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- **IRAQI ELECTIONS: NOT MUCH CHANGE FROM 2005.**
- **TURKEY: THE KURDISH LANGUAGE A MUNICIPAL ELECTION ISSUE.**
- **SULEIMANIAH: A SERIOUS INTERNAL CRISIS IN THE PUK THREE MONTHS BEFORE THE ELECTIONS.**
- **TURKEY: ENQUIRY INTO MASS GRAVES IN SIRNAK.**
- **MIDYAT: AN ANCIENT SYRIAC MONASTERY THREATENED WITH EXPROPRIATION BY THE TURKISH STATE.**
- **IRBIL: DISCUSSIONS ABOUT A POSSIBLE AMNESTY FOR THE PKK.**
- **FULL RESULTS OF THE 2009 IRAQI PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS.**

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### **IRAQI ELECTIONS: NOT MUCH CHANGE FROM 2005**

**T**he Provincial elections in Iraq last month took place without any surprises since care had been taken to exclude from the start the province that was the main source of Arab-Kurdish conflict, namely Kirkuk. Apart from this, not much change compared with the 2005 Parliamentary elections except that the ending of the boycott by the Sunni Arab parties, which enabled them to regain control of provinces where they are in the majority, like Anbar and Diyala, without,

naturally, being able to capture the Shiite areas, because of their smaller numbers. In these last, Nuri al-Maliki created a certain surprise by coming to the fore in the regions where his co-religionists were in the majority. This is why a number of papers have presented the results as a triumph for the Prime Minister throughout Iraq. However, a detailed examination of the results, not province by province (these having been carved up by Saddam Hussein to fragment and hide specific local characteristics) but by

ethnic or sectarian areas shows that nothing has really changes in the political or religious choices. The Shiites and Sunni Arabs vote for their own parties and the Kurds and Christians vote, like last time, for a common list, as in Mosul where there is even a slight drop for the Democratic Assyrian Party, that failed to win a single seat.

Maliki's indisputable (victory even though his was being attacked by the whole Iraqi political caste over his taste for personal power) is

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perhaps due, as some say, to his control of the State services and whole apparatus of power making it easier for him to campaign. However, his image as “*avenger of the Shiites, who had hanged Saddam Hussein*”, his reputation for independence of the religious lists and the pro-Iranian militia as well as his stand as “*unifier of the Iraqi national State*” (especially in opposing the Kurdish government) may also have played in his favour with the Arab nationalists, fiercely opposed to any Kurdish autonomy. His list with about an average of 20% of the votes came first in 10 of the 14 provinces that votes. In fact, the only potentially dissenting provinces in the Arab part of Iraq are the Sunni provinces, which include Sunni Arab areas and some Kurdish districts (Khanaqin, Makhmur) or mixed areas of Kurds, Shabaks, Christians and Yezidis as in Nineveh, Sinjar, and Sheikhan. Neither Kirkuk nor Kurdistan took part in these elections.

Thus in provinces with a Sunni Arab majority, like Nineveh-Mosul and Diyala, just looking at the overall results the Sunni parties won the day, since Saddam Hussein had carved them up so as to scatter the Kurdish and Christian districts among areas that had Arab majorities. However, if one examines the results of Kurdish inhabited districts of Diyala like Khanaqin it is immediately obvious that they voted nearly 97% for the Kurdish Alliance list. In Mosul, the Sunni Arab nationalist parties won all the right bank whereas on the left bank and the North the Christian-Kurdish coalition list remains united, beating certain Assyrian groups that were hostile to the Irbil government.

Elections in Kirkuk are supposed to be organised in the course of

2009, but the way their results will be applied is highly uncertain, since the Arabs and Turcomen are demanding that, even before the vote, the number of seats be divided equally between the three communities — which immediately makes nonsense of any election. The fact that the voting pattern has not changed since 2005 implies that the Kirkuk elections will give the same results as 4 years ago — a victory for the Kurds and each ethnic or religious group standing fast on its initial position.

One possible sign of the beginning of a settlement — the Iraqi government has just announced the holding of a population census of the country as a whole. Since the indispensable prerequisite holding referenda of the Kurdish populated regions regarding their incorporation in the Kurdistan Region is a population census, this first part of the process envisaged by Article 140 of the Constitution will be met. Furthermore, since this census also covers the distribution, by the central government, of the income derived from the country’s natural resources among the provinces in proportion to their population, it cannot be delayed indefinitely, even for Kirkuk.

Meanwhile, the Kurdistan Regional Government is also preparing an electoral law for its own elections — form the national Parliament on 19 May and the regional Parliament towards the end of the year. Arrangements for reserving seats for the Christian and Turcoman minorities have been passed and could be increased if the incorporation of the Kurdish populated districts brings about an influx of Christians and Turcomen to the Region. For the moment, however, it has been decided that 10 seats will be reserved for them in the

Regional Parliament, subject to increasing them should the Christian and Turcoman population increase. The Turcoman leaders living in the Kurdish Region have declared they are satisfied with 5 seats — even the representatives of the Turcoman Front, although this party is backed by Ankara and virulently opposed to returning Kirkuk to the Kurdish Region. Indeed, this appreciation has not pleased the Kirkuk-based Turcoman Front leaders, who described them as mere “*personal points of view*”.

Another factor that could change the situation in Kurdistan, traditionally dominated by two major parties: the internal crisis that has hit the PUK following the resignation of 4 members of its Political Committee, who are protesting at the “*lack of democracy and transparency*” within their party. This internal stir and the consequent replacement of certain PUK members of the government could penalise that party in the coming elections. Moreover Nashirwan Mustafa, a former senior leader of the PUK, who resigned 3 years ago, may present his own list, which would thus be in competition with the PUK. Indeed, it could attract a “*protest vote*” from among traditionally PUK electors who would not, at this time at least, switch their votes to Barzani’s Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

Finally, the Irbil Parliament has provided for an obligatory quota of women members, which would probably be about 30% of the seats reserved for women. At the same time, to show that the 1992-2003 period (which had seen the Region’s *de facto* autonomy) is now over, the Kurdish Assembly’s official name is no longer the “*National Council*” but the *Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament*.

## TURKEY: THE KURDISH LANGUAGE A MUNICIPAL ELECTION ISSUE.

**A**s the municipal elections approach it seems as if the only real suspense lies between the AKP and the DTP. The other Turkish parties, like the CHP, seem completely out of the running, faced with the overwhelming superiority of the AKP, firmly enthroned by the 2007 general election. Should the AKP, one again, win more Kurdish votes than the DTP at the coming municipal elections, its position against the nationalist parties will be greatly strengthened. At a time when Ankara is beginning to negotiate with the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government, it would greatly help it also to appear as a political force that, for better or worse, enjoys the confidence of the majority of the Kurds of Turkey. Indeed, it would not be a bad for it, faced with the European Union's criticisms about its failure to advance, thus to appear as the Turkish party best able to settle the Kurdish problem without violence. Its political strategy is thus double: on the one side economic help and distribution of basic foodstuff and necessities like coal. (Indeed, this is nothing new in AKP election campaigns throughout the country, where, like most moderate religious parties, it consolidates its popularity with social work and material aid.) However, the other aspect of its policy is, evidently, the demand by the Kurds for the right to use their language (in private and public, in the media and officially) and to teach it. Here the launching of the TRT6 channel, broadcasting in Kurdish 24 hours a day, without Turkish sub-titles is seen by some as a step forward — and an electoral stunt by the DTP, which instead of claiming

this as its own victory, since it is one of its oldest demands, attacked this opening as a superficial and opportunist gesture.

Consequently the DTP has quickly counter-attacked with the idea of embarrassing the government with its own contradictions. Thus it pointed out that posters in Kurdish were systematically forbidden, that DTP mayors had been stripped of their office for having printed some Kurdish phrases and used forbidden Kurdish letters of the alphabet (letters that are used in Kurdish but not in Turkish) and that Kurdish first names are still refused registration for the same reasons.

On 24 February, the leading DTP Member of Parliament spoke in his mother tongue at a meeting of his parliamentary group — for the first time since Leyla Zana took her oath of office in Kurdish in 1991. The public TV channel that broadcasts parliamentary debates then interrupted its programmes. Even though, given the political developments since, this would not have the same legal consequences as for Leyla Zana in 1991, Ahmet Turk succeeded nevertheless in again launching the debate of the status of the Kurdish language in Turkey. Why should not a Kurdish member of parliament have the right to express himself in his mother tongue, for example to remind people that 21 February had been declared by UNESCO as International Mother Tongue Day? Thus a journalist, Ahmet Altan, wrote ironically in the Turkish daily *Taraf*: "*Browsing the Net sites of yesterday's papers and watching the TV news programmes, I thought something really terrible had happened. Speeches, declarations,*

*censures ... What had happened? Ahmet Turk had spoken to his group in the National Assembly in Kurdish. In our country, a reality as obvious as the fact that a Kurd speaks in Kurdish is considered an exceptional event. So listen, I'm going to reveal to you a weighty secret. Kurds speak Kurdish. Turks speak Turkish. The English speak English. The French speak French. And if it still annoys some people I can go on listing still more. Why does it seem so strange to us that a Kurd should speak Kurdish?"* In the end other voices pointed out that in his recent speech in Diyarbakir the Turkish Prime Minister had addressed a few words in Kurdish to the crowd.

Ahmet Turk explained his gesture as "*an old dream*", that of being able to speak in Kurdish in Parliament, as a souvenir of the time when, jailed in Diyarbakir, he had been unable to exchange a single word with his mother in Kurdish, the only language they had in common but absolutely forbidden in the prison waiting room. Having said this, Ahmet Turk was elected to Parliament in 2007. He has thus waited two years before "*fulfilling his dream*", which seems more like a skilful riposte in the election campaign round Kurdish demands, forcing the AKP to either outbid him or act ruthlessly against him, both of which would have drawbacks for it: either it would offend its Turkish electorate or it would accentuate Kurdish distrust of it.

Will, however, this manoeuvre suffice to make up for his party's relative failure in the parliamentary elections, where the majority of Kurds had, nevertheless, voted AKP? Can the DTP repeat the success of HADEP in 1999, when that party

had won all the major Kurdish cities: Diyarbekir, Van, Batman, Hakkari, Siirt, Bingol and Agri? Or will it repeat DEHAP's poor score in 2004, when its unnatural alliance with the Turkish SHP has caused it to lose Van, Bingol, Agri and Siirt? An opinion poll published in *Haber* shows that Diyarbekir is likely to re-elect its mayor, Osman Baydemir, but the polls for other Kurdish towns is more uncertain. Hitherto Kurdistan has largely voted for Moslem religious parties (except for Dersim, an Alevi region) — often by way of a protest vote against other Turkish parties, which are closer to the Army and fiercely reject Kurdish rights. The AKP and its policy of easing off had aroused a degree of hope amongst the Kurds in 2002, very tired of the war and wishing to improve their living conditions. However, the clear decline of any concrete initiatives since 2004 (apart from the creation of TRT6) has

evidently disappointed its Kurdish electorate, which has not seen any improvement in its standard of living — the only hope of any remedy to unemployment lying, for the moment, in the economic development in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Thus the question remains as to the expectations of the electors. So far in the campaign, the DTP's position has been rather defensive (criticising those of the governments gestures aimed at taking over its own demands so as to steal its electorate). Its usual stands of a more directly political kind can seem fairly far from the daily lives of its potential electors and of their social and economic problems whereas the AKP, has always appeared as a socially and economically pragmatic party, compared with other Turkish parties.

As for the side effects of TRT6,

they appear to be contradictory according to the media (depending on their political tendency): the hope that this will silence the guns according to *Sabah*, indifference or sceptical disinterest among the Kurds, according to *Bianet*. This has not prevented AKP from continuing to woo the Kurdish provinces, particularly by playing on Islamic themes. Thus on the occasion of the festival celebrating Mohammad's birthday (Mawlid) a special programme was broadcast on TRT6 shot in the Diyarbekir Grand Mosque, with prayers, readings from the Quran, and sermons in Kurdish by the Imam, who stressed "unity and brotherhood in Islam". While the DTP has an image of a rather Left wing party, (and consequently secular if not atheistic) it also organised a Mawlid celebration at Silvan, a town close to Diyarbelir.

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### SULEIMANIAH: A SERIOUS INTERNAL CRISIS IN THE PUK THREE MONTHS BEFORE THE ELECTIONS.

**A**t a time when the Parliamentary elections are approaching, the PUK has plunged into a crisis following the resignation of four senior (Said Qadir, Omar Said Ali, Jalal Jawhar and Osman Hajji Mahud) leaders from its Political Committee.

This is not the first major resignation within the party. Three years ago, Nawshirwan Mustafa, at the time considered the Party's n°2, had resigned all his duties in the party to set up his own press group. He is said to be envisaging standing with his own independent list. On 14 February 2009, Kosrat Rassul, Jalal Talabani's own assistant general secretary and Vice

President of the Kurdistan Region also presented his resignation, but withdraw it when Jalal Talabani offered him better sharing of power with his party.

The other four people resigning have just presented 11 proposals for reforming the PUK, which have been rejected by Barham Salih, another assistant general secretary, according to Faraydun Abdul Qadir a former leader who had resigned in 2005. "The party is going through a deep crisis at several levels. Partial and superficial reforms cannot be any remedy", declared Jalal Jawhar, who is demanding "radical reforms so that the party can work democratically and transparently" as well as the return of

Nawshirwan Mustafa to his former position as assistant general secretary.

Wishing to avoid a crisis that could weaken the PUK at the coming general elections, Jalal Talabani declared that he accepted the demands made by those resigning, in particular "transparency in the PUK's finances, which will henceforth be under the control of the Political Committee, the replacement of party leaders and representatives in the Regional Government and, finally, that supervision of the party's intelligence service (hitherto controlled by Jalal Talabani's men) by one of the two Vice Presidents". However, these measures, though they had made Kosrat Rassul change his mind, have

not convinced the four others, despite Kosrat Rasul's efforts to get them to go back on their decision. As for Jalal Talabani, taken up by his duties as Iraqi President, he was unable to intervene directly at the height of the crisis as he was away on an official visit to South Korea.

One of the first consequences of this internal crisis has been the resignation of several PUK members of Nechirvan Barzani's cabinet (i.e. of the Kurdistan Government) and a unification of three ministries not located in Irbil: the Peshmerga's which goes to Jaffar Mustafa (PUK), that of the Interior, held by a KDP member but with Jalal Sheikh Karim having the post of Assistant Minister, and Sheikh Bayaz (PUK) replaces Sarkis Aghajan at Finance. Omar Fatah, formerly Deputy Prime Minister, is thus replaced by Imad Ahmed, who was previously Minister of Reconstruction. Imad Ahmed is also a member of the PUK Political Committee. The head of the Asayish (the PUK security service), Seifeddin Ali Ahmed, has also been replaced.

However, many of the reformist PUK members consider these replacements quite insufficient to resolve the internal crisis. In the opinion of Abdul Qadir, former PUK senior official: *"The replacements have been unable to end the problem of Nawshirwan or persuade the four leaders to go back on their resignation. The replacement (in the Kurdistan Government) of Sarkis Aghajan cannot prevent the most active members of the PUK from resigning in the future. A real change involves going from a terrible situation to a positive one. I expected to see these changes begin with a general reconciliation before these*

*replacements took place"*. According to Feridun Abduk Qadi, the multiplication of independent lists, particularly one led by Nawshirwan Mustafa, can only arouse the fear of a series of "lasting tensions" that would compromise the political balance of the whole of the Kurdistan Region. Thus, in the view of Farid Asasard, a leading member of the PUK and head of the Kurdistan Centre for Strategic Studies, this conflict and the weakening of the PUK seriously worries the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), although they are historic rivals, since it could put an end to the present Kurdish coalition that, since the fall of the Saddam regime, has held firm in the face of the other Iraqi parties.

According to Asasard, origin of the crisis lies in the very structure of the PUK: *"Originally, this party was not formed as a real party but as a coalition of several parties. In such an organisation, there is no real unity and the members have different ideologies. The PUK was formed in this way and continued as such until 1992, when it was decided that the basis had to change: the PUK thus became a party. The organisation's three wings also united into a single party but, in doing so, they also inherited problems inherent in parties. These problems are now visible today and the reason they have lasted so long is that the three wings never really fused into the PUK"*.

According to Abdul Qadir, the tensions essentially resulted from the way the Political Committee took its decisions and dealt with its members. *"All those who resigned held high positions. So they could not*

*complain on that score. However, in all parties there is one very important point, which is that of decision taking. If the decisions taken did not represent the ideas of all the members and if they were imposed on the members, a situation gradually emerged where people felt strangers in their own part. This is due to the party's procedures and administrative methods"*.

As for the re-integration of Nawshirwan Mustafa that the reformers are demanding, this does not seem likely to happen. Originally a leader of Komala, one of the movements that united to form the PUK, Mustafa had decided to dissolve it. However, in so doing, according to Asasard, he made a serious error of political judgement. *"In the middle of the 80s Nawshirwan had ceased to believe in Marxism or any revolutionary ideology. So that dissolving Komala seemed quite natural to him. But he had not thought of the consequences of this — he did not take into account the fact that Komala was his power base in the PUK and that he was thus depriving himself of this base. Now, 17 years after the dissolution of Komala, he says that this decision was a mistake. I also think that Nawshirwan committed a historic mistake and he's deprived himself of the source of his influence"*.

Faraydun Abdul Qadir, a former leader of Komala, who had also taken part in this decision to dissolve, confirms it was a "political mistake" and blames it for some of the Political Committee's drift towards authoritarianism, which is criticised by some members. *"The PUK had certain aspects that led to a form of decentralisation. So long as Komala still existed, Talabani really was our most worthy brother, the movement's*

leader and the PUK's figurehead — but at the same time Nawshirwan was the Party's other leader and not just a secondary one. Consequently there was a form of decentralisation in the PUK and authority was not monopolised”.

In a last attempt to ease the

crisis, Jalal Talabani is said to have offered 6 parliamentary seats to Nawshirwan Mustafa and his list, hoping thus to form a coalition. However, sources close to the reforming wing of the PUK state that the former Komala leader hoped to remain in opposition and would

refuse Jalal Talabani's offer. As for the four who resigned, Said Qadir, Omar Said Ali, Jalal Tawhar and Osman Hajji Mahud, they have confirmed their resignation and thus denying rumours that they might possibly return to their posts.

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## TURKEY: ENQUIRY INTO MASS GRAVES IN SIRNAK

**A**nother enquiry has begun in the province of Sirnak into the existence of mass graves, called “ditches of death” containing nearly a hundred civilians said to have been killed by the gendarmerie in the 1990s.

The existence of these mass graves has long been suspected by the Kurds of the region, many of whom have lost relatives and friends whose bodies have never been found. These murders are attributed to the JITEM, a secret (and illegal) gendarmerie unit formed at the end of the 1980s, assigned to the struggle against the PKK and “Kurdish separatism”, whose abuses and the reign of terror they imposed on Kurdistan are public knowledge. The JITEM is accused of numbers of kidnappings and summary executions and of arranging the disappearance of the bodies specifically in acid or by burning or burying them in secret mass graves. Hitherto the Turkish State has denied JITEM's existence, so the opening of such an enquiry shows the change in Turkish public opinion. JITEM's crimes have been confirmed by former members of the Turkish Armed Forces arrested during the drag net directed against the Ergenekon network. Amongst these are Abdulkader Aygun, who was a member of JITRM, or Tuncay Guney, a major organiser of Ergenekon.

The Sirnak Bar Association has

filed a complaint following statements by Tuncay Guney to the police specifically about dissolving bodies in acid and burning or burying them. Emin Aktar, President of the Diyarbakir Bar Association is also of the opinion that this dark period in Turkish Kurdistan must absolutely be the subject of a serious legal enquiry and that the bodies must be found and examined by experts in forensic medicine and to identify them by means of their ADN. The Silopi Public Prosecutor's office authorised such an enquiry in January 2009.

In parallel with this, one of the principal survivors of the Susurluk accident (and scandal), the former Police Chief and Minister of the Interior Mehmet Agar, is at last appearing before the court, 13 years after the car accident that highlighted the links between the Turkish Mafia and the special security services at work in Turkish Kurdistan and the extreme Right. Indeed, on 3 November 1996, in Bursa, a car hit a lorry with fatal results. It was carrying Abdullah Catli (an ultra-nationalist activist) and his partner, Huseyin Kocadag, a police chief, Mehmet Agar and Sedat Edip Bucak, both Members of Parliament for the Dogru Yol Partisi, the party of the President of the Republic, Demirel. The first three of these were killed, the others injured.

The scandal was rapidly made public by the Turkish press and

public opinion reacted sharply, in particular through organising a daily blackout in all the main cities by switching off all the lights at 9.p.m. It was then that people began openly to speak about the “deep State” and Mehmet Agar was obliged to resign from his post of Minister of the Interior. However, as a Member of Parliament, he enjoyed Parliamentary immunity, which enabled him to avoid facing the courts by getting re-elected for 13 years running. However, the 2007 elections were a disaster for his party (DT, result of a fusion between the DYP and ANAP) which failed to reach the 5% threshold needed to be represented in Parliament.

Mehmet Agar, therefore is appearing before the courts, accused of having covered the activities of the secret (and illegal) special sections of the Turkish police, in particular many assassinations in the Kurdish regions. He is pleading “not guilty” and denies that Sedat Bucak, the other Member of Parliament who survived the accident, or his former associates Korkut Eken or Ibrahim Sahin, (equally compromised by the scandal) were involved in the thousands of murders committed in the South-East. It should be noted that Ibrahim Sahin has just been arrested in the context of the Ergenekon affair and that they are all linked to JITEM and its abuses that terrorised the Kurdish regions in the 1990s.



## MIDYAT: AN ANCIENT SYRIAC MONASTERY THREATENED WITH EXPROPRIATION BY THE TURKISH STATE

**O**ne of the oldest monasteries in the world still active, the monastery of Mar Gabriel, near Midyat, is threatened with expropriation by the State, together with the villages surrounding it. Founded in 397, Mar Gabriel is the seat of the Orthodox Syriac Bishopric of Tur Abdin and of its present Bishop, Mgr. Timotheos Samuel Aktash. Tur Abdin is one of the most ancient and prestigious sites of Oriental Christianity, being bordered by Diyarbekir to the North, Mardin to the West and spread along the Tigris between Hasankeyf, Nusaybin and Cizre. Because of its position near the Syrian and Iraqi borders, the region has suffered from the clashes between the PKK and the Turkish Army. The population, which included 130,000 Syriacs in the region in 1960, has fallen to about 3,000 today. But now that the war has eased off and that tourists are coming back and Syriacs are even returning to settle again and restore Midyat or Igdil, the monastery is today threatened with being despoiled.

Far from being unoccupied or in ruins, like a number of Christian buildings in Upper Mesopotamia, Mar Gabriel still houses 3 monks, 14 cloistered nuns and 35 students. Indeed, it is one of the cultural and religious centres where they continue to teach the language and history of the Syriacs. The monastery is also annually visited by thousands of tourists and pilgrims.

Since August 2008, three headmen of neighbouring Moslem villages, members of government militia, have accused the monastery of "proselytism",

using the excuse of the presence of 35 young students, although these are all of Syriac origin. The court dismissed their plea but the village chiefs have renewed their attacks, claiming the monastery's land. The grounds given are pretty spicy considering the antiquity of Mar Gabriel. The plaintiffs claim that before the Christian buildings were built, there was a mosque on the site. It must be remembered that the church was founded there in 397, that the oldest convent buildings were built between 40 and 401 and that this is attested by all the historical chronicles, including official documents of the Ottoman Empire. Its legal status as a foundation is, in fact, recognised by the Turkish Republic's Official Journal (24.01.2003). However, a wall that encloses this land and the monastery, built in the 1990s as a protection from the fighting between the PKK and the army, is claimed by the "village guardians" to be the foundations of a mosque.

These same villages had, moreover, seized land belonging to Yezidis. In an open letter to the Turkish government, a Swedish Member of Parliament, Yilmaz Kerimo, himself of Syriac origin, has openly pin-pointed the instigator of these persecutions: the father of a local AKP Member of Parliament, who is also a commander of the "village guardian" militia. Because the Turkish State is not innocent in this case — jointly with the claims of the local village mayors of anti-Moslem activity and land stealing, the officials of the land registry attempted, in 2008, to redraw the boundaries of State property by decreeing that the land round Mar Gabriel was

really a "state forest".

"There is a constant campaign to break the back of the Syriac people and close the monastery", said Daniel Gabriel, Director of the Swedish-based Universal Syriac Alliance (Human Rights section), pointing out that if the Turkish Government really wanted to protect the Syriac community, it would put an end to all these pettifogging legal procedures. According to David Gelen, the Mar Gabriel religious community, the Bishop, monks and nuns are being exposed to a campaign of intimidation and direct threats by the villagers — to such an extent that they do not dare go to the court themselves to defend themselves nor to defend themselves in any other way. Nor do they feel sure of any legitimate protection from the local authorities: *"In Turkey, religious freedom is guaranteed by the Constitution. However, those who are not recognised as minorities do not exist in practical terms. The Syriacs, unlike the Greeks and Armenians, are not recognised as a religious minority, although they have been living here for millennia. The aim of all these threats is and legal proceedings is to oppress this minority and expel it from Turkey as a foreign body"*.

On 11 February the European Union has to tackle Turkey on the issue of human rights and religious freedom for non-Moslems in Turkey. *"We hope that our rights will be recognised"*, said David Gelen, *"but we are convinced that, as far as the Turkish State is concerned, the time has come to recognise, accept and protect the country's cultural multiplicity instead of fighting it. Turkey must decide whether it wants to preserve a 1,600-year-old culture or annihilate*

*the last vestiges of a non-Moslem tradition. What is at stake is the multicultural nature that always characterised this country under the Ottoman Empire”.*

Like the Kurds, the Syriac Christians of Upper Mesopotamia have been scattered and divided between four states: Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. The Treaty of Lausanne should have protected them but the different clauses regarding the protection of religious minorities were never observed in their case. Like the Kurds, they are, nevertheless, strongly united by their language and a common history and culture. As against the Kurds, they are also united by a single religion, even if their churches are extremely fragmented. However, again unlike the Kurds, they do not really have a continuously populated territory and this dispersion has not been helped by the genocide. Thus they have to depend on the good will of States to protect them from local greed.

*“As history teaches us, religion has always had a dominant role in civilisation”,* observes Yashar Ravi, president of the Syriac orthodox community of Antioch. *“We are, undoubtedly, a very religious people and we are proud that we speak the same language as Jesus — this language that used to be, in terms of its dissemination, the English of the Middle East”.* Indeed, appearing in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. Aramaic gradually spread with time as the lingua franca, the language of culture, of religion, of diplomacy and Under the Persians the official imperial language of the Persian dynasties. Only Greek equalled it in prestige and widespread use in Eastern antiquity.

The court hearing took place at Midyat on Wednesday 11

February, opposing Turkey against the monks, since the plaintiff, in the civil court, is the State Exchequer and in the criminal court the Turkish Minister of the Interior. Turkey’s complaint repeats the tale of the monastery being built on the site of an old mosque as well as that of a “forest” surrounding the buildings — a forest that consists of just a few bushes. At the opening of the hearing, there were several representatives of Human Rights NGOs, of Christian Solidarity International (CSI) and several journalists who were publicly threatened by a police officer and an interpreter: *“If you do not leave the court immediately things will finish badly for those Christians you’re so concerned with!”*. The courtroom was deliberately chosen, according to observers, because of its small size so as to prevent observers to staying there. The Foreign delegations having been forcibly expelled, only the representatives of the Finnish, Dutch and Swedish Embassies to Ankara were allowed to remain as well as the representative of the Norwegian Lutheran Church.

To counter the allegations of an earlier mosque on the site, the defence presented documents proving that the monastery had been there since later stages of antiquity. Proof of the property rights to the land round the monastery were confirmed and even extended under the Ottoman Empire. The documents were handed to the judge and sent to the Ministry of Agriculture. Then it was the turn of the Midyat Finance Administration to claim that a “State Forest” was being illegally occupied by Mar Gabriel. According to Turkish law, all woodland must remain public

property of the State Exchequer. However, it is easy to see, on site, that there is no forest there, just arid and rocky areas with a few bushes. Despite this, the court demanded that a survey be carried out by a botanist at the monastery’s expense, to prove that there was no forest there.

In the same building, on the same floor, another trial began on the same day — this time a criminal not civil case. The prosecution accuses the Monastery’s administrator, Kyriakos Ergun of “insidious activities” — namely of having built a wall round the convent buildings to protect it from attacks by the PKK and the “village guardians”. He was given a postponement till 6 March to prove that he had not had any “of Tur Abdin.mful intentions” in building this low wall.

Since the 1960 Army coup d’état, nearly 50 Christians, including mayor, priests, teachers as well as simple peasants, have been murdered in the Tur Abdin area without any of the murderers being brought to trial.

In addition to that of the Assyrian and Chaldean media, a campaign to save the monastery has been launched by several Kurdish and Turkish media, including the daily Evrensel, which published a series of articles, in November 2008, to make public opinion aware of the plight of the Syriacs of Tur Abdin. A petition, in English and Turkish has also been launched against this despoiling. The petition makes the connection between the programmed disappearance of the town of Hasankeyf and the attacks on the monastery, seeing there the same determination to eradicate the cultural and historic wealth of Upper Mesopotamia.

## IRBIL: DISCUSSIONS ABOUT A POSSIBLE AMNESTY FOR THE PKK

**D**uring a press conference, Burak Ozigergin, spokesman for the Turkish Foreign Minister, had rejected the idea of an amnesty for the Kurdish PKK fighters without, however, excluding the possibility that an initiative of this kind might one day be proposed in exchange for a total cease fire.

*"We are evaluating what sort of measures could be taken in conjunction with all the institutions concerned"* he declared evasively in reply to the journalists who were questioning him specifically on the question of an amnesty. *"We are also evaluating these measures with our partners in the context of a three-party or two-party machinery or else with the European Union"*

By three-party or two-party machinery is understood the joint efforts being made by the USA, Iraq and even the Kurdistan Regional Government to get the PKK to bring its fighters down from the mountains, particularly those in Iraqi Kurdistan. Hitherto no military operation has succeeded, despite information provided by the US on PKK movements. A centre for tripartite forces has been set up in Irbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, thus regrouping US, Turkish and Iraqi representatives, who have the task of eradicating the Qandil Mountain bases. Representatives of the Kurdistan Regional Government are also

included in this, and many international experts believe that the Iraqi Kurds, and especially the Massud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party, will undoubtedly serve as intermediaries in any possible negotiations between the PKK and representatives of the three states. One conceivable solution is that the PKK once and for all lays down its arms in exchange of an amnesty. According to the daily paper *Taraf*, even the Turkish Army, which for a long time has formally opposed any solution to the conflict other than a military one, would no longer object. The same paper says that some secret services reported having recorded "progress", on 20 January last, in discussions between the PKK and the KDP, particularly regarding this amnesty. Moreover the Irbil government is envisaging holding a great international conference of "representatives of all the Kurds in the world" to find a solution to the problem of the PKK and get it to lay down its arm.

Speaking about the tripartite force that has recently taken up quarters in Irbil, Burak Ozugergin pointed out that "several arrangements" had been made between Turkey, the USA, the Iraqi Government and Kurdistan Region, regarding the course of operations. He did not, however, give any details or dates for the operations envisaged. But he did talk of monthly meetings with, on the Turkish side, members of the

General Staff and military attachés as well as civilian members of the Turkish embassy in Baghdad. As for the Turkish Foreign Minister, Ali Babacan, he presides at quarterly discussions in the context of this tripartite mechanism.

*Taraf* also quotes a report published by a Kurdish magazine published in Suleimaniah, *Livin*, describing with great precision the Turkish military presence in the Kurdistan Region. It gives the figure of 3,235 men, settled in 13 military bases in the Kurdistan Region. According to *Livin*, the largest of these bases, in terms of manpower, is at Qanimasi, in Dohuk province, 8 Km from the Turkish border. However, the one with the greatest capacity for logistics and intelligence is at Bamarne, also in Dohuk province, but 40 Km from the Turkish border. The report details the number strength as follows: 2564 soldiers, 91 officers, 240 "special operations" personnel, and 340 gendarmes, while 20 secret service agents are said to be settled in Batuffa, commanded by a colonel.

As for the military equipment, it includes 58 tanks, 27 armoured cars, 31 long range canons, 26 mine layers, 17 rocket launchers, 13 machine guns two pairs of night-vision binoculars, two tripod stands for binoculars, 10 snipers rifles, one Atar bomb, four satellite telephones, two sets of Racal radios, two winches and two silencers.

### FULL RESULTS OF THE 2009 IRAQI PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

*The three Provinces of the Kurdistan Region and Kirkuk did not vote in this election.*

#### Principal parties or lists:

- *Kurdistan Alliance*: The coalition of Kurdish parties.
- *Dawa — State of Law*: Al Maliki's list.
- *Fadhila or Islamic virtue party*: A Shiite party allied to the Sadrists.
- *Nineveh Fraternity*: A Kurdo-Christian coalition.
- *Al-Hadhaba - National List*: Sunni Arab nationalists.
- *Iraqi national List*: A secular Sunni-Shiite alliance.

- *Free Independence Movement list*: Moqtada Al-Sadr's Party.
- *Al-Mehrab or Martyrs' List*: Shiite party founded by Ayatollah Al-Hakim.
- *Movement of national reform*: former Shiite Prime Minister Jafaari's party
- *Rally for the Iraqi project*: A Sunnite Arab party.
- *Sahwa — Coalition for Iraqi awakening*: Sunni Arab Tribal militia.
- *Tawafuq - Iraqi Concord front*: the principal Sunni Arab party.

**Bagdad Governorate:**

- State of Law: 38% 28 seats out of 55
- Iraqi Concord front: 9.0% 7 seats
- Free Independence Movement list: 9.0% 5 seats
- Iraqi national List: 8.6% 5 seats
- Rally for the Iraqi project: 6.9% - 4 seats
- Martyrs' list: 5.4% - 3 seats
- Movement of national reform: 4.3% - 2 seats

**Governorate d'Al-Anbar** (province with a Sunni Arab majority):

- Rally for the Iraqi project: 17.6% - 6 seats out of 29
- Coalition for Iraqi awakening: 17.1% - 6 seats
- Tribes and educated Coalition for Development: 15.9% - 6 seats
- National Movement for development & reform: 7.8% - 3 seats
- Iraqi national List: 6.6% - 2 seats
- Iraqi national unity List: 4.6% - 2 seats
- Tribes of the Iraqi list: 4.5% - 2 seats
- Iraqi Intellectuals academics: 3.2% - 1 seat
- National Justice movement: 3.2% - 1 seat
- Single and independent country bloc : 2.7% - 1 seat

**Governorate of Basra** (province with a Shiite majority)

- State of Law: 37.0% - 20 seats out of 34
- Martyrs' List: 11.6% - 5 seats
- Rally for the Iraqi project: 5.5% - 2 seats
- Free Independence Movement list: 5.0% - 2 seats
- Islamic Party: 3.8% - 2 seats
- Iraqi national List: 3.2% - 2 seats
- Fadhila or Islamic virtue party: 3.2% - 1 seat
- Movement of national reform: 2.5% - 1 seat

**Governorate of Babil** (mixed Shiite-Sunni Arab province)

- State of Law: 12.5% - 7 seats out of 30
- Martyrs' List: 8.2% - 5 seats
- Free Independence Movement list: 6.2% - 3 seats
- Movement of national reform: 4.4% - 2 seats
- Iraqi Commission for organisations of independent civil society: 4.1% - 2 seats
- Association pour an independent Justice: 3.7% - 2 seats
- Ansar independent bloc: 3.4% - 2 seats
- Iraqi national List: 3.4% - 2 seats
- Independent national unity: 3.0% - 2 seats
- Civilians: 2.3% - 1 seat
- Iraqi Concord front: 2.3% - 1 seat

**Governorate of la Diyala:**

(a province with a Sunni Arab majority, but includes Khanaqin and Makhmur, Kurdish districts added to it by Saddam and among those claimed by the KRG)

- Iraqi Concord front: 21.1% - 7 seats out of 29
- Alliance du Kurdistan: 17.2% - 6 seats
- Rally for the Iraqi project: 15.0% - 5 seats
- Iraqi national List: 9.5% - 3 seats

- State of Law: 6.0% - 2 seats
- Diyala National Alliance: 5.3% - 2 seats
- Movement of national reform: 4.3% - 1 seat
- Free Independence Movement list: 5.0% - 2 seats 3.1% - 1 seat
- National Movement for reform and development: 2.6% - 1 seat
- Islamic virtue party: 2.3% - 1 seat

**Governorate of Dhi Qar:** (province with a Shiite majority)

- State of Law: 23.1% - 13 seats out of 31
- Free Independence Movement list: 14.1% - 7 seats
- Martyrs' List: 11.1% - 5 seats
- Movement of national reform: 7.6% - 4 seats
- Islamic virtue party: 6.1% -
- Iraqi constitutional Party: 3.2%
- Iraqi national List: 2.8%
- Independent Union of Dhi Qar: 2.2% - 2 seats
- National Independent Bloc of Iraqi tribes and intellectuals: 2.0% -

**Governorate of Karbala** (province with a Shiite majority)

- Youssef Mohammed al-Haboubi: 13.3% - 6 seats out of 27
- Hope of Rafidain: 8.8% - 4 seats
- State of Law: 8.5% - 4 seats
- Free Independence Movement list: 6.8% - 3 seats
- Martyrs' List: 6.4% - 3 seats
- Rally for Justice and reform: 3.6% - 2 seats
- Movement of national reform: 2.5% - 1 seat
- Islamic virtue party: 2.5% - 1 seat
- National Rally for Iraqi-Holy Karbala tribes: 2.3% - 1 seat
- Independent Council of tribal chiefs & eminent people of Karbala Governorate: 2.2% - 1 seat

**Governorate al-Qadisiyyah** : (province with a Shiite majority)

- State of Law: 23.1% - 9 seats out of 28
- Martyrs' List: 11.7% - 4 seats
- Movement of national reform: 8.2% - 3 seats
- Iraqi national List: 8.0% - 3 seats
- Free Independence Movement list: 7% - 3 seats
- Islamic faithfulness Party: 4.3% - 2 seats
- Islamic virtue party: 4.1% - 2 seats
- Independent Bloc of united tribes of Diwaniya: 3.4% - 1 seat
- Iraqi National Conference: 3.0% - 1 seat
- Civilians: 2.3%
- Iraqi Constitutional Party: 2.2%

**Governorate of Maysan** : (province with a Shiite majority)

- State of Law: 17.7% - 8 seats out of 27
- Free Independence Movement list: 15.2% - 7 seats
- Martyrs' List: 14.6% - 7 seats
- Movement of national reform: 8.7% - 4 seats
- Islamic virtue party: 3.2% - 1 seat
- National Moderation Front: 2.5%
- Iraqi Constitutional Party: 2.5%
- Iraqi national List: 2.3%
- Iraqi Hezbollah: 2.3%

- Professional people: 2.3%
- Maysan Qualified people: 2.2%
- Independent List of Sons of Iraq: 2.2%

**Governorate of Muthanna** : (province with a Shiite majority)

- State of Law: 10.9% - 4 seats out of 26
- Martyrs' List: 9.3% - 4 seats
- Al Jumhur List: 7.1% - 3 seats
- Movement of national reform: 6.3% - 3 seats
- Free Independence Movement list: 5.5% - 2 seats
- National independent List: 5.0% - 2 seats
- Rally for Muthanna: 4.9% - 2 seats
- Rally of qualified Iraqis: 4.4% - 2 seats
- Rally of the Middle Euphrates: 3.9% - 1 seat
- Islamic virtue party: 3.7% - 1 seat
- Iraqi national List: 3.5% - 1 seat
- Muthanna Loyalty Movement: 3.1% - 1 seat
- Iraqi National Conference : 3.0% - 1 seat
- National Council of tribal chiefs and of eminent Iraqis : 2.5%
- Rally for social support: 2.2%
- Independent Solidarity Bloc: 2.1%

**Governorate of Najaf** : (province with a Shiite majority)

- State of Law: 16.2% - 7 seats out of 28
- Martyrs' List: 14.8% - 7 seats
- Free Independence Movement list: 12.2% - 5 seats
- Loyalty to Najaf: 8.3% - 4 seats
- Movement of national reform: 7.0% - 3 seats
- Najaf independent Union: 3.7% - 2 seats
- Independent Tribes and Sons of Najaf: 2.6%
- Independent National public figures: 2.4%
- Independent Tents: 2.3%
- 1991 Intifada Movement for the people of Sha'abaniya: 2.1%
- Independent Rally for reform: 1.9%
- Iraqi national List: 1.8%

**Governorate of Nineveh** : (province with a Sunni Arab majority but a substantial Kurdish, Shabak, Yezidi and Christian population since Saddam added their districts to Southern Mosul).

- National List: 48.4% - 19 seats out of 34
- Nineveh Fraternity: 25.5% - 10 seats
- Islamic Party: 6.7% - 3 seats
- Turcoman Front: 2.8% - 1 seat
- Rally for the Iraqi project: 2.6% - 1 seat
- Martyrs' List: 1.9%
- List of Iraqi National Unity: 1.8%
- Iraqi national List: 1.8%

**Governorate of Salah ad-Din** : (a province with a Sunni Arab majority)

- Salahaddin Agreement Front: 14.5% - 5 seats out of 28
- Iraqi National List: 13.9% - 5 seats
- Rally for the Iraqi National project: 8.7% - 3 seats
- Front for the Iraqi National project: 8.5% - 3 seats
- Group of educated and scientific Iraqis: 6.0% - 2 seats
- Turcoman Front: 4.8% - 2 seats
- Salah ad-Din National List: 4.6% - 2 seats
- List for Fraternity and peaceful coexistence: 4.5% - 2 seats
- Front for Freedom and Construction: 4.5% - 2 seats
- State of Law: 3.5% - 1 seat
- Iraqi Constitutional Party: 3.2% - 1 seat
- Martyrs' List: 2.9% - 1 seat
- National Movement for reform and development : 2.6% - 1 seat

**Governorate of Wassit** : (province with a Shiite majority)

- State of Law: 15.3% - 8 seats out of 28
- Martyrs' List: 10.0% - 5 seats
- Free Independence Movement list: 12.2% - 5 seats 6.0% - 3 seats
- Iraqi national List: 4.6% - 2 seats
- Iraqi Constitutional Party: 3.9% - 2 seats
- National Reform Movement: 3.2% - 1 seat
- Wassit Independent Rally: 3.0% - 1 seat
- Islamic virtue party: 2.7% - 1 seat
- Independent of tribal chiefs and eminent Wassit public figures: 2.6% - 1 seat
- Al-Khayr- Independent List: 2.5% - 1 seat

**GEO**

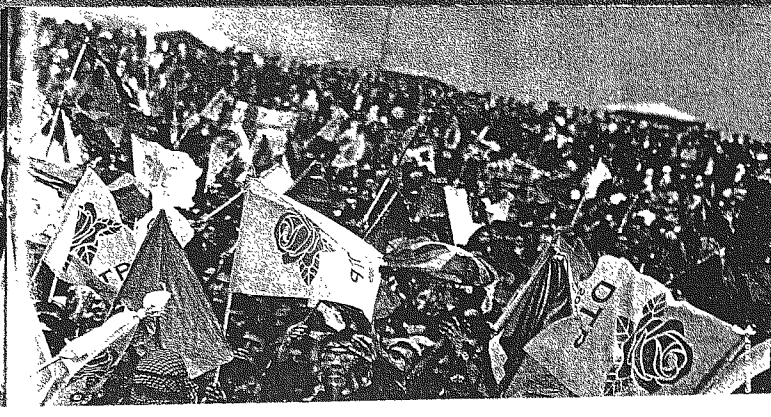
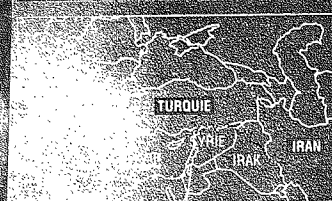
FÉVRIER 2009

# Vers un Etat kurde au Moyen-Orient ?

SECONDE PARTIE : TURQUIE ET IRAN

Après l'Irak et la Syrie (GEO n° 359), nos journalistes ont continué d'explorer les terres kurdes. En Turquie et en Iran, ils sont vingt-trois millions à lutter afin de faire valoir leurs droits. Mais, entre pressions et répression, pour eux, le rêve d'un Kurdistan indépendant paraît éloigné.

TEXTE D'OLIVIER PIOT - PHOTOS DE JULIEN GOLDSTEIN



## En Turquie, l'armée contrôle d'une poigne de fer l'ensemble du territoire kurde

**A** peine la sono crache-t-elle les premières paroles du chant de la résistance kurde de Turquie que des milliers de voix couvrent le son saturé des enceintes. Ce 21 mars 2008, un podium a été dressé à la périphérie de Diyarbakir, une ville que les quinze millions de Kurdes du pays considèrent comme «la» capitale du Kurdistan turc. Galvanisés par leur auditoire, les leaders du DTP, le principal parti politique prokurde du pays, échangent sur scène des regards complices. Jamais une fête de Newroz, le

Nouvel An kurde, n'avait rassemblé autant de monde. Et pour la première fois, les orateurs ont bravé la loi turque qui interdit l'usage de la langue kurde dans un discours officiel. «Résiste, ô Diyarbakir, résiste...» Portée par l'audace de leurs dirigeants, une foule survoltée de huit cent mille personnes entonne le refrain écrit par un guérillero du PKK, la branche armée du mouvement kurde de Turquie.

### Depuis trois ans, son fils croupit dans une geôle

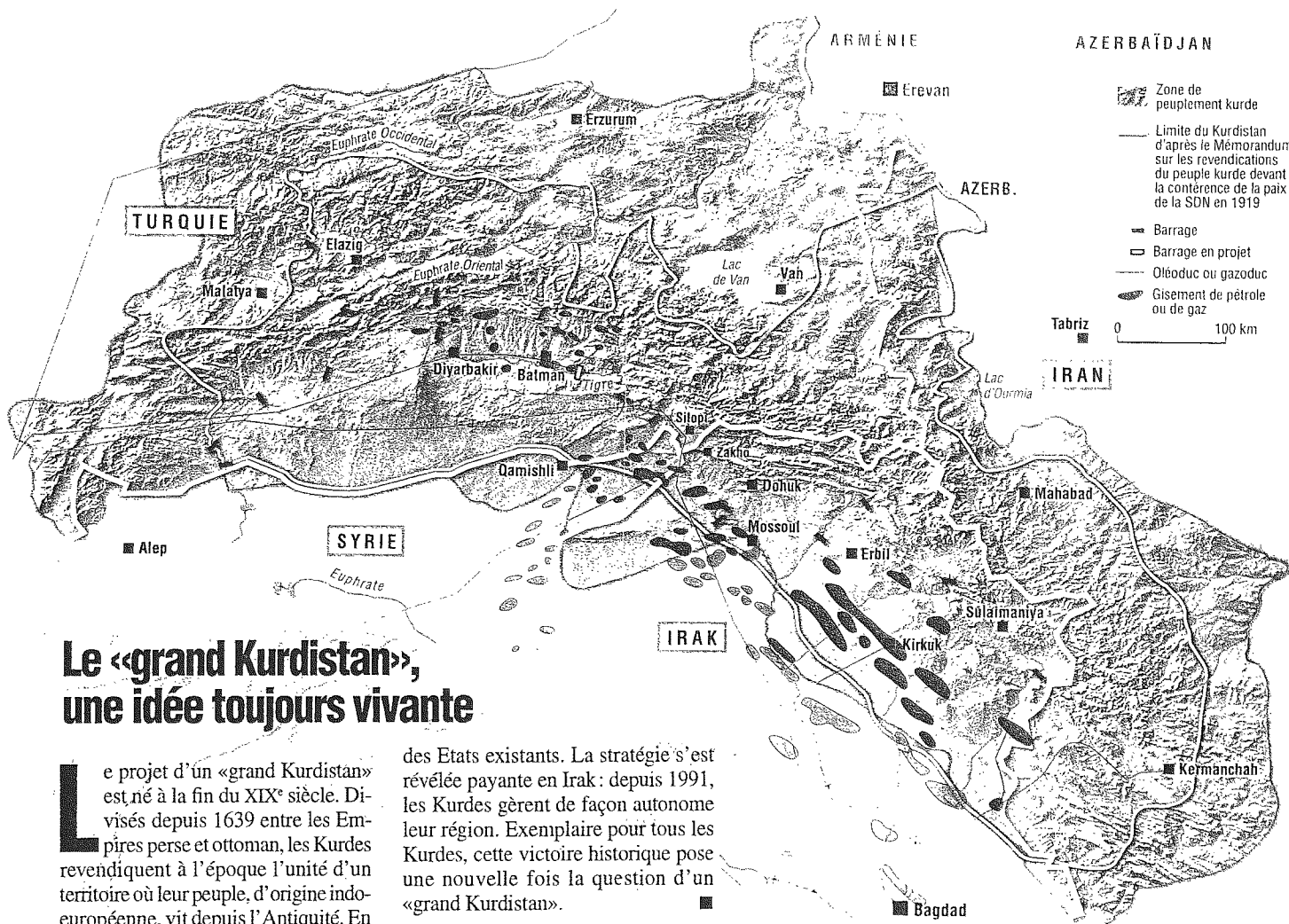
Sept mois plus tard, la tension est montée à Diyarbakir. Les élections municipales, prévues en mars 2009, approchent. Dans tous les journaux, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, premier ministre turc et chef de l'AKP, le parti islamiste au pouvoir depuis 2002, claironne la future victoire de son camp. Bravant l'unité kurde affichée le jour de Newroz, Erdogan a même choisi de débiter à Diyarbakir sa tournée électorale dans le Sud-Est. «Vous auriez dû voir ça !, s'amuse Goran, un sympathisant du DTP. Tous les commerçants ont fermé boutique pendant trois jours. Personne dans les rues pour ▶

## Vingt-cinq ans de répression et de guérilla ont décimé les villages

▶ l'accueillir !» Ailleurs au Kurdistan, comme à Hakkari, la visite d'Erdogan a même dégénéré en combats de rues contre les forces de l'ordre...

Le 2 novembre 2008, Diyarbakir résiste toujours. Sous des tentes de fortune, plantées au milieu d'un terrain vague, un millier d'élus du DTP, maires, députés et cadres du parti, se sont rassemblés pour protester contre les «mauvais traitements» subis par Abdullah Öcalan, le président du PKK, emprisonné depuis presque dix ans sur l'île turque d'Imrali. Entourée de huit femmes venues, comme elle, dormir sous les bâches du DTP, Nirba fulmine. Depuis trois ans, son fils croupit dans une





## Le «grand Kurdistan», une idée toujours vivante

Le projet d'un «grand Kurdistan» est né à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Divisés depuis 1639 entre les Empires perse et ottoman, les Kurdes revendiquent à l'époque l'unité d'un territoire où leur peuple, d'origine indo-européenne, vit depuis l'Antiquité. En 1920, après la chute de l'Empire ottoman, les puissances alliées promettent la création d'un grand Etat du Kurdistan. Mais celui-ci ne verra jamais le jour. En 1923, le peuple kurde est placé sous l'autorité de quatre pays: la Turquie, l'Irak, la Syrie et l'Irak.

Quatre-vingt-cinq ans plus tard, le Kurdistan (littéralement «pays des Kurdes») reste un territoire mythique, sans frontières reconnues, et les Kurdes une nation sans Etat. Niés dans leur identité, les quelque trente millions de Kurdes du Moyen-Orient n'ont pourtant cessé de lutter pour faire reconnaître leurs droits culturels et politiques, face à des Etats centralisateurs et répressifs. Mais les divisions linguistiques et religieuses les ont conduits à lutter en ordre dispersé. Par ailleurs, les zones kurdes sont riches en pétrole et en eau, ce qui renforce les enjeux du combat.

À l'exception de l'éphémère République kurde de Mahamad (1946), en Iran, le rêve d'un grand Kurdistan s'est peu à peu émoussé. Seul le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a ramené en Turquie, dans les années 1980, la flamme d'un «grand Kurdistan libre et démocratique». Ailleurs, les partis politiques kurdes ont tous opté pour un objectif plus modeste: l'autonomie de chaque minorité kurde dans le cadre

des Etats existants. La stratégie s'est révélée payante en Irak: depuis 1991, les Kurdes gèrent de façon autonome leur région. Exemple pour tous les Kurdes, cette victoire historique pose une nouvelle fois la question d'un «grand Kurdistan».

### Dix dates clés de l'histoire kurde

**VII<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C.**

**Fondation de l'Empire mède.** Les Kurdes s'en disent les descendants.

**1171-1250 Les Ayyubides.**

Le prince Saladin (ci-contre) fonde cette dynastie kurde, qui règne sur une grande partie du Moyen-Orient.



**1639 Premier partage.** Le Kurdistan est divisé entre les Empires perse et ottoman.

**1920 Traité de Sévres.** Signé entre les Alliés et l'Empire ottoman, il prévoit la création d'un Etat kurde dans l'est de l'Anatolie.

**1923 Traité de Lausanne.** Il revient sur la promesse faite en 1920. Le Kurdistan est partagé entre la Turquie, l'Irak, la Syrie (protectorat français) et l'Irak (protectorat britannique).

**1946 République kurde de Mahabad (Iran).** Soutenue par l'URSS, elle est proclamée en janvier et écrasée par l'armée iranienne onze mois plus tard.

**1961 Révolte kurde en Irak.**

Elle est dirigée par le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PKK), créé en 1946 par Mustafa Barzani (photo ci-dessous).



**1984 Début de la guérilla du PKK en Turquie.**

**1991 Première guerre du Golfe.** Sous la protection des Nations unies, les Kurdes administrent la région nord de l'Irak.

**1999 Arrestation d'Abdullah Öcalan,** président du PKK.

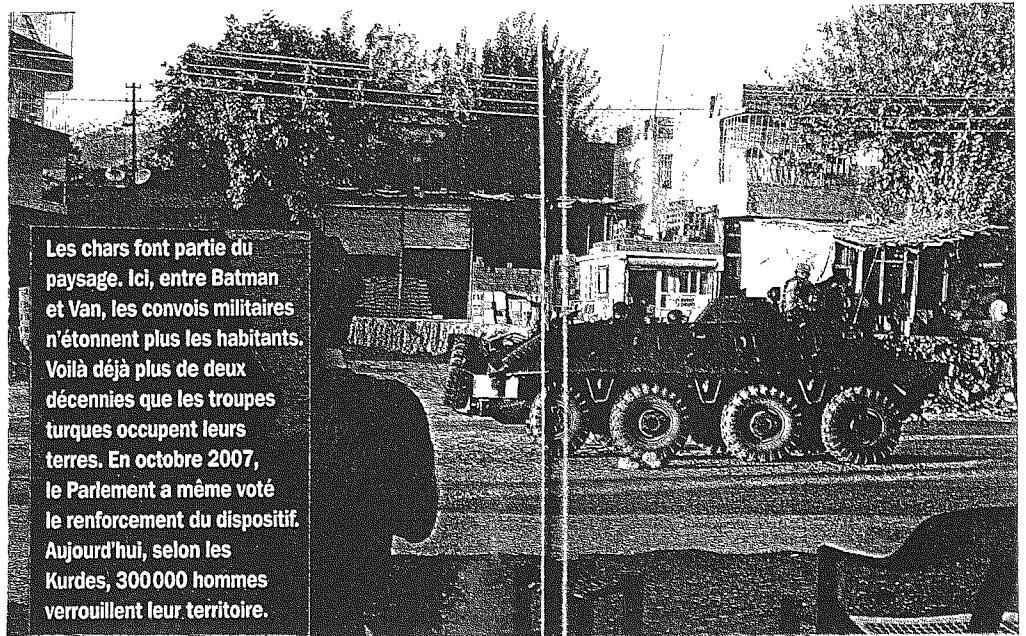
**2003 Seconde guerre du Golfe.** Chute de Saddam Hussein. Bagdad reconnaît l'autonomie du Kurdistan irakien.

geôle, juste pour avoir participé à une manifestation. «Notre langue n'est pas reconnue, nos enfants sont enfermés, nos députés méprisés, notre parti menacé d'interdiction. Et Erdogan voudrait que nous cessions de nous battre?»

## Le mouvement renaît, soudé par une idéologie marxiste

Alertés par les sections du parti, des cortèges de sympathisants se relaient depuis trois jours pour encourager le sit-in de leurs dirigeants. «Pour les Kurdes, rien n'a changé dans ce pays depuis Atatürk. C'est toujours le même combat!», déplore une mère de famille. Rien n'a changé, en effet. «Un seul Etat, un seul territoire, un seul peuple, une seule langue», avait décrété, en 1923, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, le fondateur de la République de Turquie. Dans les années 1920 et 1930, ce principe s'est traduit par l'écrasement de nombreuses révoltes. Réprimé, interdit, le mouvement kurde ne réapparaît que dans les années 1970, soudé par une idéologie marxiste. Le PKK, parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, est fondé en 1978. En septembre 1980, ►

► coup d'Etat militaire. L'armée turque pourchasse sans relâche les militants kurdes. En 1984, le PKK réplique par la lutte armée. Et revendique l'indépendance d'un territoire équivalant au cinquième de la Turquie. Pendant quinze ans, des milliers d'hommes tombent, de part et d'autre. Jusqu'à l'arrestation d'Öcalan, en 1999. Décapité, le PKK accepte un cessez-le-feu. Trois mille «peshmergas» (combattants) gardent toutefois la clan-



Les chars font partie du paysage. Ici, entre Batman et Van, les convois militaires n'étonnent plus les habitants. Voilà déjà plus de deux décennies que les troupes turques occupent leurs terres. En octobre 2007, le Parlement a même voté le renforcement du dispositif. Aujourd'hui, selon les Kurdes, 300 000 hommes verrouillent leur territoire.

destinée en Turquie. Quatre mille se relient dans le nord de l'Irak.

Face à l'impasse de la lutte armée, un autre mouvement de révolte prend la relève, avec pour objectif la «conquête des droits démocratiques». Comment? En participant aux élections, boycottées jusqu' alors, pour imposer à Ankara la légitimité d'un courant «légal» et «pacifique». Le DTP est le dernier-né de cette lignée de partis qui, d'interdiction en refondation, animent l'opposition kurde depuis 1991. En 2004, plus de soixante mairies ont été conquises par les Kurdes dans le Sud-Est. Trois ans plus tard, vingt

députés du DTP sont entrés au Parlement. Dans le même temps, l'AKP, le parti islamiste au pouvoir, a lui aussi progressé localement, promettant de résoudre la question kurde «avec encore plus de démocratie». Pourtant, en octobre 2007, le Parlement entérine le bombardement des bases du PKK, au nord de l'Irak. Et sur le sol turc, la chasse aux «terroristes» du PKK redouble.

«Nos régions sont occupées par trois cent mille soldats, explique Harzan G., adjoint d'un maire DTP. En Irak, les Kurdes ont eu la chance d'avoir l'appui des Américains. Ici, nous sommes à l'avant-poste de l'Otan. L'Etat turc se sait donc soutenu par les Etats-Unis et l'Europe. Ce serait déjà une belle victoire pour les Kurdes que d'obtenir une forme d'autonomie, plus de démocratie, l'amnistie des prisonniers politiques et l'ouverture d'écoles dans notre langue!» L'objectif du DTP n'est donc plus l'indépendance? Et ce projet d'un «grand Kurdistan uni et démocratique», défendu par le PKK dans les années 1980? Harzan sourit: «Ce n'est plus d'actualité. Même le PKK ne le réclame plus. Allez voir dans quel état est le Kurdistan d'aujourd'hui! Nos campagnes sont vides, nos villes à l'agonie.»

Cap sur l'est du pays. Présence oppressante des casernes de l'armée turque. Après une centaine de kilomètres, Silvan, une bourgade triste et délabrée. Le casse-tête des chiffres commence. Les statistiques officielles sur le Kurdistan sont beaucoup trop «sensibles» pour être fiables; il faut glaner des don-



Seulement 19 ans et déjà «martyr». C'est en l'honneur de cette jeune militante du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), tombée pour la «cause», que se recueillent les familles, près de Yüksekova. Le DTP, le parti prokurde, affirme que la lutte armée a fait 30 000 victimes dans les deux camps entre 1984 et 1999.





## Une nation, quatre pays

**GÉOGRAPHIE** La superficie du grand Kurdistan (carte) est estimée à 500 000 km<sup>2</sup>. La région est traversée par les massifs du Taurus et du Zagros, où prennent naissance le Tigre et l'Euphrate, les deux fleuves qui l'irriguent.

**DRAPEAU** Il fut dévoilé lors de la conférence de Paris, en 1920, qui prévoyait la création d'un Etat kurde. Interdit en Turquie, il est le drapeau officiel du Kurdistan irakien.

**POPULATION** Pas de recensement officiel. Les sources convergent vers le chiffre de 30 millions sur le territoire dit du grand Kurdistan.

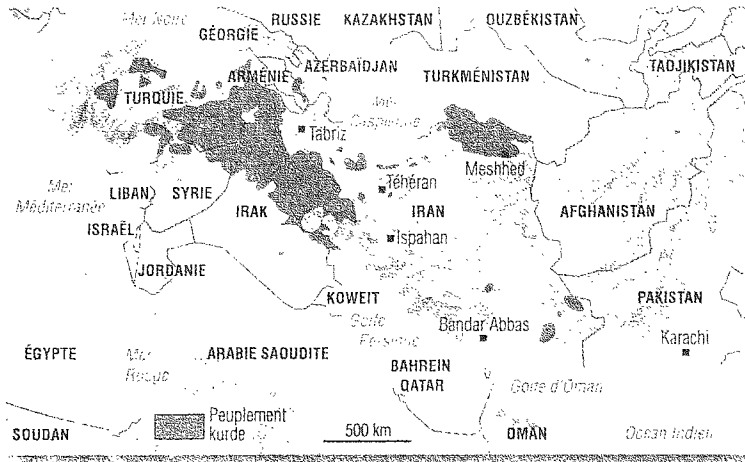
**LANGUES** Issu de la branche iranienne des langues indo-européennes, le kurde utilise des alphabets différents (latin, cyrillique, arabe, persan) et connaît plusieurs variantes :

le sorani (Irak, Iran), le kurmandji (Turquie, Syrie, Irak, Caucase) ou le zaza (Turquie).

**DIASPORA** Environ 3 millions de personnes dans le monde, surtout en Europe (600 000 en Allemagne et 130 000 en France), dans le Caucase et en Asie centrale.

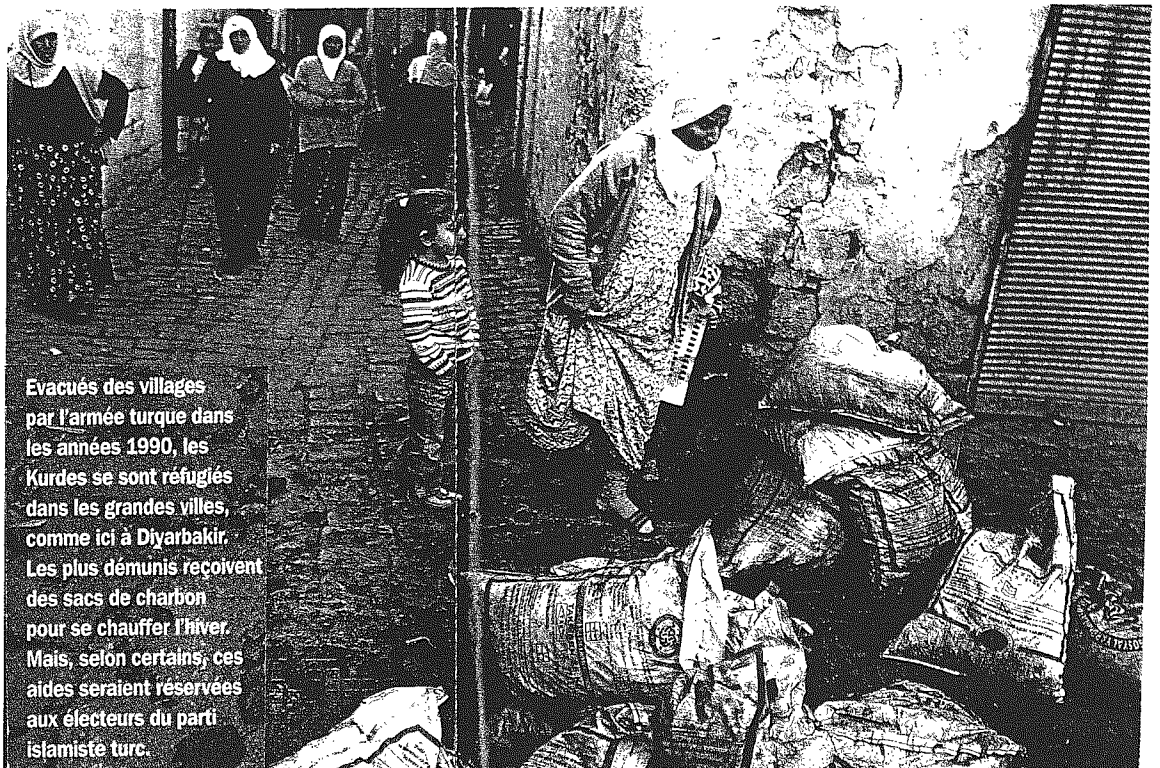
Près de 85 % de cette diaspora est originaire de Turquie.

**RELIGION** Les Kurdes, descendants des Mèdes, ont été islamisés à partir du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Sunnites à 80 %, ils comptent aussi des chiïtes, des Alévis et des Yézidis. Il existe des minorités chrétienne et juive.

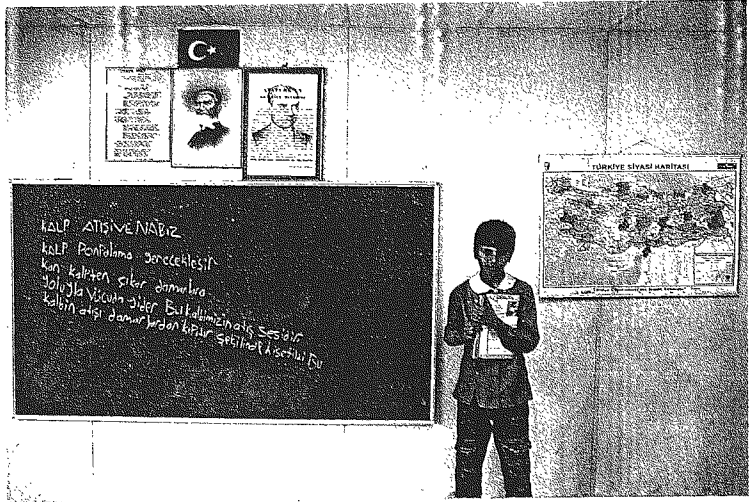


Il existe d'autres zones de peuplement kurde : dans le nord-est iranien, dans le Caucase, au Proche-Orient et en Turquie occidentale. Istanbul est la première ville kurde au monde.

## A Diyarbakir, les quartiers délabrés accueillent les familles chassées des campagnes



Evacués des villages par l'armée turque dans les années 1990, les Kurdes se sont réfugiés dans les grandes villes, comme ici à Diyarbakir. Les plus démunis reçoivent des sacs de charbon pour se chauffer l'hiver. Mais, selon certains, ces aides seraient réservées aux électeurs du parti islamiste turc.



Hasankeyf bientôt engloutie? La cité historique et 130 hameaux de la vallée sont menacés par un projet de barrage sur le Tigre, relancé par Ankara.

La langue kurde a été bannie des écoles. Le portrait d'Atatürk, père de la République turque, trône dans chaque salle de classe, comme ici, près de Simak.

nées à toutes les sources possibles, interroger, recouper. Silvan : soixante-cinq mille habitants, deux fois plus qu'il y a quinze ans. «Dans les années 1990, sous prétexte de lutter contre la guérilla, les militaires ont bombardé et incendié les villages du Sud-Est. Des milliers de familles ont gagné les villes, comme ici, à Silvan», explique-t-on à la mairie, conquise en 2004 par le DTP. Selon Görc Der, une association d'aide à ces «évacués», près d'un million et demi de Kurdes ont été expulsés des quatre mille deux cents villages détruits par l'armée entre 1992 et 1998. La plupart n'ont pas le droit de retourner vivre dans ces hameaux fantômes.

### La paupérisation a poussé la communauté à l'exode

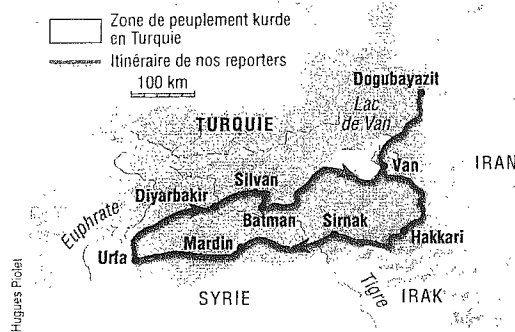
Nouvelle heure de voiture jusqu'à Batman. Autrefois réputée pour son pétrole, la cité végète. Et doit supporter la présence permanente de trente mille militaires. Mais ici, comme dans le reste du Kurdistan, l'Etat interdit aux soldats de fréquenter les boutiques locales. Toutes les casernes sont ravitaillées en nourriture, cigarettes et vêtements par des entreprises de l'ouest du pays. «Là-bas, les villes jouissent d'investissements publics et leurs nombreuses usines offrent du travail, déplore l'un des directeurs de Mado, une chaîne de restaurants. Ici, la zone industrielle est vide. Batman compte plus de deux cent cinquante mille habitants et vous n'y trouverez pas une seule unité de production de plus de quinze salariés.» A Batman, le chômage frise les 70 %.

Voilà vingt ans que l'Etat condamne les vingt-six départements revendiqués par les Kurdes (sur les quatre-vingt-un que compte le pays) à cette jachère économique. Selon l'association Görc Der,

plus de la moitié des familles du Kurdistan vivent sous le seuil de pauvreté, fixé à six cent quatre-vingts liras turques (trois cent trente euros) par mois pour un foyer de quatre personnes. Quant au PIB (produit intérieur brut) par habitant, il est, au Kurdistan turc, deux fois plus faible que dans le reste du pays. Au fil des années, la paupérisation des villes du Sud-Est a poussé la communauté à l'«exode». Toujours selon les enquêtes de Görc Der, en 1985, les deux tiers des Kurdes de Turquie habitaient le territoire historique du Kurdistan turc. A présent, plus de la moitié des membres de la communauté résident dans les agglomérations de l'Ouest, surtout à Istanbul, devenue en quinze ans la plus grande ville kurde du pays!

«Réclamer l'indépendance du Kurdistan aujourd'hui reviendrait à laisser ▶

## Sous la pression turque, leur patrimoine se délite et leur culture étouffe



La moitié des 30 millions de Kurdes du Moyen-Orient vivent dans l'est de la Turquie, qu'ils ont surnommé «Kurdistan du Nord». Les leaders du DTP revendiquent désormais la création d'un Etat fédéral turc de 28 régions autonomes, dont trois pour les Kurdes.

▶ de côté les millions de nos frères qui vivent à l'«Ouest», observe Karwan, l'un des cadres du DTP de Van. Lovée au pied du mont Zagros, à deux pas de la frontière iranienne, cette cité borde le plus grand lac d'Anatolie. Van : six cent mille habitants, huit mille policiers, trente mille militaires, un taux de chômage de 60 %, près de deux cent cinquante mille «évacués» logés dans des faubourgs insalubres... Les chiffres collectés ici traduisent le même chaos économique et humain que dans le reste du Kurdistan turc. Seule variante : en 2004, la mairie de cette préfecture habitée à plus de 90 % par des Kurdes a été remportée par... l'AKP! «Il faut comprendre, la population en a assez de la guerre permanente, commente Karwan. Avant les dernières élections, les islamistes de l'AKP avaient fait miroiter la paix, l'indemnisation des «évacués», la construction de routes...» Promesses tenues? Karwan est lapidaire : «Les seules choses qu'ils ont financées, ce sont des prisons et des moquées!»

### «L'hiver arrive, nous n'aurons plus rien avant avril»

Ali Bayram, l'adjoint au maire de Van, n'est pas de cet avis. La quarantaine, costume cravate fraîchement repassé, ce cadre de l'AKP dresse fièrement le bilan de son parti dans la municipalité : «Trente tonnes de nourriture distribuées chaque mois, vingt-sept mille tonnes de charbon données aux plus démunis, attribution de nombreuses «cartes vertes» [une sorte de couverture maladie universelle, ndr], soutien à la scolarisation...» Sa liste est longue. Mais Ali Bayram oublie un détail : la plupart de ces «bonnes actions de l'AKP» sont en réalité l'œuvre des services de l'Etat ou d'institutions publiques. ▶

► «Des aides pour les plus pauvres ? Tu parles !, s'exclame Rajan. Les membres de l'AKP n'assistent que ceux qui votent pour eux. Moi, ça fait trois semaines que j'attends du charbon. Sans piston, tu peux crever !» Depuis l'aube, ce gaillard d'un mètre quatre-vingt-dix poireaute avec une centaine d'autres manœuvres dans le quartier de l'Hôpital, près de la grande mosquée de Van. Dans un froid cinglant, ces hommes attendent un hypothétique travail. «L'hiver arrive, nous n'aurons plus rien avant avril», tempête l'un d'entre eux. Les plus téméraires du groupe continuent d'invectiver l'AKP. «Ils se vantent d'être de bons musulmans, tonne Mustafa, un

## Privé de subventions et de débouchés, ce peuple d'agriculteurs est à l'agonie



Dans la région de Dogubayazit, à une encablure de l'Arménie, le marché aux bestiaux végète. Ces dernières années, les prix ont été divisés par deux. Les éleveurs kurdes se plaignent d'un embargo, décrété en 2002 par Ankara, qui les empêcherait de vendre veaux et moutons à l'ouest du pays.

maçon au chômage depuis quatre ans. Mais est-ce qu'un musulman a le droit de donner l'ordre de tirer sur une foule d'enfants et de vieillards, comme ils l'ont fait à Hakkari, lors de la visite d'Erdogan ? En mars prochain, c'est décidé, on va voter pour nous.» C'est-à-dire ? «Pour le DTP, qui d'autre ?»

Longeant la frontière iranienne, la route du Sud qui relie Van à Semdinli est barrée par d'incessants contrôles militaires. Fouille, inspection de la voiture... Il faut des heures pour atteindre la préfecture d'Hakkari. Située à la frontière irakienne, à environ soixante-dix kilomètres des camps du PKK, cette ville est au cœur du dispositif de sécurité de

l'armée turque. Hakkari : soixante mille habitants, mille cinq cents policiers, quarante mille militaires, un taux de chômage de 80 %. Militant de la «cause» depuis les années 1970, le responsable local du DTP ne cache rien des difficultés de son parti. «Nous tenons la mairie depuis 1999, mais notre tâche est impossible. La misère est trop forte. Les gens continuent néanmoins de nous faire confiance parce qu'ils savent que notre drapeau est celui de la lutte pour les droits des Kurdes.» Des verres de thé circulent. L'homme glisse encore : «Si demain l'Etat turc investissait ne serait-ce qu'un tiers des milliards dépensés par l'armée pour nous mater, nos régions,

riches en ressources naturelles, seraient les plus prospères de Turquie.»

Pendant des siècles, les familles kurdes ont vécu d'élevage et d'agriculture. Au nord, notamment, dans les montagnes et plateaux qui s'enchaînent de Batman à Van, jusqu'à l'Iran. Mais la destruction des villages a rendu les campagnes exsangues. Au sud, cette agonie est encore plus saisissante. De part et d'autre de l'interminable route qui mène de Sirmak à Urfa, le long de la frontière syrienne, s'étend la plaine de Haute-Mésopotamie. Bordé à l'est par le Tigre et à l'ouest par l'Euphrate, le berceau des plus anciennes civilisations agraires de l'Antiquité offre un spectacle de désolation. Jadis fertiles, les terres ne sont plus que parcelles stérilisées par la sécheresse. A la fin des années 1970, pourtant, l'Etat turc avait fait de belles promesses. Un projet pour le Sud-Est anatolien, baptisé GAP, vantait la construction de vingt-deux barrages qui devaient irriguer près de deux millions d'hectares. Trente ans plus tard, neuf ouvrages seulement ont été achevés. Et servent essentiellement à fournir de l'électricité aux... régions de l'Ouest.

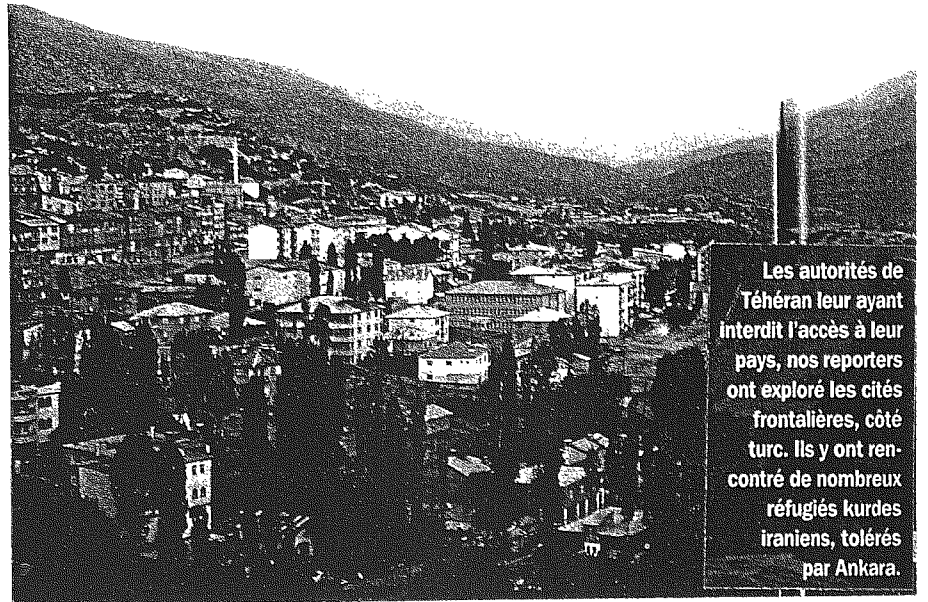
Retour à Diyarbakir : 1,5 million d'habitants, cent mille militaires, un taux de chômage de 65 %. Derrière les antiques murailles de la cité se cache Benusen, le plus grand bidonville du Kurdistan. Combien sont-ils à survivre ici, dans ces débris de maisons ? «Peut-être trente ou quarante mille familles», hasarde un passant. Partout, des ruelles couvertes de débris. Sur presque chaque masure, une antenne-satellite rouillée, tordue, rafistolée, mais branchée en permanence sur Roj TV, la télé militante, dont le siège est en Belgique. Dans un troquet, un homme offre le thé. Zoran, la cinquantaine, fait partie des «évacués» des années 1990. «Jamais retourné au village», raconte-t-il. Sympathisant du DTP ? «Evidemment ! Personne d'autre ne nous défendra.» Et les combattants du PKK, doivent-ils rendre les armes ? «Sûrement pas ! Que l'Etat turc donne des droits aux Kurdes d'abord !, tranche Zoran. Mais ça n'arrivera jamais, car l'armée met la pression sur le gouvernement. Son importance politique en Turquie, elle ne la doit qu'à notre existence. La «question kurde», c'est sa raison d'être.» ■

Olivier Piot ►

# L'IRAN, derrière ces montagnes, fait régner la terreur sur la communauté

**S**emdinli, ville caserne. Une bourgade enclavée, à l'extrême pointe du Kurdistan turc. Au pli d'une vallée, étranglée par les montagnes qui imposent ici la limite avec l'Iran et l'Irak, l'unique route serpente jusqu'à un poste militaire. «Inutile d'insister, sans visa, vous ne passez pas !», rabâche le soldat turc. Nous n'atteindrons même pas le contrôle iranien. Malgré nos demandes répétées, les autorités de Téhéran nous ont refusé l'accès à leur territoire. Pas un reporter étranger ne doit voir. Aucun ne doit témoigner. En rebroussant chemin, il faudra nous contenter de longer, vers le nord, les fiers massifs des monts Zagros, cette frontière naturelle qui, voilà presque quatre siècles, en 1639, marqua la première partition du Kurdistan, entre les empires Perse et Ottoman.

Yüksekova, Hakkari, Baskale, Van, Dogubayazit... Dans chacune de ces villes turques qui jouxtent la frontière, nous avons croisé des Kurdes iraniens. Lassés d'une vie «inhumaine», pourchassés dans leur propre pays, ils ont choisi de s'exiler ici. Les témoigna- ▶



Les autorités de Téhéran leur ayant interdit l'accès à leur pays, nos reporters ont exploré les cités frontalières, côté turc. Ils y ont rencontré de nombreux réfugiés kurdes iraniens, tolérés par Ankara.

## Par crainte des représailles, ces exilés kurdes témoignent masqués

▶ ges de ces réfugiés concordent : de tous les Etats où les Kurdes se battent pour leurs droits, l'Iran est celui où l'oppression est la plus implacable. Langue et culture non reconnues, partis politiques interdits, sympathisants et simples défenseurs des «droits humains» emprisonnés, torturés, exécutés. Chaque année, Amnesty International dénonce les «discriminations» qui frappent les huit millions de Kurdes iraniens.

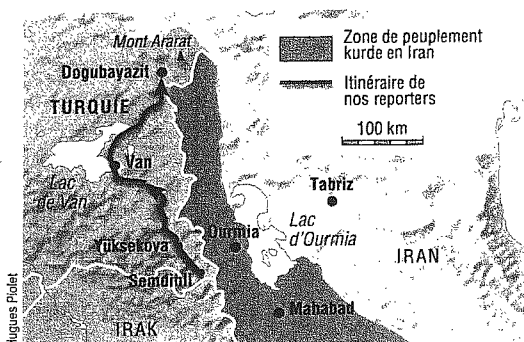
### En 1946, vie et mort d'une république indépendante

Il est loin, ce fameux mois de janvier 1946 où, profitant de l'occupation de l'Iran par les troupes britanniques et soviétiques, les dirigeants kurdes hissèrent le drapeau de la République indépendante de Mahabad. Mahabad, une petite ville du nord-ouest de l'Iran métamorphosée en mythe pour tous les Kurdes. Historique, l'expérience survécut onze mois à la vindicte de Téhéran. A partir des années 1950, le mouvement n'a plus revendiqué que l'autonomie des quatre

provinces qui, à l'ouest du pays, forment le Kurdistan d'Iran. Mais, là encore, l'Etat n'a pas cédé. Les deux partis kurdes, le PDKI, fondé en 1945, et le Komala, créé en 1969, furent contraints à la clandestinité. Et à la lutte armée.

Un espoir se manifeste, toutefois, avec la chute du chah, en 1979. Soutenu par la population, le PDKI gère pendant quelques mois les principales cités kurdes, comme Mahabad, Ourmia et Sanandaj. Mais, à nouveau, l'expérience tourne court. En août 1979, l'ayatollah Khomeyni décrète une «guerre sainte» contre le peuple athée du Kurdistan. Par milliers, les «pasdaran» (gardiens de la Révolution) envahissent les terres kurdes. Des centaines de villages sont détruits, des milliers de civils et de «peshmergas» (combattants) tués. Occupé par deux cent mille soldats, le Kurdistan iranien vit depuis en état de siège. ■

Olivier Piot





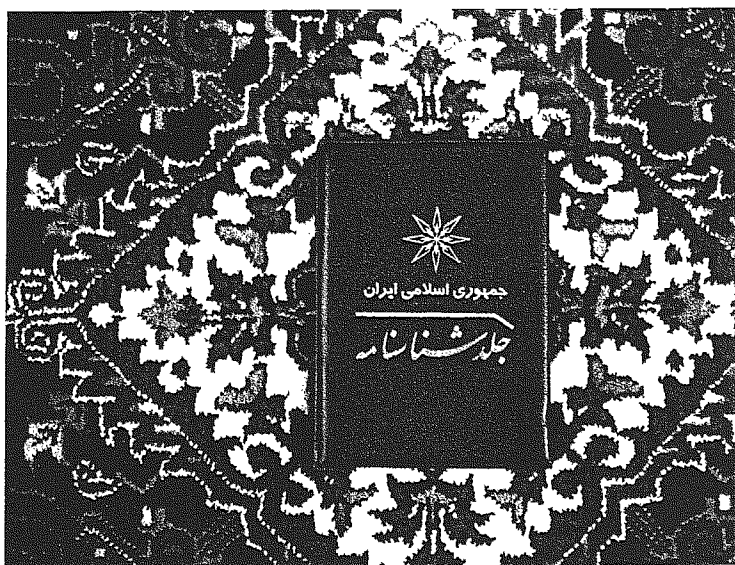


BERIWAN, 20 ANS, ÉTUDIANTE

### «Je défendrai mon peuple»

Elle ne porte pas le voile mais, pour la photo, empoigne un foulard et se couvre le visage. Pourtant, Beriwan n'a jamais fait de politique à Sanandaj, sa ville natale. «En Iran, assure-t-elle, il suffit d'être Kurde pour avoir des problèmes. On contrôle notre identité en permanence. La simple mention "sunnite" sur le passeport permet de deviner notre origine. Et nous condamne

à passer après les autres, quand on veut se faire soigner à l'hôpital, s'inscrire à la fac ou même prendre un billet de train! J'ai suivi les conseils de mes proches et quitté mon pays pour me réfugier en Turquie», soupire-t-elle en feuilletant l'album de famille, unique souvenir des siens. «Je veux aller au Canada pour y étudier le droit. Une fois avocate, je défendrai mon peuple.»

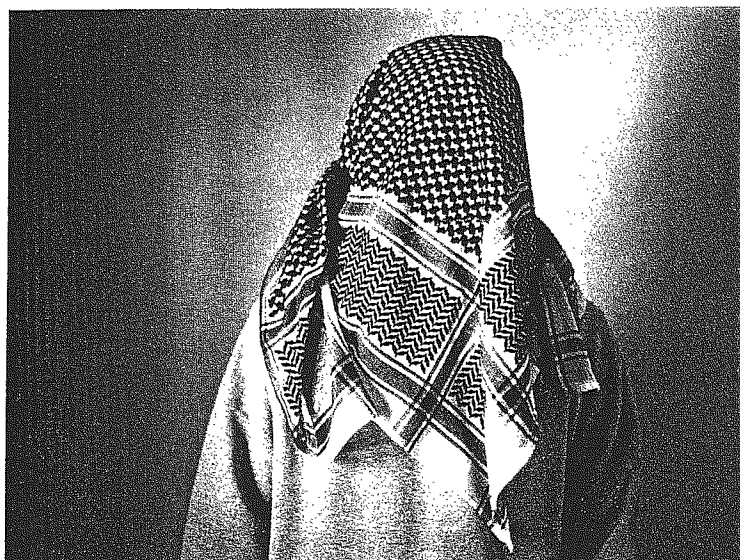


ROJWAN, 30 ANS, BOUCHER

### «Je risque la peine de mort»

Un jour d'avril 2007, dans la banlieue de Mahabad, Rojwan prend en stop deux inconnus. Il apprendra plus tard qu'il s'agissait de sympathisants du PDKI, le parti prokurde d'Iran. «Là-bas, beaucoup de Kurdes aident les services de renseignement. Quelqu'un m'a sûrement dénoncé. J'ai fui en Turquie dès que j'ai appris que des policiers me cherchaient. Je sais de

quoi ils sont capables. Un jour, lors d'une manifestation pacifique, j'ai vu une femme à terre battue à mort par trois agents!» Rojwan refuse de poser devant l'objectif. «Ce n'est pas la prison qui me fait peur. Si je suis renvoyé en Iran, je risque la peine de mort.» Il acceptera finalement de nous montrer la couverture de son passeport. Et de nous laisser saisir son ombre sur le mur.



DILAWER, 28 ANS, MILITANT POLITIQUE

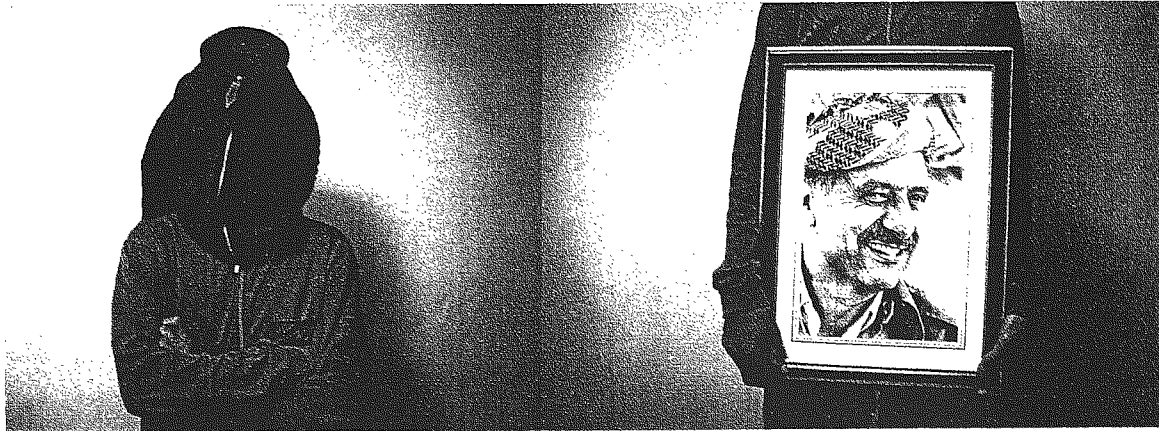
### «Je veux poursuivre la lutte»

Dilawer a grandi près d'Ourmia. «Un village dans les montagnes, avec de splendides moutons!», s'amuse le jeune homme. Activiste du PDKI, le parti prokurde, il a dû fuir l'Iran à 26 ans. «Trop repéré», confie-t-il sans plus de détails. A chaque question sur son pays, Dilawer reste évasif. «En arrivant ici, j'ai promis aux policiers turcs de ne pas m'exprimer là-dessus,

fini-t-il par nous confier. La Turquie a des accords avec l'Iran. Au moindre faux pas, je serai renvoyé là-bas.» Depuis deux ans, il attend que le HCR (Haut Commissariat pour les réfugiés) lui accorde le statut de «réfugié politique». Il compte néanmoins «poursuivre la lutte», loin de sa patrie. Alors, un portrait, même camouflé par un keffieh, c'est non. Un ami turc a posé à sa place.

KENDAL, 24 ANS, MILITANT POLITIQUE

## «Les rares fois où nous avons manifesté, ce fut un massacre»



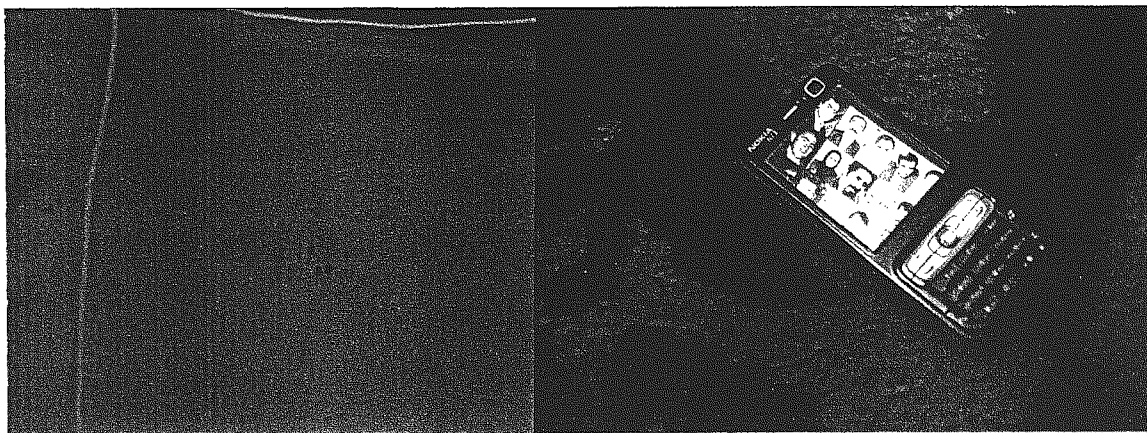
**K**endal habite désormais la cité turque de Yüksekova, près de la frontière iranienne. Une chambre toute simple, un tapis au sol, quelques coussins, un poste de télé. Aucun objet personnel. Sauf deux photos : un groupe de peshmergas brandissant le drapeau du PDKI et le portrait d'Abdoul Rahman Ghassemlou, l'ex-leader de ce parti, assassiné à Vienne par les services

secrets iraniens en 1989. Deux clichés ramenés d'Iran? «Vous plaisantez ! Beaucoup trop risqué. Je les ai imprimés ici, via Internet.» Militant du PDKI depuis le lycée, le jeune homme originaire d'un petit bled, Maku, a fui son pays en 2004. Il avait tout juste 19 ans. Depuis, il attend que l'antenne du HCR (Haut Commissariat pour les réfugiés) traite son dossier. A plusieurs repri-

ses, Kendal a assisté ici, en Turquie, à des meetings kurdes. «En Iran, c'est impossible. Les rares fois où nous avons manifesté, ce fut un massacre!» Deux de ses cousins sont morts lors d'un rassemblement à Ourmia. «Mais derrière son arrogance, la dictature iranienne est fragile, assure le garçon. Contestée de l'intérieur, critiquée dans le monde, elle peut s'écrouler à tout moment.»

TADJIN, 50 ANS, COMMERÇANT

## «Nous espérons que les Etats-Unis attaqueront l'Iran»



**T**adjin insiste: «Non, non ! Je ne fais pas de politique.» Dans le hall de son hôtel d'Hakkari, costume sombre et chaussures lustrées, ce négociant né à Bukan, au sud du Kurdistan iranien, affirme être en Turquie pour «affaires». Mais une fois installé dans l'intimité d'un petit salon, il devient plus loquace: «Au moment où je vous parle, 300 prisonniers politiques font

une grève de la faim à Ourmia, en Iran.» Instinctivement, l'homme saisit son téléphone, manipule quelques touches et nous tend l'appareil. Des visages d'hommes et de femmes apparaissent à l'écran : ce sont tous des militants du PJAK condamnés à mort en Iran. «J'en connais certains, commente Tadjin, ému. Le PJAK, c'est le seul parti kurde qui mène la lutte armée. Les deux autres,

le PDKI et le Komala, croient encore aux méthodes pacifiques.» Nous évoquons la victoire des Kurdes en Irak, leur autonomie, le rôle joué par les Américains... «Nous, les Kurdes, espérons que les Etats-Unis attaqueront aussi l'Iran. Pour pouvoir enfin nous soulever...» Une photo? «Je ne peux pas». Même masqué? «Non. Je suis déjà fiché. Une fois de plus et c'est la corde!»

**GEO**

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**Julien Goldstein**, photographe, et **Olivier Plot**, rédacteur, collaborent régulièrement à GEO. Depuis deux ans, ils travaillent notamment sur les relations entre la Turquie et ses voisins.

# Iraqis get ready for life without Americans

## Power has shifted and signs of change appear everywhere

By Alissa J. Rubin

**BAGHDAD:** Iraqis across the country voted over the weekend in provincial elections that will help shape their future, but regardless of the outcome it was clear that the Americans were already drifting off stage — and that most Iraqis were ready to see them go.

The signs of mutual disengagement are everywhere. In the days leading up to the elections, it was possible to drive safely from near the Turkish border in the north to Baghdad and on south to Basra, just a few kilometers from the Gulf,

**News Analysis** without seeing a U.S. convoy. In the Green Zone — once host to the U.S. occupation government and now the seat of the Iraqi government — the main military shopping center is set to close and the Americans have retreated to their vast, garrisoned new embassy compound. Iraqi soldiers now handle all Green Zone checkpoints.

U.S. helicopters and drones may be in the sky, but Iraqi boots are on the ground. The Americans are already worried about securing the road to Kuwait because soon they will have to start hauling out much of the vast infrastructure they have built on bases across the country.

The end of an era comes not in a single moment, but it has become evident that the mood has changed, power has shifted, the world is not the same.

In the United States, many Americans view the war as already over, even though more than 140,000 U.S. soldiers remain on Iraqi soil.

President Barack Obama has made it plain that Iraq is not his war; he wants to focus on Afghanistan. In an economic crisis, there is simply not enough money for the country to keep spending hundreds of millions of dollars a day in Iraq.

Any arguments that remain in Washington about the shape and timing of the troop withdrawal this year seem almost moot here, given how much Iraqis want to show they can govern on their own and how



Michael Kamber for The New York Times

Iraqi voters waiting to cast ballots in Qahtaniya, in Nineveh Province. The turnout was heavy, and the security was high.

much Americans want to hand over responsibility to the Iraqis so they can meet withdrawal deadlines.

This is not to suggest that the war is over. In two provinces, Nineveh and Diyala, counterinsurgency operations are still under way, and the military is tracking signs of activity by Sunni extremist groups in the troubled areas surrounding Baghdad. For now, the rest of the country is mostly calm.

The provincial elections are testing political stability: whether Iraqis can begin to resolve still festering sectarian and ethnic tensions through the ballot box. The formal process of disengagement started in earnest in November, when Parliament approved a new security agreement with the Americans that sealed the date of departure, by the end of 2011, and almost immediately changed the balance of power.

The outlook of Iraqi citizens has changed as well. They are more confident that their problems are their own and that the Americans cannot fix them and often have only made matters worse.

"The American military presence brought nothing to our streets but destruction and chaos," said Omar al-Dulaimi, 57, a government employee who lives near the Umm al-Qura Mosque, one of the largest Sunni places of worship in the capital. "We had nothing from them but tension and confusion. It's much better for us and for them if they stay in their bases now."

Now for both sides there is the feeling that something has changed and whatever happens next, Iraq will not return to the way it was.

"We're going through transition in Iraq at the same time we're going through transition in our forces here,"

said General Ray Odierno, the commanding general for Iraq. "They will elect new provincial governments. I believe 75 percent to 80 percent of the provincial governments will change, and oh, by the way, we'll begin to reduce our troops size."

The shifts are subtle, often unspoken. The U.S. military role now has less to do with protecting Iraqis and more with giving them the psychological reassurance that they can handle what comes their way.

The Americans no longer tell the Iraqis what to do and the Iraqis, especially Iraqi Army officers, no longer look to the Americans for approval. At least that is the case in areas where the fighting has stopped; less so in areas like Mosul, where American military might is still required to keep violence at bay.

When Odierno stopped Wednesday to inspect a polling center in rural Medaen, south of Baghdad, his conversation with the Iraqi general who oversees the area was respectful, a little formal: two military men exchanging information. It was not exactly a conversation between equals; each knew that the other was from a different world, each knew the Americans have superior weapons and training, and each offered the other his observations.

"I see less Sunni-Shia issues than I do a lot of other issues here," Odierno said.

General Qassim al-Maliki nodded. "We have a lot of Shia voting this time; we didn't have a lot in the last election," he said.

As the U.S. military slowly steps back, the diplomats and civilians are emerging from the wings. Certainly, this is far from a normal diplomatic relationship. Iraqis entering any area close to the Americans are still subject to multiple, humiliating searches and interminable waits. U.S. diplomats

cannot yet leave the embassy; they live like virtual prisoners, every movement beyond its gates an armed undertaking. But it is possible for Americans and Iraqis to talk about issues other than sheer survival.

Iraqis, too, are beginning to explore a different kind of relationship, one that no longer looks to the Americans only for protection. Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki has agreed to finance a substantial scholarship program to send Iraqis to the United States and British Commonwealth countries for study, in an effort to create a better educated professional class. Still, the American era in Iraq is nowhere near a final act. If this were an opera, it would be just past midway in the libretto. While both sides are disconnecting, neither can let go entirely.

The Iraqis need the Americans not just to dampen terrorist activities within the country but also to protect them from rapacious neighbors. Syria and Iran have interfered here since the invasion, and while the Iraqis are often uncomfortable with how the Americans have reined in these powers, they are reluctant to stop them because they fear their neighbors more.

For the United States, Iraq remains a strategic prize close to the Middle East flash points of Israel, Lebanon and Syria as well as Iran and the oil-rich Gulf countries. It is not by chance that the Central Intelligence Agency has its largest station in the world in Baghdad.

It is inescapable that the United States exerts more influence here than in any other oil-producing country — and will be intent on continuing to do

so. Iraq will be eager to demonstrate its independence; the United States will have to rely on other levers than a huge and continuing military presence.

The elections on Saturday were a step toward a peaceful approach to settling disagreements among factions about the shape of the country. If the new governments are seated from north to south and east to west, the United States and Iraq can begin the next act in earnest.

"The United States will not need big troops here," said Jawad al-Bolani, the interior minister, a secular Shiite. "The Americans need to look at something besides security. Iraq needs America to start a new chapter."

INTERNATIONAL  
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Roger Cohen

## The other Iran

**A**T one of the large embassies offering islands of peace from the gridlocked, grinding Iranian capital, a Western diplomat said this of U.S. and allied policy toward Iran: "You could argue that our policy has not yet failed."

That would be the most charitable view. But it is failing. Where Iran had a handful of centrifuges enriching uranium four years ago, it now has at least 5,000. With its enemies in Iraq and Afghanistan removed by U.S. military force, it has extended its regional influence.

This city, whose real-estate boom has rivaled Manhattan's in recent years, is still awash in cash from the giddy oil price season. Those billions, even ebbing, equal confidence. The Iranian Revolution, now at its 30th anniversary, has recharged its batteries on a global wave of Bush-inspired, Gaza-cemented, anti-Western sentiment.

It's time to think again, not merely to recalibrate old formulas, in order to end the three-decade impasse in U.S.-Iranian ties, a breakdown of huge cost and menace. A non-relationship has locked itself in stereotypes, the fruit of estrangement, as U.S. threats ("the military option must be kept on the table") and demands (stop the centrifuges) meet a wall of Iranian pride.

One place to begin that reflection might be in the southern stretches of Tehran, where I was the other day on the anniversary of Ayatollah Khomeini's triumphant return from France. I'd been at an airport ceremony, featuring a rousing orchestra and a kitschy reproduction of the Air France jumbo jet that brought him home, and now found myself surrounded by graves near the Khomeini shrine.

These graves, often adorned with wrenching photographs of 16-year-olds, stretch away, hundreds of thousands of them, mostly victims — or martyrs as they are called here — of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. Their deaths followed the 1978-79 revolutionary violence. Iran bled for a decade.

The psychological impact of this trauma is still palpable. Iranians don't want to bleed again; they want to get ahead. In this, they resemble the post-Cultural Revolution Chinese.

Pragmatism reigns for all the inflammatory official rhetoric. Money, education and opportunity drive people. Years of mayhem in neighboring Iraq and Afghanistan have concentrated Iranian minds: Who needs that?

"Overthrowing regimes is no longer on the agenda," Mohammad Atrianfar, the former editor of a reformist magazine shut down by the government, told me. "Reform, yes, upheaval, no."

Young people — and well over half the population is under 30 — may want a freer press or freer dress. But cell phones, widespread Internet access and satellite TV (government restrictions are as easily circumvented as Western sanctions) sap confrontational adrenalin. The Islamic revolution has proved resilient in part because of its flexibility.

In a land of such competing currents, the United States has focused on one: Iran as an expansionist power. Iran's political constellation includes those who have given past support to terrorist organizations. But an American myopia has led policy makers

to underestimate the social, psychological and political forces for pragmatism, compromise and stability. Iran has not waged a war of aggression for a very long time.

Tehran shares many American interests. It favors a democratic Iraq because that will be a Shiite-governed Iraq, and a unified Iraq stable enough for pilgrims to flock to the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. It opposes Taliban redux in Afghanistan and Al Qaeda's Sunni fanaticism. Its democracy is flawed but by Middle Eastern standards vibrant. Both words in its self-description — Islamic Republic — count.

These common interests and the long misreading of Iranian priorities demand an entirely new approach from President Obama. The radical Bush presidency produced a radical Iranian response. Any Western visitor here is soon reminded that while modern Iraq was sketched on a 20th-century map, Persia has been around for millennia. Its pride requires treatment as an equal.

To suggest, as a recent report from the Bipartisan Policy Center in Washington did, that Obama must "begin augmenting the military lever" to complement intensified diplomacy is to recommend digging deeper into failure.

Blinking is never pleasant but can be shrewd. America and its allies should drop their insistence that enrichment at Natanz cease before talks begin (Iran could always restart enrichment anyway). Obama should also say that any military threat has moved under the table in the name of restoring dialogue. These two steps would place the onus on the Iranian regime.

Can revolutionary Iran live without "Death to America?" Powerful hard-line Iranian factions think not, but I'm with the majority of Iranians who believe their Islamic Republic can coexist with a functioning U.S. relationship.

Obama should do five other things. Address his opening to the supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, because he decides. State that America is not in the Iranian regime-change business. Act soon rather than wait for the Iranian presidential elections in June: Khamenei will still be around after them. Begin with small steps that build trust. Treat the nuclear issue within the whole range of U.S.-Iranian relations, rather than as its distorting focus.



Raquel Marin

Readers are invited to comment at my blog:  
[www.iht.com/passages](http://www.iht.com/passages)



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A serious problem ■ Malcolm Rifkind

# Obama and the ayatollah

President Obama has a serious problem. He has, very wisely, proposed direct dialogue between America and Iran, without preconditions, in order to try and improve relations between these two arch-enemies.

The initiative deserves to be applauded. If President George W. Bush was able to normalize relations with Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi's Libya despite the PanAm Lockerbie disaster and past Libyan support for terrorism there is no obvious reason why the United States and Iran could not achieve a similar outcome.

There are, however, serious caveats. It takes two to tango. Qaddafi had good reasons to wish to end sanctions and isolation. He had few friends, and, in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq, he was concerned that he might have been next on Washington's list for regime change.

The Iranians do not feel that vulnerable. Indeed some at the head of the regime may feel they need the Great Satan to continue as their enemy in order to justify their repressive rule at home.

Even less-extreme Iranians, like Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani or Mohammad Khatami, may welcome dialogue and possible normalization of relations but may not be willing to sacrifice Iran's nuclear weapons aspirations in order to achieve them. That would be bad news. At the end of the day U.S. friendship with a nuclear-armed Iran is an option not even Obama could contemplate.

These concerns should not discourage the American president from offering unconditional dialogue on U.S.-Iranian bilateral relations. He would win regardless of how the Iranians might react to such a generous and unprecedented gesture. If the Iranians responded with serious interest and the talks led to gradual normalization there would be the real prospect of the next step being a negotiated resolution of the nuclear weapons crisis.

If, on the other hand, the Iranians rebuffed such a generous offer by Obama on bilateral relations, he would then be in a far stronger position, on the nuclear weapons issue, to expect and receive international

support for tougher economic and other sanctions.

There is, however, a more serious concern that has been expressed and not just by those skeptical of Obama's initiative. There are understandable fears that the Iranians might enter into prolonged discussions with the Americans not with any desire for the talks to succeed but merely to enable them to continue their uranium enrichment without fear of new UN sanctions or U.S. military strikes for however long the talks lasted. By the time the talks broke down the Iranians would have completed their enrichment program and achieved their strategic nuclear objectives having used the bilateral talks with the Americans to prevent further sanctions.

These concerns are not fanciful, but they can be resolved in a number of ways that would not impede direct dialogue between Washington and Tehran nor allow the Iranians off the hook.

At its most basic, the Americans could make clear that as their offer of direct diplomacy on bilateral relations was without any preconditions the Iranians ceasing

uranium enrichment so, too, the Iranians could not expect any preconditions of their own. Accordingly, if direct talks on U.S.-Iran relations began, this would not prevent the Americans from proposing further action to toughen sanctions against Iran over their nuclear program while the talks proceeded.

Susan Rice, Obama's new ambassador to the United Nations, has already made clear that talks on Iran's nuclear program cannot proceed until Iran implements the Security Council's demand to suspend its uranium enrichment program.

The direct talks offered by the United States would, therefore, not be on nuclear issues. That would remain the responsibility of the United Nations. Rather they would deal with the many bilateral issues that divide the two countries. That would include the re-establishment of diplomatic relations, consular issues and the resumption of trade, as well as potential common interests in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The reality is that progress on any or all of these is-

ssues would have the potential to transform U.S.-Iran relations and diminish the atmosphere of mutual distrust and suspicion that has existed since 1979. That, in itself would have a powerful, though indirect, impact on the nuclear weapons issue.

For example, the Obama administration might be willing to drop the Bush policy of fostering regime change in Iran and acknowledge that the future of Iran's political system was for the people of Iran alone to determine. The United States might formally drop the "axis of evil" rhetoric so detested in Tehran.

Part (though only part) of Iran's desire for nuclear weapons is a genuine sense of insecurity as a result of U.S. antagonism and its perceived desire to overthrow the current Iranian regime. If the U.S. position was to change as a result of the direct talks offered by Obama, Iran might be more willing to come in from the cold and compromise on nuclear policy.

Indeed, while the Iranians could not suspend their uranium enrichment program in the face of Security Council demands without serious loss of face, that would not preclude a unilateral gesture by them once Washington-Tehran talks were taking place, especially if they were going well.

There remains the question of the timing of direct talks and with which Iranians they will take place. There is no way Obama will allow President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to be involved. The Americans have no intention of boosting his prestige in advance of the Iranian presidential elections and, in any event, Ahmadinejad is to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei what Dmitri Medvedev is to Vladimir Putin. He may be head of state, but he is not the ruler of Iran.

Any rapprochement between the United States and Iran is going to be gradual and modest. Thirty years of deep hostility has been the result of real conflicts of interest that will take time and patience to address. But the rewards of success, not just for both countries, but for the Middle East and for the international community would be very great.

We will all watch with bated breath.

*Sir Malcolm Rifkind served as Britain's defense minister and foreign secretary under Prime Minister John Major.*

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# Iraqi Shiite party denies setback in regional vote

From news reports

**BAGHDAD:** The main Shiite party in Iraq maintained Monday that it had finished first or second in most provinces in weekend voting, despite projections showing that the group had suffered a setback at the hands of secular parties.

An election commission official said it would take two or three more days to complete the count from the balloting Saturday, in which Iraqis in most of the country chose provincial councils.

Some partial and unofficial results leaked to the Iraqi media suggested that the public had turned away from religious parties widely blamed for stoking sectarian tension.

Those religious parties include the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, the biggest Shiite group, which maintains links to Iran and the United States.

If the early results prove accurate, Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki

could be strengthened in dealings with Parliament before national elections scheduled to be held by next year. Maliki's Dawa Party drew strong support in Basra and Baghdad, two of Iraq's largest and most politically important provinces, according to political parties and election officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss preliminary tallies of the vote.

The relative success of the secular parties may be a sign that a significant number of Iraqis are disillusioned with the religious parties that have been in power but have done little to deliver needed services. Well-known incumbent parties also did well.

On Monday, however, the leader of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, disputed claims of a major setback, saying his party was leading in 11 of the 14 provinces where voting occurred.

"The Supreme Council is still a key player in the Iraqi arena, a role it has played since the struggle to rebuild the new Iraq with all of its challenges and complexities," Hakim said in a written statement. Hakim did not cite any figures or mention the provinces where his party was leading.

He blamed an election day vehicle ban, which forced voters to walk long distances to their polling stations, for the modest turnout — 51 percent according to the election commission.

Mohammed al-Amjad, spokesman for the electoral commission, said it would take two or three more days to complete the count because of delays in transporting ballots to Baghdad. He said no ballots had been received from four provinces, which he did not identify.

Amjad also said no complaints of election violations have been received from political parties. They have until Tuesday to file complaints. (AP, IHT)

John Vinocur

Politicus

# Obama's Iran policy still lacks definition

PARIS

This business about clenched fists and extended hands between the Americans and Iranians (who's doing the clenching and what constitutes reaching out?) is getting confusing. But not so much so as to remove this nugget of certainty:

With Iran so far advanced in making enriched uranium that some experts think it could produce enough for an atomic bomb sometime this year, the Obama administration and its European friends have gotten no closer to stopping the rush to a nuclear weapon that they insist is "unacceptable."

Part of the problem is that the Iranians, gifted verbal twisters and masters of murk, are toying with Barack Obama's phrase last week about an extended American hand in exchange for their unclenched fist.

At the same time, there is not much clarity yet from the Americans about what they want beyond the possibility of direct talks with the Iranians, or specific consequences for Iran if it refuses to accept an outcome blocking its production of nukes.

"Our fist and arms are open" to wise Americans, said Ali Akbar Javanfekr, described by Reuters as a close aide to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. "I believe that Mr. Ahmadinejad's message to congratulate Obama should be considered as an unclenched fist."

Hah. A couple of details in passing: Iran's extended hand (Javanfekr's phrase here) involves Iranian refusal to curtail its nuclear work, a demand that the United States end its military presence around the world, proof from Obama of "diplomatic respect" and an end of American support to (the wording is Ahmadinejad's) "the rootless, uncivilized, fabricated, murdering Zionists."

There was nothing more positive coming back publicly in response to what Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said was a clear opportunity for Iran "to demonstrate some willingness to engage meaningfully."

In the dim, chilling light of winter 2009, Iranian fists or hands or fingers still look alike.

But there is an American problem here, too. According to French anti-proliferation experts, the United States has acted in a way that allows Iran to believe it has a no-fist or low-risk adversary.

Last month, after Obama announced he would be retaining Robert Gates from the Bush administration as defense secretary, Gates's spokesman, Geoff Morrell, said Gates believed "a potential strike on the Iranian facilities is not something that we or anyone else should be pursuing at this time."

Gates was described in an article in The New York Times as having told George W. Bush that any overt attack on Iran would probably prove ineffective. The article said, in addition, that Bush discussed with aides the possibility that an airstrike could ignite a broad Middle East war.

Bruno Tertrais, an analyst for the Foundation for Strategic Research here, found the American messages "confusing if not contradictory."

He said, "I'm more skeptical than most about military action necessarily resulting in a catastrophic Iranian reaction." And he cited three incidents over the last 20 years in which American strikes on Iranian targets or specific threats of U.S. action made to the mullahs went without aggressive response.

Drawing on other indicators,

Thérèse Delpech, the most authoritative voice among the tough-minded French nuclear weapons-control specialists, has concluded that "the notion of a United States military threat has no credibility in Iran."

So: Is there, in fact, an American fist clenched someplace behind the offers of respect, friendship and a willingness to listen?

The latest answer came Thursday from Obama's spokesman, Robert Gibbs, who said the United States "must use all elements of our national power to protect our interests as it relates to Iran."

The Iranian reaction to this version of the all-options-remain-open mantra was quite clever. Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, an influential cleric and former president, said, "This can't be."

It was a way of turning the potential use of military force into an unacceptable contradiction in the American approach, and casting an eventual strike on Iran as a notion so contemptible that the rest of world would pressure the Obama administration to renounce it.

Although Obama has not laid out or necessarily decided on a strategy for the talks, concern has diminished

among the French that they would be so narrowly bilateral as to neutralize the UN Security Council's current active role on Iran. A high French official has said he expected Russia, which supplies Iran with its nuclear wherewithal, could be of some direct assistance in moving the Iranians.

But the Security Council connection, with Russia and China serving as a brake on the United States making more explicit warnings to Iran, has an unmistakable downside: emboldening Iran in its

**'There's no chance — zero — that the negotiations succeed.'**

belief that it can possess a bomb without U.S. military intervention. (The Israelis, after weathering international tut-tutting on Gaza, are another story.)

As for the Russians and last week's flutter of outstretched hands, their statement that, as a gesture to the new administration, they were dropping plans to station missiles targeting Europe from near the Polish border, got a hardened rewrite a couple of days later to say the threat still stands.

Looking at the overall situation, Delpech found "there's no chance — zero — that the negotiations succeed with the present Iranian power."

She foresaw unsuccessful initial contacts. And that, she said, meant more, tougher sanctions against Iran later this year, and the need for more pointed talk about "military possibilities."

If Obama takes this route, which means an end to his star turn as Mr. Multilateral, he's covered himself in advance with a declaration of his creed on the basics of potential American intervention.

His book, "The Audacity of Hope," published in 2006, clearly states there will be times when the United States must play the world's policeman, retain the right to take unilateral action against imminent threats and not accept that the Security Council has veto power over such American decisions.

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**CSIS** CENTER FOR STRATEGIC &  
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## Commentary: Keeping the Iraqi Elections in Perspective

Anthony H. Cordesman

February 2, 2009

### SYNOPSIS :

Iraqis have good reasons to celebrate the conduct of their local and provincial elections. They have taken place with a minimum of violence and with relatively high levels of participation. Iraqi forces provided most of the security for the first time, and a wide range of candidates ran on the basis of representing their constituents, rather than as part of lists that polarized the country into choosing Shi'ite Arab, Sunni Arab, and Kurd. These also were clearly Iraqi elections; no one can credibly accuse them of having been stage managed or manipulated by the United States.

At the same time, there are very good reasons for caution. It is the outcome of an election that counts. No one yet knows the results in terms of how many of those elected represent divisive sectarian and ethnic candidates, or individuals who will seek power or advantage for themselves.

It is not clear how the election has gone in deeply divided Shi'ite Arab and Sunni Arab areas like Diyala, or in an even more divided Ninewa, which is a test of just how deeply Arab, Kurd, Turcoman, and other minorities will be able to peacefully work together on the basis of any kind of vote. Moreover, the vote did not include 4 of Iraq's 18 provinces (Duhok, Erbil, Suleimaniya, and Kirkuk)-one of which includes Kirkuk city and Iraq's northern oil fields. Violence may break out between Arab and Kurd over the impact of the election in the provinces that did vote, but the key test is still to come.

Even when the election results are known, it will be months before anyone can determine what they mean in terms of practical impact on Iraq's political and economic life. Far too many analysts focus on how officials are chosen, rather than their capability to govern. In practice, real world political legitimacy is roughly 90 percent quality of governance and 10 percent democracy. Some 14,500 candidates ran for only 440 provincial council seats in this election. Even those with political experience and/or experience in office often had minimal real world capability to govern and little experience in actually working with other factions and parties.

It is not yet clear how well the vast majority of those candidates who are elected in this election will actually do in office. For many, it will be a learning experience-to put it mildly. It will also be an sobering-in not grim-experience in dealing with a central government that has deep divisions of its own, has deep elements of factionalism and corruption, often acts to the narrow advantage of its leaders, and which has not demonstrated the capability to allocate its budget effectively, much less actually spend it. These problems will be compounded by the fact that when Iraq is moving from a surplus of oil export income to major problems with its coming national budget and economy.

It also is clear that the larger national parties have seen this election as a prelude to a series of lengthy power struggles that will occur as Iraq moves toward a national election later in 2009 or early in 2010. They will make every effort to manipulate the results of this election to serve their own ends, and they scarcely are united in serving the broad national interest of Iraq:

● **The Kurdish parties are increasingly divided from the rest of Iraq, and Arab-Kurdish tension now presents the greatest risk of serious violence.** The Kurdistan Alliance-dominated by Masoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talibani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (KDP)-are becoming steadily more separated from the Arab parties in the government. There was no voting in three Kurdish-dominated provinces and the key province that is the location of Kirkuk and Iraq's northern oil fields.

○ It is clear, however, that the Kurdish factions are making a systematic effort to increase their political power at the local level, to dominate contested areas, and use the Pesh Merga and Kurdish-dominated elements in the army and police force to secure their influence and position in mixed areas. At some point, this will lead to active power struggles in contested areas, although there is no way to predict whether these power struggles will be violent.

○ **At least some significant local power shifts could emerge from this election.** The fact that so few Sunnis voted previously in Ninewa did, however, give them nearly 75 percent of the seats on the council. It seems likely that Sunnis will not be a majority. At least some Kurdish-dominated areas may likely come under Arab rule, and this may also happen in parts of Diyala and Salah al Din.

● **The previous dominant Shi'ite coalition-the United Iraqi Alliance-has fractured in ways that can have a very mixed impact on Iraq's future:**

○ **Maliki's Islamic Call (Dawa Party) and the State of Law coalition have become increasingly nationalist, secular, tribal, and distanced from Iran.** Maliki has gone from a compromise minority leader to a candidate for strongman. He does not have control over a militia but does have considerable influence over armed Shi'ite Tribal Support Councils. He has direct control of two units in the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)-included the elite counterterrorism force-as well as considerable influence in other elements of the ISF. He advocates national unity and has not supported any form of Shi'ite federalism. Maliki also has increasingly favored the Arab cause over the Kurds, creating a split with the Kurds that once backed him.

○ **The Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) controls the Finance Ministry, and has controlled a number of governorates, and the security of key cities like Najaf and Karbala.** Its Badr Organization has an important influence in some elements of the ISF and can operate to a limited degree as a separate militia. It is not clear, however, how well it will do in the elections. It is sometimes seen as too religious, as having failed to govern effectively where it had power, and tied too closely to Iran. Its leader-Abdel Aziz al-Hakim-is ill with cancer and neither he, nor his son and heir Ammar al Hakim-have ever been particularly charismatic. ISCI does, however, have a broad base of competent leaders-like Iraq's vice president Adel Abdul Mahdi-where the Maliki faction of Dawa does not. ISCI leaders spent many years in exile in Iran, Hakim once recognized the status of Iran's Supreme Leader, and ISCI is seen as much more under Iranian influence than Dawa and Fadhila. Hakim and some elements of ISCI have favored the creation of a nine-province Shi'ite federal area in the south-sometimes called Shiastan -that would give the Shi'ites control over much of the country's oil reserves and infrastructure.

○ **The Sadrists did not run openly under the sponsorship of Sadr, but did run as the Sadr al-Iraq, Blameless and Reconstruction, and Mission (Risalyun) lists.** The Sadrists still have a major influence in the south and Sadr City. They are, however, now deeply fractured. Fortunately, this includes the Mahdi Army. A series of reversals and cease-fires have left it deeply divided, and key elements have limited loyalty to Sadr, although this could make them turn violent as well as take them largely out of the normal political process. Sadr's efforts to turn much of his militia into a disciplined civil-action force called the Mumahidoon have had mixed success at best. The same is true of the remaining force that he said would be directed solely against the United States and other occupiers. There still, however, are dangerous elements of the special groups, some of which may

still have Iranian support. Some Iraqis also believe that Sadr's nationalism has been seriously compromised by his increasing dependence on Iran.

- **The Fadhila Party has seen its control weaken over Basra and its port traffic, but it still controls the governorship and had a slight majority in the provincial council.** It also has influence in other areas in the southeast, including those that export some 65 to 70 percent of Iraq's oil. Fadhila has advocated a smaller Shi'ite federal area in the three provinces where it has the most influence: Basra, Maysan, and Dhi Qar-which would give the party that controlled such an area power over much of Iraq's oil wealth as well as its port. Fadhila has small, but largely unproven militia and no clear influence in the ISF.
- **A number of new Shi'ite parties emerged, like the Constitutional Party. There are also many untested local and tribal Shi'ite candidates and national and semi-secular parties with Shi'ite leaders.** One key issue will be how much power and/or votes they gain in this election.
- **The Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and the senior Shi'ite clergy (Hawza) are still a major political force, and one courted by every major Shi'ite faction, but have less control and influence than in the past.**
- **Sunni political factions are also deeply fractured.**
  - **The Iraqi Islamic Party is a major element of the national representation of Sunnis in the Council. It has origins in Iraq's Moslem Brotherhood and has ties to Ba'athist elements.** It also, however, has seen its power shift steadily to tribal elements and leaders from the Sons of Iraq, especially in the areas of Anbar, Ninewa, and Diyala where it won votes in the national election because it led the Sunni coalition-the Iraqi Consensus Front-and was the only real choice. Its leader, Tareiq al Hashemi is one of Iraq's two vice presidents but has shown little ability to mobilize Sunni support.
  - **Other national Sunni parties in the Iraqi Consensus Front seem to have lost even more influence.** These include the National Dialogue Council (Khalaf Uallyan) and General Peoples Congress (Adnan al-Dulaimi).
  - **The National Iraq Dialogue Front (an antigovernment and anticonstitution party led by a former Ba'athist, Saleh al-Mutlak) has uncertain levels of power.** The Front won only 11 seats in the Council in December 2005 and has been largely excluded from government since that time. It is unclear what level of popular Sunni support it, or parties like it, still command.
  - **Diyala Province is deeply divided between Arab Shi'ite and Arab Sunni, with Kurdish and other minority elements.** It has an uneasy peace, but many areas are segregated by sect, and Sunni tribal political and armed elements compete with Shi'ite elements as well as each other. There are still some active Neo-Ba'athist Sunni political elements.
  - **A wide range of tribal factions and elements of the Sons of Iraq and other Popular Councils are vying for power, running against each other as well as the national Sunni political parties.** They could fracture much of the Sunni power structure into individual local elements of service politics.
  - **Significant elements of al Qaeda in Iraq still exist and pose a threat in the areas outside Baghdad, Diyala, and especially in the north in Ninewa.** They are largely defeated but can scarcely be counted out and could suddenly reemerge as a major power in any new Sunni-Shi'ite or Arab-Kurd fighting.
  - **Some Shi'ites argue that there are significant Sunni-led elements in the Army and ISF.**
- **A wide variety of local nationalist, secular, and special interest**

**parties and candidates may further complicate the political mix.** These include elements of former prime minister Allawi's Iraqi List, the National Democratic Alliance, and a number of smaller and minority parties. More arguably, some say they now include Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress.

None of these political divisions are new, and it must be stressed that they so far have played out largely at the political level and with a minimum of violence. The fragmentation of the Shi'ite and Sunni blocs may also lead to more realistic politics based on local needs and representation as well as tension. Accordingly, neither the election nor Iraq's political divisions provide a clear reason to be pessimistic about Iraq or to assume worst cases. There also, however, is no reason to be optimistic about the impact of the elections simply because Iraqis voted. Iraq is very much a work in progress, and one that will take at least several more years to achieve any meaningful stability.

It is also important to remember that the days in which outside aid, debt forgiveness, and fixed allocations of Iraq's oil export income minimized the economic strains in Iraq, are all over. Iraq is still a very attractive target for outside oil investment, but has done far too little to expedite such investment. Local politics still depend almost completely on the central government's allocation of its share of oil export income, which accounts for more than 90 percent of government revenues.

The global financial crisis has made other forms of investment in Iraq even more problematic, and some estimates put government-related employment at 70 percent of the nonagricultural labor force. Oil prices have dropped from nearly \$140 a barrel to levels averaging around \$40, and Iraq has already had to cut its planned budget for 2009 from \$78.4 billion to \$68 billion and may well have to cut it again. For the first time, the central government has to warn of layoffs and serious budget cuts.

At best, the provincial and local elections are simply a first step in the shift from the war after the war to real post-conflict reconstruction. At worst, they will be the prelude to new rounds of violence or divisive power struggles. Even Iraq good enough is still far from any kind of certainty. Much continues to depend on both the evolving political skills of Iraq's leaders and the support they get over the next half-decade from the United States and the international community.

<http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/090202cordesmaniraq.pdf>

**Anthony H. Cordesman holds the Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.**

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REUTERS

## Vote sows seeds of greater calm in Iraq's north

February 2, 2009 By Tim Cocks

MOSUL, Iraq, Feb 2 (Reuters) - Voting in Iraq's restive Nineveh province looks likely to restore disenfranchised Sunni Arabs to power, and possibly ease resentment that has fuelled continued violence there, officials said.

There were few complaints of fraud from either Sunni Arab parties or their Kurdish rivals in the volatile northern province, where al Qaeda and other insurgent groups still roam. Many had feared that provincial polls held on Saturday in 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces could be a flashpoint for tensions between Arabs and Kurds in Nineveh if either cried foul.

The election turned out to be Iraq's most peaceful since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion ousted Saddam Hussein.

A top U.S. official close to the process said there had been "some, not many" complaints of irregularities in Nineveh, Iraq's most lawless province.

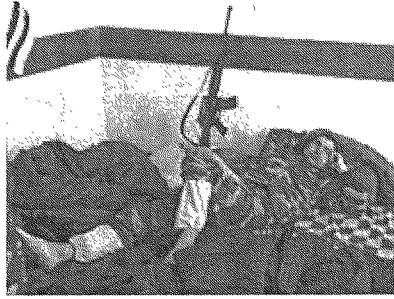
"I haven't seen any allegations that on election day the results were significantly skewed for one party," he said.

"Nobody trusts anyone here so (we) put everyone together to have as many eyes on this process as possible."

The stakes are high in Nineveh, which has been plagued by an angry Sunni Arab insurgency and is home to rival ethnic Kurds, Turkmen and Arabs. The battle-scarred provincial capital Mosul sees frequent bombings and shootings, even as violence has fallen sharply across the rest of Iraq.

Sunni Arabs boycotted the last provincial polls in 2005, leaving them with only 10 out of Nineveh's 41 council seats, despite making up 60 percent of the population.

Kurds control 31 seats, despite being a quarter of it. The Kurdish dominance is seen as illegitimate by Sunnis, who ruled under Saddam and many of whom turned to the insurgency.



An Iraqi soldier rests in an Iraqi army barracks before going out on a joint patrol with U.S. soldiers in Mosul, about 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, February 2, 2009. Reuters

One party that had hoped to attract votes from disgruntled former members of Saddam's Baath party is al-Hadba, a new bloc led by Atheel al-Nujaifi. He had prematurely accused the Kurds of vote-rigging.

But he told Reuters on Sunday: "I do not think there have been major breaches. We believe we will get 70 percent."

The U.S. official told reporters anecdotal evidence suggested al-Hadba had won around two thirds of the vote. "If al-Hadba has done as well as we think ... we're probably looking at a provincial council in which al-Hadba can govern alone. The crisis of legitimacy is addressed."

Nineveh deputy governor Khasro Goran, a Kurd, said he had heard no reports of trickery or intimidation of voters. He added that he thought al-Hadba would not get over 50 percent so would need to form a coalition with the Kurds.

"Our doors are open. We don't fear cooperation," he said.

Mohammed Shakir, local head of the other main Sunni Arab contender, the Iraqi Islamic Party, also applauded the vote.

"The election went smoothly. We think it was fair," he said.

Despite the positive reactions from politicians, the election was followed by at least one act of violence.

In a remote town south of Mosul, a house belonging to al-Hadba candidate Faisal al-Habu was blown up, police said. It was Habu's second home and he was not there. No one was injured.

Preliminary results from the election are expected in a couple of days while final results may not be known for a month.

THE KOREA TIMES February 2, 2009

## Korea's KNOC goes solo in Iraqi Kurdistan

The state-run Korea National Oil Corporation (KNOC) is confident it can go it alone in a massive oil development project in Iraq, after talks with Korean companies over forming a consortium fell through, industry sources said Sunday.

KNOC signed a contract with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) last September on exploration and production sharing for eight oil blocks in Kurdish autonomous region in Iraq's north, five located near Erbil and the other three near Sulaimaniyah.

The eight blocks have estimated oil reserves of 7.2 billion barrels, and the deal gives the

Koreans the rights over 1.9 billion barrels, KNOC said.

The Koreans, in exchange, promised to spend around \$2.1 billion to build power facilities, water services, sewage systems and other infrastructure.

However, KNOC had struggled to reach an agreement with builders such as Hyundai Engineering and Construction, Ssangyong Construction and Doosan Construction over how to balance the financing of the infrastructure project.

According to industry sources, KNOC will be part of a consortium of Korean firms, which also

includes SK Energy, in developing the Bazian oil block.

However, KNOC is now planning to go it alone in the remaining seven oil blocks, although it will remain open to talks about consortiums down the road.

KNOC is about to announce plans to initiate a \$600 million project, which is the first part of the aforementioned infrastructure project, officials said.

KNOC officials were unavailable for comment. Under the deal with the Kurdistan government, KNOC has acquired an 80 percent stake in Qush Tappa; a 60 percent stake in Sangaw South; 20 percent in Bazian; 20 percent in Sangaw North; and 15 percent each in K15, K16, K17 and K21 blocks in Hawler.

The Asahi Shimbun February 2, 2009

## Japan to set up aid office in Iraqi Kurdistan

To establish a foothold for providing greater development assistance to Iraq, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) will dispatch full-time Japanese staff members to the northern part of the nation as early as this month.

The projected JICA office would be set up in Erbil, the capital city of Kurdistan region of Iraq. Plans also call for dispatching JICA officials to the Japanese Embassy in Baghdad to coordinate development assistance projects.

With the administration of U.S. President Barack Obama considering a reduction of troops in Iraq and a shift in the focus of its war on terrorism to Afghanistan, Japanese government officials said providing reconstruction aid to Iraq would be a good opportunity to demonstrate Japan's contributions to the nation.

The region where the new JICA office is to be located would be within the Kurdistan regional government established in 2006 by three provinces in northern Iraq. The security situation in Kurdistan is said to be better than in the areas around Baghdad or in southern Iraq.

Sources said at least three Japanese officials would be posted to the Erbil office. JICA sent an advance party to the region last July and preparations for opening the office are close to completion. Although JICA wants to open the office this month, the actual opening could be delayed depending on Iraqi paperwork.

In 2003, Japan pledged about \$5 billion in reconstruction assistance to Iraq, the second largest contribution behind the \$20 billion pledged by the United States.

About \$1.5 billion has already been provided to Iraq in the form of grant assistance. A total of \$3.5 billion more in official development assistance loans has still to be implemented.

JICA had planned to set up an office in Baghdad after the collapse of

Saddam Hussein's regime, but the plan was scrapped in the wake of the August 2003 bombing of the U.N. office in the capital.

JICA officials in Amman, Jordan, have been supervising local workers in Iraq, but JICA officials decided that Japanese in-country staff would be needed to oversee future loan projects, including one to rehabilitate the Al-Mussaib thermal power plant in central Iraq that will cost about \$2.4 billion.

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

February 4, 2009

## Sunni party's rise in Iraq signals new nationalist current

By Jane Arraf  
The Christian Science Monitor

**Mosul, Iraq** - Atheel al-Nujaifi, leader of an emergent Sunni Arab party, suddenly finds himself at the center of a sea change in this country's most turbulent province.

While ballots from Iraq's provincial vote Saturday are still being counted, officials say that Mr. Nujaifi's al-Hadba Gathering Party probably did well enough to control Nineveh's provincial council, previously in the hands of Kurds.

A victory would have broad implications. While it sets the stage for heightened tensions in Mosul between Kurds and Arabs, some say it could also convince Sunni Arab insurgents to lower their guns as they are beginning to see new political openings.

Overall, Nujaifi's party seems a harbinger of a wider nationalist, secular current intent on throwing off US and Iranian influence.

"All the people who went out and voted, voted against the status quo and the Kurdish parties have to understand this reality," says Nujaifi, a prominent businessman who campaigned on a platform that US and Iraqi officials describe as blatantly anti-Kurdish.

"We are not enemies of the Kurds," insists Nujaifi, his black Italian cashmere jacket offset by a subtly striped red and white tie. "There are certain issues and we would like to discuss these issues with Kurdish parties but we are not going to give up the rights for the people who have voted for our party."

Nujaifi warns that unrest could break out in the streets of Mosul, Iraq's third largest city and a main commercial center, if Kurdish officials do not accept the election results.

Kurdish authorities in Nineveh have already complained to electoral officials that voter registration problems barred many supporters from voting.

Nujaifi insists that al-Hadba has won at least 50 percent of the provincial votes.

Officials close to the election process say it's closer to 40 percent - still enough to dominate Nineveh's provincial council and choose the new governor. Kurds say al-Hadba is overestimating its support.

"We are satisfied with the elections," says current Deputy Gov. Khasro Goran, a member of the Kurdish Democratic Party.

A victory by al-Hadba would produce the most dramatic transition among the 14 Iraqi provinces that voted Saturday. No other majority Arab province has had a provincial council so dominated by Kurds, who have held 31 of the 41 seats in the existing provincial government.

New Sunni power center

Mosul, where more than 1,000 senior Iraqi Army officers were thrown out of work when US authorities disbanded the army, has been a center of the insurgency.

"We thought the big Sunni power would be the Awakening, but al-Hadba could be the new rising star," says one Western official monitoring the elections.

The Awakening Movement, armed tribal members who first turned against Al Qaeda in Iraq-linked insurgents in Anbar Province, were participating for the first time in elections. Now allegations of fraud in Saturday's vote and an expected strong showing by the religious Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) have sparked warnings of violence by Awakening leaders.

With the end of Sunni-Shiite divisions that flared into sectarian civil war in 2006, Nineveh Province is at the center of one of Iraq's most serious rifts. Six of the province's nine districts include territory disputed by the Kurds and central governments. Kurds say areas bordering its existing "green line" demarcating the semiautonomous Kurdish region, including some oil fields, are historically Kurdish.

Nujaifi says in addition to keeping the disputed areas, his priorities are freeing detainees seized in Nineveh and taken to Kurdish jails, dealing with the issue of 100,000 Arabs and Kurds displaced from the Kurdish territories, and amending the curriculum in some school districts which he says blame Arabs for Saddam Hussein's

campaign against the Kurds.

"I think if al-Hadba has done as well as we think, part of it is the broad appeal of its very strident rhetoric against the Kurds," says a US diplomat.

"I think some of the rhetoric was unfortunate but there is a reason it got traction," he says, citing Kurdish measures that prevent Iraqi Arabs from easily traveling to the Kurdish-controlled north of Iraq.

The Kurds' political challenge

The antipathy between Nujaifi and the Kurdish parties is so strong that the Kurds have threatened to refuse to take their seats in the new council if he becomes governor.

"If Atheel al-Nujaifi stays as a governor that will be a problem," says Mosul Mayor Zuhair al-Araji, a secular Shiite who maintains good relations with both Kurds and Arabs. "They won't accept him. Anyone who becomes governor has to be able to work with everyone."

"This is a change in politics - a real change," says Nujaifi. "We're not like the parties of the past.... We have never been part of the old regime and we were not against the old regime either," he says, blaming many of the country's problems on Iraqis who joined forces with the United States to oust Mr. Hussein and pave the way for the US invasion and occupation.

Al-Hadba, named after the leaning minaret that is Mosul's landmark, is a coalition of parties whose members include some of the city's business elite. Some US officials say the party is funded by former Saddam-era regime figures and Sunni sheikhs.

Nujaifi himself, whose grandfather and father were members of parliament under Iraq's monarchy, owns real estate, transport, agriculture, and tourism businesses in Iraq and a trading company in Jordan.

Some US officials say that the rise of a party of influential and formerly disenfranchised Sunni Arabs with a component of former Baathists could lessen the insurgency.

"To me it raises the question of why there was no violence," says the US diplomat, referring to the absence of attacks either on polling sites Saturday or registration sites in November and December. It could be "that the terrorists have a political agenda," he says. "That they were not opposed to elections."

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The Washington Post February 2, 2009:

# In Iraq's North, Vote Tallies To Define Loyalties, Disputes

By Ernesto Londo o  
Washington Post Foreign Service

**M**OSUL, Iraq, Feb. 1 -- For the northern provinces of Iraq, the outcome of elections held Saturday will provide the first snapshot in decades of demographics and loyalties in areas that have become the subject of a visceral dispute between Arabs and Kurds.

Newly elected leaders in these provinces, where Sunni Arabs are widely expected to gain political power, will be thrust into the debate over whether disputed territories, including the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, should be annexed to the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Iraqi and American officials say the fight has the potential to destabilize a country on the mend at a time when U.S. troops are starting to withdraw. And the United States will be caught in a dispute between the Kurds, its longtime allies, and the central government, which it has spent billions of dollars shoring up.

"It's going to be tough," a senior U.S. diplomat in Iraq said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. "It's a very difficult, emotional negotiation."

Mahdi Herky, a Kurdish member of the Nineveh provincial council who ran for reelection, predicted that voting patterns would show that most residents in the disputed areas want to be part of the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government.

"There's good evidence that these places belong to the KRG," he said Sunday as votes were being tallied. "People have been waiting for this election to know whether there's a majority of the population" that wants to break away from the central government.

Sunni Arabs, who boycotted the 2005 elections, campaigned on the promise of curbing Kurdish expansion.

"If decision-making is in the hands of Kurdish groups, they're not going to be very reasonable," said Athel Abdul Aziz al-Nujaifi, the leader of al-Hadba-a, a new Sunni Arab party that is expected to become dominant on the Nineveh council. "They're going to hold fast to areas under their power, and they're not going to allow the government in Nineveh to go into those areas."

Sunni Arab politicians accuse the Kurds of using money, threats and violence to gain control of dozens of towns and villages along the 300-mile "green line" that separates the autonomous Kurdish region from the rest of the country.

"For us Arabs, this election is a turning point," said Hamdan Juhaihy, 30, a teacher who said he voted for al-Hadba-a. "We boycotted the last election, and the result was catastrophic because we became a target for some who want to change the identity of this area."

A census conducted in the 1950s is the



most recent that Iraqis on both sides of the dispute recognize as legitimate. Since then, the population has shifted dramatically and often by force, including a period during which Saddam Hussein's government displaced Kurds from the disputed areas and created incentives for Arabs to move there.

The population today is believed to be between 500,000 and 750,000, including significant numbers of Christians and Turkmens, and members of the Yazidi and Shabak religious minority groups.

Since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the Kurdish regional government has spent millions of dollars on development projects and security in villages, becoming the de-facto state in areas long overlooked by the central and provincial governments.

In Nineveh province Sunday, Arab and Kurdish candidates traded allegations of electoral misconduct. Both camps said partisan security forces steered voters away from voting for their rivals and in some instances campaigned openly at polling sites.

But no group said irregularities had disenfranchised a large portion of the electorate, and party leaders said the biggest problem -- incomplete voter registration rosters -- appeared to affect voters across ethnic and political lines.

"Compared to D.C. voting, these guys were organized," said Diane Crow, a U.S. diplomat based in Mosul who served as an observer.

Faraj al-Hadari, the head of Iraq's electoral commission, said that the panel was investigating numerous complaints but that none appeared to be serious. At a news conference Sunday morning in Baghdad, he said that roughly 51 percent of Iraq's 15 million registered voters turned out for Saturday's elections for provincial councils, the equivalent of state legislatures in the United States.

Turnout in Nineveh, at roughly 60 percent, was among the highest in the country. In Anbar and Baghdad provinces, about 40 percent of registered voters participated. After the results are certified, new councils will appoint governors for 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces. Preliminary results are expected later this week.

Faris al-Bakooa, a representative of al-

Hadba-a, said polling went smoothly.

"There is no election that is 100 percent correct," he said. "As far as this election goes, the problems appear to have been little."

Bakooa said one of the party's observers was beaten at a polling station Saturday. "It makes us proud," he said. "If the party wasn't powerful, people wouldn't beat us."

In the weeks leading up to the elections, U.S. officials brokered a deal between the Iraqi army and the pesh merga, the Kurdish regional government's armed force, to have a combination of forces stationed at polls in disputed areas. The arrangement was deemed necessary because the two forces came close to an armed confrontation a few months ago in neighboring Diyala province and have been used by Kurds and the central government to exert control over disputed areas.

U.S. and U.N. officials dispatched more observers to Nineveh's disputed areas than to any other province on election day. American military officials, citing intelligence reports, said they had expected attempted suicide bombings near polling sites, attempted kidnappings of foreigners and roadside bombings. U.S. Military Police soldiers drove observers to polling stations in armored fighting vehicles. But not a single violent act targeting voters or candidates was reported Saturday.

"One of the questions out there is: Did the terrorists try to disrupt this and fail?" the U.S. official said. "Or did they want this to go well? Maybe the insurgency feels represented by a political platform."

Herky, the Kurdish council member, said it was surely the latter.

"The political groups that were affiliated with al-Qaeda have now decided that violence is not the way," he said, in a snub to the Arab parties, which Kurds have accused of having links to insurgents. Sunni Arab politicians have denied that allegation.

Gen. Robert Brown, the top U.S. military commander in Mosul, said he hoped citizens would see the outcome of the elections as legitimate, unlike in 2005, when allegations of fraud by Kurdish operatives were widespread and well documented.

"I'm very hopeful this will give us irreversible momentum," Brown said.

Special correspondents K.I. Ibrahim in Baghdad and Dlovan Brwari in Nineveh province contributed to this report.□

Le Monde

Dimanche 1<sup>er</sup> - Lundi 2 février 2009

# La Turquie tente de s'imposer comme médiateur impartial au Proche-Orient

La « sortie » de M. Erdogan à Davos pourrait nuire aux efforts de la diplomatie turque

Ankara

Correspondance

Le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a fait une sortie aussi fracassante que remarquée, jeudi 29 janvier, au Forum économique de Davos (Suisse), après avoir tenu tête, dans cette ambiance d'ordinaire si feutrée, au président israélien, Shimon Peres. Une sortie particulièrement appréciée par l'opinion arabe et musulmane, au lendemain des événements de Gaza.

Pour accueillir, vendredi, à son retour, M. Erdogan, ce dirigeant issu de la mouvance islamiste, des milliers de Turcs, portant des pancartes saluant le « héros de Davos », se sont rendus en pleine nuit à l'aéroport d'Istanbul. Ils étaient encore plus d'un millier à l'acclamer le lendemain en ville, alors qu'il inaugurerait une bouche de métro. A cette foule, le charismatique premier ministre, élevé dans un quartier populaire d'Istanbul, a expliqué que, n'étant « pas issu de la diplomatie, mais de la politique », et donc habitué à se battre, il n'avait pas pu laisser passer l'affront fait, en sa personne, à « toute la nation turque ».

En réalité, ce qui s'est passé à Davos « n'était pas vraiment un scandale ni de l'héroïsme », estime İhsan Dagi, un politologue pourtant « pro-Erdogan ». Lors d'une table ronde consacrée à Gaza, au cours de laquelle M. Erdogan a pu parler 12 minutes, le modérateur a laissé M. Peres, dernier orateur inscrit, parler 25 minutes. Et ce, avec une rare véhémence pour finir sur un ton accusateur, doigt pointé contre son voisin turc. Lequel a demandé un droit de réponse, ne l'a pas eu, mais l'a pris quand même pour parler de massacres d'enfants. Avant d'être à nouveau prié de se taire. Furieux, M. Erdogan avait quitté la tribune.

Nul n'a mis en doute la sincérité de la colère de M. Erdogan, au caractère par ailleurs notoirement emporté. A Davos, c'était sa première rencontre avec un Israélien depuis le début de l'offensive contre Gaza, qu'il avait violem-



Mêlant drapeaux turcs et palestiniens, les partisans de M. Erdogan ont accueilli le premier ministre comme un héros, à son retour de Davos, à l'aéroport Atatürk près d'Istanbul. İBRAHİM USTÁ/AP

ment critiquée – devenant, avant même sa « sortie » de Davos, le nouveau héros de « la rue arabe ».

## Discours anti-israélien

Pourtant, il fut aussi le premier médiateur à se rendre dans la région. Et s'il n'est pas allé lui-même en Israël, lié à la Turquie par des accords stratégiques depuis 1996, M. Erdogan y a délégué, durant toute l'offensive, un haut diplomate réputé « pro-israélien ». Pendant que son conseiller diplomatique, Ahmet Davoutoglu, faisait la navette entre Damas – où il se rendait déjà régulièrement pour tenter de « modérer » le Hamas – et Le Caire.

Malgré cela, M. Erdogan fut accusé par une grande partie de la presse turque libérale – aujourd'hui plutôt dans l'opposition – de passer pour un défenseur du Hamas. Il aurait ainsi compromis les chances d'Ankara d'être accepté comme médiateur impartial au Proche-Orient. « La crédibilité d'Erdogan et

de son parti, l'AKP [Parti de la justice et du développement], a été entamée », a déclaré le journaliste Rusen Sakir, expert de ce parti « postislamiste » au pouvoir. Mais, selon Burak Bekdil, chroniqueur critique de l'AKP, « il faut surtout voir que M. Erdogan est en campagne électorale [pour les élections municipales, fin mars] et que son discours anti-israélien et sa sortie de Davos vont lui amener cinq à dix points de plus ».

Moins soucieux peut-être de politique intérieure, le président Abdullah Gül et le ministre des affaires étrangères, Ali Babacan, ont cherché à corriger l'impression produite par les propos du premier ministre et chef de leur parti. M. Gül a voulu rassurer la communauté juive de Turquie, qui s'inquiète d'une montée de l'antisémitisme induite par la campagne anti-israélienne de M. Erdogan. M. Babacan a déclaré que la Turquie « n'approuve pas le Hamas et souhaite qu'il se transforme en parti politi-

que », même si « cette organisation ne peut pas être ignorée dans les efforts de paix ». Répondant aux critiques, M. Erdogan a déclaré : « Il faut prendre parti, car ne pas dénoncer l'injustice c'est en être complice. (...) Le parti que prend la Turquie, c'est celui de la paix. »

Beaucoup ne seront pas convaincus. A commencer par les lobbies juifs aux Etats-Unis, très irrités, alors qu'Ankara comptait sur eux pour éviter un vote au Congrès cette année sur le génocide arménien. Mais les pragmatiques de tous bords soulignent que la Turquie et Israël ont toujours besoin l'un de l'autre et rappellent que M. Erdogan a repoussé les pressions au sein de son parti en faveur d'une rupture de certains liens avec l'Etat juif. M. Peres, de son côté, assurait, vendredi, que l'incident de Davos était clos, souhaitant que « tout puisse continuer comme avant » entre les deux pays. ■

Sophie Shihab





## Irak: taux de participation de 51% aux élections

Bagdad 01 février 2009 (AFP)

Le taux de participation aux élections provinciales qui se sont déroulées samedi en Irak a atteint 51%, contre 55,7% lors du précédent scrutin en 2005, a annoncé dimanche le chef de la Commission centrale électorale.

«Le taux de participation a atteint 51% au niveau national», a déclaré Faraj al-Haydari lors d'une conférence de presse à Bagdad. Près de 7 millions d'Irakiens sur 15 millions d'inscrits ont voté dans le calme pour départager 14.431 candidats concourant pour 440 sièges dans les conseils provinciaux. D'importantes mesures de sécurité avaient été déployées.

Seules 14 des 18 provinces votaient, les trois régions kurdes et la province disputée de Kirkouk devant voter plus tard dans l'année.

Ces conseils élisent ensuite les gouverneurs des provinces du pays.

En 2005, où l'ensemble des 18 provinces avaient voté, la participation s'était élevée à 55,7%. La minorité sunnite avait boudé le scrutin mais les Kurdes avaient voté en masse.

Ramenée à taux égal, soit selon une participation établie sur les 14 provinces qui ont voté samedi, la participation en 2005 aurait été de 49,8%.

Le taux de participation le plus élevé samedi a été constaté dans la province sunnite de Salaheddine avec 65%.

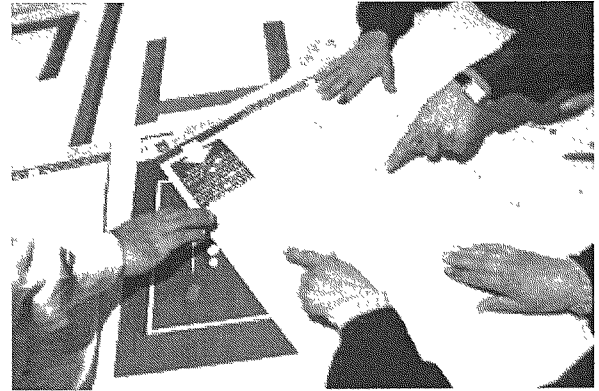
Signe du retour aux urnes des sunnites, les provinces d'Al-Anbar et de Ninive ont atteint respectivement 40% et 60%.

La province chiite qui a vu le plus nombre de votants est celle de Mouthanna avec 61% des inscrits.

Les participations les plus basses dans les provinces chiites ont été enregistrées dans la province de Missane, avec 46% et à Bagdad avec environ 40%.

Le scrutin de samedi était le premier depuis les législatives de décembre 2005. Il s'est déroulé sans grand incident et sous la protection de près d'un million de policiers et militaires irakiens.

Les premiers résultats officiels seront connus dans la semaine et les résultats défini-



tifs ne seront publiés que dans plusieurs semaines.

«Nous avons pu voir une participation forte toute la journée», avait affirmé samedi Staffan de Mistura, le représentant du secrétaire général de l'ONU en Irak.

Le président américain Barack Obama a pour sa part qualifié le scrutin d'«important pas en avant» qui devrait «faire avancer le processus permettant aux Irakiens de prendre en main leur avenir».

Le premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki, dont la liste «Coalition pour l'État de droit» est donnée favorite, s'est réjoui de l'«importante participation» au scrutin qui avait aussi valeur de test pour sa propre popularité.

Sa liste est arrivée en tête dans les régions chiites, selon des résultats partiels établis par l'AFP à partir des données des comités électoraux locaux.

Tous les sortants ont été durement sanctionnés pour leur gestion car la population leur reprochait leur incapacité à fournir les services de base et à lutter contre le chô-



## IRAK: ÉLECTIONS RÉGIONALES AU KURDISTAN LE 19 MAI

ERBIL (Irak), 3 février 2009 (AFP) -

Les élections régionales au Kurdistan irakien auront lieu le 19 mai, a indiqué mardi Adnane Mufti, le président du Parlement kurde et un dirigeant de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK de Jalal Talabani).

"En principe, nous (les deux principaux partis) sommes d'accord pour que les élections pour le parlement régional aient lieu le 19 mai", a-t-il indiqué lors d'une conférence de presse à Erbil, à 350 km au nord de Bagdad.

Les dernières élections avaient eu lieu le 30 janvier 2005, en même temps que les scrutins pour l'assemblée constituante irakienne et les élections provinciales.

Il a précisé que les élections provinciales au Kurdistan "se tiendront plus tard car la loi doit y être modifiée", a-t-il précisé.

Des élections provinciales se sont déroulées samedi dans 14 provinces du pays à l'exception de celle de Kirkouk (nord) et des trois provinces kurdes.

En 2005, sur 111 sièges, l'UPK et son rival le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK de Massoud Barzani) avaient obtenu 38 sièges chacun, les deux groupes islamistes avaient recueilli au total 15 sièges, les chrétiens 5, les Turcomans 4, les partis de gauche 5, le reste des sièges revenant à des indépendants.

Le Kurdistan bénéficie depuis la première guerre du Golfe en 1991 d'une relative autonomie qui a été confirmée par la Constitution irakienne adoptée en 2005. Cette région a son propre Parlement qui édicte des lois.

Des tensions existent entre le pouvoir central à Bagdad et le président de cette région autonome Massoud Barzani.



## LES USA QUALIFIENT DE "TERRORISTE" UN GROUPE REBELLE KURDE ACTIF EN IRAN

WASHINGTON, 4 fév 2009 (AFP)

Le Trésor américain a qualifié mercredi de "terroriste" le Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan (PJAK) et a annoncé le gel des avoirs de ce groupe rebelle kurde actif en Iran et en Irak, que Téhéran accusait par le passé d'être soutenu par Washington.

Cette mesure "expose au grand jour les liens entre les terroristes du PJAK et le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et soutient les efforts de la Turquie pour protéger ses citoyens des attentats", a souligné Stuart Levey, secrétaire adjoint au Trésor chargé de la lutte contre le terrorisme.

Contrairement au PJAK, le PKK, groupe rebelle séparatiste kurde de Turquie, figure sur la liste des organisations terroristes étrangères dressée par le département d'Etat américain.

Le PJAK ne prône pas la création d'un Kurdistan indépendant mais affirme lutter pour mettre fin au régime théocratique en vigueur en Iran au profit d'une fédération démocratique dans laquelle les Kurdes se verraient offrir une certaine autonomie.

L'Iran accuse le PJAK d'être responsable de plusieurs attentats sur son sol et accusait encore récemment Washington de le soutenir, avec d'autres organisations d'ethnies non persanes présentes à ses frontières, notamment au Khouzistan, province occidentale du pays à majorité arabe.

Depuis quelques jours, les Etats-Unis ont envoyé des signaux diffus sur l'Iran, pays avec lequel Washington n'entretient plus de relations diplomatiques depuis 1980 et qu'ils accusent de chercher à se doter de la bombe atomique.

Pendant sa campagne électorale, le président américain Barack Obama avait affirmé être prêt à rencontrer son homologue iranien Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Il y a quelques jours, M. Obama a dit être prêt à "tendre la main" à l'Iran à condition que Téhéran "dessaie le poing".

Mais mardi, après que Téhéran eut fait une démonstration de ses progrès en matière de fusées en plaçant un satellite sur orbite, la Maison Blanche a affirmé que les Etats-Unis utiliseraient "tous les éléments de (leur) puissance nationale" pour faire face aux différents défis posés par l'Iran.

Selon Jeffrey Boutwell, directeur pour les Etats-Unis du groupe Pugwash, une organisation internationale de chercheurs qui a obtenu le prix Nobel de la Paix en 1995, M. Obama a engagé il y a plusieurs mois des contacts très discrets avec l'Iran, par le biais d'experts comme l'ancien secrétaire à la Défense William Perry, qui figurait dans son équipe de campagne.

Sans donner plus de détails, un haut responsable gouvernemental américain ayant requis l'anonymat a qualifié ces informations d'"inexactes".

# Les élections provinciales irakiennes tournent à l'avantage de Nouri Al-Maliki

Dans un pays en voie de normalisation, le premier ministre l'emporte sur les partis religieux, qui avaient pris l'ascendant en 2005 au cours d'un scrutin qui s'est tenu sans incidents

## Bagdad

Envoyé spécial

**R**etour, capital pour la paix civile, de la minorité arabe sunnite dans le jeu politique national ; baisse sensible de la popularité et de l'influence des partis religieux islamiques ; montée en puissance des politiques non confessionnelles, voire laïcs ; participation modérée mais significative avec environ 51 % de votants... Quels que soient les paramètres de l'analyse, l'exercice électoral qui s'est déroulé, sans incidents violents, le 31 janvier dans 14 des 18 provinces d'Irak, marque une étape cruciale dans la marche vers la normalisation entreprise par ce pays depuis la fin 2007.

Alors que les forces américaines (extrêmement discrètes durant le scrutin) préparent leur retrait progressif des affaires irakiennes, les autorités ont montré qu'elles sont en mesure d'assurer une consultation électorale avec une certaine équité (grâce aussi à l'aide technique des 300 agents de la mission locale de l'ONU), et de le faire en déployant quasi exclusivement leurs propres forces de sécurité, soit environ 600 000 hommes. Hors les régions toujours très troublées de Mossoul et de Diyala, au nord de Bagdad, les 140 000 soldats américains du contingent d'Irak, pour la première fois depuis l'invasion de mars 2003, ne se sont pratiquement pas montrés.

Le premier ministre Nouri Al-Maliki, qui se félicitait lundi de « cette grande victoire pour le peuple irakien », pouvait se montrer d'autant plus satisfait que la liste qu'il patronnait pour ces élections régionales a fait un score étonnant, arrivant, selon les premières estimations, en tête des suffrages aussi bien à Bagdad que dans 6 des 9 régions à forte majorité chiite du pays. Jusque-là, le parti d'origine de M. Maliki, le Daawa, ne contrôlait que Kerbala. La liste qui arriverait en deuxième position dans plusieurs régions et notamment à Bagdad, serait celle de l'ancien chef du

gouvernement intérimaire mis en place par les Américains en 2004, Iyad Allaoui. Considérée comme laïque, « libérale », et comprenant notamment des communistes et des membres de l'ancien parti socialiste arabe, cette liste a surtout fait campagne sur un « anti-sectarisme » militant.

Chef, depuis 2007, du Daawa, formation religieuse chiite jadis décimée par Saddam Hussein, M. Maliki, qui a sillonné le pays et multiplié les interventions pour soutenir ses amis, présentait pour sa part une liste intitulée « Coalition pour un Etat de droit ». Celle-ci était d'autant moins perçue comme « religieuse » qu'à aucun moment le premier ministre n'a évoqué son appartenance à la majorité chiite du pays, et que la liste comprenait une douzaine de petites formations, dont des Kurdes, des sunnites, des Turkmènes et des indépendants.

## Equipes balayées

Etant parvenu à convaincre l'opinion que la baisse, forte et continue, des violences depuis dix-huit mois est, aussi, de son fait, et se présentant, « avant toute autre chose », comme un nationaliste irakien, M. Maliki semble avoir étrié les chiites religieux qui sont à la fois ses partenaires et ses rivaux au niveau national, ceux de l'Assemblée du conseil suprême islamique (ASCI). Fondée par des exilés à Téhéran en 1982 sous la houlette de la révolution khomeyniste, cette formation, qui contrôlait les assemblées d'une huitaine de régions, dont celle de Bagdad, a largement fait campagne au nom de l'islam chiite et de ses « martyrs » historiques. Idem pour le groupe du précheur radical antiaméricain, Moqtada Al Sadr, qui soutenait une liste « indépendante », et qui perd également la seule région qu'il contrôlait dans le sud chiite du pays.

Il s'agissait, on l'a dit, de choisir les membres des assemblées régionales et non d'élections législatives, qui devaient théoriquement avoir lieu en décembre mais se déroule-



Un Irakien sunnite célèbre les élections du 31 janvier à Ramadi, dans la province d'Anbar, à 100 km de Bagdad. AZHAR SHALLAL/AFP

ront probablement, selon les confidences au Monde d'un proche conseiller de M. Maliki, « en mars ou avril 2010 ». Partout ou presque, y compris à Kerbala, les équipes en place, étues dans des conditions souvent discutables et à l'ombre des chars américains en janvier 2005, ont été balayées. Ayant fait la preuve de leur inefficacité dans la restauration de services publics, voire d'une grande corruption, ces équipes, qui n'avaient dépensé que 11 % des budgets de développement attribués par Bagdad en 2008, sont largement renouvelées.

Ce constat vaut aussi dans les trois régions à majorité sunnite où les Kurdes à Ninive (Mossoul), les chiites à Diyala, et les Frères musulmans (sunnites) du Parti islamique à Al Anbar avaient profité, pour asseoir leur pouvoir, du boycottage électoral organisé par les tribus, alors sous la coupe ou la menace des djihadistes d'Al-Qaïda. Dans ces trois régions, ce sont désormais des formations sunni-

tes, parfois tribales, parfois laïques, voire proches de l'ancien Baas de Saddam Hussein qui tiennent, semble-t-il, le haut du pavé.

Une élection ne suffit pas à fonder durablement une démocratie. Mais, le 31 janvier 2009, les Irakiens, qui n'avaient jamais pratiqué ce système, ont fait preuve d'une étonnante maturité politique. ■

Patrice Claude



Le Monde  
3 février 2009

# En Turquie, la communauté juive craint une poussée d'antisémitisme

Le premier ministre, M. Erdogan, est accusé d'attiser la colère des musulmans après Gaza

Istanbul  
Correspondance

**A**bas Israël ! Nous ne voulons pas de vous dans la République turque. » L'inscription en lettres rouges barre le mur d'un immeuble, près de la grande synagogue Neve Shalom d'Istanbul. Un immense drapeau palestinien a été déployé par les habitants au-dessus de la rue, bouclée et protégée par un car de police. Depuis trois semaines, les autorités turques ont renforcé la sécurité autour du rabinat et des fondations appartenant à la communauté juive, qui compte environ 25 000 personnes, principalement regroupées à Istanbul.

Tous confient leur inquiétude à mots couverts et disent craindre une vague d'antisémitisme depuis

les opérations israéliennes à Gaza, en janvier. Lettres de menaces et insultes antisémites ont fleuri. Le consulat d'Israël à Istanbul, assiégé par les manifestants, a reçu des milliers de courriels. La synagogue d'Izmir et celle de Kadiköy, à Istanbul, ont été barbouillées de graffitis. « Dans la communauté, beaucoup songent maintenant à quitter la Turquie », affirme Kerem, jeune patron stambouliote. Mon père, né dans les années 1940, dit que c'est la pire période qu'il ait vécue. L'antisémitisme n'est pas nouveau, mais il devient plus populaire à cause d'Erdogan. »

Le premier ministre et chef du parti islamo-conservateur est accusé d'avoir attisé une colère déjà vive au sein de la société turque, majoritairement musulmane. « Les manifestations contre la politique israé-

lienne ont rapidement pris un ton antisémite et le premier ministre a encouragé tout cela », acquiesce Sami Kohen, éditorialiste au quotidien *Milliyet*. En effet, M. Erdogan, dans ses discours dénonçant les « crimes de guerre israéliens », n'a pas pris la peine de faire la différence entre « juifs » et « Israéliens ».

Le président de la communauté juive, Silvio Ovadia, a réclamé une réponse ferme des autorités contre les dérapages antisémites. Le cas d'une association locale à Osman-gazi (ouest) interdisant ses locaux aux « juifs et Arméniens » a particulièrement ému la communauté. Des appels au boycottage contre

« les entreprises juives » ont également été lancés par des associations de consommateurs.

Pour marquer leur soutien à la population palestinienne, les municipalités ont organisé des campagnes de dons et chaque député a mis la main à la poche. La plupart des juifs d'Istanbul refusent d'y voir plus qu'une poussée de fièvre passagère. « C'est difficile de subir cette hostilité, surtout pour les jeunes, soupire Ayse, employée d'une institution juive d'Istanbul. Mon fils a un enfant de 4 ans et il se pose des questions sur son avenir. » De même, le 13 janvier, le ministère de l'éducation a fait observer une minute de silence pour les enfants

palestiniens dans les écoles et beaucoup de parents ont craint des représailles.

M. Erdogan a maladroitement tenté de souligner que les juifs turcs vivaient en paix depuis la fin

« Dans la communauté, beaucoup songent à quitter la Turquie »

Kerem

jeune patron stambouliote

du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle : « Nos ancêtres ottomans vous ont sauvés quand vous êtes partis d'Espagne. » « Le passeport turc nous a aussi sauvés pendant la seconde guerre mondiale, rétorque Ayse. Mais après cinquante ans de présence, beaucoup ne supportent plus ni l'amalgame fait avec Israël ni d'être considérés, à chaque crise, comme des citoyens de second rang au motif qu'ils sont non-musulmans. »

Un avis exprimé à son tour par la psychologue Leyla Navaro dans le quotidien libéral *Radikal*. « On me tient pour responsable de la guerre au Moyen-Orient parce qu'il est écrit "judaïsme" dans la case religion de ma carte d'identité, écrite dans une tribune libre. Suis-je toujours redevable, matériellement et moralement, du fait que le sultan ait accueilli mes ancêtres ? Suis-je toujours considérée comme une invitée sur ces terres où je suis née et où j'ai grandi ? (...) Aujourd'hui, je suis triste, préoccupée. J'ai peur. »

Guillaume Perrier

Herald Tribune  
February 5, 2009

# Envoys tell Obama to negotiate with Iran

By Judy Dempsey

**BERLIN:** Meeting in Germany on Wednesday, diplomats from the world's major powers welcomed an offer by President Barack Obama to hold direct talks with Iran over its nuclear program and said they were committed to a diplomatic solution.

The meeting in Wiesbaden, attended by officials from Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States, was the first opportunity for them to hear firsthand about Obama's intentions toward Iran — which would re-

verse the policy of the Bush administration; it had shunned all diplomatic contacts with the Islamic Republic.

The U.S. delegation was led by William Burns, under secretary of state for political affairs. But Burns gave no concrete details about how the United States intended to proceed with Iran, according to officials acquainted with the talks.

Instead, the diplomats "agree to consult on next steps as the U.S. administration undertakes its policy review," according to an official four-point summary of the meeting.

The summary said that the countries meeting — the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, plus Germany — would proceed "on the basis of the dual-track strategy" of sanctions and diplomacy, as agreed to in several Security Council resolutions.

The European Union has for some time been prepared to offer Iran considerable economic and technical assistance if Iran abandoned its nuclear program, but has so far been unsuccessful.

This week, Iran announced that it had launched its first domestically

made satellite, alarming governments on both sides of the Atlantic because of its technological sophistication.

At a meeting in Washington this week, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton urged her British and German counterparts to work together in dealing with Iran.

"The United States and Germany must work together to ensure that Iran fulfills its obligations to the international community," Clinton said Tuesday, referring to Iran's unwillingness to cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN's nuclear watchdog.

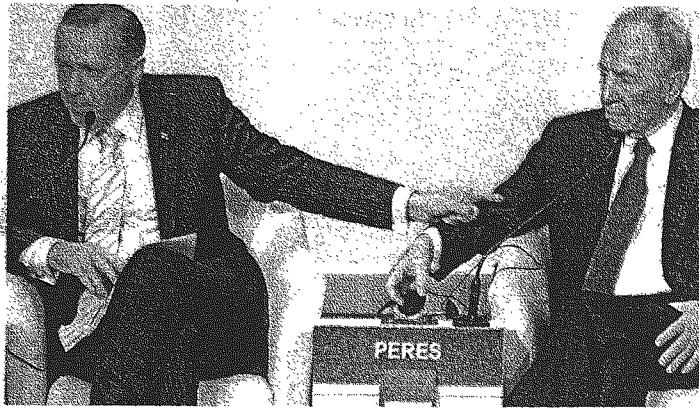
But Clinton stressed that just because Obama intended to adopt a new approach, there would still be consequences if Iran did not comply with Security Council resolutions.

"President Obama has signaled his intention to support tough and direct diplomacy with Iran, but if Tehran does not comply with United Nations Security Council and IAEA mandates, there must be consequences," Clinton told the German foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

# Retour sur la réaction d'Erdogan à Davos

Le Forum de Davos n'aura plus, semble-t-il, l'honneur d'accueillir le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui a quitté le sommet suite à un accrochage verbal avec le président israélien Shimon Peres. Sa réaction a été saluée dans le monde arabo-musulman et lui a permis d'être érigé au rang de héros

ÉDITION FRANÇAISE  
JERUSALEM POST  
- DU 3 AU 9 FÉVRIER 2009 -



## OPINION

Cenap Karaduman

*Le Premier ministre turc était-il vraiment en colère ou s'agissait-il d'une stratégie multidimensionnelle ?*

### Vengeance diplomatique

**E**rdogan qui encourageait encore récemment son pays à servir de médiateur entre l'Etat hébreu et la Syrie a été "extrêmement" déçu par l'offensive israélienne lancée contre le Hamas. La Turquie a vécu cette opération militaire comme une atteinte à la dignité de la nation turque, surtout qu'elle a eu lieu une semaine après la visite du Premier ministre israélien, Ehoud Olmert, à Ankara. Ce sentiment "d'humiliation" a largement contribué à l'ampleur des manifestations organisées dans les villes turques en signe de soutien au peuple palestinien.

Depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'AKP (parti de tendance islamique modérée), la Turquie a revu sa politique étrangère moyen-orientale. Elle s'attache désormais à renforcer ses échanges avec les pays arabes et souhaite jouer un rôle accru dans la région. Le gouvernement de l'AKP veut sans doute faire de la Turquie un acteur incontournable dans les négociations avec les pays de la région tout en maintenant le rêve européen.

Soucieux de son image du fait de ses ambitions régionales, le Premier ministre turc a attendu le Forum de Davos afin d'exprimer sa colère contre l'intervention militaire israélienne à Gaza. Frustré depuis cette offensive, il n'a pas hésité à tenir des propos démesurés à l'égard de Peres. Un tel sommet constituait pour lui, de par sa médiatisation, une occasion idéale de "se venger" et de passer ainsi pour un héros dans le monde arabo-musulman.

### Manœuvre politique à l'approche des élections municipales

Les électeurs turcs seront appelés aux urnes le 29 mars pour des élections municipales qui

représentent un enjeu primordial pour le parti du Premier ministre turc. Ce dernier désire accroître son pouvoir local, surtout dans les villes kurdes où le parti kurde (DTP) est son principal rival.

En critiquant ouvertement la politique israélienne, l'AKP espère séduire les électeurs pro-palestiniens afin de bénéficier d'une majorité confortable au niveau local. Le gouvernement de l'AKP a volontairement réagi de manière disproportionnée à l'intervention israélienne qui constituait pour lui un alibi politiquement peu coûteux destiné à rassurer son électorat généralement hostile à l'Etat hébreu.

A l'heure actuelle, les élections municipales sont au centre des préoccupations d'Erdogan. Il tente ardemment d'ancrer son jeune parti politique dans le paysage politique turc, au point de multiplier volontairement des incidents diplomatiques en vue de rappeler la "grandeur de la Turquie".

### Volonté de renforcer la légitimité de son parti politique

Depuis quelques mois, le gouvernement de l'AKP, connu pour ses accrochages avec l'armée, a lancé une vaste opération de "nettoyage" contre un groupe de nationalistes constitués d'individus issus du monde politico-militaire. En revanche, il faut savoir qu'il est extrêmement difficile pour un parti "islamique" de tenir tête à l'armée dans un pays laïc où elle est considérée comme le gardien de la nation et de la laïcité.

Cependant, l'AKP se montre pour le moment très respectueux des règles du jeu démocratique et tente par tous les moyens de gagner les différentes élections pour jouir d'une légitimité de représentation incontestable. Une fois que cette légitimité sera totalement acquise, il pourra mener à bien son projet de "nettoyage politique" et défier ainsi l'armée sans aucune crainte.

Son geste de colère à Davos lui a donc valu le titre de deuxième héros après Atatürk, père fondateur de la Turquie actuelle, et le soutien massif de ses rivaux politiques. Il s'agit évidemment d'un geste très "rentable" en termes de retombées politiques, surtout à l'approche des élections.

Allié stratégique d'Israël de longue date, la Turquie lance des accusations infondées et parfois graves à l'égard de l'Etat hébreu sans prendre en considération les véritables motifs d'une telle offensive. Elle demande à Israël de rester les bras croisés face aux roquettes lancées par le Hamas. Par conséquent, elle légitime *de facto* les attaques du mouvement palestinien contre des civils israéliens. Cependant, lorsqu'il s'agit de la sécurité de son pays, le Premier ministre turc demeure intransigeant. En effet, lors des dernières manifestations dans les villes kurdes, il mettait en œuvre tous les moyens répressifs, y compris la répression des enfants et des femmes, en vue de rétablir l'ordre. Des vidéos extrêmement choquantes, montrant des enfants kurdes battus à mort par des policiers turcs, discréditent complètement l'attitude soi-disant pacifique d'Erdogan.

### Risque de radicalisation de l'AKP

A force de vouloir satisfaire un électorat de plus en plus religieux, l'AKP pourrait se tourner vers des méthodes moins démocratiques. D'ailleurs, le Premier ministre turc a clairement affirmé lors d'un discours public que la démocratie était pour lui un moyen et non une fin. L'idéologie de l'AKP est assez proche de la synthèse islamo-turque qui gagne du terrain en Turquie. Même si les dirigeants de ce parti sont politiquement assez hétérogènes, on constate tout de même un renforcement de la présence des conservateurs religieux. Par conséquent, il y a bien un risque de radicalisation religieuse au sein de ce parti dont l'électorat connaît également le même processus. Un tel processus risquerait à terme d'impacter les relations turco-israéliennes, voire mettre en danger dans un avenir lointain l'accord de reconnaissance de l'Etat hébreu par la Turquie. En effet, soutenir implicitement un mouvement reniant le "droit d'Israël à l'existence" signifie douter d'un tel droit pour Israël. ■

*L'auteur est diplômé en Sciences politiques internationales et spécialiste de la question kurde.*

## Khanaqin blast casualties up to 28

*Up to 15 people has been killed in Khanaqin by a female suicide bomber*

**By VOI**

Casualties from Thursday's earlier attack by a female suicide bomber inside a restaurant in Kurdish Khanaqin district rose to 15 death and 13 others wounded, a security source said.

"A female suicide bomber blew herself up inside the Dilshad restaurant in Khanaqin district, (155 km) northeast of Baaquba, leaving 15 people killed and 13 others injured," the source told Aswat al-

Iraq news agency.

"The explosion caused damage to 10 stores and seven vehicles near the scene," the source noted.

A security source had said that a suicide bomber detonated his explosive vest inside a restaurant in central Khanaqin, killing 12 and wounding 11 others. The Kurdish town of Khanaqin in northeast Diyala province is near the border with Iran south of Kurdistan region and holds sizeable oil reserves.

The local Kurdish political leadership has called for Khanaqin to join the adjoining autonomous Kurdistan region in northern Iraq.

Diyala province, a restive part of Iraq outside the Kurdish - autonomous zone but home to many Kurds. The Diyala district, which includes a string of villages and some of Iraq's oil reserves, is home to about 175,000 people, most of them Kurdish Shiites.

In June 2006, the local council of Khanaqin proposed that the

district be integrated into the autonomous Kurdistan region in northern Iraq.

During the Arabisation policy of Saddam Hussein in the 1980s, a large number of Kurdish Shiites were displaced by force from Khanaqin. They started returning after the fall of Saddam in 2003. Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution is related to the normalization of the situation in Kirkuk city and other disputed areas like Khanaqin. □

**The Washington Times** February 5, 2009



**Julia Duin (Contact)** [The Washington Times](http://www.washingtontimes.com)

## DUIN: Jews, Kurds linked

Much has been written over the ages as to what happened to the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.

The answer is simple, says Ariel Sabar, author of the recent book "My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq."

"The Bible tells you where they were deposited," he says. "If you map those places, they are basically Kurdistan."

The exiles merged with the local culture, took on Kurdish dress and customs while retaining their Aramaic language, the lingua franca of the known world. Beginning in 722 B.C., Aramaic was the English of its day and the language spoken by Jesus Christ. The Assyrians, then the Babylonians, then the Persians embraced it as their official language.

Despite the Islamic conquest in the seventh century, the Jews and the Christians of Iraq retained Aramaic. By the time the 20th century rolled around, 25,000 Jews still lived in the mountainous regions overlapping Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Many more lived in Baghdad, near ancient Babylon.

Today, only eight Jews remain in Iraq. In 1951 alone, 120,000 left.

What caused this exodus? The Muslim world, furious at the founding of Israel in 1948, turned on its Jews. Mr. Sabar writes through the eyes of his father, Yona Sabar, who was born in 1938 in Zakho, a city on the Harbur River, a few miles from Turkey and Syria.

At the time, "Jews lived peaceably among Muslims and Christians," his son told me. "It was a place that when people did try to stir hatred between religions, the Kurds would not stand for it."

I was in Zakho in 2004, so I remembered the extremely dry,

mountainous terrain of the area, the blazing summer temperatures and the five-mile-long line of truckers waiting days to get through the Turkish border crossing.

Yona Sabar was ripped from this life at the age of 13, when his family fled to Israel. He became a linguist skilled in teaching Aramaic, ending up as a professor at the University of Southern California. His facility aroused the attention of movie producers, who have asked him to dub in Aramaic everything from Jesus' words "Lazarus come forth!" to the voice of the Almighty in the movie "Oh, God!"

His son, now 37, was disinterested in his father's unusual career until 2002, when he realized that most Aramaic-speaking Jews, now in their 70s and 80s, were dying off.

If their story were to be told, it had to be now. He went to Zakho in 2005 and 2006, meeting people his father knew and trying to find a long-lost aunt who was kidnapped by Bedouins back in the 1930s.

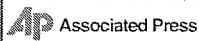
I called the author, happy to find someone who was as entranced with that mysterious area of the world as I was.

"I show up at book talks, and someone in the audience, about my age, says, 'My father was an Iraqi Jew, or my father was a Kurdish Jew, and I had no idea we had this rich heritage.'" Mr. Sabar says. "It's cool to see people gain access to a culture they've cut themselves off from or there hasn't been a whole lot written about."

He didn't want his biography "to be just a Jewish book," he adds. "I thought parts of it would appeal to evangelical Christians and people who care about the Middle East and the Kurds. Many Muslim Kurds have e-mailed me to say, 'Thank you for appreciating our culture. No one in America understands us.'"

• **Contact Julia Duin at [jduin@washingtontimes.com](mailto:jduin@washingtontimes.com).**





## Kurd PM criticizes troop movement in Iraqi north

February 7, 2009

**IRBIL, Iraq (AP)** - The prime minister of Iraq's Kurdish region is accusing the Arab-dominated national government of using troops to try to seize control of the disputed city of Kirkuk (keer-KUK').

U.S. officials consider the growing rift between Iraqi Kurds and the Arab leadership in Baghdad 1 of the major threats to Iraq's stability as U.S. troops withdraw.

The Kurds are close American allies who have jealously guarded their

self-governing territory in the north since 1991 when the U.S. helped set it up after the first Gulf War. In recent months, they've stepped up their criticism of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki (NOO'-ree ahl-MAHL'-ih-kee), accusing him of trying to re-establish a strong centralized state similar to Saddam Hussein's regime.

Kirkuk is under the political control of the central government. But the Kurds have long demanded that the city be incorporated into their self-governing region.□

*The Seattle Times* February 8, 2009 By

## Iraq's stability threatened by Arab-Kurdish rift

U.S. officials consider the growing Arab-Kurdish rift one of the major threats to Iraq's stability as President Obama's administration maps plans to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq.

SEBASTIAN ABBOT (AP)

**IRBIL, Iraq** - The prime minister of Iraq's Kurdish region accused the Arab-dominated national government Saturday of trying to use troops to seize control of the disputed city of Kirkuk, escalating tensions between Iraqi Kurds and the Arab leadership in Baghdad.

U.S. officials consider the growing Arab-Kurdish rift one of the major threats to Iraq's stability as President Obama's administration maps plans to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq.

Kurdish officials, close allies of the United States who have jealously guarded their self-governing territory in the north since the U.S. helped set it up in 1991, have in recent months stepped up their criticism of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, accusing him of trying to re-establish a strong centralized state similar to the late dictator Saddam Hussein's regime.

Tempers flared again about two weeks ago when troops of the Iraqi army's 12th Division moved from their base north of Kirkuk to towns around the city close to where Kurdish fighters loyal to the Kurdish regional government were deployed, according to senior Kurdish official Jabbar Yawar.

Kirkuk is not part of the Kurdish self-governing region and is under the political control of the central government. The Kurds have long demanded that Kirkuk, 180 miles north of Baghdad, be incorporated into their self-governing region.

Yawar said the Kurds appealed to the U.S. military to stop the movements of the largely Arab troop contingent.

Although the troop movements were halted, Kurdish officials remain suspicious about al-Maliki's intentions.

"We in the (Kurdish government)

consider this to be a provocative act," Kurdish regional Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani said of the troop movements.

Barzani said the troops movements were "not to provide security to these areas" but rather to control the city "in a military way - something that cannot and will not be accepted" by the Kurdish authorities.

Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Mohammed al-Askari said there was nothing unusual in the troop movements and "the Iraqi army has the right to be in all the provinces. It is an army for all the Iraqi nation."

Kurdish suspicions were heightened because the moves occurred just before the Jan. 31 elections, when voters in most of the country chose ruling provincial councils.

The vote was indefinitely postponed in the Kirkuk area because of ethnic tensions. Arabs and Turkomen want Kirkuk, which contains up to 13 percent of Iraq's proven oil reserves, to remain under central-government control.

Kurdish officials fear that al-Maliki will take additional steps to pressure them because his party was the big winner in the Jan. 31 balloting.

Al-Maliki's allies ran strong in the oil-rich south where voters chose his vision of a strong centralized state over a more decentralized system advocated by Shiite rivals and modeled on the Kurdish self-governing region.

In the weeks before the January balloting, al-Maliki advocated changing the constitution to bolster the power of the central government - which raised alarms among the Kurds even though he did not call for an end to their self-ruled status.

The Kurdish-Arab dispute dates back decades to a campaign by Arab-domina-

ted governments in Baghdad to settle Arabs in the northern oil fields and in territory near the border with Iran.

Under Saddam, thousands of Kurds were forced out of their homes and provincial borders redrawn, depriving the Kurds of land they believed was their own.

The major Kurdish parties joined the coalition government in Baghdad after the fall of Saddam in 2003 and hold several key posts, including the national presidency.

However, with violence receding in much of the country, issues such as the Kurdish territorial claims are now moving toward center-stage.

The Kurds also have clashed with the central government over legislation to regulate the country's giant oil industry. The Kurdish regional government wants the freedom to develop its own oil fields, but Baghdad wants a more centralized system.

The dispute has blocked ratification of the oil law for nearly two years.

The Kurds have pushed for a referendum to decide whether the Kirkuk area should become part of their self-governing region. The Iraqi constitution set a 2007 deadline for the vote, but it has been delayed repeatedly.

The Kurdish prime minister has urged Obama to pressure the Iraqi government into scheduling a referendum to create a stable environment for the U.S. to leave.

"As U.S. President Obama calls for a phased and responsible withdrawal from Iraq, we believe it is necessary that a solution be reached," Barzani said.

World Tribune 06 February 2009

## Trouble in northern Iraq: Thousands of troops flood Kirkuk in crackdown on Kurds

The Iraq Army has poured Arab troops into the divided northern city of Kirkuk.

"This confrontation could turn into a full-scale war," a government source said.

Iraqi government sources said the army's 12th Division has deployed thousands of troops in Kirkuk amid the rivalry between Kurds and ethnic Turks. The army's deployment in Kirkuk has been opposed by Kurdish militias as well as the autonomous Kurdish government.

The sources said the 12th Division, commanded by Brig. Gen. Abdul Amir Radha Al Zaydi, has been bolstered by the Sunni-dominated Al Sahwa auxiliary police force. They said about 50,000 soldiers and police were being prepared for deployment in Kirkuk. In January 2009, units of the 12th Division entered Kirkuk. The sources said the autonomous Kurdistan government appealed to the U.S. military to halt the Iraq Army deployment in Kirkuk.

The sources said the central government in

Baghdad has sought to force Kurdish militias to withdraw from Kirkuk. They said Baghdad wanted the Kurds to return to their positions prior to April 2003.

The Iraq Army plan would reduce Kurdish influence in the provinces of Diyala, Kirkuk and Mosul, the sources. So far, they said, the military has been successful as thousands of Kurds have been dismissed from the army and security forces and replaced by Sunni Arabs. The sources said the plan called for the reduction in Kurdish representation in the army's 12th Division to 25 percent. They said they expected Baghdad to accelerate the Kurdish purge in 2009.

"The army would prefer that the Turkmens in the Kirkuk area cooperate in the plan, but so far they have refused," the source said. Kirkuk city is historically a Kurdish city and it lies just south border of the Kurdistan autonomous region, the population is a mix of majority Kurds and minority of Arabs, Christians and Turkmens. lies 250 km northeast of Baghdad. Kurds have a strong cultu-

ral and emotional attachment to Kirkuk, which they call "the Kurdish Jerusalem." Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution is related to the normalization of the situation in Kirkuk city and other disputed areas.

The article also calls for conducting a census to be followed by a referendum to let the inhabitants decide whether they would like Kirkuk to be annexed to the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region or having it as an independent province.

The former regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had forced over 250,000 Kurdish residents to give up their homes to Arabs in the 1970s, to "Arabize" the city and the region's oil industry.

The last ethnic-breakdown census in Iraq was conducted in 1957, well before Saddam began his program to move Arabs to Kirkuk. That count showed 178,000 Kurds, 48,000 Turkomen, 43,000 Arabs and 10,000 Assyrian-Chaldean Christians living in the city. □

KURDISH GLOBE BE 07 February 2009

## Election results now official

By The Kurdish Globe

Kurds won the second place in Nineveh and Diyala provinces.

Kurdistan Alliance list in the disputed areas of the provinces of Nineveh and Diyala gained great number of votes of provincial elections.

Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) Thursday announced the preliminary results of provincial elections showing that Kurdistan Alliance List in the provinces of Nineveh and Diyala won the second place after counted votes.

"Nineveh Brotherhood List

(Kurdish list) has won 25.5% of the votes in Nineveh province and Kurdistan Alliance list has won 17.2% of the votes in Diyala province," stated IHEC in Baghdad.

IHEC also announced that Kurdish List in Salahaddin province won 45% of the votes in the province.

"No doubt, the Nineveh brotherhood list has won the absolute votes in the disputed areas in Nineveh province," said Mahdi Harki, representative of Nineveh Brotherhood in a telephone interview to the Globe.

"It is something well-known that Kurdish list has a strong base in disputed areas and Arab

lists are not popular in these areas," Harki said.

Meanwhile, Kurdistan Region President, Massoud Barzani, called on all sides to respect the will of the people and said that he hoped and urged the Iraqi parliament, Iraqi government, the United Nations, the U.S., and all concerned parties "to respect the will of the people of these areas and to go ahead with the implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution."

"We respect the will of the people of Iraq. We hope that this was an emphatic message from Kurds, Arabs, Turkomens, Chaldaeans, Assyrians, Muslims,

Christians and Yazidis of the Kurdish areas to voice what they really want," Barzani added.

Kurds have said that they have no intention to control Mosul, Diyala, and Salahaddin provincial councils; this was confirmed by Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani during a meeting with Arab tribal sheikhs in Erbil city.

"Winning the elections in the disputed areas not only gives us seats in the provincial councils, but also shows the UN and the Iraqi government that the disputed areas are part of Kurdistan Region," said Mosul's deputy Governor Khasro Goran, a Kurd.

Gulf Times February 8, 2009 By

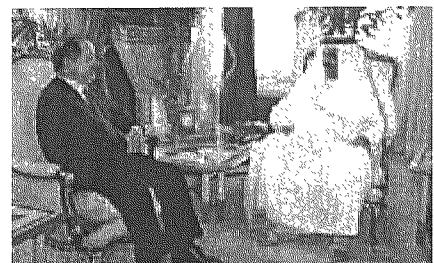
## Qatar, Kurdistan sign agreement to boost relations

A MEMORANDUM of understanding (MoU) was signed yesterday at the Foreign Ministry headquarters between Qatar and the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government pertaining to bilateral co-operation.

The MoU was signed by HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Khalid bin Mohamed al-Attiyah on behalf of Qatar and Minister for Housing and Reconstruction Imad Ahmad on behalf of the Kurdistan government.

Minister Imad Ahmad said the MoU is related to co-operation in the fields of infrastructure, agricultural development, agricultural investment, tourism and aviation; as well as the possibility of opening a Qatari consulate in the region with the approval of the Iraqi foreign ministry and the opening of an office for Kurdistan in Qatar.

Minister Imad Ahmad underlined the importance of developing and enhancing economic and political relations between Qatar and Iraq, including the Kurdistan region, noting that all agreements between the Kurdistan region and other countries are signed with the knowledge of the Iraqi foreign ministry. ■



Massoud Barzani (L), the President of the autonomous Kurdistan region in Iraq's north in Doha with Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabir al Thani

## Maliki party wins big victory in Iraq vote

By Alissa J. Rubin

**BAGHDAD:** The overwhelming winner of provincial elections in Iraq was the Dawa Party of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, whose candidates garnered the most votes of any party in nine provinces, but they appeared to fall short of being able to operate without coalition-building.

Still, the results put Maliki's party on the road to transformation from a minor player among Shiite parties into the most powerful.

The party won a clear plurality in the large provinces of Baghdad and Basra, both places where Maliki waged military campaigns to halt the activities of mostly Shiite militias.

The parties associated with the anti-American Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr also did surprisingly well, especially given that his movement only backed political parties two weeks before the elections.

Losing ground throughout the country was the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, led by cleric Abdul Aziz al-Hakim. The party even lost Hakim's home base of Najaf. The Shiite Islamist Fadhila

Party, which had held the governorship in Basra, but had never had a distinctive profile all but disappeared.

More than 14,000 candidates from 400 political parties and lists took part in the elections Jan. 31.

In Baghdad, where Maliki ran a strongly nationalist campaign, he appeared to have success in winning some votes from Sunnis, and Dawa candidates earned their highest share of votes anywhere, 38 percent. But in Muthanna Province, where Dawa also came in first, it received only 10.9 percent of the vote, underscoring that the provincial governments remain highly fractured and may have difficulty choosing a governor.

Voting throughout the rest of the country remained divided along sectarian lines, with Shiite majority provinces choosing Shiite parties and Sunni majority provinces choosing Sunni parties.

Large, prominent parties with nationally known leaders won the most seats, demonstrating the power of incumbency and the difficulties facing newer secular parties. Those fared best in the four Sunni majority provinces.

In the Shiite south, religious parties dominated in every province, with the

surprising exception of Karbala, the home province of Maliki. There, a secular civic leader narrowly edged the Dawa candidate out.

By contrast in the predominantly Sunni north, there was a greater range in the political outlook of the winners with a mix of tribal, secular and Sunni Islamist parties taking significant shares of the vote in the four predominantly Sunni provinces. The fifth predominantly Sunni province, Kirkuk, did not vote in this election.

Kirkuk and the three northern Kurdish provinces were the only governates among Iraq's 18 that did not participate in the elections. Decades of gerrymandering, ethnic cleansing and forced expulsions of Kurds under Saddam — and intimidation of Arabs since 2003 — have made it impossible for Kirkuk's Kurdish, Arabic, Turkmen and Christian populations to agree on who is eligible to vote.

As election officials were preparing to announce the results, the police in Diyala Province said that a suicide bomber blew himself up in a restaurant, killing 14 people in the town of Khanaqin, which has seen tension between Kurdish and Arab government forces.

## 4 U.S. soldiers are killed with interpreter in Iraq

From news reports

**BAGHDAD:** The U.S. military said Monday that four soldiers and an interpreter were killed in a suicide car bombing in Mosul in northern Iraq.

Violence has declined greatly in Iraq in recent months, and the attack Monday was the deadliest against U.S. forces here in nine months.

The deaths raised to at least 4,243 the number of American service members who have died in Iraq since the war began in March 2003, according to a count by The Associated Press.

Despite the decline in violence, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq said Monday in a television interview that Iran was still supporting Shiite militants in Iraq with weapons and training.

Ambassador Ryan Crocker, who is leaving this month after two years, said talks he had held with Iranian diplomats to discuss Iraq's security had been fruitless. "There is also what I would call a terrorist element from some Shia extremists, and we

believe that they are supported still by elements within Iran," Crocker said on Al Arabiya television.

"We have seen a lot of evidence," he said. "Rockets that are fired on us and on the Iraqis that are made in Iran as recently as 2008; explosively formed projectiles that are produced as a result of Iranian training; and both we and the Iraqis have captured militants who later say they were trained in Iran.

"So the evidence is clearly there, I don't think that's in question. The question is what decisions the Iranians are going to make about their future relationship with Iraq."

Iraqi officials, who last year joined Washington in complaining about Iranian support for militants, have lately said that Iranian interference appears to be abating.

Tehran has always denied supporting militants in Iraq.

"We reject these comments by the U.S. ambassador," Amir Arshadi, me-

dia attaché at the Iranian Embassy here, told Reuters. "If the U.S. forces have evidence, they should present it to the Iraqi government and let the Iraqi government be the judge. Iran does not meddle in Iraq's affairs, and this is confirmed by Iraqi officials."

Attacks by Shiite militiamen in Iraq have fallen dramatically since U.S.-backed Iraqi forces cracked down on them in the first half of last year. Nevertheless, Washington has not stepped back from accusing Tehran of meddling.

Crocker led talks with Iranian officials on Iraqi security in 2007, billed then as a landmark in U.S.-Iranian relations, which have been frozen since the Iranian revolution in 1979. He said the talks yielded few results, and he blamed Tehran.

"We approached those talks with a positive spirit and an open mind," Crocker said. "Unfortunately, we did not see results coming out of these discussions and we've not held any direct talks with the Iranians since 2007."

In another development, two senior Iraqi security officials said that four Iraqis had been transferred from the U.S. military prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, to Iraqi custody. (AP, Reuters)



AFP

## TURQUIE: UNE DÉPUTÉE KURDE CONDAMNÉE À DE LA PRISON POUR "PROPAGANDE" DU PKK

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 5 fév 2009 (AFP)

Une cour de Diyarbakir, principale ville à majorité kurde du sud-est de la Turquie, a condamné jeudi une députée kurde à un an et demi de prison pour "propagande" de la rébellion kurde mais elle n'ira pas immédiatement en prison à cause de son immunité parlementaire. Aysel Tugluk, membre et ex-présidente du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP) la principale formation pro-kurde de Turquie, s'est vue condamner pour des propos tenus en 2007 lors d'un meeting politique. Elle a été jugée coupable par les juges d'avoir fait la "propagande" du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), une organisation classée comme terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-

Unis.

Son dossier sera déféré devant la Cour de cassation qui pourra dans les mois à venir demander au Parlement d'Ankara de lever par un vote son immunité parlementaire.

Si les députés décident de lever son immunité, elle devra alors purger sa peine, selon les spécialistes.

Mme Tugluk, une avocate de formation, est l'une des 20 membres du DTP élus à l'Assemblée nationale turque lors des dernières législatives de juillet 2007.

Ces élus sont régulièrement accusés de soutenir le PKK. Certains d'entre eux ont affiché ouvertement leurs sympathies pour les rebelles et leur chef emprisonné Abdullah Öcalan.

la libre .be

06 Février 2009

## IRAN/ÉTATS-UNIS

# Un dialogue sur le dos des Kurdes ?

Gérald Papy

Washington sanctionne un groupe rebelle kurde iranien. Une décision inattendue qui pourrait être un signal de la volonté américaine de renouer avec Téhéran. Les Kurdes de Turquie et d'Iran seront-ils sacrifiés sur l'autel de la realpolitik ?

Que signifie la décision prise par l'administration Obama de sanctionner le Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan (PJAK), mouvement d'opposition au régime iranien ? Mercredi, le Trésor américain a annoncé le gel des avoirs de ce groupe rebelle, qualifié désormais de "terroriste", en inscrivant cette initiative dans le cadre du soutien aux "efforts de la Turquie pour protéger ses citoyens des attentats".

Cependant, c'est plutôt à l'Iran que s'adresse le message de Washington. Certes, le PJAK est très lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui revendique l'autonomie des Kurdes de Turquie, et les deux groupes ont en commun d'utiliser les montagnes d'Irak comme base arrière. Mais le champ d'action du PJAK, qui n'est pas séparatiste, est le "Kurdistan iranien", les régions du nord-ouest de la République islamique qui abrite la communauté kurde (lire ci-contre).

Si le PKK figure depuis longtemps sur la liste des organisations terroristes des Etats-Unis, le PJAK n'y était pas stigmatisé et Téhéran accusait même Washington de le soutenir. Pour le président de l'Institut kurde de Paris, Kendal Nezan, la décision américaine constitue une surprise, aucun signal annonciateur de ce revirement n'ayant été donné. Il rappelle du reste qu'il n'y a pas si longtemps, en 2007, un dirigeant du PJAK,

Abdul Rahman Haji Ahmadi, avait fait le voyage de Washington et avait été reçu au Congrès.

Difficile, dès lors, de ne pas rapprocher cette démarche de l'offre de dialogue répétée du candidat et du président Obama à l'adresse de l'Iran. L'administration américaine a-t-elle voulu donner un signe de sa bonne volonté ? Kendal Nezan n'exclut pas cette hypothèse; le moment choisi pour prendre la décision tendrait à l'accréditer, dit-il en substance. Et "les populations fragiles font souvent les frais des jeux d'alliances entre les grandes puissances". Mais le président de l'Institut kurde de Paris reste tout de même prudent.

Il met aussi en exergue le rôle de la diplomatie turque qui entend jouer un rôle d'intermédiaire dans le rapprochement entre les Etats-Unis et l'Iran. Or, depuis début janvier, Turcs et Iraniens ont mené au moins deux opérations communes de répression contre le PKK et le PJAK, les 5 et 13-14 janvier, aux confins des territoires irakiens frontaliers de la Turquie et de l'Iran. Ces offensives ont essentiellement consisté en des tirs d'artillerie de l'armée iranienne et en des bombardements de l'aviation turque contre des villages dans la province irakienne kurde de Souleimaniyeh. PKK et PJAK n'avaient signalé aucune victime.

La répression du PJAK s'inscrit en tout cas dans un mouvement plus large de limitation des droits des Kurdes d'Iran que Human Rights Watch a récemment dénoncé dans un rapport pointant des restrictions aux libertés d'association et d'expression. Situation paradoxale alors que les Kurdes d'Irak, eux, ont encore gagné en autonomie à la faveur de la démocratisation de l'après-Saddam Hussein.



### REPÈRES

#### Une forte minorité

Les Kurdes d'Iran sont estimés entre 5 et 10 millions d'habitants, selon les sources, sur une population d'environ 70 millions. Ils sont présents principalement dans les provinces du nord-ouest de l'Iran : Kordestan, Azerbaïdjan occidental, Kermanshah et Ilam.

Le Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan (PJAK) est un mouvement de création récente; son congrès fondateur s'est tenu en mars 2004. La branche armée du PJAK, qui milite pour la "Résurrection du Kurdistan libre", a revendiqué des dizaines d'opérations au Kurdistan iranien, notamment contre l'armée. Le PJAK est réputé proche du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) qui représente les Kurdes de Turquie et dispose de bases en Irak.

# IRAK: UN RETOUR À L'ÈRE SADDAM POUR LES KURDES?

BORIS MABILLARD, MOSSOUL

**SCRUTINS** - Les élections provinciales de la semaine passée en Irak ont renforcé le premier ministre et sa vision d'un État central fort. Mais s'il veut maintenir le fragile équilibre irakien, Nouri Al-Maliki devra écouter les Kurdes. Analyse et reportages.

Un million de militaires et de policiers mobilisés, un couvre-feu et la fermeture des frontières ont permis la tenue, samedi 31 janvier, des élections provinciales en Irak dans des conditions de sécurité exceptionnelles. Contre toute attente, la campagne et les élections se sont déroulées sans le déferlement de violence annoncé. Le mois de janvier a même été le mois le plus calme depuis l'invasion américaine en 2003. Et ce succès explique partiellement celui du premier ministre Nouri Al-Maliki dont les listes arrivent en tête. Une ombre au tableau: la participation décevante qui n'atteint au niveau national que 51%.

## Un jour de campagne dans le dernier bastion terroriste

Leyla Afdel prend la parole devant un parterre d'hommes mi-endormis, mi-admiratifs. Elle débordait d'enthousiasme dans ses vêtements un peu trop serrés: «Nous allons construire ensemble un État moderne et démocratique dans lequel tous les Irakiens vivront égaux et libres.» Barzan suit scrupuleusement le discours de sa collègue. Sa voix décidée, son humour et son côté glamour l'ont séduit. Il est conquis et la donne gagnante pour le scrutin à venir. Mais le temps presse, avant le crépuscule, toute l'assemblée se sera éparpillée; circuler la nuit tombée est tout à fait déconseillé. Dans la rue, les calicots recouvrent jusqu'aux panneaux de signalisation, et même les bâtiments officiels disparaissent sous les slogans, en violation de la loi.

### Profil bas

La campagne électorale se déroule ici, dans la province de Ninive, selon des règles à part, dictées par le conflit qui n'a pas fléchi, contrairement à ce qui a été observé dans le reste du pays. Baderdein Harki se présente sur la même liste, celle de la Fraternité kurde, qui réunit les deux principaux partis kurdes, le PDK de Massoud Barzani et le PUK de Jalal Talabani. Malgré l'arme qu'il porte cachée sous son veston et les gardes du corps qui l'accompagnent, il continue d'avoir peur: «Les meetings ont lieu dans des officines transformées en bunkers, je ne m'adresse qu'aux Kurdes et aux minorités qui nous suivent.» Il

vit à Mossoul, dans son bureau, depuis que le reste de sa famille a fui les menaces. «A Mossoul, je dois trouver un impossible équilibre entre discrétion et batelage électoral.» La peur des représailles a contraint les Kurdes à adopter un profil bas dans les zones habitées par les Arabes, et à Mossoul plus particulièrement. Leyla a mené une campagne téléphonique pour pallier l'absence de meeting: «J'ai contacté les amis d'amis, obtenu le plus possible de numéros, envoyé des SMS. Au bout du compte, j'ai personnalisé ma campagne.»

Il n'y avait pas d'alternative, les grands rassemblements font peur: «Certains ne veulent pas être repérés comme Kurdes ou comme partisans d'une liste kurde. La loi électorale garantit la liberté, mais personne ne veut exercer ses droits civiques au prix de sa vie.» Mazem, un épicier chrétien de Mossoul, n'ira pas voter: «Si je vote, des voisins arabes me verront et se douteront bien que je ne vote pas pour les mêmes listes qu'eux.» Dans cette région que se disputent Kurdes et Arabes, les électeurs donnent leur voix à leur communauté ethnique ou religieuse: les Kurdes choisissent la liste kurde, les Arabes votent en majorité pour celle du parti Hadba, qui s'est montré le plus véhément contre les Kurdes. Au milieu, les minorités chrétienne et yézidi sont sommées de choisir.

### Pas de consignes pour les militaires

A Makhmour, proche de Mossoul, Ismaël sert l'armée irakienne. Comme tous les militaires, il vote deux jours plus tôt que le reste des citoyens: «J'ai voté pour les Kurdes, je n'allais quand même pas voter pour l'ennemi. Personne ne nous a donné de consignes. Pas besoin, tous les Kurdes votent d'une seule voix. Notre colonel nous a encouragés à voter, c'est tout, il est Kurde.» Ses camarades montrent fièrement leur doigt taché d'encre, preuve du devoir accompli.

### Plainte du gouvernement kurde

A l'écart, un petit groupe de soldats arabes. «Les gradés nous ont encouragés à voter, sans nous donner de consignes, confie l'un d'eux. Ils nous ont rappelé que nous servons le gouvernement, et qu'on lui doit la fidélité, j'ai donc voté pour Maliki, car c'est lui qui me paye. En plus, il soutient l'armée et la police, combat l'insécurité.» Excepté les militaires kurdes incorporés à l'armée irakienne, la troupe a massivement suivi le parti du premier ministre.

Une foule en colère assiège le bureau de vote de Rizgari. Ils voudraient voter mais leurs noms n'apparaissent pas sur les listes. Ce sont tous des déplacés qui ont fui les persécutions pour se réfugier dans une région plus sûre. Mais les papiers sur la base desquels ont été établies les listes d'électeurs n'ont étrangement pas été renouvelés: pour les uns, un fâcheux problème technique; pour les autres, une conspiration.

Handren Mohamad Salih, le chef de la Haute commission électorale pour le Kurdistan qui organisait le vote des personnes déplacées, concède: «J'ai déjà reçu 600 plaintes individuelles, et j'ai ici la plainte du gou-

vernement kurde. Mais la commission électorale n'y est pour rien. C'est une question politique, les gouvernements de Mossoul et de Diyala auraient dû résoudre le problème, ils ne l'ont pas fait. En conséquence, des dizaines de milliers de personnes ont été empêchées de voter. Parmi elles, une majorité de Kurdes et de chrétiens.»

Au siège du comité électoral des partis kurdes, on crie au scandale: 60 000 électeurs auraient été privés de leur droit de vote dans une tentative de saper la liste kurde. Cependant, le ton général est plutôt à la victoire. Ja'afar Ibrahim est le chef de campagne pour le PDK: «Nous avons perdu un grand nombre de sièges, c'était annoncé. Le boycott sunnite du scrutin précédait avait créé une disproportion en notre faveur. Nous perdons cependant moins de terrain que ce nous l'avions craint.»

Surtout, l'enjeu pour les Kurdes était différent, il portait sur la position des populations dans les territoires disputés. Suivraient-ils l'invitation kurde à rejoindre un grand Kurdistan? «Le vote est sans appel, la liste kurde obtient une large majorité chez les chrétiens et chez les Yézidis. C'est un plébiscite en notre faveur», se réjouit Ja'afar Ibrahim.

### «La démocratie est en marche»

Leyla est élue, elle l'apprend à l'instant: «La démocratie est en marche et les partis kurdes donnent le bon exemple. Sur nos listes, il y avait la plus forte proportion de femmes parmi les candidats.» En ce qui concerne l'avancée démocratique, Handren se montre beaucoup plus circonspect: «Saddam aussi organisait des élections. Une culture politique et démocratique, la liberté, la sécurité doivent préexister aux élections. Nous n'y sommes pas encore.»

★★★

## L'impossible guerre contre un ennemi invisible

La guerre qui se mène à Mossoul n'a rien de la voir avec une guerre conventionnelle. La troupe irakienne n'y mène pas de combat. A cause de la pauvreté, la rue s'est organisée en clans et en gangs de truands. Les groupes de terroristes ainsi que les gros bonnets mafieux les utilisent à bien plaisir. Pour une poignée de dollars, on commandite un assassinat. Spécialiste du contre-terrorisme dans l'armée irakienne, le colonel Ahmed a recueilli les confessions d'un tueur: «Il m'a dit avoir tué des gens pour 60 dollars, le prix peut monter jusqu'à 100, rarement plus. Des centaines de sicaires travaillent à ce tarif.»

L'enlèvement d'une personnalité locale se monnaie plus cher, la victime est revendue au plus offrant et passe d'un groupe à l'autre, c'est un vrai marché: «L'enlèvement d'un Occidental rapporterait cash des milliers de dollars.» G2 désigne les services de renseigne-

ment de l'armée dont le colonel Youssif Ahmed Khader a la charge. Le G2 collecte des informations, arrête les suspects, les interroge et les défère devant la justice. Ses moyens sont toutefois limités. Il ne peut, en raison des risques, mener de véritables investigations sur le terrain. Il dépend pour obtenir ses informations d'une petite équipe d'agents en civil et des dénonciations. Un coup de filet se prépare. Les services du colonel Youssif ont dressé une liste de suspects. Y figurent des centaines de noms, pour des inculpations diverses: meurtre simple, association de malfaiteurs ou soupçon d'appartenir à un groupe terroriste. Quarante-trois arrestations ce jour-là. Youssif jubile, même si les suspects arrêtés sont des petits couteaux. D'ailleurs aucune arme n'a été saisie, aucune preuve récoltée. Dans le bus qui les ramène à la base, où ils seront interrogés puis incarcérés, les suspects ont les yeux bandés. Ils clament leur innocence, sachant qu'ils ne verront le jour libre avant longtemps. Parmi eux, un Egyptien soupçonné d'avoir participé à des fusillades. Un soldat l'insulte, lui promet la pendaison:

«Les Américains veulent que l'on soit polis avec les détenus, mais moi je préférerais les passer à tabac ou les liquider. Ils sont ici mieux qu'à l'hôtel. Cela me révolte quand je pense à ce qu'ils ont commis.» Une cellule de trois mètres sur trois accueille ce jour-là dix détenus. Pas de lits, rien. Ils dorment assis ou affalés les uns sur les autres. Des semaines, voire des mois passeront avant qu'ils n'apprennent leur chef d'inculpation et ne voient un juge. L'imbrication des réseaux criminels et des groupes terroristes rend la traque du colonel Youssif très ardue: «Une bande peut travailler pour plusieurs commanditaires. Remonter les filières s'avère difficile, car les terroristes sont basés dans des villages à la périphérie de la ville, et entre Mossoul et la frontière syrienne.» Le général Abdullah l'assure, la prochaine étape est de consolider la frontière: «Elle est longue, cela prendra du

temps. Mais nous sommes en train de gagner cette guerre.» Le colonel Youssif tempère cet enthousiasme: pour lui, le noeud du problème est politique: «En raison d'alliances plus ou moins avouables, certaines tribus arabes sunnites ont été ménagées, accuse-t-il. Le gouvernement et les Américains ont délibérément laissé pourrir la situation à Mossoul.» A la caserne, les soldats kurdes qui assurent la garde du colonel Youssif aimeraient pouvoir en découdre avec l'ennemi invisible.

Entre deux tours de garde, ils passent l'ennemi devant la télé. Un programme d'une chaîne interdite diffuse en boucle des images insoutenables de soldats américains tués par de prétendus djihadistes. Les soldats exècrent les terroristes, mais ne condamnent pas vraiment les crimes contre les Américains qu'ils tiennent pour responsables de la débâcle du pays: «Tout est de leur faute, ils ont détruit l'Irak et pactisent désormais avec les terroristes.»

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## Mossoul, capital du crime

Mariam frôle les murs, saute les rigoles, son reflet dans la flaque la montre soudain comme un papillon noir. Elle appartient à une petite communauté de chrétiens qui survivent à Mossoul: «La peur me prend chaque fois que je dois sortir, je me déguise alors en musulmane pour passer inaperçue.» A Mossoul, le quotidien s'écrit en noir au rythme des bombes, des enlèvements, des assassinats impunis. Alors qu'à Bagdad, à Falloujah, à Baquba la paix gagne peu à peu du terrain, Mossoul semble ne pouvoir sortir d'une spirale infernale. Chassés du centre de l'Irak, de Bagdad et de ses environs, les groupes terroristes ont reflué vers le nord, proche de la frontière syrienne. Mossoul, la troisième

ville du pays, est devenue la capitale du crime, le sanctuaire des terroristes. Les armées américaine et irakienne y ont accru leurs effectifs sans pour autant enrayer le cycle des violences. Ces derniers mois, l'armée irakienne a massivement augmenté le nombre des postes de contrôle. Pour le général Abdullah Abdul Karim, commandant de la deuxième division qui compte 18 500 hommes, il est presque impossible pour un terroriste de passer des armes:

«Les contrôles sont systématiques, nous sommes épaulés par des officiers du renseignement qui collectent les informations sur les suspects.» Chaque jour pourtant une bombe explose. Le père de Mariam redoute autant les check-points que les terroristes: «Sans appui dans l'armée, les terroristes ne pourraient pas agir. Ce sont les militaires eux-mêmes, aux check-points, qui nous dénoncent aux terroristes.» Pour passer inaperçue, il s'agit de parler arabe avec les Arabes, kurde avec les Kurdes. Surtout, il ne faut pas s'attarder. Entre deux arrêts forcés, il fonce.

A Mossoul, l'ennemi n'a pas de visage, ça peut être n'importe qui: un passant, un militaire ou le voisin. Le père de Mariam possède une épicerie dans le centre-ville. Ses déplacements entre l'épicerie et la maison sont devenus son calvaire. Plus que tout, il redoute d'être enlevé: «Tous ceux qui ont des biens sont partis. Les pauvres comme moi sont forcés de rester. Mais par rapport aux plus pauvres, je suis encore un nanti, qui plus est chrétien. Cela suffit à me désigner comme une cible potentielle.» Le racket et la criminalité font vivre l'enfer aux habitants: «J'évite les lieux fréquentés, les files des check-points, même les églises.» Dans l'attente d'un exil définitif, la famille de Mariam mène une vie de cloportes terrés dans la peur.

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## Au moins 27 morts dans plusieurs attentats en Irak

AFP

BAGDAD 12 Février 2009 (AFP) -

AU MOINS 27 personnes ont été tuées mercredi dans plusieurs attentats à travers l'Irak, dont l'un à la voiture piégée près d'une station de bus à Bagdad, ont indiqué des responsables des services de sécurité.

Le plus sanglant a eu lieu dans le sud-ouest de la capitale irakienne, où au moins 16 personnes ont été tuées et 43 blessées dans l'explosion de deux voitures piégées, ont affirmé des sources au sein des ministères de l'Intérieur et de la Défense.

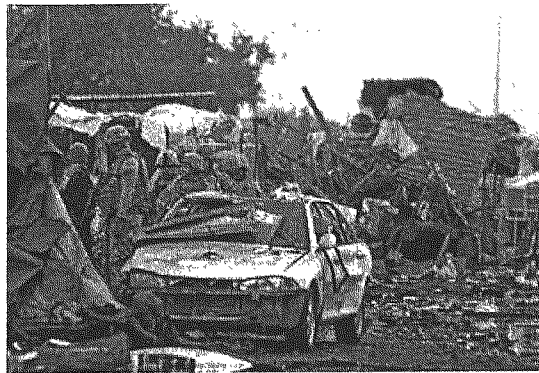
Les véhicules ont explosé vers 15H00 (12H00 GMT) près d'une station de bus à Bayaa, dans un quartier très commerçant à majorité chiite.

La police irakienne et les forces américaines ont bouclé le secteur où plusieurs véhicules étaient entièrement calcinés, a constaté un journaliste de l'AFP.

Par ailleurs, toujours à Bagdad, un pèlerin chiite a été tué et huit ont été blessés par une bombe placée sur le bord d'une route dans le quartier de Zaafaraniya, dans le sud de la capitale, ont indiqué des sources médicale et de sécurité.

Chaque année, des pèlerins se rendent à Kerbala, à 110 km au sud de Bagdad, fêter le quarantième jour après l'Achoura, commémorant le martyr en 680 de Hussein, petit-fils du prophète Mahomet. Cette commémoration aura lieu lundi.

En outre, un civil a été tué et douze autres, dont six pèlerins, ont été blessés par une bombe à Waziriyah, dans le nord de la capitale, selon la police.



A Iskandariyah, à 40 km au sud de Bagdad, deux policiers ont été tués et trois blessés dans l'explosion d'une bombe placée sur le bord de la route principale», a affirmé Mohammed al-Tamimi, un responsable de la police.

A Mossoul, à 370 km au nord de la capitale, un soldat a été tué et deux autres ont été blessés dans l'explosion d'une voiture piégée conduite par un kamikaze, a indiqué une source policière, ajoutant qu'un civil avait également été blessé.

L'attaque visait une patrouille irako-américaine, selon cette source.

Toujours à Mossoul, trois policiers ont été tués par des hommes armés qui ont attaqué leur patrouille.

Et un responsable local du Parti islamique, Ahmed Fathi al-Joubouri, a été tué par des hommes armés à bord d'une voiture alors qu'il quittait la mosquée, selon la police et le parti.

La ville de Mossoul compte plus de 1,5 million d'habitants sunnites, chiites, chrétiens et kurdes. Elle est considérée par le commandement américain comme l'épicentre de l'action des partisans en Irak d'Oussama ben Laden, repoussés en 2007 de Bagdad et de l'ouest du pays.

Enfin, à Baaqouba, à 60 km au nord-est de Bagdad, un membre des "Sahwa" a été tué par balle lors d'une attaque contre des locaux de cette milice d'anciens insurgés qui se sont retournés contre Al-Qaïda, selon une source de sécurité.

Un policier qui se rendait sur place pour repousser l'attaque a été tué par une bombe, a ajouté la même source.

## VERS UN ÉCHANGE DIPLOMATIQUE ENTRE LE QATAR ET LE KURDISTAN IRAKIEN



DOHA, 8 fév 2009 (AFP) -

LE QATAR et le Kurdistan irakien ont conclu dimanche un mémorandum d'entente en vertu duquel Doha envisage un échange diplomatique avec ce territoire autonome du nord de l'Irak, a rapporté l'agence officielle du Qatar Qna.

Le mémorandum a été signé à l'occasion d'une visite du président du Kurdistan autonome irakien Massoud Barzani à Doha où il a été reçu dans la matinée par l'émir du Qatar, cheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al-Thani.

Le document porte sur "la possibilité d'ouvrir un consulat qatari au Kurdistan avec l'accord du ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères, et un bureau du Kurdistan au Qatar", a déclaré le ministre kurde de la Reconstruction et de l'Habitat, Imad Ahmed.

Il porte aussi sur "la coopération en matière d'infrastructure, de développement agricole, d'investissement agricole, de tourisme et de transport aérien", a ajouté M. Ahmed qui a signé le mémorandum pour son gouvernement.

En 2007, l'Iran avait officiellement ouvert deux consulats dans les deux principales villes du Kurdistan irakien: Erbil et Soulaïmaniyeh.



## RAIDS AÉRIENS TURCS EN IRAK: 13 REBELLES KURDES TUÉS LA SEMAINE DERNIÈRE

ANKARA, 13 fév 2009 (AFP)

Treize rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont été tués, dont des commandants, lors des bombardements effectués la semaine dernière par l'aviation turque contre des cibles situées dans le nord de l'Irak, a rapporté vendredi l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Citant des sources de sécurité turques, l'agence semi-officielle turque souligne que plusieurs responsables de l'organisation classée comme terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, ont été abattus lors des raids.

Ceux-ci réalisés les 4 et 5 février, avaient visé des caches du PKK dans la région de Khakurk, dans la région autonome kurde du nord de l'Irak.

Des installations logistiques de l'organisation séparatiste ont subi de gros dégâts, affirme l'agence.

L'armée turque a effectué plusieurs séries de bombardements visant des cibles du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak en vertu d'une autorisation parlementaire obtenue pour mener de telles opérations de l'autre côté de la frontière. La première autorisation avait été donnée en 2007 et a été renouvelée en octobre dernier pour une année de plus.

Le PKK a lancé en 1984 une campagne armée pour obtenir l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie, une région peuplée majoritairement de Kurdes. Le conflit a fait 44.000 morts.

Selon Ankara, quelque 2.000 rebelles du PKK sont retranchés dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak, y disposent de la liberté de mouvement et s'y approvisionnent en armes et en munitions avec lesquelles ils lancent des attaques en territoire turc.

## LE PARLEMENT DU KURDISTAN IRAKIEN RÉSERVE 30% DE SES SIÈGES AUX FEMMES



ERBIL (Irak), 11 fév 2009 (AFP)

Le Parlement du Kurdistan autonome irakien a adopté mercredi une série d'amendements à la loi électorale, réservant notamment 30% des sièges aux femmes et ouvrant la voie à un scrutin régional.

A l'issue d'une session extraordinaire, le Parlement "a relevé le niveau de représentation des femmes de 25 à 30%", a affirmé Adhane Mufti, le président du Parlement kurde.

Trente-trois des 111 sièges du Parlement reviendront ainsi aux femmes, contre 28 actuellement.

Le Parlement a également réservé 5 de ses sièges aux Turcomans et 5 aux chrétiens chaldéens et assyriens.

"Le nom du Parlement a été modifié durant la session, passant de +Conseil national du Kurdistan d'Irak+ à +Parlement du Kurdistan d'Irak", a ajouté M. Mufti.

Ces amendements visent à "consolider la démocratie", selon lui.

Des élections régionales doivent avoir lieu le 19 mai au Kurdistan.

La date à laquelle se tiendront les élections provinciales, qui se sont déroulées le 31 janvier dans le reste du pays, reste encore à fixer.

Le Kurdistan bénéficie depuis la première guerre du Golfe en 1991 d'une relative autonomie, confirmée par la Constitution irakienne adoptée en 2005. Cette région a son propre Parlement qui édicte des lois.

Des tensions existent entre le pouvoir central à Bagdad et le président de cette région autonome, Massoud Barzani.

## IRAK: LES ÉTRANGERS ENTRÉS VIA LE KURDISTAN SANS VISA DE BAGDAD ARRÊTÉS (OFFICIEL)



BAGDAD, 9 fév 2009 (AFP) -

LE MINISTÈRE irakien de l'Intérieur a averti lundi les ressortissants étrangers se rendant en Irak par le Kurdistan sans avoir obtenu un visa délivré par l'autorité centrale à Bagdad qu'ils seraient arrêtés et poursuivis.

Cette annonce intervient quelques jours après qu'un Italien se présentant comme un touriste eut été interpellé à Falloujah, l'ex-bastion rebelle sunnite à 50 km à l'ouest de Bagdad, après avoir obtenu un visa de 10 jours délivré par le gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan.

Selon une nouvelle directive du ministère, "tout étranger entrant en Irak par les points de passage frontaliers du Kurdistan, sans avoir obtenu de visa auprès du gouvernement à Bagdad, sera arrêté", a affirmé à l'AFP le porte-parole du ministère de l'Intérieur, Abdel Karim Khalaf.

Il est "obligatoire pour les étrangers souhaitant se rendre sur le territoire irakien, qu'ils soient journalistes ou autre, d'obtenir un visa officiel, qui leur donne la liberté d'exercer leurs activités en Irak", a-t-il ajouté.

"Le ministère de l'Intérieur est la seule autorité habilitée à délivrer ce visa", a-t-il souligné.

"L'insouciance dont font preuve certains étrangers concernant les visas les expose à des poursuites judiciaires", a averti M. Khalaf, soulignant qu'aux termes de la loi, "les étrangers entrés de manière illégale doivent être condamnés à des amendes ou des peines de prison, et ensuite renvoyés chez eux".

Un responsable du gouvernement du Kurdistan autonome, Falah Mustapha, a pour sa part affirmé que les procédures de visa se faisaient en coordination avec le gouvernement de Bagdad.

Le New York Times a indiqué dans son édition de vendredi qu'un Italien de 33 ans, Luca Marchio, était arrivé en Irak par le Kurdistan, après un passage par l'Égypte et la Turquie, et s'était retrouvé à Falloujah.

"Je suis touriste. Je veux voir les principales villes du pays. C'est la raison pour laquelle je suis ici maintenant", a-t-il affirmé au quotidien.

M. Khalaf a indiqué à l'AFP que M. Marchio avait été renvoyé en Italie dimanche.

## IRAK: DISSENSIONS SUR FOND DE CORRUPTION DANS LE PARTI DU PRÉSIDENT TALABANI



SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 14 fév 2009 (AFP) -

Cinq hauts responsables du parti du président irakien Jalal Talabani ont présenté samedi leur démission en réclamant une lutte efficace contre la corruption et pour la démocratisation, a indiqué à l'AFP un responsable de la formation.

"Kosrat Rassoul, le secrétaire général adjoint de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), a présenté sa démission avec quatre membres du bureau politique après des différends internes liés aux réformes et à d'autres questions", a-t-il affirmé sous couvert de l'anonymat.

La lutte contre la corruption et la démocratisation au sein du parti et au Kurdistan autonome figurent parmi ces questions, selon lui.

Le Kurdistan (nord) est gouverné d'une main de fer depuis des décennies par l'UPK de Jalal Talabani et le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) de Massoud Barzani.

Depuis 2003, ce territoire autonome, où règne une relative sécurité en comparaison avec le reste du pays, accueille d'importants investissements étrangers qui attisent les convoitises, et certaines formations rivales affirment que des pots-de-vin sont versés, sans toutefois en apporter la preuve formelle.

D'après le responsable, la question de Necherwane Mustapha, l'ex-secrétaire général adjoint qui a démissionné il y a trois ans, divise aussi le parti. M. Mustapha, qui entend présenter une liste indépendante aux prochaines législatives, avait préparé un projet de lutte contre la corruption.

"Rassoul et les quatre membres (démissionnaires) veulent que Mustapha reste au parti, alors que des proches de Talabani demandent son exclusion", a-t-il dit.

M. Rassoul est également vice-président du Kurdistan.

Les quatre membres du bureau politique -Omar Sayyed Ali, Othmane Haj Mahmoud, Jalal Johar et Mustapha Sayyed Qader- avaient eux aussi présenté un projet de lutte contre la corruption à l'UPK et au Kurdistan.



# Un parti proche de l'Irak sort affaibli des élections provinciales en Irak

Le Conseil suprême islamique d'Irak (CSII) dispose toujours d'une milice puissante

## Bagdad

Envoyé spécial

Confirmée jeudi 5 février par les résultats préliminaires officiels, la victoire du premier ministre Nouri Al-Maliki aux régionales du 31 janvier pourrait-elle, par son ampleur même, se révéler dangereuse ? C'est la thèse développée à Bagdad par un certain nombre d'analystes politiques, irakiens et américains, qui craignent, anonymement, « les éventuelles réactions brutales de certains mauvais perdants ».

Le chef du gouvernement, dont la liste est arrivée largement en tête, non seulement à Bagdad mais également dans sept des neuf régions chiites du Sud, s'est chaudement félicité vendredi que ses compatriotes aient « voté en fonction des programmes des candidats et non sur des considérations confessionnelles ». S'exprimant aux côtés de M. Ban Ki-moon, le secrétaire général des Nations unies, qui effectuait sa deuxième visite dans la capitale pour « féliciter les Irakiens », M. Maliki a déclaré : « Nous pouvons garantir que les discriminations ethniques et sectaires ne reviendront pas. » Interrogé sur le point de savoir avec quelles listes il entendait former les coalitions qui gé-

### Redistribution chiite

**CSII.** Le Conseil suprême islamique d'Irak contrôlait, avant les élections, les provinces de Bagdad, Babel, Bassora, Mouthanna, Najaf, Qadisiya et Wassit. Il les a toutes perdues le 31 janvier.

### Coalition pour l'Etat de droit.

Le parti du premier ministre Nouri Al-Maliki a triomphé à Bagdad et est arrivé en tête dans huit des neuf provinces chiites du Sud de l'Irak. Le courant chiite dirigé Moqtada Al-Sadr a perdu la seule province qu'il contrôlait (Missan).



Dépouillement des bulletins de vote à Bagdad, lundi 2 février. THAIER AL-SUDANI/REUTERS

ront les provinces, sachant que ses amis n'ont remporté nulle part une majorité absolue, le premier ministre a répondu : « Nous nous allions avec ceux qui défendent l'unité nationale. »

### Unité du pays

Certains en ont conclu, peut-être un peu vite, que cette définition sibylline excluait la formation arrivée en seconde position dans la plupart des provinces chiites, à savoir le Conseil suprême islamique d'Irak (CSII), dirigé par l'héritier d'une des deux grandes dynasties religieuses chiites du pays (avec les Al-Sadr), Abdel Aziz Al-Hakim. Créé en 1982 à Téhéran, le CSII, qui contrôlait Bagdad et six régions chiites du Sud, était considéré comme le plus fidèle allié de Téhéran. Désormais, estime l'anthropologue du CNRS Hosham Dawod, « la marge de manœuvre de l'Irak en Irak est affaiblie ».

Il n'est d'ailleurs pas exclu qu'au-delà de la déception des électeurs à l'égard d'une formation qui n'a pas su leur apporter le minimum de services publics promis, tel n'était pas l'effet recherché. Les Arabes chiites irakiens sont souvent aussi sensibles à leur « irakité » que les autres. L'élection régionale a également montré qu'ils étaient tout aussi attachés que les Arabes sunnites à l'unité du pays. Le CSII, qui milite pour la création d'une entité chiite autonome regroupant, sur le modèle mis en œuvre par leurs alliés du Kurdistan, les neuf provinces du Sud, a peut-être aussi souffert de cette ambition éminemment fédéraliste qui est rejetée aussi bien par M. Maliki que par une majorité du pays. M. Al-Hakim, qui proposait aux habitants de Bassora – seconde ville d'Irak et capitale de la première province pétrolière du pays – un référendum populai-

re visant à en faire une entité autonome, avait déjà subi un échec retentissant en ne parvenant pas à réunir plus de trente mille signatures pour son projet.

Téhéran n'a pas encore réagi aux résultats des élections. Les plus optimistes rappellent que l'Irak « ne met jamais tous ses œufs dans le même panier » et qu'il entretient de bonnes relations « avec tous les partis chiites, le Daawa de M. Maliki compris ». Il n'y aurait donc rien à craindre. D'autres s'inquiètent de savoir si le CSII pourrait mettre en branle, à des fins déstabilisatrices, sa puissante milice de dix mille hommes formés à Téhéran, les Brigades Badr. Elles sont officiellement dissoutes, mais très présentes et toujours fidèles à leurs chefs historiques dans les forces de sécurité nationales. ■

Patrice Claude



## Iraqi PM says Biden criticism over Kirkuk "out of date"

REUTERS

February 10, 2009 By Waleed Ibrahim  
BAGHDAD (Reuters) -

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki took issue with the new U.S. administration on Tuesday, calling Vice President Joe Biden's criticism of the slow pace of reform in Iraq "out of date".

Before leaving Washington last week to deliver a major foreign policy speech in Germany, Biden chided Baghdad for failing to settle disputes over the city of Kirkuk and to enact a law dividing oil revenue, among other issues.

"I think our administration is going to have to be very deeply involved. We are going to have to get in there and be much more aggressive in forcing them to deal with these issues," Biden said.

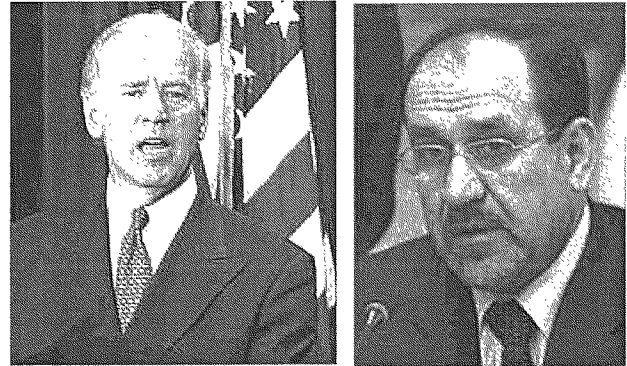
Asked about Biden's remarks on Tuesday, Maliki, an increasingly assertive leader whose followers won surprise victories in provincial elections last month, fired back.

"I believe talk about applying pressure on the Iraqi government or taking hard measures against it no longer works," he said at a news conference in Baghdad with visiting French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

"Such speech is out of date, because the government of Iraq knows its responsibilities and acts accordingly in a strong way."

Obama and Biden both campaigned on pledges to withdraw U.S. troops rapidly from Iraq and frequently accused the administration of former President George W. Bush of failing to press Iraqi leaders to make political compromises.

But Maliki has bristled at suggestions that Baghdad needed further prodding to enact laws aimed at reconciling the sects which waged years of warfare against each other, killing tens of thousands of Iraqis after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.



"It was we who launched national reconciliation," he said.

Biden has had a prickly relationship with Iraqi leaders since 2006 when, as head of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he proposed dividing Iraq into self-governing Sunni Arab, Shi'ite and Kurdish regions.

Iraqi leaders were furious at that proposal, known as the "Biden plan", which the Senate backed in 2007 but which has since quietly been shelved.

Maliki has emerged as the lead proponent of a strong central state in Iraq, opposed to measures that would divide the country into self-governing ethnic or sectarian regions.

Support for his allies in the Jan. 31 provincial elections have given him a strong mandate to push for a strong central government when he campaigns for his Dawa Party in parliamentary elections at the end of the year.

Aswat al-Iraq

February 16, 2009

## Agreement to halt Iranian shelling on Iraqi Kurdistan border villages

**Hewler-Erbil, Kurdistan region 'Iraq'**, — During the visit of the Iranian minister of foreign affairs Munochahir Mottaki to Kurdistan Region and his meeting with Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani and the senior officials in the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) party and KDP, both sides reached an agreement to stop the Iranian artillery shelling on the border villages in Kurdistan region.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Iran have reached an initial agreement to stop the Iranian shelling of Kurdish villages within the region's territories, www.ekurd.net according to a Kurdish official.

"Under the agreement, which has come into effect as of Saturday February 14, Iranian artillery will avoid shelling the villages and the populated areas...", the Kurdistan regional Government (KRG) representative in Tehran Nazim Omar Dabbagh, www.ekurd.net said in an interview with the London based al-Sharq al-Awsat newspaper.

"From now on, residents of these villages will be able to return to their houses, which they left as a result of the constant Iranian artillery shelling throughout the past period," Dabbagh added.

The agreement does not include mountainous areas, where the Iranian Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) fighters are believed to be based, he explained.

The PJAK, or the (Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistan) (Party of Free Life of Kurdistan), is a militant Kurdish nationalist group based in northern Iraq that has been carrying out attacks Iranian forces in the Kurdistan Province of Iran (Eastern Kurdistan) and other Kurdish-inhabited areas.

PJAK is a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Confederation (Koma



**Iranian minister of foreign affairs Munochahir Mottaki (L) and Kurdistan President, Massoud Barzani**

Civakan Kurdistan or KCK), which is an alliance of outlawed Kurdish groups and divisions led by an elected Executive Council.

Led by Haji Ahmadi, the PJAK's objective is to establish a semi-autonomous regional entities or Kurdish federal states in Iran, Turkey and Syria similar to the Kurdistan region in Iraq.

Since 2004 the PJAK took up arms for self-rule in Kurdistan province northwestern of Iran (Iranian Kurdistan, www.ekurd.net Eastern Kurdistan). Half the members of PJAK are women. The PJAK has about 3,000 armed militiamen.

The United States on February 4, 2009 added the Iranian Kurdish PJAK militant group opposed to Iran to its list of terrorist organizations. ■

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT

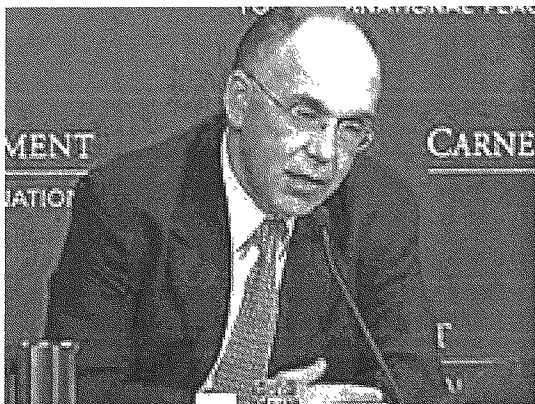
FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

FEBRUARY 10, 2009

# Preventing Conflict Over Kurdistan

Henri Barkey, Qubad Talabani, Ian Lesser, Marina Ottaway



The growing strength and assertiveness of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has alarmed Iraq's neighbors and the Baghdad government. If ignored or badly handled, Kurdish aspirations have the potential to ignite violence and instability in Iraq and the region at a particularly delicate time. To address the Kurdish issue and the role the United States can play in preventing conflict, Carnegie's Henri Barkey; Kurdistan Regional Government representative Qubad Talabani; and the German Marshall Fund's Ian Lesser discussed Barkey's report "Preventing Conflict Over Kurdistan". Marina Ottaway moderated the discussion.

## Steps Toward Preventing Conflict

Barkey explained that resolving the deadlock between the Iraqi government and the KRG over oil and gas revenue sharing is essential for preventing conflict in areas such as Kirkuk. The United States must help reach a resolution to this deadlock if it hopes to leave behind a stable Iraq. Solidifying the dialogue between Turkey and the KRG through U.S. involvement, and warming relations between Turkey and the KRG, would stabilize the region and aid in a smooth U.S. troop withdrawal. Another essential component to stability is disarming and demobilizing the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) with coordination between Turkey, KRG, and the United States.

Talabani stressed the importance of reaching an oil production sharing agreement between the Iraqi government and the KRG. Supporting the federal system outlined in Iraq's constitution is crucial to maintaining stability in Iraq. The problem of disputed areas must be resolved.

## Turkey's Role

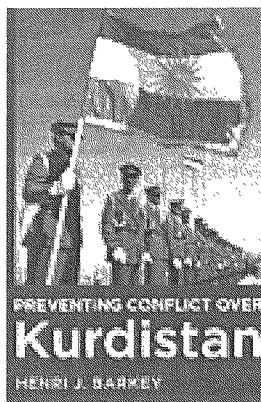
Barkey argues that Turkey's internal Kurdish disputes must be addressed as well, with involvement from the European Union. Ian Lesser pointed to the economic inter-dependence between Turkey and the KRG. Turkey has a dominant trading position in the region and Kurdish separatism remains a real concern for Turkey. Lesser explained that Turkey's approach to its domestic Kurdish problem should be used as a marker of Turkey's progress as a democratic country, and therefore of its eligibility to join the EU.

## Special Coordinator

Barkey recommended appointing a special coordinator to address the various dimensions of the Kurdish issue. Addressing the Kurdish aspect of the war in Iraq will not only ease the U.S. withdrawal, but also will reduce tensions with Syria and Iran, where there is widespread fear the United States may use the Kurdish populations in both countries to destabilize those governments. Qubad Talabani also welcomed the idea of appointing a special coordinator to serve as focal point for strategic dia-

## Preventing Conflict Over Kurdistan

Henri Barkey



The invasion of Iraq has surfaced long-suppressed nationalist aspirations among the Kurds, most notably the emergence of the federal Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). If ignored or mishandled, Kurdish aspirations have the potential to ignite violence and instability in Iraq, as well as the region, at a particularly delicate time, a new report by the Carnegie Endowment concludes.

Henri Barkey calls for renewed attention to the Kurdish issue to prevent conflict and prescribes a fresh U.S. approach. The United States must move quickly-as American forces withdraw from Iraq, U.S. influence in the region will wane.

## U.S. policy recommendations:

Break the deadlock between the Iraqi government and the KRG over oil and gas revenue sharing and refugee resettlement. This will go a long way toward rebuilding trust and preventing Kirkuk from becoming a flashpoint-the first priority for the United States.

Continue to support the federal system outlined in Iraq's constitution and avoid any suggestion that Iraq be partitioned.

Solidify the dialogue between Turkey and the KRG through U.S. involvement. Warming relations between Turkey and the KRG would stabilize the region and aid in a smooth U.S. troop withdrawal.

Demobilize the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and encourage its fighters to disarm or defect under a joint political and military effort coordinated by the KRG, Turkey, and the United States.

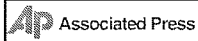
Work with European allies to resolve Turkey's internal Kurdish disputes. Supporting Turkey's counterterrorism program and its bid for EU accession, and providing development assistance in Turkey's Kurdish regions would allow the U.S. and Europe to address problems from both sides. Barkey concludes:

"The United States has to take the lead, because it remains, despite its mistakes, the only power with the requisite capacities to cajole, convince, and pressure governments and groups to act. Left to their own devices, none of the parties has shown much ability to move forward, even if the right ideas and solutions are apparent, or sustain progress once achieved. The United States can approach matters with a broader outlook and vision concerning the linkages among the issues, attributes often missing in local parties."

logue. Ian Lesser stressed the need to clarify if Kurdish issues would be handled as part of the larger U.S. Middle East policy.

## Questions & Answers:

In the questions and answers session the speakers addressed the importance of demilitarizing the PKK to instill more stability in the region; the role the United States must play in pushing for the implementation of the Iraqi constitution, thus the strengthening of federalism; and the importance of an agreement over control of energy resources in preventing conflict over Kurdistan.



## Iraqi Kurds feel abandoned by US, worry about future war with Arabs

IRBIL, Iraq - February 14, 2009 - (AP)

By SEBASTIAN ABBOT

The closest U.S. allies in Iraq the Kurds feel abandoned by Washington these days and say war with the Arab-dominated central government is likely without American pressure to resolve disputes that predate even the era of Saddam Hussein.

Tension between the Arabs and Kurds is multifaceted, but one of the major flashpoints is the status of Kirkuk, an area that contains 13 percent of Iraq's proven oil reserves.

The Kurds believe the area should be part of their semiautonomous region in the north, which the U.S. helped set up in 1991. But that position has caused serious friction with Baghdad, including a government decision to send in new mostly Arab troops to the Kirkuk area last month.

Kurdish officials want the Americans to put more pressure on Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to resolve the disputes before the U.S. military leaves Iraq.

If the disputes remain after the U.S. leaves, Kurdish regional Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani said "it will be war between both sides."

But President Barack Obama's administration has to balance its support for the Kurds and al-Maliki, who is also a close ally.

"We love the U.S., and they don't care," Barzani told The Associated Press. "When we say something about protecting our people's rights, they see it as a problem, a disturbance to their Iraq policy."

Asked about the Kurds' concerns, U.S. State Department spokesman Robert Wood said Iraqi citizens have to rely on the country's democratic system to work out their differences, not the United States.

"There are ways for people in Iraq to bring the concerns that they have to the levers of power," Wood told reporters in Washington on Thursday. "It's a democracy, and it's not really up to the United States to reassure anyone."

The Kurds have become more concerned in recent months as they have watched al-Maliki, a Shiite Arab, consolidate and project his power moving troops into areas claimed by the Kurds and pushing constitutional changes to strengthen the central government.

Al-Maliki has said the 2005 constitution gave too much power to Iraq's provinces and has called for amending the document to the alarm of the Kurds who supported the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam and who are determined to protect their regional autonomy.

"We try to stop him (al-Maliki) peacefully, but I think he is a dangerous man," said Kamal Kirkuki, deputy speaker of the regional Kurdish parliament. "He is dangerous for Iraq. He is dangerous for democracy. He is a second Saddam in Iraq."

Kurdish officials fear pressure from al-Maliki will only increase because his party did well in Jan. 31 elections, when voters in most of the country chose ruling provincial councils.

"I believe Maliki wants to have a confrontation with the Kurds," said Barzani.

Kurds fear the confrontation may come over the oil-rich area around Kirkuk, which the Kurds want to incorporate into their self-governing region.

But Arabs and Turkomen want Kirkuk to remain under central

government control. Provincial elections were indefinitely postponed in the Kirkuk area because of ethnic tensions.

"If the U.S. brigade was not there (in Kirkuk), the Iraqis feel strong and want to come from a position of strength to solve the problem of the disputed territories, which means an unstable Iraq," said Barzani.

The Kurdish-Arab dispute dates back decades to a campaign by Arab-dominated governments in Baghdad to settle Arabs in the northern oil fields and in territory near the border with Iran.

Under Saddam, thousands of Kurds were forced out of their homes and provincial borders redrawn, depriving the Kurds of land they believed was their own.

The major Kurdish parties joined the coalition government in Baghdad after the fall of Saddam in 2003 and hold several key posts, including the national presidency.

However, with violence receding in much of the country, issues such as the Kurdish territorial claims are taking on new prominence.

The Kurds have also clashed with the central government over legislation to regulate the country's giant oil industry. The Kurdish regional government wants the freedom to develop its own oil fields, but Baghdad wants a more centralized system.

The dispute has blocked ratification of the oil law for nearly two years.

The Kurds have pushed for a referendum to decide whether the Kirkuk area should become part of their self-governing region. The Iraqi constitution set a 2007 deadline for the vote but it has been repeatedly delayed.

Many Kurdish officials believe Baghdad will continue to put off the vote without increased pressure from Washington.

"The name of the game in Baghdad is delay, delay, delay," said Fuad Hussein, the chief of staff for Kurdish regional President Massoud Barzani. "We have the power, the constitutional power, but we need U.S. pressure."

Vice President Joe Biden visited Kirkuk in January just before taking office, indicating the U.S. is concerned about potential conflict over the city.

But Washington has been a strong supporter of al-Maliki and could be reticent to pressure the prime minister ahead of national elections later this year, especially on something as controversial as disputed territory.

The issue is also sensitive for U.S. ally Turkey, which borders the Kurdish region in Iraq and has been battling its own Kurdish rebels.

The Kurdish prime minister said the U.S. can't afford further delay and needs to push for resolution before its troops leave Iraq, or risk war between the Arabs and the Kurds.

"The Obama administration talks about a responsible withdrawal from Iraq," said Barzani. "It means the existing problems, including the disputed territories, need to be addressed and resolved before the withdrawal takes place."

TODAYS ZAMAN

February 16, 2009

## Message of Abant Platform: Northern Iraq and Turkey should learn from the past

AYSE KARABAT

The people of Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan should learn from their past mistakes and work for a future of friendship and peace, Arbil Gov. Nevzat Hadi said at a meeting of the Abant Platform in the northern Iraqi city of Arbil yesterday.

"The border between Turkey and Iraq is Iraq's door to Europe, and that door has never been and will never be closed," Turkish Consul General in Mosul Hüseyin Avni Botsalı, also attending the Abant Platform's 18th conference on "Searching for Peace and a Future Together." The conference began yesterday in Arbil with the participation of over 200 intellectuals from Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan.

In his opening remarks, Gov. Hadi underlined that the decision for peace and friendship rested with the people. "This is why we have to be realistic and we should not cause each other to worry. The people of Kurdistan are ready for peace," he said.

At the conference, Salahaddin University President Muhammad Sadik underlined that universities play a critical role in the improvement of science and the use of science for the public good. "But this task is not easy to perform; this is why we are hoping to cooperate more intensively with Turkish universities. This meeting of the Abant Platform will be so important to the joint future of both countries," he said.

Political science professor Mümtaz'er Türköne stated in his opening remarks that the platform had hosted meetings abroad before but that at this meeting the platform members did

not feel as if they were in a foreign country.

"We are home; we don't feel like we are in a foreign country. This is due to your hospitality and also because we are the children of the same land. We are the people who find happiness in the same things, we share the same values. This is why we are considering this Abant meeting as the most important one," he said.

"We are all Kurds," Türköne said to emphasize the similarity between the two nations. "For example, I am from Sinop, the northernmost part of Turkey. But I am a Kurd, too. I think like a Kurd, I feel like one and I will die like a Kurd." The academic spoke about Ziya Gökalp, an ethnic Kurd who was a theoretician of Turkish nationalism. Quoting Gökalp's adage, "Turks who do not like Kurds are not Turks and Kurds who do not like Turks are not Kurds," Türköne said, "The political approaches at the state level may be different, but this principle is the measure of the people."

He also recalled the existence of some maps labeling Turkey's Southeast as part of a "Kurdistan," saying that those maps are a dream to some people while a nightmare for others.

"But let's face the reality, the biggest Kurdish city in the world is İstanbul. There are more Kurds there than anywhere. This is why we are partly Kurdish, partly Turkish," he said.

He also spoke about the Abant Platform, saying it stood for democracy, tolerance and dialogue, and was welcome to all sorts of ideas as long as they were in line with the platform's opposition to violence. Speaking about the plat-



The Abant Platform, a prominent discussion forum known for addressing pressing issues challenging Turkey, convened in Arbil to hold its 2nd conference on the Kurdish issue.

form's previous meeting on the Kurdish question, Türköne recalled that it had underlined the importance of education in one's mother tongue, general amnesty for Kurds who are members of the separatist terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and further democratization. He said that not only these essentials, but also establishing a good relationship with the Kurdish regional administration of northern Iraq was a crucial element of any solution to the Kurdish question, adding that this was why they were in Arbil for Abant's 18th meeting.

The Kurdish question is not only Turkey's problem, but also a problem for Iraqi Kurds, since the issue has serious effect on the relationship between them and Turkey, he said: "What we want to underline is that the problem is one [belonging to] the state. There is no problem between the Kurdish and Turkish peoples. This is a political problem. We are trying to change our state, and we need your contribution to the solution of this problem."

Islamic thinker Fethullah Gülen also sent a message to the Arbil meeting. In his message, Gülen said, "In the last century, the region has been object of international attention. With no doubt, both war and peace are teaching different humane international relationships and providing serious gains. In addition to the tragedy it brings, perhaps there is also a teaching, maturing aspect to war. But in the end, it is necessary to go back to societal life, in other words, to a process of normalization." n



Over 200 intellectuals from Turkey and Iraq attended the Abant Platform's 18th conference on "Searching for Peace and a Future Together."

**Le Monde**  
11 février 2009

# Après trente ans de révolution, l'Iran, puissance régionale, s'interroge

## « Sous Ahmadinejad, le pouvoir d'achat est tombé de 50 % »

**Téhéran**  
Envoyée spéciale

Mohammad Atrianfar a décidé de sortir de sa réserve. Le journal qu'il dirige, *Kargozaran*, vient d'être fermé. Élégant, caustique, agacé surtout, ce conseiller parmi les plus proches de l'ancien président Hachémi Rafsandjani fait partie des « pragmatiques », alliés tactiques des réformateurs à la présidentielle de 2005. Et peut-être à celle de juin. « C'est simple, résume-t-il, un excès de radicalisme a fait du tort à l'image du pays, ces dernières quatre années. En économie le pouvoir est centralisé, nous dépendons totalement de l'argent du pétrole, ce qui exige un gouvernement sage et capable. Or qu'avons-nous ? Des slogans. On

*nous raconte que l'Iran joue un rôle au Liban, en Irak et ailleurs. Ce sont des mots et la crise est là ! »*

Et d'expliquer qu'en trois ans de gouvernement, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, avec un pétrole au prix fort à plus de 130 dollars le baril, a eu à sa disposition au moins 300 milliards de dollars : « Soit autant que les présidents Rafsandjani et Khatami en seize ans de présidence. Mais en raison du mauvais usage de l'argent du pétrole distribué de façon pas toujours judicieuse, il n'y a pas eu d'effet positif pour les Iraniens : dans les seize années précédentes, le pouvoir d'achat a été multiplié par deux, sous Ahmadinejad, il est tombé de 50 %. Dans les zones reculées, il y a même des gens qui ne peuvent plus rien acheter du tout. »

Et pour faire une image, il explique que du temps des présidences Rafsandjani-Khatami, « si on divisait la population iranienne [70 millions] en dix groupes de 7 millions d'individus, il y en avait un de riches, un de pauvres et huit de classe moyenne. Aujourd'hui, on a sept groupes de pauvres, deux de classe moyenne et un de très riches. La classe moyenne a été détruite. »

Il y a eu des grèves, des mécontentements en province, même au Bazar, allié traditionnel des religieux, dans certaines villes. Craint-il une explosion sociale ? « Je ne pense pas, dit-il, peut-être quelques mouvements. Les Iraniens ont connu la révolution, le terrorisme interne, la guerre. Ils veulent la stabilité et des réformes, pas une

autre révolution. » Et puis, ajoute-t-il : « Notre société à l'air d'une société civile, en fait c'est une société militarisée. Les militaires tiennent tout. »

Alors justement, les réformateurs et l'ex-président Mohammad Khatami ont-ils une chance en juin ? « Oui, dit-il, s'il n'y a pas de fraude. Les radicaux vont tout faire pour garder le pouvoir. S'ils pensent que, contre Khatami, ils peuvent se passer d'Ahmadinejad, ils aligneront quelqu'un de plus "acceptable", comme Ali Larijani, le président du Parlement, ou Ali Akbar Velayati, le conseiller diplomatique du "guide" Khamenei. Mais si le jeu est trop serré, même ceux qui le critiquent se mettront derrière Ahmadinejad. » ■

M.-C. D.

**Liberation**

13 FÉVRIER 2009

**Allemagne** ◀ Résultats scolaires, emplois : une étude révèle les difficultés.

## Les Turcs, la communauté la plus mal intégrée outre-Rhin

**BERLIN** de notre correspondante

Les résultats de l'étude ont provoqué une levée de boucliers dans la communauté turque d'Allemagne. L'Institut berlinois pour la population et le développement vient de publier les résultats d'une grande enquête menée sur la base d'un recensement partiel datant de 2005. Selon cette enquête, les 2,8 millions de Turcs constituent, parmi les 15 millions de personnes issues de l'immigration outre-Rhin, la communauté la plus mal intégrée. Cette étude confirme à grande échelle ce que bien des municipalités constataient sur le terrain. Sauf que, contrairement à d'autres minorités, l'intégration des Turcs n'a pas « progressé » au fil des ans. Ni en termes de résultats scolaires, ni sur le marché du travail, ni en termes de mariages mixtes... Un tiers des jeunes sortent du système scolaire sans le moindre diplôme ; 14 % d'une classe d'âge seulement décrochent le bac (deux fois moins que les Allemands de souche), les mariages mixtes sont quasiment inexistantes et le chômage deux fois plus élevé que pour les Allemands.

« **D'emblée condamnés** ». A qui la faute ? Au manque de volonté d'intégration de la minorité turque ou à l'échec du système d'intégration allemand ? Les deux facteurs sont évoqués. Le maire social-démocrate de Neukölln, l'un des quartiers de Berlin où vit la plus grande concentration de Turcs, estime que « nombre de familles turques sont dépassées par l'éducation des très jeunes enfants. Dans les villages d'origine, il n'est ni habituel ni utile de s'occuper de façon intensive des très jeunes enfants. Et les parents ne comprennent pas que

ce soit nécessaire dans une société du savoir telle que la société allemande ». « Le problème posé est une question sociale, et non culturelle, estime pour sa part le coprésident des Verts, Cem Özdemir, lui-même d'origine turque. On a fait venir en Allemagne une main-d'œuvre issue de couches sociales défavorisées, dont les perspectives d'avancement social étaient d'emblée condamnées. » Les associations turques mettent pour leur part en cause la discrimination de la société dominante et l'absence de politique d'intégration en Allemagne jusqu'au début des années 2000.

« **Enseignement** ». L'étude, publiée cette semaine, met également en avant les succès d'intégration de la petite communauté asiatique (essentiellement des Vietnamiens qui vivaient déjà à l'Est du temps de la RDA) et surtout des *Aussiedler*, ces 4 millions d'Allemands issus de l'ex-Union soviétique accueillis outre-Rhin depuis la chute du Mur. La plupart d'entre eux ne parlaient plus l'allemand depuis la Seconde Guerre mondiale mais possédaient un diplôme de l'enseignement supérieur soviétique au moment du départ. « Pour ces deux communautés, la notion de progression sociale passe par l'enseignement », constate un directeur d'école. Là serait la grande différence avec la communauté turque. Il y a un an le Premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, issu du mouvement islamiste, avait dénoncé lors d'un meeting à Cologne devant plus de 16000 Turcs d'Allemagne « l'assimilation comme un crime contre l'humanité », déchaînant une virulente polémique.

◀ NATHALIE VERSIEUX



# Nicolas Sarkozy veut renforcer les relations avec l'Irak

Le président de la République est le premier chef d'État français à se rendre dans ce pays tout juste sorti de la guerre. Il veut aider les entreprises françaises à retrouver leurs parts de marché

**N**icolas Sarkozy a effectué hier matin une visite surprise de quelques heures à Bagdad. C'était la première étape d'une tournée dans les pays du Golfe, au cours de laquelle le président français doit s'arrêter à Oman, puis Bahreïn et enfin Koweït. Il était accompagné du ministre des affaires étrangères Bernard Kouchner, pour qui il s'agissait de la troisième visite en moins de deux ans.

En revanche, c'est la première fois qu'un chef d'État français se rendait en Irak. C'est aussi la première fois qu'un chef d'État européen non membre de la coalition internationale à l'origine de la guerre en Irak contre Saddam Hussein en 2003 s'y trouvait. Les deux pays ont longtemps entretenu d'excellentes relations, depuis l'accueil très chaleureux réservé à l'ancien dictateur irakien Saddam Hussein à Paris, en 1975, par le premier ministre d'alors, Jacques Chirac.

**Les deux pays ont longtemps entretenu d'excellentes relations, depuis l'accueil très chaleureux réservé à l'ancien dictateur irakien Saddam Hussein à Paris, en 1975, par le premier ministre d'alors, Jacques Chirac.**

C'était le début d'une époque de relations économiques intenses entre la France et l'Irak, la première fournissant un réacteur nucléaire au deuxième, de l'armement également, tandis que les compagnies pétrolières françaises Elf et Total s'établissaient sur les gisements de Bassora.



Le président irakien Jalal Talabani accueillant Nicolas Sarkozy, hier. « C'est maintenant qu'il faut aider l'Irak », a déclaré le chef de l'État français.

Puis l'Irak a attaqué le Koweït, déclenchant la première guerre du Golfe en 1990, suivi d'un embargo qui a laissé la population irakienne exsangue. Lorsque les États-Unis ont envahi l'Irak en 2003, la France, présidée par Jacques Chirac, n'a cette fois pas suivi Washington. Outre la contestation de toute légitimité à cette intervention extérieure, Jacques Chirac montrait également de cette façon une nouvelle preuve de sa légendaire fidélité en amitié.

Mais le non-engagement de la France aux côtés de la coalition internationale lui a fait perdre la place privilégiée qu'elle occupait en Irak. Le but de la visite de Nicolas Sarkozy hier était manifestement de permettre à la France de retrouver cette place. C'est ce qu'il a déclaré

lors d'une conférence de presse commune avec le premier ministre irakien, Nouri Al Maliki. « Je suis venu avec Bernard Kouchner pour dire au peuple irakien la solidarité de la France », a déclaré le président en présence de son homologue Jalal Talabani. « C'est maintenant qu'il faut aider l'Irak. C'est maintenant qu'il faut s'engager », a-t-il dit, soulignant que sa venue était « la concrétisation de l'engagement de la France (aux) côtés » de ce pays. « La France croit à l'unité de l'Irak. Le monde a besoin d'un Irak uni, démocratique, souverain et fort.

Notre appui sera constant et sans ingérence, a-t-il assuré. La France souhaite votre réinsertion dans la région et dans le monde. »

Nicolas Sarkozy s'est également engagé à une collaboration « sans limites » de la France à la reconstruction de l'Irak. « Je suis venu marquer la volonté de la France de participer au développement »

« économique de l'Irak, à la réhabilitation des infrastructures. » « Nous souhaitons collaborer sur le plan économique, en matière d'énergie, de reconstruction, a-t-il précisé. Nous pouvons vous aider à former vos élites, nous pouvons vous aider s'agissant des forces de

police et de sécurité, nous pouvons former et équiper aussi l'armée irakienne», a-t-il ajouté. Il a également proposé l'aide de la France sur le plan diplomatique.

Puis, évoquant plus directement le secteur économique, Nicolas Sarkozy a insisté: «*Ma venue ici, c'est pour dire aux entreprises françaises: "C'est le moment, venez investir."*» Il a annoncé qu'une large délégation d'entreprises françaises, conduite par le premier ministre François Fillon et le chef de la diplomatie Bernard Kouchner, viendrait en Irak «*d'ici l'été*». Jusqu'à présent, les entreprises françaises n'avaient pas le droit d'investir en Irak pour des raisons de sécurité. Mais l'amélioration de la situation depuis un an leur permet désormais d'être de retour. Et les récentes élections régionales ont conforté le pouvoir en place.

Une nouvelle ambassade de France devrait être construite à Bagdad, ainsi que deux consulats, l'un à Erbil au Kurdistan, et l'autre dans la ville portuaire de Bassora, véritable poumon économique du pays. Parmi les possibles domaines d'investissements, Nicolas Sarkozy a cité la défense, le secteur pétrolier, avec Total, et l'eau. «*Nous sommes à l'écoute des demandes que feront les Irakiens*», a-t-il assuré.

CATHERINE REBUFFEL

## Le premier ministre irakien dénonce des pressions américaines

Le premier ministre irakien Nouri Al Maliki a demandé hier aux États-Unis de cesser de considérer son pays comme étant encore sous tutelle, affirmant sèchement que son gouvernement savait ce qu'il avait à faire. «*Le temps des pressions sur le gouvernement irakien est dépassé et ce dernier sait quelles sont ses responsabilités*», a-t-il déclaré lors d'une conférence de presse commune avec Nicolas Sarkozy. Il a ainsi exprimé son agacement après des propos du vice-président américain Joe Biden. Vendredi, ce dernier avait assuré que les États-Unis allaient être «*plus exigeants*» avec les Irakiens, afin de les «*pousser à s'occuper*» des questions politiques.

## LA QUESTION DU JOUR

# Quel peut être le rôle de la France en Irak ?

**Denis Bauchard**  
Conseiller à l'Institut français de relations internationales (Ifri)

«*La visite de Nicolas Sarkozy en Irak, la première d'un chef d'État français depuis l'indépendance du pays, illustre la volonté de la France d'entretenir de bonnes relations avec le gouvernement irakien à majorité chiite et de participer, sans ingérence, à la reconstruction de ce pays stratégique du Moyen-Orient.* Du côté irakien, le premier ministre Nouri Al Maliki a le double souci d'éviter un tête-à-tête trop exclusif avec les États-Unis et de compenser l'influence iranienne.

Par ailleurs, l'Irak est un pays sinistré qui a besoin de reconstruire ses installations pétrolières et ses services publics. Tout est à faire dans de nombreux domaines et les ressources irakiennes sont importantes, même si la baisse des prix du pétrole est une mauvaise nouvelle pour le pays. Des possibilités importantes existent dans le secteur de l'énergie, de l'eau, de l'électricité et des infrastructures, notamment les télécommunications.

Les entreprises pétrolières ne souhaitent cependant pas s'engager avant l'adoption par le Parlement irakien de la loi sur la répartition des revenus pétroliers et avant une clarification du rôle et des pouvoirs des provinces qui auront des gouverneurs élus à leur tête. Ceux-ci

risquent d'avoir une plus grande autonomie notamment dans la région de Bassora, la plus riche en pétrole. La même prudence existe de la part d'autres sociétés pour la participation à la reconstruction du pays.

L'ouverture prochaine de deux consulats français à Erbil et à Bassora participe de cette reconnaissance que l'Irak n'est plus aujourd'hui un État unitaire mais un État fédéral, ce qui implique d'être présent là où

il y a des décideurs importants. La compétition sera très vive et devra prendre en compte des problèmes de transparence et de corruption.

La coopération franco-irakienne en matière de formation de

Des possibilités importantes existent dans le secteur de l'énergie, de l'eau, de l'électricité et des infrastructures.

l'armée et de la police peut également se développer, de même que la France pourrait participer à l'équipement des forces de sécurité. Là aussi, la compétition sera forte, compte tenu du partenariat privilégié qui pourrait s'établir dans ce domaine entre les États-Unis et le gouvernement irakien. Même si la violence a fortement diminué, les progrès sont «*fragiles et réversibles*». L'année 2009 aura valeur de test avec plusieurs échéances importantes: un référendum doit avoir lieu cet été sur l'accord sur le statut des forces étrangères conclu entre l'Irak et les États-Unis et des élections législatives sont prévues d'ici à la fin de l'année.»

RECUEILLI PAR  
FRANÇOIS D'ALANÇON

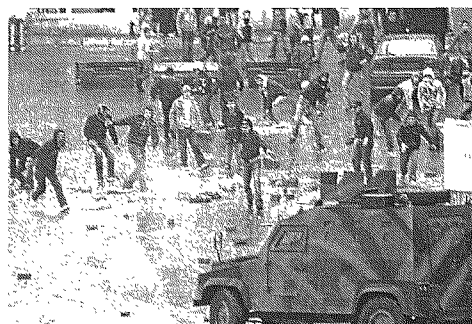


15 février 2009

Avec notre correspondant à Istanbul, Jérôme Bastion

## Turquie ; Heurts entre policiers et manifestants kurdes

Des incidents entre manifestants kurdes et policiers ont fait une quinzaine de blessés ce dimanche à Diyarbakir (sud-ouest du pays). Des heurts s'étaient déjà produits samedi dans les mêmes conditions. Les Kurdes de Turquie manifestaient ce week-end à l'occasion du 10e anniversaire de l'arrestation d'Abdullah Öcalan, le fondateur du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Ils réclament la libération de l'ancien chef du PKK, condamné à la prison à vie.



DEUX JOURS d'échauffourées en Turquie : samedi, c'était pour le dixième anniversaire de l'arrestation au Kenya du chef du PKK Abdullah Öcalan, et ce dimanche, c'était pour celui de son rapatriement en Turquie, qui l'a mené à la prison à vie.

Pour ces célébrations violentes, un peu partout dans le pays, le bilan est conforme à la tradition : des dizaines de blessés, y compris parmi les policiers, et des dizaines d'interpellations.

A chaque anniversaire, le cocktail des réjouissances est le même, sur fond d'interdiction de manifester un quelconque soutien à Abdullah Öcalan : d'un côté, en général sous la houlette du parti pro-kurde légal DTP, on se rassemble, on dresse des barricades, on brûle des pneus et on provoque les forces de l'ordre avec des pierres ou des triques, et de l'autre on réprime à coup de gaz lacrymogènes, de canons à eau et de billes de peinture, pour reconnaître les éléments les plus virulents, et enfin on interpelle.

Il a même parfois fallu à la police, comme à Hakkari, tirer en l'air pour disperser les manifestants. C'est à Diyarbakir que s'est tenu le rassemblement le plus important, avec quelque 5 000 personnes, et que les accrochages ont été les plus sérieux : ils ont fait huit blessés parmi les forces anti-émeute et sept chez les sympathisants kurdes. A Istanbul, le même jeu du chat et de la souris avait commencé dès la nuit de samedi et s'est poursuivi dimanche, avec une variante : le jet de cocktail Molotov et les traques des provocateurs jusque dans les immeubles.

L'une des revendications des sympathisants d'Öcalan devrait bientôt être partiellement satisfaite, puisque la fin des travaux dans sa prison annonce la venue prochaine d'une poignée de codétenus, mais il n'est pas sûr que cela apaise les esprits.



14 février 2009

## Manifestation kurde à Strasbourg pour la libération d'Öcalan

**STRASBOURG - Reuters- Plusieurs milliers de Kurdes se sont rassemblés samedi à Strasbourg pour demander la libération d'Abdullah Öcalan, chef du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) emprisonné depuis dix ans en Turquie, a constaté Reuters.**

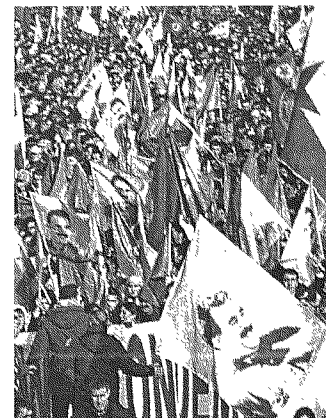
Les manifestants, venus notamment de France et d'Allemagne, scandaient "Libérez le président Öcalan", et brandissaient des drapeaux kurdes et des portraits du détenu, condamné à la prison à perpétuité pour activités séparatistes et terroristes.

Cette manifestation a lieu chaque année à Strasbourg, siège du Conseil de l'Europe et de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme

dont la Turquie est membre, aux alentours de la date anniversaire de l'arrestation du leader kurde.

Abdullah Öcalan a été interpellé le 15 février 1999 au Kenya et transféré en Turquie où il a été jugé pour sa responsabilité dans la guerre civile qui a fait jusqu'à ce jour près de 40.000 morts dans le sud-est de la Turquie, selon les chiffres des autorités turques.

Considéré comme une organisation terroriste par les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, le PKK, qui revendique l'autonomie du peuple kurde, a depuis alterné les périodes de cessez-le-feu et de reprise des combats contre l'armée turque, principalement depuis ses bases dans le nord de l'Irak.



Plusieurs milliers de Kurdes se sont rassemblés samedi à Strasbourg pour demander la libération d'Abdullah Öcalan, chef du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) emprisonné depuis dix ans en Turquie. (Reuters/Vincent Kessler)



14 février 2009

## La Turquie dénonce les critiques d'un général israélien

**LE MINISTÈRE turc des Affaires étrangères a convoqué l'ambassadeur d'Israël, Gabby Levy, pour protester contre les propos d'un général israélien, Ari Mizrahi, qui a critiqué l'occupation du nord de Chypre par la Turquie et l'attitude d'Ankara envers la minorité kurde.**

CITÉ PAR le quotidien Haaretz, le général Mizrahi, commandant de l'armée de terre, a déclaré lors d'une conférence que la Turquie n'était pas en position de critiquer l'occupation par Israël des territoires palestiniens alors qu'elle a déployé des troupes dans le nord de Chypre.

Il a aussi accusé la Turquie de réprimer sa minorité kurde et d'avoir massacré des Arméniens pendant la Première Guerre mondiale.

Dans une déclaration reprise par l'agence de presse Anatolia, l'état-major général turc juge les propos de Mizrahi totalement inacceptables, "au point qu'ils pourraient porter atteinte aux intérêts nationaux entre les deux pays".

L'état-major et le ministère des Affaires étrangères turcs ont fait savoir qu'ils demandaient des explications de la part des autorités israéliennes.

Les Forces de défense israéliennes (FDI) se sont démarquées samedi des propos de

Mizrahi en notant qu'ils pouvaient être interprétés comme une critique du passé de la Turquie. Un porte-parole de l'armée a fait savoir qu'elle tenait à souligner qu'il ne s'agissait pas de sa position officielle.

RETOMBÉES DE L'AFFAIRE DE GAZA

Un représentant du ministère israélien des Affaires étrangères a confirmé que l'ambassadeur à Ankara avait été convoqué pour être informé des objections turques et que celles-ci avaient été transmises à Jérusalem.

Les accords de coopération militaire entre la Turquie et Israël autorisent notamment des chasseurs israéliens à s'entraîner dans l'espace aérien turc.

La récente offensive israélienne dans la bande de Gaza a entraîné de vives tensions entre les deux pays.

Lors d'un débat public, le mois dernier au Forum économique mondial de Davos, le Premier ministre turc Tayyip Erdogan avait accusé le président israélien Shimon Peres de "savoir parfaitement comment tuer".

Erdogan a déclaré vendredi à Reuters qu'il était attristé par les résultats des législatives israéliennes, marquées par une montée des partis de droite, mais il a dit ne pas envisager de suspendre l'accord de coopération militaire.



Front Page Magazine  
February 17, 2009

## THE CASE FOR KURDISH INDEPENDENCE

By Joseph Puder

For decades, both the U.S. and Israel have been reluctant to support any manifestation of Kurdish independence for fear of upsetting the Turkish government. But with Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan having questioned Israel's right to its U.N. seat during the recent Israeli operations in Gaza, and adding that he wanted to represent Hamas on international platforms, it is now time for Israel and the U.S. to argue for Kurdish self-determination. It is a case that has much more merit than a terrorist Palestinian state that would destabilize the region and cause endless conflict with Israel.

Turkey has been the only Muslim country (out of 57) to serve as a NATO-member, and to be considered for membership in the European Union. Ankara has had a uniquely close relationship with Israel, and has been in the past a reliable U.S. ally. Under the current Justice and Development Party (AKP) led government, however, Turkey is abandoning the ties on which these special relationships were built. In late January of this year, Prime Minister Erdogan walked out angrily at the World Economic Forum panel in Davos, Switzerland, after blasting Israel's President Shimon Peres for killing the Palestinians.

There was no attempt on Erdogan's part to be at least fair enough to recognize Hamas provocations, and its deliberate targeting of Israeli civilians. At a speech Erdogan delivered to thousands of joyful Turks who welcomed him after his heroic performance in Davos with signs that read, Welcome Conqueror of Davos, Erdogan declared, The other side (Israel) should think about what happens if it loses Turkey. An Israeli official reacted by saying that, Israel's strategic relations with Turkey is important to us, www.ekurd.net but it is no less important to Turkey. The same official warned that Israel is tired of Erdogan's anti-Israel tirades, and was unlikely to make any more efforts to chase after the Turks.

In 2003, during the U.S. war on Iraqs Saddam Hussein, the AKP government - in power since 2002 - refused to allow U.S. military planes to refuel at Turkish air bases. Last December Erdogan told a Washington audience that, Countries that oppose Iran's nuclear weapons should themselves not have nuclear weapons, an indication that Ankara's rapprochement with Tehran may now be stronger than the relationship with Israel and the U.S. Turkey it appears is now taking a harder line on the Arab-Israeli conflict than Saudi Arabia.

Turkey's warming relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the possibility of an Israeli military operation against Iran's nuclear facilities, makes the Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish cooperation with Israel indispensable. The establishment of a viable, autonomous Kurdish state in Northern Iraq may once again reemerge as a vital geo-political factor for the Israelis.

Kurdish-Israeli relations have played an important role in Israel's Middle East policy, and have been used to effectively leverage pressure on Iraq and Syria. The historical and cultural closeness between Kurds and Jews should also be taken into account. Kurdish Jews in Israel have maintained close relations with fellow Kurds in Iraq.

In recent years, Israeli TV has broadcast photographs from the 1960s showing Mustafa Barzani embracing the Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan. And in May 2006, on a visit to Kuwait, Massoud Barzani, his son, and President of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and leader of the Kurdish Democratic party (KDP) had this response to a question about Kurdish-Israeli relations, If Baghdad established diplomatic relations with Israel, we could open a consulate in Hewler (Iraqi Kurdistan). Back in the late 1950s and early 1960s, thousands of Israeli advisors trained Barzani's Kurdish forces.

The Turkish connection is indeed important to Israel, and few Israelis would like to see it severed. But according to Soner

Cagaptay, author of *Islam Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who Is a Turk?*. The erosion of Turkey's liberalism under the AKP is alienating Turkey from the West. If Turkish foreign policy is based on solidarity with Islamic regimes or causes, Ankara cannot hope to be considered a serious NATO ally. Likewise, if the AKP discriminates against women, forgoes normal relations with Israel, curbs media freedoms, or loses interest in joining Europe; it will hardly endear itself to the U.S. And if Erdogan's AKP keeps serving a menu of illiberalism at home and religion in foreign policy, Turkey will no longer be special and that would be unfortunate.

Turkey has had a unique role as a mediator between Israel and Syria in recent years, and it was also a go-between for Israel and the Islamic world. That role may be gone now, as Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan has clearly chosen a path of close identification with the Arab-Muslim world — not with the moderate elements within that world but rather the radical axis of Iran, Syria, and Qatar — as the recent events in Gaza shown.

If Erdogan fancies himself as Hamas representative in international forums, and if he should continue advocating for the legitimacy of this terrorist group while questioning that of Israel's, then now is the time for Israel to finally go full force with its advocacy for Kurdish rights of

self-determination and statehood, www.ekurd.net and the gathering of the 40 million Kurds residing in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran into a single state drawn from Syria's (western) Kurdistan, Iraq's (Southern) Kurdistan, Iran's (Eastern) Kurdistan, and Turkey's (Northern) Kurdistan. Historical justice would dictate that while there are 22 Arab states in the Middle East with little need for yet another, the 40 million Kurds deserve at least one sovereign state of their own. ■

## Tensions escalate over Kirkuk

United Press International

ERBIL, Iraq, February 16, 2009 (UPI) --

Tensions with Arabs in the north of Iraq could escalate to all-out war if U.S. officials there do not act to resolve regional issues, Kurdish officials said.

Nechirvan Barzani, the prime minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, said tensions in the region, notably in Kirkuk, had not erupted into conflict because of the presence of American forces in the region, Iraq's satellite channel al-Sumaria reported Monday.

There are disputes over whether Kirkuk should be considered

Kurdish territory or part of greater Iraq, resulting in tensions between the various ethnic communities in the north.

Barzani called on Washington to intervene to help settle the issue. The KRG hopes to annex Kirkuk.

His comments come on the heels of a report from the Washington-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace that warns of instability should the nationalist ambitions of the KRG go unresolved prior to the U.S. departure from Iraq.

"If ignored or mishandled, Kurdish aspirations have the potential to ignite violence and instability in Iraq, as well as the region, at a particularly delicate time," the report said.

☆☆☆



17 February 2009



By Tariq Alhomayed

The Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani warned of an Arab - Kurdish war in the event of US withdrawal from Iraq prior to resolving the issue of the disputed territories. Particularly since the Iraqi Prime Minister [Nuri Al Maliki] has consolidated his internal political position, and believes that the 2005 constitution gives Iraqi provinces too much power, and is calling for this document to be amended.

Mr. Nechirvan said "We love the US and they don't care." Washington responded saying that it is not America's responsibility to reassure any party, but that it is up to the Iraqi citizens to rely on the country's democratic system to work out their differences. And so is the love of America enough to solve the problems of the Kurds in Iraq?

Of course not, since there isn't any love or hatred in politics, only benefit. The problem of some

Kurds is that they have an excessive sensitivity towards those who say that they should avoid conflict. For by all indications, the unsettled conflict between Al Maliki and the Kurds could erupt at any moment.

This is something we have said repeatedly, and which was met with anger, especially when we said that it was the duty of the Kurds to protect what they have gained, and pay attention to the realities in the region. The most important of these realities is that Al Maliki has organized his ranks, and moved away from weakening his opponents, and made alliances on the ground.

This is not in defense of Al Maliki, and many questions and doubts will continue to revolve around him so long as he does not begin a genuine reconciliation amongst the Iraqis, without making sectarian or other distinctions. Rather what we are saying is a description of [the current] reality.

The President of Iraq and the Iraqi Foreign Minister are both Kurds, and there have been well-known and real Kurdish gains on the ground following the collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime.

Proof of this is that the Kurds are calling for these gains to be protected, and expanded upon. However some Kurds continually respond: what are these gains? And here you can remember the worst [in the past]. [Whereas now] the Kurds were immediately able to reach a preliminary agreement with Tehran to halt the Iranian shelling of border villages in the Kurdish province of Iraq. And I do not think that the Kurds have forgotten their powerful neighbor Turkey, especially since one thing that both Ankara and Tehran benefit from is their mutual stance against the Kurds. And so if all of these risks are not cause for concern, then what will get through to the Iraqi Kurds?

And so if the Kurds have staked too much on Washington then they have made the same mistake as the Arabs who believe that Obama has come to say to them, your wish is my command, forgetting that Obama is motivated by the interests of his own country.

Is it in the interests of Washington today to stand with the Kurds against a broad spectrum of Iraqis? This leads to another question; what network of alliances

have the Kurds formed inside Iraq, for the democratic system, like the tribal system, is based upon alliances or mutual interests.

Therefore it is up to the Kurds to codify their internal conflicts, especially in view of the most serious situation summed up by Mr. Nechirvan Barzani when he warned of an "Arab - Kurdish" war. This is provocative language which will lose the Kurds a lot of sympathy, both internally and externally.

Love in politics is the same as indiscriminate conflict; it does not achieve anything. Relying on America did not help many countries who failed to understand the game of [political] advantage. And so where does Washington's advantage lie with the Kurds today, and where does Washington's advantage lie in Iraq when looking at the bigger picture? □

Tariq Alhomayed is the Editor-in-Chief of Asharq Al-Awsat, the youngest person to be appointed that position. He is based in London

## Obama offers support for Turkey-Iraq relationship

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Obama spoke to the two men by phone earlier in the day.

"In both calls, the leaders discussed a number of current issues, including U.S. support for the growing Turkish-Iraqi relationship, the importance of cooperation in Middle East peace efforts, and the U.S. review on Afghanistan and Pakistan policy," the White House said in a statement.

Turkey has repeatedly attacked hideouts of Kurdish separatists in the northern mountainous region of Iraq.

The White House said Obama emphasized the importance of the U.S.-Turkey alliance and expressed his desire to work on a "broad agenda" of mutual strategic interest.

"The President emphasized his desire to strengthen U.S.-Turkish relations and to work together effectively in NATO," the statement said.

## Old Europe' reaches out to the new Iraq Germany looks toward contracts; France urges peace

AP Associated Press

February 18, 2009 By Robert H. Reid, Associated Press

BAGHDAD - Germany's foreign minister met yesterday with Iraqi leaders in the latest high-level visit by a major Western nation that refused to take part in the 2003 US-led invasion but is now looking for ties and lucrative contracts.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the first German foreign minister to come to Iraq in more than 20 years, arrived a week after Nicolas Sarkozy visited Baghdad, the French president calling on other European countries to follow his lead "to support the peace."

Iraqi leaders seem eager to cement their relations with Germany and France partly to avoid the appearance of being puppets of the United States - which at any rate is preparing to withdraw its troops, many of whom worked on infrastructure projects such as rebuilding bridges and roads.

Steinmeier, who met with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and other senior officials, told reporters that Germany wants to "extend a hand to the new Iraq."

"We have seen in the last months important successes in stabilizing the country," he said.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari said the visit showed both countries were eager to resume their "historical relations."

"There is international confidence in the stability of this country," Zebari told reporters after his talks with Steinmeier.

Those upbeat comments were a far cry from the acrimony of six years ago, when France and Germany spearheaded opposition to the invasion, dividing Europe and damaging relations between Washington and some of its closest European allies.

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At the time, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld scoffed at the European critics, branding them "Old Europe" in contrast to a vigorous

"New Europe" - former Soviet bloc nations such as Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic that supported the invasion.

Over the years, the rhetoric has cooled. New governments have taken power in France and Germany. And Iraq's leadership has gained new legitimacy with the decline in violence and recent provincial elections that took place without major attacks.

Last month, the German foreign minister wrote in an open letter to President Obama, who also opposed the war from the start, that Germany was ready to help "the people of Iraq" create "a stable and democratic state."

The United States has encouraged other countries to step up their efforts to help rebuild Iraq, as the US military role in this country winds down. The United States must withdraw its troops by the end of 2011 according to a security agreement signed with Baghdad last year.

Obama's administration is considering plans to accelerate the withdrawal to shift military resources to Afghanistan, where Al Qaeda and the resurgent Taliban are challenging the US-backed Afghan government.

For their part, the Germans hope to cash in on millions of dollars in lucrative contracts in a country with some of the world's largest petroleum reserves.

Steinmeier arrived with representatives of German companies and cultural institutions.

The Germans hope to establish an economic office in Baghdad, with a branch in the northern city of Erbil, the capital of Iraq's self-governing Kurdish region. "The office will contribute to reviving the once-intensive economic relations between Germany and Iraq," German Economy Minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg said in a statement. "The office also will serve to contribute to the country's economic rebuilding."

THE NEWS OBSERVER

February 18, 2009

Leila Fadel | McClatchy Newspapers

## Iraq's Kurdish-Arab tensions threaten to escalate into war

**MOSUL, Iraq** At the headquarters of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Mosul, Khasro Goran, the deputy governor of Iraq's Nineveh province, is worried about the future.

Iraq's Jan. 31 provincial elections have been hailed as a sign that the country is putting its violent past behind it, is moving toward democracy and no longer is in need of a large U.S. military force. Along a 300-mile strip of disputed territory that stretches across northern Iraq, however, the elections have rekindled the longstanding hostility between Sunni Muslim Arabs and Sunni Kurds, and there are growing fears that war could erupt.

Al Hadbaa, an Arab nationalist party with some Kurdish and other members that vowed to retake disputed territory from the Kurdish security forces; halt Kurdish expansion and eject Kurdish militias, won 47 percent of the vote in predominantly Arab Nineveh, according to the preliminary election results. That means the Kurds will lose control of the provincial council.

The provincial elections also cost the Kurds their place as Iraq's kingmakers. Their main ally in advocating a loose federal system of semi-autonomous Kurdish, Shiite and Sunni regions, the Shiite Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, lost power in all the southern provinces it once controlled.

Kurdish parties have installed security forces well south of the United Nations Green Line that's delineated Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region since 1991. Now Goran promises to seal the borders of the disputed areas of Nineveh if the central government and provincial forces start pressuring the Kurds to relinquish some of the turf they've seized from Arabs since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion ousted Saddam Hussein's Sunni dictatorship.

"There is coldness in the region, and I am in the middle," said Goran, who's also the head of the KDP in Nineveh. "With al Hadbaa, there will be a problem, and the

province will break. . . . If there is pressure on the Kurds, we will stay in our own region and not allow any interference."

Because Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki ran on a strong central government platform and America's restraining influence will wane as U.S. troops draw down during the next three years, there may be nothing to stop a Kurdish-Arab war.

"They will actually try to draw a new green line," said Joost Hiltermann, the deputy program director for the Middle East and North Africa at the International Crisis Group. "Kurds have been strong since 2003, and now they're not as strong and they've somewhat overreached. The question is: Are they going to concede some things or are they going to fight over this?"

"Violence could happen for sure," Hiltermann said. "Eventually, the strongest is going to win. The question is, who is the strongest? The Kurds have pushed the bridge too far, and they don't have the power to realize it."

In his marble-lined mansion in Rabia, about 50 miles northwest of Mosul, Sheikh Abdullah al Yawar of al Hadbaa said Nineveh's Kurdish-dominated provincial council looked out for the Kurds and no one else. The first order of business, he said, will be to push the Peshmerga, the Kurdish militias, out of Nineveh.

"We will kick out all who work against Iraqi law and the Iraqi constitution," the sheikh said. "If you see a militia here, what will you do? I will ask the Iraqi security forces to help get them out. In government offices, only Iraqi flags should fly, and Iraqi forces from the Iraqi Army should be a mix of Kurds, Arabs and Christians."

Atheel al Najafi, the head of the Hadbaa movement who expects to become Nineveh's governor, said his party's demands include putting the entire province under provincial government control. This would halt the economic aid from the Kurdish region that funds some 400

schools, thousands of teachers and churches, and it would remove KDP soldiers from the region.

Goran said the Kurds won't withdraw from the disputed areas unless the issue of Kurdish autonomy is settled. Last year, central government and Kurdish forces nearly came to blows in Khanaqeen in neighboring Diyala province when Iraqi forces tried to push into that area. Only American intervention prevented them from coming to blows.

If the issue of the Kurds isn't settled, there will always be war, he said. Just before the provincial elections, Maliki deployed forces without informing the provincial government, and non-Kurdish candidates were brought to Baghdad to be schooled on the dangers of the Kurdish issue, he said. Kurds, Goran said, been treated like "traitors."

"Maliki does not believe in federalism," Goran said. "For us, it doesn't matter what the other people want. . . . If Maliki doesn't believe in this, there will be war again."

In Erbil, Fuad Hussein, the chief of staff to Kurdish nationalist Massoud Barzani, the president of the Kurdistan region, said the problem isn't militias or Kurdish expansion. The Kurds, he said, want to reclaim areas of Iraq they believe are theirs. They want a referendum, which the Arabs consider a disgrace.

Arabs "only accept a Kurd when he is a slave and they are the masters," he said. "Centralism failed in Iraq. You cannot have a stronger leader than Saddam Hussein."

Kurdistan Regional Government



## German Foreign Minister opens consulate in first trip to Kurdistan Region

KRG.org - February 18, 2009

**Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org)** – German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier made a landmark visit to Erbil today to mark the inauguration of Germany's Consulate General to the Kurdistan Region in Iraq.

Germany is one of 13 nations with diplomatic representation in the Kurdistan Region, four of which now have full consulates general.

Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani received Dr Steinmeier, Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zibari, and their accompanying delegations at the airport in Erbil.

President Masoud Barzani, the Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament Adnan Mufti, Prime Minister Barzani, and senior Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officials met Foreign Minister Steinmeier and his delegation.

President Barzani said, "We are very pleased by this historic visit and invite Germany to participate in rebuilding the Region." Regarding the situation in Iraq, he added, "We have continually promoted the development of Iraq, based on democracy and the rule of law."

Dr Steinmeier was pleased by the vast reconstruction under way in the Kurdistan Region, and appreciated President Barzani's invitation to contribute to those efforts.

Foreign Minister Steinmeier and Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani addressed guests at the opening of the Consulate General. Dr Steinmeier stressed the potential that exists for strengthened cooperation between the Kurdistan Region in Iraq and Germany.

Prime Minister Barzani said, "We commend the German government for opening its Consulate General in the Kurdistan Region." He added, "We hope that you return with a positive impression and are able to discuss the stability and peace in the Region with your colleagues in the European Union, so that other countries are encouraged to come to the Kurdistan Region for the same purpose."



Prime Minister Barzani has been actively promoting stronger ties and mutually beneficial relationships with members of the international community.

Accompanying members of the German delegation, which included representatives of leading firms such as Siemens and MAN, met with KRG ministers and officials to discuss opportunities in several areas, including health and electricity.

Dr Dilshad Abdulrahman, the Minister for Education, took the delegation on a tour of the elementary Gara Typical School, a partnership school in which the German language is taught. Students welcomed the guests with German songs, and Dr Abdulrahman and Dr Steinmeier addressed the audience.

The delegation completed its itinerary with a visit to AGEF a German nongovernmental organisation that promotes social, economic and democratic development, with a particular focus on capacity building. ♦



February 19 th 2009

### Iraq's Kurds and Turkey

## An unusual new friendship

ERBIL

Turkey and Iraq's Kurds are getting on a lot better than usual

**AN AUDIENCE** of Turks and Kurds, gathered in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan's capital, waited with bated breath as the Turkish consul-general took the stage. He was to address a gathering organised by followers of Turkey's most powerful Sunni cleric, Fetullah Gulen, who has long preached friendship between Turks and Iraqi Kurds. During his short speech, the Turkish envoy, Huseyin Avni Botsali, uttered the word Kurdish only twice: a measure of how edgy Turkey still feels about the Iraqi Kurds' autonomy and the impact it may have on its own 14m-odd Kurds. That is also why Mr Botsali is based in Mosul, a dangerous city in Arab Iraq, rather than in Erbil, in the safety of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Yet Mr Botsali's public appearance before the Kurdish flag marks a shift in Turkey's approach to Iraq's Kurds. Until recently Turkish generals would mutter warnings about invading the Kurdish enclave if need be to strike rebels of the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a group of Kurdish Turks who attack Turkey's forces from bases in Iraqi Kurdistan. Iraq's Kurds suspect that Turkey's real plan is to end their 17-year-old experiment with self-rule.

Nowadays, even Turkey's chief of the general staff, Ilker Basbug, admits that military might alone will not fix Turkey's Kurdish problem. Turkish officials, who used to dismiss Iraq's Kurdish leaders as tribal upstarts, privately concede that part of the solution is to co-opt Iraq's

Kurds. In the past year Turkish intelligence men and diplomats have held secret talks with Nechirvan Barzani, the Iraqi Kurdish region's prime minister, to get the PKK to call off its fight, even as Turkish aircraft continue, with America's blessing, to pound rebel strongholds near Iraq's mountain border with Iran. One idea is that rebels untainted by violence might be coaxed home and their leaders offered cash inducements to move to any European country that would take them in. Turkey could perhaps then formalise ties with Iraqi Kurdistan, among other things by opening a consulate in Erbil.

That would make a virtue of necessity. The chamber of commerce of the mainly Kurdish city of Diyarbakir in south-east Turkey reckons there are about 50,000 Turkish citizens and 1,200 Turkish companies based in Iraqi Kurdistan, doing trade worth some \$7 billion a year.

America is lobbying both sides to mend fences, while nudging Iraq's Kurds into squeezing the PKK. President Barack Obama has telephoned his Turkish coun-

terpart, Abdullah Gul, to praise the growing Turkish-Iraqi relationship. Friendship with Turkey would enable Iraq's Kurds to export their oil and gas and to check Iran's influence in the region. It might even give the Iraqi Kurds

a security umbrella once America leaves.

The last big sticking-point is the disputed oil-rich province of Kirkuk, which hosts a large minority of Turkmens, cousins of the Turks who settled there under

the Ottoman empire. Turkey wants the Kurds to renounce their desire to incorporate it into their region something they will not do in a hurry, if ever.



February 19 th 2009

## Iraq and its Kurds

# Not so happy

ERBIL

## The new strength of Iraq's central government is alarming the Kurds

IN ITS campaign to attract foreign investment, Iraq's self-ruling Kurdish region often promotes itself as the gateway to Iraq. If investors set up shop in the country's most stable area, they will, say the Kurds, be guaranteed pole position when the rest of Iraq becomes safe for business. Hitherto, visas issued at the Kurds' two international airports or at their land crossings with Turkey and Iran were accepted by Iraq's central authorities when visitors travelled on to Baghdad and beyond. Thousands of foreign businessmen and journalists used to take advantage of this easy entry into Iraq. But Iraq's prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, recently declared that foreigners entering via the Kurdish region without a visa issued by the central authorities may be arrested and deported. So the gateway has, for the moment, been closed. Mr Maliki presumably intends to show the Kurdistan Regional Government who is ultimately in charge.

In the past year or so, Iraq's Kurds, despite the enviable security of their territory, have been on the back foot in Iraqi politics. As violence in the rest of the country has subsided, territorial disputes between Kurds and Arabs in the province of Kirkuk and in parts of Nineveh and Diyala have become more dangerous again. And the Kurds are increasingly angered by their continuing failure to seal an agreement with the central government on an oil law.

The Kurds still want a referendum to decide whether Kirkuk and other Kurdish-populated areas, as well as those Arabised under Saddam Hussein, should become part of their self-governing region. According to the constitution, this referendum should have been held by the end of 2007, but it has been postponed repeatedly and some Arabs now argue that the constitutional requirement has lapsed. The Kurds also demand the right to manage the extraction and exploration of oil in their region, although they say they



would continue to share the revenue equally with the rest of Iraq.

In local elections held at the end of last month in 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces (but not in the three Kurdish ones or Kirkuk), Kurdish parties lost ground in the mixed provinces of Nineveh and Diyala to Sunni Arab parties, which had previously boycotted the polls. Tension between Arabs and Kurds, especially in those areas, has risen. In Nineveh, a stridently anti-Kurdish group called al-Hadba (an Arabic name for Mosul, the capital), led by Sunni Arabs, won the council with 49% of the votes. The Kurds had previously run the show there, thanks largely to the Arab boycott.

Many Kurds now worry that a strongman may once again be emerging in Baghdad. The Kurdish parliament's deputy speaker was reported to have called Mr Maliki a second Saddam. With American approval, the prime minister has consolidated his power. His Islamist Shia party did well in the local elections on a relatively secular law-and-

order platform. He called for strong central government, anathema to the Kurds after their suffering at the hands of Saddam. Arab politicians, seemingly with tacit American approval, have begun to deride the Kurds more openly for their supposed stubbornness. Mr Maliki and Masoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan region, get on badly and have not met for months.

Mr Maliki has questioned the Kurds' right to control some of the disputed areas, for instance around the town of Khanaqin and in some parts of Kirkuk province. He has even deployed Iraqi troops there to test the Kurds' response; the Kurds have so far refused to be provoked into fighting. He has also promoted constitutional changes to dilute the power of regions.

The Kurds' political standing has been further weakened by strife within the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), one of the Kurds' two main parties, which is headed by Iraq's president, Jalal Talabani. Five senior PUK men resigned, calling Mr Talabani too autocratic, but then came back into the fold when he said he would try to meet some of their demands. Alarmed by this apparent dip in the Kurds' political fortunes, Nechirvan Barzani, the Kurdish region's prime minister (and nephew of its president), has raised the spectre of war with Iraq's Arabs and called on the Americans to settle the main unresolved issues before their troops withdraw from the country.

So far, however, the Kurds' love affair with the Americans has seemed one-sided. We love them but they don't care, the Kurdish region's prime minister said recently, not for the first time.

When we say something about protecting our people's rights, they see it as a problem that disrupts their Iraq policy. Some Western diplomats, afraid that Kurdish-Arab tension may boil over again, think the Americans should do more to get the UN and perhaps the European Union involved in broking a deal. The Kurds want President Obama to appoint a special envoy to tackle the issue, but he shows no sign of doing so. The new administration, says one American general, would probably still want to kick the issue down the road.

# Police clash with Kurd protesters in Turkey

From news reports

**ANKARA:** The police clashed with stone-throwing demonstrators across the predominantly Kurdish southeast of Turkey on Sunday during protests marking the 10th anniversary of a separatist leader's capture.

At least eight protesters and 17 police officers were hurt in the protests, which the authorities had prohibited.

In Diyarbakir, the largest city in the region, about 1,500 people gathered in the streets — including in front of the headquarters of the Democratic Society Party, or DTP, the only legal Kurdish political grouping — to throw rocks at large military vehicles that were firing water cannons and tear gas. One of the vehicles was seen retreating down a street as the demonstrators attacked it.

Heavily armed police officers beat several protesters with truncheons, including one man who was lying on a street. The police said that they had detained about 50 protesters and that about 20 people, including officers, were injured in the rock-strewn streets of Diyarbakir.



Murad Sezer/AP

Fighting in Istanbul on Sunday, the 10th anniversary of a Kurdish leader's capture.

The city's mayor, Osman Baydemir, and a local lawmaker, Aysel Tugluk, both DTP members, were at the demonstration, but the police barred them from addressing the crowd.

Fighting also broke out in Istanbul, where young boys, some wearing face masks, threw rocks at heavily armed officers during another protest against the continued imprisonment of the separatist leader, Abdullah Ocalan, of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK.

Smaller protests were staged in towns across the southeast. In Sirnak, protesters threw fire bombs at the police, and the authorities in Semdinli, near the Iraqi border, set up roadblocks to prevent demonstrations, witnesses said.

The PKK has fought for autonomy in the region since 1984, and thousands of people have been killed. The United States and the European Union consider the PKK a terrorist group.

Ocalan was captured in Kenya in 1999 and returned to Turkey, where he was sentenced to death for treason. The sentence was later commuted to life in prison. He is the sole inmate of an island prison off Istanbul. His supporters have expressed concern about his health and want an end to his solitary confinement.

Turkey's Kurdish minority is estimated at 14 million people, about 20 percent of the country's population.

Ocalan's rebels often stage hit-and-run attacks from bases in neighboring northern Iraq. The Turkish military has frequently carried out air attacks on suspected rebels bases.

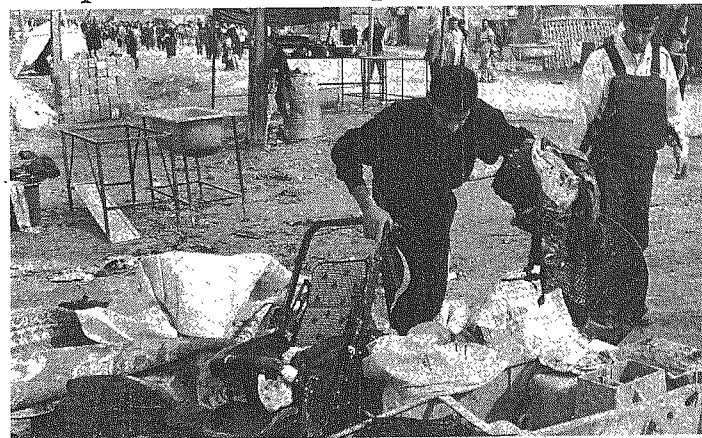
The DTP, the first pro-Kurdish party to enter Parliament in more than a decade, faces a ban by the courts over its alleged ties to the PKK. The party advocates a negotiated settlement with the PKK and an amnesty for some of its leaders.

The EU, which Turkey is seeking to join, has criticized the court attempts to ban the DTP, arguing that Kurds should have political representation in Parliament. Turkey has pledged to increase rights for Kurds as part of its bid to join the EU. (AP, Reuters)

Le Monde  
16 février 2009

Irak

## Attentat meurtrier contre des pèlerins chiïtes près de Bagdad



BAGDAD. Une kamikaze a tué 35 pèlerins, dont une majorité de femmes et d'enfants, vendredi 13 février, au sud de Bagdad, alors qu'ils marchaient vers la ville sainte chiïte de Kerbala. Il s'agit du quatrième attentat contre des pèlerins chiïtes en une semaine (photo). Le gouverneur de la province de Kerbala, Akil Al-Khazali, a indiqué, vendredi, que 5 millions de pèlerins étaient déjà arrivés sur place, dont 110 000 en provenance des pays arabes, d'Iran et d'autres pays. Chaque année, des pèlerins se rendent à pied à Kerbala, à 110 km au sud de Bagdad, pour fêter le quarantième jour après l'Achoura, hommage au martyr de Hussein, petit-fils du prophète Mahomet et fils de l'imam Ali, en 680. — (AFP) ■ (PHOTO : REUTERS)





## Nechirvane Barzani : WASHINGTON DOIT RÉSOUDRE LES PROBLÈMES ENTRE BAGDAD ET LE KURDISTAN

ERBIL (Irak), 17 fév 2009 (AFP) -

LES ETATS-UNIS doivent résoudre les problèmes entre le Kurdistan autonome irakien et le gouvernement central à Bagdad avant de retirer leurs troupes d'Irak, a estimé mardi le Premier ministre du Kurdistan.

"Le président américain Obama a dit plus d'une fois que (les Etats-Unis) allaient se retirer de manière responsable d'Irak. Ce que nous entendons par un retrait responsable, c'est que les Etats-Unis résolvent les problèmes en souffrance en Irak et aident les Irakiens à traiter ces problèmes", a affirmé Nechirvane Barzani.

"Je réaffirme que le rôle des Etats-Unis est d'aider à résoudre les problèmes existant en Irak, comme l'article 140, la loi sur le pétrole et la loi sur la distribution des richesses pétrolières", a-t-il déclaré à des journalistes.

L'article 140 de la Constitution concerne le règlement de la question des territoires disputés, dont Kirkouk, à la suite de la politique d'arabisation menée sous Saddam Hussein.

Concentré des défis et problèmes irakiens, Kirkouk, à 255 km au nord de Bagdad,

est une province riche en pétrole où vivent Turcomans, Kurdes, chrétiens et Arabes.

En visite en janvier dans la ville, à une semaine de son entrée en fonctions, le vice-président américain Joe Biden avait indiqué que la question de Kirkouk était "une préoccupation majeure pour le gouvernement américain".

M. Barzani a en outre affirmé que les accords pétroliers conclus entre des compagnies étrangères et le Kurdistan étaient valides, estimant que le ministre irakien du Pétrole, Hussein Chahristani, ne pouvait les annuler.

"Nous n'avons rien fait d'inconstitutionnel. C'est pour cela que Chahristani, ou qui que ce soit d'autre, n'a pas le droit d'entraver les contrats pétroliers conclus par le gouvernement du Kurdistan avec les compagnies étrangères, tant que ces contrats respectent les critères internationaux et les pouvoirs constitutionnels accordés au Kurdistan", a-t-il déclaré.

Les tensions avec les Kurdes ont pris de l'ampleur ces derniers temps avec le désir du Premier ministre irakien Nouri al-Maliki d'aller vers un Etat plus centralisé. □



## LE PRÉSIDENT TALABANI ACCEPTE DE PARTAGER LE POUVOIR DANS SON PARTI

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 17 fév 2009 (AFP) -

LE PRÉSIDENT Irakien Jalal Talabani a accepté mardi de partager le pouvoir au sein de son parti, pour éviter une scission qui l'aurait considérablement affaibli à trois mois des élections au parlement du Kurdistan.

M. Talabani, "le secrétaire général de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), a accepté les demandes des cinq dirigeants démissionnaires afin de les empêcher de quitter le parti", a affirmé à l'AFP un responsable au sein de cette formation à Souleimaniyeh.

Cinq hauts responsables, dont Kosrat Rassoul, le secrétaire général adjoint et vice-président du Kurdistan, avaient présenté samedi leur démission en réclamant une lutte efficace contre la corruption et la démocratisation de cette formation créée par Jalal Talabani en 1975.

Selon cette source, le vieux chef, âgé de 75 ans, a accepté "la transparence dans

les finances de l'UPK qui seront désormais sous le contrôle du bureau politique, le remplacement de responsables du parti et de représentants de l'UPK au gouvernement régional, et enfin une supervision des services de renseignement du parti par un des deux vice-présidents", Kosrat Rassoul ou Barham Saleh, l'actuel vice-Premier ministre irakien.

Jusqu'à présent, cet organisme secret était totalement contrôlé par les hommes de Jalal Talabani.

En outre, selon l'accord signé mardi à Bagdad par Jalal Talabani, Barham Saleh et Kosrat Rassoul, il a été décidé d'engager le dialogue avec les dissidents, comme Necherwane Mustapha, l'ex-secrétaire général adjoint qui a démissionné il y a trois ans, afin de les convaincre de revenir au bercail.

Outre Kosrat Rassoul, les quatre membres du bureau politique qui avaient présenté leur démission sont Omar Sayyed Ali, le ministre de l'Intérieur du Kurdistan, Othmane Haj Mahmoud, Jalal Johar et le chef des peshmergas de l'UPK, Mustapha Sayyed Qader. □

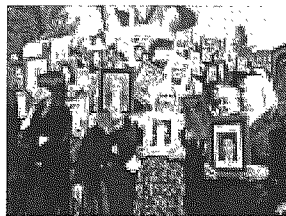


19 février 2009

## TURQUIE : Les familles kurdes se remobilisent pour les disparus

Par Assia Shihab

Durant la guerre opposant l'armée au PKK, des milliers de Kurdes ont "disparu" alors qu'ils étaient en détention. Pour les familles, le procès d'une unité de la gendarmerie turque opérant à l'époque fait renaître des espoirs de justice.



DEPUIS le mois de janvier des dizaines de familles kurdes se rassemblent chaque samedi dans un parc de Diyarbakir, dans le sud-est de la Turquie. Elles portent la photo d'un fils, d'un mari, d'un père, tous disparus dans les années 1990.

Au plus fort de la guerre entre l'armée turque et les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), des milliers de personnes ont été assassinées et ont disparu.

"Il n'y avait pas d'état de droit dans le sud-est de la Turquie. Des personnes se présentant comme des forces de sécurité arrêtaient des gens soupçonnés d'avoir des liens avec le PKK. Ils disaient qu'ils allaient les interroger au commissariat et puis on n'entendait plus parler d'eux. Beaucoup ont disparu au cours de leur détention", explique l'avocat Tahrir Elçi, qui représente plusieurs familles de disparus.

Une unité spéciale de la gendarmerie turque, appelée Jitem, est soupçonnée d'être derrière ces disparitions. L'armée a toujours nié l'existence de cette structure illégale. L'ancien quartier-général du Jitem est pourtant connu de

tous à Diyarbakir. Il s'agit d'une vieille bâtisse, aujourd'hui désaffectée, qui était utilisée par l'armée il y a encore cinq ans. Selon le président de l'Association de défense des droits de l'Homme de Diyarbakir, la plupart des personnes interrogées et torturées dans ces locaux n'en ressortaient pas vivantes. Muharrem Elbey est également persuadé que des corps ont été enterrés dans cet ancien terrain militaire.

**La fin de l'impunité...**

Si l'on reparle aujourd'hui de ces disparitions, c'est que, pour la première fois, les responsables présumés de ces crimes ne sont plus intouchables. Certains ont été arrêtés dans le cadre de l'affaire Ergenekon, une affaire qui fait grand bruit depuis un an en Turquie. Un réseau militaro-nationaliste, agissant dans les méandres du pouvoir a été démantelé. Il est soupçonné d'avoir voulu renverser le gouvernement et d'avoir commis des crimes dans toute la Turquie.

"Les Kurdes connaissent très bien certaines des personnes qui ont été arrêtées, confirme Tahrir Elçi. Ce sont d'anciens responsables de la gendarmerie qui faisaient régner la terreur dans la région. Aujourd'hui, ils sont poursuivis pour appartenance à un réseau terroriste".

Depuis ces arrestations, des dizaines de proches de disparus se rendent dans les bureaux de l'association de Muharrem Elbey. C'est le cas de Fatma, dont le mari, le fils et le beau-frère ont disparu en 1994. Soupçonnés de connaître des membres du PKK, ils avaient été tour à tour emmenés par des hommes armés.

"On m'a dit qu'ils avaient été tués mais je n'ai jamais trouvé leurs corps. Je voudrais au moins leur donner une tombe", explique-t-elle. Elle va aujourd'hui déposer plainte. Au moment de leur disparition, un procureur avait refusé d'enregistrer sa plainte, arguant que les noms de ses proches ne figuraient pas sur la liste des personnes détenues par la gendarmerie.

## A QANDIL, LES REBELLES KURDES NE SONT PLUS CHEZ EUX

BORIS MABILLARD

### REPORTAGE

Dans ce fief irakien du PKK, l'offensive terrestre turque de 2007 a ébranlé les soutiens locaux à la résistance kurde. Trop exposé, ce bastion historique n'est plus un repaire sûr pour la guérilla, qui s'est alors éparpillée.

Grâce au générateur, une loupiote baigne la pièce d'une lumière pâlotte. A la télé, une émission de Roj TV montre Nelson Mandela et une foule qui l'acclame. Bozan Tekin, membre du comité central du PKK, le Parti des travailleurs kurdes, suit attentivement le programme: «Lui aussi était emprisonné, qui aurait un jour imaginé le voir sortir de la clandestinité et recevoir le prix Nobel. Le tour viendra pour notre leader, Abdulhah Ocalan, d'être reconnu.» Nous sommes à Qandil, le sanctuaire irakien du PKK, ennemi juré de la Turquie. Ce repaire de la résistance kurde empoisonne les relations entre les gouvernements d'Ankara et d'Erbil. Le premier accuse le second d'héberger complaisamment des terroristes. Les autorités du Kurdistan irakien s'en défendent en rejetant la responsabilité sur la Turquie et sur sa politique discriminatoire envers les Kurdes.

Malgré cette pomme de discorde, les relations entre Erbil et Ankara ont pris récemment un tour nouveau. Dans le même temps, la position du KRG, le gouvernement kurde régional, à l'égard du PKK semble elle aussi avoir changé: les revendications turques ont désormais l'oreille du KRG. Ce mouvement encore timide pourrait présager des développements majeurs et, pourquoi pas, la création d'un front uni contre le PKK. Du côté de la population, le cœur des Kurdes d'Irak balance entre la sympathie à l'égard des rebelles et la nécessité de ne pas froisser la susceptibilité du voisin turc. Cette hésitation se retrouve au faite de l'Etat, et se traduit désormais par des doubles discours, voire des contradictions. Décidément, les rebelles kurdes ne sont plus chez eux à Qandil.

### Alliance tripartite contre le PKK?

Safeen Dizayee, en charge des relations extérieures pour le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), considère que le PKK est un problème turc et renvoie la Turquie à ses obligations: «Notre position n'a pas changé, nous sommes en faveur d'une solution diplomatique et politique. Nous appuyerons tous les efforts qui iront dans ce sens. Le problème n'est pas le PKK, mais les droits des Kurdes de Turquie.» En revanche, au gouvernement, un ton nouveau et plus conciliant à l'égard des exigences turques prévaut. Falah Mustafa, le bras droit du premier ministre kurde, oeuvre même à un rapprochement avec la Turquie: «Le PKK nous empoisonne la vie, il n'est pas le

bienvenu chez nous. Nous sommes les premiers à en souffrir. Nous sommes prêts à collaborer avec Ankara, Bagdad et les Etats-Unis afin de trouver une solution ensemble.»

L'annonce récente de la création d'un comité tripartite à Erbil, qui réunirait les Etatsuniens, les Irakiens et les Turcs, en vue d'éliminer le PKK du territoire irakien continue de faire des vagues. Pas de doute, le gouvernement kurde redouble d'efforts pour gagner les faveurs de la Turquie. Cela constitue une nouveauté de taille. Ce changement de cap se fait toutefois discrètement, car personne ne veut donner le sentiment de faire des concessions aux Turcs sur le dos des frères kurdes. Pour certains, cela s'apparenterait à une trahison.

Alors le gouvernement prépare d'un côté gentiment le terrain, en louant la bonne volonté d'Ankara. De l'autre, l'exécutif «isole le PKK et tente de couper ses routes de ravitaillement», dévoile Falah Mustafa, s'exprimant au nom de l'exécutif kurde. Pour le PKK, les choses ont vraiment changé. La volonté affichée d'isoler l'organisation des rebelles kurdes irrite Bozan Tekin qui y voit une trahison. Mais il n'y perçoit pas de menace sérieuse et doute de la détermination du gouvernement régional: «Ce qui compte pour nous c'est le soutien des populations civiles. Qu'ils tentent de nous isoler, les villageois nous font parvenir ce dont nous avons besoin! En plus, nous traversons à notre guise, tout à fait incognito. Jamais les Kurdes n'accepteront que leurs dirigeants nous fassent la guerre.»

### Les journalistes interdits de visite

Le vrai changement aux yeux de Bozan Tekin a lieu dans la tactique des Turcs. «Depuis décembre, ils utilisent des armes plus sophistiquées, des bombes à guidage laser. Des drones américains leur donnent des informations, lorsqu'une cible a été repérée, elle est sans faute rasée. Nous pensons que la Turquie veut éliminer les cadres du mouvement de manière similaire à ce qu'Israël pratique à Gaza. Mais nous ne sommes pas le Hamas, nous n'utilisons pas de voitures, presque pas de téléphone portable. Cette tactique est vouée à l'échec. Car nous avons pris des mesures de sécurité supplémentaires.»

Parmi ces mesures, l'interdiction faite aux journalistes de venir leur rendre visite: «Les circonstances nous ont amenés à ces mesures exceptionnelles pour notre sécurité aussi bien que pour celle des journalistes. Les Turcs recueillent aussi des informations au sol, ils utilisent toutes les sources disponibles: des espions peut-être, des photos, les enregistrements des conversations téléphoniques.» Les avions de combat turcs ont détruit tous les bâtiments estampillés PKK: les édifices, les guérites, les réfectoires et les salles de réunion, même les cimetières pour les rebelles tombés au

combat. Certaines infrastructures –les mieux camouflées– subsistent cependant. Les nombreuses grottes de la région offrent des abris naturels bienvenus. Mais les locations de ces infrastructures sont tenues secrètes. La supériorité technologique de l'armée turque ne désarçonne pas Bozan: «Nous sommes une guérilla, vingt-cinq ans d'adaptation continue et personne n'a réussi à nous stopper. La nouvelle tactique qui met à profit l'aide américaine ne nous effraye pas. Ce sont des innovations cosmétiques.»

### La guérilla éparpillée

Les vrais changements, Bozan dit les attendre avec et après les élections régionales, qui auront lieu le 19 mai prochain. «Si le scrutin se déroule normalement, et nous appelons la communauté internationale à veiller à ce qu'il en soit ainsi, les Kurdes de Turquie montreront clairement leurs aspirations. L'AKP, le parti au pouvoir, devra alors en tenir compte et engager un vrai dialogue avec nous.» De son côté, le PKK est-il prêt à faciliter le bon déroulement des élections par l'annonce d'une trêve? «Ce n'est pas à nous de faire un geste, mais au gouvernement, nous avons par le passé baissé les armes, le gouvernement n'y a jamais répondu.»

Cela signifie-t-il la poursuite des attentats dans un avenir proche? «L'armée a tué récemment, dans la région de Hakurk, trois de nos combattants, des martyrs, nous les vengerons.» De toute évidence, le PKK veut prendre la mesure du nouveau contexte et cherche à devancer les risques de se trouver confiné. De ce fait, la guérilla s'est éparpillée: Qandil et la vallée de Zap, à la frontière turque, étaient trop exposées, trop médiatisées.

Ce dispersement marque aussi les limites des efforts que le gouvernement d'Erbil est prêt à consentir. Les accès de Qandil et de la vallée de Zap sont contrôlés, les journalistes n'y sont pas autorisés. En revanche en d'autres confins, une surveillance rigoureuse est impossible. Subséquemment, les opérations militaires même conjointes n'auront que bien peu de chances d'aboutir. Aujourd'hui les forces du PKK sont disséminées sur tous les versants frontaliers, et même au-delà. A l'une des deux entrées de la vallée de Qandil, un portrait géant d'Abdullah Ocalan a été peint sur le sol. En noir et blanc. Avant il était en couleurs, mais les avions turcs l'ont détruit. Par ce bombardement, Ankara entendait montrer qu'il n'y a aucune cible que les appareils turcs ne peuvent réduire en miettes.

★★★



## L'Irak annonce les résultats définitifs des élections provinciales

Bagdad 19 FÉVRIER 2009 AFP -

LA LISTE PATRONNÉE par le Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki arrive en tête dans toutes les provinces chiites d'Irak, mais devra composer pour diriger ces gouvernorats, selon les résultats définitifs des élections provinciales du 31 janvier annoncés jeudi.

Dans la capitale, la "Coalition pour l'Etat de droit" de M. Maliki remporte la majorité absolue, avec 28 sièges sur 55, tout comme à Bassorah (sud), avec 20 sièges sur 35.

Mais ailleurs, si la liste arrive en tête en nombre de sièges, elle sera obligée de faire des alliances avec des indépendants ou avec ses rivaux du Conseil supérieur islamique d'Irak (CSII) d'Abdel Aziz Hakim, ou encore les partisans du chef radical chiite Moqtada Sadr.

A Najaf, elle obtient 7 sièges sur 28, à Babylone 8 sièges (sur 30), à Mouthanna 5 (sur 26), à Missane 8 sièges (sur 27), à Zi Qar 13 sièges sur (31), à Kerbala 9 sièges (sur 27), à Diwaniyah 11 (sur 28) et à Wassit 13 (sur 28).

Le CSII, s'il perd le contrôle des sept provinces chiites et Bagdad, reste toutefois la deuxième force chiite. Il arrive en deuxième position dans six gouvernorats, mais est distancé à Zi Qar, Kerbala et surtout dans la capitale, où il n'arrive que sixième.

Les partisans de Moqtada Sadr confirme leur position de troisième force chiite. Ils perdent Missane, la seule province qu'ils contrôlaient, où ils n'arrivent qu'en troisième position comme dans quatre autres gouvernorats.

Le vote a eu lieu dans 14 des 18 provinces et la participation a atteint 51%. Les élections auront lieu plus tard dans les trois provinces kurdes et à Kirkouk.

Le Premier ministre irakien avait affirmé le 6 février que les provinciales avaient changé "la carte politique" du pays.

Dans les régions sunnites, plusieurs partis se partagent les provinces. A al-Anbar, la coalition tribale menée par cheikh Ahmed Bou Richa, chef des "Sahwa" (réveil en arabe), milice d'anciens insurgés qui luttent désormais contre Al-Qaïda, arrive en tête avec huit sièges sur 29. Elle est suivie par la liste du député Saleh al-Moutlak (six sièges).

Le Parti islamique, issu des Frères musulmans, qui contrôlait la région depuis 2003, obtient aussi six sièges au sein d'une liste de coalition tribale. Dans la province septentrionale de Ninive, dont Mossoul est la capitale, la coalition sunnite antikurde "Al Hadba" obtient la majorité absolue avec 19 sièges sur 37, devant la liste à majorité kurde "Fraternité Ninive" (12 sièges).

Par ailleurs, avec 5 sièges sur 28, le Front de la Concorde irakienne, principal groupe sunnite au Parlement, arrive en tête à Salaheddine, dont était originaire l'ancien dictateur Saddam Hussein, et dans la violente province de Diyala, au nord-est de Bagdad, avec 9 sièges sur 29.

Selon la loi électorale, les minorités disposent de six sièges dans l'ensemble du pays (trois à Ninive, deux à Bagdad et un à Bassorah).

Trois --un par province-- reviennent aux chrétiens, les trois autres sont attribués à des sectes ésotériques.

A Ninive, le "Mouvement yazidi pour les réformes et le progrès" et les "Chabaki indépendants" ont enlevé chacun un siège.

A Bagdad, le représentant de la secte des Sabéens a obtenu 100% des voix.



## IRAK: LE PARTI DU PRÉSIDENT TALABANI REPLONGE DANS LA CRISE

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 22 fév 2009 (AFP) -

LE PARTI DU PRÉSIDENT irakien Jalal Talabani a replongé dans la crise, après la démission définitive dimanche de quatre membres du bureau politique protestant contre "le manque de transparence et de démocratie" au sein de la formation.

"J'ai démissionné, en compagnie de trois autres membres du bureau politique, de manière définitive", a indiqué à l'AFP Jalal Johar.

"Nous protestons vivement contre le fait que nos demandes en matière de réformes radicales n'aient pas été appliquées (...) et que les promesses de Talabani n'aient pas été tenues", a-t-il ajouté.

Les trois autres membres du bureau politique de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) sont Omar Sayyed Ali, Othmane Haj Mahmoud et Mustapha Sayyed Qader.

Kosrat Rassoul, le secrétaire général adjoint de l'UPK et vice-président du Kurdistan, qui avait également présenté sa démission le 14 février, était revenu sur sa décision après que M. Talabani eut accepté mardi de partager le pouvoir.

Une scission affaiblirait considérablement M. Talabani, à trois mois des élections au parlement du Kurdistan.

M. Johar a indiqué que la décision avait été prise à l'issue d'une réunion du bureau politique samedi soir, qui devait discuter d'un document en 11 points sur les moyens de réformer le parti mais a débouché sur une impasse.

"Le parti vit une crise profonde sur plusieurs niveaux. Des réformes partielles et superficielles ne peuvent être le remède", a affirmé M. Johar, exigeant des "réformes radicales pour que le parti fonctionne démocratiquement et dans la transparence".

M. Johar a réclâmé que Necherwane Mustapha, l'ex-secrétaire général adjoint qui a démissionné il y a trois ans, soit réintégré à son poste. Ce dernier, qui entend présenter une liste indépendante aux prochaines législatives, avait préparé un projet de lutte contre la corruption.

Le Kurdistan (nord) est gouverné d'une main de fer depuis des décennies par l'UPK de Jalal Talabani et le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) de Massoud Barzani.

Depuis 2003, ce territoire autonome, où règne une relative sécurité en comparaison avec le reste du pays, accueille d'importants investissements étrangers qui attisent les convoitises. Certaines formations rivales affirment que des pots-de-vin sont versés, sans toutefois en apporter la preuve formelle.



## TURQUIE: UN DÉPUTÉ PROVOQUE LA CONTROVERSE EN PARLANT LE KURDE AU PARLEMENT

ANKARA, 24 fév 2009 (AFP) -

UN DÉPUTÉ KURDE turc a défié ouvertement la loi en prononçant mardi un discours en kurde au Parlement turc, avant que la chaîne publique retransmettant ses propos ne coupe brusquement ses émissions.

Ahmet Türk, chef du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), la principale formation pro-kurde de Turquie, s'adressait au groupe parlementaire de son parti à l'occasion, selon lui, de la Journée internationale de la langue maternelle de l'UNESCO.

Avant une explication en turc, il a continué en kurde pendant quelques instants avant que la chaîne publique TRT 3 qui consacre une grande partie de ses émissions aux activités parlementaires ne cesse la retransmission.

M. Türk a été ovationné debout par la vingtaine de députés du DTP mais l'ensemble des partis politiques représentés dans l'enceinte du Parlement ont dénoncé cette initiative, selon les médias.

"La langue officielle de la Turquie est le turc", a indiqué le président de l'Assemblée nationale Köksal Toptan. "Cela est édicté par la Constitution et les lois. Cette réunion devait être conduite en turc", a-t-il dit aux journalistes, cité par l'agence Anatolie.

La loi fondamentale et les lois turques bannissent strictement l'usage d'une autre langue que le turc au Parlement ainsi que dans les établissements publics.

Selon, la chaîne d'information NTV le parquet d'Ankara a lancé une enquête judiciaire sur l'affaire.

De nombreux députés ont vu dans l'initiative de M. Türk une manœuvre politique dans un contexte d'élections municipales prévues pour le 29 mars en Turquie.

Le DTP est déjà menacé d'interdiction par la justice turque pour collusion avec la rébellion kurde du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Selon les analystes, ce discours en kurde pourrait indisposer les procureurs et juges qui seront chargés du dossier.

La Turquie a pourtant fait d'importantes réformes culturelles en faveur de sa communauté kurde ces dernières années, pour renforcer ses chances d'intégrer un jour l'Union européenne.

Paradoxalement, l'organisme public de radio-télévision TRT a lancé le 1er janvier une chaîne entièrement kurde.

THE INDEPENDENT 23 February 2009

## Iraq faces a new war as tensions rise in north

### Violence between Iraqi Kurds and Arabs is threatening an all out conflict that could complicate US plans to withdraw troops

By Patrick Cockburn in Mosul

A new war is threatening Iraq just as the world believes the country is returning to peace. While violence is dropping in Baghdad and in the south of the country, Arabs and Kurds in the north are beginning to battle over territories in an arc of land stretching from Syria to Iranian border.

A renewal of the historic conflict between Arabs and Kurds in Iraq, which raged through most of the second half of the 20th century, would seriously destabilise the country as it begins to recover from the US occupation and the Sunni-Shia civil war of 2005-07.

The crisis between the government of the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, and the Kurds, who make up 20 per cent of the population, is coming to a head now because a resurgent Iraqi army is beginning to contest control of areas which Kurds captured when Saddam Hussein fell in 2003.

There has been a mounting number of clashes between predominantly Arab Iraqi army units and the Kurdish peshmerga forces along a 260-mile line that stretches diagonally across the northern third of Iraq, from Sinjar to Khanaqin in the south.

The tensions underpinning the conflict have always attracted less international attention than the US-Iraqi war or the Shia-Sunni conflict.

Yet if the conflict develops into a full-scale war it will complicate President Barack Obama's plan to withdraw 142,000 US soldiers from Iraq over 16 months and redeploy many of them to the US military effort in Afghanistan.

In some respects, the Arab-Kurdish war has already started. Kurdish leaders say that in Nineveh province, Sunni Arab gunmen have killed 2,000 Kurds and 127,000 Kurds have turned into refugees over the past six years.

Baghdad and Basra have become safer in the past year but Mosul, the capital of Nineveh and Iraq's third largest city, remains one of the country's most violent places.

Khasro Goran, the Kurdish deputy governor of Nineveh province, who operates from heavily-fortified headquarters in Mosul, said it was "not acceptable" for non-Kurdish military units to move into disputed areas. "If they try to do so we will stop them." On the streets outside Mr Goran's office, once a Baath party office and now the headquarters of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, an array of competing military forces holds power.

His immediate guards are tough-looking Kurdish peshmerga in uniform. As we left their compound, they fired a shot to deter a driver who got too close. The driver promptly slewed his car across the road.

Two hundred yards further on, we passed a small Iraqi Arab unit covering a cross-roads with a light machine gun mounted on a cream-coloured Chevrolet pick-up truck.

Close by, a policeman in a blue uniform held an AK-47 assault rifle. He was part of a



Kurdish soldiers guard suspected insurgents in Kirkuk

mostly Sunni Arab force recruited in Nineveh which changed sides during an insurgent offensive in 2004 and joined the anti-government guerrillas. The rebels captured 31 police stations.

Mosul is majority Sunni Arab but on the east bank of the Tigris river which flows through the city, there are large Kurdish districts that are overlooked by a mosque on a small hill, where the Prophet Jonah is reputedly buried.

Most of the Kurds living west of the Tigris have fled or have been killed. The Christian community was driven out by attacks last year, although some Christians are now returning.

There have been so many bomb attacks in Mosul that in many places damage is no longer repaired. Pieces of smashed concrete lie where they landed after blasts several years ago.

The city is al-Qa'ida's last stronghold in Iraq. Earlier this month, a bomb killed four US soldiers and an interpreter while gunmen killed two prominent local politicians. The police also come under frequent attack. Shortly before we arrived in Mosul, one officer was killed by a roadside bomb, the sound of which echoed across the city.

Yesterday, US and Iraqi government forces said they had launched a new military campaign to eradicate al-Qa'ida in the province, although US troops were being used only for back-up.

The Kurds in the oil province of Kirkuk and in Diyala province have also often been targeted by suicide bombers. For their part, Arabs in these areas accuse the Kurds of launching a campaign of ethnic cleansing against them.

The Kurdish regional prime minister, Nechervan Barzani, says that if the disputes are not settled by the time the Americans withdraw, "it will be war between both sides."

Another Kurd, who did not want his name published said: "This is the day the Kurds were always afraid of. As the

Americans leave, once again we are left isolated and face to face with Baghdad."

What makes the situation so explosive in Nineveh and across the north is that over the past year the balance of power has been changing in favour of the Arabs and against the Kurds.

Minority Kurds had dominated the provincial government in Nineveh and Mosul after Sunni Arabs, despite being the majority of the population, boycotted the local elections four years ago. But new polls last month reversed the balance, sweeping an Arab Iraqi party, Al Habda, to dominance in the provincial council.

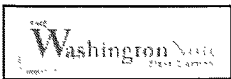
The Iraqi army is also becoming stronger. It contains both Kurdish and Arab units but it is the non-Kurdish units that are being sent north.

"The 12th division was sent to near Kirkuk without any consultation with us," said Safeen Dizayee, a senior official of the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

"There is an effort to move away Kurdish officers above a certain rank. Eighty per cent of the army in the north is Arab, including senior staff."

#### Iraqi Kurds: Unwilling citizens

\*Iraqi Kurds, who speak their own language and have their own identity, did not want to be part of Iraq when its borders were drawn after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. They often rebelled in pursuit of independence or autonomy and suffered terribly under Saddam Hussein. During the Kuwait war they rose up but were defeated. They created an autonomous zone outside Baghdad's control and since the US invasion have had autonomy through the Kurdistan Regional Government, but they control a much larger area where Kurds are the majority - this is the area now disputed. The Kurds are also an essential part of Iraq's coalition government.□



The Washington Note

19 February 2009

## Iraq's Kurds Lose Again

It appears increasingly likely that the Kurdish cause will be the latest American casualty in Iraq.

Kurdistan, an autonomous region in Iraq's northeast, is governed by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). Whether Kurdistan remains viable as an autonomous region depends on whether it can incorporate the oil-rich city of Kirkuk as its capital. The Kurds likely constitute a plurality of the city's population, but the Arabs and Turkmen each claim the city as their own.

According to Article 140 of the 2005 Constitution, a referendum to decide Kirkuk's status was supposed to be held by December 31, 2007. That deadline and others have passed because the city's Arabs and Turkmen have resisted, afraid that a vote would result in a Kurdish victory.

Neither the central government in Baghdad nor the KRG can compromise on Kirkuk. The KRG needs the power base that Kirkuk provides to maintain its autonomy and the government in Baghdad "could [not] give Kirkuk to the Kurds and hope to survive, in view of broad popular opposition in Arab Iraq," according to the International Crisis Group.

Over the past several months, Prime Minister al-Maliki has sent "support councils" (read: government militias) into Kurdish areas. The councils are clearly meant to challenge the KRG's security forces, known as the peshmerga. Kurdish Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani has pleaded with the United States to intervene to avoid what could become a civil war.

But despite its earlier support, the U.S. government has made clear that it will not become involved. Back in October, the military commander responsible for Kirkuk and the Kurdish regions, Brig. Gen. Raymond A. Thomas III, told the New York Times that if the Kurdish



and Iraqi government forces fight, the American military will "step aside," rather than "have United States servicemen get killed trying to play peacemaker."

State Department Spokesman Robert Wood struck the same note earlier this week. He said that Iraqi citizens have to rely on the country's democratic system to work out their differences, not the United States. "There are ways for people in Iraq to bring the concerns that they have to the levers of power. It's a democracy, and it's not really up to the United States to reassure anyone."

Every occupying force chooses winners and losers on its way out. And while questions remain as to who the "winners" in Iraq will be, it is becoming clear that the Kurds, the world's largest ethnic group without a state to call their own, will again find themselves among the losers.

--Ben Katcher

INTERNATIONAL  
THE NEWS

February 21, 2009

## Turkey's Kurdish southeast key election battleground

### DIYARBAKIR, Turkey:

Mehmet Ali owns a small cheese and olive shop in the old city of Diyarbakir. He has 11 grown-up children, all of them unemployed.

A stocky Kurd in his late 50s, Ali said he had not made up his mind who to vote for when Turkey holds municipal elections on March 29, but he was clear about his priorities.

"We need jobs and more investments, especially for the young," he said, gesturing toward a cafe filled with youths playing cards and dominoes. Mehmet Ali declined to give his full name for fear of reprisals.

Diyarbakir, the biggest city of Turkey's impoverished Kurdish southeast, is a battleground in local elections seen as a referendum on Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party. The AK Party is seeking to gain fresh legitimacy after it narrowly escaped a legal attempt by its secularist opponents to ban it for Islamist

activities in 2008. A decisive win in the local polls would consolidate the AK Party's grip on power and give it momentum to pursue its policies, including a pledge to reform the military-inspired constitution, key for Ankara's hopes to join the European Union.

But fears the country is slipping into recession due to the global economic crisis, soaring unemployment and graft allegations pose new challenges to the Islamist-rooted AK Party.

The AK Party, which emerged at 2002 polls as a coalition of religious, centre-right and nationalists, is expected to easily come out first at the national level. The opposition is largely discredited and lacks the AK Party's geographical reach. Failure to at least match the 47 per cent of votes the party won in the 2007 parliamentary election or to win cities such as Izmir, a bastion of the staunchly secularist CHP opposition, could paralyse the government in an a polarised country.

In Diyarbakir, the AK Party is locked in a fight for votes with the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP).

Erdogan, who plans to campaign in some 60 cities, will visit Diyarbakir on Saturday.

"We must win Diyarbakir as solving the Kurdish issue is key for the stability of Turkey," said an adviser to Erdogan. Once regarded as an outsider in Kurdish fiefdom-style politics, the AK Party was the top vote-getter in the Kurdish provinces during the 2007 election, drawing on promises to expand rights for minority Kurds and bring economic prosperity.

The AK Party believes that if it dislodges the DTP from Diyarbakir, a DTP stronghold, it would give the government the upper hand in solving the decades-old Kurdish conflict. About 40,000 people have been killed since 1984, when the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) guerrilla group took up arms with a view to establishing an ethnic homeland for Kurds.



## Glance at final results from Iraqi provincial elections

AP Associated Press

February 19, 2009 The Associated Press

*A list of the division of seats on local councils in 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces according to final results from elections announced Thursday:*

### **ANBAR (29 seats)**

Awakening of Iraq and Independents, Sheik Ahmed Abu Risha, Sunni — 8  
Iraqi National Project, moderate politician Saleh al-Mutlaq, Sunni — 6  
Alliance of Intellectuals and Tribes, Iraqi Islamic Party, Sunni — 6  
National Movement for Reform and Development — 3  
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, secular — 2  
Iraqi Tribes List — 2  
Iraqi National Unity — 2

### **BABIL (30 seats)**

Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Shiite — 8  
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council loyalists, Shiite — 5  
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Shiite — 3  
Civil Society list — 3  
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, secular — 3  
Independent Justice Association — 3  
Independent Ansar list — 2

### **BAGHDAD (57 seats)**

Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Shiite — 28  
National Accordance Front, Sunni — 7  
Followers of anti-U.S. cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, Shiite — 5  
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, secular — 5  
Iraqi National Project, moderate politician Saleh al-Mutlaq, Sunni — 4  
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council loyalists, Shiite — 3  
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Shiite — 3  
Christian — 1  
Mandaean — 1

### **BASRA (35 seats)**

Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Shiite — 20  
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council loyalists, Shiite — 5  
Gathering of Justice and Unity — moderate Shiite 2  
Followers of anti-U.S. cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, Shiite — 2  
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, secular — 2  
Iraqi Islamic Party, Sunni — 2  
Fadhila party — Shiite 1  
Christians — 1

### **DHI QAR (31 seats)**

Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Shiite — 13  
Followers of anti-U.S. cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, Shiite — 7  
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council loyalists, Shiite — 5  
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim

al-Jaafari, Shiite — 4  
Fadhila party, Shiite — 2

### **DIYALA (29 seats)**

National Accordance Front, Sunni — 9  
Iraqi National Project, moderate Sunni — 6  
Kurdish Alliance — 6  
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, secular — 3  
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Shiite — 2  
Diyala Coalition — Shiite close to SIIC 2  
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Shiite — 1

### **KARBALA (27 seats)**

Youssef Majid al-Haboubi, Shiite — 1  
Hope of Rafidain — Shiite 9  
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Shiite — 9  
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council loyalists, Shiite — 4  
Followers of anti-U.S. cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, Shiite — 4

### **MAYSAN (27 seats)**

Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Shiite — 8  
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council loyalists, Shiite — 8  
Followers of anti-U.S. cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, Shiite — 7  
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Shiite — 4

### **MUTHANNA (26 seats)**

Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Shiite — 5  
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council loyalists, Shiite — 5  
The People's List — 3  
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Shiite — 3  
Followers of anti-U.S. cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, Shiite — 2  
Gathering for Muthanna — 2  
Independent National List — 2  
The Gathering of Iraqi Professionals — 2  
The Gathering of Middle Euphrates — 2

### **NAJAF (28 seats)**

Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Shiite — 7  
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council loyalists, Shiite — 7  
Followers of anti-U.S. cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, Shiite — 6  
Loyalty to Najaf — secular led by former governor Adnan al-Zourfi — 4  
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Shiite — 2  
Union of Independent Najaf — 2

### **NINEVAH (37 seats)**

National Hadba Gathering, Sunni nationalist — 19

Ninevah Brotherhood, Kurdish list — 12  
Iraqi Islamic Party, Sunni — 3  
Shabak — 1  
Christan — 1  
Yazidi — 1

### **QADISIYAH (28 seats)**

Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Shiite — 11  
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council loyalists, Shiite — 5  
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, secular — 3  
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Shiite — 3  
Followers of anti-U.S. cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, Shiite — 2  
Islamic Loyalty party — 2  
Fadhila party, Shiite — 2

### **SALAHUDDIN (28 seats)**

National Accordance Front, Sunni — 5  
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, secular — 5  
Iraqi National Project, moderate politician Saleh al-Mutlaq, Sunni — 3  
National Project of Iraq — 3  
Group of Iraqi Intellectuals and Scientists — 2  
Iraqi Turkoman Front — 2  
Front of Liberation and Building — 2  
Salahuddin Patriotic List — 2  
Brotherhood and Peaceful Coexistence — 2  
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Shiite — 2

### **WASIT (28 seats)**

Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Shiite — 13  
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council loyalists, Shiite — 6  
Followers of anti-U.S. cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, Shiite — 3  
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, secular — 3  
Iraqi Constitutional Party, led by Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani, moderate — 3



STRATFOR  
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# THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION AND THE MIDDLE EAST

**Editor's Note:** This is the fourth piece in a series that explores how key countries in various regions have interacted with the United States in the past, and how their relationships with Washington will likely be defined during the administration of U.S. President Barack Obama.

Since the mid-20th century decline of the British Empire -- the original Western great power that dominated the Middle East -- the United States has had a deep, complex relationship with the region. For the nearly five decades of the Cold War, U.S. Middle Eastern policy was defined by the geostrategic threat from the Soviet Union and the need to protect oil interests. U.S. policy has also hinged on managing the Arab-Israeli conflict and, in recent decades, containing radical Islamist forces. It was not until the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, however, that the United States thrust itself militarily into the region. Some eight years later, a variety of different Islamist forces remain in play, but Washington is maintaining a geopolitical balancing act with the key nation-states of the region.

At a strategic level, the overall U.S. imperative in the region (as in Eurasia generally) is to prevent the rise of hegemonic powers that could become potential global challengers to the United States. In the case of the Middle East, that means pursuing complex bilateral and multilateral policies, primarily with the region's six main players: Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt and Turkey.

## IRAQ

Iraq is, and always has been, an artificial entity. The core of the population lies between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, but in reality Iraq essentially comprises the leftover land not claimed by the more geographically and ethnically coherent states that surround it. Turkey covers the Anatolian Plateau, Iran is a stronghold defined by the Zagros Mountains, Syria controls the eastern slopes of the Lebanon Mountains, and the al-Saud family holds the deep deserts of the Arabian Peninsula. All of Iraq's neighbors can relatively easily project power into Iraq, but Iraq lacks the geographic security necessary to either defend itself effectively or project its own power reliably. Iraq's internal divisions -- among Kurd, Sunni Arab and Shiite Arab -- make it all the more difficult for Iraq to function as a meaningful entity.

There is one strategy that can allow such an artificial construct to survive: Establish tight dictatorial rule over the population to minimize the impact of foreign influence, and maintain a powerful military to help keep neighboring states on the defensive. Iraq in the past followed this formula faithfully, but today's Iraq has neither of these things. Instead, Iraq is riven by internal differences, and managed by an external occupation force. That force, the United States, has an interest in preserving an independent, pro-American Iraq as a buffer against other regional powers, most notably Iran. But it also has an interest in vastly reducing the effort it dedicates to the occupation. So the Obama administration, like the Bush administration before it, knows that it has to share influence in Iraq -- most notably with Iran.

In turn, this attracts the interest of Iraq's other neighbors, who would like a piece of the Iraqi pie for themselves. Those states are concerned about the possibility of an Iranian-dominated Iraq, however, just as much as they are about an Iraq that is strong and independent in its own right. And so while the United States is preparing to rapidly draw down forces in Iraq, Washington will retain a residual force to build on a strategic relationship with Baghdad, to hedge against Tehran and to assuage Iraq's other neighbors' concerns about Iraq or Iran becoming too powerful.

Meanwhile, new leadership in Iraq is beginning to consolidate just as the Americans are preparing to draw down. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has leveraged his position, largely meaningless under the American occupation, to become a major power broker with his own tribal councils and paramilitaries. Many in Iraq are already drawing parallels between his policies and Saddam Hussein's. Al-Maliki is attempting to take advantage of his relationship with the United States to make his position militarily unassailable. A Shi'i, he has reached out to the Iranians to ensure that, come what may, his government will continue to rule, and he is building selective alliances with Sunni tribes to limit the power of the Kurds. Success for al-Maliki is far from certain, but if Iraq is to be ruled successfully in the aftermath of an American withdrawal, its leaders will do something similar to what al-Maliki is doing.

## IRAN

Contemporary Iran is like a mountainous fortress. It is bounded on the west by the Zagros Mountains, on the north by the Alborz range, along its eastern flank by lesser ranges bordering Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and on the south by the ocean. The Iranian interior is also mountainous, except for desert areas that are largely uninhabited. The fact that most of Iran's people live in mountains -- and that the dominant Persian ethnicity comprises only a little more than half the population -- makes the country difficult to govern except with an authoritarian system. Predominantly Shiite, Iran also is surrounded by Sunni countries populated by other ethnicities; these factors tend to inhibit Iran's attempts to revive Persian hegemony in

the region.

Here is where the political fragmentation and reconstitution of Iraq in the wake of the 2003 U.S. invasion represents a considerable opportunity for Tehran. The elimination of the Sunni regime in Baghdad not only removed a major security threat to Tehran, but also provided an opportunity for the Iranians to try to influence Iraq's political future through their ties to its Shiite majority. The hope among Iranian leaders has been to help remake Iraq in such a way that it no longer poses a threat to Iran.

The need to rebuild Iraq has also led the United States to begin moving toward re-engaging Iran diplomatically after three decades of confrontation (and occasional limited cooperation). Now that Obama is in the process of opening direct public negotiations, Iran is hoping for a deal whereby it can not only consolidate the gains it has made in Iraq, but also emerge as a player in Afghanistan, the Levant and the wider Middle East. In a broader sense, Tehran hopes to rehabilitate itself internationally, pull out of its current economic doldrums and re-emerge as a major energy-exporting state -- a prerequisite to its aim of becoming a regional powerhouse.

A number of hurdles still stand between Tehran and this goal, however. These include the need for a settlement on its controversial nuclear program, the need to consolidate its gains in Iraq now that provincial elections have shaken up the Shiite political landscape, the question of cooperation with the west on Afghanistan, and most importantly, the question of how to develop a working bilateral relationship with the United States.

## SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia is a militarily weak state, but since the discovery of oil in the early 20th century, it is also among the wealthiest. This has driven the ruling al-Saud family to seek alliances with great powers (initially the United Kingdom and, since the end of World War II, the United States) in order to ensure the security of its kingdom. Without oil, the kingdom's only other claim to geopolitical significance would be its relationship with transnational religious extremism, which is complicated because the Arabian Peninsula is home to Islam's holiest sites.

Because of their petrodollar wealth, however, the Saudis have been able to check the jihadist threat and align even more closely with Washington, while attempting to move away from socioreligious conservatism. The 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, however, ultimately empowered Saudi Arabia's principal adversaries in the region: Iran and its Shiite Arab allies. Because of this, the Saudis have been worried about how a potential U.S.-Iranian rapprochement might affect Riyadh's national security and its status as the United States' leading Arab ally.

The Saudis do have options, however. In fact, although the falling price of crude places some limits on Saudi financial power, Riyadh's immense oil wealth gives it influence in Washington at a time of a global recession and financial crisis. Despite U.S. overtures to Iran, the U.S.-Saudi relationship is much stronger -- and Washington and Riyadh have a common interest in making sure they can create a Sunni bulwark in Iraq to block Iran from dominating the country.

## ISRAEL

Israel's behavior is shaped by two distinct geographic features: its small size (i.e., lack of strategic depth) and a location where it is surrounded by hostile states and peoples. This has led the Jewish state to be proactively -- and often aggressively -- focused on disrupting external threats to its tenuous national security. Israel has tried through a combination of force and alliance to prevent its Arab neighbors from uniting against it, and has always been aligned with a great power for its security needs. Since the 1960s, that great power has been the United States. Over time, however, Israel's dependency on Washington has decreased to the point where U.S. and Israeli interests have begun to diverge at times.

U.S. efforts to counter transnational jihadism in the wake of 9/11 pushed the Bush administration toward policies that have conflicted with Israeli interests. These include the move to drive Syrian forces out of Lebanon, which Israel opposed because it had an understanding with Damascus that the Syrian troops would keep a leash on Hezbollah. Also, Washington's recent push to democratize the region has aided the rise of certain Islamist forces: Hezbollah, Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood and -- after the fall of the Baathist regime in Baghdad -- Iraqi Islamists, both Shiite and Sunni, and an assertive Iran.

That said, the foundation of the U.S.-Israeli relationship remains strong, as the two allies agree strategically on the need to keep the Arab/Muslim Middle East politically fragmented. There are, however, concerns within Israel over Obama's plans to go above and beyond the Bush administration's diplomatic efforts with Iran, and over the new administration's goal of improving ties with the Islamic world at large.

The Israelis are therefore working both strategically and tactically to counter the rise of Iran. A key element of this is Israel's ongoing peace talks with Syria, Iran's only ally in the Arab world. Peace with Syria could allow Israel to neutralize the military threat from Iran's premier militant proxy, Lebanon's Hezbollah movement. The Israelis

also have been quietly cooperating with the Saudis and other Arab states who share Israel's concerns about Iran – especially on the issue of countering Hezbollah and the efforts to pull Hamas out of the Iranian orbit.

## SYRIA

Syria's borders, a product of the carving-up of the Ottoman Empire in the wake of World War I, are ambiguous and constricting from Damascus' point of view. This is why Syria's primary geopolitical interests are concentrated to the west in Lebanon, the economic engine of the Levant. Without Lebanon, Syria is poor and isolated. A Lebanon under Syrian influence, however, gives Damascus access to the Mediterranean basin and makes Syria a regional power to be reckoned with.

Militarily, the greatest threats Syria faces are Turkey to the north and Israel to the south. Because Syria is no match for these countries in a military confrontation, Damascus must resort to political settlements for security. Syria already has a political understanding with the Turks fueled by a common interest in containing Kurdish separatism, but a political understanding with the Israelis will require a lot more work.

This is where the United States comes in. Washington is the chief ally and security guarantor for both Turkey and Israel. The Syrians are already well on their way to reclaiming hegemony in Lebanon, but Damascus also needs the major powers in the region – including the United States – to recognize and accept Syria's influential role in the Levant. Syria's negotiations with Israel require Damascus to follow through with commitments to neutralize Hezbollah's military arm and to deny support to Palestinian groups like Hamas, whom the Syrians will happily hang out to dry in order to ensure their own security.

The United States under the Bush administration mostly gave the al Assad regime in Damascus the cold shoulder, but the Obama administration's moves to re-engage Syria could provide the Alawite-Baathist government the opportunity it has been looking for to break out of diplomatic isolation. Washington's interest in engaging Syria diplomatically is that it could deny Iran a key ally in the Levant as well as a logistical support system for militant proxies. These negotiations will be trying, however, especially considering the Syrian regime's perception of insecurity and the fact that it will be asked to alter three decades of foreign policy.

## EGYPT

Egypt is, in essence, the Nile River Delta -- the country's entire culture and population is limited to a narrow valley surrounded by a mass of desert. Even at the height of Egypt's power during the Pharaonic Age, it only very rarely projected power beyond its core in the Nile region. Content to live on the Nile, Egypt never felt the pressure of other impinging cultures -- until those others developed technologies that allowed them to overcome the desert barriers that made the Egyptians feel so safe. This explains why for nearly 2,500 years Egypt remained under the control of various dominions -- Persian, Greek, Roman, Arab, and Turkic -- and why, even since the 1952 founding of the Egyptian republic at the hands of pan-Arab nationalists under the leadership of Gamal Abdel-Nasser, Cairo has been unable to achieve its goal of being the leader of the Arab world.

Like Israel and Saudi Arabia, modern Egypt also has heavily relied on alignment with great powers. During the days of the monarchy, Cairo was closely tied with the British. Under the Nasserite regime, Egypt spent 20 years in alignment with the Soviet Union. In the 1970s, the Egyptians joined the Western camp and made

peace with Israel, which has enabled Cairo to further its regional ambitions as the main mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since then, Egypt has been the main ally through which Washington has managed Arab-Israeli affairs.

But the 9/11 attacks forced the United States to move beyond Egypt and work with other regional players as well, a process that will only accelerate under the Obama administration. Between Washington's willingness to pursue relations with Iran and a potential rehabilitation of Syria, Egypt's favored position is fast deteriorating. As it is, Cairo has to live with the fact that Saudi Arabia is the real leader of the Arab world (due to its oil resources). Ironically, the one thing that could raise Egypt's profile in the eyes of the United States is potential instability at home amid the eventual leadership transition away from 80-year-old President Hosni Mubarak. The United States would have an interest in making sure that Islamist forces did not take advantage of the transition.

## TURKEY

Turkey is situated on what could be considered the key piece of geopolitical real estate in Eurasia -- the crossroads connecting Europe, the Middle East, the former Soviet Union and the Black and Mediterranean seas. The high plateau of the Anatolian Peninsula is easily defensible and has led to the development of a maritime culture. While the Turks have held this area since the early 14th century, these geographical advantages allowed their predecessors such as the Byzantine Empire) the same type of geopolitical leverage.

In other words, those controlling this territory -- regardless of their identity -- have historically been great powers. The past 90 years, during which modern Turkey has not sought great-power status, have thus been a historical anomaly. Ankara's restrained behavior has to do with the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the republic's internal struggles and the logic of the Cold War, which divided Eurasia and forced Turkey to be content with its status as a member of the Western camp. As a close U.S. ally and a NATO member-state, Turkey was long the bulwark blocking Soviet expansion into the Middle East.

The 2002 rise to power of the Islamist-rooted Justice and Development Party, which has proved able to work with the secular military-dominated establishment, has enabled Turkey to achieve domestic stability. Ankara began reasserting itself as a regional player as well, after the rise of Kurds in neighboring Iraq in the wake of the 2003 U.S. invasion and the European Union's de facto rejection of Turkey's membership bid.

Despite the tensions in U.S.-Turkish relations, the Bush administration recognized Turkey's role as an emerging regional player, especially in the context of the Islamic world -- a role the Turks are hoping they will be able to advance further in working with the Obama administration. Turkey's geographic proximity to a resurging Russia and its energy dependence on Moscow, however, will push it from being simply a pro-Western ally to being a pro-Western but independent actor. While the general trend will be toward cooperation, Ankara increasingly can be expected to disagree with the West on issues where its own interests diverge from those of the United States and Europe -- as evidenced by the Turkish leadership's increasingly critical stance toward Israel.

## Kurdish leader in Iraq wants rights protected

February 22, 2009  
SINAN SALAHEDDIN

AP Associated Press

**BAGHDAD** - A Kurdish politician whose list won nearly a third of the vote in a volatile northern province in last month's local elections said Saturday that his group will cooperate with Sunni Arab rivals if they respect Kurdish territorial rights.

Claims by Sunni Arabs and Kurds over disputed territory in the northern Ninevah province have fueled significant violence in the provincial capital of Mosul. U.S. officials have called the city Iraq's last major urban battleground in the war against al-Qaida and other Sunni insurgents.

The Kurds govern a semi-autonomous region in northern Iraq to which they would like to add additional disputed territory they claim was historically Kurdish.

They are pushing Iraq's Arab-dominated central government to hold a constitutionally mandated referendum that would let people in these disputed territories decide if they want to join the Kurdish-ruled area.

The constitution contained a 2007 deadline for the vote, but it has yet to take place, fueling growing tension between Baghdad and the Kurds.

Muhsin al-Saadoun, whose Ninevah Brotherhood list won 12 of 37 seats on

the provincial council in Jan. 31 elections, said Sunni Arabs must "respect the Iraqi constitution and the feelings and will of the Kurds."

The Kurdish official's statement came almost two weeks after a hard-line Sunni Arab whose list won 19 seats in Ninevah called for talks with the Kurds to pave the way for cooperation.

The Sunnis boycotted the last round of provincial elections in 2005, and U.S. officials hope their newfound political voice will help reinforce Iraq's path toward improved security and stability.

Violence in Iraq has fallen to a five-year low, but periodic attacks continue throughout the country.

An American soldier died Saturday while conducting a combat patrol near Baghdad, the U.S. military said. The death raises the number of U.S. military personnel killed in Iraq to at least 4,246 since the war began in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count.

A bomb attached to a car in Saddam Hussein's northern hometown of Tikrit killed a policeman Saturday, said a police official.

In Diwaniyah, a city south of Baghdad, gunmen killed a policeman in a drive-by shooting, said another police official.

Also Saturday, a roadside bomb in Baghdad wounded a local commander of Sunni volunteers who have been fighting al-Qaida, said a police official.

The officials all spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the press.

**Hürriyet**

February 18, 2009



## Opinion

**T**he question "Is it Northern Iraq or Kurdistan?" must have put a mark on the first day of the Abant Platform met in the northern Iraqi city of Arbil.

As a hundred Turkish, Kurdish and some more Iraqi Kurdish intellectuals looked for peace and future in the "Searching for Peace and a Future Together" meeting, this question, although, seems a semantics issue, must have in fact planted in the subconscious a relevance to the future of Turkey in the region and even an impact on it.

The two-day conference held under a heavy attention of the Turkish media, local press, even al Jazeera TV was also followed by ten thousands or hundreds of thousands in Turkey and Iraq through the live coverage of the Kurdistan TV and a Turkish TV channel. No matter how strong the emphasis of Turkish participants on "togetherness" in the future was, Kurdish attendants realized that intellectuals from Turkey stressed the "northern Iraq" word. This is how the question "Is it Northern Iraq or Kurdistan?" became the central topic in the meeting.

With the awareness of existing "mental blocks" and of internal balances in Turkey, participants from Turkey must have thought that uttering the word "Kurdistan" may trigger unnecessary sensitivities over the issue. Terming a group of people whom their existence was denied for a long time as "Kurds" and seeking a common peaceful future with "Kurds" was overall a critical and valuable step.

Slowly and gradually, it is...

However, preferring "Northern Iraq" over the word "Kurdistan" was perceived by Kurds as the continuation of the denial mentality and policy. We gathered for the "Searching for Peace and a Future Together" conference together with a hundred intellectuals from Turkey and as much that of Iraqi Kurdish. Officials of both parties approved this conference and gave their support.

Where did we meet?

In Arbil.

Where is Arbil?

For many of us, it is a city in Northern Iraq. Official discourse in Turkey has even adopted the expression "north of Iraq" instead of "Northern Iraq". So we were in Northern Iraq or in the north of Iraq.

There is nothing wrong with this geographically. But for Kurds this is the capital of the Northern Iraq Regional Administration, or NIRA. The wording "Northern Iraq Regional Administration" is already in the Iraqi Constitution. Meaning, the locale is a legal entity beyond any geographical and cultural perception.

# Is it northern Iraq or Kurdistan?

The most courageous intellectuals from Turkey can utter "Kurdish Regional Administration" but they are having a hard time to say "Kurdistan". There is no problem with "Kurds", yet pronouncing "Kurdistan" is quite difficult. It must have been extremely difficult to make a progress from "Kurd" to "Kurdistan" as the officials go back ward and move from the expression "Northern Iraq" to the "north of Iraq".

Turkish-Kurdish poet Bejan Matur put her mark on the first day of the conference in Arbil with an unforgettable speech both for hearts and minds, titled "Language, Identity, Culture: Common Values".

As she told the story of her grandfather who secretly listened to the radio together with the elderly in the village in the early 1970s, Matur said: "Some people were calling themselves Kurds in a remote country behind the mountains and were struggling for their identity. I felt that my grandfather and the elderly in the village were feeling proud of being Kurd though they didn't name themselves as one. Just like the radio stations they listened secretly, their emotions were revealing the feeling of being fugitives. For Kurds living in Turkey this is mostly the case. They were trying to live in a country where their identities were not recognized." She expressed the deep and strong ties between Kurds in Turkey and Kurds in Arbil.

This is the connection that most Turks are unaware or that doesn't make much sense in their world of perception. Still, it is an important connection which is of interest to some.

As for her first arrival to Arbil, Matur said the following:

"Like many other Kurds going to Northern Iraq to pursue the possibility of a country surrounding all of us through a spiritual bond, I was excited too. I am also excited and proud to witness how Kurds self-governing themselves in this land where the word 'Kurdistan' is being uttered freely. I am interested in the possibility of freedom rather than that of a country"

After hearing these remarks I thought that uttering the "Kurdistan" word is equal to the freedom of Kurds and that even if the "Northern Iraq" bares no such intention it is still being ignored by "Ankara politics". Matur also made a political analysis over this world of meanings:

"We all witness that Kurds in Turkey were clenched with Kurds in the South by every decision, every word to exclude Kurds in the South. Differences among Kurds were swiftly eliminated as common values were at issue. As Kurds in Turkey are extremely affected by every single word or every implication about their brothers in the South, it was impossible for Turkey to produce a policy against them and it should not be possible. Turkey is on its way to be a country of realities; being a country of a reality imposed by life. As much as Kurds in the South need Turkey for democratization, Turkey needs Kurds in the South"

The situation is good because we were looking for peace and future "together" in Arbil!

**Hürriyet**

February 21, 2009



## Opinion

**T**he Abant Platform, which holds frequent conferences at which Turkish intellectuals convene to discuss timely issues, was in northern Iraq last week. I was among the nearly one hundred names that were supposed to fly from Istanbul to Arbil for this significant meeting, but a last minute change of plans destined me rather to Washington. Yet I have been carefully reading what Abant participants have been writing about their experience in Iraqi Kurdistan a country whose very name is a big bone of contention in Turkey.

Perhaps I should first note what the Abant Platform is. It is a discussion forum launched in 1998 in order to "allow Turkish intellectuals from all walks of life to come together and talk freely." The idea and the organization belong to none other than the strongest religious community in Turkey: The Fethullah Gülen movement. In a step that some considered a public relations campaign, and others have suspected as an effort to "buy in" the intellectuals, the Gülen movement promised to create a sustainable ground for "dialogue" in a country dominated by hostile monologues. And, like it or not, they have been successful in establishing in the national scale something similar to the Bilderberg Meetings in the global scale. (But unlike Bilderberg, Abant is open to the public.)

**The country that isn't there**

Last week's Abant meeting was probably the most ambitious one, for it took place at a capital which is despised by most nationalist circles in Turkey. For the latter, the mere existence of a Kurdish political entity in Iraq is the beginning of the much-feared end: The establishment of an Independent Unified Kurdistan, which will include southeastern Turkey.

The fear is not totally groundless. World War I, which shaped the map of the current Middle East, left the Kurds as a people without a country. They were divided into four states, Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. At first they were not terribly upset by this setting, because the tides of modern nationalism, which hit other peoples of the region, had not reached them

yet. Yet as time went by, national consciousness arose among the Kurds, too, which led them to launch a series of uprisings and guerilla wars against their host states.

In return, these host states decided to crush Kurdish nationalism by force, and often ended up in inflaming it. That was the case especially in Turkey. From the 1920s on, Ankara decided to deny the very existence of Kurds, and imposed on them a strict policy of assimilation. The response of the Kurds was to launch more than 20 revolts, the last one being an almost civil war carried out by the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK.

After seven decades of forced assimilation, Turkey realized its mistake. Thus, since the 1990s on, the ban on Kurdish language and culture was gradually lifted. Today, besides marginal Turkish nationalists, most people in Turkey do not fear the word "Kurd," as they used to do it in the past. But another term is still anathema and almost unutterable: Kurdistan, i.e., the land of the Kurds.

In the Abant Platform, this term has apparently created a controversy. Most visitors from Turkey preferred to call the country that they had stepped in as "Northern Iraq," whereas the hosts insisted that its name was "Kurdistan."

The gap of terminology might have been bridged there ? most of the Abant participants are Turkish liberals, after all, not nationalists ? but this incident shows how big the gap is between the minds of the two countries, and how hard is it to stand in the middle. No wonder Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the Nationalist Action Party, or MHP, lambasted Abant organizers as those "who lost their identities."

In order to build reconciliation, both sides would need to take steps. Iraqi Kurds need to convince Turkey that their homegrown "Kurdistan" is not a step for the greater goal of building the Independent Unified Kurdistan. The political fate of Iraqi Kurds (whether it be based on an autonomy or independence) cannot be mimicked in Turkey, whose biggest Kurdish city is not Diyarbakır or Batman, but Istanbul. For Turkey's Kurds, the solution is the affirmation of full civil liberties in the current borders, not the creation of new borders.

#### Remember the Ottomans

The steps Turkey needs to take are, first, to realize that Iraqi Kurdistan is a reality that cannot be denied. Disallowing its name and official status doesn't help us Turks in any way. We have spent seven decades asserting, "Kurds don't exist." Now

we should not lose more time by asserting, "Kurdistan doesn't exist."

The second step to take is simply to remember our Ottoman past. In the Ottoman Empire, the region was commonly called "Kurdistan," and nobody had a problem with that. In fact, the empire established an official province of Kurdistan between the years 1847 and 1864, whose capital was transferred several times, first from Ahlat to Van, then to Mus and finally to Diyarbakır. (The name of the latter city was changed into "Diyarbakır" during the republican times.) The term "Kurdistan" continued to be used freely by the Ottomans, who were, unlike their modern Turkish successors, not fearful about the ethnic and religious diversity of their country.

In fact this whole Kurdish question hints to us Turks that the ultra-nationalist (and ultra-secularist, for that matter) excesses of our much-praised Republican Revolution needs to be left aside. Whether we will be able to face that is the national million-dollar question.



February 21, 2009

## Opposition fumes at use of TRT6 for politics

by Göksele Bozkurt

**ANKARA** - An AKP rally scheduled for Saturday in Diyarbakır will be aired live by the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation, or TRT, with simultaneous Kurdish translation on its Kurdish channel TRT6.

Opposition parties have called foul against the ruling government for bad politics, after it was announced that an upcoming rally would feature the first-ever prime minister speech to be broadcast live in Kurdish.

A Justice and Development Party, or AKP, rally scheduled for Saturday in Diyarbakır will be aired live by the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation, or TRT, with a simultaneous Kurdish translation on its Kurdish channel 6. The move has drawn adverse reaction from opposition parties, which claim the government is merely playing up to voters before the local elections set for March.

"Using any language other than Turkish is banned at the time of political propaganda under the laws. The prime minister seems to have allowed Kurdish broadcasts for his own propaganda," said Oktay Vural of the Nationalist Movement Party, or MHP.

He condemned "the government's attempt to use TRT 6 broadcasting in Kurdish to make politics by scratching ethnic identities."

Hasip Kaplan, deputy of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party, or DTP, said the TRT broadcast of the prime minister's Diyarbakır rally amounted to discrimination.

"Why isn't TRT 6 broadcasting the rallies of the DTP, the strongest party in the Southeast?" he said. "Is TRT 6 owned by the prime minister's father? TRT 6 was founded with our taxes."

Kaplan said while the DTP was accused of speaking in Kurdish, TRT 6 was going to broadcast the prime minister's address in Kurdish. "Isn't that a contradiction? Aren't we participating in the elections? Aren't we citizens

of this country? This is a dirty election campaign." Republican People's Party, or CHP, deputy Muharrem ?nce also criticized TRT 6 and said it was taking a wrong approach.

A member of the Supreme Board of Radio and Television, or RTÜK, said TRT was unfortunately losing its feature as a public institution by actively taking part on the one side of the political polarization in Turkey. ?aban Sevinç recalled TRT's previous "unacceptable" broadcasts targeting the main opposition party, CHP, the military and the members of the Constitutional Court.

"As a follow-up to this one-sided broadcasting policy, TRT is now unfairly broadcasting election rallies of one political party, while it is not airing broadcasts of other parties' rallies," he said, adding that the latest move was openly against the impartiality principle in elections set out by the Supreme Election Board, or YSK.

"As RTÜK, we cannot supervise TRT broadcasts but I believe for fairness in the elections, YSK must immediately interfere in TRT broadcasts," he said.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is expected to address locals in Diyarbakır at the rally. Erdoğan last traveled to Diyarbakır on Oct. 20, 2008, when he also visited nearby cities. That trip to southeastern Anatolia faced severe criticism from the Democratic Society Party, or DTP, and street protests took place where protesters and police exchanged stones for gas bombs. Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality is considered one of the bastions of the DTP and the AKP is seeking to conquer it in the upcoming local elections on March 29. Erdoğan is visiting Diyarbakır amid this climate with backing from the state Kurdish-language channel TRT6.

TRT's live broadcast of a political rally, as well as translating it into Kurdish, is a first for state television and it is reported that their greatest worry is "a technical mishap." Sources from TRT pointed to the risks posed by simultaneous interpretation and said precautions were being taken to avoid any possible problems.



## Iraq's elections: winners, losers, and what's next

Joost R Hiltermann

The lessons of a peaceful Iraqi election are more complex than early readings suggest. The reverberations will be felt in Kurdish and Shi'a politics in particular, says Joost R Hiltermann.

The Iraqi local elections were held on 31 January 2009, with 440 seats being contested in fourteen of the country's eighteen provinces. The results, most of which were released on 5 February, offer important evidence into current political trends.

The outcome has two especially striking aspects. First, the trouncing of the principal ruling parties - the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), both in Baghdad and in southern governorates, and the Kurdish alliance in Ninewa (Mosul). Second, the utter fragmentation of the political landscape.

ISCI has been damaged by four years of mismanagement, corruption and intimidation in the areas it has controlled; the public is fed up with violence, crime, corruption and the absence of basic services. The party, once paramount throughout the south, has seen its support shrink to a humbling (even humiliating) 10%. In Ninewa, the Kurdish parties, which benefited from a Sunni Arab boycott in December 2005, saw their oversized role dwindle to a representation more accurately reflective of local demographic and political realities (from 75% to 25%), while they managed to hold on to a steady 17% share in Diyala.

What may save ISCI and the Kurds is the scattering of the rest of the vote across an array of opponents. The prime minister Nouri al-Maliki's "State of Law" coalition in southern Iraq is foremost among them. Al-Maliki used all the institutional levers at his disposal to bring home the vote; moreover, he saw his nationalist rhetoric over the past year resonate with a wide spectrum of the electorate.

Yet these advantages did not translate into an overwhelming triumph. Al-Maliki averaged 20% of the vote in the nine southern governorates plus Baghdad, twice ISCI's take and a vast improvement over his feeble performance four years ago, but hardly sufficient to govern; he even lost (to Yousef Majid al-Habboubi) in Karbala, the only governorate his Da'wa party carried in 2005. The remainder of the vote went to an amalgam of small parties and individual lists, including followers of Muqtada al-Sadr, who should never be counted out, as well as a party headed by Ibrahim al-Ja'fari, Maliki's predecessor as party leader and prime minister.

The situation is hardly different in governorates whose population is predominantly Sunni Arab: palettes of nationalist, Islamist and tribally-based groups in Anbar and Salah al-Din (Tikrit), and the same in Diyala and Ninewa, where Kurds add to the range of colour. In none is there a clear winner.

Much will depend therefore on the shape of post-electoral governing alliances. Two predictions: all will seek to unite against ISCI,

and those who can spend the most and promise the best positions will bring in most of the seats won by small and individual lists.

This suggests that ISCI may yet prevail in several southern governorates (Najaf, Muthanna, Maysan and Wasit in particular) by buying up seats; but the more likely scenario is diverse, somewhat unhappy anti-ISCI alliances of al-Maliki, Ja'fari, the Sadrists, Fadhila and others, with al-Maliki's State of Law list claiming the right to appoint the most senior officials from among the governor, council head, police chief and their principal aides. In Ninewa, the question will be whether Arab solidarity will marginalise the Kurds or whether the latter will outmanoeuvre Arab nationalists by forging links with the Iraqi Islamic Party, an Arab Islamist group with which it has been an uneasy partner.

### A year of tension

What does it all mean? Much early post-election commentary widely interpreted the vote as a defeat of religious parties and of Iran; and as a victory for secularism, moderation - and the United States (which pushed for these elections and needed a peaceful poll as evidence of Iraq's upward trajectory as it prepares to pull out).

The reality is a good deal more complex. If these elections are a positive step in Iraq's tortured quest to reinvent itself, it may be because both the United States and Iran gained. Tehran wants a friendly regime in Baghdad running a state that is sufficiently strong to hold the country together, but not so powerful that it could again invade its neighbour. It may have established, funded, equipped and trained ISCI - but it has supported a number of Iraqi groups since 2003, sometimes playing one against another, before mediating a new accommodation between them.

On balance, victory has gone to parties that oppose the notion of regionalisation advocated by ISCI and the Kurds, led by a Shi'a prime minister who has openly called for a stronger central state. This reinforces rather than undermines the Iranian agenda.

Overall, the elections constitute a setback for ethno-sectarian identity politics. Nouri al-Maliki emerges strengthened as he aspires to extend his tenure. After his success in playing the nationalist card, more of the same can be expected. This will further raise tensions with the Kurds, who take a dim view of a resurgent central state that is beginning to make military inroads in the territories they claim, especially Kirkuk.

Moreover, ISCI will seek by any means at its disposal to prevent an even more crushing defeat in the parliamentary elections scheduled for December 2009. The temperature of intra-Shi'a politics is bound to rise in coming months.

*Joost R Hiltermann is deputy middle-east programme director of the International Crisis Group, based in Istanbul. He is the author of A Poisonous Affair: America, Iraq, and the Gassing of Halabja (Cambridge University Press, 2007)*



February 23, 2009

## Blast near the Kurdistan Democratic Party headquarters in Mosul

**MOSUL, Northwest Iraq.**— A sticky improvised explosive device attached to a civilian vehicle went off near the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) local committee headquarters in Mosul city on Monday, a committee source said.

"The IED went off about 50 meters away from the KDP local committee headquarters in al-Faisaliya neighborhood, eastern Mosul, but left no casualties," the source told Aswat al-Iraq.

"The explosion caused damage to nearby stores," the source added.

The KDP is headed by Massoud Barzani, www.ekurd.net the president of autonomous Kurdistan region in Iraq's north.

With a mixed population of Sunni Arabs and ethnic Kurds, Mosul has long been a flashpoint of violence. Nineveh province, is said to be one of the last strongholds of al-Qaida fighters in the war-torn country.

Mosul, capital city of Ninewa province in Iraq, near the border with Kurdistan region, lies 405 km north of Baghdad. The Yazidis are primarily ethnic Kurds located near Mosul. Some 350,000 Kurdish Yazidis live in villages around

Mosul near Kurdistan autonomous region border.

Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution states that there will be a referendum in the areas bordering the Kurdistan autonomous region, www.ekurd.net including the northern oil city of Kirkuk, so that people can choose whether to be ruled by the central government or the Kurds.

History of attacks on Kurdistan democratic party (KDP) 2007-2009 by Islamic terrorist groups:

**February 23, 2009**, in Mosul, Blast near the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) headquarters.

**January 27, 2009**, in Mosul, a suicide car bomb attack kills four near Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) office.

**April 14, 2008**, in Mosul, 12 Kurdish Peshmerga guards were killed in a car bomb strike.

**March, 16, 2008**, is Mosul a bomb attack targets Kurdish KDP party office.

**November 7, 2007** at least 17 people were injured Wednesday by a suicide bomber who targeted the headquarters of a Kurdish KDP political party in Kirkuk city.

**October 10, 2007** in Mosul a suicide bombing targeted a Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) office, left two dead and 16 wounded.

May 13, 2007 a car bomb targets Kurdish party in Makhmour city kills 50 people and wounded 115 in Kurdistan region

April 23, 2007 a car bomb near the offices of a Kurdish political party in a mainly Christian village of northern Iraq killed at least 10 people and wounded

20.

January 1, 2007 a suicide car bomber killed at least five people and wounded 28 more in an attack on an office of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in the northern city of Mosul.



The Jamestown Foundation

February 25, 2009

By: Ramzy Mardini

## Rising Arab-Kurdish Tensions over Kirkuk Will Complicate U.S. Withdrawal from Iraq

Kurdish suspicions of Iraq's central government have reignited after a January 22 decision by Baghdad to deploy the army's 12th Division north towards the disputed oil-rich city of Kirkuk. This development, coupled with U.S. military plans to gradually disengage from Iraq, led Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani to declare that U.S. President Barack Obama "has said more than once that they will withdraw in a responsible manner from Iraq...What we understand by a responsible withdrawal is that the United States resolves the problems outstanding in Iraq [before leaving]" (AFP, February 18). As the U.S. military relinquishes its security role to the Iraq Army, unresolved political issues are likely to exacerbate tensions between Iraq's central government and the KRG, complicating American plans to withdraw and leave behind a stable and secured country.

Since 2003, four independently motivated forms of violence have defined Iraq's security environment: the anti-Coalition insurgency, terrorism, sectarianism, and Shiite-on-Shiite violence. As of 2009, the threat posed by these four fronts has been dramatically alleviated due to the formation of the Sunni Awakening councils, Muqtada al-Sadr's self-imposed militia ceasefire, and the U.S. adoption of a counterinsurgency strategy of clearing and holding territory. Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki has taken advantage of the improved security regime to consolidate and centralize his power. However, Maliki's efforts have hastened a new form of instability many have characterized as inevitable, an instability that has emerged at the intersection of differing strategic interests held by Iraq's two formal governmental institutions: the KRG and the national government in Baghdad.

There are five political issues that characterize the KRG-Baghdad rift:

- Kurdish foreign oil contracts
- Redistribution of oil revenues
- The role and size of the Kurdish peshmerga (militia) forces
- The growing debate over centralization and federalism
- Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution dealing with disputed territories

Last November, five committees consisting of members from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), Prime Minister Maliki's Dawa Party, and the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) were formed to tackle most of these unresolved

issues. Though progress seems somewhat fruitful when dealing with differences on the gas and oil laws, progress on Article 140 seems to be gaining no traction.

Article 140 is the most contentious issue behind the rising tensions. The article refers to a constitutional provision that sets forth a framework-normalization, census, and referendum -for dealing with territories disputed between the KRG and national government. Its implementation deadline of December 2007 was not met by Maliki, which has frustrated the Kurds. During the former Ba'athist regime, the government executed an "Arabization" campaign in Kurdish territories, expelling Kurdish families from their homes while providing financial incentives for Arab families to replace them. Today, Article 140 represents a symbolic justice to many Kurds who call for a reversal of the Arabization campaign.

Though Article 140 represents 30 to 40 territories in dispute in Iraq, most emphasis is placed on the city of Kirkuk. With an ethnically mixed population of Kurds, Turks, Arabs, and Christians, the Kirkuk region holds 13 percent of Iraq's known oil reserves (Middle East Times, February 18). Turkey, Iran, Syria, and many in Iraq believe that Kurdish acquisition of Kirkuk will sustain the economic base for a future declaration of statehood, and fear that it may provoke their oppressed Kurdish populations to secede as well.

During a November 20 press conference, Maliki claimed that the Iraqi constitution was put together too hastily and supported amending the governmental provision for federalism. Maliki openly called for greater centralization and for more powers to be allocated to Baghdad. The KRG immediately condemned this idea, warning that the Prime Minister planned to suspend the constitution. Maliki's remarks led the Director of Kurdish Intelligence, Masrour Barzani, to make an early January visit to the U.S. Department of Defense. Barzani told his American hosts that the Kurds planned to fight any changes to the country's constitution, pointing to the implementation of Article 140 as a critical solution to Iraq's political problems (Kurdish Globe, January 9). Today, many Kurds fear that Maliki will use his upgraded political clout to call for a stronger central government, which Kurds fear would undermine Kurdish regional autonomy and any hopes of Article 140's implementation.

Regarding the Iraq Army's January military deployment around Kirkuk, peshmerga leader Mustafa Chawrash said, "The movement of the division is not normal and it is a planned agenda" (UPI, January 22). The army intends to create "a military belt" encircling the city, constraining contact with the Kurdistan provinces of Sulaymaniyah



General Abdul-Ameer Ridha, Commander of Iraq's 12th Army Division, at a ceremony with U.S. soldiers in January 2009 (Photo: Official website of the Multi-National Force Iraq, mnf-iraq.com)

and Erbil and reducing the presence of Kurdish forces in Kirkuk (Kurdish Globe, January 22). According to Chawrash, the commander of the Iraqi 12th Division is General Abdul-Ameer Ridha, an ex-Ba'athist who led the same division against the Kurds during the Saddam Hussein regime. The U.S. military imprisoned him for four months before he returned to his post. The division consists of about 9,000 soldiers - 70 percent Arab, 20 percent Kurdish, and 10 percent Turkmen. The Kurdish press claims some Kurdish officers from the 12th Division, like the 9th Brigade and 2nd Battalion commanders, were transferred from Kirkuk to Tikrit city and replaced by Arab and Turkmen officers (Kurdish Globe, January 22).

Last December, then-President George W. Bush signed a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with Iraq, creating a legal framework for a continued U.S. presence in Iraq. In effect since January 1, the SOFA requires U.S. forces to pull out of Iraqi cities by July 2009, with complete withdrawal from the country by the end of 2011. Many Kurds are uneasy about the prospects of the American safety-net disappearing. This fear is in large part inspired by Maliki's use of the Iraq Army for political ends. Last summer, under the pretext of Operation Bashaer al-Kheir-a military campaign directed towards militias and terrorists in Diyala province-Maliki ordered the Iraqi Army to invade Khanaqin (See Terrorism Focus, September 18, 2008). An oil-rich city, Khanaqin is a disputed territory under Article 140. Many Kurds found this military decision provocative and dangerous since Kurdish peshmerga soldiers had occupied the area since 2005.

Dangerous rhetoric has also accompanied the expected American withdrawal and

Maliki's use of the military (Azzaman [Baghdad], December 2, 2008). Kurdistan PM Nechirvan Barzani recently suggested the possibility of an Arab-Kurdish civil war if Article 140 was not implemented (Middle East Times, February 18). Kamal Kirkuki, the KRG Deputy Speaker, went so far as to call al-Maliki "a danger to Iraq and to democracy; he is a second Saddam" (Al-Sharq al-Awsat, February 19). The growing Arab-Kurdish divide is also intensifying on the basis of a classical security dilemma: as a power vacuum develops in accordance with

U.S. disengagement, both sides will unilaterally attempt to fill power gaps because neither side can afford to trust that the other's future behavior will be benign. As a senior Kurdish official put it while speaking on condition of anonymity, "Kurds have made a judgment that he [Maliki] cannot be trusted and that's the worst part of this-it's not about the technicalities of oil law and this and that-this issue of trust was shattered" (CSM, December 11, 2008).

While the Obama administration seeks to disengage from Iraq, the transition of power

is likely to increase tensions between Baghdad and the KRG as factions compete to out-leverage one another. Maliki's consolidation of power and provincial electoral gains have lessened his dependence on the PUK, KDP, and ISCI-the three factions that once saved his government from collapsing in August 2007. This may provoke a realignment of power amongst Iraq's domestic players. The surprising performance of former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi in the January provincial elections will provide an adequate challenge to Maliki in national elec-

**Newsweek** February 28, 2009

## The Forbidden Tongue

Turkey's leader is in a tough spot after a Kurdish politician dares to speak his native language.

Owen Matthews / NEWSWEEK

For years, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has positioned himself as a champion of the ethnic Kurds who make up one fifth of Turkey's population. He's spoken Kurdish at election rallies and on television, eased restrictions on the use of the language in public and, with more than a little encouragement from the European Union, pushed through laws that allow education and broadcasting in Kurdish. But last week Erdogan found himself on the spot when an ethnic Kurdish parliamentarian, Ahmet Türk, addressed Parliament in his native language. "Kurds have long been oppressed because they did not know any other language," he said as he switched from Turkish to Kurdish. "I promised myself that I would speak in my mother tongue at an official meeting one day."

State TV immediately stopped broadcasting the speech. Turkey's hard-line nationalists, who accuse Türk and his Kurdish-based party, the DTP, of abetting terrorists, rose in uproar. "The seeds of separatism, which were hailed by Erdogan in Kurdish on state television, have started to grow," said Devlet Bahçeli, head of the Nationalist Action Party. "The prime minister's new Kurdish initiative has immediately found its ground in the separatist groups."

Now Erdogan faces an impossible decision. Local elections are approaching, and Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) badly needs Kurdish votes if it is to win. But if Erdogan backs the scrapping of all restrictions on the Kurdish language to please Kurdish voters and Europe, he risks alienating mainstream AKP voters—many of whom strongly oppose Kurdish separatism. Equally important, the AKP is just recovering from a yearlong constitutional wrangle with Turkey's ultrasecularist judiciary,

which tried to close down the party and ban its leaders from politics for overturning a prohibition against wearing Islamic headscarves in universities. Though the AKP eventually won the dispute, the party emerged chastened, and reluctant to provoke the establishment into further showdowns. Many Turks, and especially the politically powerful military, believe even limited Kurdish rights threaten Turkey's unity and the vision of modern Turkey's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who insisted that every citizen of Turkey be a Turk.

Erdogan can't afford a showdown with the Kurds either. Aside from his need for their votes, Ankara's relations with the Kurds of northern Iraq are just beginning to normalize after years of tension and a Turkish military incursion last year. In February officials from Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan began working together in the northern Iraqi city of Erbil to coordinate efforts and share intelligence in the fight against the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which last year mounted a series of bloody raids on Turkish troops from camps inside Iraq. Turkey's largely Kurdish southeast is still volatile, too, after a series of riots last year in protest of various grievances including language rights and frustration at the slow rate of return of the estimated 1 million Kurds forced out of their villages by the Turkish Army's anti-insurgency campaign against the PKK in the 1980s and 1990s.

Small wonder that Erdogan often seems to be trying to be all things to all people. Last November he raised nationalist cheers at a rally in Ankara by saying, "We have one nation, one flag, one motherland, and one state ... Those who oppose this should leave." Meantime, he recorded a welcome message last month in Kurdish to mark the opening of a 24-hour Kurdish-language channel on the state-owned TRT 6 network. Several AKP parliamentarians followed his lead,

appearing on the new channel speaking and even singing in Kurdish. Last week Erdogan promised an ecstatic crowd in Diyarbakir, the unofficial capital of Turkish Kurdistan, that he planned to invite back to Turkey Sivan Perwer, a legendary Kurdish folk singer living in exile since 1976.

Erdogan has little choice but to come up with a hedge yet again. But the scandal over speaking Kurdish in Parliament shows just how far Turkey has come. In 1994 Kurdish parliamentarian Leyla Zana was jailed for treason for taking her oath of office in Kurdish and spent a decade in prison. Türk, the legislator who provoked the latest controversy, faces no punishment. And Erdogan's support for the singer Perwer's return is also revolutionary—in 1999 a television producer was sentenced to five years in prison for playing "Mihemedo," Perwer's most famous song, on a local TV station. Now "Mihemedo," a ballad about a Kurdish soldier in the Ottoman Army, is TRT 6's theme tune. Erdogan may be an inconsistent and reluctant champion of Kurdish rights—but he's done more for Turkey's Kurdish minority than years of armed insurgency.

# Turkish leader delivers message of inclusion to Kurds

By Sabrina Tavernise

**DIYARBAKIR, Turkey:** Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan took his message of inclusion into Turkey's Kurdish heartland, telling the city that was once the center of Kurdish resistance that its people were "first-class citizens."

Erdogan said Saturday that Turkey's Kurds — at least a fifth of this country's population and long repressed by the Turkish state — had equal rights with other citizens and that his party would continue to fight for those rights. The speech was part of a campaign tour before nationwide municipal elections March 29.

For years, Turkey's mostly Kurdish southeast was ignored by mainstream political parties, in part because the Turkish authorities were fighting an all-out war against a Kurdish separatist group, the Kurdistan Workers Party, known as the PKK. But Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party have campaigned aggressively before to win the Kurdish vote, a strategy that paid off in elections in 2007, which they largely swept in Turkey's southeast.

Still, Erdogan's party has not yet managed to conquer Diyarbakir, the

largest and most important city in the region.

The issue of Kurds here is delicate, and Erdogan, who in the past shocked nationalist Turks by publicly acknowledging that Turkey had not always treated its Kurdish population fairly, knows that better than anyone. In his hour-and-19-minute speech, he spoke carefully, deftly avoiding giving precise names to the problems of inequality he was describing.

"We are trying to share the resources of the country equally among the people," he said, standing on a stage in the center of Diyarbakir with the scarf of a local sports team around his neck, as the crowd cheered in the rain.

Although the PKK was once a popular movement for advancing Kurdish rights, it has since lost much of its support. A Kurdish political party, renamed the Democratic Society Party after surviving being shut down several times, has traditionally dominated politics here.

Erdogan's party has emerged as the principal competitor to the Kurdish party, and Erdogan is using the full weight of his resources to win votes. It was a point of pride in his speech on



Saturday that 65,000 families in the region were getting free coal.

"Our wish from politics is to serve people, to win their hearts," he said.

Changes have been slow, but officials in Erdogan's party point to successes, including one in which a long-awaited Kurdish television broadcast station has finally gone on the air. But major gaps still remain. Turkish law, for instance, forbids giving speeches in languages other than Turkish for election campaigns.

"This I believe is not very logical," said Dengir Mir Mehmet Firat, a Justice and Development Party official who was part of the delegation to Diyarbakir.

In his speech, Erdogan used words that placed Turkey in an important place on the world stage, and he said Diyarbakir's Kurdish citizens were part of that.

"The climate of warmth and brotherhood that spreads out of Turkey breezes through friendly hearts from northern Iraq to the Balkans and Gaza," he said.

## Central Florida Future

February 25, 2009

# 'The other Iraq'

## Lt. Gen. Jay Garner speaks about Kurdistan

Kelsey Hinton

The gratitude experienced in Kurdistan surpasses that of other countries, a former Army lieutenant general said Tuesday.

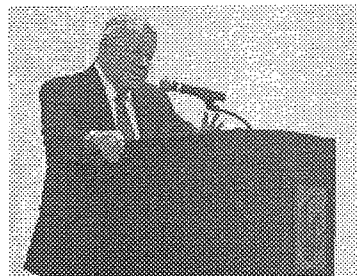
Jay Garner, the former director of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance for Post-War Iraq, spoke to a crowd of more than 300 about the region of Kurdistan and its view of the U.S.

"You'll never go anywhere in this world where you'll feel more love than in Kurdistan," Garner said, noting the gratitude the Kurds have shown the U.S. since its assistance in removing Saddam Hussein from the region during the Gulf War.

Garner has visited Kurdistan, a multi-national region mostly concentrated in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, eight times in the last year and a half. He spoke about the changing economic, political and social dynamics in the region.

He said not a single U.S. soldier has been killed in the region since 1991, proof of Kurdistan's "98 percent pro-American" support. The Kurdish forces fought alongside Americans in the 2003 Iraq invasion and suffered more casualties than anyone, Garner said.

He called Kurdistan "the other Iraq," because it is far more progressive than its southeastern neighbor. Kurds largely support states' rights



over Baghdad's centralized government, and the region conducted free elections in 1992 — 12 years before Iraq did so.

Kurdistan is also ahead economically, educationally and socially, Garner said.

"Everywhere you look in Kurdistan, something new is being built," he said. He said the region has become a gateway for international business thanks to incentives provisioned under a 2006 Kurdish National Assembly investment law.

"It's amazing the amount of growth that is going on," Garner said. New schools, police academies, housing and hospitals are cropping up everywhere, especially in larger cities, he said, and with seven universities, illiteracy is almost nonexistent.

With 25 percent of its Congress seats held by women, the Kurds have embraced ethnic minori-

ties and women in equal measure under a bipartisan government that reflects the demographics of the region.

"Our Congress could learn a hell of a lot from the Kurds," Garner said.

There are problems, though, Garner said. Kurdistan is "dangerously close" to a war over disputed Iraqi territory, and political tensions with Turkey continue to result in violence. There is also a struggle for Kurdish autonomy and animosity over the role of Iraq in Kurdish affairs, particularly regarding the control of Kurdistan's oil reserves.

As unofficial allies with Kurdistan already, Garner said the U.S. should capitalize on the opportunity to officially ally with the region, which is oil-rich and has a strategically important geographic location.

The lecture was part of The Kurdish Political Studies Initiative hosted by the UCF Global Perspectives Office and had more than 300 Learning Institute for the Elderly members in attendance. LIFE generally hosts a spring and fall series in conjunction with Global Perspectives, LIFE board member Doug Garner said.

LIFE is an educational program for retirement-age Central Floridians that meets each Tuesday on campus for presentations. The group of 473 members operates on the UCF academic calendar.

Mark Freeman, public affairs coordinator for Global Perspectives, said Lt. Gen. Garner has special relationship with many Kurds, many of whom see him as a hero.

# World financial crisis could thwart Iraq's effort to rebuild

By Campbell Robertson and James Glanz

**BAGHDAD:** In few countries around the globe are the consequences of the financial crisis as potentially sobering as they are in Iraq. Both oil revenues and American financial support have plummeted just as the country has the chance to take advantage of its increasing stability to improve basic services and upgrade its ruined infrastructure.

Now, projects are being put off as Iraq struggles to pay for huge raises granted to government employees as well as the salaries and equipment for hundreds of thousands of new security forces. And political pressure is rising as Iraqis are more loudly demanding precisely the services, including electricity and water projects, that probably will be delayed.

Last summer, with oil prices above \$100 a barrel, Iraq was so flush with cash that many in the United States were arguing that a country so rich should be paying for its own reconstruction and possibly even reimbursing U.S. taxpayers. Six months later, the question is whether falling government revenues, which depend almost entirely on oil, could threaten the relative security and stability won at the cost of so much American money and life.

A stable Iraqi economy and an adequately prepared military are crucial if American combat troops are to withdraw by August 2010, as aides to President Barack Obama suggested this week. And illustrating just how closely

the countries are still intertwined, a faltering Iraq could also complicate Obama's plan to lower the American deficit through billions in savings that would come from such a withdrawal.

As the Iraqi Parliament debates a proposed \$62.8 billion budget this week, senior U.S. and Iraqi officials say that Baghdad can prevent an immediate crisis by drawing on the very source that attracted such intense criticism in the United States: the billions of dollars in oil revenues that Iraq was unable to spend on its reconstruction projects.

That money, which the Iraqi central bank and senior U.S. officials say comes to roughly \$35 billion, is sitting in various accounts, including one at the Federal Reserve Bank in New York.

But to make up the difference, Iraq is planning to withdraw around \$20 billion in a single year. Even with such an extreme measure, Iraqi officials are concerned that they will be forced to delay or cancel promised reconstruction projects; they have already put aside some investment plans that would have been possible in earlier, more optimistic drafts of the 2009 budget.

Lawmakers debating the budget know, having seen the issues at the forefront of the recent provincial elections, that the political pressure is intense to improve services for the Iraqi population.

Electricity is still far short of meeting demand, and the government is still struggling to provide clean water. Unemployment is hovering near 20 percent. Iraqi officials insist that Iraq could have

alternative revenue sources to oil, like agriculture and industry, but developing them requires investment spending. Oil production has dropped in certain fields, requiring a major injection of government money. In the past, money for these projects has been allocated but not spent. Now it is drying up altogether.

"It's a mathematical issue," Raed Fehemi, the minister of science and technology, said at a conference Wednesday dedicated to finding alternative revenue sources to oil. "We are staying up all night trying to ensure that there are required funds for projects currently underway. The issue comes with the future projects."

The reason capital projects are being put off is that those dollars were intended to be spent as part of the capital budget, not to meet shortfalls in Iraq's day-to-day operating costs, which now take up four-fifths of the proposed 2009 budget. Unless oil revenues jump or Iraq finds new sources of revenue, its stash at the Fed will last only so long.

In many ways, the financial crisis, with the resulting drop in oil prices, could not have come at a worse time for Iraq. The government gave its employees a series of substantial raises last year, and wages now take up around 35 percent of the budget. And in a critical move as the United States takes less and less responsibility for security, the number of soldiers, police officers and other government security personnel has soared from about 250,000 two years ago, when oil prices were on the rise, to 609,000 according to the latest Pentagon figures.

"There are some critical expenditures, like paying the military and the police and making sure that's being done very, very well," said Rick Barton, co-director of the post-conflict reconstruction project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "You can't afford any slippage at this time."

Still, a senior Obama administration official said that the United States was confident that the cumulative oil surpluses banked by Iraq would allow it to weather the immediate storm. The official said that it was a positive sign that Baghdad was adjusting its budgetary aims in light of the drop in oil prices, and declined to criticize either the

American or Iraqi governments for the comparatively grandiose plans they made when revenues skyrocketed.

"Should this have been foreseen? Tough to say," the official said. "I don't know exactly what promises they made. Everybody was caught short with the fall in oil prices."

The root of the financial crisis in Iraq is much simpler than it is in many places in the world. In Iraq, there is not much of a credit market to dry up nor are there mortgages to default on. There is mostly just oil, which accounts for an estimated 86 percent of Iraq's government revenue. When oil prices drop, as they have to around \$40 a barrel from a high last summer of nearly \$150, there are few other options.

Finance and oil ministry officials in Iraq maintain that oil prices will rise

again by the end of the year. After years of conservative budgeting, the proposed 2009 budget is based on an optimistic projection that oil will be selling at \$50 a barrel, and that Iraq will be exporting 2 million barrels a day, about 100,000 barrels more than Iraq exported per day in January. Critics of the budget say the projection is unrealistically rosy and that the deficit will be even larger than the one planned. Proponents of the proposed budget are also banking on hopes that the rest of the world will quickly repair itself, expressing a confidence in

## 'Everybody was caught short with the fall in oil prices.'

U.S. and European economic solutions that is not widespread in either the United States or Europe.

"In the next half of the year there will be signs of a positive direction based on the bailouts and stimulus plans that the Western governments are now working on," said Falah al-Ameri, the head of state oil export company.

The timing is particularly bad for the new leaders who emerged from provincial council elections in January. After a campaign during which they railed against the incumbents for failing to deliver services and improvements, the new winners have to make good on their

promises with much less federal money.

"Reasonable people will understand but the common people will not accept it," said Baqir al-Shaalan, a moderate who won in the southern Iraqi province of Diwaniya, and who promised, and now doubts the feasibility of, a refur-



bished irrigation system, new housing and government jobs for the unemployed youth. "They will tell us, 'You've been justifying the lack of services with the security situation. Now the security situation has improved.'"

Then again, the provincial councils have such a dismal record of spending the money they have been allocated that, U.S. Embassy officials say, they could actually spend more money this year even

if their budgets are far more austere.

There is a bright side, some argue. The crisis could finally force the Iraqi government to get serious about building up its agriculture and industrial sectors, taking the necessary political steps to create a thriving private sector, developing an effective tax system and dedicating more effort to improvements in oil production. Some Iraqi officials have been pushing for these moves

for years, but say they were ignored when the oil revenues were pouring in.

"If the Iraqi government knew about the big depression it would have done a lot of things differently," Haruty said. "Same as the American government, I think."

Riyadh Mohammed contributed reporting.

INTERNATIONAL  
Herald Tribune February 25, 2009

## Breaking a Turkish taboo and a law

### Lawmaker delivers speech in Parliament in native Kurdish

By Sabrina Tavernise

**ISTANBUL:** A prominent lawmaker gave a speech in his native Kurdish language in the Turkish Parliament in Ankara on Tuesday, breaking taboos and also the law in a country that has long repressed its Kurdish minority for fear it would try to secede.

Turkey's state television cut off the live broadcast of the official, Ahmet Turk, as he spoke to members of his political party, the Democratic Society Party, or DTP.

As a lawmaker, Turk has diplomatic immunity, but he still took a risk by speaking Kurdish publicly. At least three court cases are pending against him, and his political party is under threat of closure after prosecutors opened a case against it last year, accusing it of separatism.

It was the second time in recent history that a speech was delivered in Kurdish in the Turkish Parliament. In 1991, Leyla Zana spoke her native language when she was sworn in as a deputy. She also had immunity, but that was later stripped and she served 10 years in prison on other Kurdish-related charges.

Turkey has a troubled past with its Kurds, who make up at least a fifth of its population. The Turkish military fought a war with a Kurdish militant group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, in the predominantly Kurdish southeast in the 1980s and '90s. The area was subsequently governed by martial law, and speaking Kurdish was prohibited.

The violence has decreased dramatically, and Kurdish no longer is banned as a language, but its public use at rallies, on fliers, or in ads is still illegal. Kurdish officials like Turk have been trying to push the boundaries of those rules.

"Being multilingual is a richness," Turk said in Turkish before Parliament, before he switched to Kurdish. "Protecting this richness, keeping it alive, is a requirement of this era."

He said he wanted to speak his native language in honor of a United Nations holiday celebrating world languages, and because "meaningless oppression and prohibitions on Kurdish persist."

Nationalists were horrified by Turk's

use of Kurdish, and said that languages other than Turkish threatened the unity of the country.

"The most important quality of a society that makes it a nation is language," said Cihan Pacaci, general secretary of the National Action Party, according to the state-run Anatolian News Agency. "If you destroy the language unity, you meant to have destroyed the unity and togetherness of the nation itself."

Though the speech was presented as a rights struggle by Turk — who has been in Parliament for a year and a half but had never spoken Kurdish there — some here saw it as an attempt by the Kurdish party to win votes in the south-east.

Turkey will hold nationwide municipal elections March 29, and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party have competed aggressively with Turk's party for the Kurdish vote.

"This looks like a move for the local

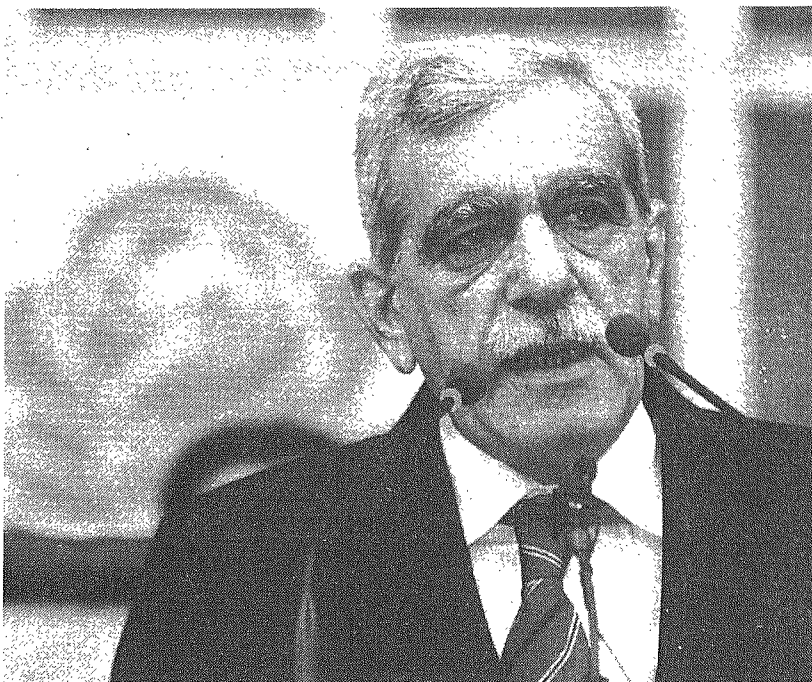
election," said Rusen Cakir, a political analyst speaking on NTV, a private television network.

Cakir said that the Kurdish party seemed threatened by the government's efforts to increase language freedoms.

On a recent trip to the region, Erdogan spoke some words in Kurdish, promoting the fact that his administration had allowed Kurdish programming on Turkish TV, a point not missed by Turk, who asked why he should be banned, if Erdogan was not.

Mithat Sancar, a law professor at Ankara University, defended Turk, arguing that Erdogan had also been using the Kurdish issue to profit politically.

Raising culture issues is "a perfectly legitimate way to contribute to an election campaign," Sancar said by telephone from Ankara, the capital. He said the distribution by Erdogan's party of free refrigerators to win votes in the impoverished zone was more questionable.



Adem Altan/Agence France-Presse

Ahmet Turk, speaking in the Turkish Parliament on Tuesday. His political party is under threat of closure after prosecutors last year accused it of promoting separatism.

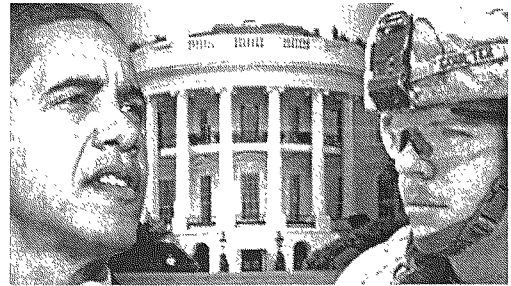


Feb 27th 2009

## America and Iraq

# A smooth exit?

NEW YORK | Barack Obama's pragmatic plan for withdrawal from Iraq



**AMERICA'S** new president has been promising to find a way to get soldiers out of Iraq and to end the war responsibly. On Friday February 27th Barack Obama announced more details of how and when this is supposed to happen. His election pledge, suggesting a 16-month withdrawal timetable, has slipped slightly to 18 months. Only two combat brigades (out of 14 now in the country) will leave Iraq before this year's parliamentary election in December. And in the long term, some 50,000 combat soldiers (some 142,000 troops are in Iraq at the moment), may stay, re-hatted as counter-terrorism or training forces.

All this points to a pragmatic approach to withdrawal. Mr Obama has long qualified his promises to leave Iraq, conceding that soldiers may either be forced to stay (for example to fight against terrorists) or to return to prevent any incipient genocide. Any who voted for him believing that every American soldier would be gone within a couple of years might now grumble that the reductions are not large enough. But Mr Obama must deal with the reality that withdrawal is neither easy or risk-free.

Getting one combat brigade out of the country each month is seen by many as the fastest reasonable pace. Huge logistical problems are involved in such big movements, with columns of troops and materiel vulnera-

ble to attack.

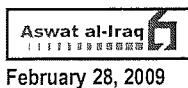
Much also depends on the political situation, which has only slowly improved as the security conditions have become slightly less bad. The surge of troops in 2007, combined with the Sunni awakening in which tribal leaders switched to the American side (in return for guns and money), have produced a lasting fall in violence. Provincial elections held at the end of January point to a strengthening of forces that want to keep Iraq broadly whole. Sectarian Shia forces and those Kurds who sought near-full autonomy did less well than had been expected in the poll. Sunni participation rose sharply compared with the previous round of elections. And the party at the centre of the ruling coalition led by Nuri al-Maliki, the prime minister, was a rebranded nationalist one, rather than a sectarian, Shia party.

Big political issues remain unsolved. The Shia parties that rival Mr Maliki's, such as the Iranian-backed Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, and the parties (and militias) that belong to Muqtada al-Sadr, a firebrand cleric, are unlikely to accept being peacefully consigned to the democratic sidelines. The broader Sunni-Shia war has subsided, but it has not disappeared. And Arab-Kurdish disputes, especially over Kirkuk and its oil, persist. Relations between the Kurdish regional president, Masoud Barzani, and Mr Maliki are tense, as Mr Maliki's moves to extend nation-

nal control over the Kurdish regions. Any referendum over Kirkuk's status may be at least as dangerous as national parliamentary elections.

Mr Obama may have been swayed by his commanders in Iraq and by his secretary of defence, Bob Gates, who oversaw the surge under George Bush. He has drawn sharp comments from critics on various sides. John Boehner, the Republican leader in the House of Representatives (and one of the most prominent figures in the party these days) has suggested that the promise to withdraw quickly has not been thought through, and could be knocked off course by problems on the ground. In contrast Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic Speaker of the House, seems unhappy that 50,000 troops will probably remain in Iraq.

Mr Obama will never please everyone. But at home, the poison of the Iraq war debate seems to have been drawn. Although anti-war groups might like to see him move faster, he is broadly sticking to his campaign promises. John McCain, last year's unsuccessful Republican candidate for president, used to accuse those who favour withdrawal from Iraq of waving a white flag of surrender. In contrast Mr McCain is now reported to be on board with Mr Obama's plan. A broad consensus seems to exist that the war must end, even if it cannot end tomorrow.



February 28, 2009

## Election results draw new map of alliances

**BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq:** The results of the provincial election that took place last January have depicted another political image in Iraq, by showing an end to the domination that some political parties maintained over some provinces' councils over the past four years.

As other political powers are gaining more influence in return, lawmakers and analysts perceive that the door is open for new alliances relying on different bases that may change the rules of the game.

Hadi Jalaw, an Iraqi journalist, sees that religious parties, such as the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC) and the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), have been backed into a critical corner after losing their influential representation in provincial councils to the Dawa Party's State of Law List.

"The Sadr movement and Fadhila party have better chances to form alliances with the Dawa Party, as they all have mutual ideological principles," Jalaw told Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

Ameer al-Kinani, head of al-Ahrar List supported by the Sadr movement, perceives that federalism and a weak center are considered redlines for the movement.

"Appointing unqualified candidates in major positions should also be avoided," al-Kinani noted.

He pointed out that rather than those points, al-Ahrar List has no other conditions to form alliances with any other party.

"Al-Ahrar movement had a meeting with Premier Nouri al-Maliki, who is also

the head of the State of Law List, and both sides agreed to form alliances in all the provinces where the premier's list won the election," al-Kinani explained.

For his part, Ridha Jawad Taqee, a senior member of the SIIC, perceives that it is possible ally with al-Maliki's list.

"Al-Maliki believes in federalism, as we do, but he wants to adopt a different mechanism," Taqee said.

But Sami al-Askari, a senior member of the Dawa Party, sees that Premier al-Maliki is determined not to employ the quota system that has been prevailing in Iraq since 2003.

"Even small entities would be absorbed," Al-Askari said.

Al-Fadhila Islamic Party, the other Shiite religious player in Iraq, still claims distinguished political influence in Baghdad and other provinces.

"The party has reforming visions that other parties lack," Sabah al-Saedi, a senior member of al-Fadhila Party, told Aswat al-Iraq news agency, stressing that the political map in the mid and southern regions of Iraq would change.

On the Sunni side, and in al-Anbar province which was once the most unstable province in Iraq, the head of the National Dialogue Council, Khalaf al-Ilayian, has no plans to join an alliance with the IIP.

"We can join an alliance with the IIP in any province but al-Anbar," al-Ilayian said.

In the other Sunni province of Ninewa, the change was essential, with al-Hadbaa List replacing Kurdish parties.

"Kurdish parties will not be as influential as they were before in Ninewa," lawmaker Osama al-Nujaifi said.

"We will join alliances with those who have a similar patriotic approach that opposes federalism," he added.



## IRAK: LES PARTIS KURDES UNIFIENT LES TROIS DERNIERS MINISTÈRES

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 24 fév 2009 (AFP) -

LES DEUX PRINCIPAUX partis kurdes ont décidé d'unifier les trois derniers ministères qui restaient divisés dans la région autonome du Kurdistan d'Irak, a indiqué l'une de ses formations.

Le ministère chargé des peshmergas (combattants kurdes) revient à l'Union Patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK du président Jalal Talabani) qui a nommé Jaafar Moustafa, et le ministère de l'Intérieur sera dirigé par la formation rivale du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK de Massoud Barzani), selon un communiqué de l'UPK.

L'UPK a aussi nommé cheikh Bayez à la tête du ministère des Finances. En 2005, après les élections régionales, tous les ministères avaient été unifiés en dehors de ces trois portefeuilles.

Deux ans après avoir obtenu l'autonomie de fait en 1991, les deux partis s'étaient opposés dans une guerre fratricide qui s'est terminée par un cessez-le-feu en 1996.

Chaque parti avait alors ses propres ministères dans cette région (nord) gouvernée depuis des décennies par l'UPK et le PDK.

Par ailleurs, la direction de l'UPK a fait un geste envers ses constataires, en annonçant avoir nommé Imad Ahmad vice-Premier ministre de la région autonome à la place d'Omar Fattah qui occupait ce poste depuis 2005.

En outre, Kader Ham Djan est devenu le chef des services de sécurité (Assayech) de l'UPK à la place de Seifedinne Ali Ahmad.

Dimanche, quatre membres du bureau politique de l'UPK avaient démissionné pour protester contre "le manque de transparence et de démocratie" au sein du parti. Ils réclamaient la lutte contre la corruption au sein du parti et au Kurdistan.

Depuis 2003, ce territoire autonome, où règne une relative sécurité en comparaison avec le reste du pays, accueille d'importants investissements étrangers qui attisent les convoitises.

**l'Humanité**

27 février 2009

## Turquie : l'AKP convoite les villes kurdes

*municipales . Le 29 mars, le Parti pour la justice et le développement entend gagner Diyarbakir, la métropole kurde, et conserver la majorité des villes.*

Ce n'est pas la première fois que la langue kurde s'invite dans le débat électoral turc. En bravant l'un des sacro-saints principes du « kémalisme » - une seule nation, une seule langue (le turc) -, le député Ahmet Türk, qui s'est exprimé en langue kurde dans une enceinte parlementaire où il est formellement interdit de s'exprimer dans une langue autre que le turc, a fait l'événement. Et bien que les temps aient changé - il est plus difficile aujourd'hui de condamner à une lourde peine de prison un député ayant utilisé cette langue -, il n'en reste pas moins que les tenants de l'orthodoxie kémaliste feront tout pour faire condamner le député, voire introduire une action en justice pour interdire sa

formation, le Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP, kurde).

Reste qu'Ahmet Türk savait ce qu'il faisait : à moins d'un mois des élections municipales, il s'est rappelé au souvenir des électeurs kurdes en jouant sur la fibre culturelle. Dans cette région, dont l'identité, malgré quelques progrès, reste niée par l'État turc, le Parti de la justice et du développement (l'AKP, issu de la mouvance islamiste) du premier ministre Tayyip Erdogan convoite la ville de Diyarbakir, que contrôle le DTP. Du fait de ses déboires avec les militaires et les nationalistes, qui l'accusent de vouloir menacer la laïcité de l'État, l'AKP n'est pas perçu négativement au Kurdistan. Jouant habilement sur les valeurs islami-

ques, disposant de réseaux caritatifs, le parti d'Erdogan est la seule formation à avoir autant d'élus au Kurdistan que les mouvements autonomistes kurdes. Qui plus est, en mettant en place depuis le 1er janvier une chaîne de télévision publique en langue kurde, TRT-6, le gouvernement de l'AKP a quelque peu mis dans l'embarras les partis kurdes. Et ce n'est pas en stigmatisant le personnel kurde de cette chaîne, comme le font le DTP et le PKK, que ces derniers pourraient contrer l'offensive du premier ministre turc. Ce dernier, qui a plusieurs fers au feu, a vu sa cote de popularité atteindre un niveau jamais atteint jusque-là, depuis qu'il a pris fait et cause pour Gaza, n'hésitant pas à quitter le sommet de

Davos après une vive polémique l'ayant opposé à Shimon Peres !

Pour l'heure, et à moins d'un retournement de dernière minute, l'AKP, qui ne ménage pas ses efforts pour rester la première force du pays, veut non seulement conserver les 51 des 81 chefs-lieux, dont Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir et Konya, mais rafler la majorité des 3 325 municipalités turques. Il lui faudra compter avec le ralentissement économique frappant le pays du fait de la crise financière. Selon le syndicat DISK, les fermetures d'usines et d'entreprises se sont traduites par plus de 300 000 pertes d'emplois depuis le début de l'année. Notons par ailleurs que l'adhésion à l'Union européenne est quasiment absente du débat électoral.

Le Monde  
25 février 2009

# Rapprochement entre les Kurdes d'Irak et les Turcs

A Erbil, dans la région autonome kurde d'Irak, une rencontre a réuni diplomates et intellectuels des deux bords

## Reportage

Erbil (Irak)  
Envoyé spécial

La scène aurait été inenvisageable il y a quelques mois. Le consul général de Turquie à Mossoul participait il y a quelques jours à une conférence pour promouvoir le dialogue turco-kurde. Un rassemblement organisé à l'initiative d'une puissante confrérie religieuse turque, accueillie par Erbil, la capitale de la région autonome kurde d'Irak.

Le diplomate avait laissé son escorte de commandos turcs à la porte du centre de conférence pour se mêler aux intellectuels d'Istanbul ou de Diyarbakir, aux chefs de clans et aux politiciens kurdes, invités par le gouvernement local, et exprimer le souhait « que la Turquie devienne la porte européenne de l'Irak ».

On y parlait les deux langues, le turc et le sorani (langue utilisée au Kurdistan irakien). « C'est une fenêtre qui s'ouvre », faisait remarquer Samir Salha, spécialiste de relations internationales à l'université de Kocaeli (Turquie). « Une étape » entre le Kurdistan irakien et la Turquie, ajoute l'intellectuel kurde Altan Tan. « On ne réglera pas tout d'un coup : il n'y a toujours pas de consulat turc ici. Il faut ouvrir des postes de douanes, des banques, promouvoir les échanges culturels, éducatifs... »

Le consul turc refuse, à l'image de son gouvernement, d'employer l'expression « Kurdistan d'Irak » pour désigner la région dirigée par Massoud Barzani, préférant parler d'« Irak du Nord ». Le premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait également interdit, au dernier moment, à quatre de ses députés de se rendre à ce symposium. Mais si l'événement a été loin de tenir toutes ses promesses, il marque un assouplissement des relations entre Ankara et Erbil.



Les intérêts d'un tel dialogue sont mutuels, explique-t-on à la présidence d'Erbil. « Nous avons déjà des échanges diplomatiques à haut niveau ».

La sécurité de la région et les enjeux économiques incitent les deux parties à se rapprocher. Quelques jours plus tôt, le président kurde d'Irak, Massoud Barzani, recevait un haut diplomate turc pour évoquer la mise en place, pro-

## Au pied de la citadelle, un ancien bazar tout juste rasé laissera bientôt la place à un immense centre commercial

chainement à Erbil, d'un centre de commandement tripartite chargé de coordonner le renseignement et la lutte contre les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) réfugiés dans les montagnes irakiennes. Quelque 2 000 hommes mais qui suffisent à empoisonner les relations entre voisins turcs et kurdes irakiens. Ce centre associera la Turquie, l'Irak et les Etats-Unis. Pour Ankara, il s'agit également de pacifier ces rapports de voisinage. « Il devient difficile

de prétendre jouer un rôle d'arbitre entre Israël et la Palestine, sans parvenir à résoudre ses propres problèmes », glisse Sami Shores, ancien ministre de la culture du Kurdistan irakien, dans une allusion à la « diplomatie de la médiation » de la Turquie au Proche-Orient.

Même le chef d'état-major turc, Ilker Basbug admet désormais que la solution au problème kurde ne peut être uniquement militaire. « Le gouvernement turc doit provoquer une solution politique et culturelle, poursuit Sami Shores. La paix entre Kurdes et Turcs est aussi dans l'intérêt des Américains, dans l'optique d'un retrait des troupes d'Irak ».

La région kurde d'Irak profite aussi de son attrait pour les capitaux étrangers. Depuis plusieurs années, la ville d'Erbil est un chantier ininterrompu. Au pied de la citadelle, un ancien bazar de petites échoppes tout juste rasées laissera bientôt la place à un immense centre commercial. Et à la périphérie, des villas « à l'italienne » ou « à l'anglaise » poussent au milieu des champs.

Plus de 1 200 compagnies turques participent activement à cet essor, selon le président de la Chambre de commerce de Diyarbakir, Galip Ensarioglu, qui souligne que la région kurde de Turquie, plus pauvre que le reste du pays,

## Des relations en essor

**Les échanges turco-irakiens** D'après le bilan de la chambre de commerce de Diyarbakir (Turquie), les échanges commerciaux entre la Turquie et l'Irak ont augmenté de 37,5 % en 2008, par rapport à 2007. L'année précédente, ils avaient progressé de 9,9 %. Le montant des échanges a atteint 7,5 milliards de dollars (près de 5,7 milliards d'euros) en 2008.

**Les principaux secteurs concernés** Les hydrocarbures, la construction, les biens de consommation.

## Mouvement de population

50 000 citoyens turcs et 1 200 entreprises travaillent dans la région du Kurdistan irakien. Des dizaines de milliers d'autres, dans le sud-est de la Turquie, vivent de ces retombées.

**Diyarbakir** Dans cette ville turque, à majorité kurde, 55 % du commerce se fait en direction du voisin irakien.

**Un poste frontière** Sur quatre-vingt-dix-sept points d'entrée sur le territoire turc, un seul poste frontière existe avec l'Irak. Il est situé à Habur, près de la ville irakienne de Zakho.

**Transports routiers** Par la ville de Zakho, transitent chaque année 20 000 camions, appartenant à 200 compagnies de transport turques.

**Liaisons aériennes** Des vols relient également Istanbul à Erbil et à Bagdad.

est le principal bénéficiaire des échanges transfrontaliers.

Un deuxième poste frontière devrait d'ailleurs ouvrir au printemps, pour accélérer le flux de camions qui transitent vers l'Irak. Les pays européens, à l'image de la

France et de l'Allemagne, reprennent pied dans la région, et l'Iran voisin s'y active déjà. Ankara ne veut pas manquer l'opportunité de les concurrencer.

Les confréries islamiques ont également joué un rôle de premier plan dans ce rapprochement turco-kurde. Le clan Barzani et M. Erdogan seraient proches de la confrérie des Nakshibandi, note un « négociateur », proche du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), le parti de Massoud Barzani.

Surtout, les adeptes de l'imam turc Fethullah Gülen, fervents partisans du dialogue et organisateurs de la conférence d'Erbil, se démenent depuis deux ans pour promouvoir la fraternité au nom de l'islam qui unit Turcs et Kurdes. Cette puissante confrérie a déjà ouvert des écoles dans toute la région, à Souleimaniyé et Kirkouk ainsi qu'une université et un hôpital à Erbil. Au collège privé Ishik (la lumière), résolument multiethnique, l'enseignement se dispense en anglais et les élèves parlent éga-

lement arabe, kurde et turc. Les enfants de la bourgeoisie d'Erbil et les rejetons des dignitaires kurdes et des diplomates arabes, se retrouvent dans les mêmes classes.

Cette démarche laisse sceptique certains observateurs. « Dans le système de pensée autoritaire turc, ce concept multiculturel est une manipulation, estime l'avocat de Diyarbakir Mustafa Gîçlî. C'est

en Turquie que le problème doit se régler. Pour pouvoir vivre ensemble, il faut une égalité entre les citoyens. » ■

Guillaume Perrier



Manifestation le 18 février en Turquie, à Diyarbakir, pour la libération de prisonniers kurdes. REUTERS

## Les partisans du PKK ne sont plus les bienvenus dans le Kurdistan irakien

Le Monde  
25 février 2009

**Kirkouk (Irak)**  
Envoyé spécial

Un slogan sur le mur souhaite « Longue vie au président Apo », le surnom d'Abdullah Öcalan, le leader du mouvement séparatiste kurde de Turquie, emprisonné depuis 1999. Le bureau poussier du PCDK, le Parti pour une solution démocratique au Kurdistan, est la vitrine politique en Irak de la rébellion des Kurdes de Turquie. Désormais installés à Kirkouk, en dehors de la région autonome kurde, ses membres ne sont, officiellement, plus les bienvenus dans la zone contrôlée et dirigée par le président Massoud Barzani, même s'ils continuent de s'y rendre. En 2007, sous la pression de la Turquie, les représentations d'Erbil, de Souleimaniyé et de Dohouk, dans les provinces kurdes d'Irak, ont été fermées.

« Nous travaillons pour la démocratie, en respectant la loi du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan [GRK], se défend Akbar Jahagiri, membre du conseil du PCDK. Ceux qui enfreignent la loi, ce sont les partis de Massoud Barzani

[Parti démocratique du Kurdistan] et de Jalal Talabani [Union patriotique du Kurdistan]. » Ce militant, vêtu d'un costume traditionnel kaki, dénonce les actions « illégales » de l'Asaish, les forces de sécurité intérieure contrôlées par les deux grands partis kurdes. Ces dernières coupent désormais la route d'accès au mont Qandil, où se trouvent les camps de base du Parti des travailleurs kurdes (PKK), qui permettait aux rebelles de s'approvisionner.

### Immolation à Erbil

« Nous avons pris des mesures : des personnes ont été refoulées à l'aéroport d'Erbil, et nous n'autorisons plus les journalistes à aller là-haut », confirme Fouad Hussein, le secrétaire général de la présidence du Kurdistan autonome. Mais les hommes du PCDK contournent aisément le barrage en passant par les sentiers de montagne. « Nous avons apporté une assistance financière à Qandil et des dizaines de moutons pour les familles », raconte Akbar Jahagiri, entouré par deux de ses adjoints. La Turquie et l'Iran

bombardent régulièrement les régions montagneuses du Kurdistan irakien, où seraient retranchés environ 2 000 combattants du PKK ainsi que ceux du PJAK, son équivalent iranien.

Mercredi 18 février, les membres du PCDK étaient montés à Qandil pour enterrer un militant kurde d'origine iranienne dans le « cimetière des martyrs ». L'homme s'est immolé par le feu en hurlant des slogans pro-PKK, le 15 février, au cours d'un rassemblement organisé dans la région d'Erbil, pour marquer le dixième anniversaire de l'arrestation d'Abdullah Öcalan. « Il est mort en martyr pour rappeler au monde le sort de M. Öcalan, récite le militant du PCDK. Il est important pour nous de soulever l'émotion autour de cette question. » Aucune image de cette manifestation n'a été diffusée sur les chaînes locales, pour éviter de contrarier les discussions du gouvernement kurde avec Ankara. Et la police a tiré des coups de feu en l'air pour disperser les 500 manifestants. ■

Gu. P.



**LE FIGARO**

27 février 2009

# Les familles des « disparus » demandent des comptes à l'État turc

**TURQUIE**

Dans les années 1990, au plus fort de la guerre civile entre l'armée et les séparatistes kurdes, des centaines de personnes n'ont plus donné signe de vie après avoir été arrêtées. Les premières enquêtes sont ouvertes.

*Istanbul*

LES GARDES à vue systématiques et les violences policières avaient fini par venir à bout de leur détermination: en 1999, après quatre ans de manifestations hebdomadaires dans l'espoir d'obtenir des renseignements sur leurs proches disparus, les «Mères du samedi» avaient rangé leurs pancartes. Dix ans après, elles redescendent dans la rue. Depuis fin janvier, chaque samedi, à midi, une centaine de familles se réunit de nouveau sur l'avenue Istiklal, à Istanbul, pour demander des comptes à l'État. Sous étroite surveillance des forces de l'ordre, elles brandissent la photo d'un enfant ou d'un mari et déroulent une longue banderole noire: «On connaît les coupables. Où sont nos disparus?» Dix, quinze ans après, la question reste toujours sans réponse.

«C'était le 18 mai 1994, mon père se trouvait dans les locaux du MIT – les services de renseignements turcs –, à Adana. Mon oncle l'a attendu toute la journée devant le bâtiment, il n'en est jamais ressorti, raconte Ercan Alpsoy, son fils aîné, âgé de 12 ans à l'époque. Les militaires ont toujours nié l'avoir détenu et les multiples requêtes auprès du procureur n'ont pas abouti.» Les «disparus» appartiennent à une page sombre de l'histoire récente de la Turquie. Dans les années 1990, au plus fort de la guerre civile qui opposa l'armée aux séparatistes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), des centaines de personnes n'ont plus donné signe de vie, essentiellement dans le sud-est du pays, après avoir été emmenées en garde à vue ou arrêtées à leur domicile. Il s'agit-



Depuis fin janvier, chaque samedi, une centaine de familles manifeste à Istanbul. Les «Mères du samedi» espèrent obtenir des informations sur un enfant ou un mari disparu depuis parfois plus de dix ans. M. Ozer/AFP

sait de membres du PKK, de militants de la cause kurde ou de simples civils. La plupart du temps, les corps n'ont pas été retrouvés. «On estime leur nombre entre 1375 et 1500. On ne connaît pas tous les cas, car des familles n'osent toujours pas parler, explique Muharrem Erbey, le président de l'Association des droits de l'homme (IHD) de la ville de Diyarbakir, à majorité kurde. Nous avons reçu six nouvelles plaintes ce mois-ci.»

**Le Jitem et Ergenekon**

Le Jitem – Service de renseignements et antiterrorisme de la gendarmerie –, est désigné comme la principale organisation responsable de ces meurtres non résolus. L'État n'a jamais reconnu l'existence de cette cellule clandestine engagée dans la contre-guérilla. Mais l'affaire «Ergenekon» est en train de mettre à mal le discours officiel. Depuis cet automne, 86 personnes sont jugées pour avoir planifié de renverser par la force le gouvernement islamo-conservateur. Parmi les prévenus,

figurent plusieurs membres supposés du Jitem, comme Veli Küçük, un général à la retraite, qui serait un de ses fondateurs. Et dans la dernière vague d'arrestations, en janvier, on trouve des officiers, en poste dans le Sud-Est pendant les années de plombs. «Ce sont les mêmes noms qui apparaissent dans nos dossiers, déclare Leman Yurtsever, membre du comité pour les personnes disparues de l'IHD. Nous demandons que des enquêtes soient ouvertes.»

Malgré plusieurs condamnations de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme pour «absence d'enquête sérieuse et d'explication plausible des autorités», la justice turque a fait la sourde oreille aux requêtes des proches. «Le procureur a répondu que, selon les registres, mon petit frère était toujours vivant», se désespère Kadri Dogan. Le garçon n'est pas réapparu depuis 15 ans. Le 29 octobre 1993, à trois heures du matin, dans la petite ville de Dargeçit, les militaires ont encerclé la maison de cette famille «sympathisante du PKK, comme tout le

monde dans le coin», résume sobrement Kadri Dogan. Ses deux frères, Azni, 9 ans, et Seyhan, 12 ans, ont été arrêtés. Le plus jeune, qui a réussi à s'enfuir de la caserne, a raconté avoir été suspendu au plafond et torturé. «Au début, nous gardions espoir pour Seyhan, se souvient Kadri Dogan. Mais toutes nos recherches se sont heurtées aux soldats qui prétendent l'avoir relâché.»

**Corps dissous à l'acide**

La douleur des familles a également été ravivée par les déclarations dans les médias d'un ancien du PKK, passé dans les rangs du Jitem après son arrestation. Aujourd'hui réfugié en Suède, Abdülkadir Aygan, affirme avoir été recruté comme «fonctionnaire» par un colonel, actuellement emprisonné dans le cadre de l'enquête Ergenekon. Selon son témoignage, les personnes arrêtées étaient systématiquement éliminées après leur interrogatoire. Généralement étranglées avec un fil électrique, parfois un câble de télévision: «Les meurtres avaient toujours lieu la nuit, et les tortures se déroulaient après les heures de travail, le soir, quand les soldats réguliers avaient rejoint leur unité.» Le lendemain de la parution de l'interview, le colonel Abdülkerim Kirca présenté comme le commandant du Jitem à Diyarbakir, s'est suicidé. Le chef de l'état-major, le général Ilker Basbug, et de nombreux officiers hauts gradés ont assisté à ses funérailles.

Mais la justice s'est peut-être décidée à en finir avec la loi du silence. Donnant suite aux plaintes de 70 familles, le procureur de Silopi, près de la frontière irakienne, vient d'ouvrir une enquête. La semaine dernière, le magistrat a commencé l'inspection de puits situés dans une zone militaire et qui appartiennent à la compagnie pétrolière turque Botas. Selon de nombreux témoignages, les corps auraient été dissous à l'acide avant d'être jetés dans des fosses communes ou dans des cuves de pétrole.

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