordered the closing of the border with Iraqi Kurdistan as a reprisal against the capture, by US Forces, of an Iranian accused of supporting the Iraqi Shiite militia. Iran now has four consulates in Iraq, the other two being in Basra and Kerbala.

• **THE EIGHT TURKISH SOLDIERS FREED BY THE PKK THANKS TO THE MEDIATION OF KURDISH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED PRIOR TO TRIAL BY COURT MARTIAL.** The Van Court Martial has banned the showing by the media of the trial of eight soldiers kept prisoner for two weeks by the Kurdistan Work-

ers' Party (PKK) then released at the beginning of November. The media received notification by fax of this decision on 12 November. *"The bulk of the documents and information regarding the enquiries on this case, which concerns matters damaging to the unity of the State and aiming at removing part of the national territory from the State's Administration, are of a nature that requires secrecy in the interest of national security"* the court affirms. The eight soldiers were made prisoner by the PKK on 21 October during its attack on a Turkish Army position on the Iraqi Kurdish border, in the course of which 12 other soldiers lost their lives. In its decision the court indicated that the soldiers were tried for acting *"counter to those required of agents of the State, persistent insubordination leading to great losses and flight abroad"*. The documents indicate that they have *"abandoned their positions in conformity with the offers of the terrorists and went with the terrorists to their camps in Northern Iraq"*.

These conscripts are accused of having crossed the Kurdistan border without authorisation. The soldiers were questioned after their liberation by their officers and the Army prosecutors, first in Ankara then at Van on 4 November. The papers have speculated that soldiers, many of whom are Kurdish, have refused to fight. Three Kurdish Members of Parliament of the Party for a Democratic Society

(DTP) helped secure the release of the eight soldiers. The Ankara Public Prosecutors Office has started investigations against these three MPs to determine whether their involvement in this release could constitute a crime under anti-terrorist legislation.

The circumstances of this attack by the PKK remain pretty disturbing in a region so strongly controlled by the Turkish Army (the second largest Army in NATO) which, moreover, has stationed 100,000 troops there in the last few months. Observers are astonished that there was no air cover and that the twenty men were completely neglected. The Turkish authorities particularly blamer them for being still alive and in no way wish to explain the reasons for this defeat, which is itself obscure.

• **A TANGLE OVER THE EVENTUALITY OF CHEMICAL ALI'S EXECUTION.** On 11 November, the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki said he was determined that *Chemical Ali* be hanged. Ali Hassan al-Majid should have been executed over a month ago. He was sentenced to death on 24 June along with the former Assistant Director of Military Operations, Hussein Rashid al-Tikriti and Saddam Hussein's Minister of Defence, Sultan Hashim al-Tai. Their sentence was confirmed on appeal. According to Iraqi law, this

cousin and henchman of the former dictator, whose nickname comes from his taste for the use of chemical weapons, should have been executed with his accomplices 30 days after confirmation of the sentence on 4 September. *"We are determined that justice be done and that these three people be handed over to the (Iraqi) legal authorities"* declared Mr. al-Maliki, whereas the condemned men remain under the responsibility of the US Occupation Forces. The Prime Minister has set up a committee to enquire into the reason for the delay in carrying out the sentence.

Ali Hassan al-Majid, nicknamed "Chemical Ali", the former Assistant Director of Military Operations, Hussein Rashid al-Tikriti and the ex-Defence Minister Sultan Hashim al-Tai were sentenced to death by the Iraqi Courts for their responsibilities in the repression of Kurds (the *Anfal* campaign 1987-88) which caused over 180,000 deaths. Several major obstacles, both legal and political, have since prevented the execution of the

three men, today guarded by the US Army. The Iraqi President, Jalal Talabani, and the Vice-President Tariq al-Hashemi, have refused to sign the order of execution for the three men. Mr. Talabani is opposed on principle to capital punishment, Mr. Hashemi, for his part fears that the execution of General al-Tai would sabotage efforts at national reconciliation in Iraq, reviving the frustrations of the Sunni Arabs.

Finally, the fact that the legal deadline for the execution — October 4th — has passed implies that it would henceforth be illegal to execute *Chemical Ali* and his co-accused, according to their defence lawyer. *"No one calls to question the fate of Chemical Ali, but it is that of Sultan Hashem is questioned"*, retorted the Iraqi government spokesman, Ali al-Dabbagh on 17 November. *"Justice must prevail, the case is in the hands of the Supreme Court, which will decide if the execution requires the agreement of the Presidential Council"*, he explained.

#### • THE KURDISH MINISTER

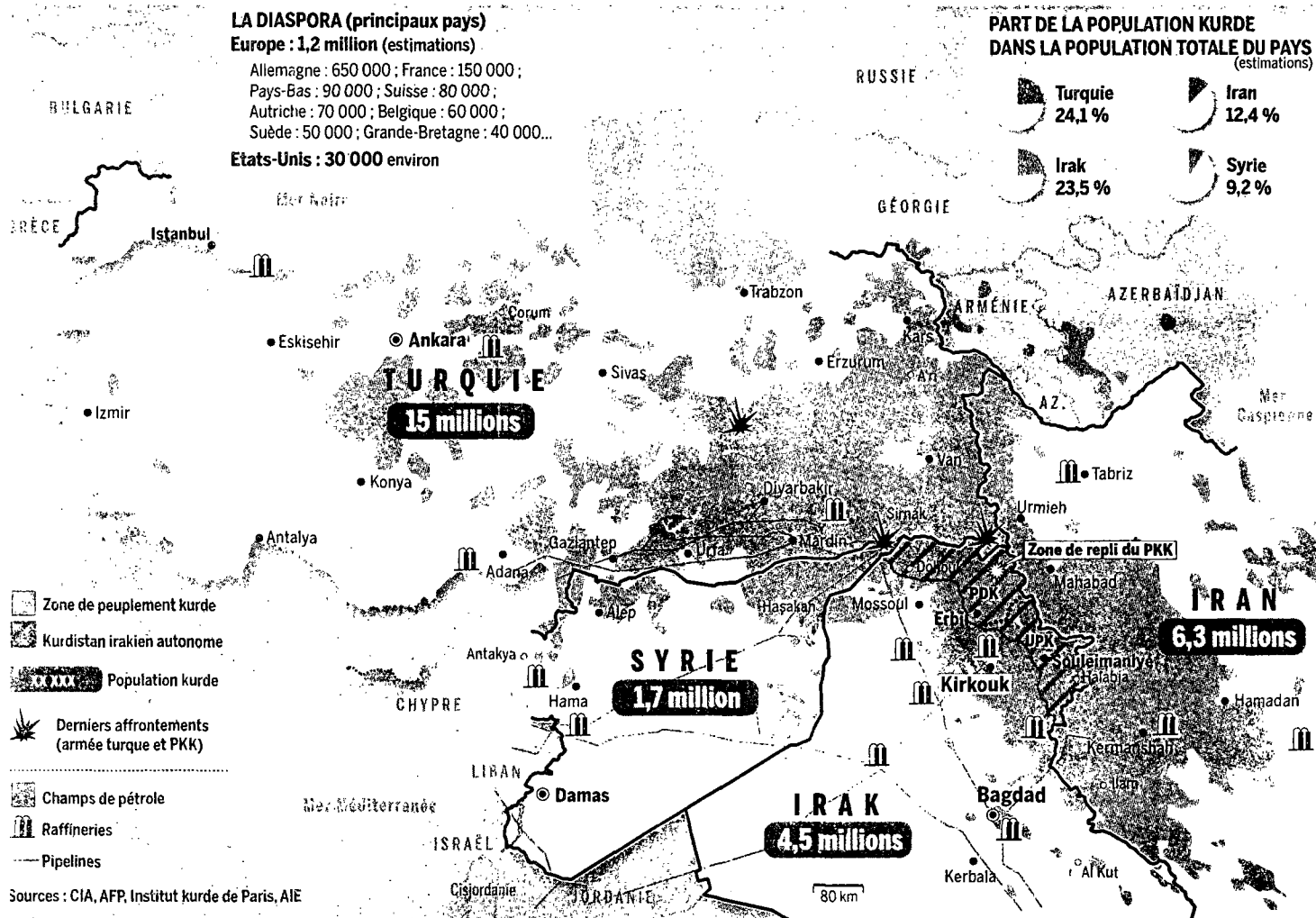
**FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EXPOSES THE ASSASSINATION OF 27 WOMEN IN FOUR MONTHS IN SO-CALLED "HONOUR CRIMES"**. On 26 November, the Minister for Human Rights in the Kurdistan Regional Government, Aziz Mohammed, declared that at least 27 women have been killed in the last four months in Iraqi Kurdistan by members of their family, in "honour crimes". *"In the course of the last four months ten women were killed in Irbil, eleven others in Dohuk and six in Suleimaniyah"*, he declared. *"These are honour crimes. We have to say that violence against women is continuing"*, lamented Mr. Mohammed. Over the same period, 97 women have also attempted to commit suicide by setting themselves alight to escape domestic violence he pointed out.

The Kurdish authorities and many associations formed to defend women's rights are acting against these crimes, most often perpetrated by members of the family for allegedly "immoral" conduct.



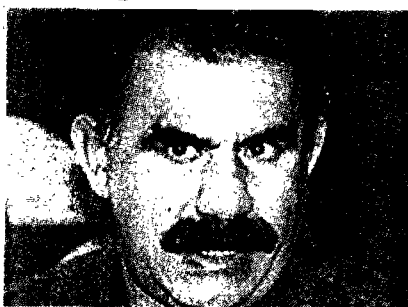
# La question kurde

## Quatre pays sous tension



Depuis le 21 octobre, un nouveau cycle d'attaques et de représailles est engagé entre les indépendantistes kurdes du PKK, réfugiés en Irak, et l'armée turque. Le risque d'une déstabilisation de toute la région motive l'arrivée, jeudi à Ankara, de Condoleezza Rice

### Turquie



**Abdullah Öcalan, fondateur du PKK.**  
BARRAK/AFP

SEULS les Kurdes irakiens ont obtenu l'autonomie que prévoyait le traité de Sèvres, lorsque les puissances victorieuses de la première guerre mondiale ont démantelé l'Empire ottoman. Considérée comme une menace en Syrie, la minorité kurde est toujours réprimée en Iran. En Turquie, où elle est la plus importante, Ankara est mis au défi par la communauté internationale de lutter sans excès contre la guérilla du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Hier. Après le traité de Lausanne (1923), la Turquie kémahiste engage une politique nationaliste refusée par les Kurdes turcs, qui espéraient obtenir une autonomie culturelle et politique. Soulèvements et répressions se succèdent, de 1925 à 1938, dans une zone placée sous administration spéciale. Dans les années 1970, plusieurs

organisations politiques kurdes de gauche se créent clandestinement, dont le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), formation marxiste-léniniste qui passe en 1984 à la lutte armée, avec quelque 3 500 combattants. En réponse, les autorités turques créent en 1985 une milice kurde, les « gardiens de village », forte de quelque 58 000 hommes. Parallèlement aux combats entre le PKK et les autorités turques, des partis pro-kurdes très surveillés sont fondés, dont le Parti travailliste du peuple (HEP), interdit en 1993, puis le Parti de la démocratie du peuple (Hadep), et le Parti de la société démocratique (DTP, 20 députés). **Aujourd'hui.** Après l'arrestation d'Abdullah Öcalan, en 1999, le PKK déclare un cessez-le-feu unilatéral qui tient jusqu'en 2004, année où reprennent les affrontements avec l'armée turque. En quinze ans, la guerre entre l'armée régulière et les rebelles kurdes a fait au moins 35 000 morts. Le conflit a traumatisé le pays, accentuant le fossé économique, éducatif

## Irak : rattacher Kirkouk au Kurdistan autonome ?



Source : <http://healingiraq.blogspot.com>

et culturel entre l'Ouest et l'Est. Des milliers de villages du Kurdistan turc ont été rasés et près de deux millions de déplacés sont venus grossir les bidonvilles d'Istanbul, d'Ankara, d'Adana ou de Diyarbakir, la plus grande ville du Sud-Est.

## Iran

**Hier.** C'est dans la partie iranienne du Kurdistan qu'a été proclamée, en janvier 1946, la seule République kurde, à Mahabad, écrasée l'année suivante par le régime de Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. En 1930, son père, Reza Chah, avait déjà fait assassiner l'un des principaux chefs tribaux kurdes, Simko. Créé en 1945, le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan d'Iran (PDKI) lance en 1967 une révolte durement réprimée. L'Iran instrumentalise pourtant la cause kurde contre l'Irak, en soutenant des factions kurdes irakiennes opposées à Bagdad, en 1974, jusqu'aux accords d'Alger conclus entre les deux pays en 1975. Le changement de régime à Téhéran, après la révolution islamique de 1979, ne modifie pas les rapports conflictuels entre le pouvoir central iranien et la minorité kurde stigmatisée par l'ayatollah Rouhollah Khomeiny. Le secrétaire général du PDKI, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, qui plaide pour une autonomie politique, tente de négocier avec la direction iranienne après la mort de Khomeiny, en 1989, mais il est assassiné, à Vienne, la même année.

**Aujourd'hui.** Le PDKI est à nouveau décapité en 1992, lorsque le nouveau secrétaire général, Sadik Sherefkendi, est assassiné à Berlin. Les escarmouches se poursuivent aujourd'hui entre Kurdes et troupes iraniennes. Créé il y a trois ans, le groupe armé Pejak (Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan) multiplie les embuscades depuis les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, où il a retranché ses camps d'entraînement. Téhéran accuse Washington de financer le groupe pour déstabiliser le régime. La répression s'est accrue ces derniers mois. Le 31 juillet, deux journalistes kurdes, Adnan

Hassanpour et Abdolvahed Botimar, ont été condamnés à mort pour « espionnage » et « activités subversives ».



Les journalistes Adnan Hassanpour et Abdolvahed Botimar. DR

## Irak

**Hier.** Les Kurdes irakiens menés par un chef tribal, cheikh Mahmoud, se soulèvent à trois reprises entre 1920 et 1930. La

répression est dirigée par les Britanniques, qui disposent d'un mandat sur l'Irak octroyé par la Société des Nations (SDN). Nouvelles révoltes de 1943 à 1945 conduites par Moustapha Barzani, qui se réfugie en Iran. Après le coup d'Etat de Kassem contre la monarchie irakienne, en 1958, les relations entre les Kurdes irakiens et le pouvoir central irakien se détendent. Les affrontements reprennent entre 1961 et 1970, puis en 1974 et 1975. Avec le début de la guerre contre l'Iran en 1980, le régime de Saddam Hussein multiplie les actions contre les Kurdes (arrestations, arabisation de la zone pétrolière de Kirkouk, destruction de villages). Les campagnes militaires d'Anfal (1987-1988) font des dizaines de milliers de morts. Les Kurdes se soulèvent à nouveau en 1991 et reçoivent la protection militaire des Occidentaux.

**Aujourd'hui.** Les deux grandes factions kurdes irakiennes – le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) et l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) – s'affrontent dans une guérilla fratricide de 1994 à

**1920** **Traité de Sèvres.** L'Empire ottoman est partagé en trois nouveaux Etats : la Turquie, l'Irak et la Syrie. L'autonomie des provinces kurdes et la possibilité de la création, à terme, d'un Etat kurde indépendant sont prévues.

**1923** **Traité de Lausanne** qui revient sur ces dernières dispositions.

**1924** **Un décret-loi interdit les écoles,** les associations et les publications kurdes en Turquie.

**1945** **Création du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan** (PDK) de Turquie, puis du **Parti démocratique du Kurdistan** (PDK) d'Irak.

**1978** **Création dans la clandestinité du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan** (PKK, séparatiste) en Turquie qui adopte, en 1984, le principe de la **lutte armée** dans le Kurdistan.

**1987** **Campagnes militaires** du régime de Saddam Hussein

**1988** **contre les Kurdes irakiens** (180 000 morts). Bombardement à l'arme chimique de Halabja, le 16 mars 1988 (5 000 morts).

**1991** **Soulèvement kurde irakien** après la défaite, essuyée au Koweït par Saddam Hussein. Répression de l'armée irakienne. Instauration par les Occidentaux d'une zone interdite à l'aviation irakienne qui sanctuarise les trois provinces kurdes de Dohouk, Erbil et Souleimaniyé.

**1995** **Affrontements fratricides**

**1996** dans le Kurdistan irakien.

**1999** **Arrestation de Abdullah Öcalan,** chef du PKK, condamné à mort en 2002, peine commuée à la prison à vie. Le PKK décrète un cessez-le-feu unilatéral.

**2003** **Chute de Saddam Hussein,** le Kurdistan irakien accède à l'autonomie.

**2004** **Emeutes kurdes en Syrie,** à Qamichli. Le PKK rompt son cessez-le-feu en Turquie.

**2007** **Les accrochages** entre l'armée turque et le PKK se multiplient.

1996. Les deux camps concluent un accord en 2002, aux Etats-Unis, à quelques mois de l'intervention américaine en Irak. Les trois provinces kurdes irakiennes (Dohouk, Erbil, Souleimaniyé) confortent leur autonomie et demandent le rattachement de Kirkouk au Kurdistan autonome. Un référendum devait être organisé sur le sujet avant la fin décembre 2007 pour décider du sort de cette zone, où coexistent à la fois Arabes, Kurdes et Turkmènes. Il est peu probable que cette échéance puisse être tenue.

## Syrie

**Hier.** Le régime syrien a adopté une attitude ambivalente vis-à-vis de la question kurde. Il a hébergé le chef du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, entre 1984 et 1998. Mais, en 1962, il avait privé de la nationalité syrienne plus de 120 000 Kurdes syriens (plus de 300 000 aujourd'hui avec leurs descendants), lors d'un recensement. Après avoir mis sur pied, selon l'anthropologue Paulo

Pinto, des brigades d'élite kurdes utilisées notamment contre l'opposition islamique, le régime a tenté de coopter des dignitaires religieux en nommant grand mufti le cheikh kurde Ahmed Kuftaro (de 1964 jusqu'à sa mort, en 2004).

**Aujourd'hui.** Après l'intervention américaine en Irak, qui a permis aux Kurdes irakiens de consolider leur autonomie, la minorité kurde syrienne est apparue com-



Le cheikh Mohammad Al-Khaznawi, assassiné en mai 2005. DR

me une menace potentielle pour le régime. Le durcissement de ses relations avec le pouvoir a été illustré par la répression brutale des émeutes de Qamichli, en mars 2004, puis par l'assassinat non élucidé d'un chef spirituel kurde, le cheikh Mohammad Al-Khaznawi, en mai 2005. ■

SERVICE INTERNATIONAL

#### PARTIS

**PKK** : Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan. Fondé par Abdullah Öcalan (né en 1949). Marxiste-léniniste, il impose une discipline de fer dans un mouvement où se développe le culte de la personnalité. Abdullah Öcalan fuit la Turquie en 1984, date à laquelle le PKK se lance dans la lutte armée.

**PDK** : Parti démocratique du Kurdistan d'Irak, fondé en 1945 ; Parti démocratique du Kurdistan d'Irak, créé en 1946 par Moustapha Barzani, qui le dirige jusqu'à sa mort, en 1979. Il est remplacé par son fils Massoud, l'actuel dirigeant de

la région autonome kurde d'Irak.

**UPK** : Union patriotique du Kurdistan. Scission du PDK irakien, fondée par Jalal Talabani, président de l'Irak, après l'accord d'Alger entre l'Irak et l'Irak sur la zone frontière du Chatt Al-Arab qui prive le PDK de son soutien iranien. Les deux partis se livrent des combats fratricides dans les années 1990, avant de conclure une alliance.

#### RELIGION

**Islam** : la quasi-totalité des Kurdes sont des musulmans avec une majorité (80 % selon certaines sources) de sunnites, surtout chaféites (une des quatre grandes écoles du sunnisme). Les autres sont d'obédience chiite ou appartiennent à de petites communautés hétérodoxes (ahl-i-haq), ismaéliens et zoroastriens en Iran, alévis en Turquie ou yézides en Irak.

L'Orient  
LE JOUR

01 novembre 2007 - Beyrouth

Le Premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a accusé le président de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani, d'offrir un sanctuaire aux rebelles kurdes de Turquie. Par ailleurs, le ministre iranien des Affaires étrangères, Manouchehr Mottaki, a déclaré hier que son pays est disposé à de nouvelles discussions avec les États-Unis en vue d'améliorer la sécurité en Irak.

Lors d'opérations menées avec le soutien de l'artillerie et d'hélicoptères de combat, 15 militants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont été tués depuis lundi aux abords du mont Cudi, dans la province de Sîrnak, frontalière de l'Irak, a annoncé l'état-major. L'armée a aussi confirmé trois pertes dans ses rangs et que des heurts s'étaient déroulés mardi à Hatay (Sud) et Bingöl (Est), sans faire de victimes. Alors que les opérations de l'armée se poursuivaient hier dans plusieurs zones, les dirigeants turcs élevaient le ton à Ankara contre les Kurdes d'Irak.

Mardi soir, le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a attaqué le président de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani. « Ce qu'ils (les hommes de Barzani) font là-bas consiste tout simplement à couvrir l'organisation terroriste », en l'occurrence le PKK, qui a tué 12 soldats et fait huit autres prisonniers le 21

## Erdogan accuse Barzani d'offrir un sanctuaire au PKK

octobre, a-t-il déclaré. M. Erdogan a de nouveau refusé de dialoguer directement de la question du PKK avec les Kurdes d'Irak, comme le demande M. Barzani.

Dans ce contexte, le Conseil des ministres s'est réuni à Ankara pour évoquer les mesures économiques à prendre contre le Kurdistan irakien, accusé d'offrir un sanctuaire aux séparatistes. La Turquie fournit notamment de l'électricité au nord de l'Irak. Les exportations turques vers l'Irak se sont élevées à 1,18 milliard d'euros pour les huit premiers mois de l'année, selon les chiffres officiels. Les importations irakiennes n'ont atteint que 106 millions d'euros pour la même période.

Dans une tentative d'apaiser les tensions, les autorités irakiennes ont mis en place de nouveaux barrages pour restreindre les déplacements du PKK et interrompre leur approvisionnement.

M. Erdogan a réaffirmé la détermination de son pays de sévir contre le PKK en Irak tout en voulant faire marcher la diplomatie, indiquant attacher une grande importance à sa rencontre avec le président américain George W. Bush à la Maison-Blanche, prévue le 5 novembre.

À Washington, un porte-parole du Pentagone a déclaré hier que les États-Unis fournissaient à la Turquie des renseigne-

ments sur les positions des rebelles kurdes le long de sa frontière avec l'Irak.

La Turquie a menacé l'Irak d'intervenir militairement si les autorités irakiennes et Washington n'empêchaient pas les opérations des rebelles du PKK. La secrétaire d'État américaine Condoleezza Rice, dont le pays est un « partenaire stratégique » de la Turquie, s'entretiendra avec les dirigeants turcs demain à Ankara pour leur conseiller la retenue. Elle doit ensuite assister à Istanbul à une réunion internationale sur l'Irak, demain et samedi, à laquelle devrait participer le chef de la diplomatie irakienne Hoshyar Zebari.

À l'occasion de la visite à Bagdad du chef de la diplomatie iranienne Manouchehr Mottaki, le Premier ministre irakien Nouri al-Maliki a appelé de son côté hier Téhéran à « désamorcer » la crise avec la Turquie et demandé à l'Iran son appui à la conférence d'Istanbul. M. Mottaki a d'ailleurs déclaré hier que son pays est disposé à de nouvelles discussions avec les États-Unis en vue d'améliorer la sécurité en Irak. Il n'a pas précisé s'il évoquait des entretiens au niveau des ambassadeurs ou à celui du comité d'experts mis en place par Téhéran, Bagdad et Washington pour tenter d'améliorer leur coopération sur la sécurité en Irak. Ce comité s'est réuni une seule fois, début août.

**LE FIGARO** 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 2007

# Avec les rebelles du PKK dans les montagnes irakiennes

## MOYEN-ORIENT

Rencontre avec une patrouille de l'organisation marxiste, qui a déclaré la guerre à l'État turc depuis le début des années 1980.

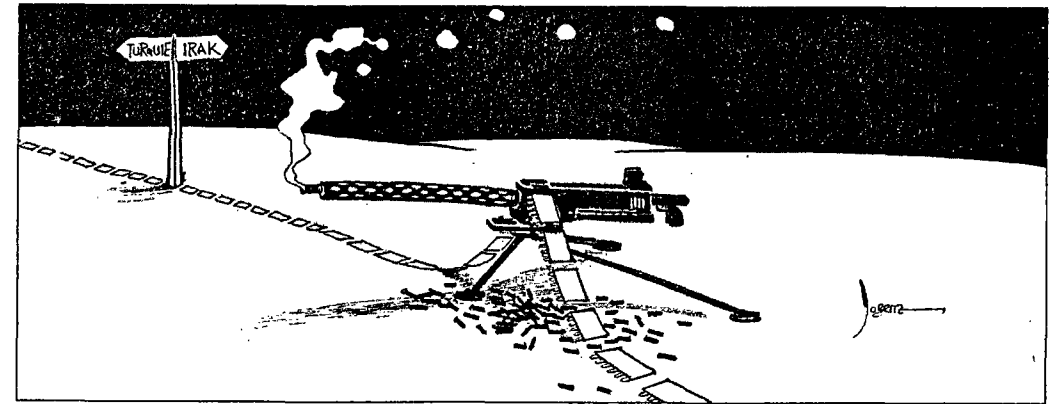
Les pays voisins de l'Irak et ceux du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU se retrouvent ce soir à Istanbul pour discuter de la sécurisation des frontières de l'Irak. La tension entre Ankara et Bagdad va dominer la réunion. La Turquie a massé des dizaines de milliers de soldats à sa frontière sud-est, menaçant le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), une organisation de rebelles séparatistes kurdes qui conduit des opérations meurtrières à partir du nord de l'Irak, où ses membres sont retranchés. Notre envoyé spécial a pu les rencontrer dans le nord-ouest du Kurdistan irakien.

*De notre envoyé spécial dans la vallée de Kachan*

LES PARTISANS apparaissent soudain au bout d'une piste défoncée qui grimpe le long d'un torrent à truites, dans les montagnes du nord du Kurdistan irakien. La kalachnikov à l'épaule, ils traversent un pont de fortune jeté en travers de la rivière, entre deux chênes au tronc noueux. Ils sont cinq, en baskets et en uniforme gris-vert taillé à la mode kurde, avec pantalon bouffant, large ceinture chargée de grenades et petite veste à poches. Sur l'autre rive du torrent, on aperçoit une sorte de camp de Robin des Bois, avec des abris de feuillages, et des cavités camouflées au pied de la falaise pour échapper aux reconnaissances aériennes.

« Il n'est pas possible d'aller plus loin », explique le plus âgé d'entre eux, qui semble être le chef de la petite escouade. Il propose un verre de thé mais reste inflexible. Sa mission est vraisemblablement d'empêcher de remonter plus haut la vallée, vers des campements sans doute plus importants.

Ces confins montagneux entre le Kurdistan irakien et la Turquie sont aux mains du PKK, le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, et les accès soigneusement contrôlés. Le partisan utilise d'ailleurs le *kre-*



*manji*, dialecte kurde parlé en Turquie, légèrement différent du *sur-rani*, celui des Kurdes du nord de l'Irak.

Malgré son nom, le PKK n'a pas grand-chose à voir avec un syndicat ouvrier. Cette organisation marxiste a déclaré depuis les années 1980 une guerre sans merci à l'État turc, qui a fait quelque 30 000 morts. C'est un mouvement clandestin et dur, à l'idéologie rigide, qui n'hésite pas à recourir aux attentats terroristes et aux assassinats, et que l'armée turque pourchasse sans merci.

Le chef fait asseoir son petit groupe, et préparer le thé. Il n'a que 37 ans mais il en fait dix de plus. Son visage à l'air tendu des hom-

mes traqués. Il refuse d'être photographié ou de donner son nom, par crainte de représailles turques. « Je suis entré au PKK en 1988 », explique-t-il. Il avait alors 17 ans, l'âge qu'a aujourd'hui le plus jeune de ses combattants. « Je ne comprends pas pourquoi l'Union européenne nous a placés sur la liste des organisations terroristes! Nous sommes des combattants de la liberté. Nous défendons les droits de notre peuple », explique-t-il, reprenant l'éternelle justification de toutes les guérillas du monde.

Ce mouvement au marxisme désuet, qui recrute aussi des femmes parmi ses combattants, et dont le chef historique, Abdullah Ocalan, croupit dans une prison

turque, menace aujourd'hui d'enflammer de nouveau le Kurdistan, dernière région d'Irak à connaître un calme relatif.

### Propice aux embuscades

La Turquie, qui vient de perdre plusieurs de ses soldats, certains tués et d'autres capturés, dans une embuscade du PKK, pourrait venir régler ses comptes avec la guérilla jusque dans ses sanctuaires du Kurdistan irakien.

Car les chefs du PKK ont profité de la quasi-autonomie de leurs cousins kurdes d'Irak, pour installer leurs bases arrières du côté irakien de la frontière, avec la tolérance plus ou moins assumée des autorités d'Erbil. Les hautes vallées de montagne du nord du Kurdistan sont aux mains du PKK.

« La frontière turque n'est qu'à deux heures de marche, en direction du nord », explique le militant du PKK. Là-bas, les troupes turques sont massées. Les tirs d'artillerie se font plus nombreux dans les vallons de montagne, à la fois en guise d'avertissement et pour chasser les derniers civils de la zone frontière. Cependant, la guérilla ne se combat pas par avions ou à coups d'artillerie, et malgré la puissance de l'armée turque, le nord du Kurdistan reste un terrain très difficile.

« On connaît tous les coins par ici », dit le chef du groupe de partisans. « Les Turcs peuvent venir.

*Mais regardez ces montagnes. Ce sera une guerre très difficile pour eux, ils vont perdre du monde »,* dit-il. Autour de lui, la vallée est fermée par des à-pics vertigineux. Seuls des sentiers muletiers permettent de passer les cols en direction du nord. Tout le pays est propice à des embuscades.

C'est sans doute pour cette raison que la Turquie s'efforce pour le moment d'obtenir le désarmement du PKK et la libération de ses soldats par des moyens diplomatiques, en multipliant les pressions sur les Américains, le gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan et les autorités irakiennes. Mais les autorités turques ont annoncé qu'elles ne se contenteraient pas de mesures cosmétiques.

**ADRIEN JAULMES**

**LE FIGARO**

2 novembre 2007

# Des Kurdes sont pris pour cible en Turquie

## MOYEN-ORIENT

Depuis le regain d'attaques des rebelles du PKK retranchés en Irak, les Kurdes de Turquie subissent les assauts d'extrémistes turcs. C'est le cas notamment à Bursa.

De notre envoyée spéciale à Bursa

AVEC ses élégantes mosquées, Bursa, première capitale ottomane, cultive avec fierté un passé impérial prestigieux. Six siècles plus tard, la cité de l'ouest de la Turquie est tout aussi prospère : l'arrivée de Renault et de Fiat, dans les années 1960, l'a transformée en plaque tournante de l'industrie automobile. Pourtant, cette ville,

plus épargnée que la moyenne par les grands maux du pays, la pauvreté et le nationalisme, a été ces derniers jours le théâtre de violences sans précédent contre la communauté kurde : commerces saccagés, maison brûlée, agressions au couteau, menaces de mort, association assiégée...

« J'habite ici depuis trente ans, je n'ai jamais vu ça, même au plus fort de la guerre civile, s'inquiète Abdülaziz Akyol, président, à Bursa, de l'Association des droits de l'homme, qui vient de publier un rapport sur les incidents. Il suffit désormais d'être kurde pour être visé, mais je ne suis pas au courant de tout, les gens ont peur, ils ne parlent pas. »

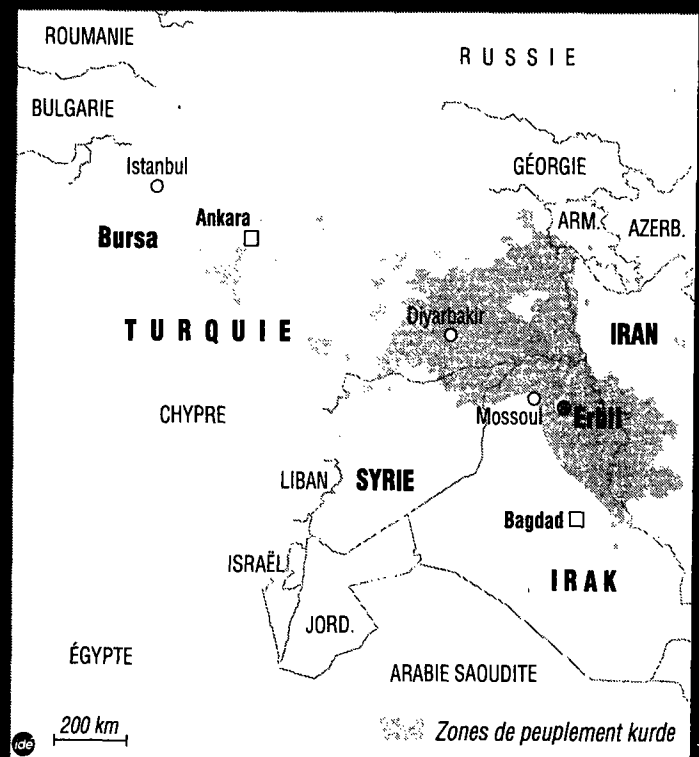
La mort de 12 soldats, tués par les séparatistes kurdes du PKK, dimanche 21 octobre, a donné le coup d'envoi aux représailles à Bursa. Elles ont culminé le mardi, avec les funérailles de Samet Saraç, l'un des « martyrs », et se poursuivent par hoquets depuis. Dans la quasi-indifférence des médias, focalisés sur « la lutte contre la terreur » et les menaces d'intervention militaire en Irak. La recrudescence des actions du PKK s'est accompagnée d'une hausse des violences ethniques en Turquie, attisées par les harangues des partis nationalistes et une presse revancharde.

À Bursa, « des petits groupes se rassemblent devant la statue d'Ata-

türk, au centre, et déambulent dans les rues en faisant le signe des Loups gris [NDLR : une milice d'extrême droite proche du Parti d'action nationaliste, MHP], personne ne leur fait de remarque, raconte Abdülaziz Akyol. Les militants des Alperen (NDLR : foyers de jeunesse du Parti islamo-nationaliste de la grande union [BBP]) participent également aux attaques. »

## Boutiques mises à sac

Le plus effrayant, de l'avis général, ce sont ces lycéens, encadrés par leur professeur, qui ont défilé en hurlant « Allah Akbar! » et « la patrie est indivisible », lors de l'enterrement du militaire. « Ces jeunes sont fanatisés, je



Beaucoup craignent désormais que les violences, attisées par la crise entre Ankara et les séparatistes kurdes basés en Irak, ne dégénèrent en guérilla interethnique. La mort de 12 soldats turcs tués par les rebelles le 21 octobre a mis le feu au poudre, déchaînant manifestations nationalistes (comme ici, à Istanbul, vendredi dernier) et agressions racistes dans le pays. Sur les 35 à 40 millions de Kurdes, 20 millions habitent en Turquie. Les autres se répartissent principalement entre l'Irak, l'Irak et la Syrie. D. Dilkoff/AFP

redoute qu'ils ne passent à l'acte si on leur en donne l'ordre», explique Alireza Beyaztas. Ce père de famille de 39 ans tient un café, «un endroit connu pour être démocrate où tout le monde se mélange» et où les chansons d'Ahmet Kaya, grand poète kurde, agrémentent les soirées.

Le jour des funérailles, il a reçu des coups de téléphone anonymes : «Nous allons te régler ton compte.» Le soir, «des types dans la salle ont applaudi lorsqu'un drapeau turc est apparu à la télé, raconte-t-il. Ça a commencé comme ça.» Ça a continué par des gaz lacrymogènes et des coups de couteau. Alireza Beyaztas a été touché à la cuisse, son cousin dans le dos, et un client a été poignardé dans le ventre. Huit jours après, il est toujours hospitalisé, les organes vitaux touchés.

«Je ressens de plus en plus le racisme antikurde, j'ai l'impression qu'on me prend pour un terroriste», témoigne un commerçant, qui refuse de donner son nom. Il a accroché un drapeau au-dessus des piles de vêtement. «Ce drapeau appartient à tous les citoyens, pas seulement aux Turcs, revendique-t-il, mais les nationalistes cherchent à nous le confisquer.»

Une motivation patriotique qui semble être une exception dans ce marché majoritairement kurde : depuis la tentative de mise à sac des boutiques par un groupe de trois cents personnes, les dra-

peaux ont fleuri devant les étals. «C'est mieux pour les affaires», chuchote un vendeur, qui a été frappé, comme s'il craignait que l'absence de l'étendard rouge et blanc le désigne comme un traître.

Un supermarché de la chaîne Saypa a également été saccagé. Depuis, le propriétaire, kurde, a placardé un «Avis à la population» sur ses vitrines. On peut y lire que Saypa existe depuis la création de la République turque, que cette «firme turque n'oublie pas» les familles des martyrs en faisant des dons alimentaires. Aucune arrestation n'a suivi ces actes de vandalisme, pas plus lorsque la maison de la famille Adam, dans le district de Kemal Pasa, à l'extérieur de Bursa, a été incendiée.

#### Ses voisins parmi les agresseurs

«Ils ont brûlé la bergerie, puis le toit de la maison, mon frère était coincé à l'intérieur», raconte Vedat Adam, joint par téléphone. Pourtant l'an dernier, le fils d'un habitant du quartier a été tué dans le sud-est, j'étais à ses funérailles et nous étions tous désolés. Mais après l'incendie, personne n'est

venu nous reconforter.» Il a reconnu ses voisins parmi ses agresseurs. Le lendemain du sinistre, ce maçon a été renvoyé par son patron. Il pense aujourd'hui quitter la région et rentrer à Diyarbakir, la grande ville kurde dans l'Est.

Au local du Parti pour une

société démocratique, pro kurde, les vitres cassées témoignent encore de «l'attaque menée par plus d'un millier de personnes», selon Sedat Ertugrul, le vice-président de la section de Bursa. «Le mot d'ordre est de ne pas répondre aux provocations pour ne pas empirer la situation ni déclencher des affrontements ethniques, explique-t-il. Mais parmi les Kurdes, il y en a qui veulent désormais affronter les Loups gris.»

LAURE MARCHAND

### Ankara pourrait fermer son espace aérien au Kurdistan irakien

Le président du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani, a affirmé hier que la Turquie avait fermé son espace aérien aux vols en direction et en provenance de la région autonome kurde. La chaîne de télévision turque NTV a également fait état de la mise en place de cette interdiction. Cependant, le premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a démenti cette information, indiquant qu'une telle mesure n'avait pas encore été décidée. Cette fermeture envisagée fait partie d'un ensemble de sanctions économiques envisagées pour faire pression sur les autorités kurdes locales, accusées par Ankara de soutenir le PKK. Le

ralentissement des échanges commerciaux au poste frontière de Habour, vital pour le Kurdistan, ainsi que la baisse d'exportations d'électricité et de ciment sont également à l'étude.

L'ensemble du contentieux turco-irakien figure en bonne place à l'ordre du jour de la réunion des pays voisins de l'Irak, qui s'est ouverte hier à Istanbul. Le secrétaire d'État américain Condoleezza Rice, qui s'entretient aujourd'hui avec les dirigeants turcs à Ankara, va tenter de désamorcer la crise.

L. MA.

LE FIGARO 2 novembre 2007

## Turcs, Kurdes, Iraniens et Irakiens se côtoient à la foire d'Erbil

Au Parc des expositions de la ville kurde irakienne, l'atmosphère est presque celle d'un pays en paix.

De notre envoyé spécial à Erbil (Kurdistan irakien)

LES STANDS de compagnies turques ou iraniennes sont installés à côté de ceux d'exposants kurdes et irakiens. Devant des rangées de groupes électrogènes et de téléviseurs à écran plat, des hommes d'affaires en costume cravate croisent des Kurdes en turban et pantalon bouffant traditionnel, des femmes voilées et des jeunes filles en jeans délavés. Alors que l'armée turque masse ses troupes à la frontière nord du Kurdistan

irakien et menace d'intervenir militairement contre les séparatistes kurdes du PKK, que les voitures piégées explosent chaque semaine dans les villes voisines de Mossoul ou de Kirkouk dans un Irak en proie à la guerre civile, et que les forces spéciales américaines jouent au chat et à la souris avec les agents iraniens infiltrés au Kurdistan irakien, la troisième foire commerciale d'Erbil s'est tenue cette semaine presque comme si de rien n'était.

Les mesures de sécurité sont strictes à l'entrée du parc des expositions construit spécialement pour cette manifestation, mais l'atmosphère est presque celle d'un pays en paix. En comparaison avec le reste de l'Irak,

les provinces kurdes sont un îlot de calme dans une région en guerre. Erbil, avec son aéroport moderne relié par des lignes régulières avec les pays voisins, reste une porte d'accès relativement sûre au marché irakien pour des hommes d'affaires de tous horizons.

#### Boom économique

La région du Kurdistan d'Irak connaît depuis quelques années un spectaculaire boom économique, et la foire d'Erbil a remplacé celle qui se tenait auparavant à Bagdad. Le premier ministre du proto-État kurde, Nechirvan Barzani, a accueilli officiellement lundi environ 300 compagnies privées, originaires de 22 pays,

soulignant que le Kurdistan entendait entretenir les meilleures relations avec ses voisins, et notamment la Turquie.

Les sociétés occidentales restent toutefois peu nombreuses. Alcatel et le petit centre culturel français d'Erbil représentent presque à eux seuls la France dans cette curieuse manifestation. On croise par hasard l'ancien PDG d'Elf, Loïc Le Floch-Prigent, en délicatesse avec la justice française, ou d'anciens habitués des contrats juteux avec l'Irak de Saddam Hussein. Quelques sociétés autrichiennes sont aussi présentes.

Mais le gros des exposants, ce sont surtout des banques, des compagnies de travaux publics et

de télécommunications irakiennes, turques ou libanaises. « Erbil est devenue une sorte de capitale bis de l'Irak, explique un diplomate français, même si les sociétés irakiennes sont un peu considérées comme des exposants étrangers. » « L'essentiel des ressources du Kurdistan viennent des 17 % du budget irakien attribué aux trois provinces kurdes d'Irak, ce qui n'est

pas négligeable compte tenu de la flambée des cours du pétrole, poursuit le diplomate français, venu à Erbil pour l'occasion. À côté de ces ressources officielles, s'est bien sûr développée une économie grise, faite de trafics en tous genres. »

Le bâtiment est l'un des secteurs les plus florissants, nourri

par une forte demande de logements. Outre la diaspora kurde d'Europe, désireuse d'investir dans ce qui ressemble de plus en plus au premier État kurde de l'histoire, de nombreux Irakiens, principalement kurdes mais aussi arabes chrétiens ou musulmans, fuyant la violence, s'installent pour de bon dans le nord de l'Irak. Autour de l'ancienne citadelle

d'Erbil se dressent des forêts de grues. Plusieurs stands de la foire vantent les nouveaux lotissements qui se construisent autour de la ville. L'un des plus visités s'appelle « American Village », et propose, dans « un environnement amical et sûr », une curieuse version kurde d'une banlieue américaine.

ADRIEN JAULMES

LE FIGARO samedi 3 - dimanche 4 novembre 2007

# Ankara presse Washington à l'action contre le PKK

## MOYEN-ORIENT

En visite à Ankara, Condoleezza Rice a promis de redoubler d'efforts pour aider la Turquie à venir à bout du « terrorisme » kurde.

Istanbul

UN INTENSE chassé-croisé diplomatique a commencé hier pour tenter de convaincre la Turquie de ne pas mettre à exécution ses menaces d'intervention militaire en Irak. Alors que s'ouvre à Istanbul la conférence internationale sur la sécurité de l'Irak, qui réunira aujourd'hui les ministres des Affaires étrangères de la région, du G8 et des représentants du

Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, Condoleezza Rice, qui était hier à Ankara, a tenté de donner des gages de bonne volonté aux dirigeants turcs.

Prônant une « approche commune » au sujet du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), le secrétaire d'État américain a affirmé hier que les États-Unis étaient résolus à aider la Turquie à combattre les séparatistes kurdes retranchés dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak. « Nous avons un ennemi commun et nous avons besoin d'une approche commune », a-t-elle plaidé.

Pour montrer la bonne volonté de Washington, Condoleezza Rice s'est engagée à augmenter les renseignements fournis à la Turquie sur le PKK par le Pentagone. La

communication autour des opérations de reconnaissance aérienne à la frontière turco-irakienne effectuées ces derniers jours par l'aviation américaine s'inscrit dans cette démarche de coopération. Elle a aussi assuré que Washington accentuerait la pression sur le gouvernement du premier ministre irakien Nouri al-Maliki pour sévir contre le PKK.

Washington, qui craint qu'une incursion de la Turquie ne plonge dans l'instabilité une région d'Irak jusque-là relativement épargnée par la violence, avance à pas comptés. Le secrétaire d'État a souligné qu'il était « difficile d'éradiquer le terrorisme » et que le problème était « très complexe ». « Cela va demander de la persévérance, cela va exiger de l'engagement », a-t-elle dit.

## Des extraditions réclamées

À trois jours de la rencontre entre le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, et George Bush à la Maison-Blanche, Ankara réclame une implication d'envergure de son allié américain. « Nous

sommes à un point où le temps des paroles est révolu et celui des actions a commencé. Nous devons travailler sur des mesures et des méthodes qui produiront des résultats », a plaidé le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères, Ali Babacan, au cours d'une conférence de presse commune avec M<sup>me</sup> Rice. La Turquie exige notamment la fermeture des camps du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak et elle a transmis à Washington et à Bagdad une liste de cadres du mouvement dont elle réclame l'extradition. Une revendication qui semble difficile à satisfaire, d'autant que le fils de Massoud Barzani, le président du Kurdistan irakien, figure parmi les 153 noms.

Le secrétaire d'État américain devait aussi rencontrer, hier soir, le premier ministre irakien, Nouri al-Maliki. Elle a assuré que la question kurde serait au centre de leur entretien. Dans la presse turque, des éditorialistes estiment que les États-Unis cherchent, eux, à monnayer leur engagement contre le PKK en échange d'un soutien d'Ankara aux sanctions américaines imposées au régime iranien.

LAURE MARCHAND



Condoleezza Rice a déclaré que le PKK constituait aussi une menace contre les intérêts américains, tout en souhaitant trouver une issue diplomatique à la crise. Umit Bektas/Reuters

## Libération annoncée de huit soldats turcs

■ Le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) devrait libérer dans quelques jours les huit soldats turcs qu'il avait faits prisonniers le 21 octobre dernier lors d'une attaque dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a rapporté hier l'agence de presse Firat, proche du PKK.

Ces sources n'ont fourni de détail ni sur le lieu ni sur les circonstances de cette libération. Douze soldats turcs avaient été tués dans cet assaut qui a soulevé une vague d'indignation en Turquie et augmenté la probabilité d'une intervention militaire dans le nord de l'Irak.

## Turquie : intervention imminente au Kurdistan irakien ?

L'armée turque pilonne depuis plusieurs jours les rebelles kurdes du PKK à la frontière irakienne et une incursion au Kurdistan irakien semble imminente. Peut-on l'éviter et l'option militaire est-elle la solution au problème kurde ?

Le point.

Par Pauline Garaude - crédits photos@SIPA

Voilà quatre mois que l'armée turque menaçait de traquer coûte que coûte les rebelles kurdes séparatistes du PKK (le parti des travailleurs kurdes, inscrit sur la liste des organisations terroristes) sur son territoire. C'est chose faite ! Impatiente d'intervenir au Kurdistan irakien qu'elle juge comme l'arrière-base, la Turquie mène depuis quelques jours des opérations de ratissage dans le sud-est du pays.

Depuis lundi, des hélicoptères pilonnent des positions de rebelles dans les monts Cudi et Kato, dans la province de Sirnak à la frontière irakienne. Les combats ont encore fait 15 morts parmi les rebelles kurdes hier. Ce qui porte leur nombre à près de 80 depuis le 21 octobre : date à laquelle douze soldats ont été tués et huit autres faits prisonniers lors d'une embuscade du PKK. Une attaque qui a déclenché les représailles massives de l'armée turque.

La Turquie est sur le qui-vive et ses forces sont stationnées le long de la frontière irakienne : plus de 100 000 soldats y sont déjà, renforcés par l'arrivée d'un convoi de 18 camions militaires. Des chasseurs bombardiers et des hélicoptères de combat survolent en permanence la région.

L'intervention turque au Kurdistan irakien que tout le monde veut éviter est imminente.

C'est ce soir que se réunissent à Istanbul les protagonistes de la Conférence des pays voisins de l'Irak et les représentants des membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies. Alors que cette conférence régionale doit étudier les progrès réalisés dans la sécurisation des frontières de l'Irak, la menace d'une intervention turque au Kurdistan irakien va certainement dominer les discussions. Comment peut-on faire pour stabiliser un Irak menacé de déstabilisation à tout moment ?

Ankara menace de lancer une opération militaire d'envergure contre les bases du PKK au Kurdistan irakien (qu'elle accuse d'être une arrière-base) si le gouvernement irakien ne s'en charge pas. D'où les inquiétudes de Bagdad, dont le ministre des Affaires étrangères M. Zebari a déclaré : "La conférence d'Istanbul doit se concentrer sur la sécurité et la stabilité en Irak et ne pas se laisser distraire par la tension à la frontière entre l'Irak et la Turquie, et par les opérations terroris-

tes du PKK".

En marge de cette conférence, le Premier ministre turc Recip Erdogan va rencontrer la secrétaire d'Etat américaine Condoleezza Rice, avant sa rencontre cruciale avec le président Bush le 5 novembre.

Les Américains font tout pour dissuader la Turquie d'intervenir et de déstabiliser l'Irak. Mais l'administration Bush a besoin de la Turquie et de sa base aérienne d'Incirlik pour sa guerre en Irak et elle veut ménager son allié. Washington tente donc de calmer le jeu alors qu'Ankara attend un feu vert du président Bush le 5 novembre. Les Etats-Unis seraient déjà en train d'étudier un plan B pour leur base aérienne en cas d'intervention militaire.

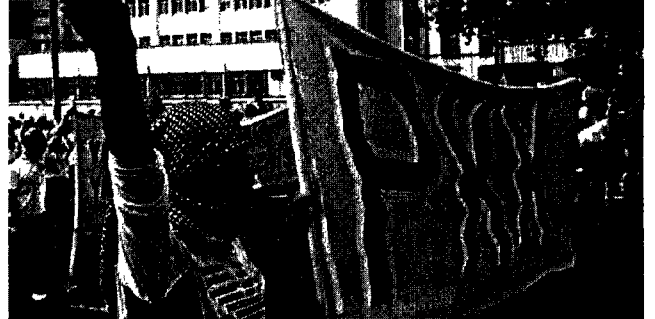
Ankara a réclamé aux Américains des mesures "urgentes" contre les rebelles kurdes basés dans le nord de l'Irak, avertissant que l'avenir de leurs relations en dépendait.

"Le terrorisme du PKK est un test de sincérité pour tous. Nous allons expliquer que ce test déterminera (...) l'avenir de nos relations futures", a averti M. Erdogan.

Le mois dernier, le Congrès voulait proposer une loi pour condamner Ankara et le génocide arménien. Cela avait envenimé les relations de la Turquie avec la Maison-Blanche.

Parce qu'une intervention au Kurdistan irakien – seule région à peu près stable d'Irak – mettrait de nouveau le pays à feu et à sang, tout le monde veut éviter le pire. Les pays voisins de l'Irak veulent favoriser la solution politique et diplomatique. Les Nations unies, le monde arabe... et Washington aussi. Pour Kendal Nezan, président de l'Institut kurde de Paris, « la Turquie va se faire des ennemis partout car une intervention sera synonyme d'un engrenage qui peut être catastrophique. »

Ankara risque à coup sûr l'isolement diplomatique (hormis peut-être l'Azerbaïdjan et la Syrie qui la soutiendront du bout des lèvres) et le repli na-



tionaliste. Ce qui suspendrait la poursuite de négociations sur l'adhésion à l'Union européenne.

« Il n'y a pas de solution militaire au problème du PKK. Cela dure depuis 1984 et il y a déjà eu 24 incursions militaires dans le Kurdistan irakien dont deux fois avec des opérations de grande envergure, en 1995 et en 1997... sans résultat. Nous, Kurdes, on ne veut pas que ça devienne une guerre de Cent Ans. Et pour l'éviter, il faut penser d'urgence à un règlement politique et diplomatique », estime Kendal Nezar de l'Institut kurde.

Pour lui, la source du problème est en Turquie. Pas en Irak. Alors quelle est la solution ? « Il faut préparer un terrain de paix en Turquie et régler deux points majeurs. D'abord une amnistie générale des maquisards pour qu'ils déposent leurs armes et de tous les militaires turcs impliqués dans des massacres, des déportations et destructions de villages... Cette amnistie est vitale pour tourner la page. Ensuite, il faut reconnaître l'identité kurde avec ses droits culturels et linguistiques. »

Enfin, cette région du sud-est de la Turquie, potentiellement riche, est ravagée économiquement. Kendal rappelle que depuis 84 ans que la République de Turquie existe, la région kurde est depuis 63 ans en état de guerre, de siège, d'état d'urgence... Que viendrait en effet ré-



soudre une énième intervention militaire ?

Il y a 18 millions de Kurdes en Turquie et pas une seule école ni un seul média en kurde – langue qui a été interdite jusqu'en 1991 ! Seul un programme de 45 minutes en langue kurde, qui vante le tourisme de la région, est diffusé une fois par semaine sur une chaîne nationale. Reconnaître l'identité kurde, c'est aussi leur donner le droit d'avoir des syndicats et des partis politiques. Ce manque de reconnaissance et ce déni total de l'identité kurde de la part d'Ankara a grandement favorisé le sentiment de frustration et d'humiliation des Kurdes. On comprend alors pourquoi beaucoup soutiennent ou rejoignent les rangs du PKK, « qui n'est que le produit d'une politique de négation radicale et extrême, pour ne pas dire extrémiste, du régime turc ».

Selon Ankara, il y aurait 5 000 combattants à l'intérieur de la Turquie, dans les terres jusqu'à 500 km de la frontière irakienne. Auxquels il faut ajouter 3 000 rebelles retranchés dans des camps aux frontières avec l'Irak et l'Iran (des régions montagneuses et escarpées qui facilitent les infiltrations et les passes d'armes).

Le Premier ministre Erdogan avait dit vouloir commencer par « nettoyer » les

camps à l'intérieur du pays avant de s'aventurer sur l'Irak. Un scénario plausible qui fait qu'une bonne partie de l'électorat avait revoté pour son parti, l'AKP, en juillet dernier. Aujourd'hui, il prône l'inverse et veut s'attaquer à ce qu'il juge comme l'arrière-base : le Kurdistan irakien.

Le PKK est une organisation terroriste. Kendal nous dit comment le mouvement est organisé. « En Turquie, les Kurdes n'ont pas le droit légalement d'avoir leurs partis ou leurs associations. Ils jouent avec cela et créent des groupements et des réseaux de même mouvance sous des noms divers. Comme ils sont interdits par la Cour constitutionnelle, on envoie les dirigeants en prison. Alors d'autres créent un autre parti qui dure entre deux et trois ans. Jusqu'à la prochaine arrestation. Et on recommence... C'est vraiment une guérilla juridique et politique. »

Pour Ankara, l'unité nationale de la Turquie est menacée par le fait que le Kurdistan irakien est devenu une entité fédérée au sein de l'Irak et que doit bientôt avoir lieu un référendum sur le ratta-



chement de ce territoire à un Kurdistan autonome. Cela pourrait donc donner l'exemple aux 18 millions de Kurdes turcs et c'est ce que veut absolument empêcher Erdogan. « C'est un péril pour leur unité nationale », précise Kendal Nezar. Qui ajoute que l'armée, gardienne de la laïcité, est également gardienne de cette unité nationale et que son chef veut au plus vite intervenir en Irak.

Les Turcs sont attachés à cette unité nationale et ce n'est pas un hasard si on assiste depuis quelques jours à un regain de nationalisme et à des manifestations un peu partout en Turquie. Mais pour Kendal, « c'est une utilisation du filon patriotique qui est en réalité militariste et ultranationaliste ».

## LE DEVOIR

## Musculation turque

01 novembre 2007 SERGE TRUFFAUT

Aux mesures militaires décidées il y a 15 jours à peine afin d'étouffer l'activisme des Kurdes turcs repliés en Irak, le gouvernement turc vient d'en greffer quelques autres. La nature de celles-ci? Économique et diplomatique. Annoncées au terme d'un conseil ministériel anormalement long – plus de sept heures –, ces mesures mettent tout d'abord en lumière un changement ou plutôt une musculation prononcée de la contre-offensive menée par Ankara.

Sur le plan économique et selon le souhait manifesté la semaine dernière par le Conseil national de sécurité, on envisage l'imposition à court terme d'un embargo sur les exportations et les importations avec les trois provinces kurdes d'Irak. Si le gouvernement turc passe aux actes, s'il

ferme le seul poste-frontière en fonction, alors il est écrit dans le ciel que, sur ce front, les Kurdes vont subir des ravages. Il faut savoir que l'essentiel de l'économie du Kurdistan irakien repose sur ses relations avec la Turquie.

En ce qui concerne maintenant la diplomatie, le moins qu'on puisse dire, c'est qu'Ankara a adopté une attitude passablement butée. En effet, à la suite des menaces formulées par le premier ministre turc – on pense à celles visant tout particulièrement l'Irak –, le gouvernement de ce dernier pays avait opté pour une certaine bonne volonté. Pour faire court, il formule une série de mesures qu'il va présenter à Ankara.

Une fois sur place, les dirigeants turcs font savoir qu'il y a un préalable à toute négociation. Lequel? Le premier mi-

nistre turc Recep Erdogan exige que Bagdad lui livre les 150 principaux leaders du mouvement nationaliste kurde. Autrement dit, Erdogan demande à Nouri al-Maliki qu'il s'engage dans une guerre avec le Kurdistan irakien. On exagère à peine. Quoi d'autre? Il faut rappeler et souligner qu'Ankara refuse encore et toujours de reconnaître le gouvernement des provinces autonomes kurdes enclavées en Irak.

La posture quelque peu frondeuse d'Erdogan a eu pour conséquence un énième resserrement des liens entre Bagdad et Téhéran. Après discussion entre les deux capitales, le président iranien Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a renvoyé chez lui le chef de la diplomatie turque les mains vides. De quoi s'agit-il? L'Iranien n'a pas donné sa caution à l'opération

militaire turque en territoire irakien.

Cette musculation des rapports de force, Ankara l'a également manifestée à l'endroit des États-Unis. Erdogan a réitéré sa requête demandant aux militaires américains en Irak d'aller dans le nord du pays afin de nettoyer les caches ou les camps administrés par les Kurdes turcs. Autrement dit (bis), Ankara voudrait que Washington s'aliène un de ses piliers les plus fermes dans le cadre de sa politique au Moyen-Orient.

À moins qu'Erdogan n'opte pour une réduction du ton employé ces derniers jours, la fébrilité qu'il manifeste pour un recours avant tout militaire annonce un autre conflit à l'horizon.

Herald <sup>INTERNATIONAL</sup> Tribune  
November 1, 2007

# Iraq fears border crises overtaking agenda

By Alissa J. Rubin

**BAGHDAD:** Tensions in northern Iraq between Kurdish guerrillas and neighboring countries are threatening to dominate Iraq's diplomatic agenda, taking attention away from some of the country's most pressing needs, Iraqi officials indicated Wednesday.

Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki met with Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki of Iran and asked him to intervene on Iraq's behalf at the meeting of Iraq's neighbors that starts Thursday in Istanbul.

"The prime minister asked the Islamic republic to present their full support to Iraq during the Istanbul meeting and also to participate in solving the border crises between Turkey and the PKK," Maliki's office said in a statement, using the abbreviation for the Kurdistan Workers' Party, a rebel group.

The PKK is using the mountainous Kurdistan region in northern Iraq as a staging point for raids on Turkish troops just over the border. The group, which has activists among Turkey's Kurdish minority as well as in Iraq, has fought in the past for a separate Kurdish state in Turkey but now appears focused on rights for ethnic Kurds living there.

At a news conference Wednesday, Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari of Iraq said he had discussed the situation in Kurdistan with his Iranian counterpart and had warned Iran "of the serious consequences" if there were to be a major military incursion by Turkey into Iraq. "It will have consequences for the entire region," he said.

Zebari also pointed out that Iraq has many other problems with which it needs help from neighboring countries. "The Istanbul meeting should not be hijacked by the PKK terrorist activities in Turkey," he said.

Nonetheless, it seemed likely that the worry over how to deal with the Kurdish rebels would be a major concern for many of the players. There are Kurdish minorities in Turkey, Iran and Syria, all of whom will be at the meeting, and the United States, which has close relations with both the Iraqi Kurds and Turkey, is eager not to antagonize either one.

Iraqi diplomats say they are worried that after Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey meets with President George W. Bush on Monday that Turkey may take action against the Kurdish guerrillas, a step that could antagonize the Iraqi Kurds. "They are under a lot of pressure from the public, so we think they will do something; we

hope they will not," a senior Iraqi official said.

Iran has been sympathetic to Turkey because it has suffered from raids by Kurds from Iran who have taken refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan and are attacking from there.

In an effort to head off a crisis, the United States is helping Turkey gain intelligence on PKK positions in Iraq, a Pentagon spokesman said Wednesday. "The key for any sort of any military response, by the Turks or anybody else, is actionable intelligence," said Geoff Morrell, a Pentagon press secretary. "We are making efforts to help them get actionable intelligence."

Erdogan specifically asked the United States to help the Turks take "concrete steps" to reduce the PKK threat.

Although Kurdistan is part of Iraq, the central government has little control over its policies. The Kurdish government functions as a semi-autonomous state with its own military force that is only nominally under the control of the Iraqi Defense Ministry. That means that for Iraq to oust the Kurdish guerrillas, they would have to have the support of the Kurdish Regional Government. Traditionally, Kurds have been reluctant to take on fellow Kurds.



Darko Bandic/The Associated Press

Soldiers on patrol in Sirnak Province, southeastern Turkey, on Wednesday. The United States is helping Turkey gain intelligence on PKK positions across the border in Iraq.

## Kurdish soldiers in northern Iraq face loyalty test

Some wonder if the warriors called to duty are fighting for their country or for Kurds

By Christine Spolar Tribune foreign correspondent ROVIA, Iraq

The Kurdish term pesh merga -- "those who face death" -- once telegraphed all one needed to know about the fighters born in the shadows of the Kandil Mountains.

The Kurds of Iraq fought against Saddam Hussein for decades, gunning for his ultimate downfall. Their grit was legendary, but, in a new democratic Iraq, their horizons had to change. The heroes of Kurdish history could live on in name -- but only as the tough pesh merga within an armed, uniformed Iraqi military.

This week, the soldiers of northern Iraq, the most disciplined of this country's army, are facing a loyalty test of sorts: They have been called to duty in droves -- every unit on full alert -- to prepare for a possible fight of enormous significance for Iraq and a region made up of countries with Kurdish minorities. Turkey has threatened to invade Iraq over a deadly running battle with rebel Kurds known as the PKK who agitate for broader Kurdish rights in Turkey. That prospect makes for emotional debate about the mission -- and its targets -- that lies before Iraq's Kurdish troops.

Are the pesh merga fighting for Iraq or for Kurds? Can they really be expected to battle Kurds who hunger for the same rights they have? Are Turkish warplanes buzzing the border to hit the PKK, or are they aiming, as top Kurdish leaders have speculated, at the Kurdish-run regional government in Iraq -- the Kurds' first-ever democracy -- and therefore posing a threat to Iraq's future.

"PKK is fighting for their rights and their land," said Hasip Adil, the mayor of Rojava who described himself as a provocateur for Kurdish rights during the years of Hussein. "Both of us are Kurdish people, and we need to cooperate. We know they hurt, we know they feel sorrow, but how can this go on?"

"Adil is a former pesh merga, and at age 35, an elected elder in Rojava, a blink of a highway town where boys have always grown up to be pesh merga. There is a strong sense of nationalism here and in a string of neighboring villages that stretch from the Turkish border -- but their pride is rooted in Kurdish primacy. Iraq has served as a launchpad for the Kurds. From Irbil north, they are in charge. A population of 5 million to 6 million, they live in a place with a legitimate Kurdish regional government and where Kurdish language and culture are respected, Kurdish flags fly, Kurdish history is taught and Kurdish businesses can thrive.

### Key to stability

But they also are bound to wave the Iraqi flag and they know that Iraq's sovereignty is key to stability -- even if hard bargains still lie ahead. The Kurds have staked a potentially explosive claim to the city of Kirkuk, an oil-rich town, as part of their ancestral land. That debate still flares but, for now, the border risks are paramount.

Kurds are openly debating the likelihood of a cross-border attack, this time by an ally of the United States. Rojava, population 1,050, has already sent dozens of men to the hills just in case.

"Every village is contributing," Adil said. "People are worried that this will start small and quickly spread. It could get very bad, very quickly." It is difficult for some families to sort through what makes for legitimate Kurd demands. One man said he had cousins fighting for both Iraq and rebel Kurdish units. Another man, Mehmet Suleiman, said camps of PKK supporters, also known as the Kurdistan Workers' Party, were helping the rebels and there was a Kurdish responsibility to recognize their demand for equal rights in Turkey.

"The PKK has the right to do this," Suleiman said. "Turkey is only targeting Kurdish existence -- and this democracy too. PKK is only Turkey's excuse." Regional President Massoud Barzani raised the same complaint, that PKK was a convenient excuse for Turkey, in an interview with Al-Arabiya television. "The main aim is to prevent the Kurdish regional development," he said last week about Turkish threats for incursions and economic embargoes.

Barzani, a former pesh merga leader and head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, is a familiar figure to Turkish Kurds and has in the past few years established a political presence in the southeastern city of Diyarbakir. Barzani's cross-border dealings -- in what some see as a bid to be a Kurdish regional leader -- have been eyed suspiciously by Ankara. National media outlets, based in Istanbul, are particularly tough on Barzani. In the past few weeks, the media have persistently derided a claim by Barzani and other Kurdish officials that they can't control the PKK.

It is widely known that official contact with the PKK is being made, by phone, in Irbil, Iraq's Kurdish government center. Throughout the week, reporters have been trooping in and out of PKK encampments in Iraq. The U.S. govern-

ment, a longtime ally of the Kurds from the days of Hussein, has made public its demands for Kurdish authorities to cut off convenient supply lines for the rebels. As rebels and soldiers skirmish across the border, the Turkish public has turned out in anger, protesting the rebels -- and Iraq's highest-profile Kurds for protecting them. Nationalism has spiraled in Turkey in the course of their outrage: Five million flags and banners were sold in five days, according to news reports.

Barzani's face is one of those hoisted on placards. On Turkish Web sites and television talk shows, he is regularly derided as a "traitor-terrorist." One columnist in the national daily Hurriyet went so far as to call for his "elimination." Barzani, in an interview published Monday in Milliyet, another daily, protested that no one should be calling for violence toward him -- or for violence to jump the mountains between Iraq and Turkey.

"Several times, I have said that PKK should disarm," said Barzani, who has also rebuffed questions about how the PKK is able to exist at all. "The time of weapons and violence has passed.

### Questions about reports

But one Turkish major, who has pursued missions along the border in the past and requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak about the current crisis, said media reports about the extent of the fighting by Turkish troops in border regions have been sensationalized. It is impossible to know how far troops are pursuing PKK because of military restrictions.

But the pace of the pursuit could change at the end of this week when U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice joins foreign ministers for a meeting of Iraq's neighbors in Istanbul, and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan travels Nov. 5 to meet with President Bush to urge more U.S. and Kurdish efforts to control the PKK. Then, the Turkish officer said, the Turkish military could be ordered into broader battles in the cliffs of Kandil, and distinguishing between Kurdish fighters will be difficult.

"They wear similar uniforms," he said of the Kurdish army and the PKK. "We think they help each other on those mountains -- they go back and forth. There is supposed to be a difference but, in fact, there isn't." At least that's what it looks like to us.

## Iraq plans to set up checkpoints on Turkey border

FINANCIAL TIMES

By Steve Negus, Iraq Correspondent November 1 2007

Iraq's foreign minister said his country would reinforce its border with Turkey to prevent Kurdish rebels from receiving supplies, in one of the first concrete proposals made by Baghdad aimed at forestalling a Turkish military incursion.

Hoshyar Zebari, who is himself Kurdish, said yesterday his government would set up checkpoints along the border with Turkey to prevent

food, fuel and supplies from reaching the Kurdistan Workers party, or PKK, which has recently staged a number of deadly attacks on the Turkish military.

Turkey's parliament voted earlier in October to authorise armed incursions against PKK bases inside territory controlled by northern Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which Washing-

ton fears could destabilise the only large secure part of the country.

Turkey has launched airstrikes against alleged PKK targets but has held off from a large ground incursion, which could bring it into conflict with the KRG's peshmerga security forces.

The PKK maintains several enclaves inside Iraq, including some lightly

garrisoned mountain ranges near the Turkish border and a much larger base relatively far from Turkish territory, near Mount Qandil along the border with Iran.

An embargo that cut off the PKK's cross-border supply routes, but did not end its presence within northern Iraq, might not satisfy Ankara's demands. The KRG says it has no love for the PKK, but does not want to incur

losses clawing them out of their strongholds.

KRG officials have previously called for a political solution that would address concerns about Turkey's treatment of its Kurdish minority, and

suggested an amnesty for PKK rebels.

Both the PKK and the KRG have in the past denied Turkish claims that the rebels use Iraqi territory for cross-border attacks.

Mr Zebari spoke in advance of a conference in Istanbul on Saturday bringing together Iraq and its neighbours. Iraq does not want the PKK issue to dominate talks but says the focus should be on security, refugee and energy issues.

\*Turkey should show restraint over Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq so as not to make the situation worse but its security concerns are understandable, a Kremlin spokesman said yesterday, Reuters reports from Moscow

**TIME**

## Crocker to Turkey: Stay Out of Iraq

Nov. 01, 2007

By Scott MacLeod/Doha

**U.S.** ambassador in Baghdad Ryan Crocker is urging Turkey to demonstrate "strategic patience" over recent attacks by Kurdish fighters inside Iraq, warning that a cross-border Turkish military strike is exactly what the PKK rebels are trying to provoke. Such an action, he told TIME in an interview on the eve of Friday's meeting in Turkey between Iraq and its neighbors, would be "highly destabilizing" in Iraq, and would not necessarily achieve the results desired by Turkey.

Crocker also cited progress in reconciling Iraq's Sunni and Shi'ite communities during the two months since he and General David Petraeus reported to Congress. Despite recent Bush Administration saber-rattling on Iran, Crocker also said that he expects to hold another round of talks with Iranian officials about mutual concerns in Iraq. He credits the U.S. troop surge for some of the success in driving Osama bin Laden's followers from Anbar province, but admits, "al-Qaeda is not defeated."

**TIME: What are the latest changes you see in Iraq?**

**Crocker:** The change in Anbar is the most dramatic. Levels of violence in Anbar are down to just about nothing. Fallujah and Ramadi, which became — like Beirut in the early '80s — synonyms for unchecked violence and terror, are two of the quietest cities in Iraq right now. The Anbaris stood up against al-Qaeda. That was occasioned, of course, in large part by al-Qaeda's own excesses — they provoked a counterreaction. But I'm not sure that would have happened, or would have had the effect it did, if it hadn't been for the surge. The tribes knew that they weren't going to be alone in this.

**TIME: Anything else?**

**Crocker:** That phenomenon; al-Qaeda excesses elsewhere; people just being tired of years of violence, wanting something better; the surge — it all started to multiply, through Baghdad, Diyala, the whole area around Baghdad, and it happened quick. I came in March, these kinds of things we're seeing now you couldn't even imagine then. This doesn't mean it's success. It's not. I wouldn't say we've turned a corner. There are huge challenges out there. Al-Qaeda is not defeated. But it really is different now.

**TIME: What about political progress?**

**Crocker:** The Iraqi government moved pretty quickly to try and take advantage of this change and consolidate it. There are now about 25,000 young Sunnis in Anbar who

are wearing the uniforms of the Iraqi police and getting their salary from the Ministry of Interior in Baghdad to keep the peace in Anbar province. You have some political movement you just didn't see before. The Sunni vice president went down to Najaf in October and called on Ayatollah Sistani. Ammar al-Hakim, the heir apparent to Abdulaziz [al-Hakim, leader of the largest Shi'ite party in the government], went out to Ramadi to visit the [Sunni] sheikhs of Anbar. The sheikhs of Kerbala and Anbar have had two big meetings together, Shia and Sunni, and the two governors are coordinating on security arrangements for the Haj [the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca]. There is a new dynamic going on. The dynamic has become clearer. We were seeing the beginning of this before the testimony [to Congress] and referred to it, but it has become considerably more pronounced since then.

**TIME: Yet, the Iraqi government still hasn't moved on key U.S. benchmarks, like de-Ba'athification reform.**

**Crocker:** What we are seeing is national reconciliation, not through national legislation, but through actual reconciliation. There is a lot of dysfunction in the Iraqi government. There is no question about it. You see it as they grapple with these major pieces of legislation. They need to show they can do a better, more focused job on this.

**TIME: How do you see Iran and the Shi'ite issue now?**

**Crocker:** You have Iranian influence, which is extremely negative. But even there, you see among the Shi'ites a reflection of what you see among the Sunnis. It is not as dramatic, but it's there.

**TIME: How do you read the situation in northern Iraq with the Turkish threats?**

**Crocker:** The north, clearly a problem. The PKK found ungoverned space, and they are using it to carry out a terror campaign against Turkey. It is not a sustainable situation. Something is going to have to give here. We think it's very important that something comes through efforts by the Iraqis and others as appropriate to find ways to shut them down and eventually get them out, not through Turkish military strikes.

**TIME: What do you tell Turkey about how you will handle it?**

**Crocker:** It's the Iraqis who are going to handle it. They are talking about steps to try to interdict the flow of goods and people into



and out of that area. Heightened security at airports to ensure they are not flying in from Europe, going through the airport and going into the mountains. Arresting them where they can be found. Tightening down with a view to disrupting their ability to organize up there.

**TIME: Does that address Turkey's concerns?**

**Crocker:** What we tell the Turks is, look, we understand your outrage. We share it. But you also have to think about consequences. If you are thinking about a military action, will it work? Will it achieve your end result? And what about unintended consequences? I think the PKK is trying to trigger a Turkish military action. That's why they are doing this. Why? So that the Turks will do something that will really inflame Kurdish opinion in eastern Turkey. And give them what they lost in '99, which is an environment where they can resume a presence and operations inside Turkey. That's what they want. That's obviously what the Turks would presumably have an interest in not giving them. Again, it's going to take some strategic patience.

**TIME: What are the unintended consequences for the U.S. and Iraq?**

**Crocker:** It could be highly destabilizing in Iraq as well. I can't go off into wild hypotheticals. It would depend on what they did. But you are talking about a large-scale military operation. Large-scale military operations have consequences.

**TIME: Are you going to talk to Iran again?**

**Crocker:** I expect we will have another round. I can't say when. I'm certainly open to do it.

**TIME: What's holding it up?**

**Crocker:** It comes at the initiative of the Iraqis. I told them I'd be prepared to sit down. They'll tell me when.

**TIME: Is Iran resisting?**

**Crocker:** I really don't know.

The Washington Times

## U.S. provides 'actionable intelligence' on PKK

November 01, 2007 From combined dispatches.

The United States has given Turkey's armed forces "actionable intelligence" on rebels from the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, based in northern Iraq, information that could be used to guide a military strike, the Pentagon said yesterday.

"We are assisting the Turks in their efforts to combat the PKK by supplying them with intelligence, lots of intelligence," Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell told reporters.

The Pentagon released the statement after Turkish officials reacted angrily to comments by a U.S. commander in northern Iraq late last week that U.S. forces were doing "absolutely nothing" to curtail PKK suspects operating from bases in Iraq's largely Kurdish north.

But with Ankara threatening a military incursion into Iraq to deal with the PKK, the Defense Department acknowledged yesterday that the U.S. military has stepped up its own anti-PKK activity, including flying manned spy planes over the border area and ordering American troops to capture any rebels they find.

U.S. and Iraqi officials have worked hard to head off a Turkish incursion, but Mr. Morrell said the information being given to Turkish planners could be the precursor to military action.

"The key for any sort of military response from the Turks or anyone else is having actionable intelligence. That's a pretty high standard and we are making efforts to help them get actionable intelligence," Mr. Morrell said.

The problem of the PKK, which the U.S. government officially has designated a terrorist organization, is one of the most delicate facing the Bush administration. Turkey, a key NATO ally, has complained repeatedly about PKK strikes from bases in northern Iraq and has massed about 10,000 troops on the border. Turkish helicopters have struck at PKK sites inside Turkey, and Ankara has said it is prepared to hit targets across the border if diplomatic efforts fail to bear fruit.

But Iraq's Kurdish region is the most prosperous, stable and pro-American

section of the country. A Turkish invasion is seen as greatly destabilizing an already difficult security situation in the country.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice travels to Ankara this weekend and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan meets with President Bush next week in Washington in a bid to repair frayed bilateral relations.

Nursuna Memecan, a member of the Turkish parliament from Mr. Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), said popular frustration in Turkey over the lack of action against PKK bases in Iraq has soared in recent months.

"All these journalists seem to have no trouble finding and interviewing the PKK leaders at their bases in Iraq, and yet the U.S. and Iraqi officials say they can't find them. People in Turkey don't understand," Mrs. Memecan said in an interview with editors and reporters at The Washington Times.

Mrs. Memecan, a deputy to Mr. Erdogan's chief foreign policy adviser, said Turkey's government at a minimum

wants PKK camps in northern Iraq shut down and rebel leaders either arrested or forced to leave the country.

"People in Turkey are sick and tired of the PKK issue," she added.

Iraqi officials announced yesterday that they will be setting up more checkpoints along the country's border with Turkey to block food, fuel and supplies destined for PKK forces.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, a Kurd, pledged to cooperate with Turkey but warned, during a meeting with visiting Iranian counterpart Manouchehr Mottaki, that a Turkish strike inside Iraq "would have serious consequences for the entire region."

Separately, the Turkish Cabinet announced new economic and diplomatic sanctions against PKK rebels and "their associates," which could affect officials of the autonomous Kurdish administration in northern Iraq.

Bloomberg  
PRESS

November 01, 2007

## Kurds in Turkey Who Backed Erdogan Now Fear Civil War

By Ayla Jean Yackley (Bloomberg)

Kurds in southeast Turkey voted this summer in record numbers for Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his promise to bring peace to their region. Now, with Turkish troops massed for a possible invasion of Iraq, the talk is of curtailed political rights and ethnic strife.

Erdogan is threatening a full-scale military operation in northern Iraq to root out guerrillas from the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, after almost 50 soldiers and civilians were killed last month. Such a move would exacerbate tensions between Turks and the estimated 15 million ethnic Kurds in Turkey, who represent 20 percent of the country's population.

"The rising tide of nationalism feels directed at Kurds, and people here fear a civil war," said Fahri Timur, 33, head of the Human Rights Association in the Kurdish town of Hakkari. "This government has improved the situation for Kurds, but we can't expect respect for human rights in the middle of a war."

On Oct. 17, parliament approved a military incursion into Iraq. Since then, there have been at least 17 attacks on pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party offices, including arson and crowds smashing windows, said the party, which has 20 lawmakers in parliament.

The U.S. opposes an invasion by Turkey, its only Muslim ally in the North Atlantic

Treaty Organization, because such a move might further destabilize Iraq. Erdogan, 53, is scheduled to meet with President George W. Bush in Washington Nov. 5. Turkey's top general, Yasar Buyukanit, has said the army will wait for that meeting before starting any major operation.

Deployed on the Border

The province of Hakkari, which has the same name as its capital and shares borders with Iraq and Iran, was the site of an Oct. 21 clash with the PKK that killed 32 rebels and 12 soldiers. The Turkish army has deployed 80,000 troops on the border and last week shelled areas inside northern Iraq.

Security has tightened around the town of Hakkari, surrounded by mountains some 2,000 meters (6,500 feet) high and accessible by only one road. Guards now check travelers for identification, and Kurds armed by the government to fight the PKK perch on small ridges above the road, which snakes along the Zapsu River.

Timur said the conditions are reminiscent of the period from 1987 to 2002 when Hakkari and other, mostly Kurdish, southeastern Turkish provinces were under martial law.

Rebellion

Kurds first revolted in the 1920s following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The newly formed Turkish republic crushed the

rebellion. The next major uprising came in 1984, when the then-Maoist PKK took up arms against Turkey's government. Fighting was reduced to sporadic clashes after Turkish commandos captured PKK head Abdullah Ocalan in 1999 and forced most of the rebels to retreat to the mountains of northern Iraq.

The death toll in the first half of this year is 225, compared with 294 in all of 2006, according to the Human Rights Association.

"People are jumpy, worried it's a return to dark days," said Hakkari Deputy Mayor Ismail Akboga. "There was a collective sigh of relief as the worst of the conflict appeared behind us. Advances will be lost if there's a war."

Akboga, a member of the Democratic Society Party, says the lives of Turkey's Kurds have improved, partly because of government efforts to comply with European Union membership criteria. A prosecutor is investigating Democratic Society after members declared Ocalan "leader of the Kurdish people" at a weekend congress, Sabah newspaper said today.

Turkey blames Ocalan, serving a life sentence in prison, for the deaths of the 40,000 people, who are mainly Kurds, who have died in the fight with the PKK since the mid-1980s.

Political Solution

Since taking power in 2002, Erdogan's Justice and Development Party has lifted bans on Kurdish-language broadcasting and education and called for a political solution to end the PKK insurrection. Almost half the voters in the southeast backed the party in the July elections, helping Erdogan capture 341 seats in the 550-member parliament.

"People voted for Justice because they believed it has the power to solve the Kurdish problem," said Akboga, 33. "Now the fear of bombs has eroded that hope."

Increased government aid to the region for health care, basic services and education also drew Kurdish support, said Ahmet Sen, head of Hakkari's chamber of commerce. Hakkari's annual per-capita

income is \$1,000, less than a fifth of the national average, and unemployment is about 60 percent, he said.

Any Turkish military operation "shouldn't affect the livelihoods" of people on either side of the border, Foreign Minister Ali Babacan told reporters in Ankara today.

#### Economic Mainstays

The conflict with the PKK has nearly wiped out the former economic mainstays of agriculture and animal husbandry as thousands of Kurds have fled fighting near their villages for the town, where the population more than doubled in the 1990s to 70,000 now.

Hakkari province's sole border crossing to Iraq has been shut for two decades, Sen said. Erdogan last week threatened trade

restrictions to force Iraqi Kurds who run the semi-autonomous area there to crack down on the PKK.

Ali Ozdemir, 42, works for a Turkish construction company in northern Iraq and hasn't returned to his job because he fears an all-out war. He estimated 4,000 Turkish nationals work in Iraq's north, where Kurds have family and linguistic ties.

"These borders don't mean much to us, and an attack on north Iraq is an attack on our brothers," said Ozdemir, who voted for Erdogan in the last election. "Justice won with the hope to end this conflict. A war will extinguish our optimism."



November 01, 2007

## Why Turks no longer love the U.S.

US Secretary Rice arrives Friday to defuse tensions over Kurdish rebels in Iraq.

By Yiqal Schleifer | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

**I**stanbul, Turkey The US hailed Turkey as moderate Islamic democracy, the kind it would like to see develop elsewhere. It's a key NATO ally, with US aircraft stationed here.

Yet, as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice arrives in Ankara Friday to defuse tensions over Kurdish rebels operating in Iraq, she faces a nation that is now the most anti-American in the world, according to one survey. In the meetings with Ms. Rice, and next Monday in Washington with President Bush, Turkey's prime minister is expected to press the US to take steps against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) rebels in Iraq.

That might help soften attitudes here toward the US. But given the depth of anti-American feeling that has developed in just the past few years, few expect Turkish public opinion to turn quickly.

In a recent global survey by the Pew Research Center, only 9 percent of Turks held a favorable view of the United States (down from 52 percent in 2000), a figure that placed Turkey at the rock bottom of the 46 countries surveyed.

"People have become accustomed to this plot line of America being a threat to Turkish national security. This was inconceivable five years ago, but now it has come to be the prevailing view," says Ihsan Dagi, a professor of international relations at Ankara's Middle East Technical University.

That perception has been reinforced in the past two years by some of Turkey's most popular books and films which portray the US and Turkey at odds - if not at war. Turkey's all-time box office champ, 2006's "Valley of the Wolves," saw a ragtag

Turkish force square off heroically against a whole division of bloodthirsty American soldiers in northern Iraq.

"Metal Storm," a bestselling political fantasy book from the year before, went even further, describing an all out war between Ankara and Washington in the not so distant future (the year 2007, to be exact), in which Turkey ultimately prevails with the help of Russia and the European Union.

Analysts say the public's mood represents a trend that has worrying implications for the future health of the ties between the two NATO allies.

"The public is really convinced that the United States is no longer a friend and ally. That is really frustrating," says Professor Dagi.

Real life events have also done little to improve America's image in Turkey. The recent passage by a US congressional committee of a resolution recognizing the mass killing of Armenians in the final days of the Ottoman Empire as a genocide - something Turkey strongly rejects - set public opinion aflame.

At the same time, the renewed attacks on Turkish forces by PKK guerrillas have only strengthened the widespread belief that Washington is doing little to get rid of the PKK in northern Iraq. Ankara has been building up its troops on the Iraqi border and threatening an invasion, something Washington strongly opposes.

"The clearest fact is that the real threats against Turkey come not from its neighbors, but from its 'allies' and each new development brings Turkey face to face with its Western allies," Ali Bulac, a columnist for the liberal-Islamic Zaman newspaper, recently

wrote. "The United States ... is taking its place on the stage as the force behind the PKK."

Says Gunduz Aktan, a former Turkish ambassador who is currently a parliamentarian with the right-wing Nationalist Action Party (MHP): "The entire Turkish public opinion now is one of frustration and exasperation and a kind of acute expectation of the US to do something meaningful and concrete [on the PKK issue] and to understand the problem that we have in Turkey."

But experts say Turkey's growing anti-Americanism also has a domestic element. The success of the Islamic-rooted ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has forced Turkey to confront the issue of how to reconcile secularism with Islam, while the renewal of PKK violence has again brought to the surface the decades-long struggle to square a strong national Turkish identity with the country's diverse ethnic identities.

"Turkey is caught right now between East and West, between Islam and secularism, between Kurdish and Turkish nationalism," says Omer Taspinar, director of the Turkey program at the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank. "Since the cold war ended, we are living in an era where all the problems that defined the Turkish Republic in the early years are back, and Turkey is blaming the West for this."

The Rice visit and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's trip to the White House on Nov. 5 are part of an effort to stave off any further deterioration in US-Turkish relations. "I will openly tell him [President George Bush] that we expect concrete, immediate steps against the

terrorists," Mr. Erdogan recently told parliamentarians from his party. "The problem of the PKK terrorist organization is a test of sincerity for everybody," he said. "This test carries great importance for the region and in determining the fate of our future relations."

Observers inside and outside Turkey say Ankara could play a role in easing regional tensions by dropping its objections to speaking directly with the Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq and its leader, Massoud Barzani.

But METU's Dagi says that without American action on the PKK front, there is little Ankara can do to defuse the public's growing dislike of the US.

"The government has somehow been taken hostage by this public mood," he says. "The first thing is to deal with this mood, and in that America has to contribute something."

#### Most Anti-American Nations

Percentage surveyed with an unfavorable view of the US

1. Turkey - 83 percent
2. Pakistan - 68
3. Morocco - 56
4. Argentina - 72
5. Jordan - 78
6. Egypt - 78
7. Malaysia - 69
8. Indonesia - 66
9. Germany - 66
10. Spain - 60

Source: June 2007 Pew Global Attitudes Project (Pewglobal.org)

## THE ROVING EYE

# Double-crossing in Kurdistan

By Pepe Escobar

Two double-crossing scenarios will inevitably take place. Washington simply cannot have its kebab and eat it too.

The Bush administration's double standards are as glaring as meteor impacts. When, in the summer of 2006, Israel used the capture of two of its soldiers by Hezbollah to unleash a pre-programmed devastating war on Lebanon, destroying great swathes of the country, the Bush administration immediately gave the Israelis the green light. When 12 Turkish soldiers are killed and eight captured by PKK guerrillas based in Iraqi Kurdistan, the Bush administration urges Ankara to take it easy.

The "war on terror" is definitely not an equal-opportunity business. That has prompted Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek to mischievously remark, regarding Turkey, "It's as if an intruder has gate-crashed the closed circle of 'we', the domain of those who hold the de facto monopoly on military humanitarianism."

The US and Israeli establishment regards Hezbollah as a group of evil super-terrorists. But the PKK consists of just "minor" terrorists, and very useful ones at that, since the US Central Intelligence Agency is covertly financing and arming the PJAK (Party for Free Life in Kurdistan), the Iranian arm of the PKK, whose mission is to "liberate" parts of northwest Iran.

Not accidentally, the new PKK overdrive coincides with US - and also Israeli - covert support for the PJAK. Israel has not only invested a lot in scores of business ventures in Iraqi Kurdistan, it has also extensively trained Kurdish *peshmerga* special commandos, who could easily share their knowledge with their PKK cousins.

The new PKK offensive coincides with a PKK flush with new mortars, anti-tank weapons, rocket-propelled grenades and even anti-aircraft missiles. And most of all, the PKK drive coincides with the mysteriously vanished scores of light weapons the Pentagon sent to Iraq with no serial numbers to identify 97% of them.

The person responsible for this still unsolved mystery is none other than the counterinsurgency messiah and top commander in Iraq, General David Petraeus. The suspicion that the Pentagon never wanted these weapons to be traced in the first place cannot be easily dismissed. Either that or the PKK has been very active lately in the black market for light weapons.

### The Turkish-Israeli plan

US corporate media totally ignore the US/Israeli coddling of the PJAK - and by extension the PKK. The larger context is lost. No one bothers to ask how come the Bush administration seems to be such a huge fan of a greater Kurdistan.

As much as the PJAK - and the PKK - use American largesse for greater Kurdistan ends, the Bush administration uses especially the PJAK for its wider "war on terror" target: the destabilization of Iran. Turkish-US relations in this case are no more than a casualty of war. Now the Turks are up not only against Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), but also the US and the European Union in Brussels. And in addition, the PKK denies it has attacked Turkey out of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Turkey has angrily reacted to the US Senate proposal for "soft" partition of Iraq. This is the famous US "Plan B" for Iraq - more an "A" than a "B" because it

was floated years ago. And the authors are Israel and ... the Turks themselves.

The plan has been extensively documented, among others, by the Center for Research at the Kurdish Library in New York. According to its "Kurdish Life" newsletter, "Back in 1990, Turkey's then prime minister Turgut Ozal made a deal with the US and Kurdish leaders Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani. Masterminded by an Israel obsessed with breaking up the 'sea of Arabs' in the Middle East, the plan has proceeded apace ever since, influencing and directing virtually all of Washington's political and military tactics in Iraq. And yet even today it remains nobody's business."

The Israeli mastermind was Leslie Gelb, a relatively moderate Zionist. The plan duly featured in the Turkish press at the time. It proposed a federal Iraq, with a Kurdistan, a section of Kirkuk and Mosul for the Turkomans; and the rest, in fact most of the country, for "the Arabs", Sunni and Shi'ite alike.

To get their autonomous mini-state, the Iraqi Kurds just had to guarantee to smash the PKK. As for Turkish Kurds, the Turkish prime minister's spokesman said at the time that since "two-thirds of Turkey's Kurds are scattered through the country" and the rest "fully integrated into Turkish society", they would have no business dreaming about autonomy.

Barzani and Jalal Talabani, Iraqi Kurdish leaders, rival warlords and wily opportunists, duly fulfilled their part of the deal - especially in October 1992 during a joint offensive with the Turkish army against the PKK. They may have sold out the PKK 15 years ago, but that won't happen again; at least that's what the two have vocally promised. For their part, the PJAK-PKK have been tremendously helpful for the Bush administration agenda of "destabilizing" Iran.

The Kurdish Life newsletter argues that the cause of Turkey's current woes is not the US or the Iraqi Kurds. It's a self-inflicted wound, all spelled out in Ozal's plan. "With his untimely death in 1993, the plan was revised, with an autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan to include Kirkuk, and more, and the remainder of Iraq to be divided between Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs. The Republicans of the Bush administration cemented it into the Iraqi constitution under the rubric 'federation'."

That's no less than the "soft" partition the US Senate recently voted for. That's the future Washington wants for Iraqi Kurdistan. And that's the scheme the US - and Israel - don't want their ally

Turkey to spoil by attacking the PKK in Iraqi Kurdistan. No wonder the Turkish leadership - not to mention Turkish public opinion - is fuming.

### Chronicle of an invasion foretold

To compound this misery, the much-touted Turkish invasion has been in the making for months. As early as March, Bush administration officials were promising the Turks that US special

forces would dislodge the PKK from the Qandil mountains. Nothing happened.

In April, Barzani was threatening "to take responsibility for our response" if the Turks interfered with a referendum on the integration of oil-rich Kirkuk into Kurdistan. Also in April, the US prohibited Turkish cross-border raids, according to the Turkish daily Sabah. The massing of Turkish soldiers at the Iraqi border started in May.

Then in June, Turkish General Yasar Buyukanit

virtually spelled out in public what this was all about, "There is not only the PKK in northern Iraq. There is Massoud Barzani as well. Turkey cannot afford an independent Kurdish state headed by Barzani on its southern border." Barzani - who for Turkish popular media is the country's public enemy number one - answered back with a startling concept; he said that if Turkey invaded, "We would deal with it as an Iraqi issue."

So what kind of Kurdish "sovereignty" is this? Iraqi Kurds detest, and ignore, the Baghdad government like the plague, and prize their independence; but as soon as they're threatened, they instantly seek refuge under Baghdad's (clipped) wings.

Kurdistan and its mountainous 75,000 square kilometers is not really Iraq. Baghdad is an entity far, far away. Iraqi Kurdistan has its own constitution, parliament, anthem, legal code, language, currency and media - and most of all the well-trained *peshmerga* army. A democracy it is not - because virtually everything is subordinated to the two warlords turned politicians, Barzani and Talabani.

The KRG has paid the price for Kurdistan as a "model" of a functioning Iraq by collaborating no-holds-barred with the US since the early 1990s. In June, Barzani confirmed that the PKK is an Iraqi problem, "A Turkish invasion would be first of all an attack on Iraqi sovereignty, and then an attack on the Kurds." Following Barzani's logic, since Iraq is under occupation, the Turks would be actually invading a colonial possession of the US. Thus it should be Petraeus to confront the Turks about what they're up to. Washington in a way has proved its point: Iraqi Kurdistan is a fragile entity that only exists because it always depended on American protection.

### Turkey and Iran, united

Kurdistan's pull in Washington is guaranteed thanks largely to Qubad Talabani, son of President Jalal Talabani, also known in Kurdistan as "Uncle Jalal". While dad sells Kurdistan as an indisputable success story, son lobbies furiously, to the extent that Frank Lavin, US under secretary of commerce for international trade, recently went to Kurdistan to promote it as a gateway for US businesses in Iraq.

But to believe that Ankara will tolerate an oil-rich, water-rich Kurdish mini-state on its southeast border, creating a magnet for Kurdish minorities in Turkey, Iran and Syria, is to believe in miracles. Not only Turkey and Iran are vehemently against it, but also Saudi Arabia (the House of Saud believing that a Kurdistan counterpart - Shi'iteistan in southern Iraq - would be subservient to Iran). What the Bush administration's games have achieved so far is to unite Turkey and Iran on the issue.

Turkey regards the Kurds just like China regards Tibetans and Uighurs; they are part of a unitary Turkish state and have no right to autonomy. If Washington condemns China for its repression of Tibetans and Uighurs, it should behave the same way regarding Turkey. Not only will this not happen, but now the Americans need the Turks more than the Turks need the Americans.

A true measure of White House and neo-conservative desperation to facilitate the relentless surge towards war on Iran is whether it would be willing to plunge Iraqi Kurdistan into war, compromise the Turkish-Iraqi corridor (through which flows 70% of US supplies to Iraq) and future US Big Oil investments in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Barzani keeps insisting he and Washington are in

sync, both wanting a peaceful solution for this royal mess; but he always points out "we are a nation" which will not accept Turkish threats.

US plans for Iraqi Kurdistan, stretching back to that 1990 Israeli-devised Turkish plan, are in jeopardy. And once again all because of the enemy within.

Washington played the ethnic card in Afghanistan, pitting Tajiks against Pashtuns; the result, apart from a never-ending war in Afghanistan, was that

Pashtuns on both sides of the border united and are now destabilizing even further the US ally, Pakistan.

Washington played the Kurd card to destabilize Saddam Hussein's Iraq and as a beachhead for its control of the country after the invasion. Not only Iraq turned into a quagmire, Washington helped to plunge Kurdistan into the line of (Turkish) fire.

There's no evidence these lessons have been

learned. No matter what happens in the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan, the Bush administration will still insist on the ethnic card to precipitate regime change in Iran.

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The State

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## Iraq's Kurds: rebel support, war fears

By DOUGLAS BIRCH - Associated Press Writer

**IRBIL, IRAQ** --When Turkey accuses Iraq's Kurdish officials of backing insurgents, one man they may have in mind is Falkadin Kakei - reportedly on Turkey's wanted list of Iraqi Kurds.

Kakei, gray-haired and engaging, is the Kurdish region's minister of culture, a role that includes campaigning to free what he calls Kurdish political prisoners, including Abdullah Ocalan, the jailed leader of the Kurdish rebel group in Turkey.

Kakei's dual loyalties - an official within Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region and champion of Kurdish nationalism - show why Kurdish officials here have been slow to move against Kurdish insurgents, even as Turkey threatens to move across the border to strike rebel hideouts.

Many of Iraq's Kurds share Kakei's sympathy for Kurds in Turkey and tolerance of the rebels' past brutal tactics. But their continued tolerance of the guerrilla group risks placing them in the middle of someone else's conflict and could threaten their privileged place as Iraq's most stable and prosperous region.

Now they face international pressure to help uproot the rebels, known as the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, from Iraqi mountain sanctuaries used as staging areas for raids across the border in Turkey. That pressure is expected to rise Friday in Istanbul during a regional conference on Iraq's security.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has all but accused Kurdistan's leader, Massoud Barzani, of helping the PKK. "He is in a position of aiding and abetting the terrorist organization in that region," Turkey's *Hurriyet* newspaper quoted Erdogan as saying.

But British Defense Secretary Des Browne said Thursday said he was encouraged by talks with Barzani

about the need to crack down on the PKK. "I have seen over the past couple of days the serious commitment to implement the range of measures that will make a difference," Browne said.

If so, it could signal a major shift in the way Kurdish authorities deal with the PKK, which has waged war on Turkey since 1984 in a campaign that cost an estimated 35,000 lives.

Kakei and other government officials say they don't regard the PKK as a terrorist group - though the United States, the European Union and other governments insist it is.

"We fully sympathize with the fact that ... the Turkish government and the Turkish people have faced a vicious set of attacks by the PKK," U.S. Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns said Thursday in Vienna, Austria.

The former Marxist group, which once sought independence, now says it is committed to democracy and wants more cultural and political rights for Turkish Kurds, but not a separate state. It also claims to have ceased offensive operations.

That hasn't stopped large-scale clashes between the PKK and Turkey, fighting which in recent weeks has killed scores of Kurds and Turks.

Kakei, who still wears the olive-drab baggy pants and shirt that was his guerrilla peshmerga uniform for 35 years, denied rumors that the government of Kurdistan turns a blind eye to shipments of food and other supplies to the wild border lands where the group finds sanctuary.

He noted that the PKK has in the past waged war against both the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan - which today share power in Iraqi Kurdistan. For years, Kakei ran clandestine radio broadcasts for peshmerga insurgents battling the regime of Saddam Hussein.

"Not only do we not offer them any

help, the PKK is fighting us, even now," Kakei said. "And they don't seem to be in need of any help from us, either, militarily or politically."

Kurdish Iraqi officials say they have not moved against the PKK because they don't have the resources. The group's seasoned guerrilla fighters, they say, would be impossible to dislodge from their hideouts in the soaring mountains of northern Iraq.

But Iraqi Kurds closely identify with their ethnic brethren across the borders in Turkey, Syria and Iran. The Kurdish people feel they have been subjected to political and cultural repression in this, their homeland, since the days of the Ottoman empire.

The current crisis has helped heal some historical divisions among the region's Kurdish communities.

"Now for the first time, the government of Turkey has united the Kurds of Iraq and Turkey," Kakei said. "For the first time, Kurds on both sides are demanding the same thing."

After Turkey recently demanded that Iraq extradite a number of PKK officials, an Iraqi newspaper reported that Kakei was one of those sought by the Turks.

So far, the list has not been made public. But Falah Bakir, Kurdistan's foreign relations chief, told *The Associated Press* the list included only officials with the PKK.

Kakei told the AP he was not a PKK official, but acknowledged he was not popular with the Turkish government.

Six months ago, Turkish officials barred Kakei from attending a cultural conference in Diyarbakir, in Turkey's heavily Kurdish southeast.

The reason? "I think the main thing and the only thing is that I have always been calling for a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish issue in Turkey," he said.

"I never hide my sympathy for the Kurds of Turkey, Syria and Iraq. The

problem is that anything in support of the Kurdish is considered a terrorist act."

In Kakei's view, the current crisis is a result of a political struggle between Turkey's Erdogan and the Turkish military, rather than Ankara's battle against terror.

Erdogan, Kakei pointed out, has gradually given Turkey's Kurds broader cultural rights and political rights, angering nationalists and their allies in the military. The current crisis, he said, is an attempt by Erdogan's enemies to wreck progress for peace in Kurdish areas.

"The military is trying to roll back the progress on the Kurdish issue over the past five years," he said. "The people who want to go on blasting the border are the military."

Kakei said he and other Iraqi Kurdish officials are pressing the PKK to halt its insurrection. PKK leaders agree, Kakei and other Kurdistan officials claim, but have been forced to keep fighting.

"Of course they are ready to lay down their arms, but the Turkish government is not allowing them any chance," Kakei said. "The Turks attacked them."

Meanwhile, Iraqi Kurdish officials have called on Ankara to declare a general amnesty for PKK fighters, and to engage in talks with the group over its demands for more autonomy.

Kurdish leaders here say Turkey could squander an opportunity to resolve the conflict. Since Ocalan's arrest in 1999, Kakei said, more moderate leaders are now charge of the PKK and are ready for compromise.

"They are ready to sit with Turkey and hold discussions," he said. "But Turkey is closing every channel, even with us."



## US helps Turkey to isolate rebels

Martin Chulov, Middle East correspondent

**THE US claimed yesterday to have deployed military resources from elsewhere in Iraq to help Turkish forces pinpoint Kurdish separatists in the north.**

The public claim to have secretly pitched in to the counter-insurgency campaign is a fresh bid to convince the Turkish Government not to invade northern Iraq. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was due in the Turkish capital, Ankara, last night as part of a high-stakes bid to stop an invasion as fears continue to mount about a new battlefield opening in war-ravaged Iraq.

Turkey said this week it would impose economic measures on the rebels of the Kurdish Workers Party and groups that support it in a move widely interpreted as sanctions against the Kurdish administration, which runs northern Iraq largely autonomously from Baghdad.

"Military, political, diplomatic and economic measures are being taken

simultaneously," Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Cicek said after a cabinet meeting. "The targets of these measures are the terrorist organisation and those groups which are supporting, aiding and abetting it."

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has suggested Massoud Barzani, the leader of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region, is assisting the Turkish Kurd rebels.

"He is in a position of aiding and abetting the terrorist organisation in that region," Turkey's Hurriyet newspaper quoted Mr Erdogan as saying.

Close to 70 per cent of all imports into the Iraqi Kurdish areas travel through Turkish airspace, giving Ankara significant leverage over the Kurdish authorities. Turkey says its military is not moving against the

Kurdish administration, but has accused both it and the US of not doing enough to cut off supply lines to the PKK.

The central Iraqi Government has said it will consider rounding up PKK leaders and handing them over to Turkey if Ankara refrains from invading. However, Turkey has so far refused diplomatic overtures from Baghdad and Washington, claiming they are both offering too little too late.

The US announcement of military cooperation comes a week after US commanders in Iraq had announced their forces there had done "absolutely nothing" in the north of the country and had no plans to change strategy.

The US now says it is flying spy planes over the border area and passing on

surveillance information to the Turkish military. PKK rebels operate mainly from the rugged frontier of the Qandil mountains, along a 300km border between Iraq and southeastern Turkey. "We are assisting the Turks in their efforts to combat the PKK by supplying them with intelligence, lots of intelligence," Defence Department press secretary Geoff Morrell said in Washington.

He said 10 members of the PKK - which the US considers a terrorist organisation - are in a US "most wanted" database.

"We have given them more and more intelligence as a result of the recent concerns ... There has been an increased level of intelligence sharing," Mr Morrell said.

By Andrew Lee Butters/Salahaddin Nov. 02, 2007

TIME

## Kurd Leader Defies Turkish Threats

The executive compound of Massoud Barzani, the president of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government, sits high on a ridge along the northern edge of the Mesopotamian plain, on a spot that was once a summer resort under the former regime. With its eagle's-nest views, helipad getaway and fierce peshmerga guards, the hilltop redoubt feels like the lair of a James Bond villain - which is exactly how many Turks think of Barzani.

In the uproar over the killings of Turkish soldiers by the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) - a rebel group of Turkish Kurds fighting the Turkish state - the Turkish media has portrayed Barzani as a warlord gone wild. The Turks accuse him of supporting the PKK, which maintains sanctuaries in the mountains of Barzani's domain in northern Iraq, in order to further his own Kurdish nationalist agenda. U.S. officials have pressed Barzani and the Kurdish leadership to take action against the PKK, at least to stem the flow of people and supplies to their mountain camps, and to arrest PKK leaders based in Erbil, Barzani's regional capital. Some American commentators have even wondered if Barzani is using the PKK as a playing card to be traded away at some future date in exchange for Turkish recognition of independence for Iraqi Kurdistan.

But in a recent interview with TIME and other foreign media, Barzani remained adamant that he wouldn't direct Kurdish security forces to act against the PKK, nor would he be intimidated by possible Turkish military incursions into Northern Iraq.

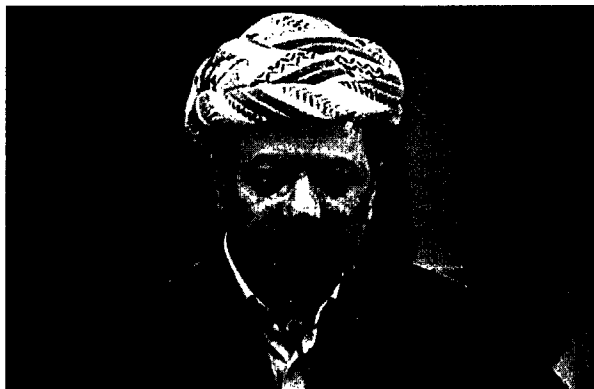
"I am not an enemy of Turkey; I am a friend of the Turkish people," he says. "But I do not accept the language of threatening and blackmailing from the government of Turkey."

Barzani and the Kurdish leadership claim they are unable to eject the PKK from Iraq, and that doing so is not their responsibility, anyway. The PKK made its way into these mountains during the early 1990s, when the no-flight zone imposed by the U.S. against Saddam Hussein's air force created a power vacuum. And although Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga cooperated with some of the many Turkish military operations against the PKK during that period, the bloody experience has left them unwilling to repeat the same mistakes.

"This is not a problem that can be solved by force," says Barzani, himself a former guerrilla commander. "[The Turks] have tried military operations in the last 23 years. Now, it's time for the Turkish people to ask their military what they did in the last 23 years, and why they didn't solve it."

Barzani believes that what's needed instead is a political solution to the conflict between Turkey and the PKK. "If they adopt a peaceful approach, we are ready to help as much as we can," he says. "If Turkey came up with a peaceful initiative and the PKK rejects that, then all the Kurdistanis will take up a position against the PKK."

Turkey, however, treats the PKK simply as a problem of terrorism. (The U.S. has also designated the organization as a terrorist group.) Barzani claims that the Turks' unwillingness to consider anything but force against the PKK is a sign that Turkey's agenda goes beyond resolving the situation at hand. "Honestly, I am about to be convinced that the PKK is only an excuse and that part of the real target is the Kurdistan re-



gion itself," he says. The other target, he suggests, is the moderate Islamists of Turkey's ruling AK party, which is opposed by Turkey's fiercely secularist generals. "This is part of their internal disputes and problems," adds Barzani.

The Iraqi Kurdish leader talks tough in the face of threatened Turkish intervention. "If the Kurdish question is not solved, there will not be security or stability in this region," he said. "If there is an invasion it means war. If they invade and enter the Iraqi Kurdistan region and they attack us, of course we have to defend ourselves. If they attack our people, our interests, our territories, then there will be no limit."

Even as Turkey ratchets up its threats and Washington scrambles to avert a showdown between two of its key regional allies by pressing for more action on the Iraqi side, Massoud Barzani is showing no signs of backing down.

# As Kurds' Status Improves, Support for Militants Erodes in Turkey

By SABRINA TAVERNISE

KIZILTEPE, Turkey, Oct. 31 — Ten years ago, Turkey ran the Kurdish region here in its south-east like a police state. All signs of Kurdish identity — the language, music, national dress — were strictly banned and subject to punishment. Checkpoints were everywhere. Going out after dark was forbidden.

Today, Kurdish is heard on the streets and in shops, Kurdish satellite TV is legally beamed into homes, and Kurdish holidays are celebrated publicly. The improvements occurred after a 25-year war for Kurdish rights subsided, and are largely a result of legal changes Turkey made to qualify for the European Union.

But militant proponents of that Kurdish identity — a rebel group based in part in northern Iraq — threaten to complicate further progress on the very rights for which they claim to fight, many here say.

"They harm the Kurdish people more than anybody else with this violence," said Mehmet Kaya, head of the chamber of commerce in the region's capital, Diyarbakir, referring to the militants. "People of this region are starting to say out loud that they no longer want violence."

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice arrives in Turkey on Friday to try to defuse a crisis between Turkey, a NATO member, and Iraq over attacks by the rebel group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, known as the P.K.K., which hides in mountains in Iraq.

The crisis has split Turkey between powerful hard-line nationalists, who want an invasion, and moderate Turks, who do not. The moderates fear further conflict could set off new ethnic violence and are hoping that support from the United States will help tip the balance against it.

"This is a test of where the United States holds Turkey," said Soli Ozel, a professor of international relations at Bilgi University in Istanbul. "If she comes with an empty hand, it's going to be very difficult for the government to really hold the waters."

For decades, Turkey has suppressed its Kurdish minority,



A Kurdish laborer in Kiziltepe, where improvements in social benefits have helped draw voters to mainstream Turkish parties.



about a fifth of the country's population, fearing secession. The oppression, combined with biting poverty — 60 percent of the residents here are below the poverty line — fueled militancy.

Like many other leftist political movements of the day, the P.K.K., founded in the late 1970s, was banned in a Turkish military coup in 1980. It remained broadly popular as a Kurdish national freedom movement, even as its fighters moved to Europe and the rugged mountains of eastern Turkey and northern Iraq.

"There was this excitement of youth in the air throughout the nation," said Ramazan Deger, a Kurdish politician from Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's party from Mardin, a city near Kiziltepe. "In the east, it was represented by the P.K.K."

But local support hardened into fear as the P.K.K. became

brutal in Kurdish villages, trying to block any local cooperation with the state. Hasan Ozgun, a 30-year-old cellphone shop owner in Kiziltepe, remembers his father trying to assess whether to open his fabrics shop every morning, after having found other merchants dead with their hands still on the locks. He said the group had killed more than 30 people in his village.

"We started to doubt their sincerity," said Serif Gokce, a 33-year-old computer shop owner in Kiziltepe. "In 25 years of struggle, so little has been achieved. People came to the conclusion that they did more harm than good."

The Turkish state was no less brutal. Mr. Gokce remembers soldiers cordoning off his village, herding the villagers together and punching and interrogating them for hours. His father still has a scar from the boot of a Turkish soldier just above his ear.

Restrictions began to ease after the P.K.K.'s leader, Abdullah Ocalan, was captured in 1999, and loosened further when Mr. Erdogan's new government began to overhaul the Turkish state for entrance into the European Union. Halime, a 32-year-old mother of eight, remembers celebrating the Kurdish spring festival of Nawruz for the first time several years ago. Children could have



Halime, right, a mother of eight, said she celebrated the Kurdish spring festival of Nawruz for the first time several years ago.

Kurdish names. Limited Kurdish broadcasting was allowed.

The P.K.K. shifted some of its primary demands to Mr. Ocalan's release and treatment, raising more questions among the more educated Kurdish public about their motives.

"What are their objectives — a better life for Kurds in Turkey or the improvement of their leader's prison environment?" said a civil servant in Mardin, who asked that his name not be used out of fear of retribution.

Mr. Erdogan began a concerted effort to win the Kurdish population. He promised roads and electricity in every village. In 2005, basic health care for the poor and aid for school children

were arranged. Perhaps most important, he stated publicly in a landmark speech that same year that Turkey had a "Kurdish problem," a remark that was almost unprecedented for Turkish leaders and made a deep impression in the region.

"His call for brotherhood, that was what won me," Mr. Gokce said, standing in Mr. Ozgun's shop as customers asked questions in Kurdish.

"We know he was trying to break a mindset."

Kurds responded, and in elections last July, they voted in large numbers for Mr. Erdogan's party, the only non-Kurdish party that campaigned in the southeast, reducing the number of Kurdish

party wins to 6 provinces, from 13 in 2002.

Independent candidates from the Kurdish party still garnered by far the most votes in the region, winning 20 seats in Parliament, the first Kurdish representation in more than a decade.

The new choice reflects a broader shift among Kurds to mainstream Turkish society. Vast numbers of Turkey's Kurds moved west during the war in the southeast, and while they are still poorer and less privileged than the rest of Turkish society, they have learned from the exposure.

"Kurdish people are much more aware than they used to be," Mr. Gokce said.

The party's success "hinted the beginning of a shift and transformation in people's minds and expectations," said Sezgin Tanrikulu, head of the Diyarbakir Bar Association.

"The violence was once seen as a legitimate way to seek for equality, no longer is," he said, adding that this week, 91 regional business groups, nongovernmental organizations and intellectuals in the region signed a declaration asking the group to lay down its arms.

The only way to end the conflict is for the government to take "a courageous and fearless step," to expand Kurds' rights, Mr. Tanrikulu said. Abdurrahman Kurt, a lawmaker from Diyarbakir and a member of Mr. Erdogan's party, said that the P.K.K. had stepped up attacks recently, precisely be-

cause of the government's success in bringing more rights for Kurds. Both the P.K.K. and the hard-liners in the Turkish military have strong interests in keeping the conflict going, Mr. Kaya said.

"They have always hit back at times when the country has reached crossroads in democracy," Mr. Kurt said.

The crisis has also brought out deep nationalist anger, and Mr. Tanrikulu expressed concerns that, beyond slowing Turkey's transition to democracy, it could also bring ethnic strife.

Mr. Gokce said that several years ago he had lost hope, and was considering moving to Europe, but decided to stay after the government's new policy of inclusion. Early aspirations for statehood have since faded.

"We used to think that Kurds should have their own land," he said wedged between customers in his shop. "But as we grew more conscious, we realized it was a false ambition."

## Britain Praises Iraqi Kurds' Efforts to End Crisis

By RICHARD A. OPPEL Jr.

SALAHUDDIN, Iraq, Nov. 1 — While Turkish and American officials have stepped up criticism of Iraqi Kurdish leaders for failing to curb the guerrilla fighters who have sanctuary in northern Iraq, a top British official lent his support to the Kurdish regional government during a visit on Thursday and indicated that he was confident of its commitment to resolving the crisis.

The British defense secretary, Des Browne, appeared here at a news conference with Massoud Barzani, the Kurdish leader of northern Iraq. Mr. Browne said that he had seen "a serious commitment to implement a range of measures which will make a difference."

Mr. Browne's comments stood in contrast to remarks last week by the State Department's senior Iraq adviser, David M. Satter-

field, that the United States was "not pleased with the lack of action" shown by Kurdish leaders.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey was quoted this week accusing Mr. Barzani of "aiding and abetting" the Kurdish guerrilla group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party.

The guerrillas' bloody cross-border attacks on Turkish forces have put enormous political pressure on Turkish leaders to show that they are taking swift action against the rebels. Turkish military forces are now massed at the Iraqi border for a potential invasion, though Turkish officials have suggested that no action will be taken before Mr. Erdogan meets with President Bush in Washington next week.

And while Turkish officials contend that a Turkish attack only on guerrilla bases in northern Iraq would not be an "invasion," Mr. Browne suggested that

the British government wanted no form of Turkish offensive inside Iraq.

"The whole focus of our efforts and the advantage of me being here today is that I can make a contribution to the collective efforts to ensure that no such cross-border operation ever takes place," Mr. Browne said.

Turkish officials also said Thursday that they had initiated economic sanctions against the Kurdish guerrillas, though they did not say what the sanctions were or how they could frame them to affect only the guerrillas.

The Iraqi Kurds depend on imports from Turkey for electricity, food and other critical needs, and they fear that the closing of trade routes would be devastating. Mr. Barzani said that Turkey had just closed its airspace to flights headed toward northern Iraq, but Turkish officials denied taking that step.

The New York Times  
November 2, 2007

# EU draft report criticizes the reduced pace of reform in Turkey

By Stephen Castle

**BRUSSELS:** In a new blow to Turkey's hopes of joining the European Union, an annual report has concluded that reforms there slowed in 2007 because of a constitutional crisis over the election of a president with an Islamic background.

With attention distracted by tensions between the governing AK Party and the military over the election of Abdullah Gul, Turkey did too little to root out corruption, modernize its judiciary, reduce the power of the military and increase freedom of expression.

The annual progress report, compiled by the European Commission, is to be released next week as a new committee prepares to examine the future of the EU. The panel may try to determine where Europe's frontiers should lie and how much farther the bloc should expand.

Public opinion across the EU is hardening against Turkey's membership bid and the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, leads a group of countries opposed to full EU membership for Turkey, preferring a looser association with Ankara instead.

Sarkozy proposed the creation of the new committee, which is scheduled to be approved by EU heads of government next month. Turkey fears the panel will kill off their membership bid.

To limit the damage to Turkish accession hopes, a draft of the commission's annual report stresses Turkey's strategic importance as a "unique interface between the West and the Muslim world," a diplomatic and military partner and an energy hub.

But it also makes clear that the implementation of reforms was "uneven" and "has slowed down since 2005." The number of people prosecuted for freedom of expression doubled from 2005 to 2006, corruption remains rife and Turkey was found to be in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights in 330 cases.

This year the military, one of the central pillars of the secular Turkish state, spoke out against Gul's candidacy for president. The crisis prompted parlia-

mentary elections that returned the AK Party to power, allowing Gul — whose wife wears a head scarf — to win the presidency through a parliamentary vote. Although the military "made statements beyond its remit," parliamentary elections were conducted properly, the draft report says.

"Turkey now needs to renew the momentum of political reforms," the document says. It calls for significant further efforts on freedom of expression, civilian control of the military, increased rights for non-Muslims, the fight against corruption and judicial reforms.

Charles Grant, director of the Center for European Reform in London, said the document comes at a difficult time for Turkey. "A number of governments that have been pro-Turkey are now backpedaling or, like Denmark, keeping their heads down and leaving it to Britain, Sweden and the commission to argue for Turkey," Grant said.

He added: "The best prospect for Turkey at the moment is just to keep going and hope that the climate in Europe changes, which it might do."

Eight of the 35 "chapters" for negotiations with Turkey are now frozen because of its refusal to open its ports to ships from Cyprus. There were fears that Sarkozy would block talks on all other issues but France has hinted that it will stop the opening of only four other chapters.

The commission's study underlines the amount of work needed to meet EU membership requirements. Although the document says that the outcome of the spring crisis "reaffirmed the primacy of the democratic process," it also notes that the military took positions on issues outside its remit. "Full civilian supervision of the military and parliamentary oversight of defense expenditures still need to be established," the paper says.

The document adds that there has been "little progress" in the fight against corruption, which it describes as "widespread."

The number of prosecutions of journalists, intellectuals and human rights activists for expressing nonviolent opinions is on the rise.

The number of people prosecuted almost doubled in 2006 from 2005 and there were further increases in 2007.

More than half of the cases were brought under the Turkish Penal Code and many of those under article 301,

which makes it an offense to insult "Turkishness." Together with the murder of a Turkish-Armenian journalist, Hrant Dink, the prosecutions have helped create a climate of self-censorship, the draft document says. Dink was killed in Istanbul on Jan. 19. His views on the Ottoman Turkish massacres of Armenians in the era of World War I had angered Turkish nationalists.

The number of reported torture and ill-treatment cases has declined, though they still occur, especially before suspects are detained. Concerns remain about the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, the report says.

From October 2006 to October 2007 the European Court of Human Rights delivered 330 judgments finding that Turkey had violated at least one article

of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The draft takes an even-handed approach on the Kurdish issue saying that Turkey made "no progress in the area of cultural rights." But it notes that the PKK separatist group is on the EU's terrorist list and talks of a "further deterioration of the situation" in terms of attacks by the PKK and other terrorist groups.

The final version of the document may make a plea to Turkey to avoid disproportionate retaliation.

The report, which covers the whole EU enlargement process, also says that Croatia might be able to join the bloc by the end of the decade if it speeds up the reform of its judiciary and the fight against corruption.

And it highlights concerns about the Balkans, including organized crime, ethnic tensions and corruption, arguing that the measures being taken are inadequate.



1 novembre 2007

## Les Kurdes appellent Ankara à proposer un "plan de paix"

Un haut responsable des rebelles kurdes turcs réfugiés dans le nord de l'Irak a appelé jeudi Ankara à proposer un "plan de paix" pour mettre fin à leur lutte contre l'Etat central turc, dans un entretien avec l'AFP.

"J'appelle la Turquie à avoir du courage et à présenter un plan de paix pour résoudre ce problème", a déclaré Abdurrahman Cadirci, porte-parole du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) rencontré dans les montagnes de Qandil, dans le Kurdistan irakien. "Ainsi nous pourrions déposer les armes", a ajouté ce responsable de l'organisation séparatiste, en charge des

relations extérieures du PKK. Cet appel à une solution pacifique intervient à la veille de l'ouverture à Istanbul d'une conférence des voisins de l'Irak et des grandes puissances, qui se penchera sur la situation à la frontière entre la Turquie et l'Irak.

Ankara a massé des troupes dans le secteur frontalier et menace de lancer une opération militaire pour éliminer les bases de la rébellion qui abritent entre 3.000 et 4.000 combattants dans le massif montagneux de Qandil. Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, lance des opérations meurtrières dans le sud de

la Turquie, à partir du Kurdistan irakien. "J'appelle la Turquie à reconnaître leurs droits aux Kurdes, leurs droits nationaux, culturels, linguistiques, politiques, et le droit à la libre expression", a ajouté M. Cadirci.

"J'appelle la Turquie à libérer notre chef Abdullah Öcalan qui est incarcéré dans des conditions sévères", depuis 1999, a-t-il poursuivi. "Ainsi, pas à pas, nous pouvons obtenir des progrès et trouver une solution à tous nos problèmes, et ne pas avoir recours à la force militaire qui n'a jamais été un succès", a ajouté le responsable du PKK



03 novembre 2007

## Conférence d'Istanbul dominée par la question kurde

La déclaration finale de la conférence sur l'Irak le montre : la réunion rassemblant les pays voisins de l'Irak a été fortement influencée par la crise entre la Turquie et les rebelles du PKK. De leur côté, en signe de bonne volonté, ces derniers annoncent la libération dimanche de 8 soldats turcs.

Avec notre envoyée spéciale à Istanbul, Farida Ayari

La déclaration finale de la conférence insiste sur la lutte contre le terrorisme. Trois points sur 23 développent cette idée et surtout le fait que le territoire irakien ne doit pas devenir la base arrière d'organisations terroristes qui chercheraient à déstabiliser les pays voisins de l'Irak.

Une allusion évidente à la crise actuelle entre l'Irak et la Turquie. Cette dernière accuse l'Irak de complaisance envers les rebelles autonomistes kurdes du PKK, en dépit des assurances du Premier ministre irakien Nouri al-Maliki sur la décision ferme et définitive de fermer tous les bureaux du PKK en Irak.

Le ministre des Affaires étrangères turc, Ali Babacan, a affirmé que, pour la Turquie, l'option militaire restait sur la table. Les Etats-Unis, empêtrés dans le bourbier irakien, essaient d'empêcher une intervention militaire turque qui déstabiliserait le Kurdistan irakien, pratiquement la seule région stable de l'Irak.

Après les nombreux efforts de Condoleezza Rice, hier vendredi à Ankara, et aujourd'hui samedi à Istanbul, lundi, ce sera George Bush en personne qui tentera de calmer les ardeurs du Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan, lors de leur entretien à Washington.



## Irak/Turquie: "préoccupation" du pape qui appelle à une "solution pacifique"



**CITE DU VATICAN, 4 nov 2007 (AFP)** - Le pape Benoît XVI a exprimé dimanche sa "préoccupation" face aux tensions à la frontière turco-irakienne et appelé à une "solution pacifique", à l'issue de la prière de l'Angélus, place Saint Pierre.

Benoît XVI s'exprimait au lendemain de la Conférence ministérielle d'Istanbul au cours de laquelle l'Irak s'est engagé à agir contre les rebelles kurdes basés dans le nord du pays, alors que la Turquie menace toujours d'intervenir militairement au Kurdistan irakien que les séparatistes utilisent comme base arrière.

"Je désire encourager tous les efforts visant à une solution pacifique des

problèmes qui sont récemment apparus entre la Turquie et le Kurdistan irakien", a déclaré le pape devant des dizaines de milliers de pèlerins.

"Je ne peux pas oublier que de nombreuses populations ont trouvé refuge dans cette région, fuyant l'insécurité et le terrorisme qui ont rendu difficile la vie en Irak", a-t-il souligné.

"Considérant le bien de ces populations, qui comprennent de nombreux chrétiens, j'espère fortement que toutes les parties s'emploieront à favoriser une solution de paix", a conclu Benoît XVI, qui s'exprimait pour la première fois sur la crise entre les deux pays.

# Tensions au pied des monts Cudi

**KURDISTAN TURC** - À Ciszré et Silopi, cités frontalières de l'Irak, l'inquiétude grimpe alors que l'armée turque est de plus en plus visible face à la montagne où se cachent les combattants kurdes.

Frontière turco-irakienne, envoyé spécial.

**P**rès des localités de Ciszré (50 000 habitants) et de Silopi (25 000 âmes), des hélicoptères de combat turcs ont pilonné lundi et mardi les vallées en contrebas des monts Cudi séparant la Turquie de l'Irak. On est là à toute proximité du poste frontière de Habur, à la sortie de Silopi, l'unique voie de passage vers l'Irak, empruntée chaque jour par des centaines de camions. Le périmètre a été décrété zone de guerre sécurisée par l'armée turque depuis les affrontements avec le PKK.

Tout comme Silopi, Ciszré se trouve au cœur du conflit. La région est quadrillée. À quelques kilomètres de l'entrée de la ville, des checkpoints de la gendarmerie se multiplient. Les identités des automobilistes et des passagers des bus en provenance de Diyarbakir – la capitale du Kurdistan turc – sont systématiquement vérifiées (lire également notre reportage en page 4). Tout autour, sur les

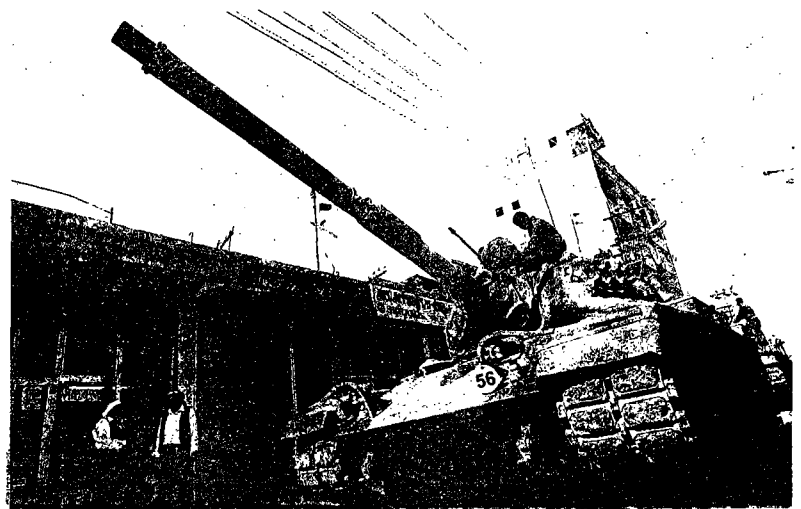
collines et les crêtes des monts bordant le Tigre, qui coule tout près de la ville, des postes militaires surveillent la région. Et les combattants du PKK ne sont pas si loin. « Là-haut, sur les monts Cudi », indique avec un air amusé Emer, étudiant en médecine.

## QUAND LES CIVILS ÉVITENT LES SUJETS QUI FÂCHENT

Comme beaucoup de Kurdes, il ne désapprouve pas les actions du PKK. « Les télévisions et les journaux ne par-

lent que des soldats tués par le PKK mais on ne parle jamais de nos chahids (martyrs). Eux aussi ont de la famille et des amis », dit-il sur un ton exaspéré. Emer est l'un des rares habitants de la ville à ouvertement s'exprimer sur le sujet. De manière générale, les habitants de cette localité montagnarde semi-rurale préfèrent éviter les sujets qui fâchent.

Dans les cafés, les gens regardent, sans commenter, les chaînes d'info télé, qui matraquent à longueur de jour-



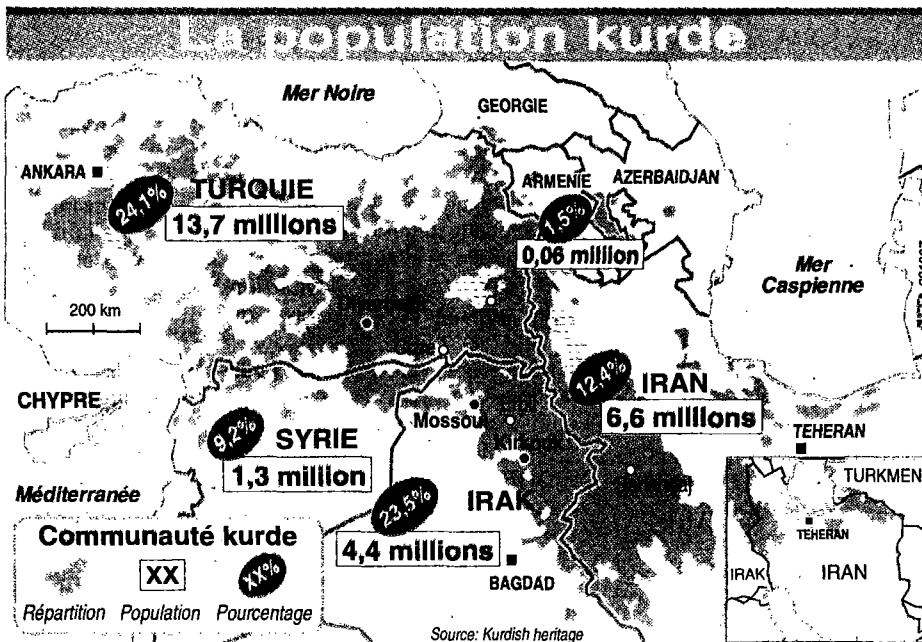
**A Ciszré, lundi dernier. La présence militaire n'est pas sans rappeler aux habitants les violents affrontements de 1992-1993 opposant l'armée turque au PKK.**

née sur la douleur des familles de soldats tués, sur les opérations de l'armée turque contre les combattants du PKK, stigmatisant au passage les dirigeants du Kurdistan irakien, suspecté de couvrir « les terroristes ».

Dans cette ville dont le maire, Aydin Budak, a été condamné en juin 2006 à un an et trois mois de prison

pour propos « séparatistes », nombreux sont ceux qui ont en mémoire le souvenir de ces terribles années 1992-1993 où de violents combats ont opposé l'armée turque au PKK,

avec leurs lots d'arrestations et de condamnations à la prison ferme, et l'imposition du couvre-feu sur la ville et sa ré-



**«Après tout, le PKK ne demande pas l'indépendance. Personne ici n'en veut.» UN COMMERÇANT DE CISZRé**

gion. « Personne ne veut revivre ce temps-là, dit ce commerçant du centre-ville. Le mieux, c'est de régler le problème pacifiquement. Après tout, le PKK ne demande pas l'indépendance. Personne ici n'en veut. Erdogan (le premier ministre) le sait. Alors? » s'écrie-t-il.

Jusqu'à-là, Tayyip Erdogan, dont le parti – l'AKP (Parti de la justice et du développement) – est arrivé en deuxième position dans le

Kurdistan, derrière le DTP (Parti pour une société démocratique, kurde) aux élections législatives de juin dernier, bénéficiait d'une certaine

cote de popularité parmi les Kurdes. Le fait que l'état-major de l'armée turque n'ait pas caché son hostilité à un parti issu de la mouvance islamiste a joué en sa faveur en pays kurde. Et l'islam aidant, peu de femmes sont dévoilées dans cette région du Kurdistan où l'AKP a effectué une remarquable percée, y compris à Diyarbakir, cœur de la contestation kurde. Mieux, avant cette crise, il escomptait rafler la capitale du Kurdistan, contrôlée par le DTP, aux élections municipales de 2008! « Il a déjà perdu. Il est comme les autres. C'est un nationaliste. Les Kurdes ne voteront pas AKP », persifle Faruk, instituteur à Ciszré.

### L'INQUIÉTUDE DES HABITANTS DE SILOPI, CITÉ COMMERÇANTE

Une dizaine de kilomètres plus loin, à Silopi cité commerçante qui jouxte immédiatement l'Irak et qui est traversée par des centaines de camions tous les jours, les gens paraissent vaquer tranquillement à leurs occupations, loin des tumultes ■■■

■■■ des préparatifs de guerre. Toutefois, le bruit des hélicoptères de combat et, de temps à autre, celui de chasseurs-bombardiers F16 volant à basse altitude alimente l'inquiétude des habitants.

Comme à Ciszré, les alentours de Silopi sont parsemés de postes militaires sur les hauteurs de la montagne et le long du Tigre. En avril 2006, à l'occasion de l'enterrement de combattants du PKK tués par l'armée, Silopi a été le théâtre de violents affrontements entre une partie de la population et les forces de sécurité. Ici, le commerce en tous genres avec l'Irak, ses dizaines de restaurants, de cafés et de supérettes compensent les faibles revenus de l'exploitation des champs de coton et de l'élevage ovin, exploitation qui n'emploie que de la main-d'œuvre féminine payée au lance-pierres.

### LES TURCS DAVANTAGE PÉNALISÉS QUE LES IRAKIENS

Avant de passer le poste frontière de Habur, situé à quelques kilomètres à la sortie de la ville, nombreux sont les camionneurs qui font une halte à Silopi. Ce mardi, le passage se fait au comptegouttes. Les camions forment une queue de plusieurs kilo-

mètres. Avant les tensions avec l'Irak, il en passait plus de 1 000 par jour. Moins de 300 ces jours-ci. Coincé dans la file, sirotant un thé, Osman, assis sur le marchepied de son camion Mercedes, attend depuis plus de cinq heures. Il doit livrer du matériel électroménager à un commerçant de Mossoul en Irak. Il n'en est pas à sa première livraison. Comme beaucoup, il craint que tout s'arrête. Se rendre en Irak est son gagne-pain. « J'ai une famille à faire vivre », dit-il. Osman n'est pas kurde, il est turc. Il dit comprendre la position de son pays, que « le PKK est responsable de cette situation », mais souhaite que ça n'aille pas au pire. Faruk, lui, est kurde. « Tous sont responsables, pas seulement le PKK », peste-t-il.

Depuis que le Conseil national de sécurité turc (MGK)

a décidé de limiter les exportations de la Turquie vers l'Irak, le trafic commercial a subi une baisse. Ce à quoi s'ajoutent, selon plusieurs camionneurs, les tracasseries de la douane irakienne depuis

**A Silopi, le commerce avec l'Irak compense les faibles revenus de l'exploitation des champs de coton et de l'élevage ovin.**

que la tension est montée entre les deux pays. Une situation qui inquiète. Car ces décisions sont plus pénalisantes pour les Turcs que pour les Irakiens. De ce fait, dans ces régions frontalières, on craint les retombées catastrophiques qu'aurait une décision du MGK exigeant l'arrêt de tout

trafic commercial avec l'Irak.

Près de 15 000 Turcs, pas tous d'origine kurde, sont installés dans le Kurdistan irakien et qui opèrent comme agents commerciaux ou représentants d'entreprises. Les échanges entre les deux pays – plus de 3 milliards de dollars d'exportation vers l'Irak en 2006 contre moins de 300 millions de dollars d'importation – bénéficient largement à la Turquie. Le boycott commercial entraînerait la fermeture de nombreuses PME et occasionnerait une perte d'environ 300 000 emplois dans le seul Kurdistan turc. « C'est pourquoi, affirme à l'Humanité Sertag Bucak, leader du Hak-Par (Parti pour les droits et les libertés, kurde), nous pensons que cette guerre, si guerre il y a, est d'abord dirigée contre les Kurdes. »

Hassane Zerrouky

**Le chiffre**  
**15 000**  
C'est à peu près le nombre de Turcs, pas tous d'origine kurde, vivant dans le Kurdistan irakien.



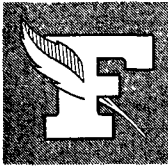
Les échanges entre les deux pays sont très réduits. Au poste de frontière de Habur, il passait 1 000 camions par jour. Il n'en passe que 300 aujourd'hui, l'attente est interminable.

L'HUMANITÉ

2 NOVEMBRE 2007

# Et si la Turquie était européenne

L'éditorial d'Yves Thréard



Toujours brûlante depuis la disparition de l'Empire ottoman, la question kurde prend aujourd'hui une nouvelle dimension. Ce peuple orphelin se remet à espérer dans la constitution d'un État, au nord de l'Irak en guerre. Ce que la Turquie ne peut accepter. Elle a dépêché 100 000 soldats à la frontière et multiplie les bombardements aériens. Inquiets, les États-Unis tentent de retenir Ankara. La diplomatie européenne ne reste pas inactive en coulisses, car la tension est vive.

Mais qu'en serait-il si la Turquie était membre de l'Union européenne ? Les opposants à son entrée agitent le chiffon de l'islamisme ou les réalités de la géographie pour contrer cet élargissement. Le conflit kurde, qui ne s'éteindra pas demain, est un autre argument de poids qu'ils peuvent faire valoir.

D'acteurs plus ou moins engagés actuellement, les Européens passeraient au premier rang sur le front des négociations... et des batailles. Bruxelles se retrouverait au cœur de la poudre du Moyen-Orient avec, comme voisins immédiats, la Syrie, l'Irak et l'Iran. Un horizon qui fait froid dans le dos...

La seule question kurde est autrement plus sensible que toutes les revendications nationalistes provenant du Pays basque espagnol, de Corse et même d'Irlande du Nord ! Du milieu des années 1980 à 1999, date de l'arrestation du leader autonomiste Abdullah Ocalan, elle a

causé la mort de plusieurs milliers de personnes en Turquie.

L'Union européenne a eu beau considérer le PKK, l'organisation séparatiste kurde, comme une structure terroriste, elle n'est pas d'une sévérité sans relâche. Nombre de Kurdes, fuyant la violence ou cherchant, au contraire, à la financer par divers trafics, vivent sur les bords de la Seine ou du Rhin. Tous ne sont pas militants, mais la plupart ne portent pas Ankara dans leur cœur.

D'où les critiques régulières des dirigeants turcs. Le premier ministre Erdogan vient encore, samedi dernier, d'accuser les pays européens

de ne pas extradier les activistes. Il a mis en cause « la sincérité » de nos diplomaties.

Les Vingt-Sept ne font pas de la reconnaissance du génocide arménien par la Turquie une condition préalable à son adhésion à l'Union. Précaution qui en dit long sur les difficultés à s'entendre des deux parties. Même sur le passé. La France est d'ailleurs l'un des seuls pays à avoir officiellement reconnu ce massacre, et à en condamner la négation.

On peut donc imaginer ce qu'il en serait pour régler la question kurde. La recherche d'une position commune à Bruxelles et Ankara relèverait de l'impossible. Comment trouver un juste milieu entre la tradition européenne du dialogue et la tentation turque du canon ?

Si l'Union est une « machine à faire la paix », conformément à son ambition fondatrice, son histoire ne l'a encore jamais amenée à faire déposer les armes.

LE FIGARO samedi 3 - dimanche 4 novembre 2007

LE FIGARO

## Les racketteurs du parti séparatiste kurde récoltent des millions en Allemagne

Les clandestins de l'organisation interdite lèvent un « impôt » parmi les 500 000 Kurdes installés dans le pays.

De notre correspondant à Berlin

L'ALLEMAGNE, comme les autres pays membres de l'UE, fiche le PKK comme « organisation terroriste ». Recep Tayyip Erdogan, le premier ministre turc, le leur a rappelé avec agacement, il y a une dizaine de jours. Car, fait-il valoir, il ne s'agit que de « déclarations » alors qu'Ankara

demande « des actes ».

À Berlin, Cem Özdemir, un député des Verts d'origine turque, va plus loin encore. Le PKK a beau être interdit en Allemagne depuis 1993, dit-il, cette mesure « n'est en rien effective ». Hans-Peter Uhl, député des conservateurs CSU, demande

lui l'expulsion pure et simple des meneurs. Le propos est sans doute excessif, mais l'Office pour la protection de la Constitution (BfV), l'équivalent outre-Rhin de la DST, admet que l'organisation kurde dispose toujours en Allemagne d'un « noyau de fonctionnaires qui agissent dans la clandestinité et l'illégalité ». Dans

### En France, deux opérations policières et des « maladroresses »

■ En France, le PKK a été visé par deux opérations depuis le début de l'année. Avec pour principale cible les racketteurs présumés qui récoltent « l'impôt révolutionnaire » nécessaire à l'organisation. En février dernier, treize responsables ou membres présumés du mouvement ont été interpellés.

Les policiers les soupçonnaient d'avoir récolté plus d'un million d'euros. Une analyse scientifique de billets, des dollars américains, a révélé des traces de cocaïne et d'héroïne.

En juin, ce sont neuf autres membres présumés du PKK qui ont été arrêtés au cours d'un second

coup de filet, puis mis en examen pour des attaques au cocktail Molotov contre des commerces et des associations turcs à Paris et en province.

Cette offensive avait tout pour plaire aux autorités turques. À un détail près : certains des suspects ont été libérés sous contrôle judi-

ciaire et se sont empressés de quitter la France. Interpellé en Autriche, l'un d'entre eux a même été renvoyé directement non pas vers Paris, mais dans le nord de l'Irak ! Ankara semble aujourd'hui avoir du mal à croire à une simple maladroresse...

Jean Chichizola



un rapport de mars 2007, ses experts estiment que sur le demi-million de Kurdes dans le pays, un sur dix est, au besoin, « mobilisable ».

« Un mois de salaire par an »

Le PKK a changé de nom en Europe pour dorénavant s'appeler *Kongra Gel*, ou « congrès populaire communauté kurde sont en réalité, selon les estimations du BfV, un « impôt » en bonne et due forme qui est recouvré « y compris par des pressions » sur ces contribuables

un peu particuliers. En principe, tout un chacun est redevable d'« un mois de salaire par an », ce qui peut atteindre « plusieurs mil-

du Kurdistan ». Il n'en a pas moins maintenu le découpage du territoire allemand en trois grandes entités - Nord, Centre et Sud - qui coiffent 27 régions. Ses quelque 11 500 membres ou sympathisants se livrent à la propagande et à la collecte de fonds. Car les « cotisations » encaissées auprès de la

liers d'euros » et se solde au total par une recette atteignant « des millions ».

D'autres spécialistes, comme Holger Münch, responsable de la police criminelle du Land de Brême cité par l'AFP, estiment que les cadres du PKK trempent également dans le trafic de drogue.

Le regain de tension entre les Kurdes et la Turquie au nord de l'Irak s'est en tout cas traduit par une reprise des affrontements en Allemagne. Des échauffourées ont

donné lieu, le week-end dernier à Berlin, à 15 arrestations. De nouvelles manifestations sont prévues ce dimanche dans la capitale. Les relations entre les deux communautés avaient été plutôt calmes ces dernières années, après avoir culminé dans des heurts violents en 1999.

PIERRE BOCEV

2 NOVEMBRE 2007



Menacés militairement par la Turquie et en conflit latent avec tous leurs voisins, inquiets de l'unification transfrontalière croissante de ce peuple, les Kurdes convoitent la zone pétrolifère de Kirkouk, en Irak, comme base d'un futur Etat.

# Les fronts du Kurdistan

Une guerre peut en cacher une autre, voire plusieurs. La Turquie a massé plus de 100 000 soldats le long de la frontière, menaçant d'intervenir au Kurdistan irakien contre les bases arrière des « séparatistes » kurdes turcs du PKK (parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan). Washington s'oppose à une telle opération qui entraînerait des réactions en chaîne, rallumant la question kurde dans toute la région. Ce peuple de 30 à 40 millions de personnes, écartelé entre Turquie, Irak, Iran et Syrie, n'a jamais réussi à construire son propre Etat, sinon pour de très brèves périodes. « Le seul ami du Kurde est la montagne », dit un vieux dicton. **Indépendante.** Mais la région autonome kurde d'Irak, avec ses 4 à 5 millions d'habitants, qui, depuis 1991, échappe totalement à la tutelle de Bagdad, représente une première ébauche d'Etat kurde. Elle est indépendante de facto au sein d'un Irak fédéral en plein chaos. Plutôt prospère malgré une corruption généralisée, et protégé par ses 100 000 « peshmergas » (combattants kurdes), le « Kurdistan du sud », comme l'appellent les nationalistes, constitue un havre de liberté d'expres-

sion qui fait rêver les Kurdes des pays voisins. « On assiste maintenant à une jonction entre les Kurdes du nord de l'Irak et les Kurdes turcs sur le plan culturel, linguistique, économique, qui n'a jamais existé auparavant », souligne l'orientaliste Olivier Roy. D'où la crainte des milieux nationalistes turcs, même si, comme le rappelle Kendal Nezan, de l'Institut kurde de Paris, « les Kurdes de Turquie réclament une solution à l'intérieur du territoire turc ». En effet, malgré quelques progrès en matière de droits culturels obtenus sous la pression de Bruxelles, ils ne disposent d'aucune forme d'autonomie. Poussé par une opinion publique chauffée à blanc, le Premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, issu du mouvement isla-

miste, martèle que la Turquie « n'hésitera pas à payer le prix, quel qu'il soit, pour protéger ses droits et son unité », tout en assurant que l'intervention restera limitée « aux bases des terroristes ». Sans convaincre pour autant les autorités kurdes irakiennes. « Cette offensive a pour cible la région du Kurdistan, et pas seulement le PKK », accuse Adnan Al-Mufti, le président du parlement régional. Les Turcs affirment d'ailleurs de plus en plus clairement que la clef du pro-



blème est le président kurde irakien, Massoud Barzani. « Il doit maintenant choisir : ou devenir un interlocuteur et un voisin ou être une cible », écrit ainsi Erturul Özkök, du grand quotidien *Hürriyet*. Mais les leaders kurdes irakiens ne peuvent livrer les chefs du PKK, comme l'exige Ankara, ou même rester passifs, sans se décrédibiliser. **Ligne rouge.** L'enjeu latent est celui de la ville de Kirkouk, revendiquée par les Kurdes irakiens comme leur capitale, bien que placée hors de la région par le régime de Saddam. L'intégration à la zone kurde de ce département aux riches ressources pétrolières est considérée comme une « ligne rouge » par Ankara, comme par Téhéran ou Damas, mais aussi Bagdad : elle donnerait aux Kurdes les moyens de leur indépendance. Pour l'administration américaine, le casse-tête kurde se complique de jour en jour. Il lui faut d'un côté ménager l'allié turc, pilier du flanc sud-est de l'Otan, dont le territoire joue un rôle essentiel pour la logistique de la guerre en Irak, mais où les sentiments antiaméricains explosent. De l'autre, il lui faut préserver l'alliance avec les Kurdes irakiens, ses seuls réels alliés dans ce pays, d'autant que Washington compte bien installer de grandes bases permanentes au Kurdistan. Et la carte kurde leur est aussi essentielle dans les grandes manœuvres guerrières qui se précisent autour de l'Irak.

← JEAN-PIERRE PERRIN et MARC SEMO

## Turquie: deux rebelles kurdes, un supplétif de l'armée tués dans des combats

AFP

**ANKARA, 4 nov 2007 (AFP) -** Deux rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et un supplétif kurde de l'armée turque ont été tués dimanche lors de combats dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

L'accrochage est survenu près de la localité d'Ildil, voisine de la Syrie, dans la province de Sirnak, indique Anatolie, citant des sources locales.

La province de Sirnak, qui est aussi riveraine de l'Irak, est le théâtre depuis deux semaines d'une vaste opération de l'armée contre les rebelles, faisant

suite à la mort le 21 octobre de 12 soldats dans une attaque du PKK.

La Turquie menace d'intervenir militairement dans le nord de l'Irak pour éradiquer les camps du PKK qui s'y trouvent et servent de base aux rebelles pour leurs actions dans le sud-est anatolien, à la population en majorité kurde.

La mort des deux rebelles porte à 82 le bilan des pertes du PKK depuis le 21 octobre dans le Sud-Est, d'après les décomptes de l'armée

## Plusieurs milliers de Turcs et de Kurdes manifestent à Berlin et Cologne

AFP

**BERLIN, 4 nov 2007 (AFP) - 16h18 -** Plusieurs milliers de Turcs et de Kurdes manifestaient dans le calme à Berlin et à Cologne (ouest de l'Allemagne) dimanche après-midi pour protester contre la situation à la frontière turco-irakienne, selon la police.

Dans le centre de Cologne, en Rhénanie du nord-Westphalie, plusieurs milliers de Turcs ont défilé contre le "terrorisme", tandis qu'à Berlin environ 600 Kurdes sont descendus dans les rues du quartier turc de Neukölln, d'après la même source.

Samedi, plus de 12.000 Turcs et Kurdes avaient manifesté dans le calme dans plusieurs villes d'Allemagne contre le conflit entre l'armée turque et les séparatistes kurdes à la frontière turco-irakienne.

Le plus gros rassemblement avec environ 7.000 personnes avait eu lieu à Nuremberg, dans l'Etat régional de Bavière (sud de l'Allemagne), à l'initiative d'une association turque. Le mouvement avait également atteint Hambourg (nord) avec 1850 participants, Stuttgart, dans le Bade-Wurtemberg (sud-

ouest), avec 1.200 et Dortmund, en Rhénanie du Nord-Westphalie (ouest), avec également 1.200 manifestants.

Le weekend dernier, des violences avaient éclaté dans le pays entre Kurdes et Turques, notamment à Berlin, en marge d'une manifestation de soutien au gouvernement d'Ankara qui avait dégénéré en affrontements entre nationalistes turcs et Kurdes. Quatorze personnes avaient été interpellées et 18 policiers blessés.

Le ministre allemand de l'Intérieur Wolfgang Schäuble a averti ce weekend dans une interview à la presse que l'Etat "ne tolérera pas la violence".

Selon l'Office pour la protection de la constitution, le PKK compte quelque 11.500 adhérents en Allemagne, dont 1.000 à Berlin, tandis que l'extrême droite nationaliste turque compte plus de 7.500 adhérents, dont des membres des "Loups gris".

Quelque 2,4 millions de personnes originaires de Turquie habitent l'Allemagne, dont près de 600.000 sont d'extraction kurde.

## Autriche: cinq blessés dans une bagarre entre Kurdes et Turcs à Vienne

AFP

**VIENNE, 4 nov 2007 (AFP) --** Cinq personnes ont été blessées dans une bagarre impliquant entre 70 et 80 personnes d'origine turque et kurde dimanche soir dans un quartier du sud de Vienne, a indiqué la police.

Deux hommes souffrent de graves blessures à l'arme blanche et trois autres sont légèrement blessés.

La police a indiqué qu'elle était toujours à la recherche de suspects non identifiés.

La bagarre a eu lieu alors que les tensions entre l'armée turque et les séparatistes kurdes du PKK sont particulièrement aiguës à la frontière turco-irakienne.

Près de 1.000 personnes ont également manifesté dimanche après-midi à Sankt-Poelten, à l'est de Vienne, pour "montrer leur solidarité avec la Turquie contre la terreur du PKK", mais cette manifestation s'est déroulée sans heurt, a précisé la police.

## Barzani pour des discussions à quatre sur les incursions kurdes en Turquie

AFP

**WASHINGTON, 5 nov 2007 (AFP) -** Le Premier ministre de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, Nechirvan Barzani, a proposé d'organiser des discussions à quatre (Irak, Turquie, Etats-Unis et région kurde) sur la question des incursions de rebelles kurdes en territoire turc à partir de l'Irak.

"C'est une question transnationale, rendue compliquée par des liens ethniques, et aucun parti ne peut trouver de solution à lui tout seul", écrit M. Barzani dans un article publié lundi par le Washington Post.

"A cette fin, nous proposons des discussions entre Ankara, Bagdad, Erbil et Washington", ajoute-t-il.

Les déclarations de M. Barzani interviennent au moment où le président américain George W. Bush doit s'entretenir à Washington avec le Premier minis-

tre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Avant la rencontre prévue lundi à la Maison Blanche, le Premier ministre turc a prévenu que la patience de la Turquie face aux attaques des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) établis dans le nord de l'Irak était "à bout".

La Turquie accuse les autorités autonomes du Kurdistan irakien de soutenir les activités du PKK et reproche à Washington de ne pas en faire assez contre les rebelles.

Dans le Washington Post, M. Barzani, tout en condamnant les incursions des rebelles du PKK, réfute ces accusations affirmant que le gouvernement autonome "ne les laissent pas opérer librement, contrairement à ce que certains ont pu dire".

# Faut-il bombarder l'Iran ?

Son système de défense militaire est inopérant. Mais ce serait une erreur politique d'agresser le pays

**A** en juger par son comportement, le pouvoir iranien est en proie à la panique. Et il a tout lieu de l'être : il y a un peu plus d'un mois, Israël a mené, avec succès, un raid en Syrie contre ce que l'on pense être des installations nucléaires, prouvant ainsi que les défenses antiaériennes de construction russe, dont l'Iran s'est lui aussi doté, sont vulnérables.

Derrière le premier ministre israélien Ehoud Olmert, il faut voir George Bush. Les deux chefs d'Etat ont fait part à maintes reprises de leur détermination à empêcher l'Iran d'acquérir l'arme nucléaire, si nécessaire par la force. Et, dans ce cas, l'Iran n'aura pas grand-chose à leur opposer. L'International Institute of Strategic Studies de Londres a évalué son budget de défense à environ 6,3 milliards de dollars (4,3 milliards d'euros). Soit un peu plus de la moitié de celui d'Israël et moins de 2 % de celui des Etats-Unis. A ce budget s'ajoutent probablement des programmes secrets, mais l'Iran est à cet égard loin d'être une exception.

Si les Etats-Unis attaquent Téhéran (nous parlons ici d'une frappe reposant sur des tirs de missiles de croisière et l'aviation), l'Iran n'aura aucun moyen de répliquer. Leurs forces terrestres et navales ne conviennent pas pour ce type de frappe. Il se peut que le pays possède des missiles Shihab III ayant la portée nécessaire, mais seulement en petit nombre et pour une fiabilité très aléatoire. Si ces missiles sont dotés d'ogives conventionnelles, en termes militaires, l'effet sera quasi nul. A l'inverse, si ces ogives sont non conventionnelles,

l'Iran s'exposera, pour reprendre les termes employés par l'ancien premier ministre israélien Itzhak Shamir peu avant la première guerre du Golfe, à des représailles « redoutables et terribles ».

L'aviation iranienne n'est guère plus brillante. En 1988 déjà, à la fin de la guerre Iran-Irak, la flotte iranienne de vieux appareils de construction américaine n'était pour ainsi dire pas en état de marche. Depuis, hormis les avions irakiens qui se sont enfuis vers l'Iran pendant la guerre du Golfe de 1991 (et ne sont probablement plus en état non plus), les seuls apports hypothétiques seraient quelques avions de chasse russes. Seuls un petit nombre de témoins ont vu ces appareils. Et quand bien même l'Iran les aurait en sa possession, ces avions sont incapables d'atteindre Israël sans un ravitaillement en vol lors duquel ils risquent d'être abattus.

L'Iran construit aussi ses propres avions. Présenté récemment lors d'un défilé et baptisé Saeqeh (littéralement, « éclair »), il est une variation du F-5 Tiger

américain. Conçu dans les années 1950 puis amélioré au cours de la décennie suivante, le F-5 fut refusé par l'armée américaine. Il a donc été vendu à d'autres pays, notamment à l'Iran, à la Jordanie et à plusieurs pays d'Amérique latine, qui n'étaient pas équipés pour exploiter des appareils plus sophistiqués. Le combat le plus illustre jamais livré par le F-5 a sans doute eu lieu dans le film *Top Gun*, de 1986, où il jouait le « rôle » d'un modèle imaginaire de MIG soviétique.

L'Iran aurait ainsi copié certains de ces appareils en leur apportant quelques améliorations. Il n'en reste pas moins que les Saeqeh n'ont pas la moindre chance face à des chasseurs dernier cri. De plus, Téhéran n'en possède qu'un nombre très limité. Et tout comme les avions de chasse russes, ils ne peuvent atteindre Israël qu'à condition d'être ravitaillés en vol.

Une autre solution consisterait pour les Iraniens à attiser les conflits dans le Golfe – c'est vraisemblablement ce qui trottait dans la tête du responsable des missiles au sein des Gardiens de la révolution, le général Mahmoud Chaharbaghi, lorsqu'il a affirmé être en mesure de lancer « 11 000 roquettes à la minute ». Ineptie. Exception faite des Katioucha, de courte portée et peu précis, aucun pays ne possède autant de roquettes, loin s'en faut. De fait, les forces américaines et leurs alliés dans le Golfe devraient pouvoir faire face à la menace des missiles iraniens. Sinon, à quoi bon maintenir dans la région 40 000 militaires (sans compter ceux postés en Irak) et deux ou trois groupes aéronavals dotés de 25 000 hommes ?

Dernière option pour Téhéran, organiser des attentats terroristes contre l'Occi-

Partout où l'arme nucléaire a fait son apparition, ses détenteurs ont cessé de se livrer des guerres à grande échelle

Martin  
Van Creveld

Professeur à l'Université hébraïque de Jérusalem, spécialiste des questions stratégiques

dent. Mais en termes stratégiques, ces opérations auraient des effets quasi nuls : après tout, les attentats du 11-Septembre, les plus importants de l'histoire, n'ont rien entamé des capacités des forces armées américaines. Une campagne terroriste coordonnée, contrairement à de petites attaques isolées, est plus facile à annoncer qu'à organiser, car beaucoup de choses peuvent capoter. En 1991 déjà, certains avaient craint que Saddam Hussein ne prépare une campagne de ce type ; au bout du compte, il n'y eut pas un seul attentat.

Rien de tout cela ne signifie pour autant que les Etats-Unis et ou Israël doivent réagir et lancer une offensive. Il n'est pas certain que les installations nucléaires iraniennes, vastes, bien disséminées et bien cachées, puissent vraiment être éliminées, et contrairement aux attaques menées par Israël contre l'Irak en 1981 et contre la Syrie, il est cette fois impossible de compter sur le facteur surprise. Il n'est d'ailleurs pas certain que ces attaques, si tant est qu'elles soient faisables, soient d'une quelconque utilité.

Depuis 1945, il ne s'est guère passé une année sans que ne se fassent entendre des voix, pour la plupart américaines, prédisant au monde les pires tourments si de nouveaux pays devaient se doter de l'arme nucléaire. Mais jusqu'ici, rien n'a donné raison à ces Cassandre. Bien au contraire : partout où l'arme nucléaire a fait son apparition, ses détenteurs ont cessé de se livrer des guerres à grande échelle. Notons que le général John P. Abizaid, ancien commandant en chef des forces américaines au Moyen-Orient, est venu s'ajouter à une longue liste d'experts qui, comme lui, estiment que le monde peut tout à fait vivre avec un Iran doté de l'arme nucléaire. Voilà un point de vue dont il faut tenir compte si l'on veut éviter que la pose anxieuse de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad ne pousse quiconque à commettre une bêtise. ■

Traduit de l'anglais par Julie Marcot  
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**Le Monde**  
2 novembre 2007

# L'armée turque fait régner un climat d'avant-guerre à la frontière du Kurdistan irakien

**KANI MASSI (Kurdistan irakien)**  
ENVOYÉ SPÉCIAL

« Les Turcs ? Mais ils sont déjà là-haut ! Vous les voyez ? » Au sommet de la montagne qui surplombe la verdoyante vallée de Kani Massi, on distingue quelques silhouettes derrière un parapet de pierraille et une bannière rouge qui flotte en haut d'un mât. Incompréhension. L'invasion du Kurdistan irakien aurait-elle commencé ? Ces soldats qui nous observent de là-haut seraient-ils l'avant-garde de cette puissante armée turque qui menace, depuis la mi-octobre, d'envoyer 100 000 hommes dans les montagnes irakiennes pour capturer ces insaisissables « terroristes kurdes » qui ont encore tué, en Turquie, 12 soldats et en ont capturé 8 autres, le 21 du

même mois ? « Non, non... » sourit Omar Maï, « chef » de cette petite municipalité agricole inconfortablement située à portée de fusil de la frontière turque. « Ils ont reçu récemment des renforts, dit-il, peut-être 500 hommes, on ne sait pas. Mais la garnison est ici depuis au moins dix ans. Ils ne nous créent pas de problème. Parfois, ils descendent au village pour acheter de l'eau ou des sucreries à l'épicerie. Ils payent, et puis ils remontent dans leur camion sans adresser la parole à quiconque. »

Côté irakien, le long de la frontière turque, d'impeccables routes en lacets serpentent à travers les montagnes et les riches vallées de pommiers et de peupliers du Kurdistan. La plupart des villages de la région sont à majorité chrétien-

ne, surtout depuis deux ans qu'au moins 30 000 membres de la petite communauté assyrienne, fuyant le chaos de Bagdad et des autres centres urbains d'Irak, se sont réfugiés ici, entre les « gouvernorats » de Dohouk et d'Erbil.

## Soldats immobiles

Quelques dizaines de kilomètres à l'ouest de Kani Massi, juste avant Begova, quasiment en bord de route, s'élèvent les fortifications d'une autre garnison turque, plus importante et plus lourdement équipée, avec une demi-douzaine de blindés, autant de chars d'assaut, des batteries d'artillerie lourde et des nids de mitrailleuses tout autour. A 500 m en contrebas, un petit poste militaire kurde

irakien vérifie placidement les laissez-passer des rares visiteurs.

Ces casernements turcs en terre irakienne – il y en a au moins trois autres dans la zone frontalière – sont théoriquement là depuis un accord signé en 1997, après une énième – et vaine – invasion militaire turque, pour « surveiller » et empêcher les infiltrations en Turquie de ces 3 000 ou 4 000 rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste) retranchés depuis vingt-trois ans dans les montagnes irakiennes.

Bien sûr, ces soldats immobiles, – jamais attaqués par les rebelles suite à un autre accord, entre le PKK et le gouvernement autonome kurde irakien théoriquement en charge de la région cette fois –, n'ont jamais non plus arrêté personne.

Leurs garnisons, a prévenu un général turc à Ankara, « pourraient être utilisées et renforcées lors des massives opérations antiterroristes que nous préparons ». Ankara a massé 100 000 hommes à la frontière et prévient que les avions de chasse F16 et les hélicoptères de combat participeront à l'invasion.

En attendant l'issue de tractations diplomatiques en cours, chacun retient son souffle. « Bien sûr que les gens ont peur ! » confie Michaël Zeya, sacristain de l'église Saint-Georges de Duri, autre petit bourg agricole frontalier, avant d'ajouter : « Les gens se souviennent que notre église a été bombardée et démolie par les canonnades turques en 1997. Personne n'a envie de revivre cela. Et les voilà qui recommencent ! Des obus tombent sur la région à peu près chaque jour, depuis un mois maintenant. Ce matin, ce sont les villages de Nizdureh et de Haloua, à quelques kilomètres d'ici, qui ont été touchés, paraît-il. » Renseignements pris, aucun bâtiment ni aucun habitant n'a été touché. « Seuls quelques peupliers ont flambé », précise le « chef » Omar Maï.

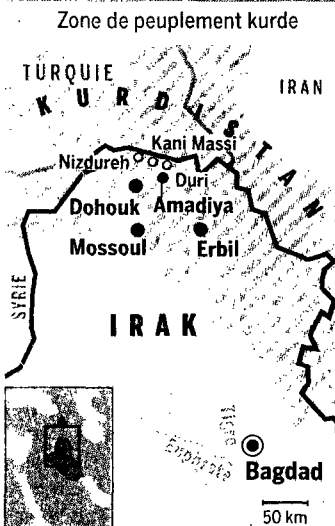
De deux choses l'une : ou bien les artilleurs turcs sont particulièrement maladroits ou ils sont simplement chargés d'intimider les populations pour dégager le terrain en prélude à l'invasion. Chacun penche plutôt pour la seconde hypothèse.

Au détour d'un virage, à quelques kilomètres plus à l'est, dans la zone de Serzéré, la complexité

## Bagdad et Ankara sanctionnent à nouveau le PKK

Les gouvernements turc et irakien ont décidé, mercredi 31 octobre, d'appliquer de nouvelles sanctions contre les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste). Ankara a déclaré avoir adopté des « mesures simultanées militaires, politiques, diplomatiques et économiques » contre le PKK mais aussi ses « associés, ceux qui l'aident et le couvrent », ce qui vise implicitement l'administration de la région autonome kurde d'Irak, base arrière du PKK. Pour sa part, Bagdad a mis en place de nouveaux barra-

ges pour restreindre les déplacements et « empêcher l'approvisionnement du PKK », a indiqué le chef de la diplomatie irakienne, Hochiar Zebari. Cette crise est au centre des entretiens prévus, vendredi à Ankara, entre la secrétaire d'Etat américaine, Condoleezza Rice, et les dirigeants turcs. Ils devraient assister ensuite, à Istanbul, à une réunion des ministres des affaires étrangères de l'Irak, de ses pays voisins, des cinq membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU et des pays du G8. – (AFP, Reuters.)



Un soldat kurde irakien patrouille dans le village de Barach, près de la frontière turque, déserté par ses habitants par crainte d'une offensive de l'armée d'Ankara contre les rebelles séparatistes du PKK. KHALID MOHAMMED/AP

topographique de la bataille annoncée saute aux yeux. Au nord, en contrebas, une clôture barbelée accrochée à des pylônes blancs court sur un contrefort de la montagne et contourne un long bâtiment abandonné qui fut un poste-frontière irakien avant que la Turquie exige sa fermeture. C'est la ligne de démarcation officielle. Au sud de cette ligne, sur un piton rocheux, quelques centaines de mètres plus haut, côté irakien, un autre cantonnement turc fait face, 500 m plus au sud encore et sur un

autre piton de hauteur identique, à un poste de soldats kurdes irakiens. Tirés du territoire turc, les obus qui tombent autour des rangées de petites maisons blanches alignées comme à la parade, en contrebas dans la vallée – un nouveau village chrétien édifié pour les réfugiés par le gouvernement kurde et à présent totalement désert – passent forcément au-dessus de la tête des forces opposées !

#### Rebelles invisibles

Et les rebelles du PKK, dans

tout cela ? « Ils connaissent le terrain comme leur poche », dit Omar Maï en riant. « On ne les voit jamais. Il y a eu du sang entre eux et nous jadis [en 1997, et 2 000 Kurdes turcs et Kurdes irakiens se sont combattus]. Ils ne descendent pas dans les villages. Même blessés, ils préfèrent mourir dans les montagnes », affirme-t-il. Le sacristain assyrien de Duri avoue « être tombé sur l'un de leurs campements, un jour, en allant à la chasse. On a pris le thé, ils étaient sympas. Je ne les ai jamais revus ».

A Amadiya, la plus grosse agglomération de la région, Fahmi Salman, un notable local, se dit convaincu que si les Turcs entrent au Kurdistan, les Kurdes irakiens « se battront en masse » aux côtés des « cousins » du PKK. A Kani Massi, Omar Maï cite un proverbe kurde : « Quand un ennemi puissant menace, il vaut mieux se couper un membre et rester en vie plutôt que mourir tout entier... » ■

PATRICE CLAUDE

### Le Monde

Dimanche 4 - Lundi 5 novembre 2007

# Le PKK libère des soldats turcs, Bagdad promet « des mesures fortes »

Le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, s'est envolé pour Washington à l'issue de la réunion internationale d'Istanbul consacrée à la tension entre la Turquie et l'Irak

ISTANBUL  
CORRESPONDANCE

Les huit soldats turcs retenus depuis deux semaines par le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) « ont réintégré les forces armées », selon le communiqué publié, dimanche 4 novembre par l'état-major d'Ankara. Ils ont été remis par les rebelles séparatistes à deux ministres du gouvernement de la région autonome kurde d'Irak. C'est dans cette zone, limitrophe de la Turquie, où sont retranchés 3 500 combattants du PKK, que les soldats étaient détenus, contrairement à ce qu'affirmaient de précédents communiqués qui les localisaient sur le territoire turc. L'armée américaine a escorté les huit hommes jusqu'à un avion militaire turc qui les a ramenés au pays. Le 21 octobre, ils avaient été capturés dans l'attaque de Daglica, dans les monta-

gnes du sud de la Turquie, où 12 soldats avaient été tués. L'embuscade avait directement entraîné la riposte du Parlement turc, qui donnait son accord à une opération militaire transfrontalière.

Cette libération confirme les efforts diplomatiques constatés au sommet des pays voisins de l'Irak, samedi, à Istanbul, et dont les débats ont été largement consacrés à la montée de tension à la frontière turco-irakienne. Le premier ministre irakien, Nouri Al-Maliki, s'est engagé à prendre « des mesures fortes ». Avec notamment la fermeture des bureaux d'un parti politique proche des rebelles kurdes et une surveillance renforcée, peut-être à des arrestations, a-t-il dit.

Martelant tout le week-end leur condamnation de la violence du groupe kurde, « un ennemi commun », mais aussi leur refus de voir la Turquie ouvrir un nouveau front en Irak, les Etats-Unis observent attentivement la situation. « Nous applaudissons les efforts du gouvernement irakien », s'est réjoui le département d'Etat américain, dimanche, après la remise en liberté des soldats turcs.

Mais la Turquie garde, selon le ministre des affaires étrangères Ali Babacan, « toutes les options sur la table », y compris celle d'un déploiement militaire. « Nous continuerons de mener la lutte contre le fléau du terrorisme avec une totale détermination », a déclaré, dimanche, le porte-parole du gouvernement Cemil Çiçek. Ankara a déjà livré une liste de 153 noms de « terroristes » à arrêter, parmi lesquels figure un fils de Massoud Barzani, le président du Kurdistan irakien, et réclame des actes concrets.

Car pendant ce temps, les manifestations, plus ou moins spontanées, et les manchettes des journaux populaires maintiennent la pression sur les autorités, poussées à intervenir militairement en Irak. Le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui s'est envolé dès samedi soir pour Washington, devait être reçu à la Maison Blanche par le

Ankara garde, selon le ministre des affaires étrangères Ali Babacan, « toutes les options sur la table »

président George Bush, lundi, pour une rencontre dont la Turquie attend beaucoup. « Ce sera un sérieux test », pour la coopération entre les deux pays, a confié M. Erdogan. Dans l'avion de retour vers Ankara, son idée sera plus précise.

Selon la plupart des observateurs de la politique turque, le premier ministre, qui, en juillet, se déclarait opposé à une intervention armée contre les bases du PKK, cherche surtout à gagner du temps. A l'approche de l'hiver, la trêve devient inévitable. Les fortes neiges qui recouvrent chaque année les sommets du sud de la Turquie font traditionnellement cesser les combats. Des officiers de l'armée turque ont mis en garde contre l'extrême difficulté de déclencher une opération dans de telles conditions. ■

GUILAUME PERRIER

## La Syrie mise en garde pour son ingérence au Liban

Les mises en garde contre la Syrie se sont multipliées lors de la conférence d'Istanbul, où se réunissaient, les 2 et 3 novembre, les pays voisins de l'Irak et les grandes puissances. « L'intimidation et l'ingérence (syriennes) dans le processus électoral libanais sont inacceptables », conclut un communiqué, publié à l'issue d'une réunion ministérielle entre la France, les Etats-Unis, l'Arabie saoudite, l'Egypte, les Emirats arabes unis, la

Jordanie et la Ligue arabe. Dimanche, le secrétaire général de l'Elysée, Claude Guéant, et le conseiller diplomatique du président Nicolas Sarkozy, Jean-David Levitte, « ont été reçus à Damas par le président syrien Bachar Al-Assad » pour évoquer le Liban, a annoncé l'Elysée. Le mandat du président libanais pro-syrien Emile Lahoud expire le 24 novembre et le processus électoral est dans l'impasse. – (Corresp)

PKK

# Manœuvres internationales contre une intervention turque en Irak du Nord

C'est un double et crucial rendez-vous diplomatique. A Ankara, la secrétaire d'Etat américaine Condoleezza Rice et le secrétaire général des Nations unies, Ban Ki-moon, tentent de convaincre les autorités turques de ne pas intervenir en Irak du nord contre les bases arrières des rebelles kurdes du PKK. Parallèlement, à Istanbul, la conférence des six pays voisins de l'Irak avec les membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité et ceux du G8 a commencé vendredi, en fin de journée.

## Les risques d'une intervention militaire turque sont-ils réels ?

Avec 100 000 hommes massés à la frontière, Ankara fait monter la tension depuis le 21 octobre, après que des rebelles du PKK ont tué 12 soldats turcs et en ont capturé huit autres lors d'une embuscade. Le gouvernement de l'AKP - issu du mouvement islamiste - a néanmoins toujours laissé la porte ouverte à une solution diplomatique. « Le sujet sur notre agenda est une opération militaire mais pas une guerre et nous espérons qu'elle ne sera pas nécessaire », affirmait encore en début de semaine le premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan devant son parti, qui, mi-octobre, avait voté au Parlement l'autorisation pour une opération transfrontalière. L'armée, qui faisait pression pour une telle intervention, en connaît aussi les risques et les limites : il y en a eu 24 dans le passé, sans résultat notable.

Accusé de tolérer sur son territoire le PKK, aussi considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Washington et l'Union européenne, Massoud Barzani - président du Kurdistan irakien, qui échappe totalement à la tutelle de Bagdad depuis 1991 - a beau jeu de souligner que « l'armée turque elle-même n'a pas réussi à éradiquer en vingt-trois ans le PKK ». Face à une opinion chauffée



Recep Tayyip Erdogan reçoit Condoleezza Rice, vendredi à Ankara. PHOTO FATH SARIBAS. REUTERS

à blanc, il sera en tout cas difficile pour le gouvernement turc de faire machine arrière sans obtenir de réelles garanties américaines. « Nous sommes arrivés à un point où

« **Nous sommes arrivés à un point où le temps des paroles est fini et où celui de l'action commence.** »

Ali Babacan, ministre turc des Affaires étrangères

le temps des paroles est fini et où celui de l'action commence », affirmait vendredi le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères, Ali Babacan, à l'issue de ses entretiens avec Condoleezza Rice.

## Que peuvent entreprendre les Américains ?

Depuis le début de cette nouvelle crise, les Etats-Unis appellent Ankara « à la retenue » pour ne pas déstabiliser le Kurdistan irakien, qui reste épargné par le chaos. Condoleezza Rice, lors de son arrivée à

Ankara, a de nouveau souligné que le PKK « est l'ennemi de la Turquie, des Etats-Unis et de l'Irak ». Les Turcs clament qu'ils en ont assez des mots creux, d'autant que la commission tripartite avec les autorités kurdes locales, créée il y a un an, n'a rien donné.

L'embaras de Washington est toujours plus tangible, coïncé entre d'un côté une Turquie pilier du flanc du sud-est de l'Otan, qui joue un rôle essentiel dans la logistique pour la guerre en Irak, et de l'autre leurs protégés kurdes. Pour agir « efficacement », l'administration américaine promet notamment une coopération plus étroite dans le renseignement. La visite de Recep Tayyip Erdogan à Washington, lundi, pourrait être le tournant de la crise. Mais Ankara est sous la pression d'une opinion turque devenue massivement antiaméricaine, convain-

cue que les Etats-Unis veulent démanteler leur pays.

## Les Turcs vont-ils utiliser l'arme économique ?

La plupart des biens consommés dans le Kurdistan irakien viennent de Turquie, de même que l'électricité et l'essence. Les exportations turques à direction de la zone ont ainsi atteint 1,2 milliard d'euros pour les huit premiers mois de l'année. En outre, les droits de douanes sur le transit des marchandises à destination du reste de l'Irak remplissent les caisses du gouvernement régional de Massoud Barzani.

Le Conseil national de sécurité turc a préconisé la semaine dernière des sanctions économiques, mais elles auraient un effet boomerang dans le sud-est du pays, à majorité kurde, où près de 300 000 personnes vivent directement ou indirectement du commerce avec l'Irak.

◀ MARC SEMO

# Ankara accentue la pression sur les Kurdes d'Irak

Après la libération, hier, de huit soldats turcs détenus depuis deux semaines, la Turquie estime que les Kurdes d'Irak doivent faire plus contre la guérilla du PKK

ISTAMBOUL

De notre correspondante

Après deux semaines de captivité, les huit soldats turcs faits prisonniers par les activistes kurdes du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) le 21 octobre ont été libérés. Les familles de ces soldats ont appris la nouvelle tôt hier matin, grâce aux chaînes de télévision turques. D'après un porte-parole du PKK, ces soldats ont été relâchés, « en bonne santé », vers 7h30, heure locale, en zone irakienne, et sans qu'aucune rançon ait été versée. Ils ont été remis à une délégation comprenant deux ministres du gouvernement autonome kurde d'Irak et trois députés turcs du parti pro-kurde DTP. Ces trois députés servaient d'intermédiaires officieux entre Ankara et le PKK.

Une fois arrivés à Erbil, ces soldats auraient été remis à l'armée américaine, puis à l'armée turque. Après un arrêt sur la base aérienne de Diyarbakir, dans le sud-est de la Turquie, ils devaient arriver hier soir dans la capitale, Ankara, avant de retrouver leurs familles aujourd'hui.

L'administration kurde d'Irak s'est aussitôt félicitée de cette libération, fruit « d'efforts personnels » menés,

entre autres, par le président du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani, et par Jalal Talabani, le président irakien. « La libération de ces soldats est un message symbolique de notre volonté d'avoir de bonnes relations avec la Turquie », a affirmé le premier ministre de la région autonome kurde d'Irak, Nechirvan Barzani.

Cette libération est arrivée à point nommé, au lendemain d'une rencontre à Istanbul entre les pays voisins de l'Irak. La Turquie y a reçu un soutien international dans sa lutte contre le PKK. « D'ici quelques jours, vous verrez des actes concrets sur le terrain; preuve de notre sérieux », a lancé sur les bords du Bosphore Hoshyar Zebari, ministre irakien des affaires étrangères. Bagdad a

déjà annoncé la fermeture immédiate des bureaux du PKK en Irak et des partis politiques sympathisants, l'arrêt de l'approvisionnement logistique de cette organisation terroriste, et s'est dit prêt à capturer ses leaders.

La libération est aussi intervenue à la veille d'une rencontre jugée « déterminante » entre le premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan et le président américain George W. Bush à Washington. La Turquie, qui continue de brandir la menace d'une intervention dans le nord de l'Irak pour y déloger les activistes du PKK, attend des actes concrets de la part de son allié américain.

Cette libération, à laquelle les forces américaines ont visiblement participé, permettra-t-elle d'adoucir

la position turque? Rien n'est moins sûr. Certes, elle est perçue côté kurde comme un signe de bonne volonté de la part du PKK qui avait appelé mercredi la Turquie à dialoguer pour mettre un terme à la crise. Mais, en pratique, Ankara, qui refuse de dialoguer avec le PKK et avec l'administration kurde d'Irak, exige bien plus que la libération de ses soldats. Sa priorité reste la fermeture des camps du PKK, installés dans les monts Kandil.

Hier, l'annonce de la libération a donc été accueillie sans tambour ni trompette. L'état-major s'est contenté d'un succinct message sur son site Internet, confirmant le « retour » des soldats. Depuis quinze jours, il refusait d'ailleurs d'employer le terme « enlèvement », préférant évoquer une « perte de contact ». Le malaise est également évident du côté du gouvernement. À la mi-journée, le premier ministre Erdogan a annulé une conférence de presse, laissant son vice-premier ministre, Cemil Cicek, commenter la situation en termes très fermes: « La lutte contre le terrorisme continue », a-t-il déclaré. « Toutes les options restent sur la table », a insisté le ministre des affaires étrangères, Ali Babacan.

La médiation du gouvernement kurde irakien dans la libération des otages donne un argument à Recep Tayyip Erdogan face à George W. Bush: « S'ils ont pu faire libérer les prisonniers, pourquoi ne peuvent-ils pas agir directement contre le PKK? » Cette question était dans de nombreuses têtes, hier, en Turquie.

DELPHINE NERBOLLIER

## L'Irak s'engage à agir contre le PKK

Le chef de la diplomatie française, Bernard Kouchner, a exhorté samedi la Turquie « à ne pas traverser la frontière » irakienne, après un entretien avec son homologue turc, Ali Babacan, en marge d'une conférence sur l'Irak à Istanbul. « C'est aux Irakiens de contrôler leur territoire », a-t-il dit. « C'est très dangereux: quand on a 100 000 soldats massés à la frontière, un petit incident peut tout embraser, a-t-il estimé. Si nous avons un nouvel incident, ce serait trop difficile de l'arrêter. »

La conférence ministérielle réunissait les voisins de ce pays, les représentants des cinq membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU et ceux du G8. L'Irak s'y est engagé à agir, y compris par des arrestations, contre les rebelles kurdes opérant en Turquie ou en Iran. La déclaration finale insiste sur les efforts de Bagdad pour « empêcher le territoire irakien d'être utilisé comme base terroriste contre des pays voisins ».

Une mise en garde a en outre été adressée à la Syrie sur le dossier libanais. Les États-Unis, la France, l'Égypte, l'Arabie saoudite, les Émirats arabes unis, la Jordanie et la Ligue arabe ont affirmé, dans une déclaration publiée également à Istanbul, que « l'ingérence et l'intimidation dans le processus électoral (libanais) n'étaient pas acceptables ».

la Croix

6 NOVEMBRE 2007

## Le nombre d'Irakiens fuyant la violence ne cesse de croître

Selon le Croissant-Rouge, près de 2,3 millions d'Irakiens vivent déplacés dans leur propre pays, tandis que le HCR estime le nombre de réfugiés à l'étranger à plus de 2 millions

Le nombre d'Irakiens déplacés dans leur propre pays par l'insécurité a atteint un nouveau

record. Un rapport publié hier par le Croissant-Rouge irakien établit qu'au 30 septembre 2 299 425 personnes avaient fui leurs régions d'origine depuis l'invasion américaine en mars 2003. Le nombre est en hausse de 16 % par rapport au mois précédent. Les enfants de moins de 12 ans représentent 65,3 % de ces déplacés et les femmes 18,6 %.

Les deux tiers de cette population, environ 1,5 million de personnes, sont localisés à Bagdad. « La majorité souffre de maladies, de malnutrition et de la pauvreté », s'alarme le rapport. Les enfants « ne vont plus à l'école, vivent chez des proches, dans des mosquées, des églises, sous des tentes ou dans des bâtiments abandonnés, la plupart appartenant au gouvernement, sans accès à l'eau potable et à l'électricité. (...) Beaucoup d'adultes ont perdu leur travail, entraînant leur famille dans la pauvreté. » À elle seule, Bag-

dad compte désormais seize camps de déplacés.

D'abord très limités, les déplacements de population à l'intérieur de l'Irak ont augmenté de façon exponentielle après l'attaque du mausolée chiite de Samarra en février 2006, qui a marqué le début

## Les chrétiens ont principalement trouvé refuge au Kurdistan irakien.

des violences confessionnelles entre chiites et sunnites. Le nombre de déplacés irakiens a été multiplié par 50 depuis cette date, doublant presque entre juillet et août 2007. Les chrétiens ont principalement trouvé refuge au Kurdistan irakien, dans les provinces de Dohouk et d'Erbil.

Le Croissant-Rouge irakien est

l'une des rares organisations humanitaires travaillant encore dans toutes les provinces d'Irak, avec 5 000 employés, 365 bureaux et 95 000 volontaires. Ses employés ont souvent été la cible de violences.

Le Haut-Commissariat de l'ONU

pour les réfugiés (HCR) estime de son côté que 4,2 millions d'Irakiens, réfugiés et déplacés, ont fui leur domicile à cause des violences. Deux millions ont trouvé refuge en Syrie (1,4 million) et en Jordanie (entre 500 000 et 750 000). L'exil des Irakiens est le plus important

mouvement de population dans la région depuis l'exode d'une partie des Palestiniens après la création de l'État d'Israël en 1948.

HERVÉ BAR  
(AFP)

## Irak Réunion internationale à Istanbul, dominée par la crise turco-irakienne, avant une rencontre Bush-Erdogan Kurdistan : la Turquie pousse Washington à agir

ISTANBUL  
CORRESPONDANCE

La Turquie, qui accueille, vendredi 2 et samedi 3 novembre à Istanbul, la deuxième réunion des pays voisins de l'Irak, élargie cette fois aux cinq membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, aux pays du G8 et au secrétaire général de l'ONU, Ban Ki-moon, met les Etats-Unis sous forte pression en menaçant d'intervenir militairement au Kurdistan irakien. Ankara avait déjà tenté d'organiser la première conférence des pays voisins de l'Irak, qui s'était finalement tenue à Charm El-Cheikh, en Egypte, le 3 mai, pour attirer l'attention sur les activités des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak.

Six mois plus tard, le problème s'est encore aggravé. Et, même si la rencontre

est consacrée à la stabilité de l'Irak dans son ensemble, l'actuelle crise turco-irakienne est au cœur des conversations diplomatiques.

« Les Etats-Unis ont la clef. Nous attendons beaucoup d'eux », a prévenu le ministre turc des affaires étrangères, Ali Babacan. Il a reçu, vendredi à Ankara, la secrétaire d'Etat américaine, Condoleezza Rice, qui a promis que les Etats-Unis étaient prêts à « redoubler d'efforts » pour résoudre cette crise, parlant du PKK comme d'un « ennemi commun » à la Turquie et aux Etats-Unis. Elle aura aussi tenté de tempérer les velléités des dirigeants turcs, prêts à déclencher une opération militaire transfrontalière contre les 3 500 rebelles séparatistes kurdes réfugiés dans les mon-

tagnes du Kurdistan irakien autonome. A quoi Ali Babacan a répondu : « Nous sommes à un point où le temps des paroles est révolu et où le temps de l'action est venu. »

S'ils ne relâchent pas la pression, les représentants turcs entretiennent le suspense sur leurs intentions. « Cette opération ne sera pas une invasion », a insisté Ali Babacan. Pas non plus une opération dirigée contre le gouvernement irakien, a ajouté le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Mais si aucun résultat n'émerge des discussions avec Américains et Irakiens, il ne restera plus qu'une cartouche diplomatique pour tenter de trouver une issue à la crise.

### Dernière chance

La rencontre, lundi à Washington, entre M. Erdogan et le président américain, George Bush, est déjà présentée par le gouvernement d'Ankara comme une négociation de la dernière chance. Les Etats-Unis semblent les seuls, aux yeux de la Turquie, à pouvoir mettre fin à la présence du PKK en Irak en faisant pression sur le président de la région autonome du Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani.

La Turquie refuse de traiter directement avec le gouvernement kurde et son président, régulièrement qualifié de « chef de tribu » dans la presse nationale. Si, au retour de la Maison Blanche, M. Erdogan n'a pas obtenu satisfaction, il pourrait décider de sanctions économiques contre le Kurdistan irakien.

Un autre acteur cherche à s'imposer dans les pourparlers : l'Iran. Invité par le

### CHRONOLOGIE

- 9 octobre.** Ankara menace de lancer une opération militaire au Kurdistan irakien contre les rebelles kurdes du PKK après la mort de 15 de ses soldats dans des attaques près de la frontière.
- 17 octobre.** Le Parlement turc autorise le gouvernement à mener des incursions militaires en Irak. Washington presse Ankara de ne pas intervenir.
- 21 octobre.** 12 soldats turcs et 34 rebelles sont tués à la frontière irakienne.
- 22 octobre.** Les rebelles du PKK se disent prêts à un cessez-le-feu si Ankara renonce à une action militaire et s'engage à reconnaître leurs droits. Ali Babacan, ministre turc des affaires étrangères, rejette l'offre du PKK, « organisation terroriste ».
- 24 octobre.** La présidence du Kurdistan irakien appelle le PKK à renoncer à la lutte armée.
- 26 octobre.** Echec des entretiens irako-turcs à Ankara.
- 2 novembre.** Arrivée de la secrétaire d'Etat américaine, M<sup>me</sup> Rice, à Ankara.

premier ministre irakien, Nouri Al-Maliki, à « désamorcer » la crise, le voisin de l'Irak et de la Turquie est lui aussi confronté aux attaques du PKK (sous le nom de Pejak)

dans ses propres provinces kurdes. Il a également bombardé à plusieurs reprises le mont Qandil, fief des rebelles, et fermé pendant quelques jours le poste-frontière.

« La Turquie et l'Iran doivent coopérer sur la question », a déclaré, vendredi, Mohamed Reza Bageri, un vice-ministre iranien des affaires étrangères. Mais l'Iran, contrairement à la Syrie, ne soutient pas une opération d'envergure au Kurdistan irakien. Kurdes et Arabes chiites ont des intérêts communs en Irak. Et Téhéran craint qu'une intervention turque ne renforce les Arabes sunnites. L'Iran devait présenter samedi « un plan très important pour l'Irak et pour les Irakiens », a affirmé M. Bageri.

Du fond de sa prison d'Imrali, le leader du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, a lui aussi, dans un communiqué publié par l'agence Firat, proche du PKK, essayé de se poser en interlocuteur, réclamant « une solution démocratique ». ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER

Le Monde  
Dimanche 4 - Lundi 5 novembre 2007



Des étudiants nationalistes de l'Union de la jeunesse turque (TGB) manifestent, vendredi 2 novembre, à Istanbul, contre la venue de la secrétaire d'Etat américaine, Condoleezza Rice, à Ankara. SERKAN SENTURK/AP



## Le PKK lâche du lest en Irak

**Les séparatistes kurdes ont libéré les huit soldats turcs détenus depuis le 21 octobre**

Ankara —AFP— Huit soldats turcs qui étaient détenus par les séparatistes kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak sont rentrés hier en Turquie après avoir été libérés par le PKK dans la matinée. Leur capture le 21 octobre au cours d'une opération sanglante du PKK dans le sud-est de la Turquie avait accru la menace d'une intervention militaire turque en Irak.

Selon la chaîne d'information télévisée CNN-Türk, les soldats ont pu téléphoner à leurs familles depuis la base aérienne de Diyarbakir, dans le sud-est de la Turquie, où a atterri l'appareil qui les transportait.

Les militaires ont été libérés à 7 h 30, selon Abdurrahman Cadirci, un responsable du PKK, qui a déclaré à l'AFP que «leur libération est intervenue après la médiation du gouvernement du Kurdistan irakien et d'un dirigeant du Parti pour une société démocratique» (DTP, parti pro-kurde de Turquie). «J'ai remis personnellement les huit soldats à deux responsables kurdes irakiens, Karim Sinjari, le ministre des Affaires internes au sein du gouvernement kurde, et Othman Hadji, le ministre de l'Intérieur.»

«Ils étaient en bonne santé», a relaté Osman Özçelik, un député du DTP présent à la libération.

«Après, nous avons récupéré les soldats et sommes revenus à Erbil où nous les avons remis aux forces américaines», a-t-il dit. Les ex-prisonniers ont alors embarqué dans un avion américain. Mais, ensuite, «ils ont changé d'avion et sont rentrés en Turquie dans un appareil turc», a relaté le Premier ministre de la région kurde d'Irak, Nechirvan Barzani, dans un entretien à CNN-Türk.

Dans un communiqué, le gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan irakien a estimé que la libération des soldats était la conséquence des «efforts personnels du président de la région kurde, Massoud Barzani, du président Jalal Talabani et du premier ministre de la région kurde Nechirvan Barzani». «Il n'y a pas eu de marché pour les libérer. Seules des considérations humanitaires ont guidé notre action», a commenté Fouad Hussein, principal collaborateur de Massoud Barzani.

L'armée turque, qui n'a jamais confirmé la capture des soldats mais avait indiqué avoir «perdu le contact» avec eux, a annoncé dans un communiqué que les militaires ont «réintégré les forces armées turques».

Les rebelles du PKK avaient attaqué le 21 octobre une unité militaire turque près de la frontière



irakienne. Outre les huit soldats faits prisonniers, douze militaires avaient été tués dans cet assaut, qui a soulevé une vague d'indignation en Turquie. L'armée turque a affirmé avoir tué depuis 80 rebelles dans une vaste offensive en Turquie.

L'attaque a fait monter la probabilité d'une intervention militaire turque dans le nord de l'Irak, où les rebelles kurdes disposent de camps qu'ils utilisent comme bases arrière pour leurs opérations dans le sud-est de la Turquie. Ankara a déployé des dizaines de milliers de soldats à la frontière.

Cette libération intervient à la

veille d'une rencontre cruciale à Washington entre le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan et le président américain George W. Bush. M. Erdogan a affirmé samedi qu'il allait demander à M. Bush «des mesures urgentes et substantielles» contre le PKK.

Les États-Unis ont salué, dans un communiqué du département d'État, les «efforts du gouvernement irakien» qui ont permis la libération des soldats et ont appelé l'Irak et la Turquie à «approfondir immédiatement leur coopération dans la lutte contre le PKK», «ennemi commun de la Turquie, de l'Irak et des États-Unis».

AFP

## Le dilemme de Güle, tiraillée entre l'armée turque et les rebelles kurdes

**CIZRE (Turquie), 5 nov 2007 (AFP)** -- Avec un fils engagé dans les rangs de l'armée turque et un frère combattant aux côtés des rebelles kurdes, Güle Uysal est prête à tout faire pour éviter que les violences qui frappent le sud-est anatolien n'embrasent le nord de l'Irak.

"Je ne veux pas que mon frère tue mon fils ou que mon fils tue mon frère", déclare cette femme âgée de 41 ans, portant une robe pourpre et un foulard blanc, dans la cour sur laquelle donne son modeste appartement de Cizre, tout près de la frontière irakienne.

Cette petite ville, située dans la province de Sirnak, est au coeur du sanglant conflit entre les forces armées turques et les séparatistes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui combat le pouvoir central turc depuis 1984 au prix de plus de 37.000 personnes tuées.

La vie de Güle porte les cicatrices de plus de deux décennies de violences. Un de ses frères a été abattu par l'armée lorsqu'il combattait pour le PKK et son père est décédé des suites de tortures infligées par les militaires.

"Les soldats ont brûlé notre maison parce que frère a rejoint le PKK au début des années 1990. Nous avons juste eu le temps de nous sauver", dit la femme. Et d'expliquer que son père a ensuite été arrêté et torturé.

"Il est mort un mois après avoir été libéré", soupire Güle. Maintenant, l'éventualité de nouvelles violences se profile à l'horizon avec les menaces turques

d'une intervention armée dans le Kurdistan irakien contre les bases du PKK établies dans cette zone autonome dirigée par les Kurdes irakiens.

De nombreux habitants de Cizre, à l'instar de Güle, pensent que le PKK, considéré comme une organisation séparatiste par la Turquie, les États-Unis et les pays européens, se bat pour les droits fondamentaux de la communauté kurde de Turquie.

"Cette lutte n'est pas seulement la lutte du PKK mais celle du peuple kurde. Mon frère est mort pour une juste cause", se défend Güle.

Dans le cadre des changements en vue de se rapprocher des normes de l'UE, la Turquie a mis en vigueur toute une série de mesures en faveur des droits culturels des Kurdes qui constituent 12 à 15 millions des 73 millions d'habitants du pays.

L'Etat d'urgence a été levé et l'enseignement privé du kurde, ainsi que la diffusion des émissions dans cette langue sur les chaînes publiques de télévision a été autorisée.

Mais après une trêve unilatérale de cinq ans, accompagnée d'une accalmie, le PKK a repris les armes en 2004, arguant que les réformes gouvernementales en faveur des Kurdes étaient insuffisantes.

Le lourd tribut des années de sanglants combats semble avoir amené Güle à

renoncer à croire que la violence soit la solution face aux aspirations kurdes.

"Je ne veux plus de morts, ni de l'armée ni du PKK. Je veux qu'aucune mère ne soit obligée de vivre ce que j'ai vécu. Je ne veux plus de conflit", lâche cette mère, les larmes aux yeux.

L'exemple à suivre, dit-elle, est celui de sa fille, première de sa classe au lycée local et espérant faire des études de droit.

"L'éducation est le plus important. Je souhaite que ma fille devienne avocate pour poursuivre notre lutte par la loi et non par les armes", ajoute Güle.

la libre .be 06 novembre 2007

## TURQUIE/IRAK : Bush a-t-il convaincu les Turcs ?

**Le Président américain a reçu le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Objectif : prévenir une opération militaire dans le nord de l'Irak contre le PKK. La libération des soldats turcs par les rebelles kurdes devait l'y aider.**

Le président américain George W. Bush a tenté de peser de tout son poids pour convaincre le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan de ne pas intervenir contre les rebelles kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak, au cours d'une réunion au sommet lundi à Washington.

### Le précédent pakistanais

Avant la rencontre à la Maison-Blanche, le Premier ministre turc a prévenu que la patience de la Turquie face aux attaques des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) établis dans le nord de l'Irak était "à bout". Mais l'administration Bush, tout en promettant le soutien des Américains dans la lutte contre le PKK, a exhorté la Turquie à la retenue de peur de déstabiliser l'une des rares régions relativement calmes d'Irak.

Convaincre l'allié turc a pris une dimension nouvelle pour le président Bush avec l'instauration samedi, par le président Pervez Musharraf, de l'état d'urgence au Pakistan. Le président pakistanais, un allié crucial de la Maison-Blanche dans la guerre contre le terrorisme au Pakistan et en Afghanistan, a ignoré les pressions de Washington (lire en pages 2 et 3).

Une décision de la Turquie de faire de même, en rentrant en force dans le nord de l'Irak, mettrait un peu plus à mal une diplomatie américaine déjà affaiblie. La Turquie accuse les autorités autonomes du Kurdistan irakien de soutenir les activités du PKK et reproche à Washington de ne pas en faire assez contre les rebelles.

A Ankara, vendredi, la secrétaire d'Etat américaine Condoleezza Rice a promis de redoubler les efforts de son pays pour aider Ankara à surmonter le problème des rebelles kurdes, tout en exhortant l'armée turque à ne pas entrer en Irak afin d'éviter de "déstabiliser davantage" ce pays. Elle a souligné que les Etats-Unis étaient dans l'"obligation" de contribuer à la lutte contre le PKK et réaffirmé que l'organisation, considérée comme terroriste par les Etats-Unis, était autant "l'ennemi" de Washington et de Bagdad que de la Turquie.

"Cela va nécessiter de la persévérance. C'est un problème très difficile [...] éradiquer le terrorisme est dur", a-t-elle toutefois ajouté.

### "Un sérieux test"

Mais pour M. Erdogan, qui fait face à la colère de l'opinion turque après une série d'attaques meurtrières du PKK, le temps est compté.

Avant de s'envoler samedi vers les Etats-Unis, il a indiqué qu'il attendait de M. Bush des "mesures concrètes" contre le PKK. "Notre visite se réalise à un moment où les relations (turco-américaines) traversent un sérieux test", avait-il dit aux journalistes à l'aéroport, avant sa visite de deux jours à Washington.

Dans une interview lundi au quotidien italien "La Stampa", il a estimé que si Bagdad prenait des mesures contre les rebelles kurdes, une opération de l'armée turque contre les séparatistes pourrait être évitée. "La Turquie n'a jamais interrompu les tractations diploma-



tiques et politiques avec Bagdad", a encore souligné M. Erdogan, avant d'avertir : "La patience du peuple turc est à bout".

### Le génocide arménien

Certains analystes craignent que l'influence américaine sur la Turquie n'ait été affaiblie par une résolution du Congrès américain visant à reconnaître un génocide arménien sous l'Empire ottoman.

La perspective d'un vote de cette résolution, finalement reporté, avait sérieusement envenimé les relations entre les deux pays, Ankara menaçant de restreindre l'accès des Américains à la base aérienne d'Incirlik, cruciale pour le ravitaillement des soldats américains en Irak et en Afghanistan.

Le président Bush devait cependant être en mesure de mettre en avant au moins un succès réalisé avec la coopération de Bagdad, avec la libération de huit soldats turcs dimanche, capturés le 21 octobre par le PKK au cours d'une opération sanglante



## L'Iran ouvre deux consulats au Kurdistan irakien

**ERBIL (Irak), 6 nov 2007 (AFP) -** L'Iran a officiellement ouvert mardi deux consulats dans les deux principales villes du Kurdistan irakien, dans le nord de l'Irak, à Erbil et Soulaïmaniyeh.

"Nous avons aujourd'hui de bonnes relations politiques et économiques avec l'Irak (...). Les deux consulats ont été ouverts en coordination avec le gouvernement irakien et les autorités du Kurdistan, qui sont responsables de la sécurité", a déclaré à Erbil l'ambassadeur d'Iran en Irak, Hassan Kazemi Qomi.

Il a assisté à une brève cérémonie d'inauguration du consulat d'Erbil, en présence du Premier ministre du gouvernement autonome de la région kurde, Nechirvan Barzani, a constaté un correspondant de l'AFP.

Le nouveau consulat d'Erbil est installé dans les locaux d'un bâtiment occupé autrefois par des officiels iraniens mais fermé depuis le début de l'année à la suite d'une opération de l'armée américaine au cours de laquelle cinq res-

tissants iraniens avaient été arrêtés.

Erbil (330 km au nord de Bagdad) est la capitale du Kurdistan irakien, entité quasi-indépendante par rapport au gouvernement central de Bagdad.

Le second consulat iranien a débuté ses activités à Soulaïmaniyeh (300 km au nord-est de la capitale irakienne).

La mise en place de ces deux représentations diplomatiques était prévue par un accord entre Téhéran et les autorités kurdes irakiennes, négocié le 8 octobre pour permettre la réouverture de la frontière avec cette partie nord de l'Irak.

Le 24 septembre, l'Iran avait ordonné la fermeture de sa frontière avec le Kurdistan irakien en représailles à la capture quatre jours plus tôt à Soulaïmaniyeh par les forces américaines d'un Iranien accusé de soutenir des milices

chiites irakiennes.

Parallèlement à l'ouverture des deux consulats au Kurdistan, l'accord entre l'Iran et les responsables kurdes prévoyait la mise en activité de deux consulats d'Irak à Kermanshah et Urmia (Orumiyeh), dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran.

Début janvier, l'armée américaine avait mené une opération sur la représentation iranienne à Erbil, simple "bureau de liaison" selon Bagdad mais véritable "consulat" selon l'Iran, arrêtant cinq ressortissants iraniens sur place qui sont toujours détenus.

"Malheureusement, les forces américaines détiennent toujours cinq des nô-

tres", a souligné à ce propos l'ambassadeur Qomi, qui a demandé leur libération.

L'Iran compte désormais quatre consulats en Irak, avec Bassorah (550 km au sud de Bagdad) et Kerbala (110 km au sud).

Les deux nouveaux consulats d'Erbil et Soulaïmaniye "peuvent jouer un grand rôle dans l'économie du Kurdistan", a assuré M. Qomi, qui a appelé les pays arabes à ouvrir à leur tour des représentations dans la région.

De son côté, le Premier ministre kurde a jugé que ces consulats permettraient "de renforcer les relations du Kurdistan avec l'Iran".

06 novembre 2007

libre.be

## L'Iran doit aussi faire face à "ses" rebelles kurdes

### Téhéran plaide pour une issue pacifique entre Ankara et le PKK mais est aussi tenté par des raids dans le nord de l'Irak.

Gérald Papy.

Dans le conflit qui oppose la Turquie aux rebelles kurdes du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), l'Iran est partagée entre la défense de ses intérêts, y compris au plan intérieur, et le respect de sa coopération avec l'Irak. Après quelques atermoiements apparents, Téhéran a officiellement opté ces dernières heures pour la recherche d'une solution diplomatique à la crise. "Nous soulignons la nécessité de parvenir à une solution pacifique et diplomatique sur ce dossier", a plaidé dimanche le ministère iranien des Affaires étrangères.

Le même défi

Fin de la semaine dernière, présent à Istanbul, le vice-ministre iranien des Affaires étrangères, Mohammed Reza Bageri, avait pourtant exprimé la volonté de Téhéran de coopérer avec Ankara sur la question du PKK. Et "toute forme de coopération est possible", avait-il asséné quand il avait été interrogé sur la possibilité d'une collaboration y compris militaire.

L'Iran est en fait placé devant quasi le même "défi" que la Turquie en ce qui concerne l'Irak et les rebelles kurdes. Créé voici trois ans, un groupe armé des Kurdes d'Iran, le Pejak (Parti pour une vie

libre au Kurdistan), a multiplié depuis quelques mois les opérations contre les forces de l'ordre iraniennes. Les Kurdes d'Iran représentent environ 8 pc de la population iranienne, soit quelque 6 millions d'âmes. Ils sont essentiellement présents dans les provinces du nord et du nord-ouest de l'Iran, frontalières avec la Turquie et l'Irak (les provinces du Kurdistan, d'Azerbaïdjan occidental et de Kermanshah).

Or, le Pejak est non seulement affilié au Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan mais il dispose aussi de bases arrière dans le nord de l'Irak.

Ainsi, les forces de sécurité iraniennes ont-elles mené ces derniers mois, et notamment en août, des raids contre des positions supposées du Pejak, dans les montagnes iraniennes mais aussi, selon des sources irakiennes, dans le Kurdistan irakien. Autre signe de l'intensification de la répression, deux "rebelles" du Parti démocrate du Kurdistan iranien (PDKI, un autre mouvement kurde iranien) ont été pendus à la mi-octobre à Sanandaj, à l'ouest de l'Iran. Ils étaient accusés d'avoir tué, en décembre 2006, un membre des Gardiens de la révolution, l'armée idéologique du régime. Enfin, deux journalistes kurdes, Adnan Hassanpour, et Abdolvahed

Botimar, ont été condamnés à des peines de mort par pendaison, le 31 juillet. Le premier, qui dirigeait la section kurde du magazine bilingue "Asso" ("Horizon") est accusé d'avoir reçu des Américains "des appareils d'espionnage", le second, journaliste et défenseur de l'environnement, a été accusé d'avoir entreposé chez lui des munitions qui devaient servir au Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan.

Stabilité politique

Bref, au nom d'une menace réelle ou fantasmée et pour lutter contre une rébellion certes de plus en plus violente mais en partie légitimée par le déni des droits des minorités, l'Iran, à l'instar de la Turquie, a renforcé la répression contre ses Kurdes. A cette différence notable près que le Pejak iranien n'a apparemment pas encore le niveau d'organisation et de puissance de feu qu'affiche le PKK turc.

Ce constat dressé, l'Iran n'a tout de même pas intérêt à voir le Kurdistan irakien se transformer en champ de bataille entre Turcs et Kurdes. En cause, des intérêts économiques et le souci de ménager malgré tout le gouvernement de Bagdad, à majorité chiite, alors que la priorité est le retrait des troupes étrangères, et singulièrement américaines, du pays.

AP Associated Press

## Un soldat turc tué par le PKK, selon les autorités

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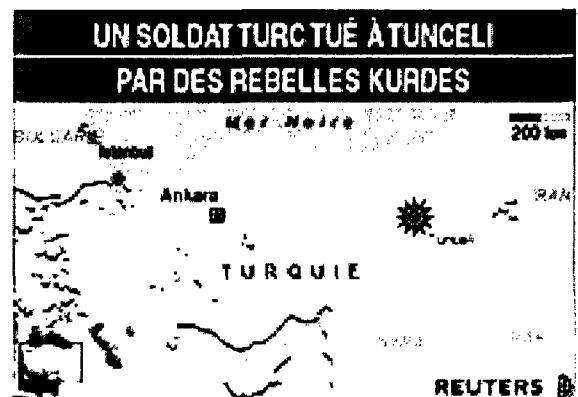
- Un soldat turc a été tué par des rebelles kurdes mardi soir dans le sud-est de la Turquie, à bonne distance de la frontière avec l'Irak, selon le bureau du gouverneur local.

Les insurgés auraient attaqué un avant-poste militaire dans la province de Tunceli, tuant un sergent. Une quarantaine de Turcs, des soldats pour la plupart, ont été tués depuis un mois dans les attaques du PKK, selon les autorités turques. Le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan subit une forte pression de l'opinion publique en faveur de représailles.

Le président turc Abdullah Gül a déclaré mardi que la Turquie ferait "ce qu'elle croit être bien" pour mettre fin aux attaques du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dont les bases arrière se trouvent dans le nord de l'Irak. Des dizaines de milliers de militaires turcs ont été massés dans la région dans l'éventualité d'incursions de l'autre côté de la frontière.

L'hiver approchant dans cette zone montagneuse et les Etats-Unis pesant de tout leur poids, les experts estiment qu'Ankara, s'il décide de sauter le pas, optera probablement pour des raids limités sur terre et dans les airs plutôt que de lancer une grande offensive dont les autorités du Kurdistan irakien ont prévenu qu'elles la considéreraient comme une atteinte à la souveraineté du territoire semi-autonome.

Selon un responsable gouvernemental turc proche du dossier, qui a requis l'anonymat, plusieurs possibilités sont en cours d'examen, dont celle de frappes d'avions F-16 sur des positions rebelles, des raids en hélicoptères et des missions des forces spéciales. "La zone est fortement minée, une grande incursion impliquant des dizaines de milliers d'hommes est hors de question",



a affirmé cette source.

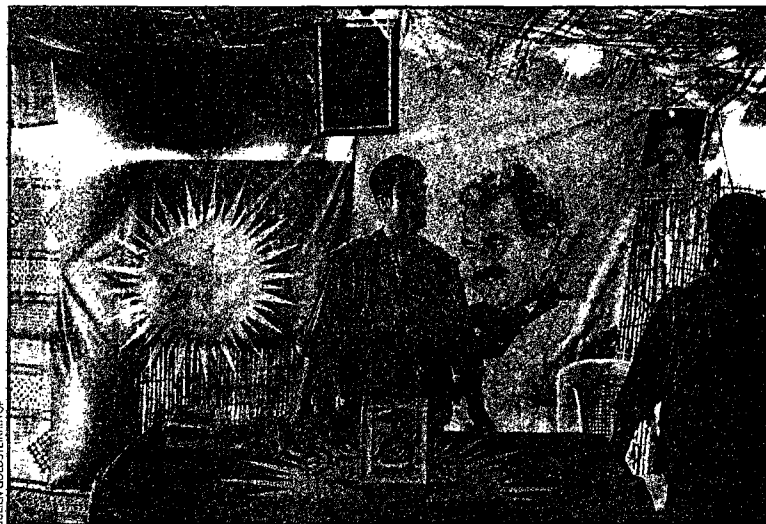
Dans le nord de l'Irak, Azad Jindany, porte-parole de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan, l'un des deux partis dirigeant la province semi-autonome, a estimé que des raids limités seraient mois déstabilisants pour la région, laissant entendre que la réaction des autorités ne serait pas la même qu'à une grande offensive. AP

# Dans les maquis du Kurdistan

La tension est vive au Kurdistan irakien, où l'armée turque menace d'intervenir massivement contre les combattants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Un foyer d'instabilité supplémentaire dans une région déjà déchirée. Mais qui sont ces hommes et ces femmes prêts à mourir pour réaliser le vieux rêve d'une renaissance kurde ?

PAR NOTRE ENVOYÉ SPÉCIAL  
OLIVIER PIOT \*

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Au cœur des montagnes irakiennes, 2007

UN AUVENT de bois caché par le treillage kaki des filets de camouflage. Des kalachnikovs négligemment suspendus. Sous ce dais improvisé, une table vient d'être dressée. Thé, crudités, viandes, fruits... Une réception bienvenue après les dix heures de route que nous venons d'effectuer depuis Erbil, la capitale de la région administrée par le gouvernement kurde d'Irak. Une journée entière de route, sous la chaleur d'un mois d'été caniculaire. Une éternité de pistes chaotiques pour venir dans cette zone aride et montagneuse située à l'extrême nord de l'Irak, le long des frontières turque et iranienne. En chemin, bien au-delà de Rewandiz, les barrages des soldats du gouvernement kurde irakien ont fini par disparaître. Une fois dans cette zone tampon longue de trois cent cinquante kilomètres, sur le fil de la frontière avec la Turquie, les uniformes sont différents : le contrôle relève des forces armées du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Ce repli stratégique des maquisards de la cause kurde (*peshmergas*) ne date pas d'hier. Dès 1984, alors que les séparatistes du PKK engagent la lutte armée contre l'État turc, des militants sont envoyés ici en réserve. Des camps s'installent dans la montagne, et les dirigeants du parti, dont beaucoup sont allés se former auprès des Palestiniens du Liban sud, aux côtés des cadres de Yasser Arafat, viennent aider à organiser ces bases arrière. Mais la guérilla se déroule alors surtout de l'autre côté de la frontière, dans les régions kurdes du sud-est de la Turquie. Au cours des années 1980-1990, seuls les militants les plus exposés se replient en Irak. Car la zone a une autre vocation : former militairement et politiquement les cadres destinés à retourner en Turquie pour défendre, par les armes, la lutte pour l'indépendance du Kurdistan anatolien.

La donne change avec la mort en 1993 du président turc Turgut Özal, favorable à la légalisation du PKK. L'espoir d'une solution négociée avec le gouvernement d'Ankara s'effondre. Un an plus tard, les députés élus sur la liste du premier parti prokurde, le Parti du travail du peuple (HEP), se voient retirer leur immunité parlementaire. En février 1999, le président du PKK, M. Abdullah Öcalan, est arrêté puis emprisonné sur l'île turque d'Imrali (1). Dès les premiers mois de sa détention, il lance un appel à la fin de la lutte armée. Son objectif : privilégier la « transformation démocratique » de la Turquie en négociant la résolution de la « question kurde » avec les autorités d'Ankara.

Les militants du PKK sont appelés à rejoindre avec leurs armes les montagnes irakiennes. En 2002, le parti change de nom et devient le Congrès pour la liberté et la démocratie au Kurdistan (Kadec). Les références au marxisme-léninisme, mélange de lutte de classes et de nationalisme, sont abandonnées (2). Signe de cette évolution legaliste, le Parti de la Turquie démocratique (DTP), prokurde, créé en 2005, qui refuse de qualifier le PKK d'organisation « terroriste », emporte en juillet 2007 vingt sièges au Parlement d'Ankara. De leur côté, près de trois mille cinq cents *peshmergas* du PKK sont gardés en réserve dans les bases arrière du nord de l'Irak. Sur le sol turc, deux mille combattants restent dans la clandestinité.

## Depuis février, les Turcs ont massé des milliers de soldats à la frontière

A OÛT 2007. Parmi la dizaine de maquisards qui nous reçoivent dans les monts Zagros, un homme sort du lot. La cinquantaine, le visage émacié, les cheveux châtain clair, il affiche l'allure martiale d'un militant de la première heure, mais ne se présente pas. « Que pensez-vous de l'Algérie ? Des indépendantistes corses ? De Guevara ? » Les questions fusent. Il avoue avoir passé vingt-cinq ans dans les prisons turques. Il y a beaucoup lu. Libéré comme d'autres au début des années 2000, il rejoint aussitôt le maquis. Nous parlons de Balzac, de Lénine... et, bien sûr, de M. Öcalan, « le » président des Kurdes. Soudain, notre interlocuteur se lève. Une voiture se dirige vers nous. Cinq hommes armés en descendent. L'un d'entre eux est plus âgé. Il s'agit de M. Mourat Karayilan, président du Congrès du peuple du Kurdistan (KCK), l'instance collégiale dirigeante du parti.

Sa présence ici est dangereuse. Chacun le sait. Mais, les bombardements iraniens étant fré-

quents (3), le haut responsable doit se déplacer le plus souvent possible. Nos batteries de téléphone sont retirées, l'ordinateur momentanément confisqué. L'entretien a lieu dans une pièce aménagée. Tapis au sol, fenêtres obstruées. Aux murs, des portraits de martyrs du parti et celui de M. Öcalan, bien sûr. Alors qu'il s'appête à répondre à nos questions, M. Karayilan est rejoint par notre spécialiste de littérature française et du marxisme, Bozan (il ne donnera pas son nom), le vice-président du KCK, celui-là même qui cherchait tout à l'heure à se faire passer pour un militant de base du PKK.

Le président du KCK ne sait évidemment rien des nuages qui vont s'amonceler sur la zone que ses hommes contrôlent. Accord entre Ankara et Bagdad pour éradiquer les forces « terroristes (4) » du PKK ; montée en puissance du discours guerrier des autorités turques ; vote du Parlement d'Ankara autorisant l'intervention de l'armée turque dans le nord de l'Irak. Mais, en ce mois d'août, les cartes sont déjà distribuées. « Depuis février, les Turcs ont massé des milliers de soldats à la frontière, et le bras de fer électoral pour les législatives en Turquie [juillet 2007] a conduit l'armée à faire de la surenchère nationaliste, explique M. Karayilan. Nous avons été informés de tractations entre Ankara, Bagdad et Washington. J'espère simplement que l'AKP [Parti de la justice et du développement, au pouvoir à Ankara] du premier ministre turc Erdogan saura saisir la perche que lui tendent nos nouveaux députés pour trouver une solution démocratique et négociée au problème kurde. »

Sur quoi porterait cette négociation ? Le PKK s'en tient-il à sa vieille revendication d'un seul et même État pour les populations kurdes de Turquie, d'Irak, d'Iran et de Syrie ? « C'est un objectif qui est toujours dans notre programme, mais il est lointain, enchaîne le dirigeant. En réalité, et les Turcs le savent, nous sommes prêts à négocier une autonomie régionale du type de celle de la Catalogne dans le cadre des frontières de la Turquie. C'est une main tendue. »

Le Kurdistan d'Irak où sont réfugiés les combattants du PKK est géré par le Parti démocratique (PDK) et l'Union patriotique (UPK), deux formations qui ont signé un accord en 2002. Cette région dispose d'une grande autonomie au sein de l'Irak, et les deux partis sont alliés des États-Unis. Tous ces paramètres de la donne régionale, M. Karayilan les connaît. A

commencer par les choix politiques des « frères » kurdes irakiens. « Le gouvernement d'Erbil a déjà participé à deux guerres "sandwich" contre nous, avec les Turcs, dans les années 1990. J'espère qu'il ne commettra pas la même erreur. Mais le passé nous a appris à ne compter que sur nous-mêmes, commente-t-il. Reste que la question kurde est un point central du processus démocratique dans la région. En Irak, les Américains ont fait le bon choix en soutenant dès 1991 la volonté d'autonomie des Kurdes. S'ils veulent aller au-delà, notamment dans la démocratisation de la société turque, ils sont obligés de voir plus loin que l'Irak. » En fixant le dirigeant du KCK,

je crois lire dans ses yeux un doute. Et si, au fond, personne n'avait besoin du PKK...

Pendant plusieurs jours, nous visitons des « postes » de peshmergas dans la montagne. Comme ce camp de jeunes femmes, membres de l'YJA-STAR (la section féminine de l'armée de libération), qui représente 40 % des forces combattantes. A plus de 2 000 mètres d'altitude, camouflée entre les arbres et les rochers, leur base jouxte le massif qui marque la frontière turque. Ces militantes sont jeunes ; beaucoup viennent de Turquie, mais d'autres sont nées en Syrie, en Iran ou en Irak. Originaires d'un village du sud d'Izmir, Askê, 21 ans, lutte depuis l'âge de 14 ans. « Mes parents étaient très engagés dans le parti, confie-t-elle. J'ai repris le flambeau dès le lycée. Avec la conviction que la libération du peuple kurde passe aussi par une lutte contre les relations féodales imposées aux femmes. »

Pour se nourrir, tous les combattants de cette zone entretiennent un potager. Une source coule à deux pas. Une fois par semaine, un service logistique – dont l'organisation restera « confidentielle » – leur livre riz, viande, cigarettes, piles, etc. Mais aussi des journaux et les déclarations du président Öcalan, notifiées par écrit par son avocat, l'une des très rares personnes habilitées à le voir dans son île-prison. Pour l'actualité récente, un petit poste de radio permet au groupe de rester connecté au monde extérieur, grâce notamment à la BBC. Régulièrement, les combattantes débattent de « thèmes politiques et

sociaux » selon un ordre du jour fixé à l'avance. « C'est une façon de continuer à nous instruire mutuellement », assure la chef de section, 35 ans, la doyenne du camp.

A ses côtés, Horin, venue d'Alep pour participer à la guérilla : « En Syrie aussi la pression est très forte sur la population kurde. Quand la section locale du PKK m'a proposé de venir me former ici, j'ai donc tout de suite accepté. » Son souhait : retourner en Syrie pour « mener la lutte politique ». Et si le PKK arrive à négocier une autonomie en Turquie ? « Ce sera bien, comme en Irak. Mais la lutte devra continuer jusqu'à ce que nous obtenions le grand Kurdistan tel qu'il fut promis par les Alliés en 1920 (5). »

Retour au camp de base, où nous passons la nuit. Au pied de rochers dont les formes imposantes se devinent derrière la tente principale, les militants regardent, fascinés, l'écran d'une improbable télévision. A quelques mètres, le disque blanchâtre d'une antenne satellite lève l'énigme : *Les Visiteurs II*, en version turque ! Les visages des guérilleros se dessinent dans la lumière changeante des images qui défilent, fréquemment interrompues par les « hoquets » d'une transmission hasardeuse. Près des tables en bois utilisées pour les repas, un portrait en noir et blanc : le visage immortalisé d'un des fondateurs du PKK.

« Si Ankara choisit  
la guerre ouverte,  
tout le peuple  
se lèvera avec nous »

CINQ HEURES DU MATIN. Le groupe est déjà rassemblé devant son chef. Dix personnes doivent

chercher du bois. Une ascension éreintante d'une heure sur une pente abrupte. De quoi ravitailler chaque jour le poêle dédié au thé traditionnel. Petit déjeuner. Le chef nous rejoint. Un garçon d'environ 30 ans, le visage fermé, dur, avec une jambe qui traîne derrière lui lorsqu'il se déplace. « J'ai été blessé dans un accrochage avec l'armée turque », confie-t-il d'emblée. Né à Dyarbakir, la capitale historique du « Kurdistan nord », Ahmed a rejoint le PKK à l'âge de 14 ans. « Dans ma région, la répression turque a été très dure : des milliers de villages détruits, des centaines de milliers de personnes déplacées de force. C'était dans les années 1990. Je suis là depuis deux ans. C'est un choix qui exige un caractère trempé et beaucoup de sacrifices. Les roquettes turques, les missiles iraniens... chaque jour, on frôle la mort. Mais si nous ne luttons pas pour le peuple kurde, qui le fera ? »

En septembre-octobre, la situation s'est tendue au Kurdistan, plusieurs accrochages ont mis aux prises l'armée turque et des combattants du PKK. Je repense aux mots de M. Karayilan : « Depuis des années, nous avons cessé les incursions en Turquie et notre guérilla sur place ne fait que riposter aux harcèlements des soldats turcs. Mais si demain la Turquie choisit la guerre ouverte, nous saurons réagir. Et tout le peuple kurde se lèvera à nos côtés. »

(1) Lire Michel Verrier, « En Turquie, procès au peuple kurde », *Le Monde diplomatique*, juin 1999.

(2) Lire Michel Verrier, « Paysages kurdes avant la bataille », *Le Monde diplomatique*, octobre 2002.

(3) Des combattants kurdes iraniens sont aussi réfugiés dans la zone.

(4) Le PKK est inscrit depuis 1997 sur la liste des organisations « terroristes » dressée par les Etats-Unis. Classification que l'Union européenne adopte à son tour en 2002.

(5) A la fin de la première guerre mondiale, les Alliés vainqueurs prévoient la création d'un Etat kurde lors du traité de Sévres (1920). Trois ans plus tard, le traité de Lausanne (1923) partage la région du Kurdistan entre quatre Etats : la Turquie, l'Iran, l'Irak et la Syrie.

## Intervention contre le PKK en Irak: la Turquie pèse ses options

**ISTANBUL, 4 nov 2007 (AFP)** - La Turquie pesait dimanche ses options en gardant "sur la table" l'hypothèse d'une intervention dans le nord de l'Irak après l'annonce par Bagdad de nouvelles mesures contre les rebelles kurdes du PKK sur son territoire et à la veille d'entretiens cruciaux à Washington.

Le gouvernement irakien s'est engagé samedi, lors d'une conférence ministérielle sur l'Irak à Istanbul, à agir, y compris par des arrestations, contre les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) basés dans le nord du pays, qu'Ankara envisage de déloger avec une opération armée.

Installation de points de contrôles, surveillance des camps du PKK, blocage de tout soutien logistique au PKK et fermeture de ses bureaux, les responsables irakiens ont énuméré une série de mesures, assurant que certaines d'entre elles entreraient en vigueur le jour même.

Le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères, Ali Babacan, n'en a pas moins affirmé en clôture de la conférence que "toutes les options restent sur la table", dont l'option militaire.

"Les offres de dernière minute de Bagdad n'ont pas satisfait" Ankara, titrait dimanche le quotidien conservateur Zaman, rapportant que les responsables turcs, déçus, avaient demandé plus et plus "concret" à leurs homologues de Bagdad et de Washington.

La presse turque interprétait les mesures irakiennes comme un leurre sans autre objectif que d'infléchir la position turque avant une rencontre cruciale lundi à la Maison Blanche entre le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan et le président américain George W. Bush.

D'autant que le pouvoir effectif du gouvernement de Bagdad est très limité dans le nord de l'Irak, sous administration autonome kurde irakienne.

"Des manœuvres de dernière minute", titrait en "Une" le quotidien populaire Aksam, estimant qu'"à 24 heures du sommet Erdogan-Bush, la direction irakienne a fait promesse sur promesse".

"Des mesures fictives", renchérisait le quotidien libéral Radikal.

Pour autant, la conférence d'Istanbul n'est pas un échec, analysait le chroniqueur de Radikal, Murat Yetkin, estimant que la réunion avait permis à M. Erdogan de renforcer sa position avant sa rencontre avec M. Bush.

"Les actes terroristes du PKK ont eu un effet de boomerang, et l'attention et le soutien accordés sur la scène internationale à la lutte contre le PKK se sont accrus", écrit M. Yetkin, prenant pour preuve de cet intérêt et de cette compréhension la présence à Istanbul des chefs de la diplomatie de plusieurs grandes puissances, dont la secrétaire d'Etat américaine Condoleezza Rice.

Le pape Benoît XVI lui-même s'est ému de la situation et a appelé dimanche à une "solution pacifique".

M. Bush devra désormais tenir compte de cet intérêt international, estime le journaliste, mais aussi de la détermination unanimement manifestée par le peuple et les institutions turcs à mettre un terme aux violences du PKK.

Lors de sa visite en Turquie, "Mme Rice a pu constater que la libération de huit soldats ne suffirait pas à infléchir le gouvernement et l'opinion publique", écrit-il, faisant référence à huit militaires turcs capturés en octobre par le PKK, dont la libération, annoncée samedi, a eu lieu dimanche.

Les huit hommes avaient été faits prisonniers lors d'un assaut du PKK contre une position militaire en territoire turc, près de la frontière irakienne, au cours duquel 12 soldats turcs avaient péri.

Cette attaque avait indigné la société turque et renforcé la détermination d'Ankara à lancer une intervention militaire contre les camps du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak, qui lui servent de bases arrière pour ses opérations dans le sud-est de la Turquie.

Avant de quitter la Turquie samedi soir, M. Erdogan a prévenu qu'il attendait de M. Bush des "mesures concrètes" contre le PKK, évoquant un "sérieux test" pour les relations entre les deux alliés au sein de l'Otan.

## Trois rebelles kurdes tués par l'armée turque dans l'est de la Turquie

AFP

**ANKARA, 7 nov 2007 (AFP)** - L'armée turque a tué trois rebelles kurdes, dont une femme, dans les combats ayant suivi l'attaque d'un poste de l'armée turque dans l'est de la Turquie, ont annoncé mercredi des responsables politiques turcs.

Un sergent de l'armée turque a été tué mardi soir dans l'attaque d'un poste de l'armée par des rebelles du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans la province de Tunceli, a fait savoir le bureau du gouverneur de la province dans un communiqué.

"Trois terroristes, parmi lesquels se trouvait une femme, ont été tués et leurs armes ont été saisies dans les combats qui ont suivi", a ajouté le communiqué diffusé par l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Un ratissage de la région était toujours en cours, selon ce communiqué.

Tunceli, un bastion du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), est situé à environ 600 kilomètres au nord de la frontière entre la Turquie et l'Irak où les affrontements entre les rebelles séparatistes et l'armée turque se sont intensifiés ces dernières semaines.

Ankara a menacé d'intervenir militairement dans le nord de l'Irak, où plusieurs milliers de rebelles du PKK ont trouvé refuge.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a engagé une lutte armée depuis 1984 pour obtenir l'autonomie de l'est et du sud-est de la Turquie dont la population est en majorité kurde. Les affrontements entre les rebelles kurdes et l'armée turque ont fait plus de 37.000 morts.

## Irak: le gouvernement autonome kurde signe sept nouveaux contrats pétroliers

AFP

**BAGDAD, 7 nov 2007 (AFP)** - Les autorités de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien ont approuvé la signature de sept nouveaux contrats pétroliers dans cette partie du nord de l'Irak, où opèrent désormais une vingtaine de compagnies étrangères malgré l'opposition du gouvernement de Bagdad.

Dans un communiqué, le ministre kurde des ressources naturelles, le Dr Ashti Hawrami, a annoncé mercredi la signature par le gouvernement kurde de "sept nouveaux contrats de partage de production pétrolière (PSC)".

Sept blocs, répartis entre les provinces d'Erbil et Dohouk, ont été attribués aux compagnies OMV Aktiengesellschaft, MOL Hungarian Oil and Gas PLC, Gulf Keystone Petroleum International Limited, Kalegran Limited, et Reliance Energy Ltd, ou à leurs filiales.

"Avec la signature de ces nouveaux contrats, une vingtaine de compagnies pétrolières internationales vont désormais opérer au Kurdistan irakien", s'est félicité le Dr Hawrami.

Ces sociétés toucheront 15% des revenus de l'exploitation pétrolière et "85% reviendront à l'Irak".

Au total, quinze blocs ont été attribués à ce jour par le gouvernement kurde depuis l'adoption en août 2007 par la région d'une loi sur le pétrole et le gaz, ceci malgré l'opposition du gouvernement central de Bagdad qui y voit une remise en cause de sa souveraineté sur cette partie nord du pays.

"Seuls 17% des revenus du pétrole kurde resteront au Kurdistan, les 83% restant seront au bénéfice des Irakiens vivant en dehors du Kurdistan", a affirmé le communiqué.

Entité de facto indépendante et alliée des Etats Unis, le Kurdistan irakien --seul oasis de paix dans un Irak largement plongé dans le chaos-- jouit d'une prospérité économique retrouvée depuis la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein en 2003.

Les responsables kurdes ont sans cesse affirmé leur intention d'exploiter les richesses de leur sous-sol, et passent ainsi, avec la signature de ces nouveaux contrats, à la vitesse supérieure.

En septembre, le ministre irakien du Pétrole, Hussein Chahristani, avait pourtant jugé "illégal" la signature des premiers contrats, suscitant le vif mécontentement des responsables kurdes.

Des responsables américains avaient également critiqué ces accords qui ont créé, selon eux, des "tensions inutiles" avec le gouvernement central de Bagdad, alors que le parlement irakien doit examiner depuis plusieurs mois un projet de loi controversé sur le pétrole.

Dossier politique ultra-sensible, cette loi vise à partager équitablement les revenus pétroliers entre les 18 provinces, dans un pays qui recèle les troisièmes réserves mondiales.

Elle doit mettre fin à la confusion qui règne aujourd'hui en Irak sur l'exploitation des ressources en hydrocarbures.

Après avoir donné son accord à une première version du texte, le gouvernement kurde s'est dit hostile à ce projet, après le rajout d'un amendement stipulant que "les contrats d'exploration de pétrole seront du ressort du gouvernement central".

Aucune date n'a été fixée par le parlement irakien sur cette loi, dont l'examen est au point mort.

"Nous avons attendu cinq mois (...), les députés irakiens n'ont rien fait et il n'y a pas de signe qu'ils vont le faire rapidement", déplorait début octobre le Premier ministre kurde Nechirvan Barzani, qui justifiait les choix de son gouvernement "au nom du fédéralisme" et comme une volonté de "servir d'exemple".

Confirmant une nouvelle fois cette ambition, le ministre Hawrami a assuré mercredi que la signature de nouveaux contrats était "une étape majeure vers l'objectif que s'est donnée la région du Kurdistan de produire un million de barils par jour".

AFP

## Trois rebelles séparatistes kurdes tués en Iran

**TEHERAN, 8 nov 2007 (AFP)** - Trois membres du groupe rebelle séparatiste kurde Pejak (PJAK) ont été tués par les forces de l'ordre iraniennes dans la province occidentale du Kordestan, a rapporté jeudi le quotidien gouvernemental Iran.

"Trois membres armés du groupe terroriste Pejak ont été tués dans le district de Kamyaran, dans la province du Kordestan", a écrit le journal en citant une "source informée", sans préciser la date de l'incident.

Les trois hommes étaient des "citoyens d'un pays voisin", a ajouté le journal. La province de Kordestan est frontalière de l'Irak. Elle abrite, tout comme celles de Kermanshah au sud et de l'Azerbaïdjan occidental au nord, une forte population kurde.

Le Pejak, acronyme du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan, est lié au Parti

des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui lutte depuis 1984 contre le gouvernement turc dans le sud-est anatolien. Basé dans le nord-est de l'Irak, le Pejak est responsable de plusieurs attaques contre les forces de l'ordre iraniennes.

L'Iran accuse les Etats-Unis de soutenir le Pejak, ainsi que d'autres organisations ethniques aux frontières de l'Iran, ce que Washington a toujours démenti.

L'Iran s'est fait l'écho de l'impatience grandissante de la Turquie envers les autorités irakiennes, incapables selon eux d'empêcher les attaques contre leurs forces de membres du PKK.

Mais Téhéran a recommandé la retenue à Ankara sur ce sujet, alors que la Turquie a menacé d'intervenir militairement contre le PKK sur le territoire irakien.

The New York Times NOVEMBER 3, 2007

# Pressed by Turks, Rice Seeks to Solve Kurdish Rebel Threat While Urging Restraint

By HELENE COOPER  
and SABRINA TAVERNISE

ANKARA, Turkey, Nov. 2 — Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice came under pressure Friday from Turkish leaders seeking American help to curb Kurdish guerrillas in northern Iraq. But it was not clear whether her public pronouncements at the outset of this long-awaited visit would be enough to satisfy them.

During a string of meetings in the capital, Ankara, before heading to Istanbul, Ms. Rice took pains to demonstrate support for Turkey. She called for restraint in an attempt to forestall any Turkish military incursion into northern Iraq, where the Kurdish rebels stage attacks on Turkey from mountain hide-outs.

"I think it's fair to say that we all need to redouble our efforts," Ms. Rice said at a press conference on Friday. "All across the world we've seen that it's not easy to root out terrorism."

Turkish leaders continued to sound resolute. "Our expectations of the United States are very high," the foreign minister, Ali Babacan, said, standing next to Ms. Rice. "We want action."

Less than two weeks before Ms. Rice's visit, the Kurdish rebels, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, killed 12 Turkish soldiers near the border with Iraq, prompting Turkey to threaten a military offensive. Turkey is a NATO member and a strong American ally in a troubled region, so a military offensive into Iraq — whose territory is controlled by the United States military — could be deeply problematic for all parties.

The Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has been skeptical of military action in the past, and is well aware of the damage an offensive would inflict on Turkey, which is pressing for acceptance into the European Union.

Few Turkish officials expect the United States to offer military action, but a public display of support for Mr. Erdogan could ease the pressure on him to choose military action.

"The Americans are not being concrete, and that is narrowing



With photos of Turkish soldiers killed by Kurdish rebels, Turks in Istanbul denounced the United States and the rebels yesterday.

down the field of maneuver for the government," said Ihter Turan, a professor of political science at Bilgi University in Istanbul. The political opposition is fanning nationalism, he said, and with trust in the United States at a low in Turkish society, it is "difficult for the Turkish government to appear that it is trusting the Americans without some concrete results."

Mr. Erdogan will meet with President Bush next week, and he reiterated this week that he would not press for a large-scale offensive, but that he expected support from the United States.

But with American forces already stretched thin in Iraq, American military commanders have balked at taking action against the rebels, known by their initials, the P.K.K., and the Bush administration has focused its efforts on pressing Iraq's Kurdish leaders, who control the area in which the P.K.K. hides, to take action against the group. Those leaders, however, say that it is impossible to dislodge the fighters from the remote mountains where they hide, and that the only solution is through diplomacy and amnesty.

The Kurdish rebel situation "has now become, rightly or wrongly, a test of where the United States holds Turkey," said Soli Ozel, a professor of international relations at Bilgi University.

Support for the United States eroded further last month, when a House committee approved a resolution condemning the mass killings of Armenians by Ottoman Turks during World War I as genocide. The full House did not vote on the resolution, but Turkey reacted angrily, threatening to shut off its territory as an American supply hub for Iraq, and recalling its ambassador from Washington.

The Bush administration opposed the genocide vote, and has worked to smooth things over since then. Ms. Rice delicately referred to the Armenian issue on Friday as "the events of 1915," but made no mention of the word genocide, a term the Turks strongly reject.

Even within the Bush administration, there has been criticism that the United States, in more than four years in Iraq, should have done more to rein in the Kurdish guerrillas. Gen. Joseph W. Ralston, who is retired from the Air Force and until last month was the United States special envoy for countering the P.K.K., told McClatchy Newspapers on

Friday that United States inaction on the P.K.K. issue might force Turkey to act. General Ralston resigned his post, administration officials said, because he was frustrated with the failure of Iraq and the United States to do more in northern Iraq.

Bush administration officials are in the middle of a delicate balancing act, trying to shore up Mr. Erdogan's hand against those in his country calling for military action. But they are also strenuously trying to avoid a new front in the war, and Ms. Rice must find a way to give Mr. Erdogan public backing while privately urging restraint.

Professor Turan said that might not be enough. "This kind of explanation is often seen as buying time," he said. "I think what the public wants to hear is something concrete."

Speaking to reporters on her flight to Ankara, Ms. Rice said pointedly that Turkey's problems with the Kurds could not all be laid at America's door. "This didn't arise with the liberation of Iraq," she said. "The problem has been there, and no one has been able to deal with it. And so now at least we have an Iraqi government that wants to deal with it."

But there is little trust between the Turks and the Iraqi government; Mr. Babacan, the foreign minister, spoke Friday of doubts about the efforts of the Iraqi government to rein in the Kurdish guerrillas.

Ms. Rice is supposed to participate with Iraqi and Turkish officials in a three-way discussion on Saturday to try to come up with a joint plan that all sides can agree on. Administration officials said that the American military had collected a list of P.K.K. guerrillas and issued orders for American forces to pick them up if they encounter them in Iraq. Beyond that, American spy planes will also feed intelligence to Turkish forces on P.K.K. movements in northern Iraq, administration officials said.

## Turkey's Kurds

# Dreams and reality

DIYARBAKIR AND OVAKOY

## The effects of northern Iraq on Turkey's Kurds are more complex than they seem

**S**TANDING by the stream that separates the hamlet of Ovakoy from northern Iraq, Hisyar Ozalp, a young Kurdish lawyer, gestures towards a cluster of pink houses on the opposite bank. "That is Kurdistan," he says. "And so is this." Any conversation in Ovakoy shows why Turkey is so nervous about the effect of the Iraqi Kurds' semi-independent statelet. "I don't like Turkish, it's no good," declares Fatma, a five-year-old, using the commonest Kurdish dialect. A gaggle of Turkish conscripts stares in mute incomprehension.

In the province of Hakkari, members of a group inspired by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of Masoud Barzani, president of Iraq's Kurdish region, whisper of a new plan to unite the Kurds of Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq. Until recently, their KDP-Bakur disavowed the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has escalated its long war against the Turkish army, killing 48 soldiers in October alone. Today it says armed struggle may be "the only way." The Iraqi Kurds' march to independence since the 1991 Gulf war has stirred excitement among Turkey's 14m Kurds (roughly half of all Kurds). Mr Barzani's autobiography is being snapped up everywhere. "Iraqi Kurdistan is like a beacon," says Ibrahim Guclu, a Kurdish politician.

Like many Kurds, he believes that Turkey's threat to clobber the PKK in northern Iraq is a cover for a full-scale invasion aimed at Iraq's Kurds. Warmongers in the Turkish media are howling for retribution against Mr Barzani for providing a haven

for the PKK. Mr Barzani, who lost 200 of his own fighters helping the Turkish army against the PKK in the 1990s, says he would be happy to mediate but insists that the Turks should first recognise him as the Kurds' legitimate representative. Nothing doing, says Turkey, which this week announced new sanctions against those who support the PKK.

Despite Mr Barzani's popularity, the Turks can take heart from the millions of Kurds who have no desire to break away. That was the message of the July 22nd election, says Sehmus Akbas, a Kurdish businessman in Diyarbakir. He is thinking of the big gains made by the Justice and Development (AK) party in Kurdish areas, at the expense of the pro-Kurdish Democratic People's Party (DTP). Such is the appeal of AK's mix of liberalism and Islamic piety that it might even wrest Diyarbakir, the Kurds' unofficial capital, from the DTP in local elections next March.

Relations between Turks and Kurds are as intimate as they are fraught and complex. "We are like flesh and fingernail, inseparable," says Mr Akbas. Many Kurds cling to sentimental notions of an independent state. But the reality after centuries of cohabitation, intermarriage and economic integration is that "drawing

boundaries has become impossible", as Hasim Hasimi, a Kurdish politician, puts it.

Take Istanbul; home to some 2m Kurds, and easily the world's biggest Kurdish city. Many Kurds are poor and unemployed, often victims of the army's scorched-earth campaign against the PKK in the 1990s. Not surprisingly, they tend to support the rebels. Yet thousands of middle-class Kurds with summer homes on the Aegean coast, who want their children to learn English not Kurdish, have little interest in politics. There are few signs that northern Iraq is luring Turkey's Kurds. More ethnic Turks

than Turkish Kurds do business there.

The frenzy of nationalism that has gripped Turkey since the PKK killed 12 Turkish soldiers and kidnapped another eight on October 21st is threatening to upset the fragile balance at home. In the western city of Bursa, ultra-nationalist vigilantes recently vandalised a chain of stores owned by a Kurdish family, after rumours spread that it was helping the rebels. DTP offices throughout Turkey have been pelted with rocks and, in one place, set on fire.

"Is Turkey going towards partition?" asks Sezgin Tanrikulu, a human-rights lawyer in Diyarbakir. Very probably not. But with every funeral of a Turkish soldier, calls for revenge are growing. Ordinary Kurds risk being caught in the crossfire. ■



Excitement stirs in Diyarbakir



**REUTERS**

## Kurd killed in north Syria protest

November 4, 2007 Reuters - By Khaled Yacoub Oweis

**DAMASCUS** - Security forces killed a Kurdish youth and wounded four other people in northeastern Syria while breaking up a protest against a possible Turkish incursion into Iraqi Kurdistan, witnesses and Kurdish activists said on Sunday.

The incident revived the issue of longstanding Kurdish grievances in tightly controlled Syria and evoked painful memories of demonstrations and riots a few years ago that killed 30 people.

Witnesses said Issa Khalil, 24, was among a group of 200 Kurds who gathered in the city of Qamishli on Friday in support of their brethren across the border in Iraq.

The city was the scene of anti-government riots in 2004 that spread to Kurdish areas across Syria. Machal Jammo, a Kurdish activist, told Reuters police fired bullets and teargas to break up the demonstrations. Protesters responded by throwing stones.

"Syria wants to send a message of support to Turkey. But its hostility to the Kurdish presence in the region risks a repeat of the 2004 anger on a larger scale," said Jammo, an official in the Kurdish Future Movement, which advocates democracy and equal rights for Syria's one million Kurdish minority.

Thousands of Kurds turned out for Khalil's funeral in Qamishli on Saturday. Witnesses said security forces surrounded the funeral procession but did not interfere.

"We could be looking at more funerals, which is keeping the situation tense. Two of the four with wounds are in serious condition," a resident of the city said. There was no comment from the Syrian authorities. Qamishli is heavily policed and news from the city is slow to filter out.

Police in the northern town of Aleppo prevented an anti-Turkish demonstration last week but there were no casualties, human right activists said.

TIES

Turkey has amassed around 100,000 soldiers on its border with Iraqi Kurdistan for a possible attack on PKK separatists who have launched strikes against Turkish forces. Baghdad has sought to calm Turkey, saying it is prepared to pursue guerrilla leaders responsible for raids into Turkey to avert an invasion.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad expressed support for Turkey's policy toward the PKK on a visit to Ankara last month, although Information Minister Mohsen Bilal later said Assad did not back a Turkish attack on Iraq.

Relations between Ankara and Damascus improved sharply in recent years as Kurdish power has risen in Iraq. In an interview with al-Jazeera television, Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani described Syria's position toward Iraqi Kurdistan as "negative".

Syria's overtures toward Turkey have not gone down well with Syria's own Kurdish minority which includes thousands of disenfranchised Kurds without passports or official documents to own property or use government services.

Under Turkish pressure, Syria has cracked down on the PKK. A security court handed several PKK members long sentences last year in trials criticised by human rights groups as illegitimate.

Syria banned the PKK after a confrontation with Turkey in 1998 over the group's activities. The two countries came close to a military conflict before Damascus met Turkey's request to expel PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, who was later arrested and jailed by Turkey.

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## Political dance of Turkish troops' release

**BBC NEWS** 5 November 2007 By Jim Muir BBC News, Baghdad

**The manner in which the eight Turkish soldiers captured by the Kurdish PKK rebels were released on Sunday says much about the complex politics surrounding the current border crisis between Turkey and northern Iraq.**

In an obviously pre-arranged scenario, the eight men were marched down from the remote border mountains where they had been held by the PKK, to a meeting point where a reception delegation was waiting for them.

There, they were formally signed over into the care of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the administration that runs the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan under a federal arrangement with Baghdad.

The KRG team was carefully balanced between the two main parties that dominate Iraqi Kurdish politics, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of Massoud Barzani, who is president of Iraqi Kurdistan, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by Jalal Talabani, who is president of Iraq.

That was a signal that both parties agreed to share either the blame or the credit for acting as midwives to the release.

Also present at the initial handover in the mountains were three Kurdish members of the Turkish parliament who had crossed the border to try to help bring about the release of the soldiers.

The three, who are among the 20 MPs of the Democratic Society Party, are now being accused by some senior government figures in Ankara of complicity with the PKK.

### Carefully choreographed

From the mountains, the freed soldiers were taken in a convoy of KRG vehicles to the regional capital, Erbil.

There, they were handed into the custody of an Iraqi government delegation headed by Defence Minister Abdul Qader al-Obeidi.

Also present was the Commander of the Multinational Forces in Iraq, Gen David Petraeus.

Both men then joined the liberated Turks on a US military aircraft that flew them, not home to Turkey, but to a Turkish-controlled airstrip at Bamarni, inside northern Iraq - one of several little-publicised bases the Turks have maintained there since the 1990s.

At Bamarni, the soldiers were finally signed over to the Turkish military and put on a Turkish military flight home, as Ankara had insisted.

According to several Kurdish and Iraqi accounts, their release had been agreed in principle by the PKK many days before, and had been heralded by many optimistic statements from officials in the know.

But the modalities clearly took some arranging. The men could simply have been



set loose near one of the Turkish bases, or sent on foot across the border.

The way it eventually happened was much more politically choreographed.

### Iraqi involvement

From the outset, Ankara had refused to

talk directly to the Iraqi Kurds of the KRG on the issue.

It insisted on the Iraqi government in Baghdad as its interlocutor although the area is beyond the writ of the central administration and firmly in the hands of the Kurds.

So the Turkish soldiers were handed over by an official Iraqi government delegation, flown in on an MNF plane by Gen Petraeus.

Although the KRG had clearly done the legwork in persuading the PKK to give the soldiers up and acted as the first link in

the chain, both Baghdad and the Americans were demonstrating to the Turks that they could deliver, as they were under strong pressure to do.

Since its overriding concern was to try to avert the threatened Turkish incursion - which it fears would be directed as much against itself as against the PKK - the KRG was happy to let the central Iraqi government preside over the handover, despite its negligible involvement in the release.

That casts the crisis as one between Turkey and Iraq, not Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds. An invasion could thus be portrayed as a threat to Iraq's stability, not

just the KRG.

There are times when it suits the independent-minded Iraqi Kurds to cling to the Baghdad government. This was one of them. Whether it will prove a lasting trend remains to be seen.

The timing of the release was probably no coincidence. It gave US President George W Bush something new and positive to point to when he met an angry Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in Washington the following day.

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**The Washington Post**

**Nov 5, 2007**

## **Kurdistan's Hope for Talks**

**By: Nechirvan Barzani**

**The Washington Post WASHINGTON,**

When President Bush and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan meet today to discuss ongoing conflict between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Turkey, we in the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRG) will be listening with hope. We welcome this meeting. The only solution to this decades-old problem lies in diplomacy. Let me be clear: The KRG is, and will remain, fully prepared to find a long-term solution to this problem. To this end, we propose talks among Ankara, Baghdad, Arbil and Washington. This is a transnational issue, complicated by ethnic ties, and no party can find a solution on its own. We will sit down at any time with anyone who seeks a negotiated, diplomatic resolution.

We must discard the rhetoric of violence and recognize that a military response to the current crisis would be a disaster for everyone except the PKK. We in the Kurdistan region of Iraq would be slowed on our path to peace, democracy and prosperity; the Turkish army would become bogged down in a bloody and unproductive struggle against the PKK outside its borders; the United States and Western allies would become estranged from a vital NATO ally; and the economies and peoples of the region -- particularly Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq -- would suffer.

We have tried to explain to our Turkish friends that we want only peace and cooperation with them. Our region depends heavily on investment and trade with Turkey. The great majority of foreign businesses operating here are Turkish, nearly all of our construction is done by Turkish contractors, we receive much of our electricity from Turkey and well over 75 percent of our imports arrive via Tur-

key. Why would we provoke Turkey into a military action that would severely damage our economy?

The history of this conflicted part of the world carries a message: Problems such as the PKK cannot be solved through military means. For decades the government of Saddam Hussein tried to liquidate the Kurdish people by violence, at a tremendous price for both sides. We ourselves fought against the PKK in the late 1990s with help from the Turkish military, and 10 years later we again find ourselves at a crisis point. The mountains inside our region and in Turkey have protected the PKK for decades, and there is little reason to believe that new military actions would be any more successful than past attempts. Problems for which military solutions are sought here seem to have a way of never getting resolved.

We have condemned and will continue to condemn the PKK for its unwarranted attacks in Turkey. We insist that its members lay down their arms immediately. We do not allow them to operate freely, contrary to what some have suggested. Turkey, with its substantial military capability, has not been able to eradicate the PKK within its own borders, yet some Turks inexplicably expect us to be successful with far fewer capabilities and resources.

Just as we ask the Turks to seek a peaceful resolution, so must the PKK abandon its failed strategy of armed conflict. Diplomacy and dialogue must be given a chance. With time, patience and stability, we believe that peaceful change can occur. Just 10 years ago the PLO and the IRA were considered terrorist organiza-

tions. Today they have begun a process of transformation and are working within the political arena. Can such a transformation take place within the PKK? We cannot be certain. But we do know that military action will only radicalize the situation further, and violence will surely breed more violence.

We want peace along our border with Turkey. We want to cooperate on economic, social and cultural issues. We want to be a good neighbor and to exercise our responsibilities as good neighbors. Our successful efforts in cooperation with Ankara and Baghdad to secure the release of Turkish soldiers demonstrate our sincere desire to find peaceful solutions to the problem. We will continue taking concrete steps to improve the security environment at the border. But the Turkish government needs to overcome its refusal to talk to us as neighbors.

The Kurdistan region is the only part of Iraq where peace and development have prospered since the liberation of 2003, and we are the constitutionally recognized regional government in the area. We have come a long way both economically and politically. But much more work remains. We have chosen to become part of a federal Iraq and will uphold that commitment.

We threaten no one as we move toward greater development. We hope that we can extend the hand of friendship to Turkey and work together to find solutions to this crisis that will lead to long-term stability and peaceful relations.

***Nechirvan Barzani is prime minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq.***

THE  
INDEPENDENT

## Former leader of Kurd rebels reveals retreat into Iran

05 November 2007 By Patrick Cockburn in Arbil

Turkish Kurd guerrillas are leaving Iraqi Kurdistan for Iran in order to avoid an attack by the Turkish army according to a former leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party, the PKK.

Osman Ocalan, brother of the imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, said: "the PKK has decreased its forces in Iraqi Kurdistan and they are moving to Iran. It is part of PKK tactics that when they feel pressure in one country they move to another."

President George Bush and the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, are to meet today in Washington to discuss what can be done about the PKK in Iraqi Kurdistan, from which it has been staging attacks on Turkish army units.

The news that the PKK is moving its mobile fighters into Iranian Kurdistan – where they have escalated attacks on Iranian government forces – further complicates any action against the guerrillas.

Mr Ocalan was at the top of Turkey's most wanted list until he left the PKK because he had fallen in

love with a woman who was a fellow PKK fighter. PKK rules forbade relationships between guerrillas, so they fled the mountains in 2004, where he had lived for 18 years, in order to marry.

As a founder member of the PKK and the brother of its revered leader, Mr Ocalan is well informed about the actions and intentions of the organisation. In an interview in Arbil he estimated the total strength of the PKK guerrillas at just under 7,000. "There are 2,750 fighters in Turkey," he said. "A further 2,500 are in the border areas of Iraq and 1,500 are in Iran." It is the PKK's war in Iran, where there is a Kurdish minority of four million, that is escalating. "In the last six months the PKK has started a war against Iran."

"There are more and more fighters in Iranian Kurdistan and the Iranian Kurds support the PKK strongly." The shift of part of the PKK into Iran to evade a Turkish military operations and to attack Iranian forces faces the US with a problem. America condemns the PKK when it is killing Turkish

soldiers in Turkey as "terrorists", but has not similarly denounced the section of the PKK, known as PJAK, which has killed as many as 150 Iranian soldiers and police in Iran. Iran claims that the PKK receives covert support from the US.

The PKK is skilful in exploiting the fact that the 25 million Kurds in the Middle East have no state of their own, but are spread across eastern Turkey (where they number 15 million), northern Iraq (five million), Iran (four million) and Syria (one million). "In this instance the partition of Kurdistan works in our interests," Mr Ocalan said.

One reason for the intensification of PKK attacks on the Turkish army is the movement's concern about the health of its leader, Abdullah Ocalan, imprisoned on the Turkish island of Imrali in the Sea of Marmara. "The Turks want to kill Apu [Abdullah's nickname]," he said of his brother. "He can't breathe the very well."

TIME

Nov. 05, 2007

## The Turks Are Coming! Oh, They're Already Here

By Andrew Lee Butters

Even on a normal day, Ibrahim Khalil, the complex straddling Turkey and Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq, is a rather unusual international border crossing. Although it is an entry point into Iraq, there are no Iraqi soldiers, no Iraqi flags, and seemingly no Iraqi federal officials. Instead, the Iraqi side is controlled by the Kurdistan Regional Government, which enforces its own customs and immigration policies, enforced at checkpoints manned by Kurdish peshmerga fighters under the flag of Kurdistan – a red, white, and green tricolor with a golden sun.

Viewed from Turkey, these trappings of autonomy are a worrying prelude to an independent Kurdish state, a prospect to which Turkey – with its own restive Kurdish minority – is implacably hostile. Turkish soldiers often harass Kurds crossing at Ibrahim Khalil, according to Iraqi Kurdish border security officials. They confiscate books or documents that use the word "Kurdistan", deny passage to women called Kurdistan – a common female first name – and to Kurds of foreign nationality whose passports list "Kurdistan" as a place of birth.

Turkey's latent hostility towards Iraqi Kurdistan has grown more active following last month's killings of about 40 Turks, mostly soldiers, by fighters of the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, a militant group of Turkish Kurds at war with the Turkish state (and branded a terrorist organization by the U.S. and EU). Turkey accuses Iraqi Kurdish leaders of allowing the PKK to maintain bases in northern Iraq as part of a greater Kurdish national agenda. (Iraqi Kurds say they are helpless against a hardened guerrilla group

that Turkey itself has failed to defeat in over 20 years of war – Turkey rejects these claims of helplessness, pointing out that the Iraqi Kurdish authorities have not even acted to cut off supply lines to the guerrilla movement's camps.) Amid rising tension, the Turks have threatened cross-border military action against the PKK, and also to close their side of the Ibrahim Khalil border crossing as punishment.

But on a recent road trip through the mountains of northern Iraq along the Turkish border, it was easier to find Turkish soldiers than Kurdish rebels. The Turkish army maintains at least four bases inside northern Iraq as a result of an agreement with Saddam Hussein after the American no-flight zone created a power vacuum in the region during the 1990s. In the town of Barmani, the Turks have a base with 35 tanks, and are repairing a disused air strip and building up troop levels, according to Iraqi Kurdish intelligence officers. But this is no invasion: The Turks supply and man these stations simply by sending uniformed soldiers through the Ibrahim Khalil border on buses.

While the Turks drive their tanks through Barmani in broad daylight once a week, the PKK guerrillas are more elusive. Although the Turkish army claims that the PKK is using northern Iraq as a staging ground for attacks inside Turkey, the PKK's main bases are in the Qandil mountains, near the border with Iran and beyond the easy reach of a large Turkish force. The few PKK bases near the Turkish border are also difficult to reach, located long distances on single-track dirt roads high in classic insurgency country. One camp that's home to some 300 fighters in a

ravine carved by the cold blue waters of the lower Khabour river looked like a beautiful place for an invading army to die. Turkish incursions into northern Iraq are unlikely to have much effect on either PKK fighters hiding there, or on those inside Turkey – where the PKK claims to have twice as many fighters as it does in Iraq.

The harsh mountainous terrain and the dispersal of the PKK makes it unlikely that the Turkish army will stage a major invasion this year and risk being caught in the mountains with winter fast approaching. Still, the mere threat of Turkish action has had an effect: The last stable part of Iraq no longer feels quite the safe haven it had become for thousands of refugees from the civil war in the rest of the country. "We fled from Baghdad, and now we are afraid of the Turks," said Mary Toma, a Christian refugee from the Dora neighborhood of Baghdad who has taken shelter with her husband and two teenage daughters in the mountain village of Gededky, within artillery range of Turkey. "Where should I go? What should I do?" she asked.

And the showdown has also reminded Kurdish leaders how dependent they remain, despite the trappings of independence, on their patrons in Washington, who are working to diffuse the crisis, and on the government in Baghdad, which leapt to the defense of the Kurdish region. And since many Kurdish observers suspect that Iraqi Kurdish independence – not just the PKK – is the target of Turkey's efforts, the Turks may have already won this skirmish in the battle of northern Iraq.

The Philadelphia Inquirer Nov. 6, 2007

## Bush: U.S. will help Turks fight Kurd rebels

By Desmond Butler, Associated Press

WASHINGTON - President Bush pledged fresh help yesterday to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in fighting Kurdish rebels, declaring them "an enemy of Turkey, a free Iraq and the United States."

In an Oval Office session, Bush offered intelligence-sharing to help combat the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. Bush also said top military officials from the United States and Turkey would be in more regular contact in an effort to track the movement of the guerrilla fighters.

"I made it very clear to the prime minister that we want to work in a close way to deal with this problem," Bush told reporters.

With Turkish troops massed on the border of his country, Erdogan is weighing a major attack against the PKK in northern Iraq. The guerrillas have killed about 40 Turks in the last month in border raids, and pressure is growing on Erdogan to strike back. The White House worries that a Turkish incursion into Iraq could bring instability to what has been the calmest part of Iraq and could set a precedent for other countries, such as Iran, that have conflicts with Kurdish rebels.

Asked about a potential Turkish attack, Bush called the question hypothetical.

"It's fine to speculate about what may or may not happen," Bush said. "But nothing can happen until you get good intelligence. We need to know where people are hiding, and we need to know what they're doing."

Erdogan said his government had the authority to mount an incursion into Iraq, but he gave no further indication of his intentions. Instead, he emphasized cooperation with the United States.

"As strategic partners, we are fighting jointly against international terrorism in the world," Erdogan said.

It is widely believed that the bulk of the PKK forces - which traditionally halt operations in the winter because of supply and logistical difficulties - have scattered as far as southern Iraq, as well as melting into the populations of large cities in the north. Bush and Erdogan met a day after the PKK released eight soldiers it had held for two weeks since capturing them in an ambush inside Turkey along the Iraqi border.

The Philadelphia Inquirer Nov. 6, 2007

## Turkish Prez: Decision Made on Rebels

SUZAN FRASER The Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey - Turkey's president said Tuesday his country "has decided" on how to proceed against Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq and had informed the United States.

The U.S. and Iraq have been pressing Turkey to avoid a major cross-border attack on Kurdish Workers' Party, or PKK, rebel bases in northern Iraq out of fear such an incursion would bring instability to what has been one of the calmest areas in Iraq.

President Abdullah Gul did not specify what decision had been made regarding an attack, but made clear that Turkey feels that the PKK is leading to instability in the region itself.

"Iraq's stability cannot be limited to fighting terrorism in Baghdad or other regions," he said. "The terrorist organization in the north is also disrupting Iraq's stability."

The comments come the day after President Bush

met in Washington with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and promised him that the United States would share military intelligence in the hunt for PKK rebels.

Gul said part of Erdogan's goal in his trip was to share with the United States the decision that the country has made on how to deal with the rebels.

"Turkey had made its preparations and had decided what to do on the issue before the prime minister left," he said.

PKK rebels have killed more than 40 Turks in hit-and-run attacks over the past month, mainly soldiers, raising the public pressure on Erdogan to retaliate.

Tens of thousands of Turkish troops are poised at the southeastern border with Iraq, and experts speculate that if there is to be an attack this year, it must come soon before the winter weather descends upon the mountainous region making military action nearly impossible.

Both the U.S. and the European Union have labeled

the PKK a terrorist organization, and Bush called the rebels "an enemy of Turkey, a free Iraq and the United States."

In addition to White House worries that a Turkish incursion into Iraq could bring instability to the area, it also is concerned an incursion could set a precedent for other countries, such as Iran, that have conflicts with Kurdish rebels.

Yet, when asked about the possibility of Turkey attacking Iraq, Bush dismissed the question as hypothetical.

He tried instead to assure Turkey that the U.S. is providing support.

"It's fine to speculate about what may or may not happen," Bush said. "But nothing can happen until you get good intelligence. We need to know where people are hiding, and we need to know what they're doing."

Erdogan said his government has the authority to mount an incursion into Iraq if necessary. But he gave no further indication of his intentions.

The Washington Times

By Nicholas Birch November 6, 2007

## Kurdish teens drawn to rebels' ranks

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey — At least 150 teenagers from this city in southeastern Turkey have joined the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party in the past year, illustrating a magnetic pull that many of their elders find baffling.

Since the jailing of Kurdish nationalist leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1999, the central government in Ankara has taken major steps to address Kurdish grievances. Their region is now free of military law; the use of Kurdish names has been legalized; Kurdish-language broadcasting is permitted for one hour a day; and,

for the first time in a decade, Kurdish nationalists are represented in parliament.

The Turkish military, meanwhile, has waged a highly successful battle against the PKK — as the Kurdistan Workers' Party is referred to by its Kurdish acronym — at least in tactical terms. As many as 75 PKK members have died since militants attacked a Turkish platoon on Oct. 21, killing 12 soldiers and capturing eight — all of whom were released over the weekend.

President Bush added to the pressure on the rebel group yesterday,

promising Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Washington that the United States will offer intelligence and other help in battling the PKK.

"The PKK is a terrorist organization. They're an enemy of Turkey; they're an enemy of Iraq; and they're an enemy of the United States," Mr. Bush said at a press conference after talks with Mr. Erdogan.

Nevertheless, as Turkey's No. 2 general conceded recently, Turkey has been "unsuccessful" in dissuading a new generation of Kurds from joining the militant organiza-

tion.

Military intelligence last year reported that 40 percent of the estimated 3,000 Kurdish militants in northern Iraq had joined since the start of a PKK cease-fire, which began in 1999 and lasted five years.

In Diyarbakir, locals say at least 150 teenagers enlisted this year. In Yuksekova, a city of 100,000, six have joined in the last month.

In towns and villages across the region, the story is told in photos on the walls of homes like that of Irfan Gur, a slender man whose face is wrinkled from years of sun and

locally grown tobacco.

There is a picture of his father, long dead, the top of his portrait covered in lace in accord with local tradition. Lace also covers the features of a much younger man, Mr. Gur's son, a PKK militant who died fighting the Turkish army in 1994.

Mr. Gur points to another photograph. "My youngest son," he said. "He went to join the group in July. I haven't heard from him since."

Many Kurds say they are surprised by the PKK's continued ability to attract recruits, especially since the rebels dropped their separatist demands to call instead for "democratic confederalism" — a concept that few Kurds understand.

Part of the explanation can be found outside Mr. Gur's front door.

A decade ago, his neighborhood consisted of fields sloping down to a river. Now it's a slum, streets full of grubby children, some barefooted, leaping over open sewers and piles of rubbish.

Places like this exist throughout southeastern Turkey, filled with villagers forced from their homes by Turkish security forces during the 1990s.

Diyarbakir's population, 350,000 a decade ago, is now nearly 1.5 million. Ninety percent of the families in some districts live below the poverty line.

"What future do these children

have?" one local journalist asked. "Crime, the PKK, radical Islam."

Locals say it was poverty and a sense of neglect, rather than organized PKK activity, that drove a recent riot in Diyarbakir, in which 11 persons, mainly children, were fatally shot by security forces.

Poverty, though, is not a problem unique to southeastern Turkey. What makes it explosive here is the frustration that has grown since PKK leader Ocalan was captured in 1999.

Despite the steps by Ankara to ease restrictions on the Kurdish language and culture, nationalists point to a flood of criminal investigations opened against Kurdish politicians since elections in July. The

latest came last week in response to calls for a revision of Turkey's unitary structure.

When four policemen shot a 12-year-old boy 10 times in the back at close range in 2005, on the other hand, a court described it as "self-defense" and freed the policemen.

Nothing irks Kurds more than what they see as the partiality of the Turkish press and television. When a TV reporter enthusiastically described a military attack that killed 30 PKK fighters last week, student Semdin Dumankaya complained, "He makes it sound like a [soccer] match."

## DTP faces probe on soldier rescue

**Government and opposition parties unite in an assault on the DTP, claiming that the pro-Kurdish party is trying to pave the way for negotiations with the outlawed PKK through its latest initiative on the release of kidnapped soldiers**

**GÖKSEL BOZKURT ANKARA TDN Parliament Bureau**

An investigation was launched about three Democratic Society Party (DTP) deputies yesterday who took back the eight missing Turkish soldiers from the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq Sunday.

Deputies of the Pro-Kurdish DTP, Aysel Tuğluk, Osman Özçelik and Fatma Kurtulan had signed a document with the PKK terrorists during the release of the soldiers, who called their engagement merely "humanitarian." But the DTP's initiative was frowned upon by a large part of the Turkish public as well as the government and other opposition parties. The Soldiers were taken hostage on Oct.21.

The chief public prosecutor's action came after a statement by government spokesman, Cemil Çiçek, who claimed that the DTP deputies were caught red-handed as they were photographed while receiving the soldiers and jointly signing a document with the PKK on a table decorated with pictures of terrorist leader Abdullah Öcalan. "We knew that our soldiers would be freed one day before their release and before the three mentioned deputies went [to northern Iraq]," said Çiçek, underlining that there was another point that must not be overlooked in the images. "It is clear who is close to the terror organization," he said.

Those who denied knowledge on the whereabouts of the terrorists made a clear impression on Sunday, said Çiçek, lashing out at the DTP's rhetoric of "mediating for the sake of humanitarianism." The DTP earlier announced that the party regarded the hostage crisis from a humanitarian point of view, not from a political one.

**Mediation vs. negotiation**

As the DTP's influence on the PKK led to judicial action, discussions on the scale of DTP-PKK relations flared up in Parliament again. The DTP's self-declared role as "mediator" was interpreted as that of "negotiator" in Ankara. The DTP's objective was seen as pushing for a political solution to the Kurdish problem by negotiating between the state and the PKK, a terrorist organization. Spokesmen of various parties castigated the "mediation" initiative of the DTP by stressing that the state will not negotiate with terrorists.

Politicians of Kurdish origins that gathered under the DTP made their first significant move this weekend. Three of them, Osman Özçelik, Aysel Tuğluk and Fatma Kurtulan went to northern Iraq and took back the missing soldiers by contacting the PKK under surveillance of Iraqi officials, northern Iraq government representatives and U.S. soldiers. The DTP highlighted its message to the public that it is the address to resort to for a political solution. The DTP's leader, Ahmet Türk, reiterated that they adopted a humanitarian view of the crisis, speaking to Turkish Daily News. The DTP's head of parliamentary administration, Sırrı Sakık, denied any ulterior motives for gaining political leverage from the hostage situation. "But we repeat this: Turkey must solve this problem with dialogue," he left.

**AKP angry with DTP**

Ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) parliamentary group deputy leader, Nihat Ergün, said it is not clear how exactly the DTP was involved in the resolution of the hostage crisis, adding that these initiatives did not change the truth that the PKK spreads terror. "While the reality

of terror remains in place, the DTP bringing soldiers back does not mean quitting the struggle," Ergün said.

An end to the nation state will not be considered as part of a political solution if this is what they mean by a political solution, said Ergün. "If DTP members want to bring terrorists back from the mountains, or convince the terrorist organization to give up violent methods, then let them use their influence," said Ergün. He added that any possibility of negotiations between the state and the terror organization is inconceivable.

**'DTP benefits from hostage crisis'**

Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) parliamentary group deputy leader, Oktay Vural, said the DTP is after political gain by turning the hostage situation into a negotiation process. "It was known from the beginning who took the soldiers, who controlled them and who was in charge. The DTP knew this too," said Vural.

"Was it the AKP who wanted the DTP to mediate? Did they ask Barzani to mediate between Turkey and Barzani? It was impossible for the PKK to harm the soldiers anyway," said Vural, adding that the exploitation of the event was a sign of the beginning of a negotiation process.

Republican People's Party deputy leader, Cevdet Selvi, said they found the DTP's efforts to mediate with the PKK unhealthy. "Turkey would never negotiate with terrorists. These attempts are merely intended to distract Turkey from a cross-border operation," he said.

## Thousands march for a peaceful solution to Kurdish question

ANKARA – Turkish Daily News

Thousands on Saturday gathered in Ankara to push the government to find a democratic solution to Kurdish problem at a time when Ankara is threatening Iraqi officials with a cross-border operation into northern Iraq if they don't take substantial measures against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK).

More than 30,000 protesters called for a "free, democratic and equal Turkey," in the meeting organized by Turkish Union of Chambers of Engineers and Architects (TMMOB), the Confederation of Public Sector Trade Unions (KESK) and the Union of Turkish Doctors (TTB).

KESK President İsmail Hakkı Tombul claimed that the Kurdish problem can be solved through its own dynamics. "Unconditional abandonment of armed methods is obligatory for taking necessary steps towards solution. It is not a motion or

a state of emergency we need," he said at the rally, amid slogans and posters in Kurdish.

Pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) deputies Sırrı Sakık and Selahattin Demirtaş and Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP) leader and Istanbul deputy Ufuk Uras were among the protesters.

Third option for a new constitution

Protestors criticized the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AKP) policies concerning a new constitution, accusing the government of keeping the drafting process in the dark. "AKP aims to build a more conservative society, in accordance with the Turk-Islamic synthesis in which [the party] was born," said Tombul. He also condemned the economic perspective reflected in this draft, claiming that AKP was institutionalizing neo-liberal economic policies and securing privatization policies by granting them a constitu-

tional statute.

TMMOB president Mehmet Soğancı argued in his speech that Turkey had been reshaped conveniently to fit the interests of the "capital," under the guise of acting in line with capitalist globalization. Protestors offered a third option for a constitution that ensured public services like education, health and social security and suppressed obstacles to freedom of associations and securing peaceful coexistence between cultures, identities and beliefs in society.

The AKP charged a "scientific board" this summer with the preparation of a draft constitution dubbed the "civilian constitution," to replace the one that was penned in 1982 under the authority of generals following the 1980 military coup. A draft of the constitution was leaked to the press in September, sparking a new wave of comments and criticisms on its content.

**REUTERS**

## Turkish PM says N.Iraq offensive planned

Nov 6, 2007

By Selcuk Gokoluk and Evren Mesci

**ANKARA (Reuters)** - Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan has said the Turkish army will go ahead with an operation against Kurdish guerrillas in northern Iraq, but diplomats suggested on Tuesday any action would be limited in scope.

Erdogan held talks with President George W. Bush on Monday to push Washington to crack down on some 3,000 Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) separatists using northern Iraq as a base for attacks in Turkey.

Bush said after their meeting that he was committed to countering the PKK, which he called their "common enemy" and offered to share intelligence with Turkey, a NATO ally.

While the talks yielded positive results they were unlikely to be enough to allow Turkey to step back from pursuing a military offensive, even if limited to air strikes and special operations, Turkish diplomats said.

"The U.S. has agreed to give Turkey 'actionable intelligence' and that means allowing us to take military action against the PKK once we have real time information," a Turkish diplomat told Reuters.

In response to what it sees as foot-dragging by Iraq and a lack of pressure from the United States, Turkey has mustered 100,000 troops on the border with Iraq and threatened to go after the PKK if nothing is done to rein them in.

The United States is against Turkey sending thousands of troops across the border, fearing it could destabilize northern Iraq and cause a bigger regional crisis. It has not opposed limited military strikes.

Turkey is a crucial ally for Washington, which uses Incirlik air base to provide logistical support for its forces in Iraq.

Erdogan said in Washington late on Monday that action was planned against the PKK, considered a terrorist organization by the United States, the European Union and Turkey.

"We are not on the eve of a war. We have made a decision on an operation. I want to stress once again that what we will do is an operation," he told the National Press Club.

Turkey's parliament last month approved a government request to permit major military cross-border operations into northern Iraq against the PKK in response to an escalation in deadly attacks by the rebels against soldiers and civilians.

LIMITED OPERATION

Diplomats and analysts said Turkey was moving towards a limited offensive rather than a full-scale incursion which would harm Turkey's image abroad.

Turkey's lira currency firmed 1.7 percent against the dollar on expectations a major offensive was now less likely.

"Although the meeting did not meet the expectations of the Turkish public, I think it satisfied the expectations of the government," Faruk Logoglu, an influential former Turkish ambassador to Washington, told Reuters.

"It's highly possible for Turkey to do some limited operations in the short term; either air strikes or some pinpoint operations by the Turkish special forces against PKK camps in northern Iraq," he said.

An escalation in separatist violence in recent weeks has sparked a public outcry in Turkey with mounting calls for an offensive against the militants in northern Iraq.

Erdogan said he had given Bush a list of five demands he wanted the United States to take against the PKK. These included shutting down PKK camps and cutting off logistical support.

"We got what we wanted," Erdogan said. "Nobody is telling us not to do an operation," he added.

Iraq has pledged to hunt down and arrest PKK leaders. But Baghdad has little influence over the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in the north and the success of any measures against the PKK would depend on cooperation of Kurdish authorities.

General Hilmi Ozkok, who retired last year as the head of Turkey's military, said in an interview with Milliyet newspaper that a cross border operation would not eliminate the PKK.

"The armed groups on the other side of the border have a great strategic depth. They pack up their bags and move back 200 km (125 miles)," Ozkok said.

"But if you ask me if this operation will benefit (Turkey)? I would say of course it will. You will show a great will. You show that you are determined to finish off (the PKK)."

The PKK took up arms against Turkey in 1984 with the aim of creating an ethnic homeland in the southeast. Nearly 40,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

(Writing by Paul de Bendern, editing by Keith Weir)

TORONTO STAR

# Kurdistan: a state of calm in Iraq

November 07, 2007

## Semi-autonomous region serves as a showcase for U.S. Mideast hopes

OAKLAND ROSS MIDDLE EAST BUREAU

**S**HAQLAWA, Iraq—When people from southern Iraq journey north to a region called Iraqi Kurdistan, they typically are in search of one precious thing.

Just ask Muhamad Sinan, originally from Baghdad, who now makes his home in this semi-autonomous state – a territory that is formally a part of Iraq but in practice almost a country of its own.

What is so different here?

Sinan replies at once.

"The safety."

The safety is right.

The 20-something computer engineer is strolling with a friend along the main street of Shaqlawa, a pastoral community tucked in a green valley between a pair of tall mountain ridges, a 40-minute drive north of Irbil, the administrative capital of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Irbil, in turn, is just a short drive from either Kirkuk or Mosul, two especially lethal points on the web of urban Iraq where violence has become a way of life, or death, much as it has done in Baghdad itself.

But here in Shaqlawa, visitors might almost think they were in a different world, and in many ways they are.

Iraqi Kurdistan – population: about 5 million – is not a paradise on earth, but it is a pocket of calm, relative prosperity, and considerable civility in what is perhaps the bloodiest-minded neighbourhood on the globe.

Fewer than half-a-dozen terrorist attacks have occurred in Iraqi Kurdistan since the early 1990s.

In many ways, this largely peaceful corner of the world's most war-ravaged land seems not to be a part of Iraq at all.

Consider:

Since 1991, when the United States imposed a no-fly zone in northern Iraq – preventing dictator Saddam Hussein from attacking the Kurdish region with warplanes – Iraqi Kurdistan has largely governed itself.

Nowadays, the region has its own army – the legendary Peshmerga, whose name means "those who face death," a fighting force reckoned to include at least 100,000 men in arms or, by some estimates, even more.

Iraqi Kurds also have their own flag, their own president, their own corps of international diplomats, their own language, their own TV channels and radio stations.

They have 42 government ministries, equally split between the two sides of a two-party ruling coalition.

They have an international airport, with direct flights to Frankfurt, Dubai, Stockholm and Amman, among other destinations.

In fact, about the only trappings of a modern nation-state that Iraqi Kurdistan now lacks are a seat at the United Nations and a currency of its own.

Still, most Iraqi Kurds will say that they wish to remain a part of Iraq if only because, at the moment, they don't have much choice.

Press them a little harder, however, and they will soon express a contradictory desire to someday be part of a larger Kurdistan nation, one that would also incorporate what are now parts of Iran, Syria, and Turkey, home to millions of ethnic Kurds.

But that is a far-off prospect and may never be realized.

"A dream is one thing, and practical matters are another," says Dalia Kaikhasraw, managing director of the University of Kurdistan.

Iraqi Kurdistan's foreign policy is nothing if not practical, revolving around just one central imperative – wholehearted support for the United States and for just about anything Washington says or does.

"No American policy would be refused in Iraqi Kurdistan," says Jawad Qadir, executive editor of *The Kurdish Globe*, a weekly English-language newspaper published in Irbil. "The Kurdish public are absolutely in favour of whatever the U.S. decides is best."

If it were not for the United States, which rescued Iraqi Kurdistan from Saddam's genocidal fury in 1991 and then overthrew the dictator four years ago, it is likely that Iraqi Kurdistan would not exist at all.

It certainly would not exist in its present form, a semi-autonomous region with its own political authority – known as the Kurdistan Regional Government, or KRG, led by President Massoud Barzani – and its own bold development

plans for the future.

The territory also serves as a showcase for U.S. aspirations in the Middle East, the one jurisdiction where democracy, capitalism, and peace all seem to work, more or less.

"We're also important to the U.S." says Kaikhasraw. "We back their policies in the region."

Business is booming, with road construction crews seemingly at work almost everywhere, while new housing developments and infrastructural projects worth billions are either on the go or on the drawing board.

Dozens of yellow construction cranes tower above the low-rise skyline of Irbil, a sprawling city set upon a largely treeless plain beneath a sometimes punishing sun.

With so much business activity, it is not surprising that corruption and nepotism have put down roots in Iraqi Kurdistan.

"Corruption is a big problem," says Qadir at *The Kurdish Globe*. "It has been recognized by everyone in government. It is a big problem, but it is not characteristic of Kurdish self-rule."

Like almost all newspapers here, *The Kurdish Globe* is funded by politicians of one stripe or another – in Qadir's case, the government underwrites a portion of his budget – but he insists his staff still are granted some room for critical reporting.

While far from true press freedom, this is an improvement on the Middle Eastern norm.

Thanks to a law passed only last year, journalists who do run afoul of Kurdish authorities are protected from serving jail sentences for what they write or broadcast.

The government here insists it does not imprison people for their political views, and Qadir says he is inclined to take the politicians at their word, albeit cautiously.

"Young people feel political security," he said. "You can be against the government, and you can feel sure you will not end up in prison. I think this is our biggest achievement."

**UNION EUROPÉENNE** Dans son rapport annuel sur l'élargissement, publié hier, la Commission déplore le peu de réformes engagées par la Turquie

# Bruxelles cherche les progrès turcs

A ROUTE de la Turquie vers l'adhésion à l'Union européenne sera longue. C'est le message subliminal qu'a adressé hier la Commission de

Bruxelles à Ankara à l'occasion de la publication de son rapport annuel sur l'élargissement, qui inclut également les six états des Balkans, eux aussi en panne de réformes. « Il est nécessaire que la Turquie réinsufflât du dynamisme » dans les négociations, a déclaré le commissaire à l'Élargissement, Olli Rehn, tout en ménageant le gouvernement Erdogan.

Les « progrès » politiques ont été « limités », souligne la Commission. Les droits accordés aux syndicats, aux femmes ou aux minorités religieuses restent insuffisants. Les atteintes persistantes à la « liberté d'expression » sont jugées encore plus inquiétantes. Elles se manifestent en particulier à travers l'application de l'article 301 du Code pénal turc, qui a permis d'inculper des dizaines d'intellectuels ayant mis en cause l'identité turque, dont le célèbre romancier Orhan Pamuk.

« Il est inacceptable que des écrivains ou des universitaires soient poursuivis au prétexte qu'ils aient émis un point de vue critique », a déclaré Olli Rehn, demandant à ce que l'article 301 soit « abrogé ou amendé sans retard ». Cette opération, a-t-il ajouté, constituera un

« test » pour la poursuite des négociations d'adhésion relatives au droit judiciaire.

La Turquie doit assimiler 33 chapitres, baptisés « acquis

communautaire » par les eurocrates. Quatre d'entre eux, d'importance mineure, ont déjà été ouverts, suivis probablement en décembre par deux autres, relatifs à la santé des consommateurs et aux réseaux transeuropéens de transport. Mais, dans l'ensemble, le processus de négociation, soumis au bon vouloir des États mem-

bres, reste très lent. Outre les huit chapitres gelés depuis décembre 2006 à la suite du refus d'Ankara d'ouvrir ses ports et ses aéroports aux avions et aux bateaux chypriotes grecs, la France s'oppose à ce que soient abordés cinq thèmes relatifs notamment aux institutions, au budget ou à l'union économique et monétaire. L'ouverture de tels chapitres, explique Paris, reviendrait à préjuger de l'adhésion de la Turquie.

**La volonté « politique » resterait intacte**

Favorable à l'adhésion de la Turquie, qu'il considère comme un facteur de « paix », le commissaire Olli Rehn a la lourde tâche de devoir composer avec des États membres réticents sans désespérer pour autant Ankara. Selon Bruxelles, seuls les troubles qui, ces derniers

mois, ont émaillé l'accession à la présidence d'Abdullah Gül expliquent le ralentissement du rythme des réformes. La volonté « politique », elle, resterait intacte. « La Turquie a surmonté ses tourments », affirme Olli Rehn.

De même, la Commission trouve des circonstances atténuantes – la nécessité de « protéger les citoyens » face aux dangers du « terrorisme » – aux raids lancés par l'armée turque dans le Kurdistan irakien. Bruxelles a simplement appelé Ankara à la « retenue ».

PIERRE AVRIL (à Bruxelles)

## Ankara avance à reculons sur le chemin des réformes

Le pouvoir turc met en avant la rédaction d'une nouvelle Constitution pour justifier son attentisme.

Istanbul

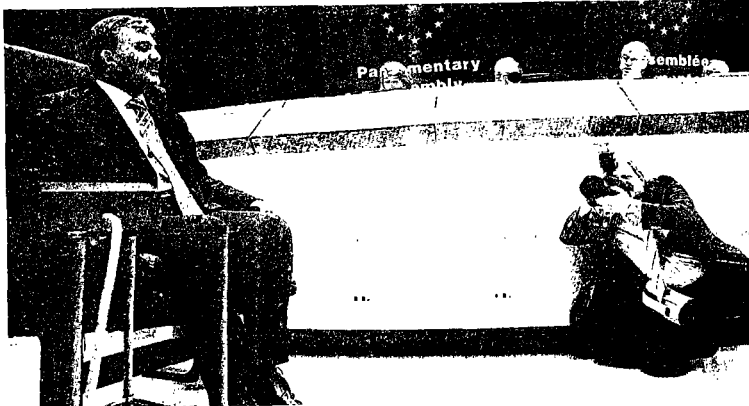
LA CRISE turco-irakienne accapare l'agenda du ministre turc des Affaires étrangères. En deux semaines, le dossier du PKK sous le bras, Ali Babacan a effectué une tournée moyen-orientale, est rentré à

Istanbul pour assister à la conférence sur l'Irak, avant de s'envoler pour Washington. Impossible de trouver un créneau à consacrer à l'Europe. Pourtant Ali Babacan occupe également le poste de négociateur en chef de l'adhésion à l'UE. Focalisée sur une possible opération militaire en Irak, la Turquie n'a pas un regard vers l'Ouest et se désintéresse totalement de l'inaction du gouvernement dans le processus d'adhésion à l'UE.

Vice-président du Parti républicain du peuple (CHP) qui s'oppose avec virulence aux réformes exigées par Bruxelles, Onur Öymen rejette entièrement la faute sur le camp européen : « La priorité des Turcs a changé. Avec les discours anti-turcs de certains de ses dirigeants, l'Union européenne a perdu beaucoup

d'attrait. » Le gouvernement n'a pas lutté contre cette désillusion populaire. Il avait pourtant amené avec succès le pays sur les rails européens, en décembre 2004, mais il n'a engagé aucune réforme significative depuis l'obtention de ce premier feu vert, confirmé par l'ouverture des négociations en octobre 2005.

Pendants deux ans, Bruxelles a fait montre de compréhension : l'approche des élections, sur fond de vague nationaliste, réduisait la marge de manœuvre du premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Mais, en juillet, son parti a remporté un triomphe aux législatives. En août, Abdullah Gül, l'artisan du rapprochement Turquie-UE, a été élu président de la République. « L'AKP disposait alors d'une marge de



Après l'élection à la présidence d'Abdullah Gül, l'artisan du rapprochement Turquie-UE, l'AKP a manqué l'occasion de réformer. Niclaj/Fedepphoto



manœuvre incroyable pour réformer», estime Isil Karakas, directrice du Centre de recherche et de documentation sur l'Europe à l'université Galatasaray. Et en septembre, le discours de politique générale de M. Erdogan, résolument tourné vers l'Europe, laissait espérer un changement de cap : « *Le processus d'adhésion à l'UE est à la fois un processus d'intégration et un processus de transformation pour améliorer les standards politiques, économiques, sociaux et légaux de la Turquie.* » Dans la foulée, Abdullah Gül vantait au Conseil de l'Europe une Turquie devenue eurocompatible.

Depuis, toujours pas une réforme en vue. La rédaction d'une nouvelle Constitution est mise en avant pour justifier cet attentisme.

#### Promesses non tenues

La loi sur la restitution des biens immobiliers confisqués aux fondations chrétiennes, refusée en 2006 par l'ancien président de la République, proche de la bureaucratie militaire, n'est toujours pas inscrite à l'agenda parlementaire. De même pour la modification, réclamée par Bruxelles, de l'article 301 du Code pénal, qui permet d'engager des poursuites pour « *insulte à l'identité*

*nationale* ». Le gouvernement a promis maintes fois de l'amender. Pourtant, les observateurs dénoncent, au mieux, un statu quo concernant les libertés individuelles. En 2005, 29 personnes ont été poursuivies en vertu de l'article 301. En 2006, 72. Cette année, en octobre, Arat Dink, le fils du journaliste d'origine arménienne assassiné, a été condamné à un an de prison avec sursis, pour avoir publié dans le journal *Agos* des propos de son père sur le génocide arménien. Quatre semaines avant, une cour d'appel avait cassé l'acquittement de deux universitaires, auteurs d'un rapport sur les droits de l'homme, comman-

dé par le premier ministre, au motif que leurs conclusions constituaient « *une incitation à la haine raciale* ».

Concernant le volet purement technique de l'adhésion, le retard s'est également accru. La comparaison avec la Croatie, qui a entamé ses négociations en même temps que la Turquie, est éloquent. Celle-ci a déjà ouvert 14 chapitres sur les 35 qui jalonnent le chemin de l'intégration. La Turquie, seulement quatre. Et huit sont bloqués pour sanctionner son refus persistant d'ouvrir ses ports et ses aéroports à Chypre.

LAURE MARCHAND

CHALLENGES N° 99 - 8 NOVEMBRE 2007

**TURQUIE** Le 6 novembre, Bruxelles a publié un rapport négatif sur l'entrée du pays dans l'Union.

## Ankara défie la bonne volonté européenne

Après son succès électoral en juillet, le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait multiplié les promesses de réformes pour faire entrer la Turquie dans l'Union européenne. Trois mois plus tard, ce ne sont plus que des souvenirs.

De fait, les pourparlers d'adhésion ne sont plus la priorité d'Ankara. Le négociateur en chef avec l'Europe, Ali Babacan, qui est aussi ministre des Affaires étrangères, a d'autres fers au feu. Il a passé les deux dernières semaines en visites à travers le Moyen-Orient. « *Tout le débat est monopolisé par la question kurde et les menaces de guerre contre le nord de l'Irak* », constate Isil Karakas, directrice du centre de recherche et de documentation sur l'Europe à l'université Galatasaray d'Istanbul.

Pour le politologue Baskin Oran, la Turquie est en train de « *se tirer une balle dans le pied* ». Le rapport annuel de suivi sur les progrès de la candidature turque présenté le 6 novembre par la Commission européenne, à Bruxelles, sermonne sérieusement Ankara. L'économie turque reste dynamique et les élections de l'été se sont déroulées démocratiquement. Mais c'est à peu près tout ce qu'il y a de positif. Bruxelles avait donné quelques pistes de réformes « *concrètes* » à réaliser

Bruxelles avait donné des pistes de réformes à réaliser avant novembre, comme la liberté d'expression et l'article 301 du Code pénal qui punit « *l'insulte à l'identité turque* ». Le gouvernement turc n'a rien fait.

avant novembre 2007 : la liberté d'expression, et l'article 301 du Code pénal qui punit « *l'insulte à l'identité turque* ». Ou encore la loi sur les fondations religieuses, qui permettrait la restitution de biens spoliés aux minorités chrétiennes. Des mesures symboliquement fortes et faciles à mettre en œuvre. Le gouvernement turc n'a rien fait,

#### Lassitude de la population

Le rapport de la Commission de Bruxelles pointe au contraire les

faillies récurrentes en matière de liberté d'expression et de diversité culturelle ainsi que l'incapacité à imaginer des solutions autres que militaires au problème kurde. Sans oublier l'interventionnisme de l'armée dans les affaires politiques.

Dans la population, l'idéal européen ne fait plus recette. Lassés des rebuffades européennes, les Turcs ne voient pas toujours l'intérêt de poursuivre des négociations qu'ils jugent pipées d'avance. L'argent ne manque pourtant pas : les fonds européens de préaccession financent actuellement 220 projets de développement turcs. Le budget, établi à 500 millions d'euros en 2007, s'élèvera à 650 millions en 2010. Mais Bruxelles a bien du mal à tout dépenser : les dossiers qui lui parviennent d'Ankara sont souvent trop mal ficelés. **Guillaume Perrier (à Istanbul)**



Darko Bandic / AP / Sipa

Soldats turcs à la frontière avec l'Irak, le 31 octobre. Bruxelles dénonce

l'incapacité d'Ankara à imaginer des solutions non militaires au problème kurde.

# Erdogan déçu mais prêt à une offensive anti-PKK

**TURQUIE** - Le premier ministre revient bredouille de Washington et déclare qu'une opération militaire contre le PKK au nord de l'Irak est en préparation.

Istanbul, envoyé spécial.

**P**arti à Washington afin d'obtenir le feu vert pour une intervention dans le nord irakien contre les bases du PKK, Tayyip Erdogan est revenu quelque peu bredouillé. Si pour le président américain le PKK est « l'ennemi de la Turquie », donc un « ennemi des États-Unis », Bush n'a promis qu'un « partage des renseignements » en matière de lutte antiterroriste. Washington serait « prêt à aller plus loin », mais sans autre précision. Ankara a obtenu que les États-Unis fassent pression sur la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien afin d'arrêter le financement du PKK.

À Pévidence, le chef du gouvernement turc ne se faisait pas trop d'illusion sur un éventuel feu vert américain. À l'issue de son entretien avec le président américain, Erdogan a toutefois laissé entendre qu'une offensive dans le nord de l'Irak était toujours en préparation : « Le processus d'une opération a débuté dans les faits avec l'autorisation du Parlement (le 17 octobre). » Rappelons que, lors de la conférence internationale sur l'Irak, qui s'est déroulée vendredi et samedi à Istanbul, les participants (pays voisins de l'Irak, États-Unis, UE, ONU et G8) se sont bornés à condamner le terrorisme et à affirmer que « le territoire irakien ne doit pas servir pour des attaques contre ses voisins ».

En fait, Washington craint qu'une incursion turque en Irak ne dérape en un conflit



L'armée turque a massé quelque 100 000 soldats à la frontière avec l'Irak.

régional. L'Iran, par exemple, serait prêt à imiter l'exemple turc pour en finir avec le PJAK (mouvement armé kurde iranien), basé également dans le Nord irakien, d'autant plus que le Kurdistan irakien pourrait devenir à son tour un lieu d'opérations des islamistes radicaux. Car Ansar al-Islam (groupe radical islamiste kurde) n'attend, dit-on, que l'occasion d'un conflit ouvert pour passer à l'action. Or, précisément, Washington tient à la stabilité de cette région irakienne. C'est ce qu'a expliqué en substance le président américain au premier ministre turc, dit-on à Istanbul. Qui plus est, avec ce qui se passe au Pakistan, autre allié des États-Unis, et en parallèle des discussions que mènent Condoleezza Rice avec les Palestiniens et les Israéliens,

**Le chef du gouvernement turc ne se faisait pas trop d'illusion sur un éventuel feu vert américain.**

la diplomatie américaine se trouverait dans une situation plus ou moins problématique. Aussi, le président américain a-t-il demandé à Erdogan de patienter, car la priorité, pour l'heure, est accordée par la diplomatie américaine à la gravité de la situation au Pakistan.

Reste à savoir si les généraux turcs, qui ont affirmé qu'ils attendraient l'issue de la visite d'Erdogan avant d'agir à la frontière irakienne, vont se satisfaire des explications américaines. Les médias turcs, proches de l'armée et des partis anti-kurdes, no-

tamment le MHP (droite nationaliste) et le CHP (kémaliste), continuent à chauffer l'opinion turque. Certains lancent carrément des appels à une intervention militaire ouverte sans tenir compte de l'avis des États-Unis. Quant à l'armée turque, qui a massé quelque 100 000 hommes lourdement armés à la frontière, il n'est pas la question qu'elle allège son dispositif. Et si le PKK, soumis à la double pression de ses frères kurdes d'Irak et de Turquie, paraît obtempérer, il n'en reste pas moins qu'il est, lui, également sur ses gardes dans ces monts de Caudi et de Qandil. Un simple incident entre l'armée turque et le PKK pourrait suffire pour que cela dégénère en conflit pouvant donner l'occasion à Ankara de pénétrer dans le Nord irakien.

Hassane Zerrouky

## PKK: les monts Qandil sont inexpugnables, assurent des vétérans peshmergas

AFP

**RANIYA (Irak), 8 nov 2007 (AFP)** - - Quand on lui demande si l'armée turque peut déloger les guérilleros du PKK des monts Qandil, leur sanctuaire montagneux dans l'est du Kurdistan irakien, Adib Kawa sourit: "Jamais".

Aujourd'hui responsable politique à Raniya, la ville la plus proche de la forteresse naturelle qui abrite les quelque 3.000 hommes et femmes du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), ce petit homme trapu a passé dix ans, de 1981 à 1991, caché dans ce massif escarpé qui servait alors de refuge aux peshmergas, les combattants kurdes irakiens, contre l'armée de Bagdad.

"Les soldats de Saddam ont tout tenté pour nous chasser. Ils ont bombardé, monté des centaines d'offensives: toujours échoué", assure ce vétéran peshmerga dans le salon de sa maison, décoré d'une carte du "Grand Kurdistan", qui ignore les frontières internationales et regroupe toutes les populations kurdes d'Irak, d'Iran, de Syrie et de Turquie.

"Là-haut les vallées sont tellement étroites, encaissées et boisées que nous avions à peine besoin des grottes pour échapper aux hélicoptères", dit-il. "Et s'ils montaient à pieds, leurs pertes étaient terribles. Ils renonçaient".

Alors que la région vit dans la crainte d'une attaque terrestre ou d'opérations aériennes contre les bases des rebelles kurdes turcs du PKK dans le Kurdistan irakien frontalier de la Turquie, Adib Kawa se dit certain qu'elles sont vouées à l'échec.

"Les gars du PKK sont plus forts que nous ne l'étions: ils sont très disciplinés, ont de gros moyens. Leurs fortifications, leurs cachettes, leurs souterrains sont formidables. Les Turcs les dérangeront un peu. C'est tout".

En 1992, les peshmergas irakiens ont prêté, pour des raisons politiques, assistance aux troupes d'Ankara dans une offensive contre le PKK. Adib en était.

"Chaque fois que nous approchions, ils disparaissaient. Des fantômes. Vous pouvez prendre une de leurs positions, mais elle sera vide. Et vous n'aurez jamais assez d'hommes pour la garder".

Il se souvient d'avoir inspecté des cavernes transformées en entrepôts, avec munitions et nourriture soigneusement emballées sous film plastique.

"Ils sont aguerris, entraînés, rapides. Avec un peu de pain, de riz et de thé, ils tiennent des mois. Et comme ils paient bien il y aura toujours des contrebandiers pour les ravitailler. Depuis l'Iran, ou la Turquie, ou ici".

A 38 ans, Mohammad Abdullah, physique de colosse, poignée de main à broyer des noix, pistolet à la ceinture, est lui aussi depuis longtemps descendu dans la plaine pour devenir un notable et un politicien.

Mais il a gardé de ses cinq ans à Qandil la même certitude: le massif, surnommé "le Tora Bora kurde", est inexpugnable.

"Personne, jamais, dans l'histoire du monde n'a pris ces montagnes. Vous voyez la vallée du Panchir d'Ahmad Shah Massoud? Qandil est encore plus facile à défendre".

Les promesses de Washington de fournir des renseignements, essentiellement à partir d'images obtenues par leurs drones, font sourire Mohammad Abdullah. "Ils ont des caméras qui voient sous les arbres, les Américains?"

Proche des frontières turque et iranienne, cette région offre aussi de nombreuses possibilités de retraite et de repli, fait-il remarquer.

"Quand la pression de Saddam était trop forte, ou qu'ils utilisaient des obus chimiques, on filait en Iran, en Turquie. C'était facile. Le PKK fera pareil", ajoute-t-il.

"Il leur suffira de rester à l'abri pendant un mois. Même ici, dans la vallée, ils ont des partisans pour les cacher. Au printemps, il suffira de revenir", assure encore cet ex-peshmerga.

"La seule solution est politique, pas militaire. Vous croyez que l'armée turque ne le sait pas? Il ont mené une vingtaine d'offensives. Elles ont toutes échoué. La prochaine, ce sera pareil".

## Turquie: Un parti pro-kurde en congrès dénonce la menace d'incursion en Irak

AFP

**ANKARA, 8 nov 2007 (AFP)** -- Le principal parti pro-kurde de Turquie s'est opposé avec force jeudi lors d'un congrès à Ankara à la politique "militariste" du gouvernement et à ses menaces d'opérations militaires transfrontalières contre les camps des rebelles kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak.

Le deuxième congrès du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP) a élu Nurettin Demirtas à la tête du parti. Il s'est tenu sur fond de menaces turques d'intervention dans le Kurdistan irakien où sont retranchés les séparatistes turcs du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

"La politique militariste de l'AKP (Parti de la justice et du développement, au pouvoir) est inacceptable (...) Au lieu de dépenser le temps et l'énergie pour une opération transfrontalière, dépensons les pour instaurer la paix à l'intérieur", a affirmé Nurettin Demirtas dans un discours, quelques heures avant d'être élu à la tête du parti.

De strictes mesures de sécurité ont encadré la tenue de ce congrès, dans un pays où des attaques meurtrières du PKK dans le sud-est anatolien, peuplé majoritairement de kurdes, ont provoqué un sursaut de patriotisme.

M. Demirtas, considéré comme un "faucou" au sein du militantisme kurde et qui a été emprisonné dans sa jeunesse pour appartenance au PKK, a été ovationné pour ses propos prononcés devant un parterre de plusieurs centaines de militants de cette formation créé en 2005 dans la lignée de partis pro-kurdes dissous par la justice pour collusion avec le PKK.

Aujourd'hui encore, le DTP, dont plusieurs dirigeants sont jugés pour apologie du PKK ou de son chef emprisonné Abdullah Öcalan, est sous la menace d'une interdiction.

Le ministre de la Justice Mehmet Ali Sahin a indiqué mercredi soir que "l'opinion publique pense qu'ils (le DTP) ont des liens" avec le PKK et a affirmé que cette formation pourrait être interdite.

"S'ils insistent à servir les objectifs du PKK sur le terrain politique (...) ils en

souffriront alors les conséquences", a-t-il averti.

Le DTP, qui refuse de considérer le PKK comme une organisation terroriste à l'instar d'Ankara, de Washington et des Européens, a réussi à faire envoyer 20 représentants au Parlement turc (550 sièges) lors des dernières élections législatives de juillet, une première pour un parti luttant essentiellement pour les droits des Kurdes.

Les projecteurs se sont braqués de nouveau sur le parti ces derniers jours après une embuscade, le 21 octobre, qui a coûté la vie à 12 soldats turcs. L'attaque attribuée à des rebelles infiltrés en Turquie depuis la montagne irakienne, a accru la probabilité d'une intervention turque en Irak.

Le parti au pouvoir avait fait adopter quelques jours auparavant à une très large majorité à l'Assemblée nationale une autorisation pour mener des opérations militaires au delà de la frontière. Le DTP a voté contre.

"L'AKP a volé les voix des Kurdes lors des élections en disant qu'il favorisait la paix, le scrutin passé, il ne parle que d'une opération transfrontalière", a souligné Nursef Aydogan, une dirigeante du parti.

Les médias font ces deux derniers jours leurs choux gras de l'information selon laquelle le mari de l'une des députés kurdes du DTP, Fatma Kurtulan, aurait rejoint le PKK dans les années 1990.

L'élue controversée présente au Congrès a refusé de répondre aux questions des journalistes sur son époux.

Les délégués arrivés des quatre coins de Turquie ont salué les réformes "insuffisantes" entreprises par Ankara pour se rapprocher des normes démocratiques européennes, mais étaient en revanche très sceptiques de l'efficacité d'opérations en Irak.

"Il y a eu 20 incursions militaires dans le passé et ils n'ont pas mis fin à l'existence du PKK. Pourquoi en lancer une nouvelle?", a souligné Abdullah Ayhan, représentant Iskenderun (sud), l'ancienne Antioche.



**MATCH**

DU 8 AU 14 NOVEMBRE 2007

# UN PEU PARTOUT DANS LA MONTAGNE, LES COMBATTANTS DISPOSENT DE CACHES D'ARMES QU'ILS RÉCUPÈRENT AVEC L'AIDE DE LEURS FRÈRES KURDES IRAKIENS

DE NOTRE ENVOYÉ SPÉCIAL PATRICK FORESTIER

**A**près Rania, avant de tourner plein nord vers la frontière iranienne toute proche, la route domine le lac Dukan qui miroite au loin. Au bout de l'immense plaine désertique de Sangassar se profilent des masures basses et misérables. Juste après le village, un barrage interdit le passage. Des peshmergas, soldats kurdes de la région autonome d'Irak, arrêtent les voitures, kalachnikov en bandoulière. Ils relèvent soigneusement nos identités et nous laissent passer. Juste après commence le no man's land qui sépare les forces gouvernementales des rebelles du P.k.k., le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan.

La route pénètre maintenant dans les monts Kandil, le repaire inexpugnable des irrédentistes kurdes que l'armée turque cherche, en vain, à anéantir depuis un quart de siècle. L'asphalte suit un torrent encaissé au fond d'une vallée étroite. Le soleil d'automne illumine le relief rocaillieux d'où est absente toute trace de végétation. Isolés et privés de carburant par Saddam Hussein, les Kurdes ont coupé les arbres pour se chauffer. L'hiver, la neige recouvre ces montagnes où il gèle à pierre fendre. Saddam Hussein avait tracé cette route pour acheminer des troupes vers la frontière iranienne. Aujourd'hui, elle n'est plus utilisée que par quelques villageois. Au détour d'un lacet

apparaît un visage moustachu, peint sur la paroi d'une falaise : c'est celui d'Abdullah Ocalan, le chef du P.k.k. détenu en Turquie sur une île-prison depuis sa capture en 1999.

Son regard, visible à des kilomètres, semble veiller sur le parti qu'il a créé. Au col de Kurtak, deux mâts flanqués d'un drapeau à l'étoile rouge sur fond vert longent la chaussée. A côté, des jeunes combattants armés. Visages fermés, méfiants, les rebelles paraissent nerveux. Les menaces d'intervention du gouvernement turc ne sont pas prises à la légère. On nous conduit dans une maison bâtie en pierres froides. Plus haut dans la montagne, je peux apercevoir d'autres bâtiments et des tentes kaki. Kandil est l'un des Q.g. de l'organisation clandestine, l'une de ses bases militaires les plus importantes au Kurdistan irakien, déchaînant la colère d'Ankara qui demande à Bagdad de les fermer. Même s'il en avait l'intention, le régime irakien comprend. Une fois dans le nid d'aigle du P.k.k., on comprend pourquoi. Contrôler ces montagnes est impossible. Même les troupes de Saddam Hussein n'ont jamais réussi malgré leurs chars, leurs avions et leurs bombes.

Une poignée de rebelles occupe le poste. Les autres sont autour, disséminés dans les rochers, les

grottes multiples, les refuges de la montagne. De ce point haut, la beauté minérale des monts Kandil est à couper le souffle. Une défense naturelle, rassurante pour les combattants qui, ici, se sentent protégés par la nature. Dans le couloir, les canons de plusieurs fusils-mitrailleurs sont appuyés contre le mur, à côté d'hommes assis à terre. Tous sont vêtus du même uniforme vert olive, réplique de l'habit traditionnel : pantalon bouffant, chemise et gilet. Ils sont jeunes et portent les cheveux

courts. De petits hommes verts qui obéissent au doigt et à l'œil au parti. Pour avoir perdu ses idéaux marxistes-léninistes, celui-ci n'en maintient pas moins la discipline. Le « commandant » refuse de me donner son nom. Il me dit simplement qu'il est né dans le Kurdistan turc, qu'il a 36 ans, dont dix-huit passés dans la clandestinité. Sa détermination n'est

pourtant pas émoussée. Il est toujours prêt à se sacrifier pour la cause. « Nous combattons toujours jusqu'à la mort, me dit-il. On n'aime pas la guerre. Même si nos frères kurdes du gouvernement viennent fermer nos bases, on se défendra. On est prêts. » Le portrait d'Abdullah Ocalan, véritable gourou d'un parti qui s'apparentait parfois à une secte, est omniprésent dans le bâtiment. Le leader incontesté du P.k.k. vivait à Damas, entouré de

**De nombreuses filles montent au maquis le fusil à la main pour obtenir leur émancipation**

1. Dans les montagnes irakiennes de Kandil, des combattantes kurdes iraniennes. Au P.k.k., la moitié des rebelles sont des femmes. 2. L'armée turque vers Hakkari, dans le sud-est du pays, près de l'endroit où 15 soldats ont été tués. 3. Le 21 octobre, à Arbil, 300 kilomètres au nord de Bagdad, lors d'une conférence de presse, Massoud Barzani (à g.), le dirigeant du



combattantes qui lui vouaient une admiration sans bornes. L'autre mur est occupé par l'étoile rouge à cinq branches du parti. « Chacune représente les régions kurdes de Syrie, d'Irak, d'Iran, de Turquie et de l'ex-Union soviétique », me précise le « commandant » en m'offrant une tasse de thé.

Sur 35 millions de Kurdes, une quinzaine de millions vivent en Turquie. En Irak, ils sont 5 millions et jouissent d'une autonomie avec un gouvernement local dirigé par Massoud Barzani. Partout, les combattants du P.k.k. se sentent chez eux, car on trouve dans leurs rangs des hommes et des femmes des cinq régions. « Le P.k.k. n'est pas un parti composé de terroristes, tient à souligner le « commandant ». On lutte pour libérer notre pays. C'est pour cela que nous nous battons contre tous ceux qui viendraient nous en empêcher. » Appuyé sur un coussin, un autre camarade hoche la tête pour montrer son approbation. L'esprit critique n'a pas cours au P.k.k., même lorsque les grands chefs sont absents. « Ils sont en ce moment au nord du Kurdistan », me lâche-t-il. Sous-entendu : ils se sont réfugiés en Iran, juste au-delà de la frontière, pour se protéger d'une éventuelle incursion turque. Le pays des mollahs est à peine à une dizaine de kilomètres à vol d'oiseau. « L'armée iranienne nous a bombardés le mois dernier », me souffle le « commandant ». Mais de l'autre côté de la frontière, les hameaux et les villages sont aussi habités par des Kurdes, qui n'hésitent pas à aider leurs frères au nez des pasdarans.

Les femmes composent la moitié des 5000 à 6000 rebelles, dont près de 2000 restent dans les montagnes du Kurdistan turc. « Elles luttent aussi pour imposer leurs choix, poursuit le « commandant ». Elles sont égales aux hommes et capables d'agir de la même manière. » Dans la société féodale kurde, nombre de jeunes filles préfèrent monter au maquis plutôt que de subir le joug familial traditionnel. C'est le fusil à la main qu'elles obtiennent leur émancipation. Récemment encore, une liaison entre un homme et une femme était, dans le maquis, un crime punissable de la peine de mort. A 36 ans, le « commandant » n'est

pas marié. « Impossible pour nous de fonder une famille en restant dans la montagne, explique-t-il. Ce n'est pas la priorité du parti ni la mienne, tant que nous n'aurons pas obtenu notre liberté. C'est plus important que d'avoir des enfants. »

Dans le maquis, les femmes sont dans le même cas. Zahide Hemid, qui a passé onze ans dans les montagnes avant d'intégrer le parti de Massoud Barzani, avait 16 ans lorsqu'elle a abandonné son lycée de Kirkouk pour rejoindre la rébellion. A Arbil, la ville du Kurdistan irakien où je la rencontre, elle me raconte son histoire : « On m'a d'abord enseigné l'histoire, le programme du parti et la révolution soviétique. Ont suivi les cours pratiques : tirs, entraînements, coups de main et embuscades. Lors de ma première attaque, j'avais peur pour moi et mes amis. Ça tirait de partout. On a dénombré quatre tués, trois hommes et une fille qui venaient de Syrie. Après, on a eu droit à la conférence critique. Le comportement au combat de chacun était évalué devant les autres, afin de ne pas répéter les mêmes erreurs. Notre quotidien était simple : lever à 5 heures en criant "Victoire ! Victoire ! Notre sacrifice et notre sang pour Apo [Le diminutif de Ocalan] ! On est avec toi, par notre sang et par notre esprit !" Notre leader est considéré comme un saint. Une fois terminés les vivats à sa gloire, on partait en patrouille ou on recevait un enseignement. Les filles vivaient dans des cabanes à l'écart des garçons. Il nous était interdit de parler entre nous si l'on ne portait pas de ceinture bien serrée autour de la taille. » En fait, les chefs prenaient des garanties pour que les jeunes maquisards ne puissent pas se déshabiller rapidement derrière un bosquet : l'amour était reporté après la libération ! Si une liaison se produisait malgré tout entre deux combattants, les fautifs étaient enfermés séparément pendant deux ou trois mois, à recopier les préceptes du parti. « Quand on a appris qu'Apo avait été arrêté, on ne l'a pas cru, pour-

suit Zahide. C'était pour nous une tragédie. Il était le père de la révolution. Qu'allait-on devenir sans lui ? Après son arrestation, le parti a été divisé. J'étais écoeuvée et j'ai préféré m'éloigner. » Zahide s'est mariée avec un homme qu'elle avait connu dans la guérilla. Aujourd'hui, à 28 ans, elle a un petit garçon de 10 mois prénommé Oniar. « Je n'ai fait qu'imiter d'autres responsables. Même Osman Ocalan, le propre frère d'Apo, avait voulu changer les règles. Sous couvert de réformes sociales, il a épousé une Iranienne. »

Osman Ocalan a quitté le P.k.k. le 1<sup>er</sup> juin 2004, en fuyant à travers les montagnes avec sept compagnons, car on ne badine pas avec les déserteurs au sein du parti. Il nous a lui aussi donné rendez-vous à Arbil. Il s'est rasé la moustache pour

moins ressembler à son frère Abdullah, son aimé de neuf ans. « Il y a quatre mois, explique-t-il, la police a arrêté un kamikaze qui projetait de lancer sa voiture piégée contre ma maison. Le coup venait de l'aile gauche du P.k.k. Les combattants ne craignent ni les bombardements ni les menaces d'invasion. Dans ces cas-là, ils s'évanouissent dans la nature. Le P.k.k. veut le dialogue. Mais pour désarmer, il faut que l'armée se retire du Kurdistan turc et qu'un comité indépendant statue sur la santé d'Apo, qui s'est dégradée. Le problème, c'est que l'armée turque veut éliminer tout le P.k.k. » Cent mille soldats turcs seraient déployés le long de la frontière avec, pour objectif, la création d'une zone tampon en Irak, comme Israël l'a fait jadis au Liban pour protéger la Galilée. En arrivant à Kani Massi, à 10 kilomètres de la frontière, la tension est déjà perceptible. Des hommes en armes sont rassemblés devant le siège du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (P.d.k.) de Massoud Barzani. « On veut la paix. Mais si les Turcs franchissent la frontière, on défendra nos villages, me dit le chef du Parti Rizgar Kesteyi. S'ils entrent, ils ne pourront plus sortir. Ils devraient reconnaître que le P.k.k. a changé. Ce n'est pas Al-Qaïda. » ■

**Zahide a passé onze ans en rébellion. Tous les matins, c'était lever à 5 heures en criant : « Notre sang pour Ocalan »**

Kurdistan irakien, et Jalal Talabani, le président irakien, également un Kurde. 4. George W. Bush a reçu le Premier ministre turc Erdogan dans le bureau Ovale, à la Maison-Blanche, lundi 5 novembre. 5. Zahide Hemid est entrée dans la guérilla à 16 ans. Elle l'a quittée en 2004. Elle est aujourd'hui cadre du P.d.k., le parti du Kurdistan irakien.



# Turkey demands airstrike deal with Bush as price for holding back troops

► Plans to attack PKK will depend on US talks

► Iraqi Kurds help to free captured soldiers

Deborah Haynes Irbil  
Tom Baldwin Washington

President Bush will hold crisis talks today in Washington where he will hope to stave off the looming prospect of Turkey's armed forces pursuing Kurdish rebels across its border with Iraq.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish Prime Minister, has delayed a final decision on taking military action until he hears what Mr Bush has to say.

Although public opinion in Turkey is pressing for the use of ground troops, diplomatic sources in Washington say that Mr Erdogan's preferred option — if he decides to take action — would be for airstrikes on Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) targets inside northern Iraq.

He has made plain that he wants US co-operation as the price for exercising restraint, saying that at his meeting with Mr Bush in Washington: "I am expecting that this trip will result with the United States taking solid steps."

The much-anticipated meeting comes as eight Turkish soldiers, captured by the PKK a fortnight ago, were enjoying their first full day of freedom after being released by their captors. Iraqi Kurdish officials said that the freeing of the troops, seized in an ambush in which a further 12 soldiers were killed, shows their desire to help Turkey in its fight against PKK. The outlawed group, meanwhile, said it signalled its willingness to resolve the stand-off with Ankara peacefully.

Baghdad and Washington are keen to avoid any military operations that could destabilise the only prosperous region in Iraq, while the largely autonomous Kurdish regional government has said that any Turkish challenge to Iraqi sovereignty would be regarded as an act of war.

"I think the meeting is important and a kind of turning point," said Falah Mustafa Bakir, head of foreign relations for the Kurdish north.

Any incursion would turn "the only secure part of Iraq into something different at a time that we are focusing on reconstruction and rebuilding; trying to focus on education, on health, on improving our economy," he said.

"Everyone is waiting to see what happens but we are trying our best to

**'We want to solve the problem peacefully through dialogue' - PKK**



Turkish nationalists protest against the PKK during an anti-terror rally in Istanbul, top, while Kurds in Berlin, below, protest against Turkish threats in Iraq



communicate to everybody that the best option is the diplomatic and peaceful political option."

In a welcome development in the lead-up to the meeting, the hostage release yesterday followed an intense period of secret talks by Iraqi Kurdish officials, non-governmental organisations and other go-betweens.

Handed over at dawn, the eight soldiers were received by Iraqi officials, who delivered them to US military personnel for transfer to Turkish authorities.

Fatma Kurtulan, one of three Turkish Kurd lawmakers who travelled to northern Iraq to help to negotiate the release, said that the men were extremely grateful to be free from the mountainous terrain where they had been held since the ambush on October 21 inside Turkish territory.

Within hours of being freed the soldiers were flown out of Iraq, eagerly phoning relatives once they touched down on Turkish soil. "I am really happy, of course, I don't know what to say," said Fehmi Salman, after talking with soldier son Fuat Basoda. "I'm happy that my son is free."

Fouad Hussain, head of the office of Masoud Barzani, president of the Kurdish region, said that Iraqi Kurdish leaders helped in releasing the soldiers. "This issue proved one thing, that the Iraqi Kurds and Iraqi leadership are part of the solution. And they want to have a good relationship with Turkish people," Mr Hussain said.

The PKK was also keen to make the most of the moment, noting that the "prisoners of war" had been well treated and released without conditions. "This is the proof that we do not want war, we want to solve the problem

peacefully through dialogue," said Abdul Rahman Chaderchi, a spokesman, "We hope that the meeting between Mr Erdogan and Mr Bush will take into consideration our actions, what we did, releasing the hostages. They must answer our needs and demands," he told *The Times*.

The outlawed group is fighting to secure better rights for Kurds living in Turkey. It also wants its leader, Abdullah Ocalan, to be freed from a Turkish prison where he is serving a life sentence.

"We hope that the release of the hostages will be the beginning of the peaceful way to solve these problems," Mr Chaderchi said.

Iraqi Kurdish officials have voiced concern that Ankara is using the PKK as an excuse to threaten the growing prosperity and independence that

Kurds are enjoying in northern Iraq. The United States applauded the efforts of the Iraqi Government to secure the release of the soldiers. Sean McCormack, US State Department spokesman also urged "continued, deepened, and immediate cooperation between Iraq and Turkey in combatting the PKK".

### Battle for identity

**1984** PKK launches armed struggle against Turkey with the aim of creating an independent Kurdistan

**1990** Drops calls for independence and demands more autonomy for the Kurds

**1999** Abdullah Ocalan, PKK leader, arrested and ceasefire begins as

group again waters down its demands

**2004** Rebels end their five-year ceasefire with Turkish Government, taking up a struggle that has killed about 37,000 people

**May 2007** Turkey angered by US decision to hand over security control to three Iraqi Kurdish northern provinces

**Sept 29** 13 Turks killed in ambush in southeastern Sirmak province

**Oct 7** PKK kills 13 Turkish soldiers

**Oct 21** Eight soldiers captured and 12 killed by PKK. Turkey claims 32 rebels killed in cross-border clashes

**Oct 24** PKK positions bombed by Turkish jets, according to Turkish news agency

**Oct 28** Turkish troops kill 15 suspected Kurdish rebels

Sources: news agencies

# Bush hopes to calm Turkey with more aid

## U.S. offers an assist against Kurd rebels

By Brian Knowlton

**WASHINGTON:** President George W. Bush offered the Turkish prime minister additional help on Monday in containing Iraq-based Kurdish militants, part of a last-ditch U.S. attempt to deter a threatened attack by Turkish troops massed at the border.

"I made it very clear to the prime minister that we want to work in a close way to deal with this problem," Bush said after his Oval Office meeting with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The president offered additional intelligence-sharing to help Turkey combat the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK — a proposal advanced late last week by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in urgent meetings in Istanbul and Ankara. Bush also promised closer coordination between the countries' militaries in tracking the militants.

Erdogan had effectively set Monday as a deadline for deciding whether to send into action some of the tens of thousands of Turkish troops now in the rugged border area.

He reminded reporters Monday that the Turkish Parliament had voted overwhelmingly on Oct. 17 to authorize a cross-border incursion, "if necessary."

The Turkish public also strongly supports military action; the PKK has killed at least 40 Turks in attacks in the past month.

Bush faced a difficult balancing act. The administration hoped to offer Erdogan sufficiently tough-sounding reassurances to help him face down those in Turkey demanding military action,

while doing everything possible to prevent such an incursion, which could dangerously upset one of the few relatively peaceful parts of Iraq.

The president did not mince words Monday in condemning the PKK guerrillas, saying: "They're an enemy of Turkey, they're an enemy of Iraq, and they're an enemy of the United States."

In promising to provide better intelligence, he said it was needed "to chase down people who murder people."

But analysts said they were unsure whether the U.S. message would be enough.

"The Bush administration would like to just kick this can down the road," said Bulent Aliriza, Turkey Project director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "The problem is, the can has been kicked down the road to the point where now it can't be kicked anymore."

Aliriza said he feared that Erdogan, returning to face an angry public, would "have a tough time saying we don't have to do an intervention."

A furious round of recent diplomacy, including Rice's meetings with Turkish and Iraqi officials, has failed to ease Turkish concerns.

Nor did Iraqi assurances of heightened cooperation.

"We are at the point where words have been exhausted and where there is need for action," Foreign Minister Ali Babacan of Turkey said Friday.

The United States and the European Union consider the PKK a terrorist group, but the sensitivities of the border area have left the Bush administration in a perplexed position.

On Saturday, Kurdish authorities in Iraq closed offices in two cities of a political party allegedly linked to the

guerrillas and set up checkpoints to arrest suspected militants.

But Turkish officials said such moves in the past were short-lived. They have demanded the handing over of named PKK militants and the closing of their bases.

Erdogan said he had discussed these matters with Bush — "the dissolving of the terrorist camps, the capture of leaders of the terrorist organization" — but neither man indicated whether any commitments had been made.

Bush declined to answer how he would react should the Turks launch a major attack but said both sides agreed that some action was necessary.

Aliriza considers a mass crossing of the border by tens of thousands of Turkish troops to be "extremely unlikely."

More likely, he said, are pinpoint airstrikes or limited commando attacks.

The administration worries that a cross-border incursion might set a precedent for other countries — most worryingly Iran — that have conflicts with Kurdish rebels.

Kurdish guerrillas on Sunday released eight Turkish soldiers captured two weeks earlier in a bloody ambush.

The rebels' top commander, Murat Karayilan, described the move as an effort to soften relations with Turkish officials, but it seemed unlikely to assuage the deep anger of Turkish officials.

The release puts "some cards in the hands of President Bush," said Cengiz Candar, a political analyst and columnist for the Turkish newspaper *Referans*.

*Richard A. Oppel Jr. contributed reporting from Duhok, Iraq; Sabrina Tavernise from Istanbul; and an Iraqi employee of The New York Times from Iraqi Kurdistan.*

# Kurdish militants release 8 Turkish soldiers in Iraq

The Associated Press

**ISTANBUL:** Kurdish rebels released eight Turkish soldiers Sunday, a day before the Turkish prime minister was to hold a meeting with President George W. Bush that was expected to play an important role in whether Turkey launches attacks on guerrilla bases in northern Iraq.

Though rebel leaders said the move was meant as an olive branch, experts said it seemed unlikely to soften Turkish demands for tough action against the rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or the PKK, which has killed more than 40 Turks in cross-border raids in the past month.

Turkey has ruled out talks with the PKK and has dismissed past overtures by the rebels as attempts to improve their image or undercut Turkish military and political pressure.

"I cannot see any kind of link between the release of the soldiers and the eradication of PKK in northern Iraq" that Turkey is pressing for, said Yalim Eralp, a former Turkish diplomat. "Neither will anyone in the state institutions."

Even as news of the release spread, skirmishes between the two sides continued, with two Kurdish rebels and a government-paid village guard killed in the town of Idil, in the border province of Sirnak, according to state-run Anadolu news agency.

Still, the soldiers' plight has featured daily in Turkish newspapers, and their release removed one of the issues that has been putting domestic pressure on Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to launch a cross-border operation against the rebel bases in northern Iraq.

And the timing — on the eve of Erdogan's meeting with Bush in Washington — was no accident.

"I'm making a call to all national and international powers, mainly to the U.S., based on these principles: They should support a peaceful solution to the Kurdish question, instead of a violent and armed one," Murat Karayilan, a PKK commander based in northern Iraq, told the pro-Kurdish Firat press agency.

"We released these soldiers to make

clear that we want to solve the Kurdish problem with peaceful means and methods," he added.

The United States and Iraq have urged Erdogan not to resort to a cross-border incursion, which could destabilize the one area of Iraq that has been relatively calm. At the same time, the United States has emphasized that it has classified the PKK as a terrorist organization and assured Ankara they are a "common enemy."

If nothing else, the PKK move will give Bush leverage to push Erdogan to negotiate with Massoud Barzani, the president of the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq, whom Ankara accuses of backing the PKK rebels, said Huseyin Bagci, who teaches international relations at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara.

"Now, Bush will say, 'Don't attack Barzani, he made this release possible,'" Bagci said. "Turkey will have to negotiate with Barzani."

The eight Turkish soldiers were handed over to Iraqi officials, who then delivered them to U.S. military personnel for transfer to Turkish authorities, according to the U.S. State Department.

The soldiers were seized in an Oct. 21 ambush inside Turkish territory that left 12 other soldiers dead.

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## James Carroll

# For Turkey, the war is real

**H**ere in Turkey, Condoleezza Rice offered sage advice to Turkish leaders ahead of the Washington meeting between President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. "Effective action means action that can deal with the threat," she said Friday, but won't "make the situation worse."

The Turkish military, with a deployed force of up to 100,000 soldiers, is poised to attack positions of militant Kurdish separatist fighters in the Kandil Mountains of northern Iraq. Their cross-border forays into Turkey over the last five weeks have killed dozens of Turks, both soldiers and civilians. Iraqi Kurds tacitly support their fellow Kurds, and Americans have done nothing to dissuade either group. Erdogan is under enormous pressure to respond to such attacks, but Rice highlighted "the need to look for an effective strategy, not just one that's going to strike out, somehow, and not deal with the problem."

As viewed from Turkey, American responses throughout this crisis range from duplicity to double standards. The cautionary message that Rice conveyed to her Foreign Ministry counterparts here, and that Bush is expected to echo, defines the exact opposite of policies pursued to this day by the Bush administration itself. The conditions that created the terrible prospect facing Turkey — an immediate war with rebel Kurds based in Iraq — have been wholly manufactured in Washington, which displays an un-

ending capacity to "make the situation worse." Turkey, a staunch U.S. ally, urged restraint four-and-a-half years ago when Bush rolled his dice in Iraq. But when the gamble was lost, it was nations in the Middle East — not America — that paid. Turkey's turn to pony up has come.

The mood here is somber because when war begins, it will be real. Turks understand that the United States, thousands of miles away, is only virtually at war. U.S. soldiers are killing and being killed, to be sure. Yet the main result of their presence as an occupation force has been to ignite and sustain a set of civil wars — now including Turkey's — that have nothing to do with America. Indeed, despite the neocon rhetoric of "fight them there instead of here," the U.S. occupation of Iraq defends against no direct threat to America. As Saddam's weapons of mass destruction

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**Washington again displays its unending capacity to 'make the situation worse.'**

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were a paranoid myth, so is the much-hyped dread of "Islamofascism," a phenomenon that, if it did exist, would threaten Islamic peoples and values far more than anything in the West. The problem, of course, is that militant Islamic extremists, however defined, are empowered by the U.S. occupation, not disarmed. Iraq has become a West Point for suicide bombers. Even then, the threat remains local. And although all the belligerents target the American occupiers, and will do so as long as the occupation continues, America has no authentic enemy among Iraq's sectarian belligerents. Turkey does.

In the United States, meanwhile, confusion reigns.



After effectively voting against the Iraq occupation last November; after denouncing it in successive polls; after seeing the Bush administration reject its own review panel's call for a shift to diplomacy; after the touted "surge" led to more of the same; after the shock of current oil prices made the real Bush agenda in Iraq plainer ever; and after Dick Cheney and George W. Bush made the mad prospect of attack on Iran seem possible — the American public has sunk into a dispirited, and perhaps guilt-induced, detachment from the entire mess. (Again last week, Congressional Democrats, debating appropriations, dared look the Pentagon in the eye — and promptly blinked.) No such detachment is possible here in Turkey.

Before Bush's war changed everything in this region, Turkish hopes were high. An expansive European Union beckoned. Turks were poised to play a historic role as the bridge between Islam and the

West. But then they found that, in the "us-against-them" war on terror, no such bridge was wanted. Europe got nervous about Turks already in its cities, and lately European countries have taken actions Turkey regards as friendly to the Kurdish rebels it is fighting. Now come warnings that, if Turkey responds to its made-in-Washington terror threat exactly as Washington does — "to strike out, somehow" — then Turkey can kiss EU admission goodbye.

The question is sharper in the United States: How much higher can the rubble pile of Bush's wreckage mount before Americans emerge from the stupor of shame to stop him?

*James Carroll's column appears regularly in The Boston Globe.*

# 2007 is deadliest year for U.S. troops in Iraq

## 6 deaths in single day bring total to 852

By Damien Cave

**BAGHDAD:** Six American soldiers were killed in three separate attacks Monday, the military said Tuesday, taking the number of deaths this year to 852 and making 2007 the deadliest year of the war for U.S. troops.

Military officials also said that nine Iranians being held in Iraq would soon be released, including two detained during a January raid of a consulate office in Erbil. The potential release of the Iranians may reflect American approval of some signs that Iran is cooperating with demands that it stanch the flow of bomb-making materials into Iraq.

Rear Admiral Gregory Smith, a military spokesman, said that recently discovered caches of components used to make deadly roadside bombs known as explosively formed projectiles, or EFPs, "do not appear to have arrived here in Iraq after those pledges were made," suggesting that Iran has limited explosives trafficking across the border after promising to do so.

American commanders have stopped short of declaring that Iran has in fact complied with the United States' demands, and Smith said Tuesday that the release of the nine Iranian prisoners was not a diplomatic reward but rather the perfunctory end to a criminal investigation. "These individuals have no continuing value, nor do they pose a further threat to Iraqi security," he said.

Smith did not say why the two Iranians captured in January at an Iranian consulate office in Erbil were held for nine months, after Iran insisted that they were harmless government workers.

But Iraqi officials welcomed the announcement. Mohammed al Haj Hamud, Iraq's deputy foreign minister,

said the release would "improve the relations between the three countries" of Iraq, Iran and the United States before another round of planned meetings on security. "We want good relations with Iran and for Iran to avoid conducting any actions inside Iraq," he said. "At the same time, the Iraqi government is keen to maintain its relationship with its first and strongest ally, the United States of America."

Five of the American soldiers killed on Monday died in two roadside bomb attacks near Kirkuk, Smith said. A sixth soldier died Monday during combat operations in Anbar Province, according to a military statement.

The deaths come only a few days after the military announced a steep drop in the rate of American deaths this year. In October, 38 American service members died in Iraq, the third-lowest monthly tally since 2003, according to Iraq Casualty Count, a Web site that tracks military deaths. The total in No-

vember, if the current pace continues, would be higher but still far below the war's average of 69 American military deaths per month.

Despite the decline, American commanders acknowledged that 2007 would be far deadlier than the second-worst year, 2004, when 849 Americans died, many of them in major battles for control of insurgent strongholds like Falluja.

Military officials attribute the rise this year to an expanded troop presence during the so-called surge, which brought more than 165,000 troops to Iraq, and sent units out of large bases and into more dangerous communities. Commanders maintain that despite the high cost in terms of lives lost, the strategy has brought improved security

to the country and "tactical momentum" that could stabilize Iraq permanently.

But violence in the country continues. Military officials announced Tuesday the discovery of a mass grave holding 22 bodies in a rural area north of Falluja. The grave was found Saturday during a joint American-Iraqi operation in the Lake Tharthar area, a desolate rural area near the site of another grave, holding 25 bodies, that was found less than a month ago.

Local police officials said the bodies were dumped in and around an abandoned building.

"Some were buried in wells and some were left in rooms used as prisons," said a police officer who helped clear the grave. "These corpses are part of what we expect to find more of in the future."

Just south of Kirkuk, the police said that clashes with Iraqi and American forces on Tuesday left four gunmen dead. In a separate incident, gunmen attacked and killed the mayor of small village about 50 kilometers, or 30 miles, south of Kirkuk, and wounded his son, as they drove to a neighboring town.

A member of the governing council in Mosul was also assassinated in a neighborhood on the city's outskirts, the authorities said, and six policemen died when they were ambushed while driving to work.

In Baghdad, the police found four dead bodies, two east of the Tigris River, two to the west. A roadside bomb exploded near an American patrol near Zawra park in western Baghdad, and a second bomb exploded in the central Baghdad neighborhood of Karrada, an Interior Ministry official said.

He said it was unclear if there were any casualties.

South of the capital, in Latafiya, a bomb targeting a joint Iraqi-American foot patrol killed one Iraqi soldier. North of Hilla, the authorities found the body of a man in his 20s floating in a small river. He had been stabbed to death.

# For Turkey, cost of attack may be too high

By Richard A. Opiel Jr.

**DAHUK, Iraq:** Viewed from the outside, Iraqi Kurdistan looks close to war. Tens of thousands of Turkish troops are amassed on the border.

And thousands of Iraqi Kurdish pesh merga fighters have taken up positions in the Mateen Mountains, ready for a counterattack, their local commanders say, should any Turkish operation hit civilians.

But wander the markets and byways here and a different reality comes into view, helping to explain why, despite bellicose Turkish threats, an all-out armed conflict may be less likely than is widely understood: The growing prosperity of this region is largely Turkish in origin.

In other words, while Turkey has been traditionally wary of the Kurds of Iraq, it is heavily invested here, an offshoot of its own rising wealth. Iraqi Kurdistan is also a robust export market for Turkish farmers and factory owners, who would suffer if that trade were curtailed.

Moreover, the Kurds' longstanding fear of dominance by other powers now seems to be colliding with modest yet growing material comfort for some urban Kurds that was unthinkable not long ago. It has come on the back of Turkish investment, consumer goods and engineering expertise.

About 80 percent of foreign investment in Kurdistan now comes from Turkey. In Dahuk, the largest city in northwestern Kurdistan, the seven largest infrastructure and investment projects are being built by Turkish construction companies, said Naji Saeed, a Kurdish government engineer who is overseeing a 187-room luxury hotel with a \$25 million price.

Some of the projects, including overpasses, a museum and the hotel, are fi-



Photographs by Michael Kamber for The New York Times

Many of the laborers, managers and engineers at this hotel site in Iraqi Kurdistan, as well as at other major projects, are Turkish.

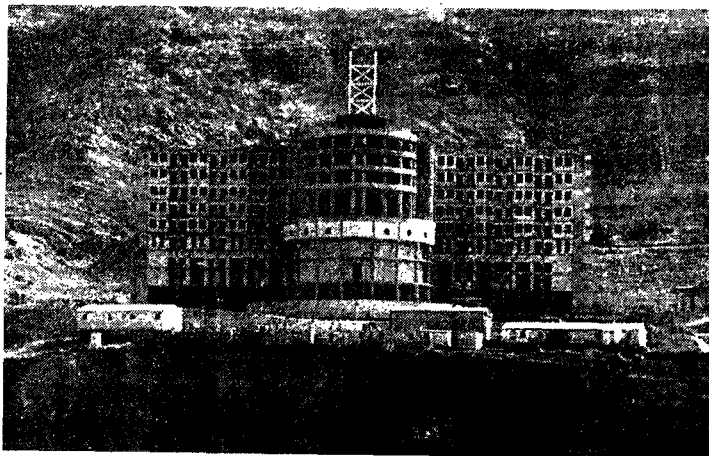
nanced or owned by the Kurdistan Regional Government, Saeed said, underscoring the direct financial partnership. Turkish investors are also building three large housing projects, including a \$400 million venture that will feature 1,800 apartments as well as a health clinic, school, gas station and shopping center.

At the construction site for a 15-story office building in central Dahuk, all of the engineers and managers are Turkish, as are dozens of laborers. "There are not any Kurdish engineers for a big project like this," said Ahmed Shahin, the Turkish engineering manager.

Since the American invasion four years ago, Dahuk has had a burst of consumerism, also thanks largely to Turkey. At the upscale Mazi Supermarket, rows and rows of Turkish-made glassware, shoes, cleaning supplies, beauty products and frozen chickens are for sale. Sixty percent of Mazi's products are from Turkey, said Sherwan Jamil, a store manager. Many other products are imported through the Turkish border crossing at Zakho.

"Turkish things are the best, better than Syria and Iran," said Shamiran Eshkery, 34, as she shopped for shoes. "We don't have any problem with Turkish food and clothing, but we are upset because we don't want to fight."

Indications are growing that Turkish officials do not want a large battle, either. Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, suggested in Washington this week that military operations in Iraq would be narrowly concentrated



A Turkish company is constructing a luxury hotel in Dohuk, where such companies are building the seven largest projects.

on guerrillas from the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, who use the jagged mountain border frontier as a haven after attacks in Turkey.

"We have taken the decision to pursue an operation," Erdogan said Monday through an interpreter at the National Press Club. "We are not seeking war," he added, but he offered no specifics or timing.

His battle is largely one of perception, trying to convince the Turkish

public that he is acting against the Kurdish guerrillas and that he has U.S. support to do so. But most analysts in Turkey expect any attack to be limited. Whatever the case, Erdogan's visit seemed to satisfy the Turkish public.

"People are probably giving the government the benefit of the doubt at the moment," said Ilter Turan, a political science professor at Istanbul Bilgi University. "Most are relieved that no major operation will start on Iraq."

But if a large attack were to occur, Turkish soldiers would encounter thousands of Kurdish pesh merga fighters who have formed a loose defensive line that parallels the Turkish border along the ridges of the Mateen Mountains.

Kurdish leaders speak only generally about repelling an invasion, but political and military commanders here have specific instructions: Attacks on civilian villages will draw a fierce counterattack.

"If the civilians face any problems, that is our 100 percent red line," Muhammad Muhsen, a regional leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party office in Amedi, said in a recent interview, before Kurdish authorities prohibited local commanders from discussing the conflict with Turkey. Amedi anchors a large border region where fighters are camped on south-facing slopes as trucks bring pesh merga fighters and weapons up curvy roads.

Muhsen expressed a common fear among Kurdish commanders, that the Turkish military wanted to use recent guerrilla attacks as an excuse to damage

the Kurdish autonomous region in Iraq.

Yet years of fighting the PKK have made for strange bedfellows, especially in Bamarni, a village north of Dahuk. In the mid-1990s the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the dominant power in western Kurdistan, allowed the Turkish military to occupy several bases on the Iraqi side of the border, when both were

fighting the PKK. The Turks now have about 1,500 soldiers at these bases, said a senior American military official in Baghdad who was not authorized to speak for the record.

In Bamarni, Kurdish pesh merga fighters are now stationed at a camp beside a Turkish air base that is home to dozens of tanks and armored vehicles. Turkish soldiers routinely dash out in gun trucks to deliver food to soldiers operating tanks that oversee the air base. They also buy supplies at local shops, said Ahmed Saeed, a local political official at a Kurdish outpost nearby.

"They have no obstacles to going to the market," said Saeed, who estimated that as many as 400 Turkish soldiers and 50 tanks were at the base. The pesh merga never have problems with the soldiers, he said. But if heavy fighting breaks out he is not sure what to expect.

"If they surrender themselves to us, then we will not kill them, because we are peaceful," he said.

*Sabrina Tavernise contributed reporting from Istanbul, and an Iraqi employee of The New York Times contributed from Iraqi Kurdistan.*



## Iraqi Governor Calls Federalism Best Solution

November 6, 2007 (RFE/RL) -

**- The governor of the Iraqi province of Al-Najaf says that federalism offers the best solution for Iraq's regions to reconstruct and succeed economically.**

**PRAGUE** - As'ad Sultan Abu Kulal said on a visit to RFE/RL in Prague today that his region is using the decentralization of power in Baghdad to make many of its own decisions. He says the result is that Al-Najaf has achieved economic self-sufficiency, both in food and fuel.

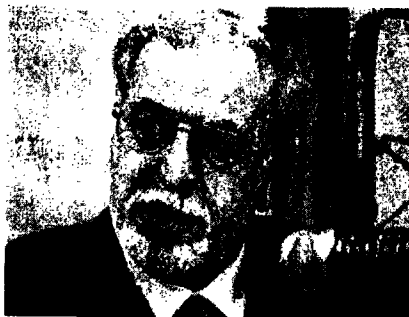
The Al-Najaf governor acknowledged that his province has many starting advantages -- including a historically thriving tourism industry based on religious pilgrims flocking to the Shi'ite holy city of Al-Najaf.

The religious tourism has boomed since the overthrow in 2003 of Saddam Hussein's regime, which greatly discouraged it. Recent years have seen investors build more than 450 hotels to lodge the pilgrims, many of whom are from neighboring Iran. The trade also supports restaurants and specialty shops, generating enough revenue for the city to enjoy considerable economic security relative to much of the rest of the country.

### Benefits Of Devolution

But Abu Kulal says Al-Najaf has prospered in recent years mostly because the decentralized government in Baghdad allows local authorities to make many key decisions on their own. He says the city's goal is to use this freedom to create self-sufficiency in fuel and food -- two key economic staples.

"Our theory as a provincial council and civil



administration is to build complementary, self-sufficient institutions for this purpose," he said. "For example, we are building the health sector, to have hospitals, and have medicine depots. For energy, we are building power stations, in order not to need power transferred from other provinces. We are building oil refineries, so as not to be obliged to bring fuel from outside the province."

Al-Najaf has been relatively free of unrest since major fighting between U.S.-backed Iraqi forces and members of the Imam Al-Mahdi Army in 2004. The Al-Mahdi Army is loyal to radical Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who opposes the U.S. presence in Iraq.

Control of the city today is shared between

supporters of al-Sadr and supporters of other Shi'ite religious parties, particularly the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council. A major moderating influence over the sometimes violent rivalries between factions is the presence of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the preeminent Shi'ite-religious authority in Iraq.

The Al-Najaf governor told RFE/RL's Radio Free Iraq that federalism offers opportunities for other parts of the country, too, despite resistance to the idea in some quarters.

"We have tried during the last few years to practice a tiny part of decentralization, and you could see the huge change that happened when the state gave [us] a little bit of authority, and a little bit of funds," Abu Kulal said. "Despite the lack of local resources and human resources -- there was development. But the problem that we face is that a part of the Iraqi people lack a knowledge of federalism."

Federalism remains a divisive issue in Iraq, where the Sunni community says it could lead to unequal sharing of the country's oil wealth or even break up of the country. Most oil wells are in the Shi'ite-majority south of the country or in the Kurdish north.

Iraq's Kurds currently enjoy substantial autonomy under Iraq's federal system. Many Shi'ite parties are actively pressing for similar rights for southern areas.

The Boston Globe

November 7, 2007

## Turkey set to attack, but limits seen

By Selcan Hacaoglu and David Rising Associated Press /

**ANKARA, Turkey** - Tens of thousands of Turkish troops were poised yesterday on the border with Iraq awaiting the order to attack Kurdish fighters, and President Abdullah Gul said the country will do "what it believes to be right" to tame the rebels.

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But with winter rapidly approaching in the mountainous region, and pressure from the United States to avoid an all-out cross-border incursion, officials and analysts said Turkey will probably be looking toward a limited offensive involving raids and aerial assaults.

Several possibilities are being discussed, including F-16 strikes on rebel positions, helicopter raids, and special forces missions, according to a government official familiar with the planning.

"The area is heavily mined and a big incursion with tens of thousands of troops is out of the question," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press. With the Turkish government talking openly for weeks about the likelihood of an attack, the official said intelligence information shows the guerrillas

have been evacuating their camps and melting away into cities and other regions.

A high-ranking retired military officer who participated in the planning of previous incursions into northern Iraq in the mid-1990s said he had received the same information.

"They are apparently evacuating camps along the border ahead of a Turkish operation, as usual," said the officer, also on condition of anonymity.

The United States and Iraq have been pressing Turkey to avoid a major cross-border attack on Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, rebel bases in northern Iraq out of fear such an incursion would bring instability to what has been one of the calmest areas in Iraq.

In northern Iraq, a spokesman for one of the two parties that governs the semiautonomous region urged Turkey to refrain from any attack, but suggested scaled-down raids would not be as destabilizing.

"We reject any kind of Turkish military strike, whether limited or not," Azad Jindyany, spokesman for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, said in Sulaimaniyah. "A limited one would cause a limited problem, but an unlimited strike would destroy the whole situation."

The former military officer said Turkey was planning for air strikes from planes and helicopter gunships, as well as special forces commando raids.

But scaled-down assaults wouldn't necessarily rule out the use of large numbers of troops, he said.

"A few thousand troops could still penetrate the Iraqi border to block escape routes of the rebels during a pinpoint raid," he said.

PKK rebels have killed more than 40 Turks in hit-and-run attacks over the past month, mainly soldiers, raising the public pressure on Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to retaliate.

Gul said yesterday that Turkey had made its decision on what to do about the PKK rebels.

"Turkey will carry out what it believes to be right with determination," state-run Anatolia news agency quoted Gul as saying.

While he did not specify what the decision was, the president made it clear that Turkey feels the PKK is leading to instability in the region.

The comments were made a day after President Bush met in Washington with Erdogan and promised him the United States would share military intelligence in the hunt for PKK rebels.

Following that meeting, Erdogan strongly suggested an attack was imminent.

**TURKISH DAILY NEWS**

November 7, 2007

## US to provide intelligence aid for 'limited' operation

US mulls providing Turkey intelligence to help 'limited, targeted' anti-PKK operations, White House says

**ÜMIT ENGİNSOY**

**WASHINGTON** President George W. Bush has told Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan that the United States will boost intelligence help to Turkey in its fight against the northern Iraq-based outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terrorists, but the Turks want to make sure that Washington keeps its promise this time. "It is time for concrete action, not rhetoric," Erdoğan said at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a think tank here, hours after a 90-minute meeting with Bush at the White House Monday. "Step one is to make sure that our intelligence sharing is good," Bush told reporters at the end of talks with Erdoğan. "Good, sound intelligence delivered on a real-time basis using modern technology will make it much easier to deal effectively with people who are using murder as a weapon to achieve political objectives," Bush said. Bush's spokesman, Dana Perino, provided some details on the nature of Washington's pledge for intelligence support. Recent U.S.-Turkish anti-PKK cooperation talks have included "intelligence information that we can give to the Turks as they carry out limited and targeted exercises against the PKK," she said.

New military liaison:

Qualifying the PKK as a common enemy of both Turkey and the United States, Bush also announced the creation of a new anti-PKK liaison between top

military officials from the two NATO nations. "We talked about the need for our military to stay in constant contact. To this end, the prime minister and I have set up a tripartite arrangement for his number two man in the military to stay in touch with our number two man and General Petraeus," he said. With "number two men," he was referring to Deputy Chief of General Staff Gen. Ergin Saygun and Gen. James Cartwright, Vice Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, who were both present at the White House talks. Gen. David Petraeus is the top commander of U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq. "This was nice talk, but we really urge the United States to abide by its pledge this time and let this intelligence apparatus work," one Turkish official said. "Otherwise they will lose all their credibility." Increased PKK attacks from bases in northern Iraq on Turkish targets last month prompted Parliament to authorize the government to order a military incursion into Iraq to fight the PKK there. Turkey repeated calls on Washington and Baghdad to put an end to the PKK's presence in northern Iraq have so far produced no concrete outcome. While the United States says that Turkey has the right to defend itself against terrorists, it staunchly opposes unilateral Turkish military intervention, fearing that it will further destabilize the war-torn country. Erdoğan said that international law had provided Turkey with

the right to take cross-border measures against terrorism. "The process for an operation has already started," he told Turkish reporters here after his talks with Bush.

Timing not clear:

But he also hinted that such military action was not imminent. "We will fulfill our responsibility at the necessary time and on the necessary basis and when the conditions become ripe," he said at the CSIS. But Bush dismissed as "hypothetical" a question about the potential impact of a Turkish incursion. At a separate appearance at the National Press Club, Erdoğan said he was "happy" with the talks he had with Bush. Pointing to some European nations, Erdoğan said Turkey did not receive the international support it deserved in fighting against the PKK. In a related development, Nechirvan Barzani, "prime minister" of the semi-autonomous Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq, an entity not recognized by Turkey, has proposed the creation of a four-way mechanism between Turkey, the United States, Iraq and Iraqi Kurds to jointly deal with the PKK problem. In an article published by the Washington Post Monday, Barzani said the problem caused by the PKK's presence in northern Iraq cannot be resolved without Iraqi Kurdish involvement. Erdoğan left here late Monday for an official visit to Italy.

**TODAYS ZAMAN**

November 7, 2007

## MHP leader Bahçeli labels Erdoğan-Bush meeting a 'fiasco'

Leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Devlet Bahçeli termed the results of a meeting between Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and US President George W. Bush at the White House a mere "fiasco."

Erdoğan and Bush met on Monday to discuss cooperation against the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has carried out a series of deadly attacks over the past weeks in Turkey from bases in northern Iraq. Bush said he was committed to countering the militants and offered to share intelligence with Ankara without pledging further support or suggesting a joint military operation against the PKK contrary to expectations.

Speaking at his party's group meeting yesterday, Bahçeli lamented: "There was no mention of eradication of the PKK, a possible Turkish cross-border operation into northern Iraq, a joint Turkish-US operation against the PKK that would yield effective results, disbanding the PKK camps in northern Iraq, handing over of the PKK leaders to Turkey or cutting logistical support to the PKK, PKK militants in Mahmour and the Kandil Mountains at the Oval Office meeting. Instead, the two

leaders beat the air and made special efforts to give a message of unity on some issues of secondary importance. The leaders reached a limited agreement at a time when Turkey has run out of patience [due to PKK violence]. This is a total disappointment. The end result for Turkey has been disappointment and failure."

Accusing the US of not being willing to take any concrete steps against the PKK, Bahçeli stressed that Erdoğan's last US visit has once again proved this.

"The prime minister, who went to Washington to get Bush's approval about the steps to be taken for Turkey's national security, could not find the support he expected and had to return to Turkey with empty pledges about some ineffective steps. I would like to mention that I am deeply agitated due to the US adopting such a stance against Turkey and the prime minister placing Turkey in such an embarrassing situation. This meeting has shown that stability of a handful of peshmergas in northern Iraq is more important and of greater priority than Turkey's security and territorial integrity for our ally, the US," Bahçeli told his party members.



Bahçeli also directed harsh criticism at the members of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) who acted as mediators for the release of eight Turkish soldiers who were taken hostage by the PKK militants last month.

"The group who signed a so-called hand-over document at a roadside table with a poster of the Imrali murderer [PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan] has merely shown an example of treason. The desperate events taking place during the release of our soldiers are a clear sign of the separatist PKK's willingness to start a new term of propaganda to legitimize itself," Bahçeli added

**TURKISH DAILY NEWS**

Yusuf KANLI, November 8, 2007

## Released soldiers: Traitors or victims?

**It's rather odd to see a lynching campaign against the soldiers who were taken hostage by the PKK for 14 days**

A lynching campaign is continuing by some people in Turkey against the eight soldiers who were taken hostage by the separatist outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terrorist group on Oct. 21 during an ambush at their post in the Dağlica district of Hakkari, and were released 14 days later.

The pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) and its three deputies who were involved in getting the soldiers released by the gang are under attack as well.

While the DTP has been a source of disappointment as it could not decide whether it is a political party trying to contribute to resolution of the problems of the ethnic Kurdish people of this country through means of politics or an organ of the separatist terrorist gang, the attacks against the soldiers, to say the least, is disgrace.

### What are the accusations?

1- Some people are questioning whether the eight soldiers "surrendered" to the terrorists despite the "continue fighting" order of their officer, and thus disobeyed

commands;

2- Some are suspecting that there might be at least one "mole" among the eight soldiers;

3- Some are even claiming that the eight soldiers did not fight with the ambushing terrorist group at all and imply that they collaborated with the terrorists;

4- The soldiers are accused of "hurting the honor and pride" of the Turkish Armed Forces by falling into the hands of the terrorists and becoming hostages;

5- They are accused of "shaking the hands of terrorists" and eating food at the same table with them.;

6- They were accused of having hot tea in glass cups together with the terrorists while their families and the entire nation was praying for their safe return;

7- They are accused of accepting degrading treatment by the terrorists and in a defeatist manner appearing in front of the portrait of the chieftain of the terrorist gang during a "hand-over" ceremony when they were released...

This list continues with such "credible" accusations...

Naturally we cannot know whether there was any mole among the eight soldiers. We cannot have any idea under what conditions they were fallen into the hands of the gang either. Whether or not they disobeyed orders of their commanders; how they were cut off from other soldiers; how they were captured unhurt by the terrorists are not questions either that we can answer. Those questions will all be answered during their interrogation by the relevant military personnel and if they were guilty of any of those serious charges, they naturally will face the military court and get an appropriate penalty. Otherwise, they will be acquitted of the charges, rehabilitated and continue serving the remaining part of their compulsory military service.

### Summary execution

However, even if one or two of them were moles, even if they were guilty of any of the charges that a military prosecutor may bring against them, those eight soldiers will still be our sons, sons of their

families. If they are guilty, they will face a proportionate penalty, serve it and that's all... What's being done to these soldiers and their families now is nothing less than summary execution.

Without knowing the conditions of the Oct. 21 night when the PKK ambushed their unit; without having any idea of the psychological condition of these eight sons and in total ignorance of the threat they faced while they were in the hands of the PKK, people are accusing them of not behaving properly while they were hosta-

ges.

How sad it is for a deputy prime minister or a justice minister and even a president to express doubt about the loyalty of our people under arms towards our state? How sad it is to see a justice minister saying "I could not feel happy with the release of them (soldiers)?"

Or, how said it is to see a party leader who himself had once traveled to the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon, inspected a "guard of honor" of the separatist gang,

shook hands with the chieftain of the group and then claimed he did all those things as a "journalist" and "for news" can now say that he would prefer the eight soldiers were killed by the PKK?

Whereas, instead of making such lofty accusations against the released soldiers, we must be able to develop an understanding that should aim to win back even those on the mountains engaged in terrorism. After all, though criminal and must be punished, they are sons of mothers of this country as well..

**TODAYS ZAMAN**

November 8, 2007

## Evren regrets ban on public use of Kurdish language

**Leader of the coup d'état in September 1980 and seventh President of Turkey Kenan Evren has said it was a mistake to ban the public use of the Kurdish language in schools, official settings and non-music broadcasts.**

In an interview on Wednesday with *Miliyet* daily's columnist Fikret Bila, Evren said he regrets imposing a ban on public use of the Kurdish language through Article 26 of the 1982 Constitution, which stated that no language prohibited by law shall be used in the expression and dissemination of thought and that any written or printed documents, phonograph records, magnetic or video tapes and other means of expression used in contravention of this provision shall be seized.

Evren said his observations during a visit to the eastern provinces triggered his decision to ban the use of Kurdish in public places. "Once I paid a visit to an elementary school in a village in one of the eastern provinces. I asked one of the students to read a text aloud, but both her reading and pronunciation was very bad. Then we figured it out that many teachers in the East and Southeast carried out schooling in Kurdish language."

Confessing that banning the Kurdish language was not a proper step to be taken on the path toward modernization and democratization, Evren added: "This ban was removed in 2002 through reforms implemented for Turkey's accession to the European Union. Anyway, we should have never imposed such bans."

The former general also contended that civil servants serving in the eastern and southeastern regions should speak Kurdish besides Turkish with the objective of developing closer ties with locals and furnishing better service to residents. Upon a question as to whether it would be necessary to permit education in Kurdish to help civil servants learn this language, Evren said: "Schooling in the Kurdish language cannot be permitted; yet there are language courses where Kurdish is taught freely. Those who wish to learn this language can apply to such courses."

Despite the soft stance he seems to have



adopted towards the Kurds, Evren expressed, on the other hand, that it was Turkey's mistake not to execute the leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) Abdullah Öcalan. "I am in favor of the execution of those who deserve it," he said.

**CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR**

November 08, 2007

## Turkish-Kurd tensions spill into Europe's streets

**Protests across the continent have turned violent in some cities, including Berlin, where more demonstrations are planned for this weekend.**

**By Ranty Islam | Contributor to The Christian Science Monitor**

**B**erlin - The simmering tensions in Turkey's Kurdish southeast are not only playing out along the country's border with Iraq, where the military has amassed tens of thousands of troops following renewed clashes with Kurdish rebels holed up in Iraq's mountainous north. They're also spilling onto the streets of European cities from Berlin to Brussels to Innsbruck, Austria.

This weekend, authorities are braced for another round of protests in the

German capital, where two weeks ago Turkish ultranationalists attacked a Kurdish cultural center, wielding machetes and injuring dozens of people. Last weekend, some 600 mainly Kurdish protesters returned to Hermannplatz - a square in Berlin's heavily immigrant Neukölln district - to inform the public of their view: that Turkey is still repressing the Kurdish people.

"It's been going on for years. The recent threat of Turkish military

incursions into northern Iraq to attack us is just the last straw," says Ahmed, a young man handing out pro-Kurdish leaflets.

With 2.5 million residents of Turkish origin, including an estimated 400,000 who identify themselves as Kurdish, Germany is home to the largest expatriate community from Turkey and is perhaps the most visible European arena for Turkish-Kurd tensions. The expat violence has prompted politicians including the German

interior minister to warn against the Kurdish conflict spilling over to Germany and other European countries.

So far there has been no indication that the clashes were planned. But that does not mean that no group has an interest in using them for their purposes, says Süleyman Bağ, Berlin correspondent for *Zaman*, a conservative daily newspaper in Turkey. In particular he refers to the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), an organization outlawed in Turkey and Germany

and classed by the US and the European Union as a terrorist group.

Taking a softer stand on Kurdish interests than previous administrations, Turkey's ruling Justice and Development party (AKP) has made unprecedented gains in Kurdish strongholds in recent elections at the expense of Kurdish parties. The trend extends to Kurdish rebel groups such as the PKK, which has become a lot less popular with Kurds, maintains Mr. Bağ. By "internationalizing" the Kurdish conflict the PKK hopes to mobilize new support, he says.

Meanwhile, Kurdish representatives in Germany charge that German-Turkish politicians are doing Turkey's bidding. Some of them have used the clashes in Berlin for one-sided and unwarranted attacks on the PKK, says Ayten Kaplan of Germany's Federation of Kurdish Clubs, referring to statements of a prominent member of Germany's Green party. "I would have hoped these politicians exert a moderating influence instead of polarizing further," she says.

In Turkey's capital, Ankara, the clashes in Germany have so far met with a muted response from Turkish

politicians. While Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is arguably more occupied with the conflict in northern Iraq, his government is likely to follow closely what happens on the streets in Germany for another reason.

Talks over Turkey's possible accession to the European Union (EU) are presently close to a standstill and popular opinion in a number of large EU countries including Germany is less than enthusiastic about Turkey becoming an EU member. Turks and Kurds battling it out on the streets of EU capitals would make things

worse.

"Ankara has no interest in seeing these tensions escalate," says Faruk Sen, director at the Center for Turkey Studies at the University of Essen in western Germany. But even if they do, he says, the real losers will be Turks and Kurds in Germany. In a country that has seen heated debates over immigration for years, further violence "would play right into the hands of those who are convinced that all efforts to integrate people of Turkish origin into German society have been a complete failure."

Al-Ahram  
11, 12

8 - 14 November 2007

## America, Ankara and the Kurds

Washington's U-turns on the Kurds have come so fast that you might be forgiven for thinking the US is trapped in a set of revolving doors, writes Galal Nassar

It was the US administration that gave the main two Kurdish Parties -- The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of Masoud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) of Jalal Talabani -- permission to harbour members of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). The latter established offices and training camps in northern Iraq in full view of the US occupation forces. Which raises these two questions: why did the US administration encourage dissident Kurds to spring to action? And why did it change its position when the Turkish government decided to go into Iraq?

The story begins with the end of World War I, when Mustafa Kemal Ataturk created a European-style Turkish republic on the ruins of the Ottoman Caliphate. Many Turks consider Ataturk the founder of modern Turkey and a symbol of progress and reform. During his rule Ataturk absolutely refused the creation of a Kurdish entity in southeast Turkey.

Ataturk gave Western countries something they always wanted and had tried and failed to accomplish by force. In the first 15 years of his rule, he turned Turkey around, introducing a secular system, modern government and separating the mosque and state. He accorded women rights and introduced the Latin alphabet. These changes paved the way for closer links between the West and Turkey, especially after the end of WWII.

During the Cold War, Turkey came to be viewed as a major ally by the West, not least because it bordered the then Soviet Union, as well as oil-rich Iraq and Iran. It controls land routes to Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and China. It straddles the Dardanelles, the waterway connecting the Soviet Union to the world. And it has borders with Syria, the gateway to Palestine and the Arab peninsula.

Turkey was central to Western schemes concerning the Middle East. The Dwight D. Eisenhower Doctrine of the mid-1950s gave Turkey a major role, and it a major partner in the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO)

and the Baghdad Pact. Even during the Turkish-Greek conflict over Cyprus the US took a neutral stand, at least in public. For all the historical and cultural ties between Greece and the West the US wasn't about to risk Ankara's ire.

At one point Turkey forged close ties with Israel. This was particularly true under Turgut Ozal's government. In 1989, Ozal proposed to transfer water from Turkey to Israel. He didn't even consult with Syria and Iraq. Turkey built major reservoirs on the Euphrates, the largest of which was behind the Ataturk Dam. Ozal argued that Turkey was entitled to control water resources just as the Arabs control oil. When the Gulf war took place, following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Turkey sided with the Western coalition. Turkish sources suggest Ozal hoped to annex Mosul and Kirkuk during the course of the war and ordered Necip Torumtay, the army's chief of staff, to make plans to achieve this. Only strong opposition from both Torumtay, and prime minister Yildirim Akbulut, aborted the move.

When the PKK was formed, with a separatist, Marxist agenda, it was clear which side the US was going to take. Washington sided with Ankara, viewing PKK actions within an essentially Cold War context. The PKK was engaged in acts of terror and armed struggle against a US ally. It was seeking to form a Kurdish state in southeast Turkey, a move that had no international or regional backing. The CIA cooperated with the Turks, helping them arrest PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in the Kenyan capital Nairobi. Ocalan is now in a Turkish prison.

Things started to change with the rise of the Islamists in Turkey. As public opinion in Turkey started to show sympathy with the Palestinians and the Iraqis the Americans began to have second thoughts. By the time Necmettin Erbakan came to power the tide had already changed. Turkish demonstrators chanted slogans supporting the rock-throwing children of Palestine, and protests were

staged against the US embargo of Iraq.

The 2003 occupation of Iraq was a watershed. The Turkish parliament voted against participation in the war. Protesters marched across Turkey denouncing the war. Turkish politicians took a dim view of the political arrangements the Americans were introducing across the border, especially the constitution and federalism. The Americans felt the need to retaliate. This was when they sanctioned PKK facilities in Irbil and Dahuk in northern Iraq.

Turkey made it clear that it would not tolerate the creation of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, nor would it approve of the Kurds gaining control of Kirkuk. The Americans pretended not to listen. Meanwhile, popular displeasure with Washington's pro-Israeli policies has mounted steadily in Turkey. Sympathy with the Palestinians has taken many forms, most recently convening an international conference on Jerusalem that Turkish NGOs plan to hold in Ankara in mid-November 2007.

Tensions increased when the US Congress passed a non-binding decision calling for the partition of Iraq, something which observers saw as a way of putting Turkey in its place. Then came a bigger blow, with Congress condemning Turkey for genocide against the Armenians. All the above, coupled with the escalation of PKK operations, hardened the resolve of the Turks.

The Americans were seemingly too weighed down by other problems to dispute the decision by Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government to send troops into northern Iraq. Reacting to the Turkish decision, US officials merely stated that issues of security in northern Iraq were Kurdish, not US, responsibility. But does this wash? Has the US turned a blind eye to Kurdish separatists to punish an increasingly independent Turkey? And will Turkey now fall back in line?

THE DAILY STAR

# Turkish party calls for Kurdish autonomy

November 09, 2007 Compiled by Daily Star staff

Turkey's leading pro-Kurdish party called on Thursday to grant autonomy to the mainly Kurdish southeast as a solution to the violence that has plagued the impoverished region for more than two decades. Nearly 40,000 people have been killed in the conflict since the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) guerrillas took up arms to fight for a Kurdish homeland in southeastern Turkey. Tensions have escalated in recent weeks and Turkey has sent tens of thousands of troops to the border region with Iraq where many PKK rebels operate.

"A democratic and federal system is the most suitable solution [to Turkey's Kurdish problem]," Aysel Tugluk, an influential Democratic Society Party (DTP) lawmaker, told a party convention in Ankara.

The party approved a declaration calling for autonomy for Kurds in the southeast, a move expected to raise tensions further. Calling for greater autonomy for the Kurds remains a highly contentious issue in Turkey and has led to

prosecutions.

The DTP won 20 seats in elections in July, the first time supporters of more rights for the large ethnic Kurdish minority have been represented in Parliament for more than a decade.

Turkey's troops on the border are in place to cross into northern Iraq where some 3,000 PKK guerrillas are based.

The DTP said a military offensive, approved by Turkey's Parliament, was no solution to the long-running problem.

"Everyone knows very well that the solution to the Kurdish problem lies in democratic moves rather than [military] operations," Tugluk said.

DTP offices have been attacked by ultra-nationalist groups in the past few weeks and calls for the party to denounce the PKK as a terrorist organization have intensified.

Many Turks remain deeply suspicious of the DTP and believe it is just a mouthpiece of the PKK. The DTP rejects any ties to the PKK, which is

considered a terrorist organization by the United States, Turkey and the European Union.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government, which is seeking European Union membership, has eased some curbs on Kurdish language and culture, but many Kurds say this is not enough.

"The most urgent issue that needs to be solved by politics is the Kurdish problem," said Nurettin Demirtas, who was appointed the DTP's new chairman later on Thursday.

The DTP wants the government to ease restrictions on the Kurdish language further, give Kurds the choice about whether to learn Turkish and give them other political and cultural rights.

In other developments in Turkey on Thursday, authorities said they detained four people and seized plastic explosives in the predominantly Kurdish southeast. Acting on a tip, authorities searched two people in the town of Nusaybin, on the Syrian border in Mardin

province, and found them in possession of 2 kilograms of the C-4 military plastic explosive, state-run Anatolia news agency reported. They later detained two others in connection with the incident.

Across the border, Iranian troops killed three foreigners said to be members of a Kurdish armed separatist group, the official IRAN newspaper reported on Thursday.

The three were killed in the town Kamyaran in Iran's Kurdistan province, some 500 kilometers southwest of the capital, Tehran. The report did not specify the timing or the circumstances of the deaths.

It also did not provide identities of the three or their gender, but only said they were nationals from a neighboring country and members of the separatist Kurdish group PEJAK, or Free Life Party of Kurdistan.

PEJAK, an offshoot of the PKK, has engaged in sporadic clashes with Iranian forces near the Iran-Iraq border. - **Agencies**

GULF NEWS

## Kurds optimistic about peaceful resolution of crisis

By Basil Adas, Correspondent November 09, 2007

Arbil: Kurds have lived the past 40 days under great strain because of Turkish threats to conduct a military invasion. Thousands of Iraqi Kurdish villages close to the Iraqi-Turkish borders have been threatened under the pretext of stopping the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) elements.

Gulf News interviewed citizens in Arbil after the end of Istanbul's Iraq neighbouring countries conference.

Farhad Samara, a Kurdish merchant, told Gulf News: "Ninety per cent of my goods are Turkish and this is the case with other merchants in the market, that means any war on the Iraqi-Turkish border or in the region, will destroy hundreds of merchants' lives. I feel the crisis will be resolved peacefully and there are political sources in Arbil and Baghdad that confirm that."

### Military threat

Kurdistan Airline sources told Gulf News flights from Arbil to Istanbul had resumed after ceasing for a week. This indicates the crisis of the PKK and military threats close to the borders is diminishing.

"I'm not a politician but I have followed the Iraqi-Turkish crisis from the beginning because any escalation means halting the construction movement... If war takes place it will be a catastrophe for all, but after the Istanbul forum perhaps there are signs of relief and this brings joy," Zacros Mullah Sherman, an engineer at a construction company, told Gulf News.

In Arbil, there are dozens of Turkish companies who specialise in paving roads and building bridges and tunnels. The province hopes Turkish companies and other foreign companies will contribute to turn Arbil into a contemporary city.

"The situation seems better and the release of the eight kidnapped Turkish soldiers by the PKK with the help of Iraq's Kurdistan President Massoud Al Barazani confirms the crisis is on its way to a solution.

"I think all parties realise they will be losers if war takes place in the region and the US considers any Turkish military invasion as a threat to its strategy to stabilise Iraq," Qamar Azadi, a political science student at Saladdin University said.

Some civil organisations in Arbil intend to organise events to celebrate the end of this crisis.

"We will chant and dance when we are sure the PKK crisis is over because we are people of peace," Mariam Sakron, an activist in the Kurdish Women's Development Association told Gulf News





## Analysis: Kurds say Kirkuk is Turkey's aim

November 9, 2007 UPI - By Ben Lando

The protest sign was plain enough, black ink on white poster board. But the message Jamel Numan was carrying amidst 200 of America's Iraqi Kurds rallying outside the White House Monday was both simply blunt and highlighted the overlooked complexity of Turkey's beef with the Kurdistan Workers' Party guerrillas: "Is this really about PKK? Or is this about Kirkuk?"

Numan, a 53-year-old now living in Nashville, a hub of American Kurds, echoed the fears of Kurds -- that Turkey is amassing troops on their border "so they can take over the Kurdish region of Iraq."

Inside the White House Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Bush discussed Turkey's threats to take military action against the Turkish Kurd separatist strongholds in Iraqi mountains on the other side of the Turkish border.

An estimated 3,000 PKK guerrillas are based in the Qandil Mountains, where Turkey alleges the most recent of the PKK's decades-old campaign has been planned. Eight kidnapped Turkish troops were released Sunday in a brief slowdown of bluster between the sides. But the PKK, which the United States and Turkey recognize as a terrorist group, has killed dozens of troops and citizens in attacks in recent months.

The separatist group's original goal was for an independent country of Kurdistan -- and tens of thousands of innocent people were killed in their fight in the 1980s -- but now it wants more autonomy and cultural recognition by Turkey.

Turkey has made numerous limited incursions into northern Iraq in the past, but the PKK remains. Meanwhile, Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government has capitalized on its own semi-autonomy since 2003, creating a rare zone in Iraq of relative security, political evolution and economic success. The KRG, which contains only 0.5 percent of Iraq's 115 billion barrels of proven reserves, announced Tuesday it signed seven new exploration and development oil deals with foreign companies and formed its own KRG-owned oil company.

Kirkuk is the city Iraqi Kurds want to make their capital, drenched in oil but cut from Iraq's Kurdish provinces when Saddam Hussein redrew the boundaries. He forced out Kurds, as well as Turkomen and residents of other ethnicities, replacing them with Sunni Arabs.

The city is an increasing hotbed of violence as a controversial referendum draws near. Voters in Kirkuk and other disputed territories currently outside the KRG's authority will decide whether to join it. The referendum, called for in the 2005 constitution -- an inclusion that's an example of the power Iraq's Kurds wield throughout Iraq -- is behind schedule.

It's likely to miss the year-end deadline and increase tensions between Iraq's Kurdish and Arab leaders. Turkey has already weighed in, fearing adding Kirkuk's estimated 11 billion barrels of proven reserves to KRG control would bolster the northern Iraq region's autonomy and empower its own Kurdish population. Iran -- which along with Syria, Iraq and Turkey is home to more than 22 million Kurds, according to the CIA's World Factbook -- has called for delaying the referendum.

Kirkuk is also the starting point of two pipelines that export oil to Turkey. The pipelines have a total capacity of 1.6 million barrels per day, but attacks from Sunni insurgents have kept them offline more than online since the start of the U.S.-led war in March 2003.

Turkish companies are the biggest investor in the KRG, though the Turkish government channels all official diplomatic and economic dialogue through Baghdad.

Turkey demands Washington, Baghdad and the KRG do more to

prevent the PKK from operating and accuse KRG officials of aiding the "terrorist organization which has deployed itself in northern Iraq," Erdogan said at a joint, albeit brief, news conference with Bush following their meeting Tuesday.

The two talked of the increased importance of sharing intelligence, "and it is important that we fight jointly against the leaders, the murderers of this organization," Erdogan said. U.S. and Turkish military leaders will communicate more, but Bush and Erdogan didn't weigh in on any specific actions. Erdogan said he would delay any military decisions until after the meeting.

The United States is stuck between Turkey and the Kurds, U.S. allies in their own right, and is having trouble satisfying both.

This year is the war's deadliest for U.S. troops, and Washington's hawk talk over Iran is increasing, so another war front, especially one inside the Iraq adventure's only empirical success story, will have long legs and leave heavy footprints.

"Clearly the Turks got themselves into a pickle by pressing for change when clearly the Americans weren't going to give them the green light to go into Iraq," said Joost Hiltermann, director of the International Crisis Group's Middle East Project. Now the United States must "help Turkey down without alienating the Kurds in Iraq."

Turkey sees the KRG position as "a situation where they're depending on Turkey and depending on the central government and need to be reminded every so often not to let the PKK roam freely," Hiltermann said. "It's PKK and its Kirkuk, those are the two issues. Everything else, it can be resolved."

"Of course, (Turkey) should be finding a political solution to the Kurds in Turkey and not a military one," he said, but Turkey's civilian and military leadership are at loggerheads in Ankara and the PKK is a flashpoint.

The Turkish Parliament last month authorized military action -- to what extent remains to be seen. There are an estimated 100,000 or more troops on the border. Airstrikes, however, have been tossed out as the best way to combat the PKK, who are more familiar with the mountainous terrain.

"You don't send 100,000 troops to fight 3,000 guerrillas," 22-year-old Kovan Morat of Nashville said just after the throng of his fellow Kurdish protestors approached a dozen pro-Turkish flag-wavers across from the White House. Police and Kurdish leaders made a human barrier preventing any physical interaction.

"Kirkuk is Kurdistan and would ensure Kurdish people of an identity and economically stabilize Kurdistan and the move to independence," Morat said. "They don't want to let this happen." Iraq's Kurdish population may feel the wrath of Turkey's response to the PKK, but they by and large feel it's a problem of Turkey's making.

"It's (Turkey's) failure to deal with the PKK problem," said 28-year-old Fatima Sindy of Manassas, Va., one of the leaders of Monday's protest, "to deal with its internal problems."

"Turkey is not afraid of the PKK," she said. "It's afraid of an independent Kurdish state." KRG President Massoud Barzani, co-leader of Iraqi Kurds along with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, agrees.

"Honestly, I am about to be convinced that the PKK is only an excuse and that part of the real target is the Kurdistan region itself," Barzani told Time Magazine.

"If they invade and enter the Iraqi Kurdistan region and they attack us, of course we have to defend ourselves," Barzani said. "If they attack our people, our interests, our territories, then there will be no limit."

Iraqi Kurdistan

# Iraq's Kurdish leader in a bind

ERBIL

What can Masoud Barzani, the Iraqi Kurds' leader, actually do?

IRAQ'S Kurdish leaders are desperate to forestall—or at least to minimise—Turkey's threatened assault against the guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) who have been attacking the Turkish army in Turkey while using the rugged mountains of northern Iraq as a haven. In the past week, the regional government of Iraqi Kurdistan, under the presidency of Masoud Barzani, has used its good offices to facilitate the release of eight Turkish soldiers whom the PKK had recently captured in Turkey. But the Turks say that Mr Barzani and his American allies must do more if Turkey is to put off a full-scale attack.

Exactly what? Mr Barzani says he is ready to help solve the PKK problem—peacefully. He insists that he is a friend of Turkey and the Turks but will not co-operate “under threats and blackmail”. He has repeated calls for the PKK to stick to its unilateral ceasefire (proclaimed a year ago) and not to use its bases in the remote mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan to launch attacks across the border into Turkey (see map on next page). Mr Barzani's government has closed the offices of the Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party, which praises the PKK, in Iraqi Kurdistan's two biggest towns, Erbil, its capital, and Sulaymaniyah. Mr Barzani also says that checkpoints between the main part of his region and the PKK zone have been revived, to squeeze the guerrillas by staunching the flow of supplies.

There is no love lost between Mr Barzani and the PKK. He is privately furious



Eyeing the Turks

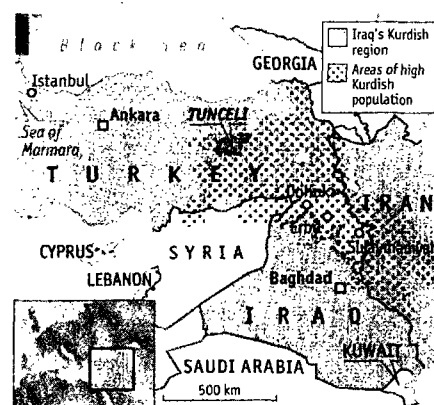
with its leaders for stoking the crisis. But he refuses to send his own Peshmerga fighters to drive the PKK out of its strongholds; they tried and failed to do that several times in the 1990s, sometimes in co-operation with the Turks, and got a bloody nose. The days of Kurd fighting Kurd are over, says Mr Barzani, mindful of the civil war among Iraqi Kurds in the 1990s. Instead, he suggests sending a multinational force into the region to corral the PKK. It is unclear which countries would contribute to such a force.

Mr Barzani anyway rejects the charge that the attacks on Turkish troops have been launched from Iraq, claiming that Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's prime minister, just before Turkey's general election in the summer, said himself that there were 5,000-odd PKK fighters inside Turkey compared with only 500 or so over the border in northern Iraq. Mr Barzani also points out that the heaviest fighting between the PKK and Turkish troops has been in Tunceli province, more than 100 miles (161km) west of Turkey's border with Iraq.

Mr Barzani's nephew Nechirvan, the region's prime minister, wrote in the *Washington Post* this week: “We have condemned and will continue to condemn the PKK for its unwarranted attacks in Turkey. We insist that its members lay down their arms immediately. We do not allow them to operate freely, contrary to what some have suggested.” Both Barzanis, president and prime minister, said the Turks and the PKK must negotiate rather than fight. The uncle noted that Turkey had tried for 23 years to crush the PKK militarily—in vain.

In any event, the numbers of PKK guerrillas, in or out of Turkey, are disputed. In a recent interview, Osman Ocalan, brother of the PKK's leader Abdullah Ocalan, who is in jail on the island of Imrali in the Sea of Marmara, said there were 2,750 PKK guerrillas in Turkey, 2,500 in Iraq's borderlands and 1,500 in Iran. The last-mentioned lot belong to the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan, better known as PJAK, generally reckoned to be the PKK's Iranian Kurdish branch. Many PKK guerrillas are thought to have moved across the border into Iran, which the Turks are unlikely to encroach upon. Some independent watchers put the PKK numbers in Iraq at fewer than 500.

The PKK says it wants to negotiate and that its violence is in response to Turkish attacks—a claim that enrages the Turks; 35,000-plus people in Turkey (most of them Kurds) have been killed since the PKK



began fighting in the 1980s. The PKK also insists that, unlike its cousins in Iraq and Iran, it no longer seeks autonomy or federalism, but just wants Kurdish cultural and political rights enshrined in Turkey's constitution. It also wants Mr Ocalan freed and better conditions while he is in prison.

Mr Barzani's mollifying gestures have cut little ice in Turkey, where he is widely cast as a villain in the thick of a plot to dismember Turkey by egging on the PKK. Nationalist Turkish commentators call him “insolent” and “treacherous”. Turkish weapons should be “turned on Barzani,” says the editor of *Hürriyet*, one of Turkey's biggest daily newspapers. Mr Erdogan has joined the fray, accusing Mr Barzani of aiding and abetting the PKK.

### Please don't throttle us

The Kurdish Iraqis are already suffering from de facto economic sanctions imposed by Turkey, which has been their economic lifeline. The Turks are threatening to close the one border crossing for heavy lorries, through which vital supplies of food and equipment reach Iraqi Kurdistan. Flights between Istanbul and Erbil, the Kurds' capital, have been suspended. There has been talk of shutting off electricity from Turkey, which would hurt the flourishing city of Dohuk. Several Turkish companies that have been doing good business in Iraqi Kurdistan (such as building Erbil's airport) have packed up and—for the time being—gone. The Barzanis sorely need them back. But how?

This week George Bush welcomed Mr Erdogan to the White House and assured him that the United States deems the PKK a terrorist group and is as keen as Turkey to squelch it. The administration apparently endorsed limited Turkish military action against the guerrillas and has offered to give as much intelligence as it can so that the Turks can identify PKK targets. But it has begged the Turks to refrain from a bigger-scale attack that could drag the Iraqi Kurds into the fray—and destabilise the only bit of Iraq that has been peaceful and increasingly prosperous. So far, Mr Erdogan and his generals have held back. But no one is sure they will do so for long. ■



À Erbil, épargnée par le chaos qui règne ailleurs en Irak, les entrepreneurs édifient à tour de bras des lotissements inspirés des banlieues occidentales. Ali al-Saad/AFP

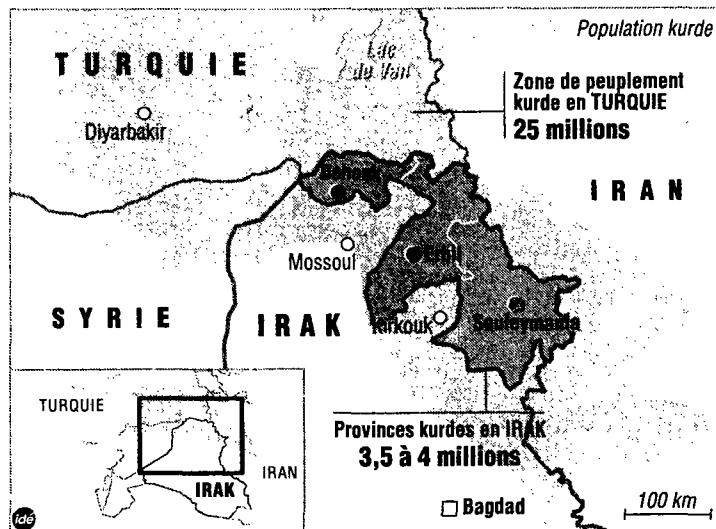
**IRAK** Le premier État kurde de l'histoire émerge dans le nord du pays

# Le Kurdistan marche vers l'indépendance

ournez à droite et vous êtes mort. Ou vous courez de sérieux risques de l'être à très court terme. Car la route mène à la plaine irakienne, elle vous emmène vers Mossoul, en proie à la guerre civile, avec ses attentats et assassinats presque quotidiens. Mais en prenant à gauche, vous traverserez sans encombre les collines semées d'herbe jaune jusqu'à Erbil, où un étranger peut se promener à pied dans les rues et boire un thé à une terrasse du bazar sans risquer d'être enlevé ou décapité.

Les véhicules en provenance de Mossoul sont soigneusement contrôlés et fouillés. Ceux qui viennent de Dohouk, au pied des montagnes du Kurdistan irakien, passent presque sans encombre. Car ce petit poste marque une frontière. Une frontière invisible, officieuse, mais bien réelle, qui sépare les provinces kurdes de l'Irak arabe.

Les drapeaux vert blanc rouge frappés d'un soleil jaune qui flottent sur la guérite du poste de



sécurité n'apparaissent encore ni dans les dictionnaires, ni devant le siège des Nations unies à New York. Mais ce nouvel emblème kurde flotte déjà partout dans les trois provinces du nord de l'Irak, Erbil, Dohouk et Souleymaniya. On l'aperçoit sur les édifices publics d'Erbil, où siège le gouvernement de la « région autonome kurde », et devant le nouvel aéroport flambant neuf de la ville.

Les soldats qui filtrent les véhicules portent l'uniforme irakien. « Mais ils sont tous kurdes ! » reconnaît le colonel Hussein, qui commande les gardes-frontières du nord-ouest du Kurdistan. Son bureau est décoré d'un portrait de Moustapha Barzani, le père de l'indépendance, vêtu comme un bandit de grand chemin, avec son turban étroit, une cartouchière et un poignard au-dessus de la large ceinture traditionnelle.

## Frères ennemis reconciliés

Depuis la fin du mois de mai, les Américains ont confié aux Kurdes la sécurité de leurs provinces. Cette décision est une étape symbolique dans la construction du premier État kurde de l'histoire. Ses prémices datent de la défaite de Saddam Hussein dans la guerre du Golfe, en 1991. Mises à l'abri des représailles irakiennes par un parapluie aérien américain, les provinces kurdes se sont développées séparément du reste de l'Irak. La chute du régime baasiste, en 2003, a offert une chance historique de parvenir à l'indépendance à la plus grande nation sans État du Moyen-Orient.

Prudents, les Kurdes s'abstiennent de la proclamer officiellement. Malgré le soutien des Américains, aux côtés desquels ils se sont rangés, les Kurdes craignent encore les réactions de leurs puissants voisins, l'Iran, la Syrie, l'Irak et surtout la Turquie, où se répartissent 25 millions de

Kurdes. Ces États n'ont jamais cessé de réprimer leurs propres communautés kurdes, tout en attisant le séparatisme chez leurs voisins. Proclamer l'indépendance totale risque de susciter des réactions violentes.

Les dirigeants kurdes préfèrent avancer masqués, fidèles à leur maxime héritée de décennies de répression : « Les montagnes sont les meilleures amies de notre peuple. »

Les deux frères ennemis, Jalal Talabani et Massoud Barzani, dont les organisations rivales, l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) et le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) s'étaient livrés une guerre civile dans les années 1990, ont enterré leurs querelles intestines après la chute de Saddam Hussein ; ils se sont réconciliés pour se partager les rôles. Talabani est devenu en 2005 le président de l'Irak, et le seul chef d'État non arabe d'un pays membre de la Ligue arabe. Depuis Bagdad, il équilibre les mises : tout en jouant la carte de l'unité de l'Irak, il veille au maintien du système fédéral mis en place par la nouvelle Constitution, qui donne un statut de quasi-autonomie au proto-État kurde.

Le Kurdistan utilise toujours le dinar irakien et dépend largement du budget de Bagdad. La nouvelle Constitution assure la répartition des revenus pétroliers au prorata de la population des diverses provinces irakiennes. Elle bénéficie largement aux Kurdes, qui reçoivent 17 % des recettes, somme non négligeable avec un baril de pétrole qui frôle les 100 dollars.

Massoud Barzani, fils de Moustapha Barzani, est quant à lui devenu le président du gouvernement de la région kurde, dont le PDK et l'UPK se sont réparti les ministères. Sans aborder ouvertement la question de l'indépendance, il a, en quelque sorte, fait sien le mot de Gambetta à propos de l'Alsace-Lorraine : « Y penser toujours, n'en parler jamais. » Tout en prévenant régulièrement que l'indépendance restait une option si l'Irak devait basculer dans la guerre civile, sans que la définition d'une telle guerre soit clairement établie, le gouvernement de la région kurde s'est depuis quatre ans employé à construire un État autonome.

Les manuels d'histoire ont été les premiers à intégrer des changements radicaux. « À l'école, on

nous a longtemps appris l'histoire du monde arabe, combien la civilisation arabe était brillante, et comment la nation irakienne avait été fondée sur le nationalisme arabe », explique Kassem, journaliste à l'hebdomadaire anglophone *Kurdistan Times*. À présent, les livres de classe parlent de l'histoire des Kurdes. Ils rappellent comment les promesses de création d'un Kurdistan indépendant sur les décombres

de l'Empire ottoman, inscrites dans le traité de Sèvres en 1920, furent trahies en 1923 au traité de Lausanne. Les amis de la cause kurde sont mis à l'honneur : il existe une place Danielle-Mitterrand à Dohouk, une avenue François-Mitterrand à Erbil. La pratique de l'arabe a reculé, au profit du kurde et de l'anglais, devenus les deux premières langues de l'enseignement.

### Un boom du bâtiment

Des lignes aériennes avec l'étranger ont été ouvertes, reliant directement Erbil à Vienne ou à Francfort, et l'on passe la douane de l'aéroport flambant neuf de la ville sans visa irakien. Des consulats kurdes ont été établis dans les principales capitales étrangères. Quelques pays entretiennent déjà des représentations diplomatiques au Kurdistan. La France, qui possède un centre culturel à Erbil, y envisage l'ouverture d'un consulat.

Les chaînes de télévision sont kurdes, et si l'indicatif téléphonique reste celui de l'Irak, les compagnies de téléphonie mobile sont kurdes. Les pechmergas, ces guérilleros qui ont longtemps hérité de la réputation de pillards de leurs ancêtres, qui remonte à Xénophon et Marco Polo, ont été intégrés dans des forces régulières disciplinées ; ils ont troqué leurs pantalons bouffants et leurs cartouchières contre des uniformes américains.

La sécurité relative qui règne dans les provinces kurdes a beau-

coup joué en faveur de leur essor économique. Le contraste entre Erbil et Bagdad ne saurait être plus frappant. Alors que la capitale irakienne s'est couverte, avec la guerre civile, de murs et de barbelés, de champs d'ordures et d'herbes folles, Erbil a pris des allures de ville prospère. Les rues sont propres, l'aéroport est bien organisé. « C'est la deuxième capitale de l'Irak », explique un diplomate européen venu à Erbil le mois dernier à l'occasion de la troisième foire internationale. On y croisait, dans les stands, des hommes d'affaires occidentaux, turcs, arabes et iraniens. C'est la seule région d'Irak où les investisseurs étrangers peuvent encore travailler.

Autour de la forteresse circulaire qui dresse ses murs de brique sur un tell au-dessus de la vieille ville, si ancienne qu'on ne sait même plus à quelle date elle fut fondée, une forêt de grues a poussé. Un immense centre commercial est en construction depuis deux ans. Barzani et son clan se sont lancés dans les affaires, plus ou moins légales.

Le bâtiment est de loin le secteur le plus florissant du nouveau Kurdistan. Autour de la ville, des compagnies de construction édifient à tour de bras des lotissements inspirés des banlieues américaines, vantant un « *environnement pacifique* ». Car la paix relative qui règne au Kurdistan a favorisé l'afflux de réfugiés depuis le reste de l'Irak. Souvent aisés, tout comme les Kurdes exilés en Europe ou en Australie et qui reviennent investir au pays, ces nouveaux habitants ont fait s'envoler la demande de logements.

Les minorités religieuses sont relativement bien traitées au Kurdistan. Aux quelque 50 000 chrétiens vivant dans ces contreforts montagneux, chaldéens et assyriens, les premiers, rattachés à l'Église catholique, les seconds, issus d'une très vieille branche de

la chrétienté, se sont ajoutés des réfugiés fuyant Bagdad et les persécutions religieuses. « C'est le dernier endroit sûr d'Irak », dit Boutros Behnam, un chrétien venu de Bagdad il y a deux ans. « Dans mon quartier de Doha, on ne savait même plus qui était notre ennemi, qui allait nous tuer. Ici, c'est la paix », explique cet homme, qui n'a qu'une plainte : « souffrir du froid en hiver ».

### Tolérance religieuse

Les yézidis, adeptes d'une religion d'influence zoroastrienne, accusés par les musulmans d'être des adorateurs du diable, et les Turcomans, population d'origine turque installée dans la région, constituent les deux autres grandes minorités de ces provinces, qui vivent en bons termes avec les Kurdes, dont le sunnisme a résisté à l'influence radicale islamiste. La plupart des femmes vont sans voile, et les mosquées restent cantonnées dans leur rôle religieux.

« Je préfère parler de Kurdistans plutôt que de Kurdes, pour désigner les habitants du Kurdistan », dit M<sup>re</sup> Rabbane, l'évêque de Dohouk, qui sillonne son diocèse au volant d'une puissante berline allemande. Ce prélat très politique a fait construire des dizaines de villages pour accueillir les nouvelles populations. Leurs maisonnettes multicolores vont autant aux chrétiens qu'aux autres confessions. L'évêque est accueilli partout à bras ouverts, embrassant les militaires kurdes. « Vous savez pourquoi tous nos voisins sont jaloux ? lui demande un colonel kurde qui l'accueille dans son campement à l'ombre d'un verger. C'est parce que nous sommes en paix. »

Pris entre un ombrageux voisin turc, qui menace d'une intervention militaire le Kurdistan si les séparatistes kurdes du PKK réfugiés dans les provinces du nord de l'Irak ne sont pas désarmés, un Irak en plein chaos et un

## La région autonome kurde s'approprie ses ressources pétrolières

Défiant le gouvernement de Bagdad, les autorités du Kurdistan irakien viennent d'approuver la signature de sept contrats pétroliers dans leur région. Les sept blocs ont été attribués aux compagnies OMV Aktiengesellschaft, MOL Hungarian Oil and Gas PLC, Gulf Keystone Petroleum International Limited, Kalegran Limited et Reliance Energy Ltd, ou à leurs filiales. Avec la signature de ces

contrats de partage de production pétrolière, « une vingtaine de compagnies pétrolières internationales vont désormais opérer au Kurdistan irakien », s'est félicité le ministre kurde des Ressources naturelles, Ashti Hawrami. Selon lui, la signature marque « une étape majeure vers l'objectif de produire un million de barils par jour » au Kurdistan.

En août 2007, la région kurde a

adopté une loi sur le pétrole et le gaz qui lui permet de signer ce genre de contrats, malgré l'opposition du gouvernement central de Bagdad qui y voit une remise en cause de sa souveraineté sur cette partie nord du pays. En septembre, le ministre irakien du Pétrole, Hussein Chahristani, avait jugé « illégale » la signature des premiers accords. Des responsables américains avaient également déploré

des « tensions inutiles » avec le gouvernement central de Bagdad, alors que le Parlement irakien doit examiner depuis plusieurs mois un projet de loi controversé sur le pétrole. Dossier politique ultrasensible, cette loi vise à partager équitablement les revenus pétroliers entre les dix-huit provinces, dans un pays qui recèle les troisièmes réserves mondiales.

(AFP)

Iran engagé dans un bras de fer avec les Américains, le quasi-État kurde indépendant reste cependant une construction fragile. « Nous avons été si souvent trahis

au cours de l'histoire que nous restons prudents. Il n'est pas impossible qu'une fois encore les grandes puissances qui nous entourent se

mettent d'accord à nos dépens », dit Kassem.

ADRIEN JAULMES  
(envoyé spécial à Erbil)

## TURQUIE MANIFESTATION DE SOUTIEN AU PARTI PRO-KURDE DTP À LA FRONTIÈRE TURCO-SYRIENNE

Le Monde  
13 novembre 2007

Un policier turc dans la tourelle d'un véhicule antiémeute, lors de la manifestation de soutien au Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP, pro-kurde), qui s'est déroulée, dimanche 11 novembre, dans la ville de Nusaybin, à la frontière entre la Turquie et la Syrie. Le parquet d'Ankara a lancé une enquête contre trois députés du DTP pour avoir assisté à la remise, le 4 novembre, au gouvernement autonome kurde du nord de l'Irak, de huit soldats turcs enlevés par le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste). Le DTP est fréquemment accusé par Ankara d'être un instrument du PKK. — (AFP.)



IBRAHIM USTA/AP

## TURQUIE

# Lorsque des militaires passent aux aveux

Des généraux turcs à la retraite remettent publiquement en question leurs jugements sur la question kurde. Un premier pas louable mais insuffisant, estime le quotidien *Sabah*.

SABAH  
Istanbul

**L**e quotidien *Milliyet* vient de publier une série d'interviews avec des généraux à la retraite. Après le général Aytaç Yalman, qui a été commandant de l'armée de terre entre 2002 et 2004, ç'a été le tour de Kenan Evren, auteur du coup d'État de 1980 [et qui dirigea la junte avant de devenir président de la République] de reconnaître ses erreurs dans la gestion de la question kurde. Le général Yalman a ainsi déclaré : « Nous n'avons cessé de dire que les Kurdes étaient en réalité des Turcs et que leur nom de 'kurde' venait du fait que, lorsqu'ils marchaient dans la neige, on entendait le son 'kart, kurt'. Nous considérons même les revendications d'ordre social comme des activités subversives. » Kenan Evren, quant à lui, va encore plus loin et fait même des propositions.

Ainsi, après avoir critiqué l'interdiction de l'usage de la langue kurde décidée dans la foulée du coup d'État de 1980, il est allé jusqu'à proposer que « les fonctionnaires de l'État envoyés dans le sud-est du pays [à majorité kurde] soient obligés de connaître le kurde ». Cependant,

il prétend ne pas être au courant des terribles tortures qui ont été pratiquées à la prison de Diyarbakir [sud-est] après le coup d'État !

Un individu peut certes procéder à son examen de conscience et conclure qu'il a commis un certain nombre d'erreurs. Toutefois, l'erreur commise par ces généraux ne se limite pas, loin s'en faut, à cette mauvaise compréhension de la réalité kurde. En effet, une de leurs grandes fautes fut aussi et surtout d'être intervenus directement dans la vie politique du pays. Pour le général Evren, devenu ensuite président de la République de 1982 à 1989, c'est une évidence. Quant au général Yalman, on a appris récemment, grâce à la publication du journal intime d'un ancien amiral, qu'il avait failli prendre la tête d'une junte militaire qui avait organisé en 2003 le renversement du gouvernement AKP, projet qui n'échoua que grâce à l'intervention du chef d'état-major de l'époque, connu pour ses convictions démocratiques.

L'enseignement qu'ils ont reçu a appris à nos militaires à considérer tous ceux qui ne leur ressemblent pas comme des ennemis potentiels. Cela

leur rend difficile de distinguer le gris parmi le blanc et le noir, et les conduit parfois à commettre des erreurs d'appréciation. Davantage que leurs éventuelles méprises, le problème est qu'ils ont tendance à vouloir imposer leurs vues à tout le monde : ils ne se limitent pas à faire de mauvais raisonnements, ils les transforment en idéologie officielle. C'est précisément l'un de ces raisonnements erronés qui se trouve à la base de l'usage systématique de la torture à la prison de Diyarbakir [qui visait surtout des militants de la cause kurde]. Kenan Evren nous dit maintenant qu'il n'a jamais donné l'ordre d'y pratiquer la torture et qu'il n'en a jamais été informé. Mais, dans un tel contexte, y a-t-il vraiment besoin d'un ordre pour que soit pratiquée la torture ? Si vous interdisez jusqu'à l'usage même de la langue kurde, les gardiens d'une telle prison ne vont-ils pas penser que les Kurdes sont décidément des créatures à éliminer ? Et, si vous mettez sur pied un régime autoritaire et que vous supprimez la liberté de la presse, comment pourrez-vous être au courant des événements désagréables qui se déroulent aux quatre coins du pays ? **Nazli İlicak**

# Irak L'aimant kurde

## Un peuple dispersé

**L**e nombre de Kurdes est objet de controverses. Même s'ils prétendent eux-mêmes être 40 millions, ils seraient, au total, une trentaine de millions, musulmans sunnites dans leur grande majorité. La moitié d'entre eux – 15 millions – vivent en Turquie, où ils représentent près du quart de la population. Ils seraient 5 millions en Irak (un quart de la population), entre 7 et 8 millions en Iran et 1,5 million en Syrie. L'Azerbaïdjan, l'Arménie, la Géorgie, le Liban et le Koweït comptent également des communautés kurdes. Nombreux sont ceux qui ont choisi l'exil : 1,2 million d'entre eux vivent aujourd'hui en Europe, dont la moitié en Allemagne, et

30 000 aux États-Unis. Parlant une langue indo-européenne, ils n'ont jamais constitué une entité politique unifiée. En 1991, la défaite de Saddam Hussein provoque une insurrection au Kurdistan irakien, violemment réprimée. L'Occident met alors en place une zone de sécurité dans le nord de l'Irak, matrice de l'actuelle région autonome. ■ D. L.

*Forte de ses prospérité et stabilité relatives, la région autonome kurde attire les « frères » des États voisins. Et, parmi eux, nombre d'activistes, à la fureur d'Ankara comme de Téhéran.*



Le Kurdistan irakien affiche aujourd'hui sa fierté. Ici, à Erbil, le drapeau national chez un marchand de tapis.

### De notre envoyée spéciale

**P**our Ouman Sadi, 21 ans, le rêve est devenu enfin réalité, il y a trois ans, lorsqu'il a foulé pour la première fois le sol de l'enclave autonome du Kurdistan irakien, après avoir fui, à travers les montagnes, son Iran natal. « Aujourd'hui, j'ai cette sensation étrange de me sentir à la maison. Je peux militer à visage découvert sans avoir à craindre d'être arrêté », confie l'ex-étudiant activiste, membre de la minorité kurde, placée sous haute surveillance par la République islamique voisine. En cette matinée d'hiver ensoleillée, il a rassemblé quelques amis dans les jardins de l'université Salaheddin (du nom de Saladin, figure historique kurde), à Erbil, la capitale de la région kurde d'Irak, administrée depuis la

chute de Saddam Hussein, en 2003, par le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan (KRG). Entre rires et accolades, c'est d'histoire, de philosophie... et d'indépendance qu'il est question. Sur la table traîne le dernier numéro d'*Adabiyat* (Littérature), une des nombreuses gazettes estudiantines à avoir vu le jour ces dernières années. Au-dessus des têtes, le drapeau kurde – rouge, blanc, vert, marqué par un soleil jaune – flotte au vent. C'est le seul, d'ailleurs, qui orne les bâtiments publics, celui d'Irak ayant été banni par Massoud Barzani, président du KRG. Les parasols de la cafétéria en plein air, frappés du logo de Coca-Cola, rappellent aussi qu'à Erbil, loin des bombes qui ensanglantent Bagdad, le Kurdistan irakien s'est vite imposé comme un havre de liberté d'expression et de prospérité économique relatives, regardé avec

envie par les quelque 40 millions de Kurdes des pays environnants, écartelés entre l'Iran, la Turquie et la Syrie.

« Aujourd'hui, pour un Kurde, quelles que soient ses origines, le Kurdistan existe. Et ça, ce n'était pas le cas il y a encore vingt ans », sourit Johan Kamar, un Kurde d'origine syrienne, qui enseigne le français à l'université Salaheddin. Peuple sans Etat, les Kurdes savourent une expérience inédite dans cette petite région semi-indépendante d'Irak, d'une superficie de 70 000 kilomètres carrés, qui échappe pratiquement à la tutelle de Bagdad, et qui représente, pour beaucoup, l'« embryon » d'un Etat. Pour y parvenir, plus besoin de traverser la frontière en voiture à partir d'un pays limitrophe. En trois ans, la région autonome kurde a déjà fait ouvrir deux aéroports internationaux, à Erbil et Souleimanieh. Les lignes aériennes desservent désormais, par vol direct, Téhéran, Beyrouth, Amman ou encore Vienne. Faisant fi de la législation irakienne sur l'or noir, qui n'en finit pas d'être réécrite à Bagdad, les Kurdes ont même commencé à signer des contrats d'exploitation pétrolière avec plusieurs sociétés internationales.

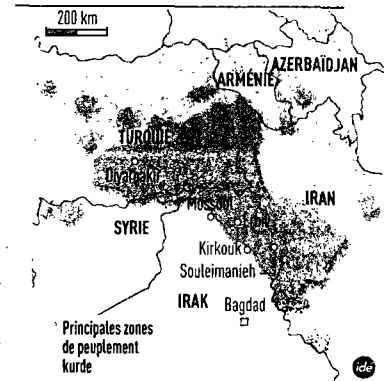
### Le refuge idéal des multiples partis d'opposition kurdes

Dans les rues, où se construisent à toute allure hypermarchés et hôtels, la plupart des panneaux de signalisation sont en kurde. Le boom des médias en ligne et des chaînes par satellite a également permis de créer un pont inédit avec les « frères » de la diaspora. Chanteurs, journalistes, investisseurs, ils sont nombreux à venir tenter l'« aventure ». Mehmet Gulsum, un restaurateur kurde natif de Diyarbakir (Turquie), n'a pas hésité à faire ses valises dès que l'occasion s'est présentée. « J'aurais pu aller en Allemagne, au Kazakhstan, en Arabie saoudite. Mais j'ai voulu ouvrir un restaurant sur cette terre particulière, car elle signifie beaucoup pour moi », confie-t-il entre deux services chez Sultan, l'une des meilleures cantines d'Erbil, où l'on déguste le traditionnel kebab. Là-bas, en Turquie, son pays d'origine, il n'est qu'un « Turc des montagnes ». Sa langue,

le dialecte kurde kermandji, se parle en cachette. Ici, les autorités locales lui offrent des conditions de travail qu'il ne peut trouver ailleurs : aides à l'investissement, exonération d'impôts. « On vit un moment unique. Les Kurdes de tous les horizons se retrouvent dans un seul et même endroit. C'est la première fois que ça nous arrive... depuis la République de Mahabad », ose même avancer Ouman Sadi, l'étudiant.

L'ironie du sort veut que ce grand brun en tee-shirt et blue-jeans soit justement né à Mahabad, ville du nord-ouest de l'Irak où en 1946, à l'époque de ses grands-parents, fut proclamée une république kurde sous influence soviétique. Quelques mois plus tard, l'intervention de l'armée iranienne mit un terme à cette expérience éphémère, restée ancrée dans les mémoires. « En Iran, c'est un sujet tabou, surtout à l'heure où le gouvernement d'Ahmadi-nejad met la pression sur les opposants au régime », remarque Ouman. A Erbil, en revanche, séminaires, débats et articles se multiplient sur la question. Mahabad a même inspiré le sujet de *La Souffrance d'une nation*, le dernier film de Jamil Rostami, un cinéaste irano-kurde. A la fureur des pays limitrophes, la Turquie en tête (voir ci-contre), le nord de l'Irak s'est également imposé comme le refuge idéal des multiples partis d'opposition kurde : de l'organisation communiste irano-kurde Komala aux rebelles armés du PKK (de Turquie), en passant par les jeunes guérilleros de sa branche iranienne, Pejak (Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan). Officiellement, le gouvernement régional ne tolère aucun mouvement armé sur son territoire. Mais, en réalité, la solidarité kurde pousse à fermer les yeux. « Connaissez-vous une autre nation de 40 millions d'habitants privée d'Etat et dépourvue de ses droits fondamentaux ? » interroge Jafar Barzandji, ministre kurde chargé des affaires des peshmerga, les anciens combattants kurdes contre le régime de Saddam Hussein. « Je ne peux qu'être fier de voir une partie du Kurdistan libéré et espérer qu'il en sera de même pour les autres », murmure-t-il. ●

Delphine Minoui



### La crise couve avec la Turquie

Depuis des mois, la tension est maximale à la frontière entre la Turquie et l'Irak. Ankara accuse Bagdad de tolérer que la guérilla marxiste du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) utilise le Kurdistan irakien comme sanctuaire en vue de lancer des opérations armées sur le sol turc. Organisation terroriste aux yeux de l'Union européenne et des Etats-Unis, le PKK bénéficie d'une évidente mansuétude de la part des autorités régionales kurdes d'Irak. 100 000 soldats turcs sont massés à la frontière. Ankara a promis à Washington d'épuiser les recours diplomatiques et économiques (menaces de sanctions) avant de lancer des représailles militaires. Car les Etats-Unis sont dans l'embarras : il leur faut, à la fois, conforter l'entité kurde, pièce maîtresse de la stabilité de l'Irak, et ne pas perdre leur précieux allié de l'Otan, la Turquie. En perte de vitesse dans le Sud-Est turc, la zone de peuplement kurde, le PKK, lui, recherche la confrontation. Ses militants ont enlevé, le 11 novembre, sept ressortissants turcs. ■ J.-M. D.

# La guerre turco-kurde n'aura pas lieu

France **Arménie**

du 16 au 30 novembre 2007

Pour le président de l'Institut kurde de Paris, Kendal Nezan, Ankara ne se risquera pas à "une défaite cinglante". En dépit de ses déclarations bellicistes, pas question pour la Turquie de s'embourber en Irak du nord. Alors, coup de bluff ? Et à quelle fin ?

**France-Arménie :** *Invokant la menace terroriste au lendemain de la mort de quinze de ses soldats en octobre dernier, le Parlement turc autorisait l'armée à intervenir dans le Kurdistan irakien. Mais n'est-ce pas hypocrite dans la mesure où les interventions militaires turques sont d'ores et déjà fréquentes dans cette région ?*

**Kendal Nezan :** Effectivement, l'armée turque a déjà opéré vingt-quatre incursions militaires en Irak du nord – sans que cela aboutisse d'ailleurs à quelque résultat que ce soit ! Ankara sait d'ailleurs pertinemment qu'une telle opération n'a aucun sens, alors même, reconnaît-on au gouvernement, que le PKK n'a pu être éradiqué en territoire turc – que ce soit à Van, Bingöl ou Der-sim.

**F.A. :** *Dans cette affaire, Ankara n'a cessé de souffler le chaud et le froid. Finalement, Erdogan a déclaré qu'il n'y aurait pas «d'invasion» de l'Irak du nord par les troupes turques. Que doit-on en conclure ?*

**K.N. :** En dépit des menaces initiales, la perspective d'une invasion turque du Kurdistan irakien est aujourd'hui l'hypothèse la moins probable. En réalité, l'armée turque n'a aucune envie de s'embourber dans une opération terrestre, sur un terrain que connaissent parfaitement les 40 000 Kurdes irakiens déployés à la frontière. Militairement, ce serait une défaite cinglante pour Ankara ! Certes, des frappes aériennes sur les camps présumés du PKK ne sont pas à exclure totalement. Mais l'hypothèse la plus probable est encore que les Américains arrivent à calmer Ankara en promettant un contrôle plus strict de la frontière turco-irakienne. Cette perspective est d'ailleurs pratique pour tout le monde : le gouvernement turc pourrait dès lors arguer qu'il est retenu par la manche par l'allié américain et sauver ainsi la face auprès de la frange la plus nationaliste du pays.

**F.A. :** *Etes-vous en train de suggérer que la surenchère d'Ankara est une grande mascarade et que rien ne l'arrangerait davantage que d'être « privé » de guerre ?*

**K.N. :** Je dis que le désaccord formulé par George Bush quant à l'opportunité d'une telle opération

entre l'Etat profond et le gouvernement turc. *Qu'en pensez-vous ?*

**K.N. :** L'armée a effectivement essayé par tous les moyens, au printemps dernier, d'écarter l'AKP du pouvoir. N'y parvenant ni lors des présidentielles ni lors des législatives, elle tente aujourd'hui ce «troi-

sième tour» en poussant le gouvernement à la faute. Une intervention militaire turque en Irak serait en effet catastrophique pour l'image de l'AKP au niveau international mais aussi sur le plan intérieur – de nombreux Kurdes ayant voté pour le parti d'Erdogan, jugé plus ouvert que celui des nationalistes.

**F.A. :** *On se souvient qu'Erdogan a reconnu il y a peu l'existence d'une question kurde...*

**K.N. (rires) :** Oui, il n'est pas rare de voir un candidat faire son voyage à Diyarbakir à la veille d'élections importantes et promettre de reconnaître la réalité kurde. Puis, une fois installé au pouvoir, il ne fait rien d'autre que reproduire une logique d'Etat, négatrice de ses minorités. A titre d'exemple, sur les 150 chaînes de télévision turques, une seule consacre six heures d'émission en langue kurde. Et quelles émissions ! Il s'agit ni plus ni moins de programme touristique sur Istanbul ou Izmir !

**F.A. :** *Pensez-vous que la surenchère militaire d'Ankara a à voir avec le projet d'une résolution américaine sur le Génocide ?*

**K.N. :** Le gouvernement turc est passé maître dans la stratégie dite «du bord du gouffre» - son exercice diploma-

tique favori. Le message destiné à ses partenaires européens et américains est clair : "retenez-moi ou je fais un malheur". Dans cette stratégie globale, le retrait de la résolution américaine sur le Génocide arménien a toujours été un objectif clair, de l'aveu même des dirigeants turcs. Et c'est bien sur ce dos-



Soldats turcs en patrouille dans les montagnes du sud-est de la Turquie, à la frontière du Kurdistan irakien



[lors de la visite d'Erdogan à Washington le 6 novembre dernier, ndr] est en réalité un immense soulagement pour l'armée turque !

**F.A. :** *Certains observateurs voient également dans cette affaire l'expression d'un nouveau bras de fer*



## JFK : "Nos médias n'y comprennent rien"

Le rédacteur en chef de *Marianne*, Jean-François Kahn, épingle la mise en scène médiatique de l'affaire turco-kurde.

Décidément, les médias occidentaux n'y comprennent plus rien ! En cause dans l'incompréhension du dossier turco-kurde : une lecture manichéenne des événements – ici totalement inappropriée. Certes, me direz-vous, il n'est pas franchement nouveau que nos médias aient besoin de « bons » et de « méchants ». Cette fois, pourtant, il se pourrait qu'il y ait définitivement « trop » d'acteurs en scène : les Turcs, les Kurdes, les Irakiens, la Syrie, l'Iran ! C'est l'incompréhension totale. Alors que le Moyen-Orient est déjà si difficile à saisir pour l'Occident, le présent dossier revêt tant de détails qu'il semble irrémédiablement compliqué ! Peut-être, alors, devrait-on commencer par se souvenir que l'Amérique est intervenue militairement afin d'asseoir l'autonomie des Kurdes d'Irak – scellant ainsi une alliance leur permettant d'interfé-

rer sur le pouvoir à Bagdad. Voilà pourquoi elle intervient - cette fois encore - en s'opposant à une intervention turque : afin de rester le maître du jeu en Irak. Une stratégie qui vient précisément de montrer sa limite : pourquoi tout à coup soutenir la Turquie dans son refus d'accorder l'autonomie kurde ? Parce



que les Turcs restent tout de même les alliés préférés des Etats-Unis ! Certes, on ne peut soutenir le PKK ni dans sa démarche ni dans ses

actions. Une fois cela dit, il est toutefois nécessaire de reconnaître qu'il existe un problème kurde, un peuple en droit de réclamer cette indépendance. D'ailleurs, alors que les Etats-Unis voudraient accorder une indépendance – légitime ! - au Kosovo albanais et ce, contre la volonté même de la Serbie (quitte à démanteler ce pays), ou encore au Darfour, on peut se demander pourquoi on ne consentirait pas le même droit aux Kurdes, un peuple démographiquement si important, un peuple de 35 millions d'individus dispersés entre quatre pays. Un peuple qui a su conquérir, au lendemain de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, une éphémère République indépendante.

*D'après les propos de Jean-François Kahn, recueillis par Vilma Kouyoumdjian*

sier que les Etats-Unis ont d'abord fait des concessions : le vote tant annoncé à la Chambre des Représentants n'a-t-il pas été repoussé aux calendes grecques ? Il est vrai que les Américains – qui ont énormément investi au Kurdistan irakien – sont très sensibles aux avantages logistiques que représente l'Est anatolien. Je pense notamment à la base d'Inçirlik, utile tant dans le cadre des opérations aériennes menées en direction de l'Irak que vers l'Af-

ghanistan. Pour autant, n'exagérons rien : tout ceci n'est qu'une question de coût. Les Américains pourraient tout aussi bien opérer depuis les Emirats arabes s'ils y étaient contraints ; le surcoût que cela représenterait serait de 25 à 30%. Ce n'est pas insurmontable !

*F.A. : On a vu l'Iran et la Syrie se rallier à la chasse au PKK. Est-ce l'union sacrée contre la*

*cause kurde ?*

**K.N. :** Votre observation est surtout juste pour la Syrie. L'Iran a en revanche un avis beaucoup plus nuancé et s'est prononcé publiquement pour une résolution de la question par le dialogue. Téhéran a d'ailleurs inauguré le 6 novembre une ambassade au Kurdistan irakien. En réalité, il faut bien se rendre compte que malgré tout ce vacarme, la Turquie est totalement isolée sur la scène internationale. L'ONU, l'OTAN, les Etats-Unis, l'Union européenne, la Russie et même le Pape ont appelé Ankara à la retenue ! Aucun pays arabe ne soutient non plus la perspective d'une intervention turque en Irak – hormis le soutien modeste de la Syrie.

*F.A. : L'efficacité de la stratégie turque a-t-elle des limites ?*

**K.N. :** Bien entendu ! Ankara ne peut jouer la carte du chantage ad vitam æternam sans que cela ne nuise gravement à son crédit. Aujourd'hui, hormis la Grande-Bretagne, plus aucun gouvernement européen n'envisage sérieusement sa candidature à l'intégration de l'Union européenne. Qui plus est, en glorifiant l'armée, en reportant sans cesse la faute sur des boucs émissaires – Arméniens, Kurdes, Chypriotes ou désormais Juifs et Occidentaux, l'Etat alimente l'expression nationaliste, enfonçant le pays dans la paranoïa et l'enfermement psychologique. La Turquie a beau tenter d'exporter sa propagande par le biais des images télévisuelles au reste du monde, elle ne peut davantage tromper les observateurs étrangers sur la situation réelle du pays et de la région.

*Propos recueillis par Varoujan Sarkissian*



*Au nord de l'Irak, sur la frontière turque, un commandant de l'Armée de libération du peuple du Kurdistan, aile militaire du PKK, entouré de ses combattants*

11 novembre 2007

libère.be

## Huit soldats libérés par le PKK écroués par une Cour militaire

**Huit soldats turcs, libérés la semaine dernière après avoir été retenus pendant deux semaines par le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste) dans le nord de l'Irak, ont été arrêtés puis écroués par un tribunal militaire de Van (est), ont rapporté les médias.**

(AFP) Huit soldats turcs, libérés la semaine dernière après avoir été retenus pendant deux semaines par le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste) dans le nord de l'Irak, ont été arrêtés puis écroués par un tribunal militaire de Van (est), ont rapporté les médias.

Les conscrits ont été accusés d'avoir refusé d'obéir aux ordres et d'avoir franchi sans autorisation la frontière irakienne, a indiqué la chaîne d'information CNN-Türk.

Les soldats étaient interrogés par des officiers et des procureurs militaires d'abord à Ankara puis à

Van depuis leur libération, le 4 novembre dernier.

Les 8 soldats avaient été capturés par le PKK lors d'une embuscade le 21 octobre qui avait coûté la vie à 12 autres militaires dans le sud-est anatolien, proche de la frontière irakienne. Les journaux turcs ont spéculé que les soldats, dont plusieurs sont originaires du sud-est, peuplé majoritairement de kurdes, ont refusé de combattre et se sont rendus aux rebelles.

Cette attaque a fait monter la tension dans la région; le gouvernement turc avait fait adopter une texte au parlement l'autorisant à des incursions de l'autre côté de la frontière, en Irak, pour éliminer les bases rebelles du PKK implantées dans le nord.

Trois députés kurdes turcs du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP, pro-kurde) ont assisté à la remise au gouvernement autonome kurde du nord de l'Irak des huit soldats.

Le parquet d'Ankara a lancé une enquête à l'encontre des trois parlementaires pour déterminer si leur implication dans cette libération pouvait constituer un crime au regard de la législation anti-terroriste.

Le DTP est fréquemment accusé par Ankara d'être un instrument du PKK, en rébellion armée depuis 1984 pour obtenir l'indépendance des Kurdes du sud-est de la Turquie dans un conflit qui a déjà tué plus de 37.000 personnes

LE TEMPS

12 nov 2007

## La région kurde, refuge des chrétiens en Irak

ERBIL (Irak), (AFP) - Par milliers, les chrétiens d'Irak ont trouvé dans la partie kurde du pays un havre de paix et de coexistence pacifique, fuyant les autres régions où leurs églises sont prises pour cibles et leurs prêtres kidnappés.

Ceux, nombreux, dont les familles étaient originaires de la région ont reconstruit des maisons dans les villages le plus souvent désertés de longue date, près de la frontière avec la Turquie.

Les autres, venus de Bagdad, Mossoul ou ailleurs, louent à prix d'or des logements dans les quartiers chrétiens, comme celui d'Einkawa dans la banlieue d'Erbil, et attendent que les choses se calment pour rentrer chez eux ou envisagent l'exil à l'étranger.

Dans son bureau de l'archevêché Saint-Joseph à Einkawa, Mgr Rabban al-Qas, évêque d'Erbil et d'Ahmadiya, estime à "plus de 70.000 le nombre de chrétiens venus se réfugier au Kurdistan irakien".

"Plus de deux cents villages, qui avaient été abandonnés ou détruits dans les années 1987/88 lors de l'offensive de Saddam contre les Kurdes, ont été reconstruits. Ceux qui avaient des terrains les ont utilisés. D'autres louent".

Il met les attaques contre les chrétiens sur le compte des "intégristes fanatiques et des 600.000 voyous et criminels libérés par Saddam avant sa chute".

"Trois prêtres ont été tués à Mossoul. Des églises ont été brûlées, dynamitées, mitraillées. Il y a vingt jours, deux prêtres ont été kidnappés

à Mossoul, libérés contre rançon".

Ces exactions ont fait souffler un vent de panique sur les chrétiens d'Irak, s'alarme-t-il, et ceux qui l'ont pu ont cherché refuge au Kurdistan irakien, "cette zone de fraternité où ils ont été bien accueillis".

Lina Behnan, 20 ans, qui cuisine au rez-de-chaussée de la maison louée 400 dollars par mois, est de ceux-là. "Nous venons du quartier de Dora, à Bagdad. Très dangereux. Cela a commencé par des menaces des islamistes sur un de mes frères, barbier, pour qu'il cesse de raser les hommes. Ensuite une voisine a été kidnappée. Et puis ça..."

Elle montre une photo de son autre frère Nasser, 18 ans, le visage grêlé de cicatrices, un bras dans le plâtre. "Une voiture piégée à la sortie de son école. C'était trop. Nous sommes montés en voiture, non-stop jusqu'à Erbil".

Comme les autres réfugiés chrétiens interrogés à Einkawa, Lina se plaint du coût de la vie au Kurdistan, bien supérieur à celui des autres régions. Toute la famille s'est mise au travail pour joindre les deux bouts, mais "on ne pourra pas rester. Dès que les choses se calment à Bagdad, nous rentrerons".

C'est ce qu'ont fait la semaine dernière, pour la première fois et à la faveur d'une baisse des violences dans la capitale, une vingtaine de familles chrétiennes d'Einkawa, indique Mgr al-Qas.

Agnes Yacoub, 38 ans, fait ses courses dans l'épicerie de la famille Habib, tout près du siège d'Ishtar TV, la chaîne de télévision des chrétiens d'Irak. Elle aussi a fui Dora.



La messe dans une église d'Erbil, dans le Kurdistan irakien, le 11 novembre 2007. Photo: Ahmad al Rubaye (AFP)

"On se sent tellement mieux ici, on peut sortir, respirer. Nous étions les derniers chrétiens du quartier, tous les voisins étaient partis", dit-elle. "Mais comme les gens affluent de partout, les prix montent. C'est le prix de la sécurité, mais nous n'allons pas pouvoir le payer longtemps".

Dans la boutique, Fawazya Benjamin, 50 ans, serre contre ses jupes ses deux petites filles, leur offre des bonbons. Elle a fui il y a cinq mois la ville voisine de Mossoul. "Je ne vivais plus. Chaque fois qu'elles partaient à l'école, j'avais peur de ne jamais les revoir".

Pour loger ses douze enfants, ils louent 600 dollars par mois une grande maison. "Les grands ont quitté l'école, tous travaillent pour payer le loyer, mais cela ne pourra pas durer. Dès que les choses se calment à Mossoul, il faudra bien y retourner..."

Le Monde

13 novembre 2007

## Quatre soldats turcs tués dans un accrochage avec le PKK

**DIYARBAKIR, Turquie (Reuters)** - Un officier et trois soldats turcs ont été tués dans un accrochage avec des combattants séparatistes kurdes, à proximité de la frontière irakienne, fait savoir leur état-major.

Des hélicoptères de l'armée turque ont par ailleurs bombardé des villages du nord de l'Irak, rapportent deux chaînes de télévision turques. L'information n'a pu être vérifiée.

Les quatre militaires, dont un lieutenant, ont été tués dans la province de Sîrnak, où l'armée a considérablement renforcé ses positions dans la perspective d'une offensive de grande envergure

contre les bases arrières du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak.

Le dernier affrontement mortel remontait au 7 novembre. Trois membres du PKK et un militaire avaient alors trouvé la mort dans l'attaque d'un poste de gendarmerie.

Selon CNN Türk, qui cite des responsables irakiens, les villages visés mardi par les hélicoptères dans le nord de l'Irak étaient déserts et personne n'a été tué.

Interrogé par Reuters, un responsable des services de sécurité kurde a dit ne pas avoir eu vent d'une telle opération. Un membre du PKK joint par téléphone dans le massif

de Qandil n'a pas non plus été en mesure de confirmer l'attaque, pas plus que le Premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, interrogé sur le sujet au Parlement.

Le chef du gouvernement, qui invoque la légitime défense prévue par le droit internationale, a déclaré la semaine dernière, à l'issue de discussions avec le président américain George Bush, que l'armée turque n'avait pas renoncé à une offensive d'envergure contre les rebelles du PKK retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak.

Le général Yasar Büyükanit, chef d'état-major de l'armée turque, a



quant à lui assuré vendredi que ses hommes n'attendaient que l'ordre du gouvernement pour entamer l'opération. Le parlement a donné son feu vert pour un an le 17 octobre

Le Monde

14 novembre 2007

## Le métier dangereux de milicien kurde en Turquie

par Thomas Grove - Reuters -

**HILAL, Turquie (Reuters)** - Fusil autour du cou, Sadik Babat montre l'endroit où se dressait sa maison avant qu'elle soit rasée par l'armée turque dans les années 1990, pendant les raids contre les villages soupçonnés de soutenir les séparatistes kurdes.

C'est pourtant bien aux côtés des militaires d'Ankara que ce Kurde de Turquie combat aujourd'hui. Il est l'un des 57.000 miliciens villageois disséminés à travers le sud-est du pays, embauché dans le double rôle de guide et de combattant.

Alors qu'une nouvelle législation encourage leur recrutement en plus grand nombre, ces supplétifs, assimilés le plus souvent à des traîtres par leurs semblables, pourraient bien devenir une pièce maîtresse du dispositif de l'armée turque en vue d'une éventuelle incursion dans le nord de l'Irak.

Les militaires d'Ankara ont absolument besoin de leur connaissance du terrain dans leur guérilla contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

"J'ai probablement participé à plus de 500 opérations au cours des 21 dernières années. Dans certains cas, j'étais le dernier debout, et j'ai aussi tiré et tué", déclare Babat en chargeant son fusil d'un geste simple et fluide.

Le PKK a pris les armes contre l'Etat turc en 1984, avec l'objectif de créer un Kurdistan indépendant dans le sud-est du pays. Près de 40.000 personnes ont péri dans le conflit.

Dès l'année suivante, les gardes villageois sont apparus dans le cadre de la mise en place controversée d'une force paramilitaire pour protéger les communes, patrouiller dans les montagnes et combattre les séparatistes.

Mais leur droit de porter des armes, de dénoncer les activités suspectes et de tuer au nom de l'Etat les a transformés en une véritable force autonome dans la région, accusée par ses détracteurs de profiter de son statut pour régler des querelles familiales ou confisquer des terres.

"C'est une force armée aux règles très mal définies. Ils peuvent s'en sortir même en cas de meurtre ou de vol", relève Emma Sinclair-Webb, chercheuse pour Human Rights Watch.

Depuis l'instauration de cette force, 4.972 gardes ont été reconnus coupables de crimes mais seuls 853 ont été emprisonnés, selon les archives parlementaires.

La présence de ces gardes a été récemment épinglée par la Commission européenne, dans son dernier rapport d'évaluation sur la Turquie, qui souligne qu'elle freine les efforts de relogement des villageois déplacés.

**DOUBLE JEU**

Cinsi, c'est le nom qu'il donne, marche à côté de son âne sur une route frontalière. Il sait qu'il n'est pas le bienvenu dans les villages. "S'ils me prenaient mon arme, la première chose qui m'arriverait serait de me retrouver pendu sur la place du village", dit-il.



Un milicien kurde patrouillant dans la province de Sîrnak, au sud est de la Turquie

Officiellement, rejoindre les rangs de cette milice est une décision volontaire, mais certains habitants disent y avoir été contraints par la force.

Sadik Babat admet le paradoxe de combattre pour une armée qui a détruit sa maison. S'il est devenu milicien, c'est par pur pragmatisme.

"Quand notre village a été détruit, certains ont rejoint le PKK, d'autres ont fui dans le nord de l'Irak. Quand on restait, on avait pas d'autre choix que de devenir garde villageois", explique-t-il en jetant un regard sur la rivière qui traversait autrefois son village d'Hilal.

L'enrôlement est facilité aussi par la perspective d'un salaire mensuel de 500 livres (290 euros) dans cette région pauvre, la plus pauvre

du pays.

La loyauté n'est pas toujours de mise et distinguer l'ami de l'ennemi est un jeu difficile et dangereux.

Babat, comme les autres gardes, porte en permanence son fusil à l'épaule, où qu'il aille, chez l'épicier ou sur les routes de montagne, pour se défendre à la fois contre les combattants du PKK et les services de renseignement qui le prendraient pour un agent double.

En octobre, six gardes travaillant dans sa région ont été arrêtés pour avoir renseigné le PKK sur des opérations de l'armée, selon des sources proches des services de sécurité.

"Il y a toujours eu des informateurs, ça n'a rien de nouveau. Je connais des gens qui ont travaillé pendant des années pour les deux

camps", souligne Sadik Babat. Alors que l'armée turque dit n'attendre que les ordres pour lancer une opération en Irak, les gardes

villageois soulignent ne pas souhaiter une présence militaire encore renforcée dans la région. Mais Babat assure qu'il combattrait s'il le

faut. "Je n'ai pas peur. Si je rencontre un terroriste sur la route, je tire et

je m'assure que je suis le dernier debout."

**Le Monde** 13 novembre 2007

## Bombardements turcs sur des villages du Kurdistan irakien

L'aviation turque a bombardé dans la nuit de lundi à mardi trois villages du Kurdistan irakien, dans le nord de l'Irak, considérés comme des zones d'activité des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), a indiqué un responsable local.

"Dans la nuit, des avions turcs ont bombardé trois villages dans les régions de Batoufa et Darkar", a déclaré à l'AFP un responsable de la sécurité à Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan irakien, qui a requis l'anonymat.

"Selon nos informations, ces raids n'ont pas fait de victimes civiles", a-t-il affirmé.

Ces villages sont situés près de la ville de Zakho, dans le nord-est du Kurdistan irakien, le long de la frontière avec le sud-est de la Turquie.

"Ils sont connus comme des zones d'activité du PKK. Nous ignorons si le PKK a subi des pertes", a précisé

le même responsable.

"Ce matin vers 10h00 (7h00 GMT), au nord de Zakho, il y a eu des bombardements turcs sur un point de contrôle frontalier, inutilisé depuis des années", a-t-il ajouté.

Peu auparavant, les chaînes d'information NTV et CNN-Türk, à Ankara, avaient fait état du bombardement tôt mardi matin par des avions de combat turcs d'une position située côté irakien à quelques kilomètres de la frontière.

Les chasseurs turcs avaient pour cible un poste abandonné situé dans la zone de Vansora, non-loin de Zakho. Ce poste date de l'époque du président déchu Saddam Hussein, selon CNN-Türk, qui a affirmé que le poste a été détruit.

Ces informations n'ont pas été confirmées de source officielle ou par l'armée turque.

Après plusieurs attaques meurtrières ces dernières semaines, Ankara

a agité la menace d'une intervention armée contre les séparatistes du PKK qui se servent de l'Irak du nord comme base arrière pour attaquer la Turquie.

Le Parlement turc a donné un feu vert le mois dernier au gouvernement pour mener des incursions en Irak pour "nettoyer" les camps des quelque 3.500 rebelles kurdes établis dans le nord du pays.

La Turquie qui dispose de la deuxième plus grande armée de l'Otan après les Etats-Unis a massé 100.000 hommes à la frontière.

Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait rencontré la semaine dernière à Washington le président américain George W. Bush, qui avait assuré que les Etats-Unis fourniraient à la Turquie des renseignements en temps réel sur les mouvements des rebelles et proclamé le PKK "ennemi commun".

Ce soutien affiché par M. Bush



avait été interprété par des analystes comme une approbation tacite des Etats-Unis à des frappes restreintes contre le PKK.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'UE, a engagé une lutte armée depuis 1984 pour obtenir l'autonomie de l'est et du sud-est de la Turquie dont la population est en majorité kurde. Les affrontements entre les rebelles kurdes et l'armée turque ont fait plus de 37.000 morts. (AFP)

## Au Kurdistan, le pouvoir de Bagdad est un lointain souvenir

AFP

**ERBIL (Irak), 14 nov 2007 (AFP) -** - Au Kurdistan irakien, la ligne officielle est claire: pas question de déclarer l'indépendance de la région, largement autonome. Mais dans les faits, le fossé avec Bagdad se creuse chaque jour davantage.

Les billets de banque, quand ils ne sont pas remplacés par le dollar, sont le dernier refuge du drapeau irakien.

Partout ailleurs, dans cette région de quatre millions d'habitants épargnée par les violences qui déchirent le reste du pays, c'est le drapeau tricolore kurde (vert, blanc et rouge) qui flotte. Pas un panneau de circulation, pas une enseigne en arabe.

"C'est simple: pour mes étudiants, l'Irak n'existe pas", assure Karim Kamar, professeur de français à l'Université de Salahudine, à Erbil (350 km au nord de Bagdad). "Pour appartenir à un pays, il faut parler sa langue, explique-t-il. Or l'arabe n'est plus enseigné. Ou alors comme langue étrangère, un peu moins que l'anglais".

"Pour eux, l'Irak, ce sont de lointains et mauvais souvenirs, ajoute l'enseignant. Et pour l'homme de la rue, c'est un voisin avec lequel il faut s'entendre, parce qu'il peut devenir méchant. C'est tout. Leur pays, c'est ici."

Dotée, aux termes de la nouvelle Constitution irakienne, d'une très large autonomie, la région kurde d'Irak a un président, un gouvernement et son "Conseil des ministres", des forces armées intégralement kurdes, des relations internationales dont une, privilégiée, avec le puissant parrain américain.

Elle signe, malgré l'opposition de Bagdad, des contrats d'exploration pétrolière avec des compagnies étrangères.

Pour Buhari Hidir, professeur de Sciences politiques à l'université d'Erbil et député au Parlement irakien, "nous ne dépendons de Bagdad que formellement".

"Nous ne sommes pas un Etat dans les textes, mais nous le sommes de facto,

estime-t-il. Nous n'avons pas besoin d'une indépendance formelle. Nous l'avons dans la rue, dans la vie. Cela suffit".

"Ce serait même une erreur d'aller vers une vraie indépendance, poursuit le député. Cela nous aliénerait inutilement nos puissants voisins, qui y verraient une incitation à l'égard de leurs propres populations kurdes".

Occupés à préserver et développer une économie qui tourne à plein régime, et pour rassurer les pays riverains et l'Etat central, les officiels multiplient les déclarations apaisantes.

"Nous voulons en rien faire sécession", assure ainsi Falah Bakir, directeur du "Département des relations extérieures" de la région. "Nous voulons rester dans les frontières irakiennes, à condition que l'Irak soit un Etat fédéral, démocratique et pluraliste", dit-il.

Et Fouad Hussein, directeur de cabinet du président de la région, Massoud Barzani, affirme: "nous respectons absolument la Constitution. L'Irak est un Etat fédéral, la répartition des pouvoirs entre Etat central et région est claire. Nous n'exigeons rien de plus. Ce système nous convient parfaitement".

Mais, au-delà des déclarations politiques, le fait concret de ne plus avoir à s'adresser, en kurde, et pour toutes les démarches, qu'à des officiels kurdes fait que l'Etat irakien disparaît progressivement de la vie des habitants de la province.

Pour lancer Ishtar TV, qui émet depuis Erbil à destination des chrétiens d'Irak, "nous avons demandé la licence au gouvernement régional, sourit son directeur, Farid Aqrabi. En principe, il faut la demander à Bagdad... Mais personne ne le fait. Cela ne sert à rien".

L'évêque d'Erbil, Mgr Rabban al-Qas, va plus loin: "Jour après jour, la distance grandit. Nous sommes toujours en Irak, mais la loi nous permet de rêver, un jour, d'un pays qui rassemblerait tous les Kurdes. Comme des frères séparés: vous ne les empêcherez jamais de rêver de vivre un jour sous le même toit".



14 novembre 2007

## Talabani : La crise entre l'Irak et la Turquie en voie d'être réglée

Le président irakien Jalal Talabani a estimé que la crise avec la Turquie sur la question des rebelles kurdes est en passe d'être "réglée" et a écarté l'éventualité d'une "invasion" turque du Kurdistan irakien, dans un entretien paru dans la presse égyptienne mercredi. "Je crois qu'il n'y a pas de danger d'une invasion turque du Kurdistan", région du nord de l'Irak où sont retranchés des centaines de combattants kurdes, a affirmé M. Talabani au quotidien gouvernemental Al Ahram.

Selon lui, la rencontre entre le président américain George W. Bush et le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan le 6 novembre à Washington a "réduit la tension". La Turquie menace d'intervenir militairement au Kurdistan irakien contre les camps du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui utilise cette région comme base arrière pour des opérations dans le sud-est anatolien, peuplée majoritairement de Kurdes. Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a engagé une lutte armée depuis 1984 pour obtenir l'autonomie de l'est et du sud-est de la Turquie dont la population est en majorité kurde. Les affronte-

ments entre les rebelles kurdes et l'armée turque ont fait plus de 37.000 morts.

La crise "turco-kurde" est sur "le point d'être réglée", poursuit M. Talabani, un Kurde, ajoutant que la délégation irakienne à la conférence ministérielle d'Istanbul, début novembre, a "convaincu" les responsables turcs que "le gouvernement irakien fait preuve d'animosité envers le PKK qui se trouve de manière illégitime dans le nord de l'Irak". Le président irakien salue également la politique iranienne envers l'Irak, notamment la position de Téhéran concernant la crise des rebelles kurdes. "La position de l'Iran était bonne car ils ont appelé à un règlement politique" de la situation, affirme-t-il. "Il n'est pas vrai que l'Iran ait une quelconque influence en Irak. Par le passé, l'Iran appuyait l'armée de Mehdi (milice du leader radical chiite Moqtada Sadr, ndlr) et certaines milices (chiites) mais à présent l'Iran s'abstient de le faire et nous aide ainsi beaucoup", poursuit-il.

M. Talabani rappelle cependant que Bagdad a rejeté à Istanbul un plan proposé par Téhéran visant à rétablir la sécurité en Irak. Enfin, le président irakien, arrivé



samedi au Caire, affirme avoir "obtenu la promesse d'un retour d'un ambassadeur égyptien en Irak avant la fin de l'année". Selon le quotidien gouvernemental Rose al-Youssef, Le Caire a "réclamé que le ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères, Hoshyar Zebari, visite l'Egypte pour discuter de la question". L'ambassadeur d'Egypte en Irak, Ihab al-Chérif, avait été enlevé le 2 juillet 2005 à Bagdad. Quatre jours plus tard, Al-Qaïda avait revendiqué son assassinat. Depuis cette date, l'Egypte a réduit au minimum le personnel de son ambassade à Bagdad.



## Le difficile départ des arabes de Kirkouk

**KIRKOUK (Irak), 17 nov 2007 (AFP) -**

Sur le mur de béton qui protège des attentats la mairie de Kirkouk, des listes de noms. Hussein Jari y cherche le sien, et ne le trouve pas. Il devra encore attendre pour toucher 16.000 dollars et, comme des milliers d'Arabes candidats au départ, quitter la ville.

Ils sont 36.000, sur les dizaines de milliers d'Irakiens arabes transférés dans cette province à majorité kurde par le régime de Saddam Hussein désireux à l'époque "d'arabiser" la région, à avoir déposé un dossier pour obtenir du gouvernement de quoi se réinstaller dans leur région d'origine.

"Nous voulons bien rentrer chez nous, près de Bassorah (sud), assure Hussein Jari, maçon chiite de 36 ans, au chômage. J'habite la maison de Kurdes qui ont été chassés par Saddam. Je veux bien la leur rendre, mais sans argent, comment faire ?"

Depuis la chute en 2003 du régime du dictateur irakien, le retour chez eux des milliers de Kurdes déplacés à l'intérieur du pays dans les années 1980 est une priorité pour les autorités locales.

Mais, comme ce retour modifie la démographie d'une région riche en pétrole et disputée, dans laquelle doit se tenir un référendum d'auto-détermination, les réticences sont nombreuses et le processus peine à se mettre en place.

Dans le bureau où il préside le comité chargé d'examiner les demandes d'indemnités arabes et de réintégrations kurdes, Babakir Sidiq Ahmed, membre kurde du Conseil provincial, reconnaît que "le mécanisme de retour est grippé".

"Sur les 36.000 demandes que nous avons reçues, moins de 1.000 ont été réglées. Cela prend du temps, il faut des décisions de justice, c'est compliqué. Et il y a beaucoup de gens qui ne veulent pas quitter les maisons qu'ils occupent ou voir les Kurdes revenir", dit-il.

Les expulsions par la police de familles arabes, théoriquement possibles, pourraient envenimer encore davantage la situation dans une région où la violence intercommunautaire persiste.

Au moins deux attaques y sont perpétrées chaque jour, essentiellement par les insurgés arabes, contre la police ou l'armée irakiennes.

"Nous parvenons à récupérer pour les Kurdes les terres agricoles, mais c'est à peu près tout", ajoute Babakir Sidiq Ahmed.

Le maire de la ville, Abdulrahmane Zangara, lui aussi kurde, reconnaît, en le regrettant, que "si les familles arabes veulent rester là où elles sont, elles le peuvent. Il faut une décision de justice, l'examen par un comité. C'est très long".

En fait, explique Hussein, un journaliste local qui demande à ne pas être identifié à cause du danger que cela pourrait lui faire courir, "de nombreuses familles arabes ne veulent pas entendre parler de départ. Ou alors, elles espèrent de grosses indemnités que personne n'est prêt à payer. D'autant que leurs régions d'origine sont souvent plus dangereuses qu'ici".

Revenus en nombre dans la province ces dernières années, les Kurdes s'entassent à Kirkouk dans des bâtiments officiels à l'abandon ou des anciennes casernes de l'armée de Saddam Hussein. Ils sont près de 2.000 à avoir construit des abris de fortune dans l'un des stades de la ville.

Dans le désert aux abords de la ville, sur des terrains communaux, ils édifient avec des planches et de mauvais parpaings des maisons brinquebalantes.

"Ils attendent de pouvoir rentrer chez eux, ou de l'argent pour construire. Mais rien ne vient. Et certains passent tous les jours devant leurs anciennes maisons, occupées par les Arabes. Ce n'est pas bon", ajoute Hussein. "Le but des gens d'Al-Qaïda ici est de créer des troubles, de monter les communautés les uns contre les autres. Avec une situation pareille, c'est facile".

**LE TEMPS**

**16 novembre 2007**

## Turquie: le principal parti pro-kurde menacé d'interdiction

**ANKARA (AFP)** - La justice turque a lancé vendredi une procédure qui pourrait se solder par l'interdiction du principal parti pro-kurde de Turquie pour activités subversives alors que le pays se prépare à intervenir militairement contre les repaires des rebelles kurdes en Irak.

La demande a été déposée auprès de la Cour constitutionnelle à l'encontre du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), fondée en 2005 sur les cendres d'un autre parti pro-kurde dissous par la justice pour ses liens avec le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit).

"Le parti en question est devenu le foyer d'activités préjudiciables à l'indépendance de l'Etat et à son unité indivisible", en l'occurrence en faveur du PKK, a affirmé dans un communiqué le procureur de la Cour de cassation, Abdurrahman Yalçinkaya.

Ces activités sont "péripétrées intensément par les membres du parti", selon le procureur qui réclame aussi que les dirigeants de la formation soient interdits de politique pendant cinq ans.

La Cour constitutionnelle est habilitée à interdire les partis.

La mesure intervient alors qu'Ankara menace de lancer une opération militaire contre les repaires en Irak du PKK qui utilise le nord de ce pays comme base-arrière pour lancer des attaques en Turquie.

Le DTP a dénoncé une atteinte à la démocratie. "C'est n'est pas vraiment une surprise", a commenté à l'AFP Sirri Sakik, député et figure influente du DTP.

"Il s'agit d'un retour en arrière dans le processus démocratique ainsi que dans celui d'intégration à l'Union européenne", a-t-il affirmé.

La Turquie a entamé en 2005 de difficiles négociations d'adhésion à l'UE après avoir mené un vaste chantier de réformes démocratiques, notamment en faveur de sa communauté kurde.

Le DTP succède à une lignée de partis pro-kurdes dissous, dont le plus connu à l'étranger est le parti démocratique (DEP). Quatre députés de ce parti ont purgé de 1994 à 2004 une peine de dix ans de prison pour liens avec le PKK. L'un d'eux est Mme Leyla Zana, qui a reçu en 1995 le prix Sakharov des droits de l'Homme.

Lors d'élections législatives, les partis pro-kurdes n'ont jamais réussi à franchir la barre des 10% de voix nécessaires au plan national pour entrer au Parlement.

Au dernier scrutin en juillet dernier, le DTP a choisi de contourner cet obstacle en envoyant à l'Assemblée 20 candidats indépendants qui se sont ensuite regroupés sous la bannière de leur formation.

Les députés du DTP sont accusés par le gouvernement, l'opposition, l'armée et la majorité de la presse

d'être la vitrine politique légale du PKK, qui mène depuis 1984 une lutte armée sanglante contre le pouvoir central turc au prix de plus de 37.000 morts.

Une députée du DTP, Sabahat Tuncel, est actuellement jugée --malgré son immunité-- pour soutien présumé au PKK tandis que le mari d'une autre députée, Fatma Kurtulan, lutte contre l'armée turque dans les rangs du PKK, fait sans précédent dans les annales du Parlement turc.

Les députés nationalistes ont récemment demandé que l'immunité de leur collègues du DTP soit levée mais le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan s'y est opposé.

Le bureau de M. Yalçinkaya travaillait depuis l'an dernier à recueillir des preuves à l'encontre du DTP, qui vient d'être à sa direction des personnalités considérées comme des "faucons" du militantisme kurde, lors d'un congrès à Ankara.

Son nouveau chef, Nurettin Demirtas, a été emprisonné pendant plus de dix ans pour appartenance au PKK.

La procédure d'interdiction devrait durer plusieurs mois.

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## 77,1% des Turcs contre la présence au Parlement du parti pro-kurde DTP

**AFP**

**ANKARA, 16 nov 2007 (AFP)**

Un sondage publié vendredi révèle que 77,1% des Turcs sont défavorables à la présence au Parlement d'élus du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), une formation pro-kurde contre laquelle la justice vient de lancer une procédure d'interdiction.

Ce taux culmine à 80,4% auprès des personnes sondées se définissant comme ethniquement turques, mais n'atteint que 48,1% chez les Kurdes, indique l'enquête, effectuée du 17 au 20 octobre par la société Pollmark auprès de quelque 3.000 personnes dans toute la Turquie.

Le procureur de la Cour de cassation, Abdurrahman Yalçinkaya, a affirmé vendredi avoir déposé un recours devant la Cour constitutionnelle contre le DTP pour liens présumés avec le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK,

interdit).

Les députés du DTP sont accusés par les autorités d'être la vitrine politique légale du PKK, qui mène depuis 1984 une lutte armée sanglante contre le pouvoir central turc.

Le sondage indique par ailleurs que 81,2% des personnes interrogées sont favorables au lancement d'une intervention militaire contre les camps établis par le PKK dans le nord de l'Irak, dont il se sert comme base arrière pour ses opérations dans le sud-est de la Turquie.

Seuls 13% des sondés se disent défavorables à une telle opération, autorisée en octobre par le Parlement et dont la probabilité a été renforcée par la mort le 21 octobre de 12 soldats turcs dans une opération du PKK près de la frontière irakienne, qui a suscité l'indignation de l'opinion publique turque.

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## Kurdistan irakien: Talabani juge "presque certaines" des frappes turques

**AFP**

**KOWEIT, 16 nov 2007 (AFP)**

Le président irakien, Jalal Talabani, a jugé vendredi que des frappes turques contre les bases du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak étaient "presque certaines", rapporte l'agence koweïtienne Kuna.

Si elles ont bien lieu, ces frappes seront "limitées" et n'affecteront pas les relations entre l'Irak et la Turquie ou entre la Turquie et les Kurdes, a estimé le président irakien, dans un interview au cours d'une visite à Koweït.

Jeudi, le chef des forces terrestres turques, le général Ilker Basburg, a déclaré que les préparatifs étaient en cours pour réaliser des frappes sur les bases au Kurdistan irakien du PKK, qui lutte pour l'indépendance des régions kurdes de Turquie.

"Le Parlement a autorisé le gouvernement (à réaliser des opérations en territoire irakien). Nous sommes dans le processus de mise en oeuvre du mandat

permettant des opérations transfrontalières", a-t-il ajouté.

L'armée turque a massé 100.000 militaires et de l'équipement à sa frontière avec l'Irak, après que le Parlement eut autorisé le mois dernier le gouvernement à lancer des incursions armées en territoire irakien.

"Nous avons demandé au PKK de déposer les armes ou de quitter le territoire irakien", a déclaré M. Talabani, un Kurde.

Il a indiqué que lors de la conférence sur la sécurité en Irak, qui a réuni début novembre à Istanbul les voisins de l'Irak et plusieurs pays de la région, la Turquie avait indiqué que toute intervention militaire serait limitée aux zones où se trouvent les bases du PKK, et non aux régions habitées contrôlées par le gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan.

## The Kurdish issue gains ground

By Mohammad Akif Jamal, Special to Gulf News November 09, 2007

The Palestinian question enjoys international interest as one of the hottest issues in the Middle East for the past six decades. Several wars also took place as a result and the cold war continues until this very day.

The Kurdish question has also played a distinctive role in destabilising the region, especially Iraq. Nevertheless, it has not received the attention it deserves from the media.

This Kurdish cause will also lead to new internal wars in the Middle East, which may spread to other locations as well.

The Kurds succeeded in internationalising their cause in the past. They also succeeded in enlisting their cause in conferences held after the First World War by the victorious powers of the day.

The Kurds were given several promises to realise their national aspirations, making use of the US president Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points before Congress, which mentioned the right of autonomous development for other nationalities within the former Ottoman Empire.

The victors soon refused to acknowledge their promises. In the Lausanne conference in 1923, the superpowers set their promises aside. They stood by modern Turkey which was a nationalist state established by Mustafa Kamal Atatürk, and a close friend of the West.

The land inhabited by the Kurds was divided among four countries: three of which were governed by nationalist countries, such as Turkey, Syria and Iraq (till recently). This meant exposing the Kurds to a lot of pressure to be a part of the people of the new country they happened to be a part of.

In the last seven decades, the Kurdish armed resistance in Iraqi Kurdistan opposed the central government in Baghdad. The first armed protest took place in the mid 1930s and the last was in 1991 after the second Gulf War.

Since the downfall of the former Iraqi regime in April 2003, the Kurds played an important role in shaping the new Iraqi image. The Kurdish leadership has been keen not to refer to a state of their own. They were always careful never to touch upon this very delicate issue. On the other hand, the very same Kurdish leadership has worked over the years to make the Kurdish region as independent as possible from Iraq, through numerous procedures limiting the authority of the central government and eliminating its existence.

This has led to many questions and worries, locally and regionally. Locally, there are several question marks concerning the right of the Iraqi central government in the oil wealth which exists in the Kurdish area. The ministry of defence on the other hand feels totally useless in defending the Iraqi Kurdish locations which might come under threat.

On the regional level, Turkey, Iran and Syria look with discontent to the distinguished Kurdish position in Iraq, and the true intentions of the US regarding this matter.

The limited military operations carried out by the Kurdish Labour Party did require this tough retaliation from Ankara. The heavy artillery and weapons moved to the borders by the Turks were not suitable for mountainous terrain, such as those used as hideout for members of the PKK. These weapons are suitable for invading cities.

Essence of the problem

The essence of the problem between Iraq and Turkey today is that Iraq is a weak state, the government is unable to enforce its laws or sovereignty over its territories, nor is it able to stop Kurdish rebels from trespassing Turkish borders from Iraq.

The Iraqi government is also unable to apply pressure on Turkey to stop blowing up the situation out of proportions.

Thus, Iraq is asking other countries to interfere on its behalf, risking future interferences in its own internal affairs.

Turkey does not recognise Iraq's Kurdistan as a region and does not accept to conduct talks with its representatives. It also accuses the Iraqi Kurds of backing Kurdish rebels.

Although the Kurdish Labour Party is considered a terrorist group by the US, Turkey and the Iraqi government, the government in Iraq's Kurdistan has a totally different view regarding this issue.

Masoud Barazani, the president of the Iraqi Kurdistan region said lately that the PKK has not refused a peaceful solution to the crisis, presented by the Turks. Barazani also said in a joint press conference with British Prime Minister Brown: "When the PKK refuses a peaceful initiative from the Turks, then we shall call them terrorists."

This crisis is not over yet, and its repercussions are not to the interest of Iraq. The Istanbul conference which was held to support Iraq turned to be a platform to back Turkey.

This crisis has also witnessed the first fallout between the coalition of four (the two Kurdish parties, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and Al Dawa party) as evident to their different stands.

The crisis has also embarrassed the US, which volunteered giving the Turks information about the Kurdish rebels.

The US cannot antagonise Turkey due to its strategic importance in the area.

The Iraqi Kurds have agreements with the US as early as 1991, to achieve their national aspirations. But after all this time and sacrifices by the Kurds, will they continue trusting the US intentions after the way they have handled the crisis?

November 10, 2007

## DTP faces probe for demanding 'autonomy'

ANKARA – Turkish Daily News

A judicial investigation was launched Friday against the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) which demanded "democratic autonomy" and more rights for Kurdish citizens during its general convention.

The prosecutor's office in Ankara said it will examine the statements made during the convention of the DTP on Thursday to determine whether they violate the law against separatism.

The DTP adopted its new political goals at the convention and proposed a comprehensive change in the administrative structure of Turkey. According to the DTP, Turkey should be ruled with twenty or twenty-five regional parliaments, in which each would be represented with its own colors and symbols.

Earlier Justice Minister Mehmet Ali Şahin warned the DTP to cut its links with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a terrorist organization fighting for independence since early 1980s. Many DTP members have connections with the terrorist organization. Demirtaş, the party's new chief, was convicted of membership in the PKK and served ten years in prison.

The party members often voice their desire to mediate between Turkey and the terrorist organization to end the armed conflict. "A mediatory role could be played when concerned parties approach it positively," the party said in its policy paper. The DTP will also launch a diplomatic campaign to end the clashes. "Relations will be strengthened with the United States, European Union, interna-

tional nongovernmental organizations and Kurdish Regional Government (in Iraq) who could play an important role in ending the conflict," it said.

### Kurtulan's statement

Meanwhile, DTP's Van Deputy Fatma Kurtulan issued a written statement Friday and explained her marital status with Salman Kurtulan, a PKK member.

"I have been officially married for 13 years but we are living separately," she said noting that each individual has the right of making his or her own choices. "As a woman, I am responsible of myself and want to be remembered for what I do," Kurtulan stated.



## Turks' Effective Weapon (Genocide) Will be Upon Iraqi Kurds

American Chronicle - Rauf Naqishbendi November 9, 2007

Turkey's application to join the European Union has met with a lukewarm response. The relationship between Washington and Ankara has been going downhill since the commencement of the Iraq War. The United States Senate has passed two resolutions affecting this issue: one acknowledging the Turks' genocide against Armenians, and the other, passed by an overwhelming majority with a vote of 75-23, calls for the partitioning of Iraq into three autonomous regions. The aggregate effect of all these events has been the spiteful reaction of Turkish leaders as they attempt to vindicate themselves by making Kurds their scapegoat. According to them, Kurds are to blame for everything, because if it weren't for the Kurds none of this evil would have befallen them. In this manner, they energized their mighty army to wreak their Turkish wrath (genocide) upon Iraqi Kurds.

Let us examine the Turkish animosity toward Kurds. First and foremost, the Kurds have not been in a position of power since the inception of Islam, more than a thousand years ago. During this time Kurds have been at the mercy of their occupiers, of which Turks happen to be one. This implies that Kurds did not tear apart Turkish communities, they did not forcefully foist themselves on Turkish lands against their will, and they did not deprive Turks of their human and national rights. On the contrary, Turks imposed their draconian occupation on Kurdistan, they demonized, disenfranchised and marginalized Kurds and treated them as less than slaves. Kurds then sought decent and humane treatment from the Turks. Asking for humane treatment seems reasonable to civilized people, but not to Turks.

Turkey has embroiled itself in a doleful war against the Kurdish Workers Party (the PKK) for the past two decades, and there is no end in sight. While the PKK is fighting to enfranchise Kurds and free them from the fetters and shackles of human abuse, Turkey has embarked on a campaign to mute the Kurdish pleas for justice and equality and extirpate the PKK. The bloodshed took more than 30,000 lives, the majority of which were innocent Kurdish civilians. Turks wiped out more than 2,000 Kurdish villages and towns, forcing millions of Kurds to leave their homes and relocate in other parts of the country. During this time, Turkey has spent tens of billions of dollars which it didn't have and had to borrow and finance at the cost of more destruction and human tragedy. The country was now polarized with Turks against Kurds. Given this background, it is amazing that Turkish authorities still have not pursued diplomacy, and instead continue to wield their iron fist and angry violence as the only remedy. The Turkish repulsion of dialogue with the PKK is a conspicuous reaffirmation of the Turkish government's desire to continue the status quo suppression of the Kurds.

To clear the way for their atrocities against Kurds, Turkey is determined to block any inroads Kurds would make toward their freedom and statehood anywhere in the region. Since the Iraqi liberation, thanks to America, the Kurds in Iraq have been breathing freely, cherishing their opportunities and making their region shine as the bright spot of the American Iraqi liberation. Turkish authorities have been adamant about their hatred for Kurds and they have taken advantage of every chance they got to

derail their achievements. The Turkish mindset is that anything good for Kurds is bad for Turks, while Kurds perceive it entirely differently.

In the Middle East, where vendettas are commonplace, and the revengeful "eye for an eye" mentality reigns, Kurds are practicing harmony and friendship even with their foes. Since the Iraqi liberation Kurds, as a gesture of good will, have granted many contracts to Turkish companies and entrepreneurs, and have engaged in every proper neighborly action to attempt to establish a good relationship with Turkey. It is telling to see how Kurds responded to Turkish intolerance with good deeds and forgiveness. This is a clear indication that a sovereign Kurdish state in north Iraq would by no means be harmful to Turkey, but on the contrary would be beneficial to Turkey given the Kurds' peaceful sentiments. Turks should not scorn the idea of a sovereign Kurdish state; it is inevitable and they better get used to it.

So often people get caught up in nostalgia for their past in such a way that it taints their vision and judgment in the present. Turks must realize that the way of arbitration of the Ottoman Empire is a century old, and in the modern world the prevailing remedy for contention and clashes between nations is sound diplomacy not violence and bloodshed. Should Turkey continue in a path of hatred and violence, it will have much to lose, whereas genuine diplomacy would return an immense dividend of peace and prosperity. Resources they have devoted to destruction and bloodshed could be diverted toward reconstruction and social welfare. The division of Turkey into classes, where Turks are superior and everyone else inferior hinders

social and economic advancement. Justice for all will invigorate the society to work for the good of the nation as a whole, and consequently enhance Turkey's economic and political stand in the world. The enemy of Turkey isn't Kurds but rather the members of the chauvinistic Turkish right wing who have never accepted the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and still aim at world domination.

Since the 1980s, the Turkish military has violently intruded into Iraqi Kurdistan several times and left thousands of their soldiers and heavy war machinery in Kurdistan to fight the PKK, yet the PKK have not by any stretch of imagination given up their struggle or ceased to exist. Since this is what happened in the past, Turks must realize that another bloody tour into Kurdistan will fail as miserably as their previous tours. Thus, they now insist that American troops fight their battle for them, as if America is a Turkish colony. Thankfully, Washington has refused their demands. If the Turkish government were to hearken to the voice of reason, it would have peacefully resolved this problem long ago. That being said, time is neutral and it is never too late to do what is right.

Turks have suffered the consequences of their own present and past crimes. Due to their lack of courage to face reality, they found in Iraqi Kurds a scapegoat to take the edge off their misery. Iraqi Kurds must beware for Turks have at their disposal a lethal and fatal weapon. They used it effectively against Kurds in their own country as well as Armenians, Assyrians and others of the Christian faith - this weapon is called GENOCIDE.

THE TIMES November 10, 2007

## For her the war is over: the PKK fighter who wants to end killing

Deborah Haynes in Irbil, northern Iraq

With her Kalashnikov folded in half to stop it dragging on the ground and ammunition strapped around her tiny waist, Zerya was 12 when she became a Kurdish fighter in the Turkish mountains after running away from home.

Sixteen years later her body bears the scars of countless battles with Turkish soldiers and her eyes are haunted by the memories of friends she has lost. No longer a guerrilla for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), she is trying to fit

back into society, using a mobile phone for the first time and discovering treats such as ice cream and pizza that she never had in the mountains.

Zerya's experience of fighting against Turkey to secure greater rights for the Kurds, she says, has taught her that the problem can be solved only by agreement between both sides. "If the guerrillas decided to come down from the mountains and disarm, then Turkey would kill

all of them," she said, speaking to The Times at a secret location in the Kurdish north of Iraq.

"When it comes to Turkey you either submit or you fight - there are only two options," said the 28-year-old, who has shed the dark green fatigues of the outlawed rebel group for a smart trouser suit and heeled shoes.

The PKK offered a new way for both sides to step away from confrontation yesterday. The group said that it was open to dialogue with



Turkey that could lead to it laying down its arms, thus avoiding a war across the border of two of America's strategic allies in the region.

Zerya's life as a teenage rebel fighter began when she first heard about the PKK as a ten-year-old growing up in Hamburg, where her Kurdish family were asylum-seekers from the mountains of southern Turkey.

A talented musician and dancer, she became attracted to the organisation because it ran clubs that taught Kurdish songs and history. "Every song or poem taught us something about the Kurdish cause," she said in a hushed voice to avoid drawing attention to herself. The PKK is now classed as a terrorist organisation by much of the international community.

Captivated by the plight of the Kurds in Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq, Zerya yearned to help: "It was like an illness for me. I just wanted to go to Kurdistan and fight in the mountains."

After a year of pestering PKK leaders in Hamburg she was given permission to travel on a fake Turkish passport to Syria, where she was meant to stay until she turned 16 and was deemed old enough to learn how to fight. She left Germany aged 12, without telling her parents. But instead of waiting in Syria she secretly followed a group of PKK trainees to Lebanon, literally tracing their footprints until she arrived at the Bekaa Valley.

There, she was allowed to join a six-month political and military training course with 300

recruits. "I remember walking along a path with a Kalashnikov over my shoulder but it was too long for me and would hit the ground," Zerya said, recalling the day her training finished and she was sent to the mountains to fight. "That first day I felt I was free and in my home for the first time in my life."

Instead of studying, gossiping about boys and listening to pop music, Zerya spent her teenage years fighting Turkish soldiers, living off scraps of food and sleeping wherever she found shelter. "We lived in caves or just used plastic sheets for cover. Sometimes if the weather was kind then we would live under the stars like birds."

By the time she was 14, Zerya was commanding small groups of rebels on operations. Equality is a principle cherished by the PKK, which divides responsibility evenly between men and women fighters.

She recalled one occasion when her unit became encircled by Turkish soldiers. "I spotted a weak point in the Turkish line and started to lead my colleagues out but one young man panicked. I had to slap him to calm him down." On another occasion, aged 16, a Turkish grenade exploded close by, sending a chunk of shrapnel deep into her left knee. "In the heat of the fight I did not feel the pain, but then I had difficulty moving so my male colleagues took me to safety."

The guerrillas had nothing to treat Zerya with other than water and thread to stitch up her knee. She was forced to shelter in a cave for two

months until she was strong enough to walk again. "It was winter and bitterly cold. It was too dangerous to light a fire because that would have drawn attention to our position."

Sexual relationships, and certainly falling in love, are forbidden between PKK fighters in the mountains because the group feels that such a bond would distract a couple from the battle. Zerya spoke of one young man she grew close to. "He liked me and I liked him but we never told each other," she said. The man was killed during a fight with Turkish troops.

Zerya had her fair share of injuries after 13 years in the mountains, including shrapnel wounds to the chest and thigh. She began to feel a burden on her fellow fighters so decided three years ago to leave the armed struggle to seek shelter in the Kurdish north of Iraq. Returning to civilisation was like stepping out of a time capsule.

Life is hard after the PKK because her past means that she has no official identity or nationality and no passport. "I would like to settle down and do some work to help women and children," she said. She is trying to return to Germany, where her family is still living. Asked whether she would ever return to the front line for the PKK, Zerya says that her fighting days are over. "From my time in the mountains, I have understood one thing: killing is not the solution to this problem."

Chicago Tribune

November 11, 2007

## Iraq's Kurdish leaders walk fine line

### Public's distrust of Turkey complicates regional government's tack on PKK crisis

By Bay Fang, Tribune correspondent ZAWITA, Iraq

Hamid Nabi remembers 1988 as if it were yesterday. Stringing his plastic worry beads through wind-chapped hands, the retired Kurdish fighter recalls watching his village razed by Saddam Hussein's bulldozers. He remembers carrying his month-old son into the mountains with thousands of other Kurds to escape the government's chemical bombs.

But when asked who he considers his greatest enemy, the man who spent half his life fighting Hussein's army readily answered, "I hate Turkey more than Saddam. Turkey is more dangerous than Saddam was — if it could, it would destroy all the Kurdish villages in the country."

Nabi and his neighbors in this village 30 miles from the Turkish border say they are ready to take up arms if Turkey invades northern Iraq in pursuit of Kurdish rebels. "When Turkey said, 'We're on the border,' we also say, 'We're on the border,'" he said.

Aware of those sentiments, Kurdistan's regional government in northern Iraq is treading a fine line as it warily awaits a move from Turkey's government.

The Kurdish authority has tried to demonstrate goodwill toward Turkey by taking a

series of steps over the past week to contain the Kurdish rebels, known as the PKK. And it has openly stated its desire to be involved in talks with the Turkish, Iraqi and American governments over solving the rebel problem without an invasion that could destabilize the region.

At the same time, it is building up its military presence along the Turkish border in a step whose stated purpose is to limit the movement of the PKK, but which also could be construed as a defensive measure to counter the buildup of Turkish troops and reassure villagers that the Kurds will maintain their territorial integrity no matter what takes place.

#### To most, Turkey the enemy

The Kurdish public by far considers Turkey the enemy to guard against, not the PKK. Many here believe Ankara is using the PKK as an excuse to invade the semiautonomous Kurdish state.

"The movement of [Kurdish security forces] is to ensure that Turkey's boundaries and borders are protected," said Qubad Talabany, the Kurdistan Regional Government's representative in the U.S. Asked whether it was Turkey or the Kurds in Iraq that needed to be protected, he declined to clarify.

He added that the other moves by the government—increasing checkpoints, closing PKK-affiliated offices and limiting the flow of supplies and financial support to the rebels—are intended to generate goodwill with Ankara.

The U.S. has been pressuring the Kurds to make these initial moves against the PKK, hoping they will assuage Ankara enough to restart the three-way dialogue over the fate of the rebel group, even as it contemplates military action against the PKK. Another meaningful gesture the Kurds could make, U.S. officials say, is to arrest a PKK leader or two.

"The Turkish public will need to see pictures of detained PKK leadership that they recognize," said Zeyno Baran, a Turkey scholar at the Hudson Institute, a Washington think tank. "They still need to see results."

But Kurdish officials say it would be nice to get some reciprocity from Turkey, which thus far has refused to recognize their regional government in Iraq. The last attempt at initiating talks in Ankara last month, with Kurdish officials participating as part of the Iraq delegation, failed miserably, according to U.S. officials with knowledge of the meetings.

"It takes two to tango," Talabany said. "Well, three in this case."

Driving around northern Iraq, the increased military presence and number of checkpoints around the border region is readily apparent. While the checkpoints are meant to limit the movement of PKK rebels, Kurdish officials acknowledge that they also serve to prevent journalists from talking to the fighters, which had been one of Ankara's complaints.

**Memories of last invasion**

On the winding mountain road past Zawita, a Turkish flag waves in the middle of a Kurdish city. This is a reminder—painful to some—of the last time Turkey invaded northern Iraq in pursuit of the PKK, in the mid-1990s. Then, the two Kurdish parties that now form the Kurdish government, tiring of the PKK fighting from their territory, invited thousands of Turkish soldiers in and fought the PKK alongside

them.

Some who witnessed the fighting in 1996-97 said that the only time the Turks appeared to be successful in their attacks was when the Iraqi Kurds joined in the fight.

"When the Turks fought by themselves, they would use a lot of force to kill some fighters, but as soon as they left, the PKK would come back," said Reber Muhammed, a former local journalist who covered half a dozen battles for his television station. "But the [security forces] knew the area and the PKK's tactics. In every battle, if the Kurds did not go first, the Turks would not dare to move."

Ten years later, experts again say it is only with the cooperation of the Kurdish authorities that the Turks have much chance of success against the PKK — although it's not known how much cooperation they will get.

Even while disavowing influence over the

rebel group, the Kurdish government was instrumental last week in returning eight Turkish soldiers held hostage by the PKK. The Kurdish population also generally expresses support for the group, though some fear the guerrilla movement could compromise the Kurds' hard-won chance at an independent state.

Jowher Miran, a peshmerga fighter from Salahuddin, was transferred to the Zawita area two weeks ago. The stocky 37-year-old says he fought against the PKK in the mid-'90s, but now he calls them his brothers.

"I wouldn't do it again. They are fighting for their rights, just like we were against Saddam," he said.



Nov. 12, 2007

## Turkish Hostages Called Traitors

By PELIN TURGUT

Forget a hero's welcome. After being held hostage by Kurdish guerrillas for two weeks and released last week after a Washington-led diplomatic effort, eight Turkish soldiers have been called traitors and cowards and detained. The eight — all in their late teens and early 20s — are being charged with disobeying orders, "suspicion of crime" and "going to a foreign country without permission," the last presumably referring to their captivity under Kurdish rebels based in north Iraq.

There was little joy at their release last week. The military is Turkey's most revered institution; every 18-year-old male is required to complete an army tour. Because Turkish soldiers are widely upheld as heroes, the former hostages were vilified by the public for not choosing death over the dishonor of capture by the enemy. With nationalist fervor at a peak, some right-wing pundits accused them of being Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) moles. One was of Kurdish origin, others pointed out. Justice Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin said he could not "accept the fact that they went with the terrorists that night. Our soldier is prepared to die if necessary when he is protecting the country."

Although Turkey's army chief of staff Yasar Buyukanit initially said there was no evidence

against the men, they were later detained under military law.

The episode lays bare the hard-line psychology of Turkey's military, a powerful political player. It does not brook public scrutiny. The hostage-taking incident, in which 200 PKK guerrillas stormed a heavily protected unit, killing 12 soldiers, is still shrouded in mystery. How did so many guerrillas manage to infiltrate a heavily guarded area? Why did it take so long to get reinforcements to the scene? How did the guerrillas and hostages leave? In their testimony, the men — all of whom were in different positions in a mountainous region near the Iraqi border — said they found themselves under fire and surrounded by PKK fighters; several said their guns jammed. According to news reports, they surrendered individually when they ran out of ammunition.

"This is the military's response to an incident that has made them uncomfortable," says political commentator Mehmet Ali Birand. "The military is giving a clear message to any soldier who finds himself in a similar situation. That message is 'Fight. Do not surrender easily.'"



Recruit Irfan Beyaz's father learned of his son detention from journalists. "I can't believe this is happening," he was quoted as saying. Private Ozhan Sabanoglu's family, in the southern town of Hatay, found out from watching TV. "We have been waiting in fear and pain for days, said his father, Bahattin Sabanoglu. "We love our country. I cannot understand it. My plea to the General Staff, to the generals is give us information." A lawyer for the eight men says he will appeal the arrests. They may later stand trial, but in the eyes of a public consumed by nationalist pride, a verdict has already been delivered.



Nov. 13, 2007

## Turkish Gunships Attack Kurdish Villages Inside Iraq

By YAHYA BARAZANJI Associated Press Writer

Turkish helicopter gunships attacked abandoned villages inside Iraq on Tuesday, Iraqi officials said, in the first such strike since border tensions have escalated in recent months.

A spokesman for the Kurdish regional

administration, Jamal Abdullah, denied the report but said two Turkish warplanes dropped flares Monday in the mountains near Zakhu.

But Col. Hussein Tamir, an Iraqi army officer who supervises border guards, said the airstrikes occurred

before dawn on abandoned villages northeast of Zakhu, an Iraqi Kurdish town near the border with Turkey. There were no casualties, he said.

A spokesman for the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, corroborated Tamir's account of the airstrikes,



and said sporadic clashes had been taking place inside Turkey since late Monday. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

Witnesses also said the Turkish bombing lasted a half-hour in the villages.

"I was on the other side of the mountain when I heard huge explosions and could smell TNT powder all over the area," said shepherd Ibrahim Mazori, 53. He said he sometimes spends a night or two in the villages while tending his sheep.

Several hours after the dawn airstrikes, about a dozen warplanes and at least two helicopters were seen taking off from an air base in Diyarbakir, southeast Turkey. It was unclear where they were headed.

Iraqi officials said helicopter gunships were responsible for the morning raids, while Turkish media reported warplanes were involved.

It was the first major Turkish action against Kurdish rebels since Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan met President Bush in Washington earlier this month. The United States and Iraq have pressured Turkey to avoid a large-scale attack on rebel bases in northern Iraq, fearing such an operation would destabilize what has been the calmest region in the country.

Meanwhile, Kurdish guerrillas killed four Turkish soldiers in a clash Tuesday in southeastern Turkey, Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul said.

More than 50 Turkish troops have been killed in a series of hit-and-run attacks by Kurdish rebels since late September. Turkey says it has killed dozens of rebels.

Turkey has massed tens of thousands of soldiers along the border with Iraq, but political and military analysts believe the Turkish military will concentrate for now on limited air raids and special, counterinsurgency

operations inside Iraq rather than launch a large ground offensive against Kurdish rebels.

A lengthy campaign involving large numbers of troops could get bogged down as winter swiftly approaches in the mountainous border region, making it difficult for tanks and other heavy military equipment to function in bad weather.

The United States has pressed Turkey to avoid an all-out cross-border incursion, which could be politically damaging for the Turks and raise questions about whether their true goal is to punish the Iraqi Kurd administration for their separatist aspirations. Turkey fears its own Kurdish minority could become emboldened by the success of Iraqi Kurds in taking control of their own affairs.

However, air assaults conducted with the help of newly provided U.S. intelligence could allow Turkey to chip away at rebel strength and show an angry public that it is taking substan-

tive steps to combat the rebel problem. Skeptics believe Kurdish fighters have scattered from their camps or are ensconced in hideouts that are difficult to spot from the air.

U.S. authorities have agreed to share intelligence about positions of Kurdish rebels with Turkey, possibly enabling the Turkish military to carry out limited assaults.

"The United States has declared the PKK as the common enemy. The struggle against this enemy will be maintained until it is eliminated," Erdogan told lawmakers in Parliament Tuesday.

Kurds are a major ethnic group straddling four Middle Eastern countries - Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria - totaling about 20 million people. Most live in Turkey, primarily in the southeast, where the PKK has been fighting for autonomy since 1984 in a conflict that has killed nearly 40,000 people.

The Washington Times

November 13, 2007

## Cross-border threat unites Kurds

By Nicholas Birch - YUKSEKOVA, Turkey

Turkish threats to attack Iraq, which may be heightened by a kidnapping over the weekend, are having the unintended effect of fostering closer ties between Kurdish communities in the two countries.

Turkish forces have been poised for weeks to cross the border into Iraqi Kurdistan to clear out bases of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has used Iraq as a haven after attacking soldiers and civilians in Turkey.

The latest such incident came Sunday when Kurdish militants blocked a bridge leading to the village of Ogulveren near the border with Iran and kidnapped two guards and five other young men, sources told the Reuters news agency.

Rising anger in Turkey is directed not just against the PKK but also at the Kurdish-led government and military in northern Iraq, which are seen in Ankara as protectors of the militants.

But many of Turkey's Kurds, while never particularly fond of their fellow Kurds across the border, say any attack on the Iraq-based Kurds would drive fresh recruits into the hands of the PKK.

Ankara's stance is "pushing Kurds together and deepening the rift between Kurds and Turks," said Sezgin Tanrikulu, bar association head in Diyarbakir, the southeastern Turkey's largest city. "Wounds are being created that will not be easy to heal."

Five years ago, Turkish Kurds had little but contempt for Iraqi Kurdish leaders Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani. Kurds in teahouses

across southeastern Turkey dismissed them as "backward tribesmen interested in nothing but dollars from Washington."

Today, that contempt has entirely evaporated. Instead of insults, many Turkish Kurds prefix mentions of Mr. Talabani and Mr. Barzani with the word "brej" — a Kurdish expression of respect.

Turkey was fiercely opposed to Iraqi Kurdish autonomy before dictator Saddam Hussein was toppled and remains so today. Despite Kurdistan's official status as an autonomous region within Iraq, Ankara still refers to Iraqi Kurdistan as "northern Iraq" and refuses to talk to its leaders.

When a delegation from Baghdad arrived in Ankara late last month for talks with Turkish authorities, two Kurdish representatives were allowed in only because of the insistence of the head of the Iraqi delegation.

"They were made to share the same hotel bedroom," said one Istanbul-based newspaper. Turkish Kurds find this tone offensive.

"I don't like Talabani personally," said one journalist in Yuksekova. "But when I see the Turkish media insulting him ... I interpret that not as an insult aimed at him personally, but at me and other Kurds this side of the border."

Turkey's worst fear is that Turkish Kurds will one day seek to merge their territory with Kurdish Iraq, but that seems unlikely. Despite their support for Iraqi Kurdish autonomy, most Turkish Kurds who have visited Iraqi Kurdistan



complain of conservatism, rampant corruption and limited democracy across the border.

Above all, Turkish Kurds say, they are far too embedded in Turkish life to want to break off now.

"Who do people in Yuksekova marry if it's not their neighbor?" asked Irfan Sari. "Turks, not Iraqi Kurds."

At a local nightclub, youngsters sing along to Turkish songs. Local businessmen divide their time between here and Istanbul.

Nobody puts the point more bluntly than Maaruf Ataoglu, Turkish Kurdish owner of a chain of restaurants in Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan.

"I may dream I was born American, but who would want to be born an Iraqi?" he asked. "If you had the choice between a country on its way to the European Union and one stuck in the Middle East, which would you take? Like every single Turkish Kurd, you'd choose Turkey."

## TURKISH DAILY NEWS

November 14, 2007

Leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), Devlet Bahçeli, criticized all the political parties in Parliament yesterday for the stance adopted by them toward the terrorists and said terror had entered Parliament with the arrival of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party's (DTP) deputies.

"The aim is to divide Turkey," Bahçeli said, addressing his deputies during his party's group meeting in Parliament. "The axis of betrayal is composed of the murderer on İmralı Island (Abdullah Öcalan, imprisoned leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party [PKK]), the PKK's affiliate in Parliament the DTP, Barzani ([Massoud] president of the semi-autonomous administration in northern Iraq) and ethnic separatists within Turkey," Bahçeli said.

Criticizing the government for not instructing the army to launch a cross-border military offensive even though parliamentary authorization for such a move was

# Bahçeli lashes out at all parties

granted 27 days ago, Bahçeli said, "Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has shown once again that he is not sincere in fighting against terrorists." The influence and deterrent qualities of Parliament's authorization has been eroded by the government itself," he said.

Bahçeli slammed the DTP for wanting "democratic autonomy" in Turkey with 20 or 25 regional parliaments where all will be represented by their own flags and symbols and defined it as "the project of betrayal." "The DTP should be banned through a judicial process. One need not look for the terrorists in the mountains. Their spokespersons have already entered Parliament", he said.

He also called on Erdoğan to amend the Constitution and remove the immunity enjoyed by the lawmakers who act against the unity of the republic.

### Baykal assures Barzani

Bahçeli also criticized Deniz Baykal, leader of the Republican People's Party



(CHP) for proposing a set of new measures to win the hearts of the Iraqi Kurdish groups. "The CHP's proposals are assurances to Barzani for establishing his own independent state. Baykal also supported Erdoğan's policies," he added.

## TURKISH DAILY NEWS

November 14, 2007

### ANKARA - TDN Parliamentary Bureau

The lynching campaign continues against the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP), the party's former leader said yesterday.

"Nobody can tame us with pressure. We are not the public servant of anybody. We came here with elections and will go in the same way," Ahmet Türk, former DTP leader and deputy, said during a DTP parliamentary group meeting.

Referring to photographs published by the Turkish media showing DTP Van Deputy Fatma Kurtulan in northern Iraq amid outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terrorists, wearing the terrorists' style of clothing and carrying an automatic weapon, Türk said: "The campaign of criticism continues although it is known that the photo displayed in the media didn't belong to Kurtulan and that some were informed of the real identity of the person. This is a conspiracy aimed at inciting the public against our party, and it shows that the lynching campaign continues."

Kurtulan became a member of the DTP in the 1990s and was a deputy candidate in the 1999 and 2002 elections. She was elected Van deputy in the 2007 elections.

"She has been involved in democratic politics for a long time. But some want to create a picture that paints Kurtulan as if

# Lynching campaign continues, says Türk

she ventured into politics by leaving the PKK camps in the mountains behind. It should be questioned which opportunities we are losing by trying to harm the DTP," he said.

### We want unity:

Türk said the DTP wanted unity in Turkey and that such campaigns against the party should be stopped.

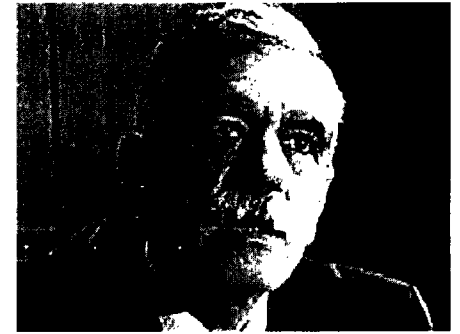
"Our solutions don't intend to divide up the country. What we want is more democracy and a strengthened democratic nationalized structure."

Those who mask their real intentions in the fields of politics, human rights and democracy are other factors that trigger such campaigns against the DTP, he said.

"The DTP began to decipher the political views of those who act under the auspices of the military. That's the real reason for this panicked atmosphere and initiatives aimed at closing our party.

The DTP will continue to defend living in Turkey with its own culture within the same borders and under the same flag, despite all kinds of oppression, he said.

Türk also drew attention to the interviews Milliyet daily's Ankara representative Fikret Bila conducted with retired commanders who said that soldiers have perceived the Kurdish issue wrongly for



the past 20 years.

"You self-criticize but continue to pursue the wrong policy as well," he said.

"We didn't want violence. We always defended peace and have struggled for it," he said in reference to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's statement that all kinds of thoughts should be able to be expressed without violence.

### 'I am not the person in that photo':

Kurtulan, meanwhile, also denied allegations that she is a member of the PKK.

"You know very well that I am not the person in that photo. I will file a suit," she said in response to questions from the press

## Kurds and Arabs Shelter Side by Side in Distrust and Misery

By MICHAEL KAMBER

SULAIMANIYA, Iraq, Nov. 7 — On a barren, trash-strewn plain on the outskirts of this city, two groups — one poor and Kurdish, the other displaced and Arab — huddle side by side in distrust and suspicion.

They are united only in their misery, their fear of the coming winter and their envy of those thriving nearby in Sulaimaniya, the largest city in the Iraqi region of eastern Kurdistan.

The estimated 200 Kurds living in the tent city here say they find work one or two days a week as day laborers. A good day brings \$10. Living in a tent with no running water keeps the overhead down.

They move frequently, they said, and so their children — filthy, thin and barefoot — cannot attend school. A few have fled from the continuing violence in Kirkuk. Others, local residents said, are Qurag, the Kurdish word for Gypsy or Romany.

A Kurd, who gave his name only as Ramazan, gestured at the tents of the Arabs who had come here to escape the killing in Baghdad and Diyala in the south.

"We don't like them — we have not forgotten Halabja and Anfal," he said, speaking of Saddam Hussein's murderous campaigns against Kurdish civilians.

"They get food and supplies for free from the government," another man said. "A tanker comes to give water to Arabs. We have to pay."

Other Kurds at the camp are more charitable, pointing out that the Arabs taught them to write their names in Arabic over time.



Many of the children living in the tent city — dirty and thin — cannot attend school because they move frequently.



A Sunni Arab great-grandmother, who thinks she is about 100, lives with her family here after being driven out of Baghdad.



A mother holds her child in front of the tent that is their home for now. The child was born in the camp, outside of Sulaimaniya.

ONLINE: OUTSIDE SULAIMANIYA

More photographs of Arabs and Kurds, displaced from other parts of Iraq, living side by side in a tent city outside Kurdistan's largest city: [nytimes.com/world](http://nytimes.com/world)

That gained them free rations too, until the government caught on and cut them off with a severe reprimand.

A hundred yards down the line of ragged tents, the Arabs are grouped together.

Degrees of squalor are difficult to gauge, but they appear to be as poor as the Kurds. Some of their tents and blankets are marked U.N.H.C.R., after the initials of the United Nations refugee organization. Registered as internally displaced persons, they are entitled to meager rations, some bedding and a monthly allowance, they said.

Hamza Muzahem, a community leader who arrived two months ago from the notoriously violent Baghdad neighborhood of Saydia, said he left his home after a letter with a bullet was slipped under his door. Mr. Muzahem needed no further warning; he had seen numerous Sunni neighbors slain by Shiite militias.

His story is perhaps the least dramatic here. A well-dressed woman, stepping carefully through the dust in high heels, casually told a visitor of how her husband, a translator for the American military, was killed after neighbors discovered his line of work.

A 4-year-old boy, Ali Al Jamoori Mohamed, lay on a tent floor to re-enact the killing of his mother and father in their home. He is being raised here by relatives.

A hollow-eyed 17-year-old, Khaled Mohamed Al Timini, recalled how his parents and two brothers were taken from their car and executed on the streets of Dora, another violent Baghdad neighborhood.

That same day, he said, he left his house and all his belongings behind and made his way to this camp. He said he could not concentrate, had stopped attending school and had found no work here.

Still, he is thankful. "It is safe here," he said simply.

## Military-civilian responsibility in Kurdish issue



Mehmet Ali Birand

Fikret Bila's latest book abounds with lessons to be drawn from his interviews with military commanders. Their explanations contribute significant information as to how and why the Kurdish issue became what it is today. My years-long experience helps me to draw a few conclusions: First, the responsibility of this complex and multifaceted issue cannot be attributed to the military alone. Second, the real responsibility for the mismanagement of the Kurdish issue belongs to civil governments that took the easy way out by letting the military take care of it. Third, it is time for the governments to assume responsibility and take courageous steps

You must read Fikret Bila's book titled "Komutanlar Cephesi" (The Commanders' Position). It gives you clear insight into how the commanders of the Turkish Armed Forces view the country, especially in relation to many critical subjects that range from the Kurdish issue to democracy and from the United States and the European Union to civil governments.

The names Fikret interviewed for this book (Kenan Evren, Doğan Güreş, İsmail Hakkı Karadayı, Hilmi Özkök, Aytaç Yalman) are among the best-educated and first rate Turkish Armed Forces commanders of the last 25 years. The interviews give you clear facts on how they were educated and how they look at the world and, most importantly, at Turkey.

The book also reveals the enormous difference between the commanders' world and perception of Turkey and those of civilian officers. I drew some conclusions from the interviews of these commanders, each of whom is an extremely well intentioned, patriotic and decent person: HH The military point of view did not bring solutions :

The present situation indicates that the thoughts and efforts expressed by an important section of our commanders failed to settle the Kurdish issue. Their critique of themselves also confirms this fact. We must remember that many of these officers were in charge during the initial stage of this issue, in other words, a time when more effective measures could have been taken. Some measures taken by another set of commanders (like Kenan Evren) only served to aggravate the issue. Then there were some who objected for security reasons to every suggestion to take measures to soften the elements that disturbed our citizens of Kurdish origin (like the bans on people's names, village names and the Kurdish language). The interviews reveal that the importance they attached to

security measures was an essential constituent of their education. Another such constituent was the motto, "Regional people side with the powerful," which completely ignored the social side of the issue. All that is very natural and in keeping with the education and the quality of a soldier. In fact, isn't it obvious that today's officers have also failed to draw lessons from the experiences and self-criticism of yesterday's commanders? HH We can't pin the responsibility on commanders alone :

It would be a big mistake to say that the attitude of our commanders is wholly responsible for the current state of the Kurdish issue. It is true that the military have contributed to it, but they should not be made the sole target of all criticism.

In my opinion, civil governments are a lot more to blame for obvious reasons.

They are the ones who turned this difficult matter over to the military out of fear of losing votes. None of them dared to take courageous steps or to develop a policy. They were content to let the military take their own measures. Would the general staff have said NO if any one of them tried to initiate a new policy? I don't think so.

The military always had the obligation to fill the gap left by our politicians.

Despite the fact that the military warned them many times and said, "This is all we can do. Don't expect more. You can't solve this issue with arms alone," and in spite of the insistent appeals of the experts and the media, the governments failed to produce a political, economic or a social package. The five years since Öcalan's arrest were also wasted. In the end, the Iraqi wars of 1991 and 2003 revived the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), causing the present chaos and modifying both the nature and the

dimensions of the issue. It became much more difficult to solve. All the missed opportunities have served to increase the complexity of the present situation.

This is a new period :

Let's put the past aside, if you will. Let's use the experience we've acquired in order to establish a new approach and a new policy. The reasons are plain to see. The Kurdish issue has changed. The PKK terror has taken on new dimensions, and north Iraq has acquired a different position. Circumstances were completely different 25 years ago. Today, we face a completely different Kurdish issue, PKK terror and structure in north Iraq. These problems used to be primarily Turkish issues. Consequently, they were easier to handle. The solutions were simpler. Today, however, they've acquired international dimensions. The colour and the contents of the problem are no longer the same. They involve much greater actors. At this stage, the necessarily more complicated and finer calculations require the efforts and the participation of all our thinkers and policy developers besides those of the military. Turkey can make this change happen. As long as the civil government takes courage. As long as all institutions achieve effective coordination. As long as a new policy is established, which extends to all cultural, social, political and economic factors, as well as to security. As long as the Kurdish issue, the PKK terror and the situation in north Iraq are kept separate and rational long-term steps are taken. Can all this be accomplished by a single step? No. We'll have to get there step by step. The problem in north Iraq is the easiest to solve. The PKK terror and the Kurdish issue can be reduced to a "co-habitable" level as to dimension and vehemence. However, if the present mentality and attitude persist and we create deeper chaos through our lack of vision and policy, I'm afraid that this country will have to face the danger of an actual division.

The Economist

Nov 15th 2007

### Turkey's Kurdish rebels

## Goading Ankara to overreach

SINCE the late 19th century Turkey's Kurds have rebelled repeatedly against their Turkish masters. But no uprising has been as violent or long-lasting as that launched in 1984 by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in its bid to unite the 25m Kurds scattered across Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Turkey's latest threat to clobber the rebels in their haven in northern Iraq has again raised the spectre of regional war. It has also concentrated attention on the PKK: who are these indomitable fighters and what is their true goal?

"Blood and Belief" offers unusual insight into the rebels' shadowy universe and, by extension, into Turkey's festering Kurdish problem. Aliza Marcus, an American journalist who was put on trial in Turkey for

her reporting on the Turkish army's abuses against ordinary Kurds, charts the origins and evolution of the movement. Her scholarly, gripping account is based on interviews with, and the unpublished diaries of, former PKK militants.

Founded in 1978 by a clutch of Turkish university students, the PKK rapidly became one of the world's deadliest guerrilla armies. There are several reasons for its success. Foremost, perhaps, was Turkey's brutal suppression of Kurdish identity: the mass arrest and torture of Kurdish dissidents created fertile recruiting ground. In addition, the group had the foresight to escape to Syria before the Turkish army took over the country in 1980, allowing its forces to survive largely intact.

With Syria's blessing, the PKK sent its



men and women into Lebanon's Bekaa valley for training by Palestinian militants. By the 1990s swathes of Turkey's rugged Kurdish mountainside had fallen under guerrilla control. The army's response was a scorched-earth campaign that drove more than 1m Kurdish villagers out of their homes. Robbed of its logistical base, the PKK fell into decline.

The group's fortunes were even harder hit by the capture in 1999 of its leader, Abdullah Ocalan, by Turkish secret agents in Nairobi. His subsequent recanting—he called the rebellion "a mistake" and offered to "serve the Turkish state"—is well documented. But little is known about Mr Ocalan's personal life and Ms Marcus helps to lift the veil shrouding a leader who used to shuttle between villas in Damascus and Aleppo while his fighters roughed it in the mountains. Deserters and dissidents would be summarily executed. Indeed Mr Ocalan did not hesitate to order the deaths of women and children if they were

related to members of a stateemployed Kurdish militia that fought alongside the Turkish army.

"Ocalan was so convinced of his strength", writes Ms Marcus, "that he began to believe the PKK's actions were behind many world events." Such was his vanity that when he played football with his men, he insisted that someone kept track of each goal he scored. When one hapless militant lost count, Ocalan started shouting, "You bum, how could you forget four of my goals."

From his island prison off the coast of Istanbul where he is serving a life sentence on treason charges, Mr Ocalan succeeded in remaining in control of his outfit—at least until the Americans occupied Iraq in 2003. Shamed by the big gains that the Iraqi Kurds made under America's protection, the PKK escalated its campaign in 2004. Whether it did so with Mr Ocalan's approval remains unclear. But it is plain that his leadership has become in-

creasingly symbolic and that a new generation of hardliners is gaining the upper hand.

What is missing from Ms Marcus's excellent reporting is the growing appeal of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development (AK) party to Turkish Kurds. A mixture of social-welfare schemes and Islamic piety helped AK to trounce the biggest pro-PKK party in many of its former strongholds at the general election last July. One reason for the increase in PKK militancy is to goad the government into a cross-border attack which would, in turn, drain it of its growing support among the Kurds.

Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence.

By Aliza Marcus.

New York University Press; 368 pages; \$35 and £22.50

**Daily News**

November 16, 2007

## Iraq to blacklist firms which signed oil deals with Kurdish regional government

Gulf Daily News

**RIYADH:** Iraq warned yesterday that foreign oil companies which signed deals with the autonomous Kurdish regional government will be barred from doing business in the country and from exporting oil.

"Any company that has signed contracts without the approval of the federal authority of Iraq will not have any chance of working with the government of Iraq," Oil Minister Hussein Shahrastani said.

"We warned the companies

that there will be consequences... that Iraq will not allow its oil to be exported," Shahrastani said on the sidelines of Opec meetings in Riyadh.

Last week, the Kurdish authorities signed seven production-sharing contracts with a number of foreign oil companies in defiance of the Iraqi central government and before approving a controversial federal oil law.

The latest contracts bring to 15 the number of deals finalised by the Kurdish regional government since it passed its

own oil law in August.

The regional administration said 85 per cent of the returns from the foreign deals would be for Iraq and the rest would go to the contractor.

The Kurdish government's minister for natural resources Ashti Hawrami said last week that with the signing of the latest contracts, 20 international oil companies are now working in the region.

He said talks were ongoing with foreign firms over 24 new oil blocks in the oil-rich north

and that announcements would be made soon.

But Shahrastani warned that foreign firms which sign contracts with the Kurds risk being blacklisted by Iraq. "Our position is that any company that signs a contract without the approval of the federal authority will compromise their chances of getting business in future in Iraq," he said. (afp)

**BBC NEWS**

16 November 2007

## Legal action to ban Kurdish party

Turkish prosecutors have reportedly moved to ban a pro-Kurdish political party in Turkey that has been accused of colluding with Kurdish rebels.

Supreme Court prosecutors asked the Constitutional Court to bar the Democratic Society Party (DTP), the state-run Anatolian news agency said.

They allege the DTP is linked to the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The legal action comes amid tensions with Iraq over Turkey's threat to make cross-border attacks on PKK bases.

The DTP, which is represented in parliament, has called on Ankara to grant autonomy to Turkey's mainly Kurdish south-east.

'Step backwards'

Founded in 2005, the DTP denies any links to the PKK, which is designated a terrorist

group by Turkey, the US and the EU.

DTP deputy Sirri Sakik said the legal action was a step backwards for Turkey in terms of democracy.

"Turkey is becoming a cemetery of banned political parties," he told the AFP news agency.

The PKK has waged a violent campaign for Kurdish autonomy since 1984, resulting in more than 30,000 deaths.

Turkey has recently massed about 100,000 troops on the Iraqi border after its parliament approved calls for a military incursion to deal with the insurgents.



San Francisco Chronicle November 16, 2007

# Free homes draw Iraqi Christians

## Critics say offer of a haven is part of Kurdish effort to bolster region's autonomy

James Palmer, Chronicle Foreign Service Teena, Iraq --

Something seems out of place in this small Kurdish village.

First, there are the low-slung homes with the pastel exteriors - yellows and pinks - that scream for attention against the rugged backdrop of pine trees and mountain peaks. Then, up on a hill, sits a church with a squat steeple. But it's the cross reaching toward the magnificent blue sky that stands out in this predominantly Muslim country.

The Assyrian Catholic Church serves 32 families who fled the violence of Baghdad for the relative calm and security of the Kurdish region in northern Iraq. The homes are among more than 5,000 units in 100 Christian settlements across Dahuk province in the Kurdish region.

The Kurdish regional government has financed the developments in hopes of providing

Increasingly, critics and some political analysts contend these Christian communities are part of an effort to strengthen the Kurdish region's ever-growing autonomy from Iraq's central government in Baghdad by diversifying its population.

Franso Matthey, a private contractor who has overseen much of the building in Dahuk, said funding for the projects comes directly from the Kurdish government, which also provides monthly stipends of roughly \$80 to an estimated 7,000 Christian families who now live here.

Matthey said his engineers design and construct homes at an average cost of \$17,000 to \$20,000, but he steadfastly maintains his mission is a humanitarian one.

"We just want to help the people," he said, arguing that the Kurdish government also has provided funding to rebuild 30 Muslim villages in Dahuk. "There are no political parties involved."

While that may be true, critics are also quick to note that the man leading the project is Sarkis Aghajan Mamendo, an enigmatic Iraqi Assyrian politician who is currently finance minister in the Kurdish regional government.

Mamendo, a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, also backs the Ishtar satellite TV network, where he is often seen shaking hands with constituents, members of the clergy and other government leaders. But he rarely, if ever, speaks publicly. Multiple requests for interviews sent to his offices elicited no reply.

Mamendo's efforts have made him famous among Christians around the world. In 2006, Pope Benedict XVI awarded him the Knight Commander of the Order of St. Gregory the Great, one of the Vatican's highest commendations in recognition of his work on behalf of Iraq's Christians.

The Christian building boom in the Kurdish region began in the late 1990s with a U.N. program that funded reconstruction of villages leveled under Saddam Hussein's government. Yelda Guywailgese's house was one of 20 in Gedeky that was blasted to the ground in 1988.

"They even took the bricks," said Guywailgese, a 60-year-old farmer, referring to Iraqi soldiers who dynamited his house and doused his apple orchard and tomato field with acid.

In 2001, Guywailgese and the other villagers returned to reconstruct their homes with U.N.-provided materials.

Today, this Christian village has risen from the ashes and expanded to more than 30 houses and 250 people. Among the newco-

mers are many families from Baghdad who were lured with free housing.

Despite the peaceful new life, Kurdish officials may not be able to keep everyone in the



region. Several of the rebuilt and newly constructed villages lack health clinics and schools, though all have at least one church.

"The first thing needed is a church, but so many families have come here with children so now we need a school," said Guywailgese.

For those who have relocated to the north from Baghdad, the transition is often trying.

Peto, who shuttered his shoe factory after it was looted a second time in 2005, has found no work. The 64-year-old businessman has turned to harvesting tomatoes and apples, and selling wood for a living.

In the meantime, Peto's 21-year-old son, Fadi, has delayed his studies because he doesn't speak Kurdish, the region's official language that is predominantly spoken in classrooms of most universities.

The winding roads running into Teena are sometimes impassable, trapping residents and barring the priest from making his 30-mile trip to perform Mass weekly at the village's church.

"Life is difficult here," Peto said.

Back inside his new house in the rebuilt village of Gedeky, Sliwa said he wanted to leave Iraq because of "too many bad days." The deployment of Turkish troops along the border with Turkey, an hour's drive north of Teena, is also troubling.

The Turks are poised for a cross-border offensive against the Kurdistan Workers Party, which has been fighting for autonomy for Turkish Kurds since 1984 in a conflict that has killed nearly 40,000 people.

Yet, Sliwa, a former prisoner of war during Iraq's conflict with Iran in the 1980s, promised he would someday return to Baghdad once the security situation is restored.

"I returned home once," Sliwa said, referring to his internment in Iran. "Maybe I'll return home again."



Christians with a haven.

"When I came here, I just started building," said Patrice Isaac Peto, an Assyrian Catholic who left his house and business in Baghdad two years ago. "I didn't know someone was going to help us."

Further north in the town of Gedeky, Ischa Zaya Sliwa explains the circumstances that drove him from Baghdad. After earning \$400 a month for three years as a chef with an American-run company, Sliwa, 52, said local Shiite militiamen persuaded him to quit his job.

"They weren't bad guys, they just threatened me," said Sliwa, who added that some militiamen will "kill you without any warning."

After reluctantly abandoning their cramped apartment in August 2006, Sliwa, his wife and three daughters moved 260 miles north to the city of Dahuk before driving another three hours to Gedeky last November. They have since settled into their new three-bedroom house.

"We were offered a free house in a safe place," Sliwa said. "It was difficult not to accept."

But the charitable gesture is not without controversy.



November 16, 2007

THE AUSTRALIAN

# Raid into Iraq imminent, Turkish general says

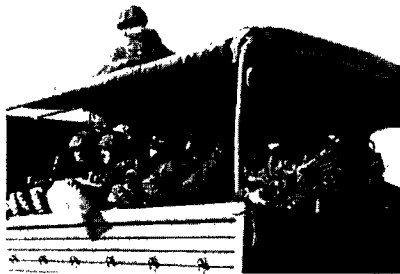
TURKEY is in the process of implementing a cross-border operation against Kurdish guerrillas who use northern Iraq as a base to launch attacks, a senior Turkish general said today.

## From correspondents in Ankara

But there were no immediate signs of increased military activity along Turkey's mountainous border with Iraq on overnight, Reuters reporters in the region said, suggesting any offensive may still be in the preparatory stages.

"We are in the process of implementing the cross-border operation," General Ilker Basbug, head of the land forces and the second most powerful man in the armed forces, said at a diplomatic reception.

Gen Basbug did not specify what he meant by



implementing an operation, but the military has for weeks been boosting their presence along the border.

Analysts also say authorities have stepped up the rhetoric to pressure US and Iraqi authorities to move against the rebels.

Turkey has amassed as many as 100,000 troops, backed by warplanes, helicopters and tanks, for a possible cross-border incursion to root out the separatist rebels, blamed by Ankara for a series of attacks on its security personnel.

A Reuters reporter in the northern Iraqi town of Zakhu, which is close to the border with Turkey, said he could not hear any explosions or the sound of aircraft flying overhead.

The situation in the town appeared normal, he said.

One senior US military official in Baghdad said he was not immediately aware of any Turkish action. Officials from the Iraqi government could not be reached for comment.

Yesterday security sources said Turkey had sent hundreds of special forces to the border to bolster its forces there.

Washington has urged Ankara to avoid a large-scale incursion, fearing it could destabilise the most peaceful part of Iraq and cause a bigger regional crisis.

Gen Basbug's comments followed a reaffirmation by the government this week that Turkey was ready to carry out an offensive against some 3000 Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants based in the mountains of northern Iraq.

The PKK took up arms in 1984 with the aim of creating an ethnic homeland in mainly Kurdish southeast Turkey.

Nearly 40,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

NATO-member Turkey has staged limited raids, predominantly air strikes, in the past month across the mountainous frontier against the rebels.

"Turkish armed forces have been doing cross-border operations for years and they have been



successful so far," Gen Basbug said, answering criticism about the effectiveness of previous offensives in northern Iraq.

He said that if such operations had not been carried out there would be 10,000 rebels rather than the 5000 PKK fighters estimated to be in Iraq and Turkey.

Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan said this week a military operation was still planned, despite logistical difficulties as winter closes in across the rugged region.

Last week, Mr Erdogan urged US President George W. Bush in Washington to crack down on the militants.

Iraq has pledged to hunt down and arrest PKK leaders. But Baghdad has little influence over the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in the north and the success of any measures against the PKK would depend on cooperation of Kurdish authorities.

Turkey's parliament approved last month a government request to be able to launch cross-border operations into northern Iraq.

## Invasion is wrong answer to Turkey's problems

FINANCIAL TIMES

November 15 2007

By Wesley Clark

Just over a week after US president George W. Bush and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's prime minister, met in Washington, Turkish troops remained poised to move across the border into Iraqi Kurdistan in an attempt to destroy elements of the Kurdistan Workers party (PKK). We can only hope that a solution based on the idea of joint co-operation against the PKK that seemed to be forged in the Oval Office meeting, focusing on diplomatic engagement between the US, Turkey, Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, will trump the still-looming military assault.

The Turks are understandably angry and ready for war. Accumulated frustrations over recent attacks by the PKK erupted in public de-

mands for a decisive military solution. Turkish popular opinion strongly supported attacks on rebel base camps inside Iraqi Kurdistan, and the Turkish armed forces have mobilised more than 100,000 troops on the Iraqi border, setting the stage for a massive Turkish invasion of northern Iraq that would have disastrous consequences.

On paper all wars seem simple. Turkish military planners may hope that one bold thrust into Iraqi Kurdistan will, once and for all, eradicate the PKK. A glance at what soldiers call the "troop-to-task" ratio might suggest that the job could be done quickly. Turkey has a very good army and it would seem feasible that 100,000 well-trained and fully equipped Turkish troops

could quickly capture or kill 3,000 PKK rebels hiding in an area somewhat larger than Maryland.

But war is never simple. The friction and fog of war always conspire to make the actual combat far more complex, time consuming and bloodier than the sterile and optimistic plans written in the comfort of remote headquarters. Even a military genius like Alexander the Great was stalled by the inhospitable terrain of southern Turkey and northern Iraq. Despite popular longing for a quick military solution, a Turkish invasion of Iraq would bring only stalemate, frustration and – more ominously – destabilise the region, undermine US-Turkish relations for decades, and jeopardise the stability and prosperity of

Iraq's Kurdistan region.

Turkey will certainly benefit by continuing on the more creative and diplomatic path now being pursued by Mr Erdogan. He has secured a US promise to share intelligence and to co-operate in neutralising PKK elements in Iraq and preventing their movement across the border. He should open a dialogue with the KRG to formulate joint measures to prevent the PKK from striking Turkey from Iraqi territory. To that end, he needs to embrace the establishment of four-party talks between Turkey, Iraq, the US and the KRG. This must be the way forward.

War is not the answer, especially given the creative alternatives

available. First, strike the PKK where they are vulnerable, not in the mountain base camps where they are strongest. Divide the enemy by crafting an amnesty that permits civilians and lower level PKK members to lay down their arms and rejoin society. This worked in Northern Ireland to isolate radical fringes of the Irish Republican Army and it will work here, where the PKK's popular support at best is tepid.

Second, the US and others could cripple PKK operations by cutting

off its financial support. PKK's centre of power is not, and never has been, in Iraqi Kurdistan; its popular base lies in south-eastern Turkey. Its financial base is in the cities of continental Europe, where the money is raised. Its leaders travel freely in European capitals. A co-ordinated international effort is needed to interdict the flow of money and supplies to the PKK.

Decades of military action against the PKK have failed to produce a lasting solution and it would fail again. Albert Einstein was not a

military strategist but he did know something about how to solve problems. He also recognised the folly of substituting haste for thoughtful, reasoned decision making when he said: "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

Dealing with the PKK is an essential element of resolving the larger conflict in Iraq and improving the peace in the region. This challenge requires a creative strategy, one rooted in diplomacy and dialogue.

Most of all it requires leaders with vision who rise above raw emotion – courageous leaders who are willing to forego short-term violent actions in order to wisely serve their nation's long term interests.

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General Clark is a former supreme commander of Nato, led the alliance of military forces in the Kosovo war (1999) and is a senior fellow at the Ron Burkle Center at UCLA

**HOUSTON CHRONICLE**

**Nov. 17, 2007**

## Iraqi parliament opens probe into delays over status of northern oil-rich Kirkuk

By **SAMEER N. YACOUB** Associated Press

**B**AGHDAD — Iraq's parliament on Saturday ordered an inquiry into the delay of a referendum over whether the oil-rich city of Kirkuk will join the semiautonomous Kurdish region in the north.

The Iraqi constitution requires that a referendum on the future status of the city be held by the end of this year to determine whether it will remain under Baghdad's control, become part of Kurdistan or gain autonomy from both.

"Four years have passed, and the referendum should have been done by now, but successive governments have done nothing," Kurdish lawmaker Mahmoud Othman said. "Yet we do understand that there were obstacles, such as security challenges and bureaucracy."

Qadir Aziz, a spokesman for Kurdish president Massoud Barzani, said the delay "is not to the Kurds' benefit."

The head of the Kirkuk city council on Saturday accused the central government of intentionally stalling the process, saying Baghdad's Arab-dominated government stood to gain from the delay.

Kirkuk is an especially coveted city for

both the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government in Baghdad and the Kurdish one in Irbil.

Much of Iraq's vast oil wealth lies under the ground in the Kirkuk region, as well as in the Shiite-controlled south. Kurds refer to Kirkuk as the "Kurdish Jerusalem," and control of the area's oil resources and its cultural attachment to Kurdistan have been hotly contested.

The city's Arabs are generally in favor of continued rule by Iraq's central government, while many Kurds want Kirkuk to join the Kurdish zone to its north. The city's minority Turkomen — ethnic Turks — have said they prefer to stay under Baghdad's control, but would lobby for their own autonomous region if Kirkuk ends up being part of Kurdistan.

Kirkuk also has significant minorities of Christians, Armenians and Assyrians.

The constitution also calls for a census to be held in Kirkuk by the end of 2007 to determine how many Arabs, Kurds and Turkomen reside in the city.

Kurds dispute the results of censuses conducted under Saddam Hussein.

Iraqi officials confirmed Saturday that the census and referendum have been postponed until next year.

Tens of thousands of Kurds and non-Arabs fled Kirkuk in the 1980s and 1990s when Saddam's government implemented its "Arabization" policy. They were replaced by pro-government Arabs from the mainly Shiite south, after Saddam accused the Kurds of siding with Iran in the 1980-1988 war with Tehran.

Now, the Iraqi government has begun resettling some of those Arabs to their home regions, making room for thousands of Kurds who have gradually returned to Kirkuk since Saddam's ouster.

The plan is said to be voluntary, and Arabs who agree are paid \$15,500 and given a piece of property in their regions of origin.

About 1,000 Arab families have received compensation so far, according to Kaka Ritsch, a Kurdish official who works on resettlement issues in Kirkuk. Another 3,500 families have signed up for the program and are willing to return to their home regions, he said Saturday.

**AFP**

## Iraqi Kurds flex muscles over black gold reserves

**ARBIL, Iraq, Nov 18, 2007 (AFP)**

Despite a veto from Baghdad, Iraqi Kurds have signed contracts with foreign firms to exploit their huge oil reserves which they vow will benefit the whole country.

Strengthened by the autonomy enshrined in the Iraqi constitution, the Iraqi Kurdish authority launched a regional oil policy in August, signing deals with overseas companies, to first achieve self-sufficiency and later exportation.

The authority has signed 20 contracts during the last three months and shows no sign of changing course, despite threats from the federal government to blacklist companies trading with the Kurdish region.

"Iraq has more than 12 percent of the world's crude oil reserves, of which at least five percent is in our region," said Kiwan Siwaily, advisor to Kurdish oil minister Ashti Hawrami.

"The old Iraqi regimes since the 1920s didn't allow us to develop these resources. No student was allowed to study in the oil and gas sector," added Siwaily, just recently back from Germany with a degree in this field.

In the 1970s, gigantic oil fields were discovered in Iraqi Kurdish region but failed to be fully explored. They were never exploited during the reign of Saddam, hostile to the Kurds who resisted his authority.

Since the end of his regime in April 2003, the reserves attracted the attention of international oil sector representatives who

travelled to the main city Arbil.

"To export, we have to talk to the central government. But for our domestic use, we don't have to ask anyone. It belongs to us. It's our country," said Siwaily.

"We're now producing 20,000 barrels a day. We need 100,000 for our domestic use alone. It's our oil, it's our right."

The federal parliament has been attempting to hammer out a deal regarding national oil policy and to negotiate the delicate issue of sharing resources between the regions.

The Shiite majority in the south and Kurdish majority in the north have plentiful oil reserves.

But the Sunnis in central Iraq have little oil and insist policy is centralised through Baghdad, an approach not shared by the Kurdish regional authorities but backed by Washington.

US authorities want the oil revenues to be shared equally among the 18 provinces of Iraq, especially the Sunnis in a bid to wipe out the Sunni-led insurgency against its troops.

Commenting on the oil contracts signed in Arbil on November 7, Hawrami said: "In Kurdistan, we are setting the example: this is only the first post-Saddam framework for oil investment in Iraq that follows the democratic, federal, and free-market principles

mandated by the Iraqi constitution."

The Kurdish authorities are attempting to reassure Baghdad and the other communities that they are happy with rules that restrict them to retaining only the 17 percent of export earnings.

At the federal level, this figure of 17 percent is also the portion of the national budget granted to the Kurdish region.

"We know that if we want to export anything, we'll have to share: 17 percent for us only," said Siwaily. "We have no problem with that."

"They are still discussing this oil law at the federal level. It could take them another two or three years. We're not going to wait. We have lost enough time already."

"Here, we have enough oil and gas for all the Middle East. It's our oil, our country. You'll see, we don't need more than two or three years to develop everything and cover our domestic needs."

Among the contracts recently signed, is one for a gas collection and a refinery to supply the electricity stations, which experts says make the problem of regional power cuts a distant memory.

**The New York Times** November 18, 2007

## Iraq credits Iran with helping calm violence

### Spokesman also says government wants Sunni ministers back

**Alissa J. Rubin, New York Times**

The Iraqi government on Saturday credited Iran with helping to rein in Shiite militias and stemming the flow of weapons into Iraq, improving the security situation noticeably.

The Iraqi government's spokesman, Ali al-Dabbagh, speaking at a lunch for reporters, also said that the Shiite-dominated government is making renewed efforts to bring back Sunni Arab ministers who have been boycotting the government for more than four months.

Speaking about Iran, he said that government helped to persuade the Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr to ask his Mahdi militia to halt attacks. Al-Sadr ordered his militia to stop using weapons in early September, and officials say the stand-down by Mahdi members has helped improve stability. They say it also seems to have helped decrease the frequency of attacks with explosively formed penetrators, a powerful type of bomb that can pierce heavy armor.

Al-Dabbagh is the first Iraqi official to say publicly that Iran has used its influence with al-Sadr to discourage him from using his militia for armed attacks.

Since al-Sadr gave his order in mid-September, the numbers of unidentified bodies found on the streets of Baghdad daily has rarely exceeded a half-dozen. When his militia was active there were often as many as 30 or more unidentified bodies found daily.

"The freezing of the Mahdi Army makes us feel they have good intentions," al-Dabbagh said. "Iran played a role in this."

Al-Dabbagh said the turning point came when Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki visited Iran in August and met with the country's supreme

leader, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, in the Shiite shrine city of Mashad. Al-Maliki told the Iranian leader that "Iran had to choose whether to support the government or any other party and Iraq will decide according to which they choose," al-Dabbagh said.

The Iranians promised to help and have done so, he said.

About the parliament, al-Dabbagh said the government wants the Sunni Arab bloc to return and that he believes a government with the bloc "in it is better than one without it."

In one concession, al-Maliki has made a point of allowing a lengthy debate and review on the execution of Sultan Hashim Ahmed, the minister of defense under Saddam Hussein. In September, Hashim was found guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced to hang. Objections from some Kurds and Sunni Arabs, who believe he was not responsible for the policies he was forced to enact, have halted his execution while the judiciary and the government review the case.

The Cabinet has sent legislation to the parliament revising the de-Baathification law that had presented obstacles to former Baathists' working in government jobs. The new proposal, which has been agreed to by the Sunni Arab bloc as well as the Kurdish and Shiite leaders, would let an additional 10,000 people take



government positions, including many Sunni Arabs. It would also guarantee that all former government employees would be eligible to collect their pensions.

Also in a move to spur reconciliation between Shiites and Sunnis, the government announced it will pay one million Iraqi denars, about \$812, to every displaced family that returns home. More than 150,000 families, roughly 900,000 Iraqis, have fled their homes because of the recent violence, and about 95,000 of those families are in Baghdad, said Dr. Abdul-Samad Rahman Sultan, Iraq's minister of displacement and migration.

Also, 30 skeletons were found Saturday in Hor Jab, a rural Sunni Arab area on Baghdad's southern edge that until early October was controlled by al Qaeda in Iraq.

# 4 soldiers are killed as Turkey sends troops to border with Iraq

INTERNATIONAL  
Herald Tribune

November 14, 2007

Reuters

**TUNCELI, Turkey:** Four Turkish soldiers were killed Tuesday in clashes with guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and Turkey sent hundreds of anti-terrorism special forces to the region bordering Iraq.

Military sources said the special forces would join up to 100,000 Turkish troops near the border. Turkey has threatened an incursion into northern Iraq to root out PKK rebels who use mountains there as a base for attacks across the border.

It was not clear whether the presence of the special forces in the provinces of

Sirnak and Hakkari in southeast Turkey was linked to an offensive launched Tuesday against PKK rebels following clashes that left four soldiers dead.

Troops, backed by tanks, attack helicopters and fighter jets, have been on standby for weeks in case the Turkish government authorizes an incursion.

Washington and Baghdad oppose a major cross-border offensive, fearing it could destabilize northern Iraq and potentially threaten the wider region.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, under intense domestic pressure to act after some 50 soldiers were killed in recent weeks, has pledged to send troops into northern Iraq if such attacks

from Iraq continue.

The Web site for NTV, a Turkish news channel, reported that Erdogan told a meeting of his Justice and Development Party on Monday night that "a cross-border operation is approaching." The meeting was closed to the media.

"This business needs to happen before winter conditions worsen," he was quoted as saying. "If we don't see concrete things from the other side, an operation is near," he said.

The death of the four soldiers in Sirnak Province on Tuesday is likely to increase pressure on the government to authorize an operation, despite logistical difficulties as the weather closes in

across the rugged, mountainous region.

Security sources said nine others had been wounded in the Sirnak clashes, which lasted more than an hour.

President Abdullah Gul sent a mes-

sage to General Yasar Buyukanit, chief of the armed forces, conveying his condolences to the soldiers' families, the military and the Turkish public.

They were the first casualties of the conflict on Turkish territory since last week, when one soldier and three PKK guerrillas were killed in clashes.

Separately, the Kurdistan regional government in northern Iraq denied media reports that Turkish attack heli-

copters and warplanes seeking PKK rebels had bombed empty villages in the area Tuesday morning.

CNN Turk and NTV, citing Iraqi officials, reported that nobody had been killed in the bombings.

Jamal Abdullah, a spokesman for the semiautonomous Kurdistan Regional Government, said two Turkish warplanes had dropped flares over a village near Zakho in northern Iraq on Monday.

About 3,000 rebels use northern Iraq as a base for attacks in Turkey. The PKK took up arms in 1984 with the aim of creating an ethnic homeland in south-east Turkey, which is mainly Kurdish.

# Despite the turmoil, Iraq has capital plans

## Government sets costly building program

By Alissa J. Rubin

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq will spend an unprecedented \$900 million in 2008 on projects in Baghdad and \$19 billion on capital projects across the country, senior Iraqi government officials said

Wednesday, even as they warned that the fight against insurgencies, gangs and militias was far from over.

"We still have a lot of security challenges," said Barham Salih, the deputy prime minister, in a speech to a gathering of senior Iraqi government and local Baghdad officials.

"We must confront the terrorism and extremism that hampers the building of a country of citizenship and that provides opportunity, water, electricity and fuel," said Salih, who is in charge of economic development for the Baghdad Security plan, which began last February.

The 2008 Iraqi budget of \$40 billion, including capital and operating costs, was agreed to Tuesday and sent to the Parliament for review, said Salih, who made the announcement at a conference also attended by the two Iraqi vice presidents, Adil Abdul Mehdi and Tariq al-Hashemi, as well as General Aboud Qanbar, the commander of the security plan and the U.S. ambassador, Ryan Crocker.

Although the city would get an unprecedented amount of money for capital projects, it was less clear whether it would be able to spend it. American development experts believe that, at best, 60 percent of the capital funds allocated in 2007, which was about \$450 mil-

lion, was spent. Spending has been slowed by a combination of security problems, a lack of expertise in contracting projects and inexperience in delegating tasks so that if a project manager is away, work comes to a standstill since others are often afraid to make decisions.

More damaged than the city's infrastructure, however, is its social fabric, which has been torn in ways that can not be patched together overnight. But



Ali Yusef/Agence France-Presse

**IRAQI NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH** — These Sunni gunmen, part of the "Revolutionaries of Adhamiyah," patrolled a restive Baghdad area on Wednesday.

INTERNATIONAL  
Herald Tribune

November 15, 2007

# Iran gets a mixed review on atom plans

## UN's understanding of Tehran's program is 'diminishing'

By Elaine Sciolino and William J. Broad

**VIENNA:** A new report said Thursday that Iran had made new but incomplete disclosures about its past nuclear activities, missing a crucial deadline under an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The United Nations agency's report also confirmed for the first time that Iran had crossed the major milestone of putting 3,000 centrifuges into operation, a 10-fold increase from just a year ago. In theory, that means that Iran could produce enough uranium to make a nuclear weapon within a year to 18 months.

But the report indicated that the centrifuges — fast-spinning machines that enrich uranium at a vast facility in Natanz — were operating well below their capacity, and the agency said that, so far, it had not discovered any evidence that Iran was enriching to a level that would produce bomb-grade fuel.

The report concluded that Iran's "cooperation has been reactive rather than proactive," and it said that because of other restrictions Iran has placed on inspectors, its understanding of the full scope of Iran's program is "diminishing."

The Bush administration, which suspects Iran of having a secret nuclear weapons program, seized on the report's findings as evidence of Iran's determination to forge ahead with its nuclear program in defiance of the UN Security Council.

Calling Iran's cooperation with the agency "selective and incomplete," a statement from the United States Mission to the agency said: "Iran still refuses to fully disclose the past and present as the IAEA expects and to suspend fully its proliferation-sensitive activities as the Security Council requires."

The British Foreign Office, meanwhile, urged Tehran to "come clean on all outstanding issues without delay."

The findings seem certain to be used by the United States, Britain and France to call for far harsher sanctions against Iran than those so far imposed in two Security Council resolutions, though Russia and China have strongly opposed another round of sanctions.

The Iranian government has denied that it is trying to manufacture a nuclear weapon.

Iran's new chief nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, said that the report "means all the claims that Iran's nuclear activities have a military agenda and are deviant are not true" and that the basis for Security Council sanctions "has collapsed."

Under the terms of a "work plan" concluded by Iran and the agency last summer, Iran was to have met a series of deadlines to resolve all unanswered questions about suspicious nuclear activities dating back two decades.

The agreed timeline set November as a date for Iran to answer all outstanding agency questions about the history of its program to build centrifuges — tall, thin machines that spin very fast to enrich, or concentrate, uranium's rare component, uranium 235, which can fuel nuclear reactors or atom bombs.

But the report Thursday, while outlining a number of limited disclosures about the centrifuge program, noted that Iran has yet to answer some key questions. One mystery, the IAEA said, concerned "the role of the technical university at which uranium particle contamination was found."

Another centers on a new generation of centrifuges that Ahmadinejad claimed last year that Iran had under development. In a speech, he boasted that the P-2 centrifuge would quadruple Iran's powers of uranium enrichment.

The IAEA report said that Iran divulged some information about the P-2 program on Nov. 8, adding that Tehran would discuss the issue with the agency in December.

That means Iran missed a reporting deadline to clear up the issue, even while pursuing the far more sophisticated way of making atomic fuel. American officials and inspectors fear that the new generation of centrifuges could speed Iran's path to developing a nuclear weapon.

In heralding the work plan last August, Mohamed ElBaradei, the IAEA's director general, said in an interview that there were "clear deadlines" that proved the plan was "not an open-ended invitation to dallying with the agency or a ruse to prolong negotiations and avoid sanctions."

He added that the goal was to wrap up the nuclear issues by December. The Iranian program has been under investigation for four years.

Now officials close to the agency are saying that the deadlines could slip into January or February.

"Iran's active cooperation and full transparency are indispensable for full and prompt implementation of the work plan," the agency's report said.

The report also faulted Iran for continuing to deny inspectors broad access to its nuclear facilities and manufacturing sites under a voluntary protocol that Iran has suspended. The agency's limited access meant that it could not say with certainty that Iran did not have a secret weapons-related enrichment program.

# Bombings around Iraq fall sharply, U.S. reports

By Stephen Farrell

**BAGHDAD:** The American military on Thursday reported a sharp fall in the number of roadside bombs and other homemade bombs in Iraq, saying that Iran appeared to be abiding by a reported commitment to halt the flow of such weapons into Iraq.

Major General James Simmons said 1,560 improvised explosive devices had been directed at coalition forces and Iraqis in October, a steady monthly decline from 3,239 in March. Half of the bombs exploded; the other half were found and cleared.

"We have found weapons that we believe are associated with Iran in some of the caches that we have picked up," said Simmons, deputy commanding general of the Multinational Corps-Iraq. "But most of these weapons appear to have been in Iraq for months, so we have not seen any recent evidence that weapons continue to come across the border into Iraq. We believe that the initiatives and the commitments that the Iranians have made appear to be holding up."

Defense Secretary Robert Gates said this month that Iran had assured the Baghdad government that it would stem the flow of roadside bombs across the frontier. But Iran has consistently denied sending powerful bombs into Iraq and has challenged previous claims by the U.S. military that it was doing so.

Simmons said the number of attacks using the devices had declined in all areas, but he conceded that 1,560 was still a "significant number," comparable with the level of attacks in September 2005.

Most roadside bomb attacks, he said, were now in northern Iraq amid indications that Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, the Sunni extremist group that American intelligence agencies say is led by non-Iraqis, has shifted some of its activities out of Baghdad and Anbar Province, where it has been challenged by U.S. and Iraqi security forces.

In violence Thursday, a suicide car bomber Thursday killed six people in Kirkuk, north of Baghdad, when he rammed his vehicle into a police convoy. The police said the dead included three schoolchildren and that the apparent target, General Khattab Abdullah Aref, a senior police officer who has led the fight in the area against Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, was seriously wounded.

One American soldier was killed and four were wounded by an explosion on Wednesday in Diyala Province north of Baghdad, the American military said.

reconstruction can be a sort of peace dividend that gives people hope for better times and encourages them to eschew the violence that has traumatized the capital.

"People need to feel the value of peace. There needs to be quick improvement in electricity, in water, in health care," said Tariq al-Hashemi, the Sunni Arab who serves as one of Iraq's two vice presidents. "The destruction of Baghdad has not been just a matter of its infrastructure, the damage to streets and buildings, it is the social fabric that has been damaged. This is the greatest problem and this will remain the principle obstacle to safety and security."

The conference was well attended despite the explosion of a roadside bomb about 90 minutes before it was slated to begin just outside the gates to the Green Zone used for the conference. The bomb killed two civilians, wounded three more and threw two police officers from their guard towers nearby, the police said.

The bomb, which detonated shortly after 8 a.m., was the largest to have gone

off in Baghdad in recent weeks, and immediately raised questions about how an explosive device could have been planted in such a closely watched area.

Elsewhere in Baghdad armed Iraqi guards seized a mosque Wednesday that houses the headquarters of a hard line Sunni Muslim group that fiercely opposes the American occupation here, the group and witnesses said. Shortly after 9 a.m., guards acting on the orders of the Sunni Endowment, which oversees the country's Sunni mosques, surrounded and entered the mosque and ordered its immediate evacuation, according to a statement posted by the hard-line group that runs it, the Association of Muslim Scholars.

The association's radio broadcast was cut, and its occupants were ordered to gather their belongings and furnishings and get out of the mosque, Um al-Qura, by noon, according to the group's

statement. The motive behind the seizure was not immediately clear, and calls to leaders of the Sunni Endowment were not immediately returned. The Association of Muslim Scholars has long opposed Iraq's Shiite dominated government and called for the boycott of elections here last year.

Also on Wednesday, three U.S. soldiers were killed in two separate attacks, according to the U.S. military. A roadside bomb killed two soldiers and wounded four more in Tikrit, an overwhelmingly Sunni area and the third soldier was fatally shot in Mosul.

Their deaths brought the number of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq to 3,863, according to icasualties.org, an independent Web site that tracks military and civilian deaths in Iraq

LE FIGARO vendredi 16 novembre 2007

## ElBaradei dénonce les dissimulations de l'Iran

### PROLIFÉRATION

Le rapport de l'AIEA sur le programme nucléaire iranien rend compte de « progrès », toutefois insuffisants, ce qui ouvre la voie à de nouvelles sanctions.

Vienne

L'AGENCE internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA) a dévoilé hier un rapport sévère sur l'Iran. Très attendu, ce document de neuf pages, remis simultanément au Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies et aux États membres de l'agence de Vienne en charge de la lutte contre la prolifération

nucléaire, dresse un bilan de trois mois de consultations intensives menées entre l'AIEA et Téhéran, dans le but de faire toute la lumière sur les activités passées et présentes du régime islamique. Ces entretiens avaient été convenus dans le cadre d'un « plan d'action » prévu le 21 août dernier. « Laissez-nous jusqu'en

novembre et nous verrons bien si les Iraniens nous ont menés en bateau », clamait alors Mohammed ElBaradei, le directeur général de l'AIEA, très contesté par Washington et Tel-Aviv pour sa « pusillanimité » vis-à-vis de Téhéran.

Trois mois plus tard, l'Iran n'a pas tenu ses promesses. S'il relève

les « progrès substantiels » accomplis par le régime islamique dans sa coopération avec les inspecteurs nucléaires, notamment dans la description de ses recherches sur le plutonium et les centrifugeuses, Mohammed ElBaradei regrette que celle-ci ait été « plus réactive que proactive », s'avouant toujours incapable de statuer sur la nature civile ou militaire du programme nucléaire iranien. Jeudi 8 novembre, à l'occasion d'une visite de dernière minute à Vienne, des officiels iraniens avaient apporté des plans industriels concernant le moulage de demi-sphères d'uranium métal, des documents que l'AIEA sollicitait depuis deux ans.

« Depuis début 2006, l'agence n'a plus reçu le type d'informations que l'Iran lui avait fourni jusque-là, au titre du protocole additionnel (du traité de non-prolifération, instaurant une coopération renforcée), poursuit le rapport. (...) Dans ces conditions, la connaissance par l'agence de l'état actuel du programme nucléaire de l'Iran tend à diminuer. »

### « La porte reste ouverte »

En outre, l'Iran n'a rien fait pour rétablir la confiance, en continuant d'enrichir l'uranium à Natanz, où 3 000 centrifugeuses sont désormais opérationnelles, et en poursuivant la construction à Arak d'un réacteur à eau lourde.

Préoccupée, l'AIEA prie l'Iran de renouer avec l'application du protocole additionnel « le plus tôt possible », en mettant un terme à tous ces chantiers.

Sitôt après la publication du rapport, le négociateur iranien en charge du dossier nucléaire, Saïd Jalili, a déclaré que le document enlevait toute légitimité à la saisi-

ne du Conseil de sécurité par l'AIEA, mettant en avant les « progrès substantiels » accomplis par l'Iran.

Les États-Unis, qui dénoncent une « coopération sélective » des Iraniens, ont annoncé qu'ils allaient aussitôt demander le vote de nouvelles sanctions économiques à l'encontre de Téhéran au

Conseil de sécurité. « La porte reste ouverte à une suspension des sanctions en échange de la suspension de l'enrichissement (d'uranium), a rappelé l'ambassadeur américain auprès de l'AIEA, Gregory Schulte, et d'un règlement négocié qui donnerait à l'Iran l'accès à l'énergie nucléaire tout en rassurant le monde sur ses intentions pacifiques. »

Cette offre de coopération technique fera l'objet d'un second rapport la semaine prochaine de la part du haut représentant de l'Union européenne pour la politique étrangère et la sécurité commune, Javier Solana. L'Iran a catégoriquement rejeté la proposition européenne.

MAURIN PICARD

LE FIGARO samedi 17 - dimanche 18 novembre 2007

## La justice turque veut interdire le parti prokurde

### TURQUIE

Des poursuites judiciaires ont été lancées contre 19 des 20 députés du DTP.

Istanbul

LE COME-BACK des députés prokurdes à la Grande Assemblée pourrait tourner court. Après 13 ans d'absence, 20 candidats du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP) avaient remporté un siège aux élections le 22 juillet. Une « victoire » qui sonnait alors « comme une revanche », pour le DTP. Hier, le procureur de la Cour de cassation a demandé l'interdiction de la formation kurde, accusée d'être la vitrine politique du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Ce parti « est devenu le foyer d'activités contraires à l'indépendance de l'État et à son unité indivisible », a estimé le magistrat.

Cette action de la justice contre le DTP intervient après une virulente campagne médiatique contre la présence de ces députés au Parlement. Et depuis la mort de soldats dans des embuscades du PKK en octobre, la colère populaire se concentre sur le parti prokurde. Cette semaine, le Parti de l'action

nationaliste (MHP, extrême droite) a une nouvelle fois réclamé la levée de l'immunité parlementaire de ces représentants.

### « Appartenance à une organisation terroriste »

Une demande rejetée par le premier ministre. « La voie démocratique doit être privilégiée », a déclaré Recep Tayyip Erdogan, estimant qu'une éviction du Parlement conduirait « à les renvoyer dans les montagnes », et risquerait de renforcer les actions terroristes du PKK. La procédure engagée, sur laquelle la Cour constitutionnelle

devra statuer, comprend également une interdiction pour les maires du DTP de se présenter aux élections locales en 2008, sous l'étiquette du parti ou en indépendant. « Il s'agit d'un retour en arrière dans le processus démocratique et dans celui de l'intégration à l'Union européenne », a réagi l'un des 20 parlementaires, Sirri Sakik.

Le DTP, dernier-né des partis prokurdes, risque donc de subir le même sort que ses quatre prédécesseurs, fermés les uns après les autres. Après la dissolution du Parti de la démocratie en 1994, quatre députés – dont Leyla Zana, l'égérie



La mort de soldats turcs dans des embuscades du PKK (Ici les funérailles d'un des quatre militaires tués jeudi par des séparatistes) provoque la colère de la population contre le parti prokurde. UstalAP

de la cause kurde – ont purgé une peine de 10 ans de prison. Entamées il y a quelques mois, les poursuites judiciaires contre 19 des 20 députés du DTP s'intensifient, essentiellement pour « appartenance à une organisation terroriste » : le procès de Sabahat Tuncel, qui se trouvait en détention provisoire jusqu'à son élection en juillet, est en cours. Mardi, une enquête visant Fatma Kurtulan, épouse d'un membre du PKK, a été ouverte : une photo de l'élue en tenue de combat aurait été prise dans un camp de la guérilla. Le cliché, dont la provenance reste indéterminée, a fait la

une des journaux. Ces pressions s'accompagnent d'une tentative de radicalisation du DTP : Nurettin Demirtas, qui a déjà passé 10 ans en prison et représente la branche la plus inféodée au PKK, a été élu à la tête du DTP, le 8 novembre.

Selon Ümit Firat, un intellectuel kurde, l'interdiction de ce parti arrangerait à la fois les militaires et les séparatistes : « C'est ce que cherche l'armée depuis le début. Quant au PKK, il pourra légitimer son action armée, en disant : "Vous voyez bien qu'il n'y a pas d'espace politique pour les Kurdes." »

LAURE MARCHAND

Le Monde

19 novembre 2007

## En Irak, Al-Qaida ne contrôle plus aucun quartier de Bagdad

L'amélioration de la situation sécuritaire est liée à l'embauche et à l'armement par l'armée américaine de 67 000 miliciens sunnites opposés à la frange djihadiste de la guérilla

Les combattants d'Al-Qaida en Mésopotamie, la branche irakienne du mouvement d'Oussama Ben Laden, « ne contrôlent plus » aucun des quartiers sunnites de la capitale, affirme le général Joseph Fil Junior, le commandant des for-

ces américaines déployées à Bagdad.

Après Ghazaliya, Ameriya, Yarmouk et d'autres zones urbaines essentiellement peuplées d'Arabes sunnites, l'AFP a constaté, vendredi 16 novembre, qu'Adhamiya, le seul quartier sunnite sur la rive orientale du fleuve Tigre, qui sépare la capitale en deux parties (la majorité chiite de la ville résidant majoritairement sur cette rive), était à son tour « entièrement sous le contrôle » de résidents armés financés et soutenus par les soldats américains. Naguère réservé aux officiers méritants de l'armée de Saddam Hussein, Adha-

miya fut, en avril 2003, le théâtre du dernier bain de foule télévisé du dictateur irakien, qui s'appretait à fuir Bagdad où l'armée américaine se déployait.

La diminution spectaculaire des opérations menées par les extrémistes irakiens d'Al-Qaida contre les soldats américains, les policiers et les militaires irakiens et, surtout, les civils de la majorité chiite d'Irak, semble se confirmer sur tous les fronts.

### Nettoyage ethnique terminé

En septembre, puis en octobre, le nombre de civils tués dans des attentats, enlé-

vements ou assassinats ciblés, a baissé de moitié par rapport aux mois précédents, pour s'établir à environ 850 morts, selon les statistiques gouvernementales. Les pertes parmi les soldats américains ont également diminué depuis deux mois, dans des proportions voisines.

L'amélioration de la situation sécuritaire en Irak, qui reste à confirmer dans la durée et qui ne préjuge pas contre d'autres attentats sanglants, est due à une conjonction de facteurs qui semblent tous plus ou moins liés à la nouvelle stratégie militaire mise en œuvre par le commandant en chef des forces américaines, le

général David Petraeus. A Bagdad, où le nettoyage ethnique entre les deux grandes confessions musulmanes semble terminé, ce qui facilite une certaine « paix des armes », l'implantation permanente, dans chaque zone « troublée », de postes militaires communs américano-irakiens et l'édification de hauts murs antibombes entre les quartiers ont eu un impact évident.

L'embauche et l'armement, par les Américains, de milices dites « civiques », formées de citoyens sunnites qui n'en pouvaient plus des excès des fidèles d'Al-Qaida, ont d'abord été mis en œuvre, via les tribus, dans les provinces d'Al-Anbar et de Salaheddine. Cette tactique a été

progressivement étendue aux villes, dont Bagdad.

Plus de 67 000 miliciens sunnites sont aujourd'hui salariés par les Américains à travers le pays. Des dirigeants chiïtes craignent que ces hommes armés se retournent contre leurs partisans lorsque la présence militaire américaine aura diminué en Irak, notamment lorsque les 30 000 renforts américains déployés en juin quitteront le pays. Un départ prévu au printemps 2008. ■

PATRICE CLAUDE



19 NOVEMBRE 2007

## Turquie

# La peur des Kurdes d'Istanbul

«Ma cousine médecin se promenait l'autre jour sur l'İstiklal, [à Péra, les Champs-Élysées d'Istanbul, ndlr] où défilait des manifestants nationalistes, son portable a sonné, c'était sa mère qui l'appelait de Diyarbakir [Sud-est] qui ne parle que le kurde. Ma cousine a dû répondre en kurde. Des manifestants l'ont repérée et ont voulu l'attaquer en criant "Terroriste! Terroriste!" Elle a pu s'échapper en courant», témoigne Abdullah Keskin, directeur de la maison de publication Avesta, spécialiste de la littérature et des œuvres politico-sociales kurdes.

**Menaces.** Comme dans tout l'ouest du pays, la peur, l'inquiétude et l'insécurité règnent dans la communauté kurde d'Istanbul depuis l'intensification du conflit entre l'armée turque et le Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui mène la lutte armée contre le gouvernement. L'éventualité – moins probable mais toujours présente – d'une incursion militaire turque dans le nord de l'Irak ces derniers mois a encore échauffé les esprits, tant parmi les Turcs toujours plus exaspérés du «terrorisme séparatiste», que parmi les Kurdes (15 millions sur 70 millions d'habitants pour la plupart concentrés dans le sud-est

anatolien). «Il ne s'agirait pas d'une simple opération transfrontalière de sécurité contre le PKK, car l'armée turque vise clairement l'entité kurde dans le nord de l'Irak, cette première ébauche d'Etat kurde», estime Umit Firat, intellectuel indépendant kurde d'Istanbul où vivent 3 millions de Kurdes sur 15 millions de Stambouliotes. Les violences antikurdes sont devenues de plus en plus fréquentes comme dans la ville de Bursa, de l'autre côté de la mer de Marmara, le mois dernier. A Istanbul, il s'agit le plus souvent d'humiliations ou de menaces. «Il était minuit, je rentrais chez moi, les policiers de la circulation faisaient un contrôle d'alcoolémie, mais j'ai vu des types en civil qui me demandaient ma

carte d'identité. Quand ils ont vu que j'étais né à Sırnak [Sud-est, région frontalière de l'Irak, ndlr] ils m'ont dit "Interdit! Les Kurdes ne peuvent pas entrer à Bagçilar" [quartier populaire près de l'aéroport d'Istanbul, ndlr], raconte un livreur. «Trois hommes sont entrés dans ma boutique et m'ont longtemps interrogé sur la carence du drapeau turc sur ma vitrine. Je leur ai dit que je mets le drapeau seulement pendant les jours fériés. Ils m'ont dit qu'il faut le mettre tous les jours. J'ai dû accepter», explique un cordelier du Grand Bazar soulignant avec un soupir: «Pourtant j'avais fait attention à mon accent, afin qu'ils ne comprennent pas que je suis kurde.»

**Attques.** «C'est vrai que nous sommes inquiets. Heureusement

que personne n'est mort jusqu'à aujourd'hui, mais nous ne pouvons rien. Les nôtres [les Kurdes, ndlr] n'iront jamais à la police ou bien au tribunal pour se plaindre des attaques antikurdes. On ne fait plus confiance à la police ou aux juges», assure un jeune étudiant vraisemblablement proche du PKK. «On fait des petites réunions informelles entre familles dans les maisons pour trouver des solutions, pour mieux nous protéger. Nous ne contre-attaquons pas, ça, c'est sûr... Mais nous renforçons les mesures de sécurité, nous refaisons nos portes, les serrures et on a maintenant des bâtons derrière les portes», ajoute-t-il.

Umit Firat est aussi inquiet qu'amer: «A cause des déclarations des militaires en poste ou en retraite et des publications haineuses des médias, la cible n'est plus cette fois uniquement le PKK, La vague nationaliste vise l'ensemble des Kurdes voire les Américains accusés d'aider les Kurdes.» Abdullah Keskin est tout aussi amer: «Auparavant dans les communautés kurdes, moi j'étais fier de me présenter en tant que Kurde d'Istanbul. Désormais les Kurdes s'éloignent politiquement et psychologiquement de plus en plus de cette grande ville.»

De notre correspondant à Istanbul

► RAGIP DURAN

## Un parti menacé d'interdiction

Une dizaine de personnes ont été appréhendées et plusieurs autres blessées samedi dans des heurts avec la police à l'issue d'une manifestation à Van (dans l'est du pays) organisée par le principal parti kurde DTP (Parti pour une société démocratique) menacé d'une procédure d'interdiction. La justice turque accuse ce parti qui a une vingtaine d'élus au Parlement d'être «le foyer d'activités contraires à l'indépendance de l'Etat et à son unité indivisible» ainsi que de collusion avec les rebelles du PKK en conflit avec Ankara depuis 1984.



AFP

## Kirkouk: débat houleux au Parlement, et craintes croissantes de violences

BAGDAD, 17 nov 2007 (AFP)

Le sort de Kirkouk, que les Kurdes irakiens convoient, a fait l'objet samedi d'un débat houleux au Parlement de Bagdad, un député prévenant que cette ville pourrait devenir "la plus dangereuse" du pays.

"S'il n'y a pas de solution au problème de Kirkouk, Kirkouk sera la ville la plus dangereuse d'Irak", a averti Hadi al-Ameri, député chiite du Conseil suprême islamique irakien (CSII), et chef de la milice de ce parti, les Brigades de Badr.

Dans un entretien avec l'AFP à l'issue d'une séance difficile à la chambre des députés, il a mis en garde contre tout emportement des partis kurdes, qui forment avec le CSII la majorité parlementaire du gouvernement de Nouri al-Maliki.

"Il y a deux approches au problème de Kirkouk", a-t-il averti : "La première est l'usage de la force et cela ouvrira les portes de l'enfer. La deuxième est le dialogue et la négociation sous la surveillance de l'Onu".

La Constitution irakienne a prévu un recensement pour déterminer la composition ethnique de la ville, où vivent des Kurdes, des Arabes, et des Turkmènes. Il doit être immédiatement suivi, avant fin 2007, d'un référendum pour proposer aux 1,3 million d'habitants un éventuel rattachement de leur ville, riche en pétrole, au Kurdistan irakien.

Pour le moment, rien n'indique que ce référendum pourra se tenir dans les délais et les Kurdes s'impatientent.

"Le recensement est un devoir du gouvernement", a lancé en séance le député kurde Fouad Massoum. "La Constitution est le document qui lie tous les Irakiens", a-t-il ajouté. "Ceux qui lui désobéissent ne doivent pas rester en Irak".

"Si les autorités ne se conduisent pas de manière responsable, les partis kurdes trouveront une autre manière d'agir", a-t-il déclaré, sans préciser les moyens qu'il avait à l'esprit.

Le problème de Kirkouk est considéré comme un des plus épineux en Irak,

avec le pouvoir central, dominé par les chiites, peu enclin à laisser cette ville et ses ressources passer sous le contrôle du gouvernement régional kurde.

Le grand voisin turc est également inquiet d'un rattachement de Kirkouk au Kurdistan irakien, qui donnerait à cette région les moyens financiers de se transformer en mini-Etat autosuffisant.

Les responsables du Kurdistan irakien assurent que les Kurdes forment la majorité de la population de cette ville, que le régime de Saddam Hussein avait arabisée en y implantant des populations d'autres régions du pays.

Les Arabes et les Turkmènes qui vivent à Kirkouk redoutent qu'elle ne passe sous le contrôle des Kurdes, et assurent qu'ils sont déjà victimes de discriminations.

"Le problème de Kirkouk va déclencher une guerre civile s'il n'est pas réglé", a prévenu Abbas al-Bayati, un Turkmène chiite. Les Turkmènes proposent une solution fédérale avec une représentation égale de 32 pc pour les trois principales communautés et une représentation résiduelle de 4 pc pour la communauté chrétienne.

Pour Hadi al-Ameri, "il faut un recensement et un référendum, mais pour que tout le monde respecte le référendum, il faut qu'il se tienne dans des conditions acceptables de transparence". Or, a-t-il ajouté, les "conditions de sécurité actuelles ne permettent pas de tenir un référendum".

Il a appelé les Kurdes à ne pas trop insister sur le respect scrupuleux des délais, arguant qu'une telle exigence, si elle n'était pas satisfaite, pourrait rendre caduque l'idée même d'une consultation.

M. al-Ameri a également souligné que les limites de toutes les provinces irakiennes, qui ont fait l'objet de changements durant le règne de Saddam Hussein, devaient être révisées et que chaque modification devait être soumise à un vote populaire.

AP Associated Press

## La menace d'une incursion majeure turque en Irak s'éloigne, selon le chef de la diplomatie irakienne

AP - 20 novembre 2007

BRUXELLES - Le ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères a déclaré mardi que la menace d'une incursion militaire majeure turque dans le nord de l'Irak était devenue moins forte en raison de la coopération croissante entre Ankara et Bagdad pour juguler les attaques des rebelles kurdes contre les forces turques. Son homologue turc a marqué son désaccord.

Pour Ali Babacan, les "très bonnes" intentions du gouvernement irakien et de l'autorité régionale kurde sont appréciables mais "la volonté politique seule ne suffit pas": l'Irak doit aussi posséder "la capacité physique" d'agir contre la guérilla du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

"Quand il sera temps et quand ce sera nécessaire, nous emploierons tous les instruments dans notre combat contre le PKK (...) et nous espérons

que la communauté internationale nous soutiendra", a lancé le chef de la diplomatie turque.

Du côté irakien, Hoshyar Zebari s'est montré moins réservé. "La menace est toujours présente mais nous pensons que la probabilité d'une invasion majeure s'éloigne", a-t-il souligné Hoshyar Zebari avant un entretien avec Javier Solana, le haut représentant de la politique étrangère et de sécurité (PESC) de l'Union européenne. MM. Zebari et Babacan ne se sont pas rencontrés face à face lors de cette visite à Bruxelles. AP



AP Associated Press

## Un haut responsable des rebelles kurdes met en garde contre toute offensive turc dans le nord de l'Irak

AP | 21 nov. 2007

L'un des principaux chefs des rebelles kurdes a mis en garde les Etats-Unis et l'Irak contre toute assistance que ces deux pays pourraient accorder à la Turquie pour une éventuelle offensive transfrontalière dans le nord de l'Irak, a rapporté une agence pro-kurde mercredi.

Cemil Bayik, un haut responsable militaire du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), a lancé cette mise en garde au lendemain de la rencontre entre deux généraux américains et le commandant en second de l'armée turque pour discuter des mesures à prendre contre les séparatistes kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak.

"Les Etats-Unis, l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan et le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan doivent comprendre que si nous le voulons, nous pouvons provoquer l'instabilité et mettre leurs intérêts en danger", a rapporté l'agence Firat en citant Bayik faisant référence aux deux factions kurdes qui dirigent le gouvernement autonome kurde dans le nord de l'Irak.

Depuis la fin septembre, les hommes du PKK ont tué plus de 50 Turcs, essentiellement des soldats dans des attaques perpétrées en Turquie depuis le territoire irakien. AP



## Deux généraux américains de haut rang à Ankara pour évoquer le PKK

**ANKARA, 20 nov 2007 (AFP)**

Deux généraux américains de haut rang se sont entretenus mardi avec des militaires turcs sur la lutte contre les rebelles kurdes retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak, a annoncé l'armée turque.

Le général James Cartwright, vice-président de l'état-major américain, et le général David Petraeus, commandant les forces américaines en Irak, ont été reçus par le numéro deux de l'état-major turc, le général Ergin Saygun, a affirmé l'état-major dans un communiqué.

"Au cours de la réunion ont été discutés les sujets intéressant les deux pays, l'Irak, la coopération et le partage renforcé de renseignements dans la lutte contre l'ennemi commun que constitue le PKK", poursuit le document.

La réunion a été organisée "dans un but de coordination des questions militaires" après la rencontre survenue le 5 novembre à Washington entre le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan et le président américain George W. Bush, précise le communiqué.

A l'issue de cet entretien, M. Bush avait annoncé que les Etats-Unis fourniraient à Ankara des renseignements "en temps réel" sur les mouvements des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), retranchés dans le nord de l'Irak, qu'il avait qualifiés d'"ennemi commun" des Turcs et des Américains.

Il avait indiqué que les trois généraux réunis mardi à Ankara seraient chargés de la coordination de la Lutte contre le PKK.

Arrivés mardi à Ankara, les généraux américains ont quitté la Turquie après la réunion pour se rendre en Irak, où ils doivent s'entretenir avec le gouvernement central et l'administration kurde du nord du pays de l'attitude à adopter face au PKK, a rapporté la chaîne télévisée d'information NTV.

La Turquie menace d'intervenir militairement dans le nord de l'Irak contre le PKK, qui utilise cette région comme base arrière pour des opérations dans le sud-est anatolien, peuplé majoritairement de Kurdes. Quelque 100.000 soldats ont été déployés près de la frontière irakienne.

M. Erdogan a toutefois affirmé mardi qu'Ankara n'aurait pas immédiatement recours à des opérations transfrontalières, autorisées le mois dernier par une motion parlementaire.

"Nous ne sommes pas des cowboys agitant leurs pistolets (...) Nos forces de sécurité utiliseront le mandat (qui leur a été donné) au moment voulu", a-t-il déclaré devant les députés de son Parti de la justice et du développement, ajoutant que le "bon sens" prévaudrait.

Le ministre des Affaires étrangères irakien Hoshiyar Zebari a pour sa part estimé mardi, lors d'une visite à Bruxelles, que le risque d'une invasion turque dans le nord de l'Irak avait diminué et qu'Ankara avait "sagement, montré beaucoup de retenue".



## Pétrole: le Kurdistan rejette les menaces du ministre irakien du pétrole

**BAGDAD, 21 nov 2007 (AFP)**

Les autorités du Kurdistan irakien ont violemment critiqué mercredi le ministre irakien du pétrole Hussein Chahristani qui avait menacé les compagnies internationales ayant investi dans cette région du nord de l'Irak sans l'accord de Bagdad.

"Depuis plusieurs années, M. Chahristani a été incapable de mener à bien le moindre projet pétrolier. Il tente maintenant de dissuader les autres de faire ce qui est bien pour le pays", accuse un communiqué du gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan.

"Nous n'accepterons aucune forme de menace, sanctions et punitions de nos partenaires au sein du gouvernement de coalition à Bagdad", avertit le communiqué.

Début novembre, les autorités du Kurdistan --entité de facto indépendante et alliée des Américains-- ont approuvé la signature de sept nouveaux contrats pétroliers.

Au total, quinze blocs ont été attribués à ce jour par le gouvernement kurde depuis l'adoption en août 2007 par la région d'une loi sur le pétrole et le gaz. Une vingtaine de compagnies étrangères opèrent désormais au Kurdistan, ceci malgré l'opposition du gouvernement central de Bagdad qui y voit une remise en cause de sa souveraineté sur cette partie nord du pays.

En réaction à ces nouveaux contrats, le ministre Chahristani a menacé ces compagnies "qui ont signé des contrats sans l'approbation des autorités fédérales" de ne plus avoir "l'opportunité de travailler avec le gouvernement ira-

kien".

"L'Irak ne permettra pas qu'on exporte son pétrole à moins que ces contrats aient été signés avec son gouvernement (fédéral)", avait-il assuré le 15 novembre lors du sommet de l'Organisation des pays exportateurs de pétrole (Opep) de Ryad.

La région Kurde "est un partenaire en Irak, pas une région qui doit être menacée ou punie parce qu'elle a exercé ses droits constitutionnels et souhaité contribuer à la stabilité (...) du pays", ont commenté les autorités kurdes, qualifiant de "stupéfiante" la réaction de M. Chahristani.

"Nous pensions que l'époque des menaces contre les Kurdes d'Irak était révolue. Il est décevant de voir que M. Chahristani a choisi le camp des éléments anti-Kurdes de l'époque de Saddam Hussein (...)", poursuit le communiqué.

"Nous ne sommes pas impressionnés (...). L'expérience montre que la plupart des compagnies pétrolières internationales ignorent désormais ces déclarations" (du ministre du pétrole), ajoute le texte.

La future production pétrolière du Kurdistan --un million de barils par jour selon les autorités locales--, "se fera au bénéfice de tous les Irakiens", assure le gouvernement kurde.

"Nos contrats sont constitutionnels et légaux, définis par la loi kurde sur le pétrole et le gaz. Les bavardages et les menaces vides de sens ne dureront pas", conclut le gouvernement kurde, se disant "certains que le bon sens prévaudra".



## La Turquie salue les mesures prises par les Kurdes d'Irak contre le PKK

**ANKARA, 21 nov 2007 (AFP) -**

Le président turc Abdullah Gül a salué mercredi les mesures prises par les Kurdes d'Irak pour lutter contre les rebelles kurdes basés dans leur région autonome mais a prévenu que l'option d'une intervention militaire n'était pas écartée, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

"Nous voyons que le bon sens a commencé à prévaloir peu à peu dans le nord de l'Irak", a déclaré, selon Anatolie, M. Gül à des journalistes à Tbilissi peu avant une cérémonie de lancement de la construction d'une voie ferrée entre l'Azerbaïdjan, la Géorgie et la Turquie.

"Ils (les Kurdes d'Irak) sont conscients du prix à payer quand on ne montre pas le courage de s'opposer au PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan)", a-t-il ajouté.

Accusant les Kurdes d'Irak de soutenir le PKK, la Turquie a menacé de lancer une opération militaire dans le nord de l'Irak pour en déloger les rebelles qui se servent de cette région comme d'une base arrière pour leurs actions dans le sud-est de la Turquie, à la population en majorité kurde.

Pour éviter un tel développement, le gouvernement de Bagdad et les autorités régionales kurdes du nord du pays ont annoncé des mesures visant à restreindre les mouvements des rebelles.

Début novembre, le président américain George W. Bush a pour sa part assuré que les Etats-Unis fourniraient à Ankara des renseignements "en temps réel" sur les rebelles.

"Nous devons montrer notre détermination à mener un combat armé contre le terrorisme. L'organisation terroriste doit le savoir : si elle persiste sur la voie des armes, nous répondrons par les armes", a déclaré M. Gül.

Les déclarations de M. Gül ont coïncidé avec les menaces d'un dirigeant du

PKK affirmant que ses troupes feraient régner le chaos dans le nord de l'Irak si les Etats-Unis et les Kurdes irakiens commençaient à aider la Turquie contre les rebelles.

"Si nous le souhaitons nous pouvons créer l'instabilité et placer leurs intérêts en danger", a déclaré Cemil Bayik, cité par l'agence de presse Firat News, considérée comme le porte-voix du PKK. "Notre position (...) est claire: nous allons résister. Nous ne nous rendrons jamais".

**Gank** 23 novembre 2007

## Zoom sur la presse Turque.

# Le DTP pro-kurde dans le collimateur de la justice turque.



Le DTP pro-kurde dans le collimateur de la justice turque. Sera-t-il interdit ou pas ? La question de l'avenir du DTP, le parti pro-kurde, fait la une de l'actualité cette semaine en Turquie. Vendredi dernier, le Procureur général de la Cour de Cassation, Abdurrahman Yalçinkaya, a envoyé une demande d'interdiction du parti à la Cour constitutionnelle, pour des liens présumés avec le PKK.

Tout est parti de la proposition d'« autonomie démocratique » pour les Kurdes, faite par le DTP lors de sa dernière convention. Elle a déclenché un débat parmi les formations politiques et au sein de l'opinion publique, sur la question de savoir s'il faut interdire le parti ou pas. Le Premier ministre s'est même prononcé contre l'exclusion des députés DTP du Parlement - une décision qui, selon lui, pousserait ses membres à rejoindre les rangs du PKK.

Dans le document envoyé à la Cour constitutionnelle, le Procureur général de la Cour de Cassation accuse le DTP d'agir sur les ordres du PKK et de prendre sa défense, ainsi que celle de son leader emprisonné Abdullah Öcalan. Selon le Turkish Daily News, le Procureur Yalçinkaya réclame notamment l'interdiction pour le DTP de participer à toute élection durant la procédure judiciaire. Il demande également l'exclusion de la vie politique pour 221 membres du parti, dont huit députés, pendant les cinq années qui suivront l'interdiction du DTP. Parmi les charges retenues contre le DTP, on relève que le Procureur l'accuse de fournir un soutien logistique au PKK. Il rappelle que le pré-décesseur du DTP, le HADEP (le Parti pour une Démocratie populaire), avait été fermé en 2003 pour les mêmes raisons.

Précisons que la Cour constitutionnelle, qui doit d'abord évaluer les conclusions des rapporteurs, peut décider de l'interdiction d'un parti si sept de ses onze membres votent pour sa suspension.

Dans une première réaction, le nouveau leader du DTP, Nurettin Demirtas, a estimé qu'interdire le parti ne ferait qu'aggraver le problème kurde. « S'ils peuvent nous convaincre que fermer le parti résoudra le problème ou au moins arrêtera le bain de sang, alors nous dissoudrons nous-mêmes le parti et quitte-

rons le Parlement. »

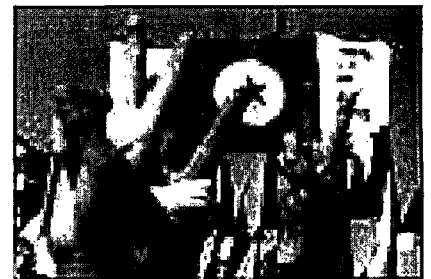
Pour le député DTP de Siirt Osman Özçelik, « fermer les partis politiques ne produit aucun résultat ». Il déplore « la politisation croissante des tribunaux turcs, et spécialement la Cour de Cassation ».

Par ailleurs, comme nous vous l'annonçons la semaine dernière, Fatma Kurtulan, une députée du DTP, fait l'objet d'une enquête pour appartenance présumée au PKK, après la publication dans la presse d'une photo la montrant dans une tenue semblable à celle des militants du PKK. Une photo qui a été truquée, selon elle, pour la désigner à la vindicte publique.

Enfin, une autre enquête a été diligentée sur les agissements de trois députés du DTP qui se sont rendus en Irak du Nord pour superviser la libération des huit soldats turcs qui avaient été capturés le 21 octobre dernier par le PKK. Dans les chefs d'inculpation, on relève que le DTP aurait exploité cette libération pour mener une action de propagande en faveur du PKK.

Comme le souligne Yusuf Kanli dans son éditorial du Turkish Daily News, de tous les partis représentés au Parlement, seul l'AKP du Premier ministre s'est prononcé contre l'interdiction du DTP et l'exclusion de leurs députés du Parlement. L'AKP s'oppose à la levée de leur immunité parlementaire, que préconise le MHP de Devlet Bahçeli. Le mouvement d'extrême droite, qui accuse régulièrement le DTP d'être le prolongement du PKK au Parlement, a proposé un projet de loi visant à exclure l'accusation d'atteinte à l'unité du pays du champ d'application de l'immunité parlementaire. Le numéro deux du groupe parlementaire MHP, Oktay Vural, s'est référé à l'article 68 de la Constitution, qui dispose qu'aucun parti politique ne peut entreprendre d'actions allant à l'encontre de l'unité de la nation ni prêcher la violence.

Taha Akyol, dans Milliyet, pense lui aussi que le DTP est « l'aile politique du PKK ». Et si la démocratie, comme il le rappelle, permet la fermeture des partis politiques qui posent problème, il s'empresse d'ajouter que le Royaume-Uni n'a pas interdit le Sinn Féin. Or, ce mouvement était considéré « comme l'aile politique de l'Armée Républicaine Irlandaise, un



groupe qui cherchait à mettre fin au règne britannique sur l'Irlande du Nord ». « La décision concernant la fermeture d'un parti politique est une affaire d'Etat, écrit Taha Akyol. Chaque pays prend ses décisions en la matière au regard de sa lutte contre le terrorisme et de sa conception de l'unité nationale. (...) Mais à mon avis, ce serait une faute politique d'interdire le DTP. Interdire le DTP ou ne pas interdire le DTP. C'est le problème politique », conclut Taha Akyol.

Dans Radikal, Murat Belge, lui aussi, est opposé à la fermeture du DTP, qu'il juge « politiquement incorrecte ». « Je ne suis pas proche du DTP, écrit-il. (...) Le DTP incarne une ligne à laquelle je ne veux pas adhérer. Mais je crois qu'il a le droit d'exister. » Il appelle à l'instauration d'un dialogue, qui n'existe pas en Turquie ; alors que dans d'autres cas, comme le conflit israélo-palestinien, « les deux parties essaient de se parler ».

Une fermeture du DTP à laquelle s'oppose farouchement Daniel Cohn-Bendit. Dans un entretien accordé au quotidien Zaman, le coprésident des Verts au Parlement européen a estimé qu'il fallait « donner une chance à la représentation politique kurde ». « Si vous interdisiez le DTP, vous pousseriez tous les Kurdes à soutenir le PKK. Ce serait mauvais, mauvais, mauvais », a-t-il martelé.

Selon Daniel Cohn-Bendit, le DTP est sous la pression, d'un côté, à la fois du PKK et de ses électeurs, qui sont des sympathisants du PKK et de l'autre, des militaires et des autres partis au Parlement. « Il est légitime de combattre le PKK, souligne Daniel Cohn-Bendit. (...) Mais si vous exercez une trop forte pression sur le DTP, vous ne ferez que le rapprocher du PKK. Le génie de la politique consiste à les

séparer l'un de l'autre. »

Même son de cloche, ou à peu près, du côté de l'Union européenne. Olli Rehn, le Commissaire européen à l'Élargissement, a déclaré mardi 20 novembre, selon Zaman, qu'il préférerait « voir le DTP au Parlement, plutôt que dans les montagnes ».

Dans sa chronique du Turkish Daily News, Mehmet Ali Birand pense lui aussi que l'interdiction du DTP enverra « un nombre croissant d'individus dans les montagnes ». Il reproche aux dirigeants turcs de s'occuper du DTP au lieu de traiter la question kurde, et reprend à son compte l'analyse de Muhsin Kizilkaya, du journal Birgün : « Comme nous ne parvenons pas vraiment à discuter de la question kurde ou à faire des efforts pour la résoudre, et comme nous n'arrivons pas à éliminer le PKK, nous punissons le DTP simplement parce qu'il est à portée de main et plus facile à atteindre. »

Et Birand d'enchaîner : « Nous avons choisi le DTP comme cible. Ils sont tout proches. Ils ne sont pas dans les montagnes, mais au Parlement, parmi nous. Nous les rencontrons chaque jour. Nous les entendons à la télévision. Nous pouvons les attraper quand nous le voulons, à la différence du PKK. Nous devenons fous à chaque fois que nous sommes frappés par le terrorisme, et notre envie de lyncher le DTP croît chaque jour. »

« Les pulsions de lynchage, qui existent habituellement au sein de la population, ont contaminé l'État à présent. En réalité, le DTP ne fait rien d'autre qu'exprimer le souhait que Öcalan aille dans les monts du Kandil. Cette attitude, baptisée "Autonomie démocratique", prend naissance dans l'idée qui consiste à dire "Gouvernons-nous nous-mêmes et partageons notre culture et notre langue". Aujourd'hui, c'est une coquille vide, mais elle se remplira le moment venu. »

Pour le chroniqueur, cette « situation complexe » a incité le DTP à « se radicaliser, parallèlement aux développements régionaux et conformément aux directives d'Öcalan ». « Le DTP s'est autoproclamé parti kurde, de la même manière qu'est apparu le terrorisme du PKK. Il a cessé de dissimuler ses différences. »

« Comme vous le voyez, écrit Birand, on assiste à une partie d'échecs. La sanction qui consiste à interdire le DTP fait partie des règles du jeu. D'accord, mais fermer le parti serait une grosse faute, même s'il est vrai que le DTP devrait jouer le jeu dans le respect des règles. Il doit prendre ses distances avec le terrorisme et contraindre le PKK à rendre les armes. Comme l'a dit Hassan Cemal, conclut le chroniqueur, le DTP doit s'inscrire dans le processus démocratique ou se préparer à assumer les conséquences s'il décide de soutenir le terrorisme. »



## Iran : arrestation de onze rebelles kurdes

**TEHERAN, 25 nov 2007 (AFP)**

Les forces du ministère iranien des Renseignements ont arrêté onze membres du groupe rebelle séparatiste kurde Pejak (PJAK), accusés d'avoir commis plusieurs attentats et actions armées, selon un communiqué officiel publié dimanche par l'agence semi-officielle Mehr.

"Un groupe lié au Pejak a été démantelé par les forces du ministère des Renseignements (...) et onze membres actifs ont été arrêtés et remis à la justice", selon le communiqué du ministère.

Les membres du groupe avaient "commis un attentat lors d'une exposition sur la défense sacrée (guerre Iran-Irak), attaqué et incendié un commissariat de police à Sanandaj (chef-lieu de la province iranienne du Kurdistan) et fait exploser plusieurs bombes", ajoute le texte.

Le Pejak, acronyme du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan, est lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui lutte depuis 1984 contre le

gouvernement turc dans le sud-est anatolien. Basé dans le nord-est de l'Irak, le Pejak est responsable de plusieurs attaques contre les forces de l'ordre iraniennes.

L'Iran accuse les États-Unis de soutenir le Pejak, ainsi que d'autres organisations ethniques aux frontières de l'Iran, ce que Washington a toujours démenti.

Le 8 novembre, le quotidien gouvernemental Iran a annoncé la mort de trois rebelles kurdes tués par les forces de l'ordre dans la province du Kurdistan.

Depuis deux ans, les rebelles du Pejak ont multiplié les actions armées dans les provinces occidentales de l'Iran, le long de la frontière avec l'Irak et la Turquie.



## Irak: le Kurdistan honorera ses contrats pétroliers malgré Bagdad

**ERBIL (Irak), 26 nov 2007 (AFP)**

Le Kurdistan irakien, région autonome du nord de l'Irak, "mettra en oeuvre" les contrats pétroliers qu'il a signés avec des compagnies étrangères, malgré l'opposition du gouvernement central de Bagdad, a déclaré le Premier ministre kurde Nechirvan Barzani.

"Les contrats pétroliers signés par le gouvernement du Kurdistan seront mis en oeuvre. Personne ne peut annuler des contrats signés par le Kurdistan", a affirmé dimanche à Erbil M. Barzani.

En fin de semaine, le ministre irakien du pétrole Hussein Chahristani avait affirmé avoir annulé une quinzaine de contrats pétroliers signés récemment par les autorités du Kurdistan irakien -- région autonome et alliée des Américains--.

Ces contrats sont "nuls et illégaux" et "ne seront pas reconnus", selon le ministère du Pétrole à Bagdad.

"Nous regrettons les propos de M. Chahristani", a commenté dimanche

devant la presse M. Barzani à l'occasion d'une cérémonie officielle.

"En cas de problème, l'Irak a un tribunal fédéral auquel M. Chahristani peut s'adresser", a-t-il simplement ajouté.

Début novembre, les autorités du Kurdistan irakien ont approuvé la signature de sept nouveaux contrats pétroliers.

Au total, quinze blocs ont été attribués à ce jour par le gouvernement kurde depuis l'adoption en août 2007 par la région d'une loi sur le pétrole et le gaz. Une vingtaine de compagnies étrangères opèrent désormais au Kurdistan, ceci malgré l'opposition du gouvernement central de Bagdad qui y voit une remise en cause de sa souveraineté.

Le ministre Chahristani a déjà déclaré à plusieurs reprises considérer ces contrats comme "illégaux", menaçant les compagnies concernées de ne plus avoir "l'opportunité de travailler avec le gouvernement irakien".

Ces menaces sont restées sans effet à ce jour.

November 19, 2007

# As violence in Iraq ebbs, role of Iran is examined

From news reports

**BAGHDAD:** Violence was down 55 percent in Iraq since the U.S. troop buildup began this summer, but it was unclear what role Iran played in the downturn, U.S. officials said Sunday, tempering recent optimism about Tehran's waning support for militants with warnings that more needs to be done.

Washington has accused Iran of training, arming and funding Shiite extremists inside Iraq. In recent weeks, U.S. and Iraqi officials have said that Tehran appears to have halted the flow of arms across its border into Iraq and reined in Shiite militias.

An Iraqi government spokesman, Ali al-Dabbagh, said Saturday that Tehran had helped to persuade the Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr to ask his Mahdi militia to halt attacks. Sadr ordered his militia to stop using weapons in early September, and officials said that the stand-down by Mahdi members had helped improve stability. They said it also seemed to have helped decrease the frequency of attacks with explosively formed penetrators, a powerful type of bomb that can pierce heavy armor.

Since Sadr gave his order in mid-September, the numbers of unidentified bodies found on the streets of Baghdad daily had rarely exceeded a half-dozen. When his militia was active, there were often as many as 30 or more unidentified bodies found daily. "The freezing of the Mahdi Army makes us feel they have good intentions," Dabbagh said. "Iran played a role in this."

Dabbagh said that the turning point came when Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki visited Iran in August and met with its supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in the Shiite shrine city of Mashad. Maliki told the Iranian leader that "Iran had to choose whether to support the government or any other party and Iraq will decide according to which they choose," Dabbagh said.

The Iranians promised to help and have done so, he said.

Dabbagh's comments echoed those of the U.S. military here, who in recent days had gone out of their way to publicly acknowledge Iran's role in helping to slow the flow of weapons into the country.

But U.S. officials said Sunday that it was too early to determine Iran's role in a recent sharp downturn in violence. "It's unclear to us what role the Iranians might have had in these developments, if any," said Philip Reeker, spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

"It's difficult to read trends in reductions," Reeker said at a news conference



Patrick Baz/Agenc

U.S. soldiers resting after a patrol in a village south of Baghdad. Iraqi and U.S. officials attributed a recent decline in attacks to more troops and fewer weapons in the country.

in the U.S.-guarded Green Zone in Baghdad, continuing "to draw direct lines from that data — to say that there are fewer attacks and conclude that there's a particular reason for it."

He added: "Vis-à-vis Iran's action — that is something we're not yet prepared to do."

Overall, attacks in Iraq had fallen 55 percent since nearly 30,000 U.S. reinforcements arrived in Iraq by June, said Rear Admiral Gregory Smith, a U.S. military spokesman. Some areas were at their lowest levels of violence since the summer of 2005, he said.

Iraqi civilian casualties were down 60 percent across the country since June, and the figure for Baghdad was even better — 75 percent, Smith said.

Dabbagh also said Saturday that the Shiite-dominated government was making renewed efforts to bring back Sunni Arab ministers who had been boycotting the government for more than four months.

He said that the government wanted the Sunni Arab bloc to return and that he believed a government with the bloc in it "was better than one without it."

In one concession, Maliki has made a point of allowing a lengthy debate and review on the execution of Sultan Hashim Ahmed, minister of defense under Saddam Hussein. In September, Hashim was found guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced to

hang.

His execution was halted while the judiciary and the government reviewed the case after objections from Kurds and Sunni Arabs, who believed he was not responsible for the policies he was forced to enact. (AP, IHT)

## ■ 17 killed in bomb attacks

At least 17 people were killed Sunday by explosions across Iraq, Iraqi police and officials said, according to Reuters.

Nine people were killed and at least 20 were wounded in one of the worst attacks in Baghdad in several weeks, which the police said targeted Salman al-Mugotar, an adviser with the Finance Ministry.

A Finance Ministry source said that Mugotar was unhurt in the blast in Hurriya Square in the capital's Karrada district, but that his security guards were reported to have been wounded.

Brigadier-General Abdul-Karim Khalaf, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry, said the car that was targeted belonged to Satar Jabar, chief editor of the New al-Bayna newspaper.

He said Jabar was riding in the car but was also unharmed. He gave a lower death toll for the attack.

A Reuters witness at the scene saw two burned corpses in the back of a police truck.

**REUTERS** 

## Iraq's Kurdistan bans media from going to PKK bases

November 19, 2007 By Shamal Aqrabi and Aseel Kami

**BAGHDAD (Reuters)** - Iraq's northern Kurdistan region have banned journalists from travelling to Kurdish rebel bases, officials said on Monday, accusing the media of aggravating the crisis with Turkey.

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) spokesman Jamal Abdullah said the semi-autonomous KRG would stop journalists going to Iraq's northern border and interviewing Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) rebels who have launched attacks against Turkish soldiers.

"We will not allow journalists or the media to send any reporter ... to where the PKK are, whether on the border or the area of Qandil mountains," Abdullah said.

He said media reports had led to an "acceleration of the crisis with Turkey". "We will try in different ways to calm the situation," he said.

Turkey has massed 100,000 troops backed by tanks, artillery and planes on Iraq's border and threatened to launch a major military operation to crush PKK fighters.

Iraqi President Jalal al-Talabani, a Kurd, said last week that a limited invasion appeared inevitable.

Abdullah denied accusations from media watchdog, the Iraqi Journalistic Freedoms Observatory, that Kurdish security forces had detained several

journalists.

The Iraqi non-governmental organisation said a team working for al-Hurra television, including correspondent Ali al-Yasi, was detained in the Zakho area near the Turkish border.

It said a Japanese television reporter had also been detained in the Bativa border area but did provide any more details.

Journalists have flocked to Iraq's northern border as tensions have grown over attacks on Turkish soldiers by PKK rebels operating from Iraq's mountainous north.

The KRG has taken steps to block supplies to the rebels, but Ankara is pressing Iraq to do more.

The Journalistic Freedoms Observatory said in a statement that it rejected "random decisions" by the Kurdish government, adding that authorities had been "harassing" journalists and hindering their work.

The Iraqi Association of Defence of Journalists' Rights, another non-governmental organization, said an order preventing journalists from going to border regions had been issued by the Kurdistan president's office on November 14.

Abdullah said no such order had been issued.

November 20, 2007

**Guardian**

## Iraq: High-level quarrel highlights rift between Sunnis, Shiites

By **HAMZA HENDAWI**

**BAGHDAD (AP)** - Iraq's prime minister lashed out at the country's Sunni Arab vice president in an interview published Tuesday, drawing attention to a bitter rift between two key politicians from rival sects at a time the U.S. is pressing for Iraqi unity.

The outburst by Nouri al-Maliki, printed in a London-based, Arabic-language daily, al-Maliki, a Shiite, said Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi was to blame for a backlog of legislation adopted by parliament but not yet ratified by the three-man presidential council of which the Sunni is a member.

Al-Maliki also said al-Hashemi's Iraq Accordance Front, the largest Sunni bloc in parliament, was not representative of the country's Sunni Arab community.

The prime minister said he had given up trying to persuade five members of al-Hashemi's bloc to return to Cabinet posts they abandoned last August in a dispute with al-Maliki.

Al-Maliki said he planned to name other Sunnis from Anbar province and the cities of Tikrit and Mosul to those Cabinet posts and that "we are in the final selection stage."

For months, al-Hashemi has been a sharp

newspaper read throughout the Arab world, occurred as American officials are urging the Iraqis to take advantage of a downturn in violence to resolve their differences before next year's planned drawdown of U.S. forces.

In the interview, published by Al-Hayat, a L

and outspoken critic of al-Maliki, accusing him of pursuing pro-Shiite sectarian policies and restricting decision-making inside a small circle of top aides from his Dawa party.

However, al-Maliki's attack on al-Hashemi and his criticism of the Accordance Front suggested that the rift between the two sides was widening, rather than closing.

"It's a campaign to discredit good intentions," said Lubnah al-Hashemi, the vice president's daughter and his press secretary.

"But we refuse to be drawn into a war of words through the media," she said.

She said the vice president has refused to sign off on some legislation because he wanted "certain things" added in the public interest. She did not elaborate.

The vice president's office e-mailed to The Associated Press a list of 13 draft laws he had rejected. Most were relatively minor.



One exception was a bill allowing investors to build and run oil refineries.

The vice president said the legislation could lead to a monopoly over an essential commodity.

Al-Hashemi's ally in the Accordance Front, Adnan al-Dulaimi, said their bloc never claimed it spoke for all Sunni Arabs.

"I wonder why al-Maliki included us in the government and gave us several ministerial posts if we were not representing the Sunnis," al-Dulaimi said.

The U.S. military says overall attacks have fallen 55 percent since nearly 30,000 additional American troops arrived in Iraq by June, and that parts of the country are experiencing their lowest levels of violence in more than two years.

November 20, 2007

**Guardian**

## Turkey's fickle friends



**Arrogant acts by the country's generals, the Bush administration and the EU have doomed prospects for peace with the Kurds**

**Stephen Kinzer**

The democratic revolution that has brought unprecedented levels of freedom to Turkey in recent years will not be complete until the festering Kurdish problem is resolved. When I toured the Kurdish region two years ago, a solution seemed tantalisingly close. Kurds were overflowing with optimism. Now that optimism has crashed back into frustration and anger. What happened?

In the summer of 2005, prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan flew to Diyarbakir, the biggest city in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast, and delivered a speech that was shocking in its candor. "A great and powerful nation must have the confidence to face itself, recognise the mistakes and sins of the past and march confidently into the future," he said. "The Kurdish issue does not belong to a part of our nation, but to us all ... We accept it as real and are ready to face it." Today, southeastern Turkey is again militarised. Thousands of soldiers are poised to stage cross-border raids into northern Iraq, where Kurdish guerrillas of the rebel PKK maintain fortified bases. Turks who call for a peaceful, democratic solution to the Kurdish problem are once again branded traitors. Kurdish mayors are being arrested.

Last week, Turkish prosecutors accused the main Kurdish political party, which might have been a bridge between Kurdish and Turkish nationalists, of collaborating with the PKK, and asked the supreme court to ban it. Some of the party's supporters took to the streets in protest, and violent clashes ensued.

There are three villains in this sad story. First is the Turkish state. In 1999 security officers captured the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan. At

his trial he repented his rebellion and said he wanted to "serve the state" by asking his followers to lay down their weapons. But the state, which was then still dominated by generals, refused his offer. Military commanders have never wavered from their fierce conviction that the Kurdish challenge can only be met with force and that to suggest cooperating with Ocalan was treasonous.

The second blow to the dreams of reconciliation in southeastern Turkey was dealt by the United States, through its invasion of Iraq in 2003. Turks understood perfectly well that this invasion would produce a fragmentation of power in Iraq that would allow the PKK to establish protected bases in regions bordering on Turkey. They warned the Bush administration that an invasion would open a deep breach between the US and Turkey, and also set off a new and destabilising Middle East crisis. These warnings were brushed aside with the same response President Bush and his aides gave to other warnings they heard in 2003: we are determined to invade Iraq, we are powerful enough to resolve whatever problems might emerge afterward and anyone who believes otherwise is defeatist.

Precisely what Turks predicted has now happened. The Kurdish regime in northern Iraq has given sanctuary to PKK guerrillas, and those guerrillas are launching deadly forays into Turkey. This has set Turkey afire with outrage and made any peaceful overture to Kurds politically impossible.

The final blow to Kurdish hopes came from Europe. When I travelled through the Kurdish region of Turkey two years ago, everyone I met told me that the main reason they felt so hopeful

was that Turkey was progressing toward membership in the European Union. That meant the army could not repress them and prosecutors could not limit their freedom of speech. Then, last December, the EU slammed its door in Turkey's face by suspending talks on key aspects of Turkey's application.

This was an enormous gift to anti-democratic forces in Turkey. Nowhere has it had greater impact than in the Kurdish region. Diplomats in faraway Brussels, claiming perhaps sincerely to represent the democratically expressed wishes of their constituents, undermined the nascent democracy that had been settling over southeastern Turkey.

The inevitable crisis to which these misbegotten policies gave birth has now erupted. Prime minister Erdogan, much to his credit, has refused to order the massive attack on northern Iraq that would make him a national hero. He realises that an attack would not succeed in wiping out the PKK, would weaken Turkish democracy by giving new power to military commanders and would further diminish Turkey's already dimmed chances of entering the EU.

Arrogant acts by Turkish generals, the Bush administration and the EU have devastated prospects for peace in southeastern Turkey. Prime minister Erdogan, who not long ago seemed on the verge of a historic breakthrough that might have brought peace to that long-suffering region, now has little margin for decisive action. It is an example of how fully even mid-sized powers like Turkey are at the mercy of those who claim to be their friends.

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## Kurdistan dispute damps hopes of further rise in Iraqi exports

**FINANCIAL TIMES**

**November 22 2007**

**By Steve Negus, Iraq Correspondent, and Dino Mahtani in London**

Iraq said yesterday it had boosted oil exports to nearly 2m barrels a day, thanks to the opening of a pipeline to Turkey. However, hopes for future increases could be damped by an increasingly vicious dispute between the Baghdad oil ministry and the northern Kurdistan autonomous region.

Falah Alamri, director general of Iraq's State Oil Marketing Organisation, told an international security forum in Bahrain that exports were now 1.8m-1.9m b/d, and production was 2.5m b/d - the highest that it has been since late 2004.

Iraqi exports in September reached 1.9m b/d, a postwar record, and unlike earlier spikes the increase appears to have been sustained. The principal reason for the increased exports are the 300,000 b/d now traveling from the northern Kirkuk region to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan. The new pipeline, which had been paralyzed by attacks, opened in August.

Mr Alamri said production could increase to 3m b/d by the end of 2008 and to 6m b/d within six years. However, Iraq's chances of attracting foreign investment into the sector depend heavily on the

passage of a law regulating the oil industry and the chances of its swift passage have been set back by an increasingly bitter exchange of accusations between Baghdad and Kurdistan officials.

The KRG and Baghdad have been deadlocked for more than a year on details of the proposed law and are now clashing over who has the right to sign deals with oil companies in the interim.

The Kurdistan government says Iraq's constitution gives it the right to develop new oil fields in its territory, and it last week announced five new exploration deals with

companies from Britain, South Korea and elsewhere. The Iraqi press yesterday quoted Hussein al-Falluji, a lawmaker from the Sunni-led Iraqi Consensus Front, as saying parliament was preparing a blacklist of companies that had signed contracts with the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The statement echoed remarks by Hussein al-Shahrastani, the oil minister who last week warned that any oil company that signed a contract without federal government approval would "compromise their chances of getting business in future in Iraq".

Mr Shahrستاني also said that he would use legislation in force during the regime of the deposed president Saddam Hussein to strike deals with foreign groups. In a statement released late on Tuesday, the KRG accused Mr Shahrستاني of having "chosen to side with anti-Kurdish elements from the

Saddam era" and also of incompetence.

"Dr Shahrستاني has failed to deliver any meaningful projects through his ministry year after year. He has not managed to spend even a quarter of the annual federal budget allocated to his ministry and is now trying

also to deter others from doing the right thing for the country."

Despite the KRG's insistence that it has the constitution on its side, the leverage Baghdad enjoys thanks to its control over the vast oil fields in southern Iraq will probably deter most big oil companies from doing business in Kurdistan. "A KRG

agreement is now the kiss of death in Baghdad," said one foreign company executive who does business in Iraq. However, Baghdad itself could face difficulties lining up foreign investment deals as long as the law remains in dispute.

## TURKISH DAILY NEWS

November 22, 2007

# President sees 'common sense' in N. Iraq

ANKARA - Reuters

The president said on Wednesday "common sense" was gaining ground in northern Iraq, in comments that seemed to signal a reduced chance of Turkish military intervention against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Ankara has massed up to 100,000 troops near its mountainous border with Iraq, backed up by tanks, artillery and warplanes, in preparation for a possible incursion to root out militants of the outlawed the PKK hiding there.

But analysts say improved intelligence sharing between NATO allies the United States and Turkey and measures taken by the autonomous Kurdish administration in northern Iraq have lessened the likelihood of a major Turkish cross-border incursion. Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government has set up roadblocks to stop the flow of food and fuel to the PKK members, who use the region as a launchpad for attacks on targets inside Turkey.

"We see that common sense has slowly started to dominate in northern Iraq," Turkey's Anatolian state news agency quoted President Abdullah Gül as saying during a visit to Tbilisi in neighbouring Georgia. "The northern Iraq administration

must assess carefully the costs of using the PKK and the benefits of cooperating with Turkey," Gul said.

Turkey has long accused Masoud Barzani's administration of giving the PKK free rein in the region. Barzani has refused repeated requests from Ankara to crack down on the rebels but has begun to act after increased U.S. pressure.

Both Washington and Baghdad are anxious to avert a major Turkish incursion into northern Iraq, fearing this could destabilise the wider region.

"The question of whether an operation is made must be left to the political and military experts," said Gul, stressing the need for a "cool-headed" approach to fighting terrorism.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari said on Tuesday in Brussels he saw a reduced risk of a major Turkish incursion because of improved cooperation between Ankara and Washington.

Also on Tuesday, two senior U.S. generals visited Ankara to discuss intelligence sharing with Turkey's military.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was due to discuss the northern Iraq si-



**SIGNS:** After weeks of saber rattling in Turkey, President Gül (left) sees encouraging signs emanating from northern Iraq. The military, led by Gen. Yaşar Büyükanit, still believe an incursion into northern Iraq is necessary. AA photo

tuation on Wednesday with General Yaşar Büyükanit, head of Turkey's powerful military General Staff.

Ankara blames the PKK for the deaths of nearly 40,000 people since the group launched its armed campaign for an ethnic homeland in southeast Turkey in 1984. The United States and European Union, like Turkey, consider it a terrorist group.

## Iraqi forces detain dozens in major offensive in oil-rich northern city of Kirkuk

AP Associated Press

The Associated Press November 24, 2007

**BAGHDAD:** Authorities imposed a daylong curfew in the northern city of Kirkuk and surrounding areas on Saturday as Iraqi security forces captured dozens of suspected militants during a major offensive amid fears of violence in the oil-rich area.

Acting on intelligence, more than 1,000 Iraqi police and army soldiers poured into the streets of the violence-plagued city, 290 kilometers (180 miles) north of Baghdad.

Maj. Gen. Jamal Tahir Bakir, the chief of police for the Tamim province, said the operation dubbed "Revolutionary Eagle" was aimed at bombing networks and other insurgent activities after tips indicated new attacks were planned.

The 11-hour curfew began at 6 a.m. to keep ordinary Iraqis inside as security forces went house-to-house, seizing weapons and searching for militants and signs of car bombs believed to have been smuggled into the city.

Iraqi troops detained 18 militants believed to be part of a roadside bomb network targeting security forces and 135 other suspects accused of "terrorist activities," Bakir said, declining to be more specific. He also said 40 rifles were confiscated.

The local police chief in the provincial capital of Kirkuk, Maj. Gen. Torhan Abdul-Rahman, said the operation was launched after 22 wanted militants and 11 other suspects had been detained late Friday in Hawija, which is south of Kirkuk.

Kirkuk has seen a recent rise in violence that authorities have blamed in part on insurgents who fled security crackdowns in Baghdad and surrounding areas as well as an argument over the city's status.

Kurds want to incorporate it into their self-rule area, but the idea has met stiff resistance from Arabs and a constitutionally required referendum on the issue was recently delayed.

Kirkuk is an especially coveted city for both the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government in Baghdad and the Kurdish one in Irbil.

Much of Iraq's vast oil wealth lies under the ground in the region, as well as in the Shiite-controlled south. Kurds refer to Kirkuk as the "Kurdish Jerusalem," and control of the area's oil resources and its cultural attachment to Kurdistan have been hotly contested.



# Shiite leader defends Iran; bill to ease curbs on Saddam loyalists draws fire

AP Associated Press

November 25, 2007 By Sameer N. Yacoub Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD—Iraq's most influential Shiite politician said Sunday that the U.S. had not backed up claims that Iran is fueling violence here, underscoring a wide gap on the issue between Washington and the Shiite-led Baghdad government.

A draft bill to ease curbs on ex-Saddam Hussein loyalists in government services also drew sharp criticism from Shiite lawmakers, opening old wounds at a time when the United States is pressing the Iraqis for compromise for the sake of national unity.

The Americans have long accused the Iranians of arming and training Shiite militias, including some linked to the U.S.-backed government of Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

U.S. officials have also alleged that Iran has provided weapons used to kill Americans -- a charge the Iranians vehemently deny.

"These are only accusations raised by the multinational forces and I think these accusations need more proof," Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the Supreme Islamic Iraq Council, told reporters.

Al-Hakim, who has been undergoing treatment for lung cancer in Iran, said the Iranians have insisted in meetings with Iraqi officials that "their true will is to support the Iraqi government" and to promote stability.

"They have a long history of standing by the Iraqi people and that is their official stance that is presented to the press without any hesitation," he said.

Al-Hakim spent years in exile in Iran during Saddam's regime and is considered closer to the Iranians than any of the major Iraqi Shiite leaders. His party has also closely cooperated with American authorities since the 2003 collapse of Saddam's regime, and he has met with President Bush in the Oval Office.

His comments were made ahead of a new round of talks between U.S. and Iranian officials here over ways to promote stability in Iraq and exploit the sharp downturn in violence since the U.S. sent 30,000 reinforcements early this year.

No date for the next U.S.-Iranian talks has been announced. The Americans are expected to raise concerns about Iranian influence among Shiite armed groups, although U.S. officials have said they believe the flow of Iranian arms has been curtailed.

This month, the U.S. military released nine Iranians who had been held in Iraq for months. They included two accused of being members of the elite Quds Force suspected of arming Shiite extremists.

But the U.S. military has blamed an Iranian-backed Shiite cell for a bombing Friday in a Baghdad market that killed 15 people -- the deadliest attack in the heart of the capital in more than two months.

A U.S. military spokesman, Rear. Adm. Gregory Smith stressed he was not accusing Iran of ordering the attack.

Nonetheless, Iran dismissed any suggestion that it was at fault.

"Contradictory reports have been heard about the bombing. But remarks by the Americans were made with the aim of making propaganda against Iran," Mohammad Ali Hosseini, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, told reporters Sunday in Tehran.

Although major Kurdish and Shiite parties maintain ties to Iran, suspicion of the Iranians runs deep within the country's Sunni Arab community, including those groups that have abandoned the insurgency and agreed to work with American forces.

Sunni fears of Iranian domination are among the obstacles standing in the way of reconciliation among Iraq's religious and ethnic communities.

Another hurdle has been Sunni complaints that they have been marginalized politically by regulations that banned former members of Saddam's Baath party from holding government jobs or running for public office.

The United States has been pressing the Iraqis to relax the ban to allow thousands of lower-ranking Baathists to regain their posts.

On Sunday, parliament began debate on the latest draft bill. But the session adjourned after Shiite legislators loyal to anti-American cleric Muq-

tada al-Sadr began pounding their fists on their tables in protest.

"This law is unconstitutional and moreover, it worries about the future of the Baathists while ignoring their victims who suffered a lot because of Baath party and the regime," Nasser al-Rubaie, parliamentary leader of the 30-member Sadrist bloc, told The Associated Press.

The prospect of rehabilitating former Baathists did not sit well with Shiite lawmakers from other political parties. Many of them suffered terribly under the Sunni-dominated Saddam regime.

"This draft amounts to an unannounced general pardon by the government," said Safiya al-Suhail, a Shiite woman lawmaker whose father was assassinated by Saddam's agents in Beirut in the 1990s.

"There is no punishment for wrongdoers," she added. "The victims of the former regime should see justice done to them. We will not accept national reconciliation at the expense of justice."

Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish lawmaker, said parliament would discuss



**Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, left, welcomes leader of the Supreme Islamic Iraq Council Abdul Aziz al**

**Hakim, front center, for a meeting in Tehran, Iran, seen in this Tuesday, Nov. 13, 2007, file photo. AP**

**Hakim, Iraq's most influential Shiite politician, disputes U.S. claims that Iran is fomenting violence in this country, underscoring a wide gap between Washington and Baghdad over Tehran's role. (AP Photo)**

the draft again on Wednesday.

"I think that the bill is in general a good one," Othman said. "The country is in dire need of national reconciliation...Iraqis should abandon revenge and adopt forgiveness."

Ten people were reported killed following two bombings in the capital -- a car bomb near a medical complex in Baghdad that killed nine and one in a roadside bomb targeting an Iraqi army patrol. Nearly 40 people were injured in the two blasts.

Still, the carnage is well below the levels of last year, when Shiite and Sunni extremists swarmed the city, slaughtering members of the rival sect.

Ten suspected Sunni militants were killed and eight captured during a U.S. operation against al-Qaida fighters north of Samarra, the U.S. military said. The fight began when U.S. soldiers came under fire Saturday as they approached the target area, a statement said. Soldiers called for help from an unspecified aircraft, which killed eight people. Seven others were detained.

Hours later, soldiers in the same area saw three men inside a vehicle and called for them to come out. One man complied and was detained. Two others remained in the vehicle and detonated a suicide vest, which caused the vehicle to explode in flames, killing both of them, the statement said.



## Interview: KRG minister on Iraq oil beef

November 27, 2007

By BEN LANDO, UPI Energy Editor

**WASHINGTON, Nov. 27 (UPI)** -- Iraqi Kurdistan's oil minister, Ashti Hawrami, begins his U.S. tour of political and business leaders from Washington to Texas a hot item with international oil companies, but with icy relations with his counterpart in Baghdad.

He has signed around 20 oil deals with international oil companies, most after the national oil minister labeled them illegal.

Hawrami blames Baghdad for playing politics with a national oil law, prompting the Kurdistan Regional Government to move ahead with its own regional oil law in August.

And he simultaneously defends his oil deals as constitutional while condemning Iraqi Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani's plans to rely on the Saddam Hussein-era legal regime to sign its own contracts.

"I tell the critics that rather than focus on these silly issues they should be focusing on doing something positive for the Iraqi people," Hawrami told United Press International in an interview.

Hawrami, joined by Qubad Talabani, son of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and the KRG's main man in Washington, as well as another KRG-Washington staffer, was frank about his beef with Baghdad, defending the KRG's strategy, and the future where he would produce nearly half the amount of oil Iraq is pumping today.

"You cannot blame people from getting frustrated when time and time again the only thing Dr. Shahristani does is shout 'illegal' for any achievement Kurdistan makes. That is not the way to work. So when he puts people into corners, he should expect a message back," he said, adding he hasn't met with Shahristani since April.

"Sign some contracts, generate some revenue, remedy the wells which are not producing, increase the production. That's what we should be doing rather than saying, 'Oh, no, no, no you have no right to do that' and leave it in the ground for the next generation," he said. "These are empty gestures. They are unhelpful. It appears that some in Baghdad basically want to have control in their hands, for wrong reasons usually, to come back and fight us again as before."

The KRG's motives may be rooted in the Saddam-era carnage, but one need only look back two years, when Iraq's Constitution took the vague route in order to secure passage. Now either side of the debate -- be it over the draft oil law itself or signing oil deals -- uses its own interpretation.

The KRG is accused of acting unilaterally, ignoring the overall Iraqi oil strategy, which many experts say should focus on fixing the current infrastructure instead of finding more oil to pump.

The status of the oil law is as murky as its contents. It was drafted by three technocrats more than a year ago, altered during negotiations between Hawrami and Thamir Ghadhban, top energy adviser to Iraq's prime minister and one of the three authors,

and altered some more after that.

It's a lightning rod because it could drastically alter two of the only aspects from the past decades in Iraq that has wide support in the country: a centrally controlled oil sector and one that has strict limitations on foreign oil company participation.

Iraq's oil production has averaged about 2 million barrels per day since 2003, though recent security improvements pushed it to around 2.4 million bpd last month. As the oil sector has stagnated compared with its potential, so has the life of Iraqis suffering daily threats of death and decreasing quality of life.

Baghdad has been unable to stop it, let alone invest money into the oil sector. The KRG was unwilling to wait.

It first signed oil deals in 2004, looking to explore its three-province region that was cut from development by Saddam. Of the 115 billion barrels of Iraq's proven oil reserves -- the largest in the world after Saudi Arabia and Iran -- only 0.5 percent is under KRG control.

Since Sept. 8, when it announced a controversial oil deal with Dallas-based Hunt Oil, it has signed another 14 production-sharing contracts with companies from around the world, including India's Reliance, Austria's OMV, Hungary's MOL and Norbest, an affiliate of BP's Russian arm, as well as some KRG-owned firms.

"We continue in our efforts," Hawrami said when asked if there are any more on the horizon. "We are not in a rush signing them off but if we have the right company competing appropriately to serve our policy or targets then there is nothing to hold it up."

This week Iraq's Oil Ministry escalated its rhetoric. It first called the deals "illegal" -- and threatened to blacklist any company that signs with the KRG -- but has now said the deals are nullified.

Just around the time of the Hunt deal, Shahristani announced he would no longer wait for the national law either. Last week he told UPI he is in discussions with oil companies over technical service agreements to enhance Iraq's largest producing fields.

"I encourage him to sign agreements; I have no problem with that. He should be relying on the constitution, that's a far stronger message to international oil companies," Hawrami said.

"Saddam's laws if they contradict the constitution, which most of them do, are null and void," he said, "So you cannot rely on Saddam's laws but you can rely on the constitution and you can rely on the future oil and gas law when it is passed. That is the way to forge ahead with our development and future negotiations."

Hawrami said the two 2004 deals, one with Norway's DNO and the other with a venture between Turkey's Genel Enerji and Canada's Addax Petroleum, will help the KRG produce 200,000 bpd within two years and 1 million bpd in five years.

## Turkish Army Urges Kurds to Surrender

November 28, 2007

By SELCAN HACAĞLU Associated Press Writer

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) -- The Turkish military, massed in increasing numbers for a possible assault on Kurdish rebels in Iraq, has begun dropping leaflets urging rebels to surrender and "be welcomed with love," an official said Tuesday.

In recent weeks, Turkey has moved more soldiers and artillery units to the border with Iraq for a possible cross-border offensive against Kurdish rebel bases.

At the same time, with an amnesty in effect, army helicopters have dropped thousands of leaflets on mountain paths used by the rebels to infiltrate Turkey, a government official said. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media. He did not say when the campaign began.

"Make your decision and leave the organization. Go to the nearest military unit or police station. You will be welcomed with love," said one leaflet found by a villager on a mountain path near the border town of Cukurca, the private Dogan news agency reported Tuesday.

The amnesty program has existed for 17 years but has failed to lure most rebels into giving up. The announcement of the new campaign coincided with the 29th anniversary of the founding of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK.

The leaflet, bearing a photograph of a rebel and a smiling Turkish commando, promised amnesty for rebels who have voluntarily left the group and are not engaged in fighting. Rebel leaders who share critical information about the

group also qualify for the amnesty.

The leaflets were dropped from military helicopters taking off from a base near Cukurca, where the borders of Iran, Iraq and Turkey converge, Dogan reported.

In another leaflet, the news agency reported, the telephone numbers of police and paramilitary police were listed, along with a slogan: "The road to freedom is very close."

The PKK has been fighting for autonomy in the predominantly Kurdish southeast since 1984, when it launched its first attack on a military outpost.

Public pressure on the government to attack rebel bases in northern Iraq has built up as rebel attacks have increased.

The United States, however, worries that a Turkish incursion could bring instability to the north - a region that has been the calmest part of Iraq - and could set a precedent for other countries, such as Iran, that have conflicts with Kurdish rebels.

Washington has agreed to share intelligence about rebel positions in the region. And the Iraqi Kurdish administration in northern Iraq has promised to prevent the rebels from attacking Turkey.

But Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan said in the U.S. that Iraqi Kurdish authorities have not taken any "satisfactory measures" against the PKK so far, the state-run Anatolia news agency said Tuesday.

Dallas Morning News November 28, 2007

## Kurds defend recruiting foreign oil producers, including Hunt

Hunt's, Perot's firms among 20 there despite Baghdad's threats

By DAVE MICHAELS / The Dallas Morning News

WASHINGTON - Midway through a tour of Washington and Texas, Kurdish leaders defended their break with Baghdad on oil production, promising to double the number of foreign companies drilling in their territory by the middle of next year.

Two months after Hunt Oil Co. announced its agreement with the Kurds, the Dallas independent looks like the best-known company with eyes for Iraqi Kurdistan.

But 20 foreign companies are operating there, including Ross Perot Jr.'s Hillwood International Energy, despite warnings from Baghdad that regional officials lack authority to grant such contracts.

Illegal?

"Every time we hear the word *illegal*, we sign new contracts," Ashti Hawrami, minister of natural resources for the Kurdistan Regional Government, said Tuesday.

Last week, Baghdad's Oil Ministry said firms that signed agreements with the Kurds would be blacklisted from future deals with Iraq. Iraq's oil minister insists that foreign companies wait for a national energy law governing investment and production. Kurds insist their own petroleum law is good enough.

Mr. Hawrami said the ministry's threat wouldn't dampen excitement about investing in his region. But many of the major oil companies have stayed away, a choice

that Mr. Hawrami attributed to the size of parcels that Kurdish leaders have offered. "Maybe Kurdistan is too small for them," he said.

Instead, the region has emerged as attractive to midsize companies such as Hunt Oil, which favors territory that hasn't been picked over. Kurdish officials expect \$10 billion in investment by next year, boosting their area's production by 1 million barrels per day within five years.

Yet many questions remain, including how to export oil without the national government's blessing. Mr. Hawrami admitted that Baghdad could block access to the pipeline that carries oil to the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

"Even Saddam Hussein didn't use those tactics," he said.

Kurdish officials said production in so-called disputed territories would boost output by another 1 million barrels per day. So far, the Kurds have not awarded any exploration rights in those areas, Mr. Hawrami said.

Hunt Oil's concession lies in Nineveh province, which is historically Kurdish yet claimed by Sunni Arabs. Mr. Hawrami said Hunt Oil has nothing to worry about because the region is 90 percent Kurdish and has been administered by Kurds "year after year."

Hunt Oil is prepared for the possibility that control of Nineveh could change hands - a chance Mr. Hawrami called "one in a million," otherwise "they would not have come in."

Mr. Hawrami plans to meet with Ray L. Hunt, Hunt Oil's chairman, on Friday, said Qubad J. Talabani, the Kurdish representative to the United States. Mr. Hawrami and Mr. Talabani will be in Houston on Thursday for meetings with investors and energy companies, although they declined to name them.

HKN's stake

Another Texas company is increasing its stake in Iraq. Two weeks ago, HKN Energy Ltd., a Hillwood International Energy company, completed an agreement for a 1,226-square-kilometer block in Dahuk province, according to Kurdish officials.

Hillwood, owned by Ross Perot Jr., first entered Iraq last year through its investment in Hawler Energy. Hawler's block sits 70 kilometers north of the Kirkuk oil field, one of the country's most productive fields.

"We are excited for Hillwood and for the Kurdish-Iraq people and looking forward to getting going on it," said Eddie Reeves, a spokesman for Hillwood International Energy.

THE MIDDLE EAST NOVEMBER 2007

# Have the Kurds lost the battle for Kirkuk?

By Chris Kutschera



IRAQI KURDISH leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Massoud Barzani refuses to compromise on certain issues

**“T**HERE ARE FIVE OR SIX issues on which I will not compromise,” Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdish region, recently told one of his confidants: “Identity, borders, peshmergas, budget, the oil law and Kirkuk.”

Of all these issues, Kirkuk is the most explosive, and the most elusive. Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution, inspired by

article 58 of the Transitory Administrative Law (TAL) and approved by a popular referendum on 15 October 2005, stipulates that a referendum should be organised in the disputed territories before the end of December 2007.

The referendum is the last phase of a complex process which includes several phases aimed at reversing steps taken by the Baath Revolutionary Command Council (RCC): the deportation of Kurdish and Turkmen families from Kirkuk, coupled with the transplantation of Arab families, mainly from the South of Iraq (within the framework of a campaign of Arabisation which extended over several decades); the alteration of the administrative map of the region (the districts of Chemchemal, Kifri, Tuz Kurmatu and Kalar were arbitrarily detached from the governorate of Kirkuk and attached to Suleimania and other governorates).

After months of procrastination under previous governments, in July 2006, Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki committed himself to normalising the situation, with the creation of a special commission allocating a budget of \$200m, to implement the following timetable: March 2007, modification of the administrative map; July 2007,

organisation of a census. And, in December 2007, the referendum.

It is clear to all that this timetable is not going to be fulfilled. The “normalisation commission” established by Nouri Al Maliki and chaired by justice minister Hashim Al Shibli is no more efficient than the previous one chaired by Hamid Majid Moussa. For one thing, the commission has not had a chairman since Hashim Al Shibli resigned in March. It remains unclear whether more than a few million dollars have indeed been transferred to the commission’s bank account. Mohammed Ihsan, minister of “extra-regional affairs” (disputed territories) of the Kurdish government and member of the normalisation commission, claims that the commission is working, that the resignation of its president is “not an issue”, and that 16,000 Arabs have registered in Kirkuk to go back South, while 48,000 Kurdish families have registered to return to Kirkuk. “We are going to give money (\$15,000 per family) to the Arabs before the Kurds,” adds Mohammed Ihsan, ac-

knowledging that no money has been given so far, and that no Arab families have yet left Kirkuk within the framework of the normalisation process.

It is all the more significant that the old map of the administrative borders of the Kirkuk governorate was not restored last March. The reintegration of the districts of Chemchemal, Kalar, Kifri and Tuz Kurmatu into the governorate of Kirkuk is at the same time an easy step, as Fuad Hussein, Massoud Barzani’s spokesman, explains, and a highly political one: “It does not take time to cancel a RCC decision. There is no need for parliament to debate it. This measure should be decided by the Presidency – the president of the republic, Jalal Talabani, and the two vice-presidents, Tariq Al Hashemi and Adil Abdul Mahdi. But each one has a veto right, and if one says ‘No’, it’s over.” The fact these three statesmen cannot agree and reach a decision on an issue which is inscribed in the constitution says a lot about the inner workings of the

present Iraqi regime. July went by without any sign of preparation of the census to register the people qualified to vote at the next referendum. Kurdish officials tend to minimise this delay, saying that, after all, they have the lists of the people who voted at the first elections (30 January 2005), at the second elections (15 December 2005) and at the referendum on the constitution (15 October 2005). They say they only need to register new voters, people who have since become 18 years old, and the newcomers.

**The truth is the Kurds hold few cards. For many Kurds, who speak more openly than their leaders, the battle for Kirkuk is lost**



**THE KURDS who have, for years, lived a chequered and uncertain life are determined future generations will not suffer a similar fate**

This apparent lethargy masks deep worries and divisions among the Kurdish leaders, intensified by the knowledge that their options are limited. Against all evidence, Mohammed Ihsan, minister of extra-regional affairs in Nechirvan Barzani's government, maintains that "the referendum will take place, definitely". Asked whether he believes the referendum can still take place before the end of 2007, Adnan Mufti, member of the PUK leadership and speaker of the Kurdish parliament, answered, after a long silence, saying finally, "I am not going to answer this question if you are going to quote me". Saadi Pira, also a member of the PUK leadership, is more direct: "Technically, it is not possible to organise the referendum within the agreed time frame, for security reasons, because of delays in payments by the Iraqi government, and of problems in the registration of the transfers of residence."

While refusing to consider the possibility that the referendum will not take place on time, some Kurdish politicians, like Dr Mahmoud Osman, an independent member of the Iraqi parliament, or Saadi Pira, and Safin Dizaye, KDP spokesman, are ready to consider extending the deadline by a few months - three-to-six months at the most - if there are clear signs that decisions are taken during these months. "To postpone for one year and do nothing would be very bad," says Saadi Pira. "It would lead to disaster," confirms Fuad Hussein.

Kurdish officials in Erbil know who the opponents to the implementation of article 140 are. "It is not like in the 1970s, when Saddam Hussein indefinitely postponed the referendum included in the March 1970 agreement," claims Adnan Mufti, "now there is no dictatorship in Baghdad, it is possible to discuss and to put forward our demands... But we face the opposition of ex-Baathists, some members of the Turkmen front, and of some Shi'a. And, of course, the main problem is the opposition of Turkey and of the Arab countries."

More pessimistic, Nouri Talabani, an independent member of the Kurdish parliament, says "the Arabs were forced to accept the compromise of article 140, but except for a few liberals and leftists, they do not believe in this compromise, and they have no intention of implementing it". Fuad Hussein, although he speaks officially as the spokesman of Massoud Barzani, nevertheless blames "people who are in the government and are opposed to article 140, and who do not say it openly but invoke technical reasons".

Asked what their options are if the referendum does not take place before the end of 2007, Kurdish officials are clearly reluctant to discuss this issue. Adnan Mufti answers that he does "not want to put forward our options for the others to choose". Fuad Hussein says that if it comes to that, the Kurds can withdraw their ministers from

the government. "And if we withdraw, the government collapses."

Off the record, some Kurdish officials say the Kurds would have no other alternative but to storm Kirkuk. "Should we repeat the KDP coup of 31 August 1996?" says a PUK official, alluding to the events of 1996 when Massoud Barzani reclaimed Erbil with the help of the Iraqi army. But these Kurdish officials know that such a move, unless it is supported by the US, could risk provoking unpredictable reactions from Turkey and Iran. "If the Americans allow us to secure Kirkuk and Mosul, we must do it quickly," says Fuad Hussein. But it is a big "if"... and for the time being, the Americans are not sending any positive signals to the Kurds. "When we ask the US what they think about the attitude of the Baghdad government, they answer 'we do not interfere'," says a disillusioned Dr Mahmoud Osman, adding "they fought the war, they have been occupying the country for four years, but they say 'they do not interfere' (laughing)... It means they do not oppose Baghdad's behaviour".

The truth is the Kurds hold few cards. The Kurdish leaders are convinced that Nouri Al Maliki is the best prime minister they can have. "We are partners," says Mohammed Ihsan, "we are in the same boat, and if anything happens to them, we are in real trouble."

For many Kurds, who speak more openly than their leaders, the battle for Kirkuk is lost. "If the referendum does not occur before the end of 2007, it will never happen," says Nuri Talabani, "because the situation is going to be more and more complex, and the pressures will increase."

Ferhad Pirbal, a university professor and an intellectual who made his name in Kurdistan by not being afraid of expressing non politically correct opinions, is not the only one to think that the Kurds can finally benefit from Baghdad's policy of "delaying... and deleting" the referendum.

"Like previous ones, the present government in Baghdad is playing with this issue. Just like between 1970 and 1974, Ahmed Hassan Al Bakr tried three times to kill general Barzani, and cancelled the referendum". "One should not be afraid of saying this," adds Ferhad Pirbal during an interview in the garden of the Erbil writers' club, "it is not being racist, it is not being chauvinistic - they are chauvinistic. There will be an abyss between the Arabs and the Kurds. I am happy that the Arabs betray us. I can tell the people: 'This is what the Arabs who claim they are democrats are doing to the Kurds'. They do not want us to live together in a unified Iraq". ■