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ROJAVA: ABANDONED BY TRUMP AND THE WEST, THE SYRIAN DEMOCRATIC FORCES ARE LEFT ALONE TO FACE THE TURKISH INVASION

October 2019 will remain in history as the month during which the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) were abandoned almost overnight by their US military ally to confront a Turkish offensive. By announcing the withdrawal of his troops from Syria in a two-paragraph communiqué on October 6, President Donald Trump implicitly gave the green light to his Turkish counterpart to launch the invasion he had

long wanted to carry out. In doing so, he literally stabbed in the back his five-year allies on the front line against ISIS, who had left in this war 11,000 fighters killed and more than 23,000 wounded. But he also betrayed his own diplomats, who had been trying for weeks to prevent a Turkish attack by negotiating the setting up in northern Syria of a “safe zone” guaranteed by American troops. While the SDF, with American mediation, had accepted a security mecha-

nism in response to Turkish demands, had withdrawn from several posts and even destroyed some of their border fortifications, the agreement with Ankara, which had been difficult to reach at the end of September, finally ended up in oblivion, without any consultation from the White House with the Pentagon or the State Department.

On the evening of the 6th, while Turkey was reinforcing its military

presence on the border, the United States announced that Turkey would “soon” conduct a “long planned” military incursion “in northern Syria” and that American troops stationed in the country would leave the area (AFP). On the 7th, when the Pentagon announced that it “does not support” a Turkish offensive, the American military began its withdrawal from the border area... In the face of an attack that seemed imminent, the UN declared that it was “preparing for the worst”. Warnings about the risks of a resurgence of ISIS, including a warning from the European Union, were not heeded. And the ambiguous messages of the American president, who seemed for a while to be trying to go back on his statements of the previous day by threatening the Turkish economy with “destruction”, did not have any effect. On the 8th, after the Ankara Parliament voted to extend the authorisation to external military operations (a decision to which only the “pro-Kurdish” HDP opposed), the Defence Ministry announced that its preparations were completed.

The next day, the authorities in Rojava decreed a general mobilisation, urging the inhabitants to “resist”. On the 9th around 2 p.m., Mr. Erdoğan announced that the operation, cynically called “Spring of Peace”, had begun. The first phase consisted of air strikes, particularly in the vicinity of Ras al-Ain / Serê Kaniyê. Very quickly, the SDF indicated that at least two civilians had been injured, a figure that was quickly revised to fifteen dead, including 8 civilians, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR). The ground offensive began the same evening, with the entry into the Tell Abyad/Girê Sipî sector of Turkish soldiers accompanied by Syrian auxiliaries, of whom Ankara had prepared tens of thou-

sands. According to SDF spokesman Mustafa Balî, this initial advance was quickly repelled, as was a new assault on Ras al-Ain on the morning of the 10th, when Turkish artillery fire was aimed at both this city and Tell Abyad. The semi-autonomous Rojava administration also announced that Turkish bombing had hit a prison housing foreign fighters from ISIS. Already 60,000 civilians had fled the fighting at the border and headed east, including the town of Hassakeh (SOHR). On the Turkish side, around 20 people were wounded in Akçakale and Ceylanpinar by shells fired from Syria. On the 11th, while violent fighting was taking place along the 120 km between Tell Abyad and Ras al-Ain, the first casualty on the Turkish side was announced with the death of one soldier, soon followed by that of another, with three others wounded. Meanwhile, west of the invasion zone, two Turkish soldiers were killed and three wounded by shells at a military base near Azaz. On the evening of the 11th, on the SDF side there had been 41 fighters and 17 civilians killed. According to the SOHR, the Turks and their auxiliaries conquered eleven villages, two of which were quickly taken back by the SDF. Some Arab tribes joined the Turkish troops.

Also on the 11th, the Autonomous Administration announced that after Turkish fire had targeted several IDP camps, Mabrouka (7,000 residents) and Ain Issa (13,000 residents), it had begun evacuating the former. Among the residents of the second camp are 785 family members of ISIS fighters. The United Nations reported that the Turkish operation had caused the displacement of 100,000 people; fourteen humanitarian organizations warned that the situation could jeopardize the delivery of aid to civilians. However, Turkey intensified its bombing, and the Turkish

President repeated that Turkey would not stop its operation. The next morning, Saturday 12, the fourth day of the operation, Ankara, after an artillery barrage and a simultaneous attack on three sides of Ras al-Ain, announced the capture of the city, almost immediately denied by the SDF, which indicated that the fighting was continuing. The SOHR counted 23 villages taken by the Turks since the beginning of the offensive. On the same day, the Pentagon stated that its troops near Kobane had suffered Turkish fire the day before, but did not sustain any casualties. Washington asked then Ankara to “avoid any action that could lead to an immediate retaliation”. Turkey denied targeting the Americans.

On the 12th, pro-Turkish Syrian proxies from Ahrar al Sharqiya intercepted the car of Hevrin Khalaf, Secretary General of the “Syria Future Party”, on the Qamichli-Manbij road. The 34-year-old woman, unarmed, was beaten and shot dead, along with her driver. At least ten civilians were summarily executed in various locations on that day (SOHR). The UN has also put the number of displaced people at nearly 130,000, worrying that this number will soon reach 400,000. On the 13th, while fighting continued between Tell Abyad and Ras al-Ain, near the latter city, the Turks had to retreat in front of the defence of the SDF, which according to one of their commanders used “underground tunnels” to surprise their attackers (AFP). According to the SOHR, they had then taken 36 villages, but no major towns, for a total of 104 SDF fighters and 52 civilians killed. The SDF, accusing the United States of having “stabbed them in the back”, called on them to “assume their moral responsibilities” and close Syrian airspace to Turkish aviation. By mid-day, the SOHR announced that the Turkish forces and their Syrian auxiliaries

had taken Tell Abyad / Girê Spî, the first major city to fall into their hands since the 9th. On the same day, Turkey announced that it had taken control of the M4 motorway, which links the SDF-controlled territories from east to west. At the end of the day, the official Syrian agency Sana announced an agreement between Damascus and the Rojava authorities, according to which the Syrian army would deploy near the Turkish border. Russia indicated that it had played a facilitating role in the discussions. The next morning, the Damascus army, beginning its movement towards the Turkish border, entered Manbij and announced the next day being in full control of it, while the United States announced its withdrawal. A Turkish soldier was killed in night fighting around the city with the fighters of its Military Council. On the evening of the 16th, Turkey denounced that it would deem "unacceptable" any remaining of the YPGs in Manbij under Russian flag...

Further east, in Ras al-Ain, the SDF still fiercely resisted the Turks and their allies on the 15th. On the seventh day of the Turkish offensive, the SOHR counted 135 SDF fighters, 120 pro-Turkish fighters and 70 civilians killed. The UN estimated the number of displaced persons at 160,000, while according to the Rojava authorities, the 32 international NGOs present on the field had withdrawn their staff for security reasons and thus stopped all humanitarian activities (AFP). On the evening of the 15th, two soldiers of the Syrian regime were killed by artillery fire from pro-Turkish rebels (SOHR) near Ain Issa (halfway between Raqqa and the border), and on the morning of the 16th, near the M4 motorway, north-east of Ain Issa, "violent fighting" took place between the SDF assisted by the regime's forces and the pro-Ankara rebels. Further fighting continued on the border near Ras al-Ain, which was

targeted during the night by air strikes and artillery fire. In the afternoon, troops of the regime accompanied by Russian soldiers entered Kobane where, accompanied by SDF, they took possession of a former US military base (SOHR). On the same day, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo flew to Ankara in an attempt to stop Turkish operations in Syria. The Turkish President, after announcing for internal use that he would not receive them, finally agreed to a meeting, which took place on the 17th.

Late in the evening, after four hours of talks, Mike Pence announced that Turkey had agreed to a 120-hour (five-day) ceasefire, during which time the SDF would have to withdraw from Turkey's desired security zone, a 32-km-deep border strip. The head of the SDF, Mazloum Abdi, said on the Kurdish TV channel Ronahi that the SDF were "ready to respect the ceasefire". Pence also indicated that Turkey had committed itself to ensuring that its military presence would remain temporary and that there would be no mass population transfers...

The assessment drawn on the 17th by the SOHR of the humanitarian impact of the Turkish operation, supplemented by the figures quoted by AFP, is frightening. The offensive put to flee 300,000 people, one of the largest waves of displacement since the beginning of the conflict in 2011; from the 13th to the 16th alone, a thousand Kurds fled to Iraqi Kurdistan. 83,000 displaced people had to receive food aid from the World Food Programme. The UN also announced that it had provided blankets for 52,000 people. Forty schools in Hassakeh province had to be converted into emergency shelters (SOHR). Finally, 400,000 inhabitants of the city and the

region of Hassakeh are threatened by a lack of drinking water (UN). Concerning civilian casualties, 72 civilians were killed on the Syrian side (and 20 on the Turkish side according to Ankara). On the same day, the autonomous administration accused Turkey of having used prohibited phosphorus incendiary bombs against civilian populations. The SOHR could not confirm their use, but reported the arrival of several wounded people suffering from burns at Tal Tamr hospital in the previous two days. Videos posted on the Internet show children whose burns are likely to be caused by such weapons. Mustafa Balî called for the intervention of international experts to examine them, as all those previously present had left the region during the withdrawal of NGOs caused by the Turkish invasion (AFP).

While a precarious calm was established on the morning of the 18th near the Turkish border, the fighting taking place in Ras al-Ain during the Ankara meeting continued intermittently. In a ceasefire violation denounced by the SDF, 10 new Turkish air raids and artillery fire and 27 ground attacks killed at least 14 civilians on the Syrian side, including in the village of Bab al-Kheir, according to the SOHR, which also put the toll at 275 SDF fighters killed since the beginning of the invasion. According to the SOHR, the staff of the Ras al-Ain hospital, damaged by the strikes, was blocked inside. On the 19th, SDF Commander Mazloum Abdi accused the Turks of "blocking the exit of our forces, the wounded and civilians from Ras al-Ain", effectively preventing the withdrawal of the SDF to make them responsible for the continuation of the operation. Abdi pointed out the responsibility of the Americans, guarantors of the agreement which provided for the opening of a humanitarian corri-

dor allowing evacuation. Finally, on Sunday 20, a convoy of more than eighty vehicles, including pick-ups and ambulances, was able to take wounded and SDF fighters to Tal Tamr (30 km to the south-east, on the road to Hassakeh), leaving Ras al-Ain to the Turkish forces.

On the 21st, the day before Mr. Erdoğan was due to meet his Russian counterpart in Sochi, Turkey announced its intention to begin the establishment of “its” security zone in North-Eastern Syria. Contrary to statements made on the 17th by Mike Pence, Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar reiterated his intention to settle “two million” Syrian refugees there (AFP). With a length of 120 km between the cities of Ras al-Ain and Tell Abyad, instead of the 440 km initially desired, the area will for the moment be four times shorter than initially desired. To extend it further would require negotiations with Russia, since the Damascus army, with which the SDF has concluded a military alliance against the Turkish offensive, has deployed further west, accompanied by Russian troops trying to position itself in a way to avoid direct Turkish-Syrian clashes.

On the 22nd, the day the truce was due to expire at 19:00 GMT, Vladimir Putin received his Turkish counterpart in Sochi, while the Syrian President, making an unprecedented visit to his troops in the Idlib region, reaffirmed his readiness to support “any resistance to Turkish aggression”: a manner to appear supporting without mentioning them those same SDF he had some time before labelled as “traitors”... The SDF, for their part, indicated that they had “fully” met the conditions of the Turkish-American agreement through Redur Khalil, who stated: “We have fully complied with the terms of the cease-

fire [...] and withdrew all our fighters and security forces from the military area of operations from Ras al-Ain to Tell Abyad”, adding: “We have also defined the demarcation lines between us and the Turks east of Ras al-Ain and west of Tell Abyad” (AFP). At the same time, the United States announced that it would lift the sanctions imposed on the 14th against three Turkish ministers if Ankara respected the agreement negotiated on the 16th, but that if it did not, new sanctions would be imposed on the country.

In Sochi, after a six-hour meeting, the Turkish President announced a “historic agreement” with his Russian counterpart. The two countries agreed to take joint control of most of the Syrian border strip, after Russia has supervised the withdrawal of SDS to a depth of 30 km. The SDS had no choice but to accept an agreement which, while stopping the Turkish operation, calls into question the very existence of their “autonomous administration”. Indeed, reiterating the joint Russian-Turkish will to “resist separatist aspirations on Syrian territory”, the agreement claims to preserve “the territorial integrity of Syria”. However, it leaves Turkey in control of the area between Tell Abyad and Ras al-Ain, with no deadline for withdrawal. To the east and west of this area, once the SDF have been removed at a depth of 30 km, control will be taken by joint Russian-Turkish patrols to a depth of 10 km. Russian-Turkish efforts to “facilitate the voluntary and safe return of refugees” are mentioned, which may raise fears of ethnic cleansing such as that carried out by the Turks in Afrin...

On the evening of the 22nd, the Turkish Ministry of Defence announced that it “did not need” to resume its offensive, as the SDF had withdrawn from the border area. On the 23rd, the Russian Ministry of

Defence announced that at 12:00 local time (9:00 GMT), a column of Russian military police crossed the Euphrates River towards the Syrian-Turkish border, “to assist in the withdrawal of YPGs and their disarmament over a depth of 30 km”. Their first border patrols took place on the same day. SDF spokesman Mazloum Abdi thanked Russia for having put an end to the Turkish offensive, but expressed “reservations” about a Russian-Turkish agreement that allows the Damascus regime to return to the Rojava “in the Russian wagons”... According to the SOHR, “The SDF withdrew from positions between Derbasiyeh and Amouda, in the Hassakeh region”, but remained in many points along the Syrian-Turkish border strip, which stretches some 440 km in total.

On the 24th, Mazloum Abdi told journalists in Qamichli that the SDF was in favour of the German plan to create a “safe zone” under international control, which was to be discussed the same day in Brussels at the NATO foreign ministers’ summit. But unsurprisingly, with the participation of Turkey and after the conclusion of a Russian-Turkish agreement on the ground, this proposal, which would have risked provoking a direct confrontation with Russia, received little support. The very next day, Syrian troops, reappearing in the Syrian northeast for the first time since 2012, entered Hassakeh (70 km southeast of Ras al-Ain). On the 26th, 2.000 Syrian troops, supported by hundreds of military vehicles and elements of the Russian military police, deployed south of the Turkish-controlled area. The day before, however, Syria and Turkey had exchanged invective in the Security Council. The same day, the UN opened a second camp in Iraqi Kurdistan to take in Syrian Kurdish refugees, the first being saturated with 11,000 refugees (AFP).

In the evening, between Tal Tamr and Ras al-Ain, clashes took place

between pro-Ankara forces, supported by the Turkish Air Force, and the SDF supported by the Syrian Army, resulting in nine deaths among pro-Turkish fighters and six among the SDF (SOHR). Exchanges of fire continued the next day near Ras al-Ain. On the 27th, the SDF confirmed their announcement of the 24th that they would “withdraw to a depth of 32 km” and that “central government border guards [would be deployed] along the border”. The official Sana agency confirmed the withdrawal, which was coordinated with the Syrian army. These various movements did not prevent new fighting on the 29th, which for the first time directly opposed the regime’s and Turkish forces. Five Syrian soldiers were killed by Turkish artillery fire, a sixth was “executed” by Syrian rebel fighters. Further east, in Derbassiye, a Russian patrol “mistakenly” received Turkish shelling (SOHR). On the same day, Russia and Turkey separately confirmed the full withdrawal of SDS from

the border areas. This has not prevented Turkey from continuing to provide air support to its jihadi auxiliaries in their attacks on Kurdish villages from the “security zone”, westward between Tal Abyad and Kobane, and eastward between Ras al-Ain and Tal Tamr. Pro-Turkish jihadists, as usual, also engaged in looting in Ras al-Ain and several surrounding villages, including stealing 48,000 tons of wheat from the silos. The same day, the UN reported that the Turkish invasion had displaced at least 80,000 children (WKI). On the 30th, the Turkish President announced that joint patrols with Russia would begin on 1st November.

Also on the 30th, Damascus called on the SDF to join the Syrian army. The Ministry of the Interior made an identical appeal to the Asayish (Kurdish security) to join the police. The SDS immediately replied that Damascus should first recognise in a “political agreement [...] their specific structure and status”. According

to Mazloum Abdi, the SDS have made concrete proposals to the regime in this regard...

Turkey had assured Mike Pence that its military presence would remain temporary, but the Russian-Turkish agreement did not specify any deadline for withdrawal... How sincere is the Turkish president? Mr Erdoğan signed on 4th October a decree ordering the opening of several higher education institutions in the Syrian territories under Turkish control: an institute of economics and administration in Al-Bab, a Faculty of Islamic Sciences in Azaz and a Faculty of Education in Afrin, all of which will come under the jurisdiction of the Gaziantep rectorate... Turkish Post has already opened an office in Al-Bab, and Turkey has set up schools and its own police in the Syrian territories under its control. Are we heading in the Syrian North towards a situation of the “Northern Cyprus” type, under Turkish occupation since 1974?

INTERNATIONAL: SOLIDARITY AFTER THE TURKISH INVASION OF ROJAVA, BUT INEFFECTIVE POLITICAL REACTIONS

Rhe Turkish attack on Northeast Syria provoked many reactions of anger, solidarity and support in France and in the world. In France, street demonstrations followed one another from the 9th. In Rennes, about fifty members of the Kurdish community gathered in front of the railway station to denounce the Turkish attack and the inaction of the international community, and to call for a large demonstration on the 11th (France Bleu). In the evening in Nice, a group of the same size demonstrated on the avenue Jean-Medecin (Nice Matin), and in Grenoble, about a hundred demonstrators responded to the

call of the Isère Association of Friends of the Kurds, including trade unionists from Solidaires, migrant rights activists and several elected municipal officials. The next day in Quimper (Britanny), a rally was held in Place Terre-auduc at the call of local associations and parties, whose communiqué reproduced the appeal of the Kurdish Democratic Council of France (CDK-F): “The Turkish invasion is synonymous with massacres, ethnic cleansing and humanitarian tragedy. It will bog down Syria in an even deeper war and provoke a massive exodus of the civilian population which will amplify the flow of refugees to Europe... The Kurds, who gave 11.000 lives in the war against ISIS

and developed a political system in the region based on democracy, pluralism and gender equality, pose no threat to anyone” (Le Télégramme). In Marseille, some 300 people marched on the Canebière.

On the 11th, demonstrations took place in Rennes, at 5 p.m. at Place de la République at the call of the Rennes Kurdish associations (West France), again in Marseille with hundreds of people, in Nancy at Place Maginot at the call of a collective. In Dreux, a rally was held at the foot of the belfry (L’Echo Républicain), in Montpellier, more than 300 people demanded economic and diplomatic sanctions against Turkey and above all, a

lasting political solution for Kurdistan (France 3 Occitanie).

On the 12th, a Saturday, numerous demonstrations took place throughout France at the call of the CDK-F, often relayed locally by left-wing parties, associations and trade unions. In Angers, at the call of the Movement for Peace, two hundred people gathered at Place du Ralliement (Fr3 Pays de la Loire). In Avignon, it was at 2 p.m. on the Place de l'Horloge (Le Dauphiné), in Bordeaux (a thousand participants), in Châteaubriant at 6 p.m. on the square in front of the town hall, where the gendarmerie had to intervene when members of the Turkish community tried to burn a banner (Ouest France). In Fougères, UCL's call to demonstrate in Place Aristide Briand was supported by the "France insoumise" party local group (Actu.fr). In Grenoble, the event brought together 500 participants in the city centre (France Bleu Isère). In Le Mans, about a hundred demonstrators gathered at Place des Jacobins in response to an appeal by "Collectif 72 pour la Paix" (County collective for peace) (Western France). In Lille, nearly 300 people gathered at 3 p.m. in Place de la République to chant "Erdogan terrorist!". In Marseille, for the third gathering, several thousand participants marched to the top of the Canebière from 2 p.m. (AFP). In Montbéliard, the rally was held at 3 p.m. on the Human Rights Square at the call of a newly created "Solidarity Collective" to demand an end to the Turkish aggression and a ban on Syrian airspace for Turkish military, the creation of a security zone for the Kurds of the Rojava, the guarantee of access for humanitarian aid and "sanctions by France and the European Union against Erdogan's Turkey if the aggression does not stop immediately" (France Bleu Doubs). In Lyon, the demonstration, which

brought together 500 people, was marked by the provocation of a driver who showed a Turkish flag, triggering the anger of the demonstrators and fleeing by nearly running over a gendarme. In Morlaix, the rally in support of the Kurdish people was held at noon at the "kiosque" (West France). In Nantes place du Commerce at 4 p.m., more than 3.000 people responded to the call of the MRAP (anti-racism movement), which had joined the National Solidarity Kurdistan Coordination in various cities in France to denounce the Turkish military action. The former Prime Minister of François Hollande, Jean-Marc Ayrault, himself from Nantes, expressed his support on Twitter. The demonstration ended without violence in front of the Turkish consulate, protected by mobile gendarmes (Fr3 Pays de la Loire). In Nevers, the gathering was held at 10.30 a.m. at Place Carnot (Journal du Centre). In Nimes, it was held at the end of the morning on the square in front of the arenas on the initiative of the PCF (French communist party) (Midi Libre). In Pau, about sixty people gathered at Place Clémenceau, politicians, trade unionists, associations activists and ordinary citizens (France Bleu Pyrénées-Atlantiques). In Poitiers, several dozen people demonstrated in the morning in the city centre to denounce Turkey's military intervention, in a rally supported by the (anarchist) UCL (The New Republic). In Strasbourg, the event took place from 2 to 4 p.m. at Place Kléber at the call of the ecologists of EELV. In Tours, 150 to 200 participants gathered at the Place Jean Jaurès to the call of the PCF and the association "France-Kurdistan 37" (France Indre-et-Loire).

In Paris, two demonstrations in support of the Rojava took place on Saturday 12th. The first, called in particular by the Kurdish Institute of Paris, the magazine La

règle du jeu from the philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy and the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organisations of France (CCAF), took place at 11.30 a.m. on the "Esplanade des droits de l'homme" (Human rights esplanade), place du Trocadéro. In an op-ed published on the 10th in Le Monde, the organisers denounced the Turkish president as "the chief smuggler of the thousands of jihadists rallying the Caliphate via Turkey during the years of the war against ISIS". The second one, at 2 p.m. in Place de la République, followed the call for the mobilization of the CDK-F.

Demonstrations also took place abroad. As early as the 11th in Iraqi Kurdistan, thousands of demonstrators booed the Turkish President. In Liege, Belgium, about 400 Kurds gathered at Place Saint-Lambert at 5 p.m. (RTBF). In Switzerland, a thousand people demonstrated in Bern and 200 to 250 in Geneva at the Place des Nations. On the 12th, several thousand people demonstrated in Zurich, and 300 to 400 chanted "Erdogan murderer" in Bellinzona, demanding freedom for the Kurdish people (Swissinfo.ch). In Germany, home to a large Kurdish community, events were held on the 12th in Cologne (more than 10.000 participants), Frankfurt (4.000), Hamburg (3.000), Hannover (3.000), as well as in Berlin, Bremen and Saarbrücken. In Manchester (UK), 250-300 demonstrators gathered in Piccadilly Gardens waving Kurdish flags and placards bearing "Stop the ethnic cleansing of the Kurds" and "Boycott Turkey" (Manchester Evening News). Demonstrations also took place in Ireland, notably in Dublin, O'Connell Street. In Quebec, about 200 protesters gathered on the 12th in downtown Montreal at Phillips Square. Canada was among the countries that condemned the attack. "This

is much appreciated, but much more needs to be done”, said Hovig Tufenkjian of the Armenian National Committee of Canada (Le Devoir).

In Greece, a thousand Kurds and sympathisers demonstrated in Thessaloniki, with placards asking “Where is the UN?”. In Athens, 2.000 demonstrators marched to the Turkish embassy, protected by police, and another group of 150 to the American embassy. In Jerusalem, several dozen people, some of Kurdish origin, demonstrated in front of Prime Minister Netanyahu’s residence. On the 10th, dozens of IDF officers signed a petition calling on the state to provide humanitarian assistance to Kurdish fighters in northern Syria (i24). In Beirut, nearly 300 Kurds demonstrated on the 13th in Martyrs Square (L’Orient Le Jour). Rallies were also held in Cyprus, Warsaw, Brussels and The Hague, where the police had to intervene to separate Dutch people of Turkish origin from the demonstrators.

In Turkey itself, on the 10th, Sezai Temelli, co-president of the HDP, the only party to oppose the operation in parliament, called on the government to put an immediate end to it; calling on the CHP (Kemalist opposition), which had approved it, to “get rid of its contradictions”, Temelli called on the EU, the US and the UN to act.

In addition to the solidarity expressed by the citizens of many countries, the Turkish invasion also provoked reactions from politicians. On the 7th, two days before the attack, the French President and Prime Minister had expressed their concerns, urging Turkey to abandon an operation that could contribute to a resurgence of ISIS. The President received at the Elysée Palace the Rojava Kurdish leader Ilham Ahmed, expressing the will to pre-

serve the SDF. On the 8th, the United Kingdom expressed “deep concern”. After the launch of the invasion, negative reactions multiplied in France: Amélie de Montchalin, Secretary of State for European Affairs, announced a joint France-Germany-United Kingdom condemnation, Marielle de Sarnez, President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly, Bruno Retailleau, President of the LR Senators, and Jean-Luc Mélenchon (LFI) condemned the invasion. Former President François Hollande called for sanctions against Turkey if the offensive continued. In the Netherlands, the Turkish ambassador has been summoned. On the same day, France referred the matter to the United Nations Security Council.

On the 10th, Ilham Ahmed unsuccessfully called in Brussels for EU countries to “freeze their diplomatic relations with Turkey by recalling their ambassadors immediately”.

Several European countries announced one by one the suspension of all arms exports to Ankara: Norway on the 10th, the Netherlands on the 11th, followed on the 12th by Germany (242,8 million euros of arms exported to Turkey in 2018, almost a third of its arms exports), and on the 15th by the United Kingdom. On the 13th, the Turkish president, retorting that these embargoes would not set Turkey back, repeated his usual threat to “send 3.6 million migrants” to the EU, prompting outrage from EU Council President Donald Tusk, who denounced (from Cyprus...) an “unacceptable” blackmail. The EU, recalling that it had allocated 97% of the planned aid funds to Turkey, reiterated its opposition to any demographic change in Syria, specifying that it would not grant any funding for the resettlement of refugees there.

In New York, following an emergency meeting of the Security Council, the five European countries sitting on the Council – Paris, Berlin, Brussels, London and Warsaw – demanded an end to “unilateral military action”, and France called for an emergency meeting of the international anti-ISIS coalition.

On the 13th, the French President and the German Chancellor together called on Turkey to stop the operation. In Italy (one of the main suppliers of arms to Turkey), the head of government Giuseppe Conte said he would like to see a “moratorium on arms sales to Turkey” in the EU framework “as soon as possible”. But on the 14th, the meeting of EU foreign ministers did not result in any formal decision. Upon his arrival in Luxembourg, the future head of European diplomacy, Josep Borrell, stressed that arms sales to Turkey were the result of “agreements concluded country by country” and that the decision to stop them was a matter for the sovereignty of each Member State. The final communiqué of the meeting condemned the Turkish operation and announced sanctions against... illegal Turkish drilling off the coast of Cyprus. A “lowest common denominator” agreement was reached on a “strict application” of the arms export policy, which states that arms exports should not “contribute to regional instability”. While Spain announced the withdrawal in December of its battery of Patriot missiles deployed by NATO in Adana, a senior European official explained that Turkey’s membership of NATO made it impossible for its allies to impose an embargo...

On the 17th, at the end of the first day of a summit held in Brussels, the European Council took note of the suspension of the Turkish

operation and, reiterating its condemnation, again called on Ankara to withdraw its troops. On the 20th, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas declared that the Turkish attack violated international law. The next day, the Turkish president accused Western countries of “siding with the terrorists”. On the 23rd, the German government, criticising the Russian-Turkish agreement of the 22nd, proposed an international solution involving Europe as well to settle the conflict. On the same day, a joint declaration by European and American parliamentarians reiterated the condemnation of the Turkish operation, before a new condemnation the following day by the European Parliament characterising it as “a serious violation of international law”. Among other demands, the resolution voted by a show of hands called on Member States to impose “targeted sanctions and visa bans” against the senior Turkish officials “responsible for human rights abuses in the context of the ongoing military intervention” and those “responsible for the repression of fundamental rights in Turkey” and, as a last resort, to suspend the EU-Turkey customs union. During the debates many MEPs denounced the EU’s impotence.

The same powerlessness characterised NATO, whose semi-annual meeting of Defence Ministers opened on the 23rd. When the offensive was launched on the 9th, the organization had confined itself to calling Turkey to “restraint”. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg declined to issue any condemnation, citing “legitimate security concerns [of Ankara]”... Fearing a new rapprochement between Ankara and Moscow, the allies have hardly given serious consideration to the German proposal for a protection zone under international control, supported by the Kurdish authori-

ties in Syria: “There has been no request for a NATO mission in north-east Syria”, said Stoltenberg...

On the 30th, the French National Assembly unanimously adopted a “resolution” (non-binding, contrary to laws) proposed by Marielle de Sarnez, President of the Foreign Affairs Committee, condemning the Turkish offensive. Co-signed by the chairmen of the Assembly’s eight political groups, it “strongly condemns” the Turkish offensive, “calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities” and “affirms its unwavering support for the SDF”. All the speakers from the groups gave it their support, with some deploring the fact that Europe remained a “spectator”. Turkey “firmly” rejected it and summoned the French ambassador to Ankara the next day.

In Washington, Donald Trump’s abrupt decision to withdraw from the military caused an outcry, with several Republican supporters of the president, Lindsey Graham, Liz Cheney and Marco Rubio, urging him to reconsider this “mistake”. Former UN ambassador Nikki Haley also expressed her emotion. On the Democrat side, Hillary Clinton called the decision “a despicable betrayal” and Bernie Sanders, although a proponent of disengagement, called it “extremely irresponsible” in its suddenness. The Pentagon said it “does not condone” the Turkish operation, and on the 10th, the former head of US forces in the Middle East, General Joseph Votel, accused Trump of “abandoning” the Kurds.

On the 9th, two senators, Lindsey Graham (Rep.) and Chris Van Hollen (Dem.), unveiled a joint proposal for tough sanctions against Turkey if it did not withdraw its troops: freezing the assets in the United States of the Turkish President and several ministers,

stopping US arms sales to Turkey, sanctions against any entity selling arms to the country, and visa restrictions for Turkish officials. The text also provided for the prompt implementation of the sanctions foreseen for the Turkish purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defence system. On the 13th, Defense Minister Mark Esper, calling Ankara’s offensive “unacceptable”, said Turkey appeared to be committing war crimes. On the 14th, the United States condemned “in the strongest possible terms” the “extrajudicial” execution of Hevrin Khalaf by pro-Ankara Syrian rebels, and the President signed a presidential decree imposing targeted sanctions on three Turkish ministers. On the 16th, the House of Representatives passed a (non-binding) resolution condemning the US withdrawal from Rojava by a large majority, two-thirds of whom were Republicans. As Lindsey Graham and Chris Van Hollen’s sanctions plan came to a vote in the Senate, the announcement of the ceasefire obtained in Ankara by Mike Pence and Mike Pompeo largely calmed the revolt, even if Republican politicians such as Marco Rubio and Mitt Romney remained critical, the latter declaring that the agreement was “far from being a victory”. But on the 23rd, Donald Trump announced the lifting of the sanctions imposed on the 14th: they would have lasted only ten days...

The next day, the United States announced that it would maintain military forces in eastern Syria to prevent the takeover of its oil fields by the regime and its Russian and especially Iranian allies, while Ilham Ahmed, co-chair of the Executive Committee of the Syrian Democratic Council, tried to obtain minimum political support from Congress and the Trump administration. According to Al-Monitor, she made several demands, including the imposi-

tion of sanctions against Turkey, the deployment of an international peacekeeping force on the Syrian-Turkish border, the suspension of article 5 of the NATO charter with regard to Turkish aggression in Syria, the imposition in the airspace controlled by the anti-ISIS coalition of a no-fly zone preventing Turkish bombing. Finally, she

asked for US support for the SDC to participate in the discussions initiated under the aegis of the UN. At the end of the month, none of these requests appeared to have been heard...

All in all, while indignation and expressions of support were widespread in Europe and the

United States, at the institutional level, the Rojava's western allies demonstrated their powerlessness, their divisions, and their lack of political will to stop the Turkish operation. Beyond Turkey's condemnations in words, none of the desperate requests of its Authorities have received any concrete response.

TURKEY:

THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT REPRESSES ANY CRITICISM OF ITS ROJAVA INVASION AND RESUMES DISMISSING HDP MAYORS

Faced with growing economic and political difficulties, Mr Erdoğan, following a tried and tested recipe, tried to make people forget them by launching the military operation "Spring of Peace" against the Rojava on 9 October. The "Kurdish external enemy" seems to be playing its part well, but it remains to be seen how long this diversion will work. As former co-chairman of the "pro-Kurdish" HDP party Selahattin Demirtaş told Özgür Politika: "The AKP [...] knows very well that it could not stay in power even for a month without a policy of war. But war is a double-edged sword: if you don't get results, it will cut you at the end".

As after the attacks on Kurdish cities in Turkey in 2016 and the invasion of Afrin last year, the Turkish authorities launched a hunt against all those who dared to criticise the operation on social networks and sent the police to suppress any demonstrations; then they resumed dismissing HDP mayors.

On the very day of the attack, the Security Directorate announced it had launched investigations against 78 people (TIHV). On the 10th in Ankara, eight people were imprisoned when the HDP tried to hold a press conference in protest. They were released the next day, but eleven others were imprisoned

at a new press conference (TIHV). On the same day, more than twenty people were arrested in Mardin for "terrorist propaganda" (Anatolia) and "inciting public hatred", including the co-Mayor of Derik (Mardin), Şerif Kiran, and several municipal councillors... A judicial investigation was opened against the co-presidents of the HDP, Sezai Temelli and Pervin Buldan, for calling the operation an "invasion", as well as against HDP MP Muş, Gülistan Kılıç, and HDP MPs Leyla Güven and Berdan Öztürk, also co-chairmen of the Congress for a Democratic Society (DTK). The head of the Birgün newspaper's website, Hakan Demir, and the editor of the news website Diken were arrested overnight at their homes, charged with "inciting public hatred", before being released on parole the next day with their passports confiscated. Birgün had simply tweeted an article reporting the deaths of civilians in Turkish strikes. Two journalists who had reported SDF statements were imprisoned. The governors of Urfa and then Kocaeli announced a 15-day ban on all public protests.

On the 11th, the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) announced censorship of all criticism, stating that no broadcasts "supporting terrorism" would be tolerated. On the same day, the bars of Diyarbakır, Van,

Urfa, Mardin, Şırnak, Muş, Adıyaman, Bingöl and Dersim jointly called for the "immediate end to the war". Interior Minister Suleiman Soylu announced that since 9 October, 121 people had been taken into police custody across the country. He added on the 13th that measures had been taken against 500 people who had "insulted the operation or defamed our country as an invader on social media". On the same day, the Turkish President reported that 109 people had been imprisoned and 589 subjected to administrative measures (Bianet).

Also on the 11th, 13 people were imprisoned in Izmir, 12 released the next day and one arrested for "propaganda for an illegal organisation", eight in Nusaybin, including the local BDP co-president and several municipal councillors. In Diyarbakır, the co-mayors of the Bismil district, Gülşen Özer and Orhan Ayaz, were imprisoned and then released the same day. On the 12th, police prevented an HDP press conference in Adana, and Iskenderun HDP co-chair Hülya Ateş was detained and charged with "membership in an illegal organisation". In Antalya and Hatay, several members of left-wing parties were arrested. Arabiya journalist Zidan Zankloi, who was covering the operation in Urfa, was arrested. In Diyarbakır, Vahit Aba, leader of the Partiya Azadiya Kurdistan (PAK), was

detained and placed under house arrest. At Şırnak, five people were incarcerated, and two in Silopi. In Izmir, 16 members of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) and four members of the Communist Movement (TKH) who distributed the newspaper *Boyun Eğme* and *Sosyalist Cumhuriyet*, whose front page was about the operation, were imprisoned. On the 13th, the HDP Co-Chairs of Ceyhan District, Delal Mamuk and Seyfettin Aydemir, were detained and then released after deposition. An HDP executive, Tahir Özdemir, was arrested for “membership in an illegal organisation”. On the 14th, the Ankara prosecutor launched an investigation against Istanbul CHP MP Sezgin Tanrıku for having publicly described the operation as an “unjust war” (*Bianet*) at the 759th gathering of the “Saturday Mothers”.

On the 15th, seventy-nine “Artists Against War” courageously launched on *change.org* a petition in Turkish, Kurdish and English, proclaiming: “No to war, no to lies, no to plunder”. On the 16th, the Anatolia agency reported 186 incarcerations for “disinformation” on social networks. 38 people were released and 40 were released under judicial supervision. In Bursa, five out of 15 people in prison were charged the next day with “propaganda for an illegal organisation”. In Erzincan, former local HDP co-chair Ayhan Pakan was arrested. Other incarcerations took place in Istanbul, Izmir, Çanakkale and Diyarbakir, where one of the ten incarcerated, aged 17, was charged with “membership in an illegal organisation”. In Istanbul, nine of the seventeen people incarcerated have been charged. In Diyarbakir, Mersin and Şırnak, police prevented HDP press conferences, using pepper spray that seriously affected MP Nuran İmir and İdil Co-Mayor Songül Erden... At Şişli (Istanbul),

two Dev-Güç members who had occupied the CHP premises and suspended banners opposing the operation were arrested. In Izmir, Adana and Şırnak, HDP rallies were banned in advance by the governor because of “possible protests” against the military operation.

On 17 October, four people were imprisoned in Kocaeli, thirteen in Adana, eight in Denizli, ten in Ankara, one in Urfa, eight in Mardin, fourteen in Elazığ, and at least six in Çanakkale. Eight people were arrested in Bursa, Kocaeli, Antalya and Konya. The detentions of thirty people incarcerated on the 11th in Nusaybin were extended. Three of the eleven people incarcerated in Antalya have been charged. In Istanbul, the publisher of the magazine *Meşale*, Özgür Sazlık, was imprisoned during a raid on his home; the same happened to a member of a revolutionary party. The leader of the *Partîya Komünîst a Kurdistan (KKPê)* Sinan Çiftiyürek, who had been imprisoned at Diyarbakir the day before, was released under judicial supervision. On the same day, the Governors of Mardin, Eskişehir and Adana banned in advance any public events due to “possible protests” against the operation. In Urfa, already subject to the ban since 19 August, the governor took the same decision on 21 August. On the 25th, the Governors of Adana, Batman and Van (where all public events had already been banned since 21 September) did the same; Iğdır followed on the 28th.

On the 18th, three children were imprisoned in home raids in Istanbul for taking part in protest demonstrations. They were released on the 21st. In Mardin on the 21st, local HDP leader Abidin Uyan, who was incarcerated on the 10th, was charged with “membership in an illegal organisation”.

Eighteen other persons incarcerated in the same investigation were released under judicial supervision, with four remaining in detention. On the 23rd, three HDP officials from Kocaeli were jailed for their messages on social networks, as was a *NetNews* reporter in Istanbul, Emre Orman. Several people incarcerated in the previous days across the country were charged. On the 24th, five people were incarcerated in Adiyaman. There has also been reports of police violence: on the 16th in Diyarbakir, during a raid on her home, Çimen Ülker was kicked and her mother threatened with strangulation by an officer pointing a pistol at her head. On the 28th in Urfa, a father and his two sons were handcuffed behind their backs, laid on the ground, beaten and threatened with death (“The State has ordered us to shoot, we can kill you”). Taken to Security, they were hit again. A doctor forged a fake certificate for the police without even examining them... (TIHV)

The HDP’s criticism of the Rojava invasion provided new excuses for the power to repress its members and elected officials, as only the HDP refused to approve the Rojava invasion in parliament; so new HDP municipal officials were removed from office.

The month began with the trial, on the 1st, of twelve members and officials of the HDP in Istanbul, including the former local co-chair, Doğan Erbaş; all were accused of “membership in an illegal organisation”. The trial was adjourned to January 30. At the same time, four members of the DEV-GÜÇ (Young Revolutionaries) were imprisoned during raids in Istanbul and Izmir. In Tunceli (Dersim), the provincial HDP co-chairs Hıdır Çiçek and Özlem Toprak were incarcerated together with the İHD executive Gürbüz Solmaz and other local

HDP leaders, including the Mazgirt district co-chair Celal Aydın. In Diyarbakir, the prosecutor requested the waiver of immunity of Hakkari HDP MP and DTP co-chair Leyla Güven for her public criticism of the appointment of an administrator to the Diyarbakir mayor's office. At Şırnak, the governor again banned all demonstrations for 15 days; the first ban followed the appointment of administrators to the municipalities of Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van. The next day, the Governor of Adana made the same decision for the fourth time (TIHV).

On the 2nd, the final hearing of the trial of lawyer Feride Laçın for participation in the activities of the Congress for a Democratic Society (DTK) was held in Diyarbakir. Accused of "creating and directing an illegal organization", she was acquitted. On the 4th, former HDP MP Sirri Süreyya Önder, sentenced to three years and six months in prison for terrorist propaganda following his speech at Newrouz 2013, was released on the basis of a decision of the Constitutional Court, which ruled that his freedom of expression had been violated. One of Selahattin's lawyers Demirtaş, Mr. Kayaoğlu, pointed out that the Constitutional Court had been careful not to issue a verdict on the violation of his client's rights, for which a file had been submitted two days before the one concerning Önder and for the same facts... (Bianet) Moreover, Demirtaş was again sentenced on the 7th to one year and three months suspended imprisonment for participating in an event in 2013 (TIHV).

On the 5th, fourteen people were arrested in their homes at Şırnak, including Councillor Gurbet Güleş. Eight were released on the 8th. On the 6th, sixteen HDP members of Kayapınar (Diyarbakir), including the district co-president, were incarcerated

during raids on their homes, and released the next day. On the 7th, nine people, members of the HDP, DTP and the Federation of Socialist Assemblies, were similarly imprisoned in Tunceli. On the 7th, the Governor of Urfa announced the renewal of the ban on all public events for fifteen days. This is the third such ban since the appointment of trustees in Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van (TIHV).

On the 8th, the former HDP co-chair Figen Yüksekdağ was acquitted during the final hearing of her trial in Ankara for "insulting the Turkish nation, the Republic of Turkey and its institutions". This acquittal did not affect her incarceration, as she remains charged in many other cases...

On the 9th, at least 31 persons, including members of municipal councils and leaders of political parties and trade unions, were detained in raids in several districts of Urfa province. On the same day, four HDP members were imprisoned in Diyarbakir, before being released the same day. On the 11th, the court accepted the indictment against the former metropolitan mayor of Van, Özgökçe Ertan, who had been dismissed on the 19 August. Accused in particular of "membership in a terrorist organisation", she faces up to 30 years in prison (Bianet). On the 11th, 12th and 13th, police prevented several sit-ins in front of the HDP office in Diyarbakir, planned as protests against the appointment of administrators at Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van. Twenty-six people were arrested under the governor's ban on public demonstrations, among them, two HDP officials from the district of Bağlar, its co-chair Fatma Kavmaz, and the party assembly member Şahin Tanrıverdi, accused of "propaganda for an illegal organisation", who were placed under house arrest and forbidden

to leave the country. A rally in support of them before the court was violently dispersed. Another HDP sit-in in Van was also prevented.

Also on the 13th, in Istanbul, a commemoration for the seventh anniversary of the founding of the HDP was attacked by Istanbul police with rubber bullets and pepper spray, and nine people were arrested, including the co-chairman of the district of Şişli Mutlu Öztürk, and the co-chairman of the district of Küçükçekmece Hüseyin Fidanboy. Those arrested were formally charged on the 15th with "violation of the law on meetings and gatherings" and "terrorist propaganda". On the 14th, Hülya Ertaş, a member of the HDP executive board, was arrested in Diyarbakir.

On the 15th at dawn, police raided several municipalities in Hakkari, Mardin and Van provinces and arrested many HDP members and local elected officials, including the co-mayors of Hakkari, Yüksekova, Erciş and Nusaybin. In Hakkari, the raids targeted the town hall and the home of the co-Mayor, Cihan Karaman, who was arrested at his home. Yüksekova's co-mayors, Remziye Yaşar and İrfan Sarı, as well as those of Nusaybin, Semire Nergiz and Ferhat Kut, were also arrested at their homes. A violent raid also targeted the "crisis centre" set up in Nusaybin by the HDP to help the inhabitants of this border town, which has been the target of mortar attacks since the beginning of the Turkish offensive in Rojava. The police broke down the door, beat several people present, and arrested on the spot Councillor Mehmet Emin Alkan. In Van, the police arrested in the town hall the co-mayors of the district of Erciş Yıldız Çetin and Bayram Çilek. Municipal Councillor Erhan Akbaş and District HDP Co-Chairs Hicran Kandemir and Şakir

Asıl, and Baran Karaca were arrested at their homes. Finally, on the morning of the 15th, police arrested several HDP members in Bursa, Istanbul and Malatya. On the 17th, Nergiz, Kurt, Karaman, Yaşar and Sarı were charged with “membership in an illegal organization” and “propaganda for an illegal organization”. They were immediately suspended from their posts by the Ministry of the Interior, which appointed the Governor or Deputy Governor of their jurisdiction as administrators in their place. Alkan was released.

On the 16th, the Diyarbakir prosecutor launched an investigation against the HDP mayor of Mardin, Ahmet Türk, who had been suspended in August, for “propaganda for an illegal organisation” on the basis of a speech he gave at Newrouz 2018. In his statement, Türk stated that he defended peace and democracy. On the 17th, Izmir police prevented a “rally for democracy” in front of the HDP office, allowing only HDP co-president Sezai Temelli to make a statement from his office. The same thing happened in Van. On the same day, several leaders of women’s associations imprisoned in Diyarbakir during raids on their homes were subjected by police officers to sexist insults and threats (TIHV). Also on the 17th, Hakkari HDP co-chair Sinan Kaya

was sentenced to ten years and four months in prison for, among other things, “propaganda for an illegal organisation” and “resisting a police officer”.

Early on the morning of the 21st, four new HDP co-mayors were incarcerated after raids on their homes: Selçuk Mızraklı, co-Mayor of Diyarbakır, dismissed on August 19, Keziban Yılmaz, co-Mayor (female) of Kayapınar, Orhan Ayaz, co-Mayor of Bismil, and Rojda Nazlıer, co-Mayor (female) of Kocaköy. The police closed down and searched the town halls of the districts of Kayapınar, Bismil and Kocaköy, and the investigation was declared confidential. The HDP called on the opposition “not to remain silent”, through its deputy parliamentary group leader Saruhan Oluç, who said the government continued to “flout the will of the people by using war as a pretext”. On the 22nd, Mızraklı was charged with “membership in a terrorist organization”, and Yılmaz and Nazlıer were also arrested and replaced by trustees, as well as Cizre’s co-Mayor, Mehmet Zırığ. On the same day, Mesut Ürün, HDP co-chair of Mazıdağı (between Diyarbakir and Mardin), was imprisoned, and four people were detained in Tatvan before being released under judicial supervision. On the

23rd, three members of the HDP were incarcerated at Muş and two in Malatya, each time including the local co-chair. Two of the detainees at Muş were charged on the 25th with “propaganda for an illegal organisation” and the third was released under judicial supervision. As of that date, eleven HDP representatives had been dismissed since the March 31 elections. But the government did not stop there. On the 24th, he launched a broad anti-HDP offensive in parliament, with the filing of 31 different requests for prosecution with the Constitution and Justice Commission against one member of the party İYİ and 19 HDP deputies, including Sezai Temelli (involved in five cases) and Pervin Buldan (one case).

On the 28th, the three dismissed mayors Mızraklı, Yılmaz and Nazlıer, were transferred from Diyarbakir to Kayzeri, 600 km to the west, without any reason given. On the 29th, the police violently dispersed a protest against the dismissal of Zırığ at Şırnak, injuring many people and arresting four, including two Cizre town councillors, Mesut Uçkaç and Serhat Küçük. On this day, the number of HDP mayors dismissed since the March 31 elections stood at thirteen, including those from the metropolitan municipalities of Van, Diyarbakır and Mardin.

TURKEY:

AFTER ITS INVASION OF ROJAVA, THE GOVERNMENT STEPS UP ITS REPRESSION OF JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

After its invasion of Rojava, the Turkish government again intensified its repression, targeting all those who dared to criticise its military operation and launching a new wave of dismissals of elected HDP members. At the same time, he also continued with attacks against the media, human rights

defenders and more generally, all the victims of his policies who dared to raise their heads, such as dismissed civil servants daring to protest – or simply those who speak Kurdish...

On the first of the month, a trial hearing was held in Istanbul for the former editor of the newspaper Yeni Yaşam, Osman Akın,

which was immediately adjourned to January 9, 2020, and the next day, on 2nd October, another was held in Ankara for Rahmi Yıldırım, against whom two to four years in prison are being sought for an article about defence minister Hulusi Akar. The trial has been postponed until 25 December. The same day, the trial of eight defendants, including

seven former journalists from the Dicle News Agency (DİHA), later closed by emergency decree, was held in Diyarbakir for articles about Musa Çitil, a gendarmerie brigadier-general, during the curfew in the Sur district of Diyarbakir. One to five years are required for “disclosing the identity of counter-terrorism officials”. The trial was adjourned until 18 December. On the 9th, the Supreme Court of Appeal upheld the sentence of eight years and nine months for “membership in an illegal organization” of journalist Türfent, also from DİHA: he had reported human rights violations during the curfew on Yüksekova, and interviewed members of the YPS armed group.

On the 18th, Journalist Hayri Demir, charged with “membership in an illegal organisation”, denounced the inclusion in the indictment of a photo taken with Selahattin Demirtaş during an interview in October 2015, stolen from his home in February 2018 and “mysteriously” passed on to the police... “Is it a crime to interview the president of a party that has received six million votes?”, Demir asked, adding: “We are going to days when even breathing will be considered a crime” (Bianet). Journalist Emre Orman, who regularly covered the protests of the “Saturday Mothers” in Istanbul, was charged with “propaganda for a terrorist organisation” on 24 October. On the 25th, the Turkish president filed a complaint against the French magazine *Le Point*, which in the front page of its last issue had called him the “eradicator” of Syria’s Kurds. On the same day, Turkish Vice-President Fuat Oktay, answering a parliamentary question from CHP deputy Fethi Gürer, said that since 2015, 3.804 press cards had been cancelled, including 715 since January 2019, their number having fallen from 15,485 to 12,735 (Bianet). The day

before, the Bianet site had reported that in the past three months, 31 journalists had been fired, 212 tried and 13 imprisoned, and 577 online articles had been blocked. Nurcan Kaya, a journalist with the website *Artı Gerçek*, was jailed at Istanbul airport on the 27th. Charged with “inciting hatred and hostility” following her publications on social networks, she was released after giving evidence. The trial of the newspaper *Sözcü*, whose several employees, including its editor, are accused of “directing an illegal organisation”, was held on the 28th. It was adjourned until December 27.

Finally, on the 30th of June, eight journalists on the daily *Hürriyet* were informed of their dismissal by letter. According to OdaTV, the editor-in-chief, Vahap Munyar, was not aware of this. The next day, more than a dozen more journalists were sacked. In this context, editorialists Gülse Birsnel and Naim Dilmener announced their resignation on Twitter. Since March 2018, the group Doğan, owner of *Hürriyet*, belongs to the Demirören family, very close to Mr. Erdoğan (Bianet).

In a rare bit of good news, on the 11th, Necla Demir, former editor of the news website *Gazete Karınca*, was acquitted of “repeated propaganda for a terrorist organisation”, of which she had been charged after covering the attack on Afrin. On the 16th, Beritan Canözer, of the JINHA agency, accused of “membership in an illegal organisation” for her coverage of the violence suffered by the inhabitants of Sur (Diyarbakir), was acquitted. On the 23rd, the Constitutional Court ruled that four publication bans imposed on media outlets had violated their rights. Among the cases concerned were the ban imposed on *Cumhuriyet* on the supply of arms by the MIT (Turkish secret service) to Syrian

rebels, and the ban imposed on Bianet regarding the parliamentary inquiry into corruption against four AKP ministers in 2013. On the 25th, the day after the new “judicial package” came into force, the last defendant in the *Cumhuriyet* case, Emre İper, originally sentenced to more than three years imprisonment, was released on appeal. On the same day, the court ordered the release of Hüseyin Aykol, former co-editor-in-chief of *Özgür Gündem*, later closed by an emergency decree, originally sentenced to nearly four years in prison on 12 July. Aykol said he thought he had been “released temporarily to soften Europe”, as Turkey wants EU funds to resettle refugees in Syria. Also on the 25th, Meltem Oktay and Uğur Akgül, of the agency DİHA, were released after action by their lawyers. They had been charged with “membership in a terrorist organization” for covering the 2015-2016 curfews.

In Istanbul, police continued to prevent “Saturday Mothers” gatherings by blocking access to Galatasaray Square on 12 and 26 October. On the 12th, the Mothers and their supporters wanted to read in front of İHD premises a statement about Cemil Kırbayır, who disappeared in detention after the 1980 coup d’état, and expressing opposition to the Turkish invasion of the Rojava, but the police dispersed them with truncheons and pepper spray. The police also prevented Mothers from attending an HDP meeting on the 7th in Ankara. One of them, Nazife Yiğit, was stopped en route, in Urfa, and others at the Adana road terminal were forcibly put back into buses to their home towns.

Numerous demonstrations by people dismissed by emergency decree and calling for their reinstatement were also repressed. This problem also concerns the

“Academics for Peace”, those teachers who were fired after signing a petition against the violence of 2016 in Kurdish cities. While the ruling in their favour by the Constitutional Court on 26 July led to the acquittal of 329 of them, 406 are still unemployed and 549 deprived of their passports. In a joint statement issued on the 4th, they have been calling for return of their travel documents, automatic reinstatement by the Higher Education Council (YÖK) or the allocation of an equivalent post, and full payment of the withheld salaries.

In Ankara, the police prevented numerous public statements by dismissed public servants, organised twice a day in front of the Human Rights Monument on Yüksel Street. Several protesters were detained each time and usually released in the evening or the following day. On October 1, 2, 7 and 8, four people were incarcerated. Incarcerations continued on the 9th (six incarcerations), and on the 11th, 12th and 13th (twelve incarcerations over the three days), and so on until the end of the month. Not only were the protesters not reinstated, but some were charged and arrested for protesting! The police repressed other protests: on the 7th in Ankara (health workers, two imprisoned, a new protest on the 29th also repressed) and in Istanbul (a woman violently imprisoned, returned protesting in the street on the 21st and again imprisoned). On the 5th and again on the 14th, the gendarmerie prevented a march to Ankara of the Manisa miners, who had been dismissed without compensation, even though the administrative court had lifted the governor's ban on the march. There was repression on the 17th in Düzce, then again in Ankara on the 21st against health workers, in Istanbul against the cleaning staff of Maltepe University who were

protesting against dismissals. On the 24th at Eskişehir, the police attacked the employees of Zeytinoğlu Holding, unpaid for months and then dismissed without compensation, with truncheons and pepper spray, preventing them from walking to Ankara (32 arrests, several hospitalizations due to pepper spray). Finally, several people dismissed by decree and missing for months “reappeared” in the hands of the police, who had placed them in solitary confinement. Others haven't been heard from for almost a year...

For a long time in Turkey, prisons have been a place of political struggle that can go as far as hunger strike, and of ill-treatment that can go as far as torture, to which the authorities turn a blind eye. Detainees are sometimes illegally forbidden to listen to the radio or to access the books sent to them, which are confiscated before they reach them. The former co-mayor of Diyarbakir, Gültan Kışanak, who is being held in the prison of Kandıra, wrote in a letter to the press sent on the 21st that they were forbidden to read the newspaper *Yeni Yaşam* and that the administration refused them the books they were sent, forcing them to buy books in the facility instead. On the 17th, a court replied to a prisoner asking for the radio he had bought in prison and that was confiscated afterwards, that he was indeed “legally entitled to have a radio, but could not use this right, by decision of the Ministry of Justice”... A prisoner in Amasya Type E prison, Fethi Yaşa, was charged 180 TL (€25) for translation costs after he sent letters in Kurdish.

It is common practice to forcibly transfer detainees away from their loved ones: Ferhat Kut, Co-Mayor of Nusaybin, arrested on the 17th, was placed in solitary confinement at Elaziğ on the 26th; Keziban Yılmaz, co-mayor of Kayapınar

(Diyarbakir) and Rojda Nazlier, co-mayor of Kocaköy (Diyarbakir), arrested on the 22nd, were transferred on the 27th to Kayseri, in Central Anatolia, hundreds of kilometres from their homes. Prison overcrowding is such that in Izmir, for example, prisoners sleep on the ground while detained spouses are prevented from seeing each other. In Çanakkale, the prisoners are piled up to fourteen in cells of eight. Detainees on hunger strike have no medical assistance. In the Sincan women's prison, inmates are not transferred to the infirmary, allegedly due to the lack of a doctor. Finally, the police systematically repress the actions of defenders of prisoners' rights. On the 12th and 26th in Istanbul, it blocked access to Galatasaray Square to prevent a sit-in by the İHD association calling for the release of sick detainees. The İHD members had to make their public statement in front of their premises. On the 21st, Zeynep and Hakan Koçak, whose son Mustafa is on hunger strike, were arrested in front of the Parliament where they had come to meet MPs.

On the 13th, Istanbul police prevented a press conference of the Prisoners' Families Solidarity Association (TAYAD) which wanted to announce a march to Ankara in support of the musical group Grup Yorum (TIHV). Several of its detained members have been on indefinite hunger strike, some for 144 days, to obtain their release, the lifting of their charges and the ban on their concerts, and an end to the harassment against the Cultural Centre İdil in Istanbul where they rehearse, and which has suffered eight police raids over the past two years, during which thirty people have been arrested and their instruments broken or stolen. Two of the musicians, Selma and İnan, have sought asylum in France.

Lawyers and human rights defenders continue to be systematically prosecuted. On 9 October, the ninth hearing in the trial of eleven members of associations accused of “membership in an illegal organisation” was held in Istanbul. Among the defendants are the two foreign trainers (Swedish and German) and lawyer Taner Kılıç, honorary president of Amnesty International Turkey. Ten were arrested together on the island of Büyükada (Istanbul) on 5 July 2017 while participating in a workshop entitled “Digital Security and Protection of Human Rights Defenders”. Kılıç was arrested along with 22 other lawyers in June 2017 for another case. Amnesty International Secretary General Kumi Naidoo called for “an end to the judicial farce”, stressing that in two years the prosecution could not provide any evidence of criminal activity (Bianet). On the 16th, the Court of Appeal upheld the 159 years of imprisonment imposed on members of the “Association of Modern Lawyers”. Six of them, sentenced to sentences of less than five years, cannot appeal; twelve others, sentenced to sentences of more than five years, can go to the Supreme Court of Appeal...

On the evening of the 22nd, police raided the home of the co-president of the human rights association İHD, lawyer Eren Keskin, in her absence. She was then summoned to the anti-terrorist branch. Keskin, founder of the Legal Aid Office against sexual harassment and rape in detention, and also a former editor and columnist for Özgür Gundem, is accused of “propaganda for a terrorist organisation” and is the target of 143 different lawsuits, including some for “insulting the president” and “degrading the Turkish nation”...

The trial of Osman Kavala, arrested on 1st November 2017 in the

so-called “Gezi Park case” for the 2013 protests, continued, with a hearing on 8 October. The prosecution is seeking life sentences for 16 defendants charged with “attempting to overthrow the government”, and prison terms on other charges. Citing a “flight risk”, the court decided to keep in custody Kavala, now the only defendant still in prison, and adjourned the trial to 24-25 December. Kavala’s lawyers have denounced his 707-day incarceration as a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, and the fact that the entire prosecution file is a compilation of illegal recordings (Bianet).

Arrests related to the July 2016 coup attempt also continue. On 1st October, thirty-six incarcerations took place in eighteen cities across the country, with another thirty targeted at military personnel and medical officers. On the 8th, fourteen incarcerations took place in twenty-one cities following an enquiry launched from Ankara and thirty-six others in ten cities following another one in Izmir. On the 24th, thirty-one people were apprehended across fifteen cities...

Finally, speaking or singing in Kurdish (or simply being Kurdish) continues to be grounds for imprisonment, or worse. On the 4th, seven musicians from two different groups who were singing in Kurdish at a wedding were arrested at Şanlıurfa and charged on the 7th with “propaganda for an illegal organisation” (TIHV). On the 13th, Şirin Tosun, a nineteen-year-old seasonal worker, who was shot in the head in a Sakarya street on 23 August because he spoke Kurdish, died of his injuries in hospital (Evrensel). On the 25th, it was learned that Ozan Okur, a Kurdish man waiting for a bus for Adana at the Edirne bus station on 20th September, had been taken to the police station, beaten

up and stripped of his bus ticket, money and phone. Police violence also marred the trials against residents of Kurdish towns forcibly evacuated during curfews. On 8th of October, forty residents of Sur (Diyarbakir) were evacuated from the courtroom and beaten by gendarmes, and family members were incarcerated.

In addition to the invasion of North-eastern Syria, the Turkish army continued its operations in the Kurdish provinces of the country as well as in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. On 1st October, the media reported the death of two Kurdish activists in an air strike at Şırnak on 28 September, and two people identified as MLKP activists were killed and two police officers injured in an attack on a house at Eskişehir. On the 7th and 8th, the Defence Ministry announced the “neutralisation” of twelve PKK fighters in several air strikes in Iraqi Kurdistan (AFP), and on the 10th, the “neutralisation” of four THKP-C/MLSPB militants near Dohuk on 16 September. On the 8th, in connection with the attack in Syria, the governor of Hakkari announced the designation of fourteen border areas as security zones, prohibited from entry. On the 14th, the districts of Central Hakkari, Çukurca, Şemdinli, Yüksekova and Derecik were designated safe areas for two weeks. On the 17th, eleven zones in the province were again designated as safe zones until the 21st (HVT). On the 29th, a new announcement extended these designations for five zones until 12 November (Bianet).

On the 9th, a seven-year-old child was run over by an armoured vehicle in Silopi, without any investigation being opened (news published on the 24th). On the 15th, the Ministry of Interior announced the incarceration of 391 people during the previous three days in an operation target-

ing the PKK (245 incarcerations in 36 provinces) and ISIS (146 incarcerations in 25 provinces), an operation that is still ongoing (Bianet). On the 17th, a civilian was killed by gunfire from soldiers in Lice during an attack on a house (TIHV). On the 18th, the governor of Van announced the death of a soldier on patrol in

Çaldıran in an attack in which two others were wounded. On the 21st, a one-day curfew was imposed on four districts of Derik (Mardin). On the same day, the death of a soldier was announced in the same area, and another death at Şemdinli (Hakkari). In addition, five soldiers and three village guards were injured in an

attack on a patrol at Kağızman (Kars). On the 27th, a soldier wounded by a missile on the 23rd in Yüksekova died in hospital. That same day, the army announced the “neutralisation” by air strike of four Kurdish fighters in Haftanin in Iraqi Kurdistan, and the next day that of three others in Derik (Mardin).

ISIS:

THE JIHADIST ORGANIZATION TAKES ADVANTAGE OF THE WEAKENING OF ITS OPPONENTS BUT LOSES ITS LEADER AL-BAGHDADI.

Even before the Turkish invasion of the Rojava, the Middle East Monitor (MEMO) pointed out on October 1st the resurgence of ISIS in Syria. In Palmyra, jihadists used a car bomb against Russian Special Forces and pro-regime militias, and surrounded and attacked a Russian convoy, which had to be cleared by air strikes. Near Raqqa, the former capital of the “Caliphate”, the organisation claimed responsibility for an attack against the SDF, in which five fighters were killed or wounded. But the most important operation mentioned by MEMO remains the capture of Al-Sukhna, a small town of 16.000 inhabitants on the Palmyra-Raqqa road, on 29 September. Forced to withdraw by Russian air strikes, the jihadists retook the city on 1st October, killing 20 pro-Damascus militiamen. Also on the 29th, three civilians were killed in a bomb attack near the Al-Omar oil field, controlled by the SDF, which also uses it as a military base. Although the attack was aimed at the SDF, a vehicle transporting field workers was hit instead... (SOHR) The attack was not immediately claimed but in this region the SDF is often the target of attacks by ISIS. The jihadist organisation used to control the Al-Omar field, which, before being destroyed in October 2015 by raids by the international coalition, brought in

between 1.7 and 5.1 million dollars a month (1.5 and 4.6 million euros) to the jihadists (AFP).

On the 9th, ISIS claimed responsibility for another suicide bombing in Raqqa that claimed no victims. On the 11th, the explosion of a car bomb, parked near a popular restaurant in Qamishli, which killed six people, including civilians, and injured nine, was claimed. On the same day, as a result of the Turkish attack, five members of ISIS were able to flee from “Navkur” prison, located on the western outskirts of Qamichli, after Turkish air strikes nearby. And in the Al-Hol camp, where are kept more than 70.000 displaced people, including 3.000 families of djihadists, a riot broke out when local Asayish (Kurdish Security) were attacked by women from the camp who had organized a demonstration and refused to obey the guards. The incident occurred after part of the Kurdish security forces in the camp were redeployed further north to assist in the fight against the Turkish attack. A Kurdish official assured that no jihadists had managed to escape in the turmoil.

However, on the 13th, the Kurdish authorities announced the flight of 785 relatives of foreign jihadists from the Ain Isa camp, which had been targeted by Turkish aerial bombardments and from which its guards had had to leave.

Expressing its “concern”, France reiterated its request to Turkey to “conclude its intervention as soon as possible”. The next day, Turkey accused the SDF of deliberately releasing members of ISIS in order to “sow chaos” in the region. On the 15th, the lawyers of three French women hitherto detained by the SDF in Syria learned that they had been “recovered” by ISIS as a result of the Turkish military intervention in the country. On the 17th, the organisation claimed to have “freed” several female prisoners held in Raqqa by attacking an SDF headquarters near that city.

On the 16th, the SDF commander, Mazloum Abdi, announced the suspension of operations against ISIS, before announcing their resumption on the 19th: “We have resumed military operations against the ISIS cells in Deir Ezzor, our forces are working there with those of the coalition”, he said in a telephone interview with AFP.

On the 23rd, James Jeffrey, US envoy to Syria, told the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee that more than 100 ISIS prisoners had escaped since the Turkish offensive: “We believe the number is now over 100. We don’t know where they are”, he said. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) also reported that a ISIS leader with 150 terrorists took advantage of

the chaos and looting caused by the Turkish operation to make his return to Tell Abyad (WKI).

The 26th was, however, the day of a major blow to the jihadist organization, with a raid by the American Special Forces on the Idlib region that resulted in the killing of ISIS's leader, the self-proclaimed Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. American commandos were transported close to their objective by eight helicopters that

left from Iraqi Kurdistan and landed in the night near the hide-out of the jihadist leader. The SDF had managed to infiltrate an informant into the entourage of the "Caliph" of ISIS, who had been able to obtain an undergarment from his target and then a sample of his blood, which was invaluable in verifying the identity of the suspect before the strike, and later in ensuring his DNA identification. It was this informant, who remained on the scene, who guid-

ed the American commandos to the end.

The next day, it was ISIS's spokesman Abu Hassan Al-Mouhadjir who was killed in another raid in the village of Ain al-Bayda near Jerablous – a city under Turkish control. On the 31st, ISIS confirmed the death of its leader and appointed his successor, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashem al-Qurashi, threatening the United States with reprisals.

IRAQ:

HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE KILLED IN THE REPRESSION OF PROTESTS

The month of October has been marked by the extension of popular protests triggered at the end of September by the dismissal of Lieutenant-General Abdul Wahab Al-Saadi. Widely regarded by public opinion as one of the main architects of the victory over ISIS, Al-Saadi, who was transferred to the Ministry of Defence on 27 September, said he felt the decision was "a humiliation in his military career". The authorities even had a statue of him covered up and placed under guard to prevent it from being unveiled by the population! It was reported he owed his dismissal to his bad relationship with the pro-Tehran Hashd al-Shaabi militia...

Demonstrators' demands quickly expanded, with protesters calling for the departure of corrupt political elites responsible for the country's dire situation with massive unemployment and lack of basic services. When thousands of citizens took to the streets in Baghdad, including Tahrir Square, on 1st October, security forces did not hesitate to use live ammunition to disperse them. Far from stopping the movement, this excessive use of violence accelerated its spread throughout the country, including Kirkuk... The repression left 21 people dead and more than 800 injured.

On the 2nd, the government blocked the Internet and declared a curfew in Baghdad. On the evening of the 3rd, Prime Minister Abd al-Mahdi intervened to declare that he had heard the demands of the demonstrators and would try to respond to them, although he had "no magic solution". He announced the forthcoming introduction of a minimum income. During the following week, 1,3 million Iraqis applied for the unemployment benefits subsequently created by the Ministry of Finance, but this did nothing to calm the protesters. Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani urged the government to take action and respond to the demonstrators' demands, and Amnesty International called for an investigation into the violence by the security forces and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

By the 5th, the death toll had risen to over a hundred dead and 6,000 injured. The Speaker of Parliament, Mohammad Al-Halbousi, announced a special session to discuss the demands of the demonstrators. But on the night of the 6th to the 7th, in Sadr City, east of Baghdad, the security forces used heavy weapons and thirteen people were killed. On the 7th, President Barham Saleh called for "an end to the escalation" and called for "frank and total political dialogue" without "foreign interference". The army

acknowledged an "excessive use" of force, which was condemned by the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights.

Demonstrations took an increasingly anti-Iranian turn, with many protesters accusing this country of seeking to weaken the Iraqi army in favour of militias that are sympathetic to it. The Iranian commander of the Pasdaran Foreign Action Force, Al-Quds, Qassem Soleimani, and the head of the Shiite militia Hashd Al-Sha'abi, the Iranian-Iraqi Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, were singled out. Moreover, at the end of the month, Reuters and Associated Press both reported that, as soon as the protests began, Soleimani went to Baghdad to encourage security officials to apply the violent Iranian methods of repression, with the results that we know of... On the 30th, the Iranian Supreme Guide, Ali Khamenei, attributed the protests in Iraq and Lebanon to the instigation of the Gulf countries. On the 9th, Amnesty published a report documenting the use of snipers by law enforcement agencies, and on the 10th, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported about intimidation and attacks on journalists covering the protests.

The Prime Minister initiated a cabinet reshuffle; the leaders of Kurdistan gave him their support.

Indeed, Baghdad and Erbil were on the verge of concluding a budget agreement for the next six years: Baghdad would pay civil servants of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and allocate 13% of its budget to it, in exchange for the daily delivery of 250.000 barrels of oil. The KRG was hence not really enthusiastic about a change of interlocutor, which might bring the discussions back to square one...

On the 11th, Ayatollah Sistani blamed the government for the many deaths and gave the Iraqi leaders two weeks to investigate them and make the results known. The Prime Minister complied the next day by setting up a Commission of Inquiry. On the 14th, the Iraqi Lawyers Association said that the government, despite promises to release all arrested demonstrators, was still holding more than 6.000 people, mostly teenagers, in detention. On the 17th, two security officials revealed the role played by pro-Iranian militia snipers in the killings of protesters. On the 22nd, the report of the Commission was disappointing: although admitting excessive use of violence and recommending the dismissal of several security officials, it did not address the responsibilities of the pro-Iranian militias. On the same day, the UN mission in Iraq (UNAMI) released its own report in which it found that the Iraqi Security Forces had violated "the right to life, liberty and security of persons, as well as the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly". On the 18th, Amnesty spoke out again, calling on the Iraqi government to end its violations and in particular the disappearances of protesters (ISHM). Announcements of the creation of 4.500 civil service posts for students on the 19th did not prevent the resumption of demonstrations on the 25th in several cities, including Baghdad, Nasiriya, Basra and Samawa. The security forces again fired live ammunition and on the

31st, it was estimated that since the 25th, more than 100 Iraqis had been killed and 5.500 wounded.

As pressure mounted to force the Prime Minister to resign and to call early elections, the parliament on 26th launched a series of measures: it passed a law to dissolve provincial, district and sub-district councils, established a Commission to make recommendations for constitutional amendments, and passed a law to eliminate financial benefits for members of the government. At the same time, the demonstrations began to have an economic impact: on 29 November, the port of Umm-Qasr (Basra) was blocked by demonstrators, and the 46th Baghdad International Fair, scheduled for 1st November, was postponed. On the 31st, President Salih declared on television that he supported the demands of the protesters and was in favour of snap elections.

The extension of the protests also led to the suspension of the Baghdad-Erbil negotiations. Several delegation visits to Baghdad or Erbil were cancelled, and on the 22nd, the KRG's Head of External Relations, Safin Dizayî, officially announced that the situation had forced Baghdad to change its priorities. He indicated that the KRG was ready to resume discussions as soon as possible. On the 27th, KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani and Iraqi Security Advisor Falih Fayyadh, after a meeting on the security situation in the disputed territories, reaffirmed "the continued cooperation between the Pechmergas and the Iraqi Security Forces". In fact, since the departure of the pechmergas in October 2017, the security situation in these territories remains catastrophic. Moreover, Baghdad's decision to hold provincial elections in these territories has caused new tensions between Erbil and Baghdad. The Kurdish channel NRT reported on 1st October that the KRG justice

minister, Farsat Ahmad, had filed a complaint with the supreme court on 24 September against the speaker of the Federal parliament, Muhammad al-Halbousi, for ratifying an electoral law that was illegal because it is unconstitutional. NRT does not specify the reasons for this unconstitutionality, but it is highly likely that it relates to non-compliance with Article 140, which subjects the definition of the electorate in the disputed territories to a validation process that has never been carried out...

While contesting the holding of provincial elections in the disputed territories, the Kurdish parties at the same time made arrangements to participate in them if they are held. They formed a common electoral list for each of the provinces of Kirkuk, Diyala, Salahaddin and Ninewa, called "Kurdistani". For Kirkuk, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the Kurdistan Islamic Union (Yekgirtûy Îslamî), the Movement for Change (Goran) and the Islamic Group (Komal), meeting on 1st October, chose as their joint candidate to the function of governor Abdulrahman Mustafa, former governor of Kirkuk from 2003 to 2011. He indicated that he would campaign on inter-community coexistence and the implementation of Article 140. In Kirkuk, the provincial council is still in conflict with the interim governor appointed by Baghdad after the dismissal of Nejmeddin Karim, Rakan Said Al-Jabouri, whose budget it rejected and whom it accuses of concealing documents. At the end of the month, the Iraqi Integrity Commission arrested seven provincial civil servants and issued arrest warrants for several others for corruption: they had allegedly used public money to pay for Al-Jabouri's personal expenses...

In Tuz Khurmatu, Kurdish traders in the city observed a 24-hour strike on 16 October on the second

anniversary of the attack on the city in 2017 by the Iraqi army and pro-Iranian militias, which had caused the destruction of 160 Kurdish houses and numerous abuses. In Kirkuk, after the return to the city of the KDP, which had left on the same day in 2017, a small group of Turkmen and Arab inhabitants of the city gathered to protest against this return and launch racist anti-Kurdish slogans (WKI).

The chronicle of jihadist attacks in the disputed territories for this month is frightening, with many attacks using homemade bombs / improvised explosive devices (IEDs). On the 2nd, one of them killed two tribal fighters in Al-Shura (Ninewa), while a coalition air strike killed ten jihadists in Hawija (Kirkuk) and another five in Salahaddin in the Hamrin Mountains (ISHM). The jihadists became so confident that they were able to briefly cut the Baghdad-Samarra road on the 3rd before Security restored the passage. On the 10th, according to local officials, increased jihadist activity in north-east Baqubah (Diyala) prompted 140 families to leave; jihadists also killed the Mukhtar of Rashad (southwest of Kirkuk) and possibly a civilian in the old city of Mosul on the 11th. On the 12th, two civilians were killed by a bomb south of this city. On the 13th, two separate attacks killed one officer and wounded two soldiers in Anbar (car bomb), and an IED wounded three members of the Security forces south of Kirkuk. The following day, a bomb injured two farmers in Diyala and another two Hashd al-Shaabi de-miners in Salahaddine, and on the 16th a civilian north of Mosul. On the same day the security forces were able to neutralize seven jihadists in Daquq (Kirkuk) with Coalition support, but clashes with ISIS left one militia member dead and two injured in Diyala, where a bomb hit three soldiers the next day. On the 18th, Baghdad closed the Syrian border in

an attempt to prevent the infiltration of jihadists. But from the next day on, a series of IEDs hit Iraq: on the 19th, a civilian was wounded in Taza (Kirkuk), a policeman wounded south of Kirkuk, two civilians injured inside the city; a fourth IED did not cause any casualties. On the 23rd, another killed three civilians and wounded a fourth in Riyadh (west of Kirkuk), and on the 24th, two civilians were killed and two wounded in Khazir (north-west of Kirkuk). Besides, two police officers and four members of their escort were killed in an ambush on the 22nd in Salahaddin, and the security forces had two dead and three wounded in a separate attack on an oil field. On the 24th in Abu Saida (Diyala), snipers shot dead three local officials and at least one civilian. On the 19th, twenty more terrorized families left their village near Khanaqin. On the 25th, snipers killed two and wounded three federal police officers in Taza (south of Kirkuk).

The death in an American raid of the ISIS leader in Syria on the 26th did not stop the activities of jihadists in Iraq. On the 27th, they wounded four members of the Hashd al-Shaabi in Diyala in an attack on their outpost and launched an attack on an oil field. On the 28th, two civilians were killed in a bomb explosion in Mukhdadiyah, and on the 30th, mortar shells were fired at the provincial government headquarters in Baqubah without causing any casualties. On the 31st, as ISIS announced the appointment of Baghdadi's successor, an attack on a roadblock in Tarmiyah (near Baqubah) left one security force (ISHM) dead and five wounded.

Concerning the Turkish operation in Rojava, the KRG called on Turkey on the 8th to avoid any action that could jeopardise the fight against ISIS. On the 15th, Erbil's parliament called by a large majority for an

immediate end to the attack. The following day, the KRG criticised the US withdrawal, expressing concern about the risk of ISIS's re-emergence and further population displacements. Kurdish political parties have also condemned the abuses committed against the Kurds of Syria by pro-Ankara jihadists, and thousands of Kurds demonstrated in Erbil and Suleimaniyeh (WKI). Seventy trucks of aid were collected and sent to Rojava. Following numerous calls on social networks for the boycott of Turkish products, their prices have literally collapsed. On the 17th, the Russian oil company Rosneft announced the closure for security reasons of a field near the Syrian border. On 31 October, the KRG Crisis Coordination Centre announced that since 14 October, 13.572 Kurdish refugees from Syria had arrived in the Region. The KRG, which is already hosting more than 1,1 million refugees and displaced persons, announced an emergency plan to assist them.

Parallel to the invasion of the Rojava launched on the 9th, the Turkish army continued in Iraqi Kurdistan its anti-PKK operation "Claws" launched last May. On 1st and 2nd October, air strikes killed at least nine fighters of this organisation (ISHM), including three in a vehicle hit on the 1st near Ozmana (north of Dohuk). Another strike near Zakho caused significant agricultural damage (Kurdistan-24). On the 2nd, another strike hit Çemankê, near Amêdî, causing a fire and extensive material damage (RojInfo). On the 5th, the Turkish Ministry of Defence announced the elimination in Avashin of seventeen Kurdish fighters, an unverifiable allegation. On the 15th, security forces in Suleimaniyeh announced that an armed Turkish drone (UAV) had killed two fighters; local officials denounced an attack too close to populated areas. On the 16th, another air strike hit the village of Blava (Dohuk).

IRAN: PLANNED END OF AID TO THE POOREST, PROFITS FOR CACIQUES, PRISON FOR PROTESTERS

At the beginning of the month, the World Bank published its 2019 assessment for the Iranian economy, which is still subject to US sanctions: it contracted by 8.7%. Then on October 15, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its World Economic Outlook Report, forecast a contraction of 9.5% for 2019. Adding up the contraction of the previous year leads to a total of 14%... This is Tehran's worst economic performance since 1984. For inflation in 2019, the same two sources put it at 38%, after the 30% of 2018. However, the governor of the Central Bank, Abdolnasser Hemmati, proclaimed that the regime had succeeded in stabilising the economy, echoing President Rouhani's assertion before the United Nations General Assembly. It is true that, after the lifting of sanctions in early 2016, oil exports arithmetically boosted growth, but this was only the expression of new income, without any development, since the industry had only grown by 1% at the time. As for the drop in inflation, it means that prices are rising at a slower pace, not stabilizing... On the 28th, the IMF indicated that to balance its 2020 budget, Iran needed an oil barrel at \$ 195. It is currently at \$ 65 (Radio Farda)...

The regime showed its declarations to be mere propaganda when it decided to cut back on the financial aid introduced by President Ahmadinejad from 2005 onwards, by gradually raising the thresholds for its allocation. In September, 700,000 Iranians were deprived of it, and in October another 400,000. These successive removals will continue until March 2020, when they will affect 24 million Iranians. Even if the

value of this aid, paid in rials, had already fallen sharply with the collapse of the currency, abolishing it will deal a blow to the poorest. It is in this context that the five-year prison sentence on appeal for corruption of President Rouhani's brother, Hossein Fereydoun, also accused of money laundering in other cases, came about. The President's supporters denounced a political condemnation, prepared by the Conservatives. But it does show that the Islamic Republic is a regime of profiteers...

On 7 October, the abolition of fuel price subsidies was discussed in parliament in a closed-door session in the presence of the deputy commander of the Revolutionary Guard, Ali Fadavi. Closed-door session, no media reporting: clearly, the regime fears reactions from the street.

The repression exercised by the regime is commensurate with its fear. The month began with the announcement on the 2nd of the execution on 25th September of at least eight inmates of Rajai Shahr (Karaj) prison, sentenced to death for murder or drug trafficking. In Iran, executions often take place in secret and are known only with delay. But Iran is the country that executes the most in proportion to its population. The Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) compiled data from several reports and counted 195 from January 1st to December 20, 2018, thirteen of which were public and six concerned minors (or minors at the time of the alleged acts). According to another HRANA estimate, from 10 October 2018 to 8 October 2019, there were 134 death sentences and 242 executions, 16 of which were public and

five of which of minors. Given such figures, is it worth rejoicing that according to HRANA, the courts handed down 47.6% fewer death sentences than in the previous year? Executions have fallen by 5.4%...

Recently, women seem particularly targeted by the repression: eight Iranian women have been executed over three months. Among the political prisoners who refuse to give in is Atena Daemi, who is being held in Evin prison. She had already received three more years in prison for protesting the executions of three Kurdish political prisoners, Zanyar and Loghman Moradi, and Ramin Hossein Panahi. On the anniversary of their executions, she reiterated her opposition to the death penalty in an open letter sent from her cell, in which she declared herself "honoured" by this new sentence. On 2 September, it was learned that the sentence of student activist Parisa Rafiyeh had been upheld on appeal in Tehran on 25 September. Arrested in February 2018 in front of her university, the art student was sentenced to seven years in prison and 74 lashes for "propaganda against the state", "disturbing public order" and "assembly and collusion against national security". According to an anonymous source, Rafiyeh was abused during her interrogations, including being forced to undergo a virginity test, and threatened with torture and execution ...

On 10 October, for the first time since 1981, Iranian women were able to legally buy tickets for a football match in Tehran. To achieve this result, FIFA had to threaten to suspend Iran from international tournaments. But the trigger was Sahar Khodayari's sui-

cide. Arrested for attempting to enter a stadium disguised as a man, the girl known as “the blue girl”, the colour of the Istiqlal team she supported, was sentenced to six months in prison. Terrified at the prospect, she set herself on fire in front of the court and died in hospital on September 9.

On 14 October, the Tehran Court of Appeal upheld the three-year prison sentence imposed on women’s rights defender Aliyeh Motalebzadeh for “propaganda against the state” and “collusion”. Motalebzadeh had already been arrested several times (HRANA) as a signatory of the “One Million Signatures Against Discriminatory Laws” appeal.

Workers daring to protest against low wages, late payment or working conditions, as well as activists trying to defend them, are also particularly targeted. According to the food industry union, the contracts of 150 workers at the Haft Tappeh sugar factory in Shush have not been renewed. Protests at the 4,000-strong sugar factory, Iran’s oldest, began on September 23 after 21 workers were fired.

On the 14th, trade union leader Nahid Khodajû, arrested on 1st of May in front of the Parliament together with other demonstrators, was sentenced to six years in prison and 74 lashes for “disturbing public order” and “assembly and collusion against national security”. According to the Iranian penal code, she will have to serve her highest sentence, five years for “assembly and collusion”. Arrested in the same circumstances, Atefeh Rangriz, sentenced to 11 years in prison and 74 lashes and incarcerated in Qarchak Prison, went on hunger strike on the 16th (HRANA). In Sanandaj, Etelaat (Iranian intelligence) arrested on the 19th the trade

unionist Faramarz Sharyatî, and on the 23rd, another trade unionist, Saman Malakî (WKI). On the 20th, thirteen employees of a sub-contracting company in the municipality of Kut-e Abdollah (Khuzistan) were arrested for attempting to launch a strike after unsuccessfully demanding the payment of their salaries.

The Kurds are still as much targeted by repression, and among them cross-border porters or kolbars, a dangerous occupation to which are turning, because of the disastrous economic situation, according to the Human Rights Association of Kurdistan (KMMK), more and more Kurds, and even recently an increasing number of Kurdish women. At the end of the month, KMMK counted since the beginning of 2019 60 kolbars killed and at least 119 wounded by the regime. On the 13th, two porters, Abdulrahman and Sadiq Mouradî, were killed by security forces near Piranshahr. In Pawa, another was victim of a mine and had to have both legs amputated. At Hewraman, a shopkeeper was shot for his relations with kolbars. On the 15th, again in Piranshahr, a kolbar was seriously wounded in an ambush, and one killed and another wounded in Sardacht. On the 16th, one was wounded in Salmas, a second the next day, again in Piranshahr, and a third the day after again in Sardacht, where on the 21st, a kolbar was again killed in an ambush. On the 23rd, another was shot in his vehicle in an ambush to a group near Javanrud. On the 24th, another died after falling in a ravine in Nowsud while fleeing border guards. On the 27th, another was injured near Baneh (WKI).

The Kurds who gathered to protest against Turkey’s invasion of Rojava (although it had been denounced by Tehran) were also targeted by the repression. Many

people took to the streets on Saturday 12th, as evidenced by videos posted on social networks from Piranshahr, Sanandaj, Baneh, Marivan... Demonstrations took place in about twenty cities in Iranian Kurdistan as well as in Tehran. The protesters used the #Resistance hashtag on Twitter to mobilize. The authorities did not react immediately, allowing the protests to proceed smoothly. But on the following Monday, 14 October, Etelaat arrested more than 20 people involved in organizing the protests, many of them Marivan, and charged them with “disturbing public order”. The same week, Kurdish activist Arman Ghafuri was sentenced to six months in prison on the same charge for organising a protest against the Turkish invasion of Afrîn. Four other activists were arrested in Bokan on the 19th. At the end of the month, in Ilam, the “Revolutionary Court” sentenced Ahmed Shokrî to one year in prison for organising a protest demonstration against the Turkish invasion of the Rojava. Also at the end of the month, five Kurds arrested this summer in Urumieh and Sanandaj by the Etelaat were sentenced in Urumieh to one year in prison for “aiding Kurdish opposition parties” and “propaganda against the Islamic Republic”.

Also targeted are religious minorities, particularly the Baha’i, as their religion is not recognized. On the 12th, three Baha’is from Abadan and Ahwaz each received one year in prison for “propaganda against the state”. On the 21st, three more Baha’is from Shiraz were placed in solitary confinement after a city-wide search campaign. As for Iranian Sunnis, it was learned on October 2 that a former imam of Talesh, Tohid Ghoreishi, had been sentenced on September 25 to sixteen years in prison for “supporting opposition groups”, “assembly and collusion

against national security" and "propaganda against the state" (HRNA). On 11 October, a Urumieh resident, Seyed Aram Aminzadeh, was sentenced on appeal to 11 years in prison for "propaganda against the state by creating a Salafist group on social networks".

Finally, intellectuals, always suspect of dissidence, are also target-

ed: the Kurdish writer Emîn Massori was arrested, and on the 13th, the short film director Kyumars Marzban was sentenced on appeal to 23 years and nine months in prison, in his absence and without his defence being heard. According to the penal code, he will have to serve his most important sentence, eleven years for "cooperation with a hostile state", a sentence that is entire-

ly fabricated (the organisation employing him is recognised in Iran as an NGO). The incredible list of Marzban's other convictions demonstrates the true nature of this regime: seven years and six months for "blasphemy", three years for "insulting the Supreme Guide and Founder of the Revolution" and nine months for "insulting the authorities"...



October 1, 2019

Erdogan : Turkey has no choice but set up Syria «safe zone» alone

Turkey has no choice but to act alone given too little progress has been made with the [United States](#) in forming a «safe zone» in northeastern [Syria](#). President [Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#) has said, in his most direct indication of a cross-border offensive.

After eight years of war in neighbouring Syria, Ankara and [NATO](#) ally Washington have agreed to establish a zone along 480km (300 miles) of the border that Turkey wants to be 30km deep (19 miles).

Under the Turkish plan, up to two million Syrian refugees would be settled in the area that would be cleared of the Syrian Kurdish militia People's Protection Units (YPG), which Ankara deems «a terrorist organisation».

Since agreeing to set up the zone in northern Syria, Turkey has repeatedly warned of unilateral military action if efforts do not meet its expectations, saying it would not tolerate any attempts by the US to stall the process.

It set a September-end deadline for action, which passed on Tuesday.

«We have not achieved any of the results we desired in the east of the Euphrates. Turkey cannot lose even a single day on this issue. There is no other choice but to act on our own.» Erdogan said at the parliament's opening ceremony in Ankara.

«We plan to settle two million people in the safe zones we will establish. We calculated the costs and we will carry out efforts to improve. We will start taking steps as soon as the region is saved from the invasion of terror,» he said.

Strained ties

The US agreed to the «safe zone» as a way to protect its Kurdish allies in Syria and address Turkish concerns about the border, after President [Donald Trump](#) announced plans last year to abruptly withdraw 2,000 US special forces troops that helped Kurdish fighters battle



Turkey earlier set a September-end deadline for action [Evrin Aydın/Anadolu]

the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant ([ISIL or ISIS](#)) armed group.

But the US troops have yet to leave and Washington and Ankara have so far failed to agree on details. Turkey has accused the US of dragging its feet and warned that it would take matters into its own hands.

While diplomats, analysts and Turkey's main opposition say Ankara would be unwilling to anger Washington with a military incursion as the allies try to repair strained ties, Erdogan's comments marked the clearest indication of an offensive in the region.

The president said Turkey aimed to host an «international donors meeting» to get funding for its plans in the area, which he said would stretch from the Euphrates River in Syria east to the Iraqi border.

Erdogan has repeatedly called on Turkey's allies to provide financial support for the plans, including in his speech at the [United Nations](#) last month.

But Ankara is unlikely to receive a response for any plan that settles people hundreds of kilometres from their homes and alters the demographics of northeast Syria.

Erdogan, who has supported rebels fighting Syrian President [Bashar al-Assad](#), will also face opposition from Damascus's most powerful backers: Russia and Iran.

Inside Turkey, where the 3.6 million Syrian refugees have become a heated political issue as the country's economy struggles to emerge from recession, the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) also says Damascus must be involved.

«First of all, any kind of zone which is going to be created within Syrian territory should be controlled by Syrian authorities,» Unal Cevikoz, CHP vice president and former Turkish diplomat, told Reuters news agency.

«We have insistently called on the government that we should get into dialogue with Damascus.»

AMN

October 2, 2019

Turkish military attacks Kurdish forces in northern Aleppo

BEIRUT, LEBANON (12:00 P.M.) – The Turkish Armed Forces launched a new attack against the Kurdish-led troops in the northern countryside of the Aleppo Governorate on Tuesday evening.

According to the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) troops near scene of the attack, the Turkish Armed Forces launched several artillery shells towards the Kurdish-led People's Protection Units' (YPG) defenses in Tal Rifa'at, Mennagh, and Hirbal.

No casualties were reported after the attack. This attack by the Turkish Armed Forces came shortly before the Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar announced that his nation's military would be implementing the safe zone in northern Syria as soon as possible.

Baghdad sends delegation to Erbil to resolve disputes

SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq — Iraqi President Barham Salih met separately Sept. 18 with four Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) leaders — President Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, parliament Speaker Rewaz Fayaq and Deputy Prime Minister Qubad Talabani in Erbil, the KRG capital.

The purpose of Salih's visit was to warn the KRG about the region's share in Iraq's federal budget for 2020, scheduled to be passed by the national parliament by the end of the year. A well-informed source close to the ruling elites in both Baghdad and Erbil told Al-Monitor on condition of anonymity that the Iraqi president — who is Kurdish — cautioned the Kurdish leadership that the federal government in Baghdad will cut the Kurdistan region's share of budget, including salaries of the KRG employees, if Erbil fails to hand over a portion of its oil to the State Organization for Marketing of Oil. The organization is responsible for selling Iraq's oil.

Under the Iraqi budget law for 2019, the KRG agreed to send 250,000 barrels of oil per day to the state oil organization. Although Baghdad continues delivering funds to Erbil as per the 2019 budget law, the KRG has told Baghdad that it cannot hand over its share of oil, claiming it has obligations to pay back debts to international oil companies working in producing and importing the region's oil. Because the KRG's oil sector is not transparent, there is no official data available on the KRG's local and foreign debts. However, some 2018 estimates indicated the loans were about \$20 billion.

The head of the national parliament's finance committee, Haitham al-Jubouri, said Sept. 23 that the Iraqi government has yet to send the draft budget bill to parliament. He said the committee will return the bill to the government if it includes large deficits.

Iraq is the second largest producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and home to 12% of the world's proven oil reserves; 95% of Iraq's revenues come from oil production.

Jubouri said the country's debt has reached \$125 billion. In part as a result, Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi is under increasing pressure from Iraqi opposition parties to require the KRG to either respect its financial obligations to Baghdad or see a drop in the KRG share of Iraq's budget.

The source said the KRG asked Iran to appeal to Abdul Mahdi to continue sending funds to the



A flame rises from a chimney at Taq Taq oil field in Erbil, in Iraq's Kurdistan region, Aug. 16, 2014. REUTERS/Azad Lashkari

Kurdistan region in 2020 and cover the KRG's inability to submit the 250,000 barrels of oil per day, but that Tehran refused the request.

KRG spokesman Jutyar Adil told Al-Monitor, "The KRG has showed goodwill for reaching an agreement with Baghdad based on the Iraqi Constitution. For this purpose, we formed several technical committees." Adil added, "There are some details that should be settled between both sides; the KRG believes that the issues can be resolved permanently."

Asked whether the KRG could handle its financial issues if Baghdad cut all federal funds to Erbil, the spokesman said the KRG will respond to this if and when the funds are cut off.

Jamal Kochar, a Kurdish member of the national parliament's finance committee, told Al-Monitor, "The budget bill is a political debate. I do not believe the Kurdistan region's share will not go below 12.67%, since data from the Iraqi ministries of planning and trade indicate the Kurdish population to be 13.9% of Iraq's population."

"I do not think Baghdad will cut salaries of KRG employees because such an action would support the Kurdistan region's bid toward independence and economic independence from Baghdad; this is not the Iraqi state's policy and the global coalition against the Islamic State would not tolerate that," he added.

He indicated that the Iraqi parliament will not be able to easily pass the budget bill with a reduction in the KRG's share. He said that if the Kurdistan region's share of the federal budget is reduced, Kurdish lawmakers will vote against the bill.

Mohammed Rauf, a professor of economics at Sulaimani University, told Al-Monitor that according to Iraq's Constitution, the Kurdistan region's share of federal budget cannot be cut, provided that the KRGs abide by the budget bill that is yet to be passed.

He said that the KRG did not abide by its obligations regarding the budget law for 2019, and that the Iraqi central government partially implemented its responsibilities toward the Kurds.

"If KRG does not start submitting 25,000 barrels of oil per day to Iraq in the coming months, then mutual trust between Baghdad and Erbil would vanish," Rauf said, "Consequently, that might cause Abdul Mahdi's government to stop sending any cash to Kurds, even if the Iraqi parliament passes the budget bill similar to this year's formula. Still, Abdul Mahdi might continue sending the cash to -Kurds."

The economist emphasized that the KRG lacks a strong will to combat corruption, which, he said, is the culprit behind all of the Kurdistan region's debts and financial woes.



October 1, 2019
Karzan Sulaivany

Dutch Kurdish woman flees Turkey to escape trial

ERBIL – A Kurdish woman with Dutch citizenship and her 5-month-old daughter have fled Turkey to the Netherlands illegally to escape a trial, Dutch media reported on Tuesday.

The 31-year-old woman, identified as Rojda A. from the city of Rotterdam, was on a trip to Istanbul with her daughter and was arrested after she wanted to return to the Netherlands from Turkey in April.

She was released in July on condition she would stay in Turkey and report weekly to the Turkish police.

According to a report by the *Algemeen Dagblad*, Rojda's lawyers said she was unwilling to wait for her trial that was scheduled to begin on Thursday and had left Turkey illegally.

She did not leave "because she wants to hide... but because of the situation she was facing," her lawyers were quoted as saying.

The Dutch newspaper also said Rojda's family does not understand why she was arrested in Turkey since she previously visited the country at least four times in 2016 without any incident.

Authorities in Turkey accuse Rojda of being the co-chair of the Council of Communities from Kurdistan (DEMNEK). According to the Turkish prosecution, the Dutch-Kurdish organization is linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is banned in Turkey.

The PKK is fighting an insurgency against Ankara over Kurdish rights and self-rule. Related Article: Turkish shelling kills 3 alleged PKK fighters near village in Kurdistan. The woman has denied ties with the PKK and claims the organization is involved in cultural activities.

Rojda is not the only Dutch citizen who was arrested in Turkey. At least 19 other Dutch nationals cannot leave the country pending trial.



A Dutch Kurdish woman and her 5-month-old daughter have been jailed in Turkey since April 5, 2019. (Photo: EPA/Tolga Bozoglu)

Most of them are being prosecuted for being critical of the government or being involved with Kurdish politics.

Murat Memis, a local politician of the Socialist Party (SP), was acquitted in July on alleged "terrorism" charges and returned to the Netherlands. Some in the Dutch-Kurdish community practice self-censorship because of fears they will be arrested.

"Kurds are afraid to freely express their opinions and criticize [the state]," Serpil Ates, a member of The Hague city council for the GroenLinks party, told Kurdistan 24.

Meanwhile, Memis said Dutch Kurds even remove their Facebook and other social media accounts before going on vacation to their homeland.

"Parents tell youth not to bring their phone and remove their Facebook. The youth is afraid to go on vacation in their home country," he told Kurdistan 24.

Kurds in the Netherlands also avoid Kurdish festivals, Kurdish organizations, and stop following Kurdish news on social media.

"This culture of fear is spread all over Europe," Memis said.

Moreover, some Dutch Kurds also believe the government does not support its citizens when they are arrested in Turkey.

In May, the Dutch Foreign Ministry updated its travel advice, and warned Dutch citizens that the Turkish government could prosecute Dutch citizens for "statements made outside of Turkey, including on social media."

"I realize that if I [were] not a politician, I would still be in jail," Memis told Kurdistan 24.

"I'm also upset by this. The Dutch government should support anyone, no matter if they are a people's representative, a farmer, or a normal employee. You are a Dutch citizen."



October 01, 2019
By Karzan Sulaivany

Turkish shelling kills 3 alleged PKK fighters near village in Kurdistan



Smoke rises from an area in the Kurdistan Region just struck by a Turkish warplane. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

EBRIL (Kurdistan 24) – Turkish warplanes on Tuesday afternoon targeted a vehicle purportedly carrying members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) as it drove outside a village to the north of the Kurdistan Region, local witnesses said.

The vehicle "had five PKK guerrillas in it and three of them were killed in the bombardment while the other two escaped, injured," one witness from the village of Ozmana – located roughly 25 kilometers north of the city of Duhok – told Kurdistan 24.

The incident had occurred near Ozmana around 2:15 p.m. Approximately one hour later, Turkish airstrikes hit areas surrounding Doobanke village near the city of Zakho, located close to Turkey's border with the Kurdistan Region.

A local witness told Kurdistan 24 that the attack had caused substantial damage to agricultural fields in the area.

In the past two days, the Turkish military has claimed it has "neutralized" nine alleged PKK fighters in sep-

arate operations in the Kurdistan Region, without specifying dates.

Ankara is currently in its fifth month of an anti-PKK campaign they launched in late May called Operation Claw, now in its third phase. The total number of PKK operatives the Turkish army claimed to have killed or captured has reached over 400.

The PKK is engaged in a decades-long insurgency against Turkey over Kurdish rights and self-rule, in a conflict that has resulted in the death of over 40,000 people on both sides.

Ankara, along with Washington and NATO, designates the PKK as a terrorist organization. The group is thought to have fighters near hundreds of villages inside the Kurdistan Region, mainly in the mountainous areas near the Turkish and Iranian borders.

In the past decade, Turkey has regularly shelled areas inside the Kurdistan Region, but operations this year have intensified and widened in terms of scope and territory covered. In some areas, Turkish forces have mobilized as far as 30 kilometers deep inside the autonomous region's border.

As civilians, agriculture, trade, and the local environment continue to suffer from the clashes, residents and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officials have repeatedly asked the PKK and the Turkish government to take their fight elsewhere.

LE FIGARO 01-10-2019

Ankara dénonce une « attaque qui dépasse les bornes » de la part de Macron

Ankara a dénoncé mardi « une attaque qui dépasse les bornes » de la part du président français Emmanuel Macron, qui a critiqué le « recul » de l'Etat de droit en Turquie et évoqué la façon dont elle utilisait les migrants pour « faire pression » sur l'UE.

« L'attaque de Macron contre la Turquie dépasse les bornes », a déclaré le chef de la diplomatie turque, Mevlut Cavusoglu à l'agence de presse officielle Anadolu. « Je le compare à un coq qui chante alors que ses pieds sont enfouis dans la boue », a-t-il ajouté.

Emmanuel Macron a déclaré mercredi devant le Conseil de l'Europe à Strasbourg que, trente ans après la chute du Mur de Berlin, des droits fondamentaux étaient remis en cause dans certains pays.

Il a alors cité la Turquie, « où l'Etat de droit recule, où les procédures judiciaires ouvertes contre les défenseurs des droits de l'Homme, des journalistes, des universitaires doivent faire l'objet de toute notre vigilance ».

Mevlut Cavusoglu a également dénoncé les déclarations de M. Macron sur la question migratoire. « Combien de réfugiés Macron a-t-il laissé entrer dans son pays ? », a réagi le chef de la diplomatie turque, fustigeant également le président français pour son accueil à Paris de miliciens kurdes des « Forces démocratiques syriennes » (FDS), qualifiés de « terroristes » par Ankara.

La Turquie accueille plus de quatre millions de réfugiés, dont une grande majorité de Syriens, et le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan a menacé début

septembre d'en laisser affluer une nouvelle vague vers l'UE s'il n'obtenait pas davantage d'aide internationale. Ankara souhaite la création en Syrie d'une « zone de sécurité » où ils pourraient retourner. A Strasbourg, à une députée grecque qui faisait état d'une « nouvelle très grande crise » avec l'arrivée de 20.000 migrants durant les trois mois d'été, Emmanuel Macron a répondu être « pleinement conscient de ce que la Grèce vit aujourd'hui ».

« Vous avez parfaitement raison de dire que ceci est un moyen de pression de la Turquie », lui a répondu le président français, ajoutant ne pas penser que « la bonne réponse soit de céder à la pression » et appelant à une coopération avec Ankara. Mais, « en aucun cas, notre agenda en Syrie ne doit être dicté par cette pression turque », a-t-il déclaré.

Syrie: trois employés d'un champ pétrolier tués dans un attentat

Trois civils syriens ont été tués mardi dans une attaque à la bombe près du champ pétrolier d'Al-Omar contrôlé par les forces kurdes dans l'est de la Syrie, selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH).

Seule une partie du champ d'Al-Omar, le plus grand de Syrie et situé dans la province de Deir Ezzor, est toujours en activité, mais il est aussi utilisé comme base militaire par les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), une alliance de combattants kurdes et arabes soutenue par Washington. L'attaque visait les FDS mais c'est un véhicule transportant des employés du champ qui a été touché, a indiqué à l'AFP le directeur de l'OSDH, Rami Abdel Rahmane. «L'engin explo-

sif a été activé à distance après le passage d'une patrouille des FDS sur la route menant au champ pétrolier» mais l'explosion a touché un véhicule transportant des travailleurs du champ, passé juste après celui des FDS, selon lui. Trois employés ont péri.

L'attentat n'a pas été revendiqué mais dans cette région les FDS sont souvent la cible d'attaques du groupe djihadiste Etat islamique (EI). C'est dans cette même province frontalière de l'Irak que les FDS ont reconquis en mars le village de Baghouz, ultime bastion des djihadistes en Syrie, avec le soutien d'une coalition internationale emmenée par Washington. L'organisation djihadiste conserve des cellules dormantes dans plusieurs

provinces syriennes et continue de revendiquer des attaques dans les zones anciennement sous son contrôle.

Les djihadistes ont été mis en déroute après une montée en puissance fulgurante en 2014 et la conquête de vastes territoires en Syrie et en Irak. Ils contrôlaient autrefois le champ d'Al-Omar. Avant d'être détruit en octobre 2015 par des raids de la coalition internationale, ce champ leur rapportait entre 1,7 et 5,1 millions de dollars par mois (1,5 et 4,6 millions d'euros), selon la coalition internationale. Depuis sa reconquête par les FDS fin 2017, la production pétrolière a partiellement repris, d'après l'OSDH. Déclenchée en 2011, la guerre en Syrie a fait plus de 370.000 morts et déplacé des millions de personnes.



October 1, 2019

Daesh makes resurgence in Syria, captures town, attacks Kurdish and Russia forces

Daesh has conducted manoeuvres to make a resurgence in Syria today by besieging Russian and regime forces, attacking a prominent Kurdish militia and capturing a town in the east of the country, fulfilling recent predictions of the extremist group's recuperation in the conflict.

Daesh militants attacked a gathering of regime militias and Russian special forces in the ancient town of Palmyra through the use of a booby-trapped car filled with explosives, as well as surrounding a Russian convoy and besieging it. The militant group's own media outlet named Amaq News Agency then allegedly reported that planes launched heavy shelling on its positions in an attempt to break the siege.

In the Raqqa countryside – home to Daesh's former capital – the group claimed responsibility for killing and wounding five members of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in an attack on the militia's positions. A Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) vehicle was also reportedly destroyed by an explosive device near the town of Haws.

In what is the most determinative operation undertaken by the group, however, Daesh has captured and taken full control of the town of



Daesh fighters [File photo]

Al-Sukhna in the eastern countryside of Homs governate following a series of battles and skirmishes with regime militias in the area. According to Amaq News Agency, Daesh originally took control of Al-Sukhna on Sunday before withdrawing under the pressure of Russian air strikes, but retook control of the town today. Twenty regime militia members were allegedly killed during its recapture, and regime forces continue to be pushed out of the town's surroundings.

The resurgence of Daesh – also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria – comes amid recent warnings from a variety of international sources that the group would soon make a resurgence and that it has been planning a comeback,

particular through the use of its imprisoned fighters throughout the region.

Two years after its rapid expansion in 2014 and its capture of vast swathes of the Levant, the lost group lost significant territory as a result of an international coalition in which saw both local and foreign actors fight against it. It gradually lost control of its major strongholds including Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria. Only scattered sleeper cells now exist around the region.

The group's re-emergence is particularly seen in the light of US President Donald Trump's announcement in December last year that US troops will be withdrawn from Syria due to the alleged defeat of Daesh and the recapture of its strongholds in the region. This complacency on the part of the president was met with widespread disagreement among US political and military figures, as well as the Kurdish groups who rely on Washington for military support, insisting that there would be a risk of Daesh re-emerging if American forces pulled out of the region.

A Pentagon report released in early August warned the group is recuperating and regathering forces, and that "Despite losing its territorial 'caliphate' the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) solidified its insurgent capabilities in Iraq and was re-surg-ing in Syria."



October 2, 2019

Seven journalists facing up to 3 years in prison over social media posts

The journalists are accused of targeting Musa Çitil, who served as the gendarmerie deputy commander in the country's southeastern Kurdish majority province of Diyarbakır in 2015, during the height of the conflict between the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and Kurdish militants linked to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

The PKK is an armed group that has fought for Kurdish self-rule in Turkey for over three decades.

In August 2015, Kurdish militants declared autonomy in Diyarbakır's central district of Sur and other city centres across the country's southeast and erected barricades to keep security forces out. After months of bitter street fighting, mili-

tary operations officially ended the following March.

Journalists Ömer Çelik, A.Vahap Taş, Çağdaş Kaplan, Selman Çiçek, Hamza Gündüz, İnan Kızılkaya and Kemal Sancılı shared on their social media accounts a report by the now defunct pro-Kurdish Dicle news agency (DİHA) which the authorities say targeted Çitil.

They are accused of "targeting an official fighting against terror."

The next hearing in the case of the journalists is set to take place on Dec. 18. ■



A Turkish prosecutor has requested between one and three year prison sentences for seven journalists over their social media posts, pro-Kurdish Fırat news agency reported on Wednesday.



Oct 02, 2019

Erdoğan's demographic engineering plans in Syria mirror those of Assad regime - FT

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's real objective in Syria is to overwhelm the de facto home rule Syrian Kurds have established in the north of the country and change the demography by diluting the Kurds with a big influx of Sunni Arabs, the Financial Times said in an editorial.

The move by Turkey's strongman mirrors the violent demographic re-engineering going on in the rest of Syria, the article said.

Turkey and the United States last month started efforts to establish a safe zone in northeast Syria, which Ankara says will also serve as a peace corridor for the safe return of 3.6 million Syrians living in Turkey.

Meanwhile, Ankara, not satisfied with the progress being made on the zone, has repeatedly threatened to launch a military operation against territories in northeast Syria controlled by the predominantly-Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which forms the backbone of

U.S.-led coalition forces fighting against the Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria.

Ankara sees the SDF as an existential threat due to its links to the outlawed Kurdistan



Workers' Party (PKK), which has been fighting an insurgency inside Turkey for more than three decades.

The overwhelming majority of Syria's population that have been displaced by the war are Sunni Muslims, the article said, "reflecting the Sunni majority who were the bedrock of the rebellion against a minority regime based around the Assad clan's Alawite sect."

Six million Syrians have been displaced internally and another 6 million have fled the

country, estimates say.

Aided by Iran and its Shia paramilitary phalanxes, as well as by Russia's air force, the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad has survived, the Financial Times said. It is now implementing a system that ensures the population balance of pre-war Syria cannot be recreated.

To this end, the Assad regime is expropriating property belonging to refugees and vetting of Sunni men of fighting age and imprisoning returnees who make it through the net, among other measures, it said.

Two-thirds of Syria's population was Sunni with half of it "scattered to the winds," the Financial Times said.



October 2, 2019

Syria's Kurds protest exclusion from constitutional committee

Hundreds of Kurds demonstrated in northeast Syria on Wednesday in protest at their minority community's "exclusion" from a United Nations-backed committee tasked with drafting a new constitution for the war-devastated country.

Carrying placards, demonstrators gathered in front of UN offices in the Kurdish-majority city of Qamishli.

"It's our right to participate in the drafting of the constitution," read one sign.

The United Nations on September 23 announced the long-awaited formation of the committee to include 150 members, split evenly between Syria's government, the opposition and Syrian civil society.

Individual Kurdish representatives linked to the Syrian opposition or civil society groups are part of the constitutional committee.

But the Kurdish administration in northeast Syria that controls nearly 30 percent of the country has said its exclusion was "unjust".

Talaat Younes, a Kurdish administration official, stressed the need to include "all components of Syrian society".

Around him, men and women carried portraits of Kurdish fighters who had died battling the Islamic State group in Syria.

Syria's Kurds led the US-backed fight against IS in northern and eastern Syria, expelling the jihadist group from their last major redoubt in the country in March.

"Our military force has achieved significant success. We must have representatives on this committee," said Hashem Shawish, one of the protesters.

Long marginalised, Syria's Kurds have largely stayed out of Syria's eight-year civil war, instead setting up their own institutions in areas under their control.

They have been sidelined from UN-led peace talks as well as a parallel Russian-backed negotiation track, mainly due to objections by Turkey, which considers them to be terrorists.

The war in Syria has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions since erupting in 2011 with the repression of anti-government protests. Qamishli (Syria) (AFP)



October 2, 2019
by Karzan Sulaiwany

Protests in Iraq spread to disputed province of Kirkuk

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Hundreds of civilians in the disputed province of Kirkuk took to the streets on Wednesday as protests against corruption within the Federal Government of Iraq spread to other parts of the country.

Massive demonstrations took place in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad on Tuesday and continued on Wednesday across several provinces against ongoing corruption within governmental institutions.

Sources told Kurdistan 24 that large waves of people gathered on Wednesday at the governorate square in Kirkuk to protest against a lack of services and job opportunities as well as for a change in the system of governance. All roads to the governorate square are closed due to the protests, the sources added.

Initial reports indicate that clashes between security forces and protesters led to intense encounters in central and southern provinces in Iraq, resulting in the death of at least six civilians and riot police so far.

According to Iraq's Ministry of Health, two civilians died, and another 82 were wounded during the second day of protests in Baghdad. Meanwhile, in the southern Dhi Qar province, protesters set fire to the governorate building and several other public sector buildings, local media reported



Civilians fill the streets in front of Kirkuk's Governorate building square, Oct. 2, 2019. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

Official data from the health ministry indicates that protests are ongoing in nine provinces in Iraq, including Baghdad, Dhi Qar, Maysan, Najaf, Basra, Babylon, Karbala, Wasit, and Qadisiya. Demonstrations in Kirkuk began on Wednesday evening.

The Maysan governorate building was reportedly set on fire after protesters entered the faci-

lity. The incident led to riot police using tear gas, water hoses, and live rounds into the air to disperse the crowd. Iraqi media reported.

Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi held an urgent National Security Council meeting on Wednesday to put security forces and police on standby. The federal government also temporarily suspended work and school on Thursday.

Iraq's Green Zone was also closed following security measures to ensure the security of government headquarters and foreign embassies. The Green Zone had recently reopened in July 2019.

According to a report Reuters published on Wednesday, internet access was cut across areas of Iraq except for the autonomous Kurdistan Region.

Iraq has one of the world's largest oil reserves and is the second-largest oil producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

However, the embattled Middle Eastern nation

continues to rank high on Transparency International's list for corruption, fraud, and mismanagement of state institutions, some of the most significant challenges facing the country since the fall of the former regime in 2003.

LE FIGARO 02 octobre 2019

Syrie: des Kurdes manifestent contre leur « exclusion » du Comité constitutionnel

Des centaines de personnes se sont rassemblées ce mercredi à Qamichli, ville dominée par les Kurdes dans le nord-est de la Syrie en guerre, pour dénoncer une « exclusion » de cette minorité du Comité constitutionnel récemment créé par les Nations unies.

Le comité, dont la création a été annoncée le 23 septembre par l'ONU, doit amender la Constitution syrienne approuvée en 2012, ou en rédiger une nouvelle. Il comprend 150 membres: 50 nommés par le gouvernement de Damas, 50 par l'opposition et 50 membres issus de la société civile et choisis par les Nations unies. Des personnalités kurdes sont présentes sur les listes de l'opposition et de la société civile. Mais l'administration semi-autonome kurde, qui contrôle près de 30% du pays, avec des territoires dans le nord et le nord-est, a qualifié « d'injuste » son « exclusion » en tant qu'entité politique.

À Qamichli, les manifestants se sont rassemblés devant des bureaux de l'ONU, selon un correspondant de l'AFP. « C'est notre droit de participer

à l'élaboration de la Constitution », pouvait-on lire sur une pancarte. « L'administration autonome est indissociable du peuple syrien », était-il écrit sur une autre. Présent parmi les manifestants, Talaat Younes, un haut responsable au sein des autorités kurdes, a dénoncé auprès de l'AFP une « exclusion des représentants de l'administration autonome du Comité constitutionnel », et souligné la nécessité « d'une participation de toutes les composantes de la société syrienne ».

Autour de lui, hommes et femmes brandissaient des portraits des « martyrs » des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), l'alliance de combattants kurdes et arabes qui a joué un rôle majeur dans la lutte contre le groupe djihadiste Etat islamique (EI). « Nous avons une force militaire qui a remporté des succès importants, nous devons avoir des représentants au sein du comité », a dit un des manifestants, Hachem Chawich. Après avoir souffert de discriminations des décennies durant, les Kurdes de Syrie ont créé une zone semi-autonome à la suite du conflit déclenché en 2011.

La minorité ethnique tient à tout prix à préserver cette semi-autonomie, dénoncée par le pouvoir central du président Bachar el-Assad.

Les Kurdes n'ont participé ni aux négociations pour la paix sous l'égide de l'ONU, ni aux pourparlers d'Astana lancés en janvier 2017 par Moscou, Téhéran et Ankara, notamment en raison du refus de la Turquie, qui entretient de profondes rivalités avec la minorité. Spécialiste de la question kurde, l'analyste Mutlu Civiroglu a estimé que les Kurdes ont « travaillé très dur » pour intégrer le comité, mais que la Turquie voisine, le gouvernement syrien et son allié russe ont entravé leurs efforts. « Le gouvernement syrien voit toujours les Kurdes comme un problème à résoudre tôt ou tard. Il est dans son intérêt que les Kurdes soient mis de côté », a-t-il affirmé. Déclenchée avec la répression de manifestations prodémocratie, la guerre en Syrie a fait plus de 370.000 morts. Le régime de Bachar el-Assad a reconquis environ 60% du territoire avec l'appui militaire de Moscou, de l'Iran et du Hezbollah libanais.

Liberation 2 octobre 2019

Les camps syriens, « bombes à retardement » jihadistes

La population qui a fui les territoires en guerre sans quitter la Syrie vit dans des camps où se rassemblent aussi les derniers fidèles de l'Etat islamique. Ces zones pourraient devenir les nouvelles bases arrière du « califat ».

Tribune. Ils sont six, installés dans le nord-est de la Syrie, sur le territoire des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), une alliance arabo-kurde soutenue par la coalition internationale. Six camps, qui hébergent près de 100 000 personnes. Surtout des déplacés, c'est-à-dire des Syriens qui ont fui les régions les plus marquées par le conflit dans leur pays pour trouver refuge dans des zones plus calmes. On en compte au total 6,5 millions. Les réfugiés - ceux qui ont quitté la Syrie - sont quant à eux 5 millions, principalement installés dans les pays voisins : la Turquie, le Liban, la Jordanie et l'Irak surtout. En tout, un Syrien sur deux a déjà connu une migration.



Les camps de déplacés en Syrie du Nord-Est trouvent leur origine en 2014, lorsque commence la guerre contre l'Etat islamique. Dans le nord du pays, les Kurdes autoadministrent une région alors nommée « Rojava » où ils gèrent l'arrivée des populations arabes fuyant les zones perdues par le régime de Damas. L'administration kurde met en place

un contrôle des flux : la création de camps de filtrage et de transit, où le passage demeure obligatoire pour entrer dans le territoire contrôlé par les forces armées kurdes (YPG), permet de sécuriser les zones. Les déplacés, contraints de rester dans les camps jusqu'à trouver un garant, subissent un contrôle à l'intérieur même de leur pays, comme s'ils avaient franchi une frontière internationale. Une fois sous la responsabilité d'un garant local (famille, ami ou employeur), ils s'installent en ville ou, via un réseau de passeurs, poursuivent leur parcours vers la Turquie et potentiellement l'Europe.

Des centaines de milliers de personnes transitent par ces camps, qui rythment les parcours migratoires en deux temps : la phase où ils s'y rendent ; puis celle où ils se réinstallent, soit en Syrie sous administration kurde, soit dans un pays étranger. Dans les six principaux camps sous contrôle de l'administration autonome, on a compté 551 500 entrées et 499 000 sorties d'août 2014 à décembre 2018, selon l'administration locale. Entre mars 2018 et septembre 2019, près de 41 000 personnes se seraient réinstallées en Syrie ou en Irak ou à l'étranger.

Des six camps sous contrôle des FDS, celui d'Al-Hoz est le plus peuplé et le plus difficile à gérer. Sur 68 000 habitants, il abrite 41 % de déplacés syriens, mais aussi 45 % d'Irakiens, qui ont fui le conflit dans leur pays au cours des années précédentes. Tous poursuivent leur existence en côtoyant les familles des combattants étrangers engagés dans le jihad et qui n'ont pu quitter le pays. Car l'idéologie de l'EI y est prédominante : après la bataille d'Al-Baghouz, dernier secteur jihadiste à être tombé en mars, Al-Hoz a servi de lieu de rassemblement des derniers fidèles du «califat», les combattants et leur famille. Le camp devenant une «petite ville jihadiste», qualifiée de «bombe à retardement» par l'administration autonome. L'afflux de dizaines de milliers d'habitants issus des ex-territoires contrôlés par l'EI dans la zone sous contrôle des FDS pose la question sécuritaire, vu les risques d'infiltration de membres de l'organisation. Contrôler et gérer ces populations, parfois fidèles au califat jusqu'à la dernière heure, est un gage de stabilité. Sans l'aide financière de la communauté internationale, l'administration locale pourrait rencontrer des problèmes de gestion, et le risque est élevé que l'EI, qui se reconstitue déjà localement en Irak et en Syrie dans des

zones désertiques (Anbar et Deir ez-Zor), fasse de ce lieu une base pour ses opérations dans les deux pays (1).

L'autre difficulté demeure la gestion des populations déplacées hors camps. Dans certains secteurs, comme autour de Manbij dans le nord de la Syrie, ils représentent la moitié de la population. Or, l'administration autonome manque de moyens pour leur assurer l'accès aux services primaires (santé, éducation, électricité). C'est dans la capacité à intégrer ces populations sans les faire basculer dans les rangs de l'EI que se joue la légitimité même du système administratif autonome et fédéral des territoires du nord de la Syrie, et à moyen terme son devenir.

(1) L'administration autonome sous contrôle des FDS utilise ce camp comme moyen de pression sur la communauté internationale pour obtenir financements et soutiens politiques.



02 octobre 2019

ISIS fighters find refuge, rebuild networks in northern Iraq, Kurdish peshmerga warn

Security analysts dispute Trump claims that militant group 'decimated'

MOUNT QARACHOGH, Iraq — The black-clad figures are barely visible through binoculars from atop this mountaintop lookout in northern Iraq.

One crouches near stagnant water at the end of a dry riverbed. His companion stands over him and then walks out of view beneath an escarpment, moving without any apparent fear of exposure.

From their position on top of the mountain, the Kurdish peshmerga, the renowned armed forces of the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government, say Islamic State fighters are living in caves in the no man's land between Kurdish and Iraqi security forces on the plains below.

This area of northern Iraq includes disputed territories of the central government in Baghdad and the regional authorities in Irbil. It is in ungoverned spaces like this where Kurdish officials say ISIS is rebuilding its networks and running guns between clusters of caves to desert holdouts.

The development is troubling after the grinding struggle and sacrifice involved in rolling back the Islamic State group and its self-proclaimed "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria over the past three years.

President Trump has said the caliphate, which once covered a broad swath of territory and such major cities as Mosul and Fallujah, has been "decimated,"

but security analysts say the Islamic State has been scattered but not defeated and still claims the allegiance of thousands of fighters

U.S. forces are advising and assisting the Iraqi security forces and Kurdish peshmerga to help root out the ISIS remnants. On Sept. 10, U.S. Air Force F-15s and F-35s dropped 80,000 pounds of bombs on an island that the allied coalition said was "infested" with ISIS.

Getting to the front lines with the Islamic State these days requires a drive of about one hour outside of Irbil to the desert and mountainous region overlooking the plains that frame the Tigris River. It is among communities in Hawija and the Ham-



Kurdish peshmerga use binoculars to look for ISIS activity below Mount Qarachogh. (Seth J. Frantzman - Special to The Washington Times)

reen mountains where ISIS support first arose.

The Kurdish commanders of the area, called Sector 6, control more than 90 miles of the front lines. ISIS generally operates in small groups and rarely assembles more than 150 men in a cell. But their

control allows them to demand taxes from farmers and threaten those who don't pay.

For now, the anti-Islamic State coalition works closely with the Iraqi army and the peshmerga, but the division on the ground means challenges remain in coordinating the two forces and the territory that separates them. While the Kurdish peshmerga stand guard on their mountains, the Iraqi forces in the plains and desert below are monitoring ISIS.

An Iraqi army operation dubbed Will of Victory has entered its fifth phase. Through binoculars aimed at the ISIS figures coming out for water from their hideouts in caves, it is clear that these operations have a long way to go before victory can be declared.

"We're setting the conditions for our partner forces to continue bringing stability to the region," Air Force Maj. Gen. Eric Hill, commander of special operations for the Iraqi allied campaign, told reporters at the time. The goal, the general said, was to "disrupt [the Islamic State's] ability to hide in the thick vegetation."

The Pentagon is clearly concerned about a resurgence of the Islamic State, given Iraq's deeply unsettled political scene. Internal feuding among the Kurds and tensions between Irbil and Baghdad are complicating the mission, according to an inspector general's second-quarter 2019 report on the state of the Iraqi mission against the Islamic State.

"Deep-seated internal Kurdish political divisions and the Kurds' continuing dispute with Iraq's central government over a swath of disputed territory in northern Iraq rich in resources have allowed ISIS insurgents to exploit gaps between [Iraqi security forces] and peshmerga forces, which allows [the Islamic State] to regroup and plan attacks in the region," according to the inspector general's review.

The ISIS-controlled island was only 18 miles away from the Kurdish positions, a sign that the fight against the terrorist group is very much alive two

years after Mosul was recaptured from ISIS. According to the local Kurdish commanders, Islamic State fighters are infiltrating Sunni Arab villages in the region and exploiting anger among local residents at the presence of Iranian-backed Shiite paramilitaries called Popular Mobilization Forces.

These forces were raised in 2014 by a fatwa from Iraqi Shiite leader Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, and they became officially part of the Iraqi security forces in March 2018. But efforts to integrate them into the national armed forces away from their sectarian origins have faced hurdles, and there are fears that their heavy-handed tactics and checkpoints will alienate Sunni areas and produce more ISIS recruits.

Essential struggle

For the Kurdistan region, the importance of keeping ISIS defeated is essential. The region lost thousands fighting the extremists from 2014 to 2017 and has since struggled to keep itself free from terrorism

But that also requires closer coordination between the largely autonomous Kurdish region and the national government in Baghdad, as well as with U.S. and coalition forces stationed in the country. In conversations with two KRG government ministers, a senior adviser and peshmerga generals and commanders, the multifaceted challenges of confronting ISIS today quickly become evident.

The peshmerga require more financial support from Baghdad for salaries, their commanders and officials say. They also need to continue reforms of integrating units, standardizing uniforms and creating an effective supply chain for small arms and other munitions. The Iraqi Constitution is supposed to guarantee this support, but long-standing tensions between Baghdad and Irbil make every part of training and arming the peshmerga a complex process.

Falah Mustafa, senior foreign policy adviser to KRG President Nechirvan Barzani, said in an in-

terview that although the ISIS caliphate has been eliminated, the lure of the Islamic State's ideology still exists.

"There are groups reorganizing, and we need to work together with Baghdad and the U.S. and the coalition so ISIS will not reemerge," he said.

Mr. Mustafa said the challenge is not just military, but political and cultural as well. It means engaging with local communities so they see a future for themselves and are not alienated. The Kurdistan region is an island of security and prosperity, he said, and international support is essential in this difficult environment with terrorist threats. Mr. Barzani has said the region is committed to "protect and promote peace in our region and elsewhere."

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3 octobre 2019

Turkish court rules conviction of pro-Kurd MP violates his rights

The Turkish Constitutional Court on Thursday ruled that convicting Sırrı Süreyya Önder, a former member of parliament for the main pro-Kurdish party, for statements he made during speeches in 2013, was a violation of his right to freedom of expression, independent news website T24 reported

Önder was jailed in December last year after a court upheld a three-year-and-six-month sentence on charges of making propaganda for a terrorist organisation. His lawyers are expected to now apply to the courts to have him released.

Önder, a deputy for the Peoples Democratic



Party (HDP), was accused of praising Abdullah Öcalan, the jailed leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), in speeches he made in March 2013 when a ceasefire was declared between the outlawed group and Turkish security forces.

Following the 2015 collapse of the two-year ceasefire and the failed coup of 2016, the judiciary has carried out a crackdown on the HDP, accusing of being in cahoots with the PKK, a group listed as a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.



3 octobre 2019

SDC: New stage in Syria after defeat of ISIS

WASHINGTON DC (Kurdistan 24) – Ilham Ahmed, co-chair of the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), explained on Wednesday that Syria was entering a new stage, following the territorial defeat of the so-called Islamic State.

With that defeat, new efforts are underway to determine Syria's future. Earlier on Wednesday, the UN's Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, had announced that a Constitutional Committee had been formed, consisting of 50 government, 50 opposition, and 50 civil society members. It is to convene on Oct. 30 in Geneva.

SYRIA

Speaking at the SDC's Washington office, Ahmed, who represents the political wing of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), America's principle ally against the terrorist group in Syria, strongly objected to the way the Constitutional Committee has been formed.

"The Syrian Constitutional Committee does not include all the components of Syria. It includes the representatives of the Syrian regime," she told Kurdistan 24. "But the forces who fought alongside the Coalition against ISIS, who sacrificed 11,000 martyrs and have had 24,000 wounded, these people are not represented in the Committee."

If that is the case," Ahmed continued, "the committee will not be successful and will break down."

"Also, if the current regime is reinstated, the reasons that led to the Syrian civil war will not have been addressed," she warned, "and there will be the possibility of further unrest in the future."

Indeed, Syrians "want a new Syria," she explained, including the five million people living in northeastern Syria, under the autonomous self-administration there, which controls one-third of the country.

Ahmed called on the US "to recognize and consider the wishes of all sides and help make that a reality."

She also explained that Russia had misrepresented the reason for the exclusion of the SDC from the Constitutional Committee. That is due to a Turkish veto, and the decision of others, including Moscow, to accommodate Turkey.

On Wednesday, "Russia issued some statements on the lack of SDC representation in the political process," she told her Washington DC audience. "They accuse Washington; that Washington did not want us to be represented."



Ilham Ahmed, Syrian Democratic Council co-chair, during an interview with Kurdistan 24, Washington DC, Oct. 2, 2019. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

"However, it is known that the Constitutional Committee was a result of the Sochi conference," she continued, "and Russia is taking the Turkish veto into consideration."

Reportedly, the Syrian regime is considering a new offensive in Idlib, the only province still under opposition control. If the regime regains control of Idlib, it will no longer be interested in negotiations, Ahmed warned.

She suggested that the "only way to prevent the division of Syria" was a "decentralized, secular system," akin to that which the SDC has established in the northeast.

TURKEY

Ahmed revealed that there is "an indirect dialogue" with Ankara, that is being carried out through US officials—Amb. James Jeffrey, US Special Representative for Syria Engagement and Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, as well as US military commanders in the course of their discussions with their Turkish counterparts.

"We really thank him [Jeffrey] for his efforts," as well as the US military officers and "the Pentagon, which has also played a good role," she said.

Ahmed emphasized that the SDF was carrying out its part of the agreement between the US and Turkey. "We implemented the first phase of the security mechanism," she said. "We withdrew five kilometers from the border and the heavy weapons have been moved 20 kilometers away. We have also destroyed our defense fortifications on the border with Turkey."

Asked to provide further details, she explained that the area from which the People's Protection Units (YPG) had withdrawn was now under the control of local military councils. She expressed

confidence in their ability to maintain security and prevent the reemergence of the Islamic State, as they are "trained forces."

The military councils also work with internal security forces which also consist of local people. The internal security force "plays a big role in countering ISIS' sleeper cells," she said, and "there is good cooperation" between them and the military councils.

Ahmed explained that what the SDC truly wants is "real" negotiations with Turkey, as she stressed that the SDC had "the capability and strength" to conduct such talks, and it could deliver on any commitments it might make.

Nonetheless, as she noted, "Turkey is still escalating," although "we had hoped for the opposite." She called on the international community to press Ankara to enter into direct negotiations.

Speaking about Afrin, Ahmed described its "difficult situation," as she explained, "Turkish forces and the rebel groups they back are involved in the kidnapping of civilians," along with "the burning of homes and businesses."

They are engaged "in a process of demographic change," which includes "the Turkification of the local administrations and villages." This indicates, she said, that the "Turkish regime in tends to remain in Afrin for the long term."

PROSECUTING ISIS FIGHTERS

Finally, Ahmed called for international backing for the criminal prosecution of Islamic State fighters—without which the victims of the terrorist organization will not have the justice that is their due.

"We, along with Syrian Arabs, and Yezidis, request the formation of an international court in northeast Syria, where ISIS fighters can be tried for their crimes," Ahmed told Kurdistan 24.

"Western countries are afraid that if the ISIS fighters return, they will be freed quickly," she continued. But "they should be tried here, in northeastern Syria, where they committed their crimes and there are witnesses who can testify against them." And, then, once they have been convicted, "they can be sent back home and imprisoned in their own countries."

En Irak, la colère explose contre la corruption et le chômage

Explication : Depuis mardi 1er octobre, des manifestations ont éclaté un peu partout dans le sud du pays, y compris à Bagdad, suscitant une violente réaction des forces de l'ordre. Parmi les mots d'ordre figureraient notamment le rejet de la corruption, du chômage, mais aussi la mainmise iranienne sur l'Irak.

Sur les premières images diffusées sur les réseaux sociaux avant qu'internet n'ait été coupé, des jeunes en jeans et tee-shirt lancent des pierres sur les forces de l'ordre, le visage dissimulé pour se protéger des tirs lacrymogènes. Sur les suivantes, filmées cette fois à la nuit tombée, les manifestants courent cette fois en tous sens à la recherche d'un abri, poursuivis par le bruit continu des armes automatiques. Certains d'entre eux montrent dans leur paume ouverte les balles des policiers.

Des manifestations ont éclaté mardi 1er octobre dans tout le sud de l'Irak, et y compris dans la capitale. Manifestants et policiers se sont opposés principalement aux abords de l'emblématique place Tahrir à Bagdad, point de rendez-vous traditionnel des manifestants séparé de l'ultrasensible Zone verte par le pont al-Joumhouriya bouclé par les forces de l'ordre. Celles-ci utilisaient au départ canons à eau et gaz lacrymogènes.

Corruption, chômage, manque de services publics

Mercredi, la répression a pris un tour plus brutal : des centaines de membres des forces de sécurité et de la police antiémeute lourdement armés ont été déployés dans les rues. Le soir, un couvre-feu a été décidé, qui n'a visiblement pas empêché les jeunes de tenter de nouvelles sorties. Mais Internet ayant été coupé dans une grande partie du pays, il était impossible de joindre des habitants.

Le point de départ de cette soudaine mobilisation reste difficile à établir, de même que le bilan des heurts entre manifestants et forces de l'ordre. Pour le *Baghdad Post* qui les a filmés dans les rues de Bagdad, les Irakiens souhaitent ainsi dénoncer la « corruption », le « chômage » et le manque de « services publics ».

Le mouvement est « pour la première fois sans drapeau, sans affiches et sans slogans de parti », note le quotidien d'orientation libérale *Al-Bayina al-Jadida*. « Les manifestants que j'ai rencontrés sont jeunes, démunis, apolitiques, confus et en colère », confirme sur son compte Twitter Hiwa Osman qui se présente comme analyste et commentateur de la situation en Irak et au Kurdistan.

Selon un autre, la main-mise de l'Iran sur la politique irakienne serait également visée. « Nous exigeons notre droit de l'Irak et des troupes de l'Irak », scanderaient aussi les manifestants.



Dans la ville sainte de Najaf, le bâtiment du gouvernement aurait été pris d'assaut, les bureaux du parti Hikma et Dawa attaqués.

19 morts et des centaines de blessés

En guise de réponse, le tout jeune gouvernement d'Adel Abdel Mahdi a choisi la manière forte. Les forces de l'ordre qui ont tiré à balles réelles pour disperser des manifestants à Bagdad, ainsi que dans le sud, à Nassiriya et dans la ville sainte chiite de Najaf.

Le bilan est incertain. Mercredi soir, il s'établissait déjà à neuf morts – huit manifestants et un policier – tous tués par balles à Bagdad et Nassiriya, selon des responsables qui n'ont pas précisé l'origine des tirs. Mais jeudi, de rare

sources locales, relayées par des médias américains, indiquaient qu'il avait grimpé et comptabilisaient 19 morts. Des centaines de personnes auraient également été blessées.

Une suite incertaine

Une explosion survenue dans la nuit a frappé la zone verte, où se trouvent certains ministères et ambassades. La coalition américaine en Irak a toutefois déclaré que les installations américaines n'étaient pas touchées.

Il est impossible de prédire la suite de ce mouvement baptisé « Iraq protest » ou « Iraq initiative » sur les réseaux sociaux. La municipalité de Bagdad a déclaré jeudi jour chômé pour les

fonctionnaires, ce qui pourrait permettre aux forces de l'ordre de renforcer leur quadrillage. Mais l'appel à la « grève générale » et à des « sit-in pacifiques » par le très populaire leader chiite Moqtada Sadr fait craindre que la mobilisation ne perdure. À la différence du précédent mouvement social d'ampleur qui avait paralysé la Zone verte de Bagdad en 2016, ce dernier semble avoir seulement pris le train en marche. Daech reprend de l'ampleur sur les ruines de l'Irak et de la Syrie.

Sur les réseaux sociaux, des Irakiens profitent du rapprochement avec le grand pèlerinage chiite annuel vers le tombeau de l'imam Hussein à Kerbala, qui a déjà commencé et doit culminer le 17 octobre avec les célébrations d'Arbaïn. Un événement célébré chaque année avec une immense ferveur par plus d'un million de fidèles...

« Les partis au pouvoir en Irak ont pillé l'Etat sous couvert de religion », écrit l'un d'eux, appartenant à une grande famille de Najaf. « Mais la religion est une arme à double tranchant, surtout lorsque les manifestations anti-corruption d'aujourd'hui coïncident avec la commémoration de la révolte de l'imam Hussein contre la tyrannie au VII^{ème} siècle ».

Les Kurdes iraniens piégés entre Téhéran et Washington

A lors que le sort des Kurdes d'Irak, de Turquie ou de Syrie est souvent au cœur de l'actualité, celui de leurs compatriotes iraniens est rarement évoqué. Et pourtant, tandis que les tensions entre Washington et Téhéran s'exacerbent, leur situation géopolitique en font un enjeu majeur.

Le 8 septembre 2018, au petit matin, sept missiles iraniens Fateh-110 s'abattent sur le quartier général du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan d'Irak (PDKI) à Koysandjak, près d'Erbil, causant la mort de 18 de ses membres et en blessant 50 autres. Les Gardiens de la révolution revendiquent la paternité de la frappe, clamant avoir « puni [...] les terroristes menant constamment des attaques contre les frontières de la République islamique d'Iran » et promettant de « mettre fin prochainement aux activités des transgresseurs ». Neuf mois plus tard, un vétérinaire de la diplomatie iranienne, Seyed Mohammad Kazem Sajjadpour, se trouve pourtant assis à la même table qu'une délégation de plusieurs mouvements armés kurdes iraniens afin de négocier un cessez-le-feu.

Qui sont ces groupes armés iraniens ? Pourquoi ont-ils pris les armes ? Profitent-ils du succès politico-militaire des Kurdes en Syrie et en Irak ? Quelles relations entretiennent-ils avec l'Iran et les États-Unis, compte tenu de l'accroissement des tensions entre les deux puissances rivales ces derniers mois ?

Au cœur de discriminations étatiques

À l'instar de ceux de Turquie, d'Irak et de Syrie, les Kurdes d'Iran sont l'objet de politiques discriminatoires mises en œuvre par Téhéran, malgré la relative tolérance que le régime leur octroie, notamment en matière culturelle — certains médias sont diffusés en langue kurde et les traditions vestimentaires et musicales kurdes sont tolérées.

Malgré l'opacité informationnelle régnant au sein de la République islamique, ces discriminations sont régulièrement documentées par des ONG ou l'ONU. Dans un rapport publié le 16 août 2019, le rapporteur spécial des Nations unies pour les droits de l'homme en Iran Javād Rehman indiquait que les Kurdes représentaient près de la moitié des prisonniers détenus pour atteinte à la sécurité nationale et, la plupart du temps, étaient condamnés à des peines plus sévères que les autres.

De plus, les provinces peuplées à majorité de Kurdes sont volontairement négligées par le pouvoir et figurent en deuxième et troisième position des régions les moins développées d'Iran.

Outre cette marginalisation économique, les discriminations à l'endroit des douze millions de Kurdes iraniens sont également d'ordre socioculturel. La langue kurde n'est pas officiellement reconnue par Téhéran qui en a interdit l'apprentissage dans les écoles ; certains prénoms kurdes sont refusés par l'état civil, tandis que des pratiques d'expropriation forcée menées par l'État iranien au profit de citoyens chiites — les Kurdes sont majoritairement sunnites —, sont régulièrement dénoncées par des ONG comme Amnesty International (cf. son rapport annuel 2017/2018).

Les discriminations subies par les Kurdes et la politique particulièrement répressive dont ils font l'objet en ont conduit un grand nombre à prendre les armes suivant une tradition insurrectionnelle pluricentenaire dont l'exemple le plus marquant,

dans l'histoire contemporaine de l'Iran est probablement celui de la République de Mahābād quand, en 1946, des insurgés ont créé un État kurde indépendant.

pendant avant qu'il ne soit détruit par l'armée iranienne. Héritiers de ces mouvements et évoluant au fil des dynamiques géopolitiques régionales, cinq groupes armés kurdes iraniens forment le fer de lance de l'opposition armée au pouvoir de Téhéran.

Des groupes armés actifs

Cinq mouvements sont logés au sein de la Région autonome du Kurdistan (RAK) d'Irak d'où ils préparent leurs opérations, et projettent leurs attaques sur la frontière ou dans les provinces frontalières (essentiellement celles d'Azerbaïdjan occidental, du Kurdistan et de Kermanshah). Ils sont de plus en plus redoutés par Téhéran en raison du choix idéal de proxy (intermédiaire) qu'ils représenteraient pour les États-Unis en cas d'escalades militaires avec l'Iran.

Le PDKI est le plus important de ces groupes, ou du moins celui qui retient le plus l'attention de Téhéran. Dirigé depuis 2010 par le charismatique Moustafa Hijri, après une décennie d'inactivité militaire, il a repris les hostilités contre l'Iran en avril 2016. Le PDKI dispose de plusieurs milliers de peshmergas (combattants kurdes irakiens et iraniens). Bien équipés et entraînés, ces combattants mènent essentiellement des actions de harcèlement contre les forces iraniennes, alternant escarmouches et embuscades. Des groupes spéciaux, regroupés sous la bannière des « Aigles de Zagros » lui permettent de conduire des opérations de commandos dans la profondeur du dispositif iranien. Cette structure mobile et efficace fait du PDKI la figure de proue des opérations militaires menées par les Kurdes iraniens contre le régime des mollahs.

Face à cette reprise des hostilités, la réponse de Téhéran ne s'est pas fait attendre : dès le mois de décembre 2016, une double attaque à l'engin explosif a ciblé le QG du PDKI à Koysandjak, au Kurdistan irakien, tuant plusieurs peshmergas et employés locaux. Le 8 septembre 2018, ce même QG a été la cible d'une frappe de missiles. Plus récemment encore, l'artillerie iranienne a bombardé à plusieurs reprises les positions des insurgés dans les montagnes irakiennes.

Des liaisons avec le PKK

Le Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan (PJAK), avatar iranien du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), constitue la deuxième force politico-militaire majeure. Créé en 2004, le PJAK est en concurrence directe, mais non fratricide avec le PDKI et ne bénéficie que très peu des succès militaires et diplomatiques de ses camarades des Forces de défense du peuple (HPG, bras armé du PKK) en Irak et du Parti de l'union démocratique (PYD, filiale syrienne du PKK) en Syrie. Dotée d'une branche armée forte d'environ 3 000 hommes, les Unités du Kurdistan oriental (YRK), le PJAK reste relativement discret et ne combat que très rarement les troupes iraniennes.

Cette réserve tranche avec les attaques quasi quotidiennes que le PJAK lançait en 2010. Elle s'explique sans doute par la vaste opération lancée par l'armée iranienne en 2011 contre ses positions dans les monts Zagros. Durant deux mois, les forces iraniennes se sont employées à repousser



les YRK du côté irakien de la frontière, provoquant des pertes d'une ampleur inconnue, mais suffisamment meurtrières pour qu'à la fin de l'été 2011, les deux parties conviennent d'un cessez-le-feu.

À ce jour, cet accord est toujours en vigueur, les escarmouches entre YRK et forces de sécurité iraniennes s'avèrent rares et semblent être le fait d'individus isolés plutôt que d'une volonté du PJAK de reprendre la lutte armée. Les mouvements kurdes irakiens et iraniens qui lui sont hostiles affirment — sans apporter de preuves — que Téhéran le soutiendrait désormais afin qu'il « étanchéise » la frontière face à ses concurrents kurdes iraniens basés au Kurdistan d'Irak.

Renoncement à un État indépendant ?

Trois autres mouvements complètent la liste des groupes armés : le Komala, le Parti de la liberté au Kurdistan (PAK) et le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan-Iran (PDK-I, issu d'une scission en 2006 du PDKI). Leur rôle politico-militaire demeure très limité.

Si l'idéologie de ces groupes diffère, passant du nationalisme à l'utopie révolutionnaire, tous semblent s'être accordés sur l'impossibilité d'obtenir un État kurde indépendant et détaché de l'Iran. Leur objectif est donc de parvenir à une situation similaire à celle du Kurdistan irakien : une région autonome au sein d'un État fédéral, la reconnaissance de leur identité et le respect de leurs droits sociopolitiques.

Cette volonté commune s'est illustrée par l'établissement, en 2018, d'un Centre de coopération des partis politiques du Kurdistan iranien à l'initiative du PDKI. Le PJAK, considéré comme un parti « d'étrangers » en raison de sa proximité avec le PKK turc, n'a pas été convié à rejoindre cette plateforme de coopération.

En raison de leur activisme militaire et du rôle qu'ils pourraient être amenés à jouer dans le cas d'un conflit armé entre les États-Unis et l'Iran, ces mouvements ont été approchés en différentes occasions par les deux protagonistes.

U.S. Officials Are Worried About Turkish Foray Into Syria

A major incursion could prompt Trump administration to withdraw troops, essentially ending fight against Islamic State in Syria

WASHINGTON—U.S. officials are increasingly concerned that Turkey soon will mount a major incursion into northern Syria and trigger a clash with Kurdish fighters, a move likely to prompt the Trump administration to withdraw all U.S. forces from Syria to avoid a conflict.

A U.S. pullout would essentially end the fight against Islamic State in Syria, which U.S. officials still consider a viable terrorist network capable of staging attacks against the U.S. and its allies and interests despite having lost its so-called caliphate.

Turkey wants to resettle up to two million Syrian refugees currently living in Turkey in Syrian border towns that would be cleared of Kurdish forces known as the YPG, a group Turkey considers to be a terrorist affiliate of the Turkey-based PKK.

But while Turkey, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, views the Kurdish military organization as a terrorist group, U.S. officials credit Kurdish fighters with eliminating Islamic State's territorial hold in Syria.

Washington has attempted to quell Turkish concerns by conducting joint military patrols in two Syrian cities and holding talks on Turkey's request for a 300-mile safe zone along the border between the two countries.

Zones of Influence

Turkey wants to seize control of a 300-mile strip in northeastern Syria for what it calls a 'safe zone' to relocate up to 2 million Syrian refugees now living in Turkey.

Now, U.S. officials said this week that they see mounting evidence that Turkey is preparing to insert forces into northeastern Syria in the coming days or weeks, putting U.S. forces at potential risk.

"It's a perfect storm, it's really ugly. There may just be no choice but to leave," one U.S. official said.

In Ankara, government officials said they were frustrated by the slow pace of joint efforts to create what they call safe areas for refugees in northeastern Syria. U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper spoke about the issue with his Turkish counterpart, Defense Minister Hulusi Akar on Thursday.

The U.S. hasn't formally warned Turkey about a possible withdrawal from Syria, one person familiar with the matter said. If the U.S. conveyed such a message,

Areas of control, Sept. 30
 Syrian government Opposition forces
 Kurdish forces and allies
 Turkish army/opposition forces



Areas of control, Sept. 30
 Source: Conflict Monitor by IHS Markit

the person said, it would be interpreted as "a perception ploy," a way to tell the Turks that they could be worse off dealing alone with the regime of President Bashar al-Assad of Syria and its main backer, Russia.

Turkish officials didn't respond to questions about their military plans. On Tuesday, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey told parliament's opening session that his country had no choice but to act unilaterally to create a safe zone in northern Syria.

"We have not achieved any of the results we desired," Mr. Erdogan said. "Turkey cannot lose even a single day on this issue. There is no other choice but to act on our own."

A member of the Kurdish internal security forces in northern Syria last year. Photo: Hussein Malla/Associated Press

YPG representatives declined to comment, and a spokesperson for the Syrian Democratic Forces, a coalition led by Kurdish fighters, didn't respond to requests for comment.

U.S. attempts over the past year to elicit European interest in the Syrian refugee resettlement plan have fallen short, and talks between Washington and Ankara have dragged on.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu of Turkey said the U.S. wasn't sincere about cooperating in northeastern Syria. "We think the process under way with the U.S.

won't take us to the point we want. Information coming from the field proves it," the minister told Turkish television Wednesday.

Turkey could choose to insert a small number of forces, potentially drawing a muted Kurdish reaction. But if Turkey conducts a widespread incursion using heavy arms and forces, the U.S. might have no choice but to pull its more than 1,000 troops out of Syria to avoid a potential conflict with a NATO ally, officials said. The U.S. had more than 2,000 troops in Syria last year.

U.S. officials said they harbor deep misgivings about withdrawing troops from the area and leaving their close Kurdish allies to an uncertain fate, a move that would send a conflicting message about U.S. reliability to other current and prospective U.S. partners world-wide.

But President Trump, who now is facing an impeachment inquiry and is eager to demonstrate a foreign policy victory, has tried to disengage the U.S. from conflicts overseas, including in Syria. Last year, he called for a complete U.S. withdrawal from Syria, but ultimately reversed himself after a backlash by GOP allies and top military officials.

New Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Army Gen. Mark Milley Photo: kevin lamarque/Reuters

The problems associated with pulling U.S. support from Kurdish allies were among arguments against a full U.S. withdrawal last year. However, military officials said they have grown resigned to the situation, adding that an armed clash between Turkey and Kurdish forces would heighten prospects of a pullout.

The complex issues surrounding the U.S. presence in Syria will fall squarely on the Pentagon's new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army Gen. Mark Milley, who succeeded Marine Gen. Joe Dunford. Gen. Dunford served as the administration's primary military contact with Ankara.

In calls and visits with Turkish leaders, Gen. Dunford, who stepped down Monday, repeatedly urged Turkey to exercise restraint, defense officials said. Gen. Dunford last spoke to his Turkish counterpart two weeks ago, according to Joint Staff officials.

U.S. officials have grown alarmed about Ankara's moves in part because they worry Turkey won't provide an adequate notice that it is moving in, one official said. Any warning could come less than 48 hours before Turkey takes action. "It seems more and more

likely based on the actions they are taking in southern Turkey,” said one U.S. official, referring to movements of equipment and personnel.

Turkey has long complained about the buildup of Kurdish forces and influence along its southern border, calling it a direct threat. Since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Turkey has entered Syria twice in a bid to stop Kurdish expansion.

In response, U.S. officials had set up joint U.S.-Turkish patrols to cool tensions. Last year, in the Syrian city of Manbij, U.S. and Turkish forces conducted joint patrols after Turkey threatened to launch an offensive against Kurds based at the border. Since September, U.S. and Turkish forces have conducted joint patrols in the Syrian city of Tal Abayd.

The U.S.’s current position in northeast Syria is not tenable over the long term,” said Jennifer Caffarella, a Syria analyst at the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War. “The U.S. does not have enough forces in Syria to prevent the Turks from crossing the border and will not fight Turkey, a NATO ally, if that occurs.”

Ekurd Daily, 04 octobre 2019
Know Your World, First Perspectives in News

Kurdistan rejects call from Iraqi federal gov't to suspend Internet : ministry

HEWLÊR-Erbil, Iraq’s Kurdistan region,— The Kurdistan regional Government’s (KRG) Ministry of Transportation and Communications said on Thursday that it had rejected a call by the federal government to cut off the internet in the Kurdistan region.

In response to deadly protests rocking Baghdad and several southern Iraqi cities, the federal government cut off access to the internet on Wednesday.

After a 28-hour block, internet access briefly returned for several hours overnight, but appears to have been cut off again, according to NGO Netblocks.

Access in the Kurdistan region remained active. The Kurdish region’s network and connection to international communications infrastructure is separate from the one in southern and central Iraq.

A spokesperson for the ministry in Erbil said that the federal Ministry of Communications had called on them to suspend internet access and social networks.

“The [KRG] Ministry of Transportation and Communications is committed to the [KRG] Council of Ministers’ decision that the contracts of the internet services are taken by the Kurdistan regio-



A demonstrator gestures as he stands close to burning tires blocking a road, during a protest over unemployment, corruption and poor public services, in Baghdad, Iraq, October 2, 2019. Photo: Reuters

nal Government, not Baghdad,” the statement said. Internet access has been cut off across much of Iraq including the capital Baghdad with connectivity falling below 70%, internet blockage observatory NetBlocks said, amid renewed anti-government protests that turned violent and spread nationwide.

Earlier on Wednesday social media platforms Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as messaging application WhatsApp all appeared to be have been disabled across Iraq except in the semi-auto-

nomous Kurdistan region.

The services were only accessible by using a VPN, which effectively disguises the location of a device.

Since Tuesday, Iraqi security forces have fired live rounds and tear gas every day to disperse the protesters, leaving 33 people dead and hundreds wounded.

Police shot at a small group of protesters in Baghdad on Friday after three deadly days of anti-government unrest and Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi said no “magic solution” was available, pledging vague reform that are unlikely to placate Iraqis.

Responding to the ongoing anti-corruption protests in Baghdad and southern Iraq, President of the New Generation Movement Shaswar Abdulwahid called for protests in Iraqi Kurdistan. He said on Wednesday that residents in Erbil, Sulaimani, Duhok, and Halabja governorates should also take to the streets.

“In the Kurdistan region, there are poor living conditions, theft of the country’s fortune by officials, injustice, and lack of services. They [officials] do not pay the salaries of their employees and the people and workers are in a bad condition in the market,” Abdulwahid said.



04 october, 2019

Amnesty: Iraqi forces' brutality against protesters 'outrageous'

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – International human rights watchdog Amnesty International has sternly rebuked Iraqi security forces’ violent response to demonstrations in the capital Baghdad and other cities this week, calling their actions “unnecessary” and “outrageous.”

“The Iraqi government must immediately order security forces to stop using excessive, including

lethal, force against protesters and ensure that the investigation announced into the reported killing of at least 18 protesters and one police officer begins immediately and is fully independent and impartial,” read a statement released on Thursday.

The current wave of demonstrations erupted on Tuesday in Baghdad’s central Tahrir Square, a traditional venue for protest. After news of the

security forces’ use of violence, protests quickly spread to several major cities in central and southern Iraq and, to the north, the disputed city of Kirkuk.

The Iraqi government declared a curfew in Baghdad on Wednesday, which it said would be in effect “until further notice” and some provincial governors have taken similar measures. Amnesty also called on authorities “to end the un-

lawful blocking of access to the internet and social media, and to lift the arbitrary curfews imposed in several areas.”

“It is outrageous that Iraqi security forces time and again deal with protesters with such brutality using lethal and unnecessary force,” said Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International’s Middle East Research Director.

“The state must commit to holding those responsible to account. This must not be yet another case of the government announcing an investigation or committee of inquiry which never yields any results.”

On Thursday evening, Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi responded to the protests by promising a minimum income scheme for Iraqi citizens.

“The protesters have the right to demand an end to corruption, but it takes time for change to take place,” Abdul Mahdi said, calling for “the normalization of life in various provinces,” and “respect for the rule of law.”

The prime minister asserted there was no “magic solution” to the problems of governance and abuse of power in Iraq but vowed to try to pass a law that would give low-income families a basic income.

Amnesty’s report continued, “Protesters in Baghdad have described injuries consistent with those that can result from stun grenades if thrown directly or too close at protestors, or from explosive devices which should not be used at all in public order situations.”

According to international human rights law and policing standards, stun grenades should only ever be

used by specially trained officers in very specific circumstances that do not include public order policing operations or managing assemblies.

Amnesty said it is further concerned about reports of arbitrary arrests of protesters and journalists in multiple provinces. In Basra, Baghdad, and Najaf, protesters told the organization that security forces had been randomly arresting protesters.

“The yearly recurrence of these protests goes to show that the underlying drivers of these protests will remain as long as they are not meaningfully addressed,” the report continued.

“Instead of meeting these protests with arbitrary and excessive force, authorities must address protesters’ grievances and the root causes of the unrest in a sustainable manner.”



4 october, 2019

Dutch MPs warn against possible Turkish attack against Syrian Kurds

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Several Dutch MPs have warned against a possible attack against the northeast of Syria following threats made by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Dutch MP for the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Martijn van IJelvert, on Thursday warned that if the US allows Turkey to invade the northeast of Syria, Kurdish would release all Islamic State prisoners and surrender to Assad, Russia, and Iran.

“The Kurds cannot stop Turkey, control ISIS, hold ISIS prisoners and keep the Assad-regime at bay. I urge to call Turkey to order within NATO. There should be less fighting in Syria, not more,” he tweeted.

He added that the Dutch government and other NATO partners should urge Turkey not to invade northeastern Syria.

The CDA is one of the ruling coalition parties within the Dutch government.

Dutch MP Sven Koopmans, for the People’s Party for Freedom (VVD), which is also a member of the ruling government coalition, on Twitter agreed that Turkey should not reconsider its attack on Syria’s northeast.

However, he questioned if it would be in the ‘interest’ of the Kurds to release Islamic State prisoners or to ‘surrender’ themselves to Damascus.

Sadet Karabulut, a member of the opposition’s Socialist Party (SP), told Kurdistan 24 that Turkey’s possible invasion would redirect priorities to inte-



On Friday, the US and the Turkish army carried out the third joint patrol in northeast Syria as part of the US-Turkish agreed security mechanism. (Photo: Turkish Defense Ministry)

rests other than the security and stability in the region.

“The Netherlands must firmly condemn such a plan and make this public by all possible means,” Karabulut stated.

Washington-based Kurdish Affairs analyst, Mutlu Civioglu, told Kurdistan 24 it is “clear that an operation inside northeastern Syria would not be a solution, but would create new catastrophes and human tragedies.”

“Many people are going to be displaced. What is going to happen people who is going to lose their homes?” he asked.

Civioglu, who often visits the northeast of Syria, affirmed it is one of the most stable parts of Syria.

He also warned that if attacked, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) would defend itself and that it is possible thousands of Islamic State fighters and families would suddenly be at large.

“Even now, they have a hard time containing these people. And if there is an attack against them its going to be even harder because their priority would shift to defending themselves, not taking care of these prisoners and their families.”

The original tweet by Helvert came in response to a report published by the Wall Street Journal that suggested US officials were worried a major Turkish incursion could prompt the Trump administration to withdraw troops.

Erdogan on Tuesday warned the deadline to jointly establish a “safe zone” with the US in northern Syria had expired, bringing the possibility of a cross-border offensive closer.

On Friday, the US and the Turkish army carried out their third joint patrol in the northeast as part of the US-Turkish agreed security mechanism.

The Dutch government and the Dutch Parliament have publically made clear they are opposed to any unilateral Turkish incursion in the northeast of Syria.

Following pressure from the Dutch government, the EU made a statement in December last year calling on Turkey not to take unilateral actions in Syria that could jeopardize the fight against the Islamic State.

“The Netherlands continues to support this call and will repeat it where possible,” the Dutch government said in January.



4 october, 2019
By Liz Sly

Syria camp is at risk of falling under ISIS control, Kurdish general says

BEIRUT — America's Syrian Kurdish allies are at risk of losing control of the vast camp where the families of the Islamic State's defeated fighters are being detained as militant women increasingly assert their dominance over the camp, according to the top Kurdish military commander.

Guards at the al-Hol camp in eastern Syria are failing to contain the increasingly violent behavior of some of the residents, and the flimsy perimeter is at risk of being breached unless the international community steps in with more assistance, said the head of the Syrian Democratic Forces, Gen. Mazloum Kobane, who uses a nom de guerre and is known simply as Mazloum.

"There is a serious risk in al-Hol. Right now, our people are able to guard it. But because we lack resources, Daesh are regrouping and reorganizing in the camp," he said, using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State. "We can't control them 100 percent, and the situation is grave."

The al-Hol camp houses around 70,000 people, most of them women and children who were displaced by the war against the Islamic State. A majority of those are ordinary civilians caught up in the fighting who have no relationship to the militants, and more than half are children.

But as many as 30,000 are Islamic State loyalists, including the most die-hard radicals who chose to remain in the group's self-declared caliphate until the final battle for the village of Baghouz this year, Mazloum said in a telephone interview from his headquarters in the Syrian province of Hasakah.

Around 10,000 of those are foreigners from more than 40 countries who made the journey to join the Islamic State in Syria, and they are among the most fiercely committed extremists, according to camp officials.

Tension, fear and violence in Syria's al-Hol displacement camp

In August, Kurdish officials and residents told The Post about rising tension and fear among the more than 70,000 residents of Syria's al-Hol displacement camp. (Joyce Lee/The Washington Post)

Tensions in the camp have risen sharply since Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi delivered an audio address last month urging his followers to "tear down the walls" of the camps and prisons housing detainees to free them, SDF



Women and children stand by a gate during a brief dust storm at the foreigners' section of the al-Hol camp in Syria. (Alice Martins for The Washington Post/FTWP)

officials say. The women have set up their own Islamic State-style sharia courts and are inflicting physical punishments on ordinary camp residents who reject their ideology.

One of the SDF's foremost wishes is for governments to alleviate some of the burden on the SDF by repatriating their citizens, Mazloum said. But most governments are refusing to take them back.

The Kurdish administration also needs help with funding to secure, feed and house the detainees, he said. The town-size camp, sprawled across a remote stretch of desert near the Iraqi border, is surrounded only by a rusty, sagging chain-link fence. Floodlights — paid for by the Kurds — to detect breakouts at night were smashed almost immediately by women throwing rocks, Mazloum said. The guards have no night-vision equipment, and the few closed-circuit TV cameras are useless after sunset.

Smugglers sympathetic to the Islamic State lurk in the desert nearby and close in under cover of darkness and help women and children clamber across the fence.

Mazloum said he believed all of those who have escaped in that way were foreigners, and all were subsequently recaptured. SDF officials concede, however, that it is possible some have managed to get away, and could make their way back to their home countries undetected.

An incident this week heightened fears that the camp is slipping out of control. Guards attempting to intervene to prevent Russian Islamic State women from administering beatings against two women who had failed to obey their rules were

confronted by stone-throwing women, two of whom pulled guns, according to the officials. The guards opened fire in the air, according to Mazloum, but aid workers reported that four women were injured by gunshots and the SDF said one woman died.

Compounding the problem are dismal living conditions. Food is scarce, water supplies are contaminated and disease is rife. With winter approaching, the misery will only increase, heightening discontent in the camp and perhaps turning more residents against the SDF, said Mazloum, citing the urgent need for more humanitarian assistance as well.

The U.S. military shares the SDF's concerns, said Col. Myles B. Caggins III, a U.S. military spokesman speaking from Baghdad. Although large numbers of the camp's residents are not Islamic State supporters, "without an international solution, the next generation of ISIS combatants may emerge from al-Hol," he said.

The SDF forces are meanwhile stretched thin across their vast territory, amounting to a third of Syria, by the effort to suppress revived Islamic State activity elsewhere, by continuing threats from Turkey and fears that it plans to invade the northern part of the area, and by the need to defend against possible incursions from the Syrian government to the south.

"All this is preventing us from focusing on the camp," Mazloum said. "If we can remove these challenges, we can manage."

But, he added, that would require a political settlement to the overall Syrian war, "which will take a very long time."



October 5, 2019
by Karzan Sulaivany

US warns Ankara, amid worry of Turkish incursion into northeast Syria

WASHINGTON DC (Kurdistan 24) – For the second straight day, on Friday, senior US Defense Department officials held discussions with their Turkish counterparts, amid US concerns that Ankara is preparing an attack across the border into northeast Syria.

Such concerns do, indeed, appear well-founded, as, the following day, on Saturday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened an imminent attack.

On Friday, Gen. Mark Milley, the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke by telephone with his Turkish counterpart, Gen. Yasar Guler. According to a formal US readout of their discussion – the first between the two men – they “discussed updates to the security situation in Syria and the importance of US-Turkish cooperation in the region.”

However, Lt. Col. Gleason, Pentagon Spokesperson, provided Kurdistan 24 with a more pointed statement that articulated US concerns more clearly.

“In our view, and we have communicated this to Turkey,” Gleason said, “any uncoordinated military operations by Turkey would be of grave concern as it would undermine our shared interest of a secure northeast Syria and the enduring defeat of ISIS.”

Presumably, Milley stated that as well. And so, too, one assumes, did US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper who spoke with Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar on Thursday.

The discussions occurred against the backdrop of a Wall Street Journal report on Thursday that explained: “US officials are increasingly concerned that Turkey soon will mount a major incursion into northern Syria and trigger a clash with Kurdish fighters”—that is with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), who have been America’s main ally in the fight against the so-called Islamic State in Syria.

Yet senior US officials appear reluctant to describe, at least publicly, the extent of US concerns about possible Turkish actions.

On Tuesday, Erdogan told Turkey’s parliament about his intentions in Syria, including for the 3.6 million Syrian refugees now living in Turkey.

“We plan to resettle two million people along the 30-kilometer deep safe zone which we will create in the area between the Euphrates River and the Iraqi border, including Manbij,” Erdogan stated.

“Turkey does not have a single day to waste in this matter,” he said. “At this point, we have no alternative



Turkish and US military vehicles take part in a joint patrol in the Syrian village of al-Hashisha on the outskirts of Tal Abyad town along the border with Turkey, Oct. 4, 2019. (Photo: AFP/Delil Souleiman)

but to continue on our own path.” Such a plan, if implemented, would bring about radical demographic change, creating an “Arab belt” between Kurdish-inhabited areas of Turkey and Syria.

It would also threaten the fragile stability that the US-led Coalition, in partnership with the SDF, has established in northeast Syria, while raising the prospect of the re-emergence of the Islamic State.

Asked by Kurdistan 24 at a Pentagon press briefing on Thursday to provide an update on the implementation of “the security mechanism” along the Syrian-Turkish border and whether it was still viable in light of Erdogan’s remarks, Col. Patrick Ryder (US Air Force), Spokesperson for the Joint Staff, declined to comment on Erdogan’s statements.

However, Ryder affirmed, “We continue to implement the security mechanism.” US and Turkish forces have conducted “seven combined air reconnaissance flights, two joint ground patrols,” and more are “planned for the future.”

“We continue to see YPG (People’s Protection Units—the Kurdish leadership of the SDF) fortifications being dismantled,” and that “shows a good base effort on the SDF’s part to help implement this mechanism.”

Asked, “As far as you’re concerned, the SDF is complying with the terms of these understandings,” Ryder replied, “We continue to work with them, we continue to see fortifications be dismantled.”

“We recognize there’s still a lot of work to do, but we’re confident that progress is being made,” he concluded.

To this reporter, it sounded like Ryder had responded, albeit cautiously, in the affirmative: the SDF is

complying with the terms of the agreement with Turkey.

Yet “there is growing concern within the US government,” Nicholas Heras, a Fellow at the Center for a New American Security, told Kurdistan 24. “Erdogan’s continued provocations might force the US to not only hasten a withdrawal but force the SDF into a bad agreement with Russia and the Syrian regime, rather than cede territory to Turkey that could become filled with jihadists.”

“The US military does not want to be in a position to have to fire on a NATO ally to protect the SDF, even though there are some US commanders who no longer view Turkey as an ally,” Heras said.

“Erdogan’s strategy is to keep constant pressure on his US counterparts by repeatedly threatening cross-border operations,” Dr. Aykan Erdemir, a former Turkish parliamentarian and currently a Senior Fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, advised Kurdistan 24.

Erdemir cautioned that statements “about possibly withdrawing all American forces” might “embolden the Turkish president to take unilateral action,” producing unintended consequences.

Whatever the reason, Erdogan does appear emboldened. On Friday, his top advisor, Ibrahim Kalin, spoke by telephone with the new White House National Security Adviser, Robert O’Brien, who assumed that position on Sept. 18, following Amb. John Bolton’s departure.

On Saturday, Erdogan affirmed to his Justice and Development Party (AKP) that Turkey was readying a cross-border assault.

“We have completed our preparations and action plan, the necessary instructions were given,” Erdogan said. “Maybe today or tomorrow will be the time to clear the way for [our] peace efforts, which are set, and the process for them started,” Turkey’s state-run Anadolu Agency reported.

“We will carry out a ground and air operation,” Erdogan affirmed. “Our aim is, I underscore, to shower the east of Euphrates with peace.”



05 october, 2019
by John J. Catherine

Kurdish MPs in Baghdad voice support for protesters, call for 'urgent' reform

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Kurdish lawmakers from the Gorran (Change) Movement in the Iraqi parliament on Saturday called on Baghdad to prepare an “urgent” reform project amid nationwide protests that have resulted in the deaths of close to 100 people.

“The demonstrations by unarmed Iraqi citizens are the result of the accumulation of years of waste of Iraq’s wealth by the hundreds of billions due to the corruption of successive authoritarian elites, the lack of basic services, unemployment, and the weakening of citizens’ confidence in the democratic process due to the rigging of general and local elections,” Gorran said in a statement.

“We in the Gorran parliamentary bloc support the legitimate demands of the demonstrators and strongly condemn the use of live rounds to counter them,” continued the statement, which called on Baghdad “to prepare an actual and urgent reform and ministerial changes necessary as soon as possible to be voted on in parliament.”

On Thursday, Amnesty International sternly rebuked Iraqi security forces’ violent response to the demonstrations, saying, “The Iraqi government must immediately order security forces to stop using excessive, including lethal, force against protesters.”

Lawmakers are expected to hold an extraordinary session to discuss the protests, which, in their first four days, led to the deaths of 93 protesters or security forces, the injury of 3,870, and the arrest of



Demonstrators gather at a protest during a curfew, three days after the nationwide anti-government protests turned violent in Baghdad, Oct. 4, 2019. (Photo: Reuters/Alaa al-Marjani)

567, according to UN figures.

Earlier on Saturday, Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi met with purported representatives of the demonstrators from various parts of the country to hear their demands in preparation for the special session.

Gorran stated that the parliament convening “without a project and a clear road map for change and radical reform would not lead to the resolution of problems and could worsen the situation further.”

On Friday, influential cleric Muqtada al-Sadr—who commands a coalition that makes up about half of

parliament—called for snap elections and the resignation of the government led by Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi. Sadr also blamed politicians in general for the violence that has engulfed the country, the worst since Abdul Mahdi’s predecessor proclaimed the Islamic State defeated in late 2017.

On Thursday evening, Abdul Mahdi responded to the protests by promising a minimum income scheme for Iraqi citizens, saying, “The protesters have the right to demand an end to corruption, but it takes time for change to take place.”

The prime minister asserted there was no “magic solution” to the problems of governance and abuse of power in Iraq but vowed to try to pass a law that would give low-income families a basic income.

Early Saturday morning, state media announced that Abdul Mahdi had lifted a curfew that had been in effect since Wednesday.

LA
PRESSE

05 octobre 2019

Syrie : Erdogan réitère sa menace d'intervention « sur terre et dans les airs »

Ankara - Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a réitéré samedi sa menace de lancer une opération « sur terre et dans les airs » en Syrie contre une milice kurde considérée comme « terroriste » par Ankara, mais alliée de Washington.

« Nous avons effectué nos préparatifs, achevé nos plans d'opération, donné les instructions nécessaires », a déclaré le président turc dans un discours télévisé, ajoutant que l'offensive pouvait commencer « aussi tôt qu'aujourd'hui, demain ».

« Nous conduirons cette (opération) sur terre et dans les airs », a-t-il ajouté, précisant qu'elle serait menée à l'est de l'Euphrate.

Les autorités kurdes en Syrie ont elles appelé la communauté internationale à « mettre la pression sur la Turquie pour l'empêcher de commettre toute agression » sur le territoire qu'elles contrôlent dans le nord-est de la Syrie.

Les menaces du président turc sont « dangereuses et attentent à la sécurité et la stabilité de la région », ont-elles ajouté dans un communiqué.

M. Ergodan avait affirmé mardi que la Turquie arrivait à bout de patience envers les États-Unis au sujet de la création d'une « zone de sécurité » dans le nord de la Syrie, prévue aux termes d'un accord conclu en août entre Washington et Ankara.

Il avait auparavant averti Washington que la Turquie lui donnait jusqu'à fin septembre pour des résultats concrets dans la mise en place de cette zone tampon où ont été effectuées des patrouilles communes américano-turques, faute de quoi elle déclencherait une opération contre la milice kurde des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG).

Fer de lance des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), cette milice a été un partenaire clé de Washington dans la lutte contre le groupe djihadiste État islamique (EI).

M. Erdogan a menacé à plusieurs reprises de lancer une offensive transfrontalière.

Outre éloigner les YPG de sa frontière, M. Er-

dogan espère pouvoir utiliser cette « zone de sécurité » pour y renvoyer jusqu'à deux millions de réfugiés syriens.

Le président turc accuse les pays occidentaux de refuser délibérément de partager le fardeau des

réfugiés syriens, alors que la Turquie en accueille 3,6 millions.

M. Erdogan avait annoncé le 21 septembre que les préparatifs étaient terminés en vue d'une opération turque en Syrie.

Si elle a lieu, cette opération serait la troisième menée par la Turquie en Syrie depuis 2016. La première visait l'EI en 2016 et la deuxième les YPG en 2018.

Le Monde

05 octobre 2019
Hélène Sallon

En Irak, la contestation fait près de 100 morts ; le premier ministre fragilisé

Les manifestants expriment un rejet de l'ensemble de la classe politique au pouvoir et se disent déterminés à poursuivre le mouvement « jusqu'à la chute du régime ».

Après quatre jours d'une contestation extrêmement violente, réprimée dans le sang, à Bagdad et dans les villes du sud chiite de l'Irak, le premier ministre Adel Abdel Mahdi est sur la sellette. Alors que, dans la rue, les manifestants se disent déterminés à poursuivre le mouvement jusqu'à « la chute du régime », les pressions politiques s'accroissent sur le gouvernement. Vendredi 4 octobre au soir, le chef populiste chiite Moqtada Al-Sadr, à la tête de la première force politique au Parlement, a appelé à sa démission et à l'organisation d'élections législatives anticipées. L'ancien premier ministre Haïder Al-Abadi, qui dirige le troisième bloc parlementaire, s'est joint à cet appel.

Confronté à son premier test social majeur, un an après la formation de son gouvernement, Adel Abdel Mahdi n'a pas su trouver les mots pour apaiser les contestataires, mobilisés contre la corruption, le chômage et la déliquescence des services publics. C'est à deux heures du matin vendredi, alors que la plupart des Irakiens dormaient, qu'il s'est adressé à la nation dans une allocution télévisée. S'il a dit comprendre la frustration de la population et vouloir répondre aux « demandes légitimes » des manifestants, il a souligné qu'il n'existait pas de « solution magique » aux problèmes du pays.

Et, alors que la contestation a fait au moins 100 morts – dont six policiers – et 4 000 blessés dans le pays en quatre jours, selon un bilan provisoire de la Commission gouvernementale des droits de l'homme, il a assuré que les forces irakiennes répondaient aux manifestants « selon les standards internationaux. » Le Haut Commissariat de l'ONU aux droits de l'homme a toutefois demandé à l'Irak une enquête « rapide » sur les morts et « de permettre à la population d'exercer ses droits à la liberté d'expression ».

Article réservé à nos abonnés Lire aussi Scènes de chaos et coupure massive d'Internet en Irak « Cela fait plus de quinze ans qu'on entend les mêmes promesses »

A la fin de la prière du vendredi, alors que le couvre-feu était maintenu et Internet toujours coupé, les manifestations ont repris de plus belle



Le premier ministre irakien Adel Abdel Mahdi lors de son intervention télévisée, à 2 heures du matin vendredi, alors que la plupart des Irakiens dormaient. AFP PHOTO / HO / IRAQIYA TV

à Bagdad et dans le sud du pays. Le grand ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, la plus haute autorité chiite du pays, venait d'apporter son soutien aux manifestants. Dans une allocution très attendue, son représentant, Ahmed Al-Safi, a exhorté toutes les parties à cesser les violences et blâmé la classe politique pour son échec à réformer le pays. Il a appelé le gouvernement à « améliorer les services publics, trouver des emplois, éviter le clientélisme dans le service public et en finir avec les dossiers de corruption ».

Mais face à l'ampleur de la répression, ce discours a été jugé trop mesuré par nombre de manifestants, qui ont exprimé des critiques, rares envers le dignitaire religieux. « J'espérais plus. (...) Avec un mot, il aurait pu faire tomber le gouvernement », a déclaré Samer, 29 ans, à l'Agence France Presse. « En 2014, quand les djihadistes étaient aux portes de Bagdad, nous sommes allés mourir au combat à cause de sa fatwa » qui a permis de former des unités de supplétifs aux troupes irakiennes. « Aujourd'hui, il nous laisse tomber ! », a déploré Sayyed, un manifestant de 32 ans à Bagdad, à l'AFP.

Des tireurs d'élite de la police ont ouvert le feu

sur des manifestants, semblant cibler certaines personnes

La journée de contestation, vendredi, a vu de nouveaux affrontements entre forces antiémeutes et manifestants, marqués par une escalade dans l'usage de la force. Des tirs nourris ont résonné toute la journée dans la capitale et se sont poursuivis dans la nuit de manière sporadique. Des tireurs d'élite de la police ont ouvert le feu sur des manifestants, semblant cibler certaines personnes, ont rapporté des journalistes de l'agence Reuters. Alors que les autorités accusent depuis mardi des « saboteurs » d'infiltrer les manifestations, les forces de sécurité ont accusé, vendredi, des « snipers non identifiés » d'avoir tiré sur les manifestants et sur leurs membres à Bagdad. La levée du couvre-feu a toutefois été ordonnée dès samedi à l'aube, dans la capitale uniquement, pour permettre aux citoyens de retrouver une vie normale.

Les manifestants se disent déterminés à poursuivre le mouvement « jusqu'à la chute du régime ». « Cela fait plus de quinze ans qu'on entend les mêmes promesses, a témoigné à l'AFP Sayyed, le manifestant de Bagdad. On

continue : soit on meurt, soit on change le régime. » Mobilisés depuis mardi sans le soutien d'aucune organisation politique ou religieuse, ils expriment un rejet de l'ensemble de la classe politique au pouvoir depuis l'invasion américaine de 2003, accusée de détourner l'argent public et d'instrumentaliser le confessionnalisme à des fins politiques. Comme lors des manifestations de l'été 2018, les partis et milices chiites, qui dominent la vie politique, et leur parrain iranien se voient ainsi défier au cœur même de leur base électorale, à Bagdad et dans le sud chiite du pays.

« Nouvelle guerre civile »

Le premier ministre Abdel Mahdi, 77 ans, se retrouve face à une équation impossible. « Il a échoué jusqu'à présent à introduire des réformes majeures. Il est devenu l'otage des puissantes factions politiques et paramilitaires qui perpétuent leur domination par des

moyens légaux et extralégaux, analyse Harith Hasan, chercheur associé au centre américain Carnegie. Sans un changement significatif dans la gestion de la politique, à commencer par une réforme de la loi électorale pour permettre une représentation juste et mettre fin à la répartition partisane des postes et des ressources de l'Etat, il y a très peu d'espoir qu'une amélioration effective des conditions soit possible. »

Candidat de compromis entre les coalitions chiites arrivées en tête des législatives de 2018, et entre les deux parrains américain et iranien, le premier ministre ne dispose ni d'un soutien partisan ni d'une base populaire. La division du camp chiite a jusqu'à présent assuré sa survie politique mais son gouvernement est pris au piège des tensions croissantes entre Washington et Téhéran dans la région. « Une escalade de la violence est possible, surtout si les milices décident de soutenir un camp. Si la

réponse aux manifestations allait dans cette direction, cela pourrait déboucher sur une nouvelle guerre civile, sanglante, plutôt qu'une sortie de crise », avertit Anthony Pfaff, chercheur associé à l'Atlantic Council.

Alors qu'Hadi Al-Ameri, à la tête de la deuxième force parlementaire, la coalition Al-Fatah qui regroupe les milices chiites liées à l'Iran, a exhorté le premier ministre à mettre en place des réformes, l'appel de Moqtada Al-Sadr à sa démission risque de mobiliser ses milliers de partisans dans les manifestations. Selon les observateurs, les manifestants pourraient toutefois rejeter toute récupération politique du mouvement par l'ancien chef de milice chiite. Moqtada Al-Sadr avait déjà instrumentalisé le mouvement de contestation de 2016 pour se forger l'image de chantre des réformes et de héraut nationaliste et non confessionnel face aux factions chiites proches de l'Iran, pour s'imposer ensuite dans les urnes.



05 october, 2019

Turkey detains five Germans on terror charges: report

Turkish authorities have detained five Germans over alleged links to Kurdish militants, pro-Kurdish media reported.

The suspects were taken into custody on charges of spreading propaganda, the pro-Kurdish news agency Mezopotamya said late Friday, and of belonging to an illegal organisation which was not named but is likely the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)

The PKK is considered to be a terror group by Ankara, the United States and the European Union.

The five, who were detained this week, were being held in Ankara, the agency said.

It said the arrests were part of an investigation by the Ankara public prosecutor. His office would, however, not confirm the report when contacted by AFP.

The PKK has waged an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984 during which tens of thousands of people have been killed.

The German foreign ministry meanwhile would only say that it was "aware of the cases" and that the embassy in Ankara was providing consular assistance.

The German interior ministry denied claims that information leading to the detention of the five



was handed over to Turkish authorities during Interior Minister Horst Seehofer's visit to Ankara this week.

However, a ministry spokesman would not rule out that such information could have been exchanged "as part of the routine cooperation between our security services".

Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu in March this year threatened to detain individuals

who came to Turkey if they were involved with the PKK and other groups.

"We have now taken measures against those who take part in the terror organisation's meetings in Europe, Germany and then come to Antalya, Bodrum, Mugla for a holiday.

"Let them enter the airports. They will be detained," he said.



06 october, 2019

Iran warns Turkey against military action in Syria

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Sunday warned Turkey against any military move in Syria, calling on Ankara to respect other countries' territorial integrity.

The stance of the Islamic Republic on Syrian Kurds is "completely clear," and that the only way to maintain security in Turkey is through the establishment of the Syrian central government's military presence in the border areas, Iran's private Tasnim news agency quoted Zarif as saying in an open session of the parliament in Tehran.

Zarif's statements follow those of Turkish President Recep Tayyip

Erdogan, who in his strongest warning yet, on Saturday said that an operation targeting U.S.-backed Kurdish militia in northeastern Syria could take place "any day."

Turkey has repeatedly warned of an operation citing a lack of progress on a U.S.-Turkish deal to secure Syria's troubled border with Turkey.

Turkey and the United States in August agreed to set up a safe zone in northern Syria. Ankara aims to clear the area south of its border of the Kurdish-led People's Protection Units (YPG), which it sees as an existential threat due to its links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an armed group that

has been at war in Turkey for over 30 years.

"The Islamic Republic certainly believes that regional security is possible through observing two principles: first, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity and security of all regional countries, and second, respect for the rights of all its inhabitants, including our Kurdish brothers and sisters..." Tasnim quoted Zarif as saying.

Iran backs Syrian President Bashar Assad and along with Russia and Turkey is part of the so-called Astana Group. The group was launched in 2017 and aims to end the Syrian conflict.



06 octobre 2019

Caroline Fourest présente son film, "Sœurs d'armes" :

"Ce qui est arrivé aux femmes Yézidies c'est le sommet de la violence misogyne et totalitaire"

INTERVIEW

Deux jeunes françaises s'engagent dans une brigade internationale partie se battre aux côtés des combattantes Kurdes contre Daech. Elles rencontrent Zara, une rescapée Yézidie qui tente de se reconstruire et qui entre en résistance. Toutes trois vont devenir des "Sœurs d'armes". Le nouveau long-métrage de Caroline Fourest donne à voir ce qui est rarement montré dans cette guerre contre l'Etat islamique : le martyre des femmes Yézidies, la résistance des Kurdes, le combat des femmes contre les djihadistes. La réalisatrice était l'invité de Patrick Cohen dimanche, dans "C'est arrivé demain", sur Europe 1.

Pour Caroline Fourest, l'attentat contre Charlie Hebdo est un déclic personnel. "J'avais besoin de fiction, de trouver un nouveau langage", confie-t-elle. Elle tombe alors sur des vidéos de Daech, sur le marché aux esclaves où des femmes Yézidies sont vendues, ou échangées contre des pistolets. "J'ai été frappée par ces images qui donnaient 'envie' d'en voir plus. Et les gens qui ont vu le film m'ont dit : 'Je pensais tout savoir de cette guerre mais je n'avais pas du tout vu ça.'"

"C'est inouï comme renversement iconographique"

Pour raconter l'histoires de ces femmes, Caroline

Fourest choisit de réaliser un film "épique, grand public". Une vraie fiction grand spectacle avec scènes de combats et d'explosion. "J'avais besoin d'être à côté, au milieu de ces combattantes, de voir leur courage, leur énergie pour gagner cette guerre." Les djihadistes sont terrorisés à l'idée d'être tués par une femme. "J'ai rencontré des combattantes qui jouaient avec cette peur", raconte la réalisatrice. "Je me suis dit : 'si on n'en fait pas un film de cinéma sur quoi faire du cinéma ?'"

Et la réponse à la violence misogyne et totalitaire de Daech devient le cœur du film. "C'est incroyable que, si proche de nous, des femmes ont été vendues comme esclaves sexuelles et ont fini

par prendre les armes pour se retourner contre leurs bourreaux." Caroline Fourest raconte le sort des survivantes Yézidiées. Si la plupart, qui ont réussi à s'échapper, vivent dans des camps de réfugiés, certaines inspirées par les femmes Kurdes ont pris les armes pour se venger. "C'est inouï comme renversement iconographique", souligne la réalisatrice. "On sait que les guerres passent sur le corps des femmes mais que ces mêmes corps soient une arme qui terrorise les djihadiste, c'est le cœur du film."

"Un film lumineux sur la résistance"

Le long-métrage rend hommage aux "héros et héroïnes" qui se sont volontairement engagés aux côtés des brigades Kurdes. "Ils se sont engagés à corps et à cœur dans cette résistance", souligne la réalisatrice. Dans le film, les images

de posters, de médailles, les écrans de télévisions sont de vraies images, en hommage. Caroline Fourest a aussi tourné au Kurdistan irakien avec un vrai groupe de combattantes.

La réalisatrice a aussi montré le film à plusieurs survivantes Yézidiées, dont la prix Nobel de la paix Nadia Murad. "Certaines m'ont dit qu'elles avaient subi pire que ça. Mais je ne peux pas montrer aux gens de la paix ce qu'elles ont vraiment vécu, ils ne le supporteraient pas. Je voulais faire un film lumineux sur la résistance mais qui explique les raisons de l'engagement de ces hommes et de ces femmes dans cette guerre. Ce qui est arrivé aux femmes Yézidiées, c'est le sommet de la violence misogyne et totalitaire."

Un film pour continuer la bataille culturelle
La bataille contre Daech est loin d'être gagnée

pour la réalisatrice, malgré une victoire militaire. C'est désormais selon elle, une bataille culturelle qui se joue, contre les "nostalgiques du Califat". "Après la Seconde guerre mondiale, on a eu cinquante ans de films Hollywoodiens pour faire triompher une certaines visions de la liberté. Là, naïvement, on propose des émissions de débat face à des vidéos de propagande qui font des dégâts incroyables sur internet."

Caroline Fourest évoque une "bataille inouï pour monter ce film". Elle espère le soutien du public pour son long-métrage porteur d'un autre message que celui des djihadistes. "A la fin, j'espère que les jeunes se diront : 'Tiens, ces héroïnes ont plus d'allure que tout ces jeunes montrés à longueur de journaux télévisés qui s'engagent aux côtés de Daech.'" Le film sort au cinéma le 9 octobre prochain.



06 October, 2019

By by Karzan Sulaivany

Turkish jets attack alleged PKK targets close to Christian village in Kurdistan Region

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Turkish bombardment on Sunday targeted alleged Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) positions in the Kurdistan Region's border areas, damaging agricultural lands near a Christian village.

Turkish jets destroyed farmlands close to a Christian village in the Naheli area of the Amedi district.

A source in the area told Kurdistan 24 the location of the airstrikes was only a few hundred meters away from the village. The source said the bombardment caused a fire in the surrounding area, burning the agricultural lands and spreading fear among villagers.

No casualties have been reported.

However, the source added that shepherds fled the area in fear, leaving behind their distressed cattle.

Sunday's bombing marks the second airstrike in the area within the last three days against alleged PKK targets.

The group has been engaged in a decades-long insurgency against Ankara over Kurdish rights and self-rule that has resulted in the deaths of over 40,000 people on both sides.



The moment a Turkish airstrike hits an area in the Kurdistan Region, Oct. 6, 2019. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

In the past year, Turkey has carried out military operations against PKK fighters based within the Kurdistan Region with continued regularity, with Turkish forces having crossed up to 20 kilometers past its borders in some areas to target the group.

Such attacks have led to the evacuation of many villagers from the Kurdistan Region be-

cause the bombardment damages residential and agricultural lands, and, on occasion, kill civilian bystanders about whom there are no claims of PKK affiliation.

Aggrieved locals and officials from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) have long urged both sides to take their conflict elsewhere.

À Bagdad, scènes de carnage et de révolution

Depuis mardi 1er octobre, des milliers d'Irakiens exaspérés par le chômage et la corruption défient chaque jour le pouvoir en place. En moins d'une semaine, le bilan est déjà effrayant : près de 100 personnes auraient été tuées et 4 000 autres blessées dans des heurts sans précédent.

Derrière ses montures imposantes, Ali Almikdam dévoile des yeux verts illuminés par la volonté d'en découdre. Quand il n'est pas sur le front des manifestations, cet Irakien de 21 ans enchaîne les cigarettes dans un café du centre de Bagdad, proclame à l'envi que les soulèvements ne s'arrêteront pas, et coordonne avec ses amis les regroupements à venir.

Tous les jours, depuis mardi 1er octobre – soit un an après l'arrivée au pouvoir du gouvernement du premier ministre Adel Abdul Mahdi –, Ali rejoint les milliers d'Irakiens qui s'insurgent contre l'incertitude politique.

En moins d'une semaine, les heurts violents qui ont opposé les manifestants aux forces de l'ordre auraient fait au moins 99 morts et près de 4 000 blessés, selon la commission gouvernementale des droits de l'homme irakienne.

Internet coupé

Ces mouvements spontanés, lancés par des jeunes qui n'ont déjà plus rien à perdre, et les violences sans précédent qui en découlent se retrouvent sur toutes les lèvres. En l'absence d'Internet, coupé au troisième jour des soulèvements, les vidéos du dernier rassemblement et des manifestants qui y ont laissé leur peau passent de main en main dans Bagdad.

En fond, l'alternance entre le calme inhabituel de quartiers plongés dans un couvre-feu et les salves de tirs des lieux où les opposants défient les forces de l'ordre, à coups de jets de pierres et de pneus brûlés.

De l'argent, quasiment impossible à retirer, aux denrées alimentaires, dont les prix enflent, en passant par les arrestations et raids nocturnes qui ciblent activistes et journalistes, Bagdad, coupé du monde, sombre sous une chape de plomb.

Escalade de la répression

Chaque jour, le décompte des victimes, morts et blessés, se faufile en ville comme une traînée de poudre ; et un nouveau degré de violences semble atteint. De l'eau chaude versée sur la foule le premier jour, puis l'usage massif des gaz lacrymogènes, enfin des balles tirées en l'air puis directement sur les réfractaires. La violence de la répression choque même les manifestants de longue date.



A Bagdad, scènes de carnage et de révolution. Un blessé est évacué pendant une manifestation antigouvernementale, le 5 octobre 2019 à Bagdad. Ahmad Al-Rubaye/AFP

Les hôpitaux qui entourent les places Tahrir et Tayaran, ainsi que les différents ministères devant lesquels se déroulent les manifestations, se retrouvent pris d'assaut. Dans l'hôpital Cheikh Zayed, le personnel s'affaire, jusqu'à tard le soir, pour soigner les dizaines de blessés qui affluent. « Ils m'ont même demandé si je ne connaissais pas des docteurs disponibles, car ils n'en ont pas assez », explique Ali.

À quelques mètres, Moussa, 16 ans. Il explique qu'il a reçu une grenade lacrymogène sur le pied. « Ils m'ont ensuite laissé par terre, comme un chien, les policiers présents ont refusé que je reçoive des soins car je suis un manifestant », ajoute-t-il. Il a finalement été conduit à l'hôpital.

Tirs de snipers

De retour d'une journée traumatisante, Khaldun Saab, volontaire chargé des premiers soins, peine à trouver ses mots : « Je ne dors pas depuis trois jours, mais j'ai secouru 500 blessés. Aujourd'hui, j'ai vu deux snipers tuer un jeune devant moi. Il est tombé d'un coup. J'ai voulu l'aider mais un deuxième adolescent s'est écroulé juste après. » Ce médecin est persuadé que les snipers ne font pas partie des forces de l'ordre irakiennes, qu'ils appartiennent plutôt à des milices. Un avis que partagent de nombreux manifestants.

Si ces derniers s'accordent sur le fait que la situation présente est inacceptable, ils divergent sur la finalité du mouvement, aux allures de révolution qui ne dirait pas son nom. Certains souhaitent le départ du premier ministre, d'autres celui de l'ensemble des députés. D'autres prôchent le changement radical de régime, quand certains caressent l'idée d'une dictature militaire...

« Qu'importe la direction prise, elle sera toujours meilleure que l'actuelle », estime l'activiste Mohammed Al Daraji. De son côté, Ali continue à y croire, malgré les massacres : « Je suis prêt à perdre ma vie pour mon pays, pour avoir enfin accès à la liberté et à un futur. » Celui-ci semble désormais s'écrire au présent.

Les revendications et les réponses de Bagdad

Le mouvement social se présente comme spontané, « pour la première fois sans drapeau, sans affiches et sans slogans de parti », note le quotidien libéral Al-Bayina Al-Jadida.

Parmi les motifs de colère : le chômage des jeunes, la déliquescence des services publics, la corruption des élus, le limogeage d'un général « héros » de la reprise de Mossoul ou la mainmise de l'Iran sur le pays.

Le gouvernement a pris, dimanche 6 octobre, une série de mesures : aide au logement, pensions pour les jeunes sans emploi, construction de 100 000 logements, installation de halles pour les vendeurs ambulants...

Le Patriarcat chaldéen – basé à Bagdad – a exprimé « sa grande préoccupation » et « son profond chagrin pour les nombreuses victimes » et appelle au dialogue pour trouver des solutions aux « revendications légitimes » des manifestants.

NRT

06 octobre 2019
Nalia Corporation

Three Kolbars killed in September by Iranian security forces: watchdog

SULAIMANI – Three Kolbars (porters) and another worker were shot and killed in September by the Iranian security forces and ten Kolbars and two people were wounded.

Adozen ethnic Kurds were also arrested by the Iranian security forces for civil and political activities, according to the Kurdistan Humans Rights Association.

That represented just part of a larger picture of troubling human rights abuses in western Iran's Kurdish areas.

“36 Kurdish citizens were hanged since the beginning of the year. Sixty-three Kolbars and workers were killed and 120 Kolbars were wounded,” the statement said.

“247 political, civil and environment activists were arrested and imprisoned by the Iranian security forces,” the statement added.



security forces, the report said.

Kolbars carry goods across the mountainous border between Iran and Iraq on their backs.

They frequently come under fire from Iranian border guards. Despite extreme temperatures in winter and summer, they risk

231 Kurdish Kolbars were either killed or seriously wounded in 2018, according to Hengaw. Of those, 71 were shot and killed by the Iranian

their lives in the treacherous mountain passes to make end.

Le Monde 06 octobre 2019
Philippe Escande

Irak : contre la corruption, le chômage et la faillite de l'Etat... les manifestations sanglantes continuent

Les affrontements entre les forces de l'ordre et les manifestants sont chaque jour de plus en plus sanglants en Irak. Au total, 29 manifestants et deux policiers ont été tués depuis le début, mardi à Bagdad, d'un mouvement qui a depuis gagné la quasi-totalité du sud du pays.

Jeudi 3 octobre, au troisième jour d'un mouvement pour l'emploi et contre la corruption, les blindés des forces spéciales sont entrés en action à Bagdad pour repousser la foule. Manifestants d'un côté et policiers antiémeutes et militaires de l'autre se repoussaient par vagues dans la capitale, placée sous couvre-feu et où les fonctionnaires – la majorité des travailleurs du pays – ont été appelés à rester chez eux.

Pour faire reculer plusieurs milliers de protestataires arrivés à bord de camions en brandissant des drapeaux, les forces de sécurité tiraient à balles réelles, à bord de blindés. Sur la place Al-Tayyaran, dans le centre, les manifestants s'en sont pris à ces véhicules, en incendiant deux, a



Manifestation à Bagdad, le 3 octobre. Hadi Mizban / AP

rapporté un photographe de l'Agence France-Presse (AFP).

Un test majeur pour le gouvernement

Erreur ! Nom du fichier non spécifié. Manifestation à Bagdad, le 3 octobre. Hadi Mizban / AP

Dans d'autres villes du Sud, des affrontements ont également eu lieu et neuf nouveaux morts – dont un policier – ont été recensés en fin de journée par

des responsables de la santé. Les autorités, qui dénoncent des « saboteurs » parmi les protestataires, ont décrété un couvre-feu à Diwaniya, à 150 km au sud de Bagdad, tentant de faire fermer commerces et bureaux. De telles mesures prises

la veille ailleurs, notamment à Bagdad et dans plusieurs villes du Sud, n'ont pas entravé l'amplification du mouvement. Internet, d'où sont partis les appels à manifester, a également été coupé dans une grande partie du pays.

Ces manifestations sont un test majeur pour le gouvernement d'Adel Abdel Mahdi, qui doit souffler sa première bougie à la fin du mois. Dans la rue, les contestataires demandent notamment des services publics fonctionnels dans un pays en pénurie d'électricité et d'eau potable depuis des décennies, des emplois pour les jeunes alors qu'un sur quatre d'entre eux est au chômage, et la fin de la corruption qui a englouti en seize ans plus de quatre fois le budget de l'Etat – soit 410 milliards d'euros.

Aucune récupération politique ou religieuse pour l'instant

A cette heure, aucun parti politique ni chef religieux n'a revendiqué la paternité du mouvement, une rareté dans un pays habitué aux clivages confessionnels.

Mercredi soir, toutefois, le leader chiite Moqtada Al-Sadr a appelé ses très nombreux partisans, qui avaient déjà paralysé le pays en 2016 avec des manifestations à Bagdad, à organiser des « sit-in pacifiques »

Mercredi soir, toutefois, le leader chiite Moqtada Al-Sadr a appelé ses très nombreux partisans, qui avaient déjà paralysé le pays en 2016 avec des manifestations à Bagdad, à organiser des « sit-in pacifiques »

A défaut d'une filiation claire, le mouvement apparaît marqué du point de vue géographique : tandis que Bagdad et le Sud s'embrasent, le calme prévaut au nord et à l'ouest de Bagdad, régions principalement sunnites et récemment ravagées par la guerre contre l'organisation Etat islamique (EI), ainsi que dans le Kurdistan autonome.

Bagdad cristallise les violences car les protestataires cherchent à prendre la place Tahrir, séparée de l'ultrasensible Zone verte – où siègent les principales institutions du pays et l'ambassade américaine – uniquement par un pont,

Al-Joumhouriya, bouclé par les forces de l'ordre. Symbole fort, les autorités ont refermé ce secteur qui avait été rouvert aux Irakiens en juin seulement, après quinze années de repli derrière murs et barbelés.

Le Monde 07 octobre 2019
Philippe Escande

Plus de 100 manifestants tués en Irak après une semaine de contestation contre le chômage et la corruption

Face à l'engrenage de la violence et à la longue liste des « martyrs », les manifestants se disent prêts à défier les forces de sécurité « jusqu'à la chute du régime ».

Rien ne semble pouvoir entamer la détermination des Irakiens qui se sont mobilisés, pour la sixième journée successive, dimanche 6 octobre. Ni le bâton ni la carotte. En début de soirée, alors que la capitale, Bagdad, était restée relativement calme pendant la journée, des centaines de manifestants du bastion chiite de Sadr Citr, à l'est, ont affronté les forces de l'ordre qui avaient érigé des barrages pour les empêcher de rallier le centre-ville, à quatre kilomètres de là, et la place Tahrir, point de ralliement de la contestation, totalement bouclée. Les heurts ont fait au moins treize morts.

Les contestataires qui manifestent depuis mardi à Bagdad et dans le sud chiite du pays – en majorité de jeunes chômeurs et des hommes des quartiers pauvres – ne se satisfont plus des revendications initiales du mouvement contre la corruption, le chômage et la déliquescence des services publics. Face à l'engrenage de la violence et à la longue liste des « martyrs », ils se disent prêts à défier les forces de sécurité « jusqu'à la chute du régime ». Depuis le 1er octobre, au moins 104 personnes ont été tuées – dont huit policiers – et 6 100 autres blessées – dont 1 200 membres des forces de sécurité –, selon les chiffres annoncés, dimanche, par le ministère de l'intérieur.

Snipers ciblant délibérément pour tuer



La répression – réponse qui a été privilégiée par Bagdad dès le premier jour – a pris, depuis vendredi, un tour inquiétant. Dans la capitale, les manifestants se sont retrouvés sous le feu de snipers, ciblant délibérément pour tuer.

Parmi les vidéos qui ont été téléchargées sur les réseaux sociaux tôt dimanche matin, au moment où Internet avait été rétabli pour quelques heures seulement dans le pays, plusieurs montrent des manifestants fauchés par des tirs de balles. La plupart des victimes ont été touchées à la tête et au cœur, a confirmé le porte-parole du ministère de l'intérieur, Saad Maan, qui a dénoncé des « mains malveil-

lantes » derrière ces attaques et nié l'implication des forces de l'ordre. Toutefois, des manifestants et des journalistes ont affirmé avoir vu les forces de sécurité tirer sur la foule pour la disperser.

Samedi soir, dans ce qui semble avoir été une opération coordonnée, une dizaine de médias locaux et étrangers ont été attaqués par des hommes armés, en l'espace de deux heures.

La chaîne de télévision émiratie Al-Hadath a diffusé une vidéo de l'attaque contre ses bureaux à Bagdad, réalisée à partir d'images de caméras de surveillance. Elles montrent des dizaines

d'hommes armés, masqués et en uniforme d'unités spéciales, envahir les studios de la chaîne et casser le matériel. D'autres médias ont rapporté que leur personnel avait été molesté. Journalistes et militants politiques redoutent d'être arrêtés ou kidnappés. A Bassora, la grande métropole du sud du pays, un caricaturiste et son épouse ont été assassinés chez eux par des hommes armés, jeudi.

Kidnappings en marge des manifestations

Ces modes d'action, dont certains ont déjà été observés lors des manifestations de l'été 2018, évoquent aux manifestants ceux des milices chiïtes, dont le poids n'a cessé de croître depuis l'occupation américaine de 2003.

« La politique sécuritaire de l'Etat est gérée par les milices très proches de l'Iran. Leur mainmise sur l'Etat est inquiétante », affirme un bon observateur du dossier. A Bagdad et dans le Sud chiïte, ces factions armées ont étendu leur influence dans les domaines sécuritaire, politique et économique. A la tête des unités de la mobilisation populaire (MP), un organe paramilitaire créé en 2014 pour lutter contre l'organisation Etat islamique (EI) et désormais intégré aux forces armées, les chefs des milices chiïtes proches de l'Iran sont entrés au Parlement en 2018 comme deuxième force politique.

Les principales forces déployées contre les manifestants sont les unités de la police fédérale et des SWAT, qui sont depuis 2004 noyautées surtout par la faction chiïte pro-iranienne Badr. Les manifestants accusent par ailleurs des milices, dont certaines ne sont pas intégrées à la MP, de mener des attaques et des kidnappings en marge des manifestations. Depuis le début du mouvement, les slogans contre les partis et factions chiïtes au pouvoir, ainsi

que leur parrain iranien, sont très présents dans les manifestations. Plusieurs de leurs sièges ont été incendiés par des manifestants dans le sud du pays.

Lundi, Faleh Al-Fayyadh, le chef des unités de la MP, s'est dit prêt à intervenir pour empêcher « un coup d'Etat ou une rébellion », si le gouvernement le lui ordonnait. Dénonçant des « comploteurs », M. Al-Fayyadh a prévenu lors d'une conférence de presse à Bagdad que sa coalition voulait « la chute de la corruption et non la chute du régime », répondant à l'un des slogans scandés par les manifestants au cours de la semaine écoulée.

Plus tôt dans la journée, le Guide suprême iranien Ali Khamenei avait accusé des « ennemis » de chercher à « semer la discorde » entre l'Iran et l'Irak. « L'Iran et l'Irak sont deux nations dont le cœur et l'âme sont liés (...) Des ennemis cherchent à semer la discorde mais ils ont échoué et leur complot n'aura pas d'effet », a écrit M. Khamenei dans un tweet, sans préciser qui sont ces « ennemis ». Plusieurs responsables iraniens ont accusé la semaine passée les « ennemis » de l'Iran – notamment les Etats-Unis, l'Arabie saoudite et Israël – d'être à l'origine des manifestations.

Une série de dix-sept mesures sociales annoncée

« Soit le premier ministre, Adel Abdel Mahdi, est dépassé et ne maîtrise pas réellement les choses, soit il avalise et joue volontairement ce petit jeu de "ce sont d'autres qui décident" », estime encore cet observateur. Si le bilan des victimes témoigne à lui seul de la brutalité de la répression, aucune commission d'enquête indépendante n'a pour l'heure été ordonnée par le premier ministre. Une enquête est en cours pour déterminer la source des tirs létaux, a toutefois fait savoir le porte-parole de l'intérieur, Saad Maan.

Et lundi, après les heurts meurtriers de Sadr City qui ont fait 13 morts, le commandement militaire irakien a admis un « usage excessif de la force débordant des règles de l'engagement ». Le commandement a assuré avoir « commencé à demander des comptes aux officiers qui ont commis ces erreurs ». Les autorités ont ordonné à la police de prendre la relève de l'armée dans le quartier de Sadr City. Jusqu'ici, les autorités, critiquées par les défenseurs des droits humains, affirmaient se conformer « aux standards internationaux ».

Après un premier discours qui avait échoué à convaincre les contestataires, le gouvernement Abdel Mahdi a annoncé, dimanche, une série de dix-sept mesures sociales, allant de l'aide au logement à l'allocation de pensions aux jeunes sans emploi. Il a également décidé, à l'issue d'un conseil extraordinaire, la construction de 100 000 logements. Le cabinet a enfin ordonné l'installation de halles pour les vendeurs ambulants, dans une tentative de créer des emplois, notamment parmi les jeunes – dont un sur quatre est au chômage. Le gouvernement a par ailleurs annoncé avoir inscrit les personnes tuées dans les violences sur la liste des « martyrs », ouvrant la voie à des dédommagements pour leurs proches.

Les autorités ont réclamé du temps aux manifestants pour mettre en place des réformes nécessaires pour améliorer les conditions de vie des 40 millions d'Irakiens. « C'est une liste faramineuse de réformes qui vont encore alourdir les dépenses de l'Etat, alors que l'Irak n'en a pas les moyens. C'est plus qu'un mouvement social, c'est un mouvement antisystème qui dénonce la mainmise des partis politiques corrompus sur l'Etat depuis 2003. Le système politique est à bout de souffle et ce rafistolage ne peut pas le sauver », analyse, pour sa part, le chercheur Hosham Dawood



07 October, 2019

Jenny Awford & Jon Lockett

Trump defends allowing Turkish 'invasion' of Syria as Kurds brand him a traitor and threaten to release 15,000 ISIS fighters

DONALD Trump today denied he had double-crossed one of his major allies in the Middle East by green lighting Turkey's invasion of Northern Syria.

Kurds have accused him of abandoning them after US troops began pulling out of the war-torn country ahead of Turkey's expected border assault to seize ISIS jihadists. They say the White House has turned its back on the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) - longtime allies in fighting ISIS - to face the might of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's armies alone. It's now feared the Kurds will fol-

low through with their threats to release 15,000 jihadi prisoners if the Turkish military invades. Politician Aldar Xelil said in August: "Either we will fight the Turks or guard the prisoners. We cannot do both together."

Defending his decision, the US president said he was fed up the US becoming a "sucker" by always being called in to sort out the world's problems.

He acknowledged that "The Kurds fought with us," but claimed they "were paid massive amounts of money and equipment to do so."

"I held off this fight for almost 3 years, but it is time for us to get out of these ridiculous Endless Wars, many of them tribal, and bring our soldiers home," he wrote

'ENDLESS WARS'

He then added that: "WE WILL FIGHT WHERE IT IS TO OUR BENEFIT, AND ONLY FIGHT TO WIN."

The world leader said it will now be up to the region to decide what to do with captured ISIS fighters, and warned of retribution in response to any future attacks.

"We are 7,000 miles away and will crush ISIS again if they come anywhere near us!" he wrote.

The move follows a call between Trump and Erdogan on Sunday in which the "long-planned" military operation was given the go ahead, a White House press statement said.

However, it came AFTER the SDF was told if it withdrew from the border to create a "safe zone" it would receive US support in keeping the Turks at bay.

The Kurds agreed to the measure in August to show their seriousness about stability in the region but they say today's announcement directly contradicts what they were told.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also says American troops were evacuating positions near the towns of Ras al-Ayn and Tal Abyad.

One Syria Kurdish official told NBC: "The Americans are traitors. They have abandoned us to a Turkish massacre."



The SDF said the American withdrawal began first from areas along the Syria-Turkey border.

"We can no longer fight against ISIS and have to defend ourselves. This could allow ISIS to return to the region."

The SDF added later in an official statement: "The American forces did not abide by their commitments and withdrew their forces along the border with Turkey."

Mustafa Bali, the SDF spokesman, tweeted that his group is now no longer expecting the US to protect Northern Syria.

But people here are owed an explanation regarding the security mechanism deal and destruct

ion of fortifications," he added.

The SDF had earlier removed fortification from the areas, considered a threat by Turkey, and withdrawn with heavy weapons.

The Kurdish-led fighters have been the main US-backed force in Syria in the fight against ISIS.

In March, the group captured the last sliver of land held by the extremists, marking the end of the so-called caliphate that was declared by ISIS's leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in 2014.

"We will not hesitate for a moment in defending our people" against Turkish troops, the SDF today warned pointing out it has already lost 11,000 fighters in the war against ISIS in Syria.

It said ISIS sleeper cells are already plotting to break free some 15,000 militants detained by Syrian Kurdish fighters in northeastern Syria.



October 7, 2019
Sirwan Kajjo

US: Turkey Will Soon Move Forward With Operation in Northern Syria

WASHINGTON - The Trump administration announced Turkey "will soon be moving forward" with its plans to carry out an offensive in northern Syria, a move the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces said will have a "negative impact" on the fight against the Islamic State group.

"The United States Armed Forces will not support or be involved in the operation, and United States forces, having defeated the ISIS territorial 'Caliphate,' will no longer be in the immediate area," the White House said, citing a Sunday phone call between President Donald Trump and Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The SDF said U.S. forces "have withdrawn from border areas with Turkey," and it accused the United States of not fulfilling its responsibilities under a U.S.-Turkey agreement that involved the

Kurdish fighters dismantling some of their defensive capabilities near the border to allay Turkish concerns.

"As the Syrian Democratic Forces, we are determined to defend our land at all costs," the group said in a statement. "We call on our Kurdish, Arab, Assyrian, and Syriac people to strengthen their unity and stand by the SDF in defense of their land."

Turkey views the People's Protection Units (YPG), the main force within SDF, as an extension of the Turkey-based Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been fighting for greater rights in Turkey's Kurdish-majority southeast for decades.

But the U.S. makes a distinction between the

PKK and YPG, backing the YPG-dominated SDF in the fight against the Islamic State terror group in Syria.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Turkey has supported Syria's territorial integrity since the beginning of the country's conflict, "and will continue to do so."

"Determined to ensure survivability and security of Turkey by clearing the region from terrorists," he wrote on Twitter. "Will contribute to bringing safety, peace & stability to Syria."

A spokesman for the SDF said ahead of the U.S. announcement that any Turkish incursion into Syria would throw the entire region into indefinite instability.

"We see these Turkish threats as extremely serious," Mustafa Bali told VOA. "We fear that mass killings would be committed against our people if Turkish forces invaded this part of Syria."

Islamic State detainees

The SDF is holding thousands of people in detention camps in northeastern Syria, including many suspected foreign fighters who traveled from Western nations to join Islamic State.

The White House said in its Sunday statement that France, Germany and other European nations have refused to take back their nationals, and that the United States will not be holding them.

"Turkey will now be responsible for all ISIS fighters in the area captured over the past two years," it said.

Brett McGurk, former U.S. envoy to the Defeat IS coalition, sharply criticized the White House statement, saying it "demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of anything happening on the ground."

"The 'United States' is not holding any ISIS detainees. They are all being held by the SDF, which Trump just served up to Turkey," he wrote on Twitter.

"Bottom line: Trump tonight after one call with a foreign leader provided a gift to Russia, Iran and ISIS," McGurk said.



SDF general commander Mazloum Abdi, center, speaks during a press conference in Kobani, Syria, July 22, 2019. (S. Kajjo/VOA video grab)

U.S. position

U.S. officials say that any Turkish offensive in Syria would hinder efforts to defeat IS militants.

"Any uncoordinated military operation by Turkey would be of grave concern as it would undermine our shared interest of a secure northeast Syria and the enduring defeat of ISIS," Pentagon spokesperson Commander Sean Robertson told VOA in an email, using another acronym for IS.

Aykan Erdemir, a senior Turkey analyst at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) in Washington, says Turkey has been trying to exploit the differences of opinion and commitment within the U.S. government concerning the ongoing U.S. military presence in Syria.

"Erdogan has pursued a consistent strategy vis-à-vis northeast Syria in attempting to extract concessions from the U.S. through frequent threats of unilateral cross-border action," he told VOA.

The United States currently has about 1,000 troops in Syria that have been instrumental in the fight against IS. U.S. President Donald Trump, however, has ordered a gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria.

"If the U.S. manages to prevent unilateral Turkish incursion this time around by offering new concessions, it is certain that there will be a repeat of the same process in the not too distant future," Erdemir added.



08 octobre 2019
Bruno Rieth

Patrice Franceschi : "Abandonner les Kurdes de Syrie serait une faute politique très grave"

Marianne : Le film de notre collaboratrice Caroline Fourest, *Sœur d'armes*, en salle ce mercredi 8 octobre, raconte le parcours de femmes engagées au sein des rangs des Kurdes de Syrie. Derrière la fiction, quelle est la part de réalité ?

Patrice Franceschi : Ces unités combattantes sont une réalité. Il faut bien comprendre qu'entre 25% et 30% des combattants kurdes de Syrie sont des combattantes. Au niveau de l'organisation des unités kurdes de Syrie, il y a d'une part les unités masculines, les YPG, des unités féminines, les YPJ, et majoritairement des unités mixtes. Le film de Caroline Fourest raconte l'histoire d'une unité YPJ. C'est une organisation unique au monde. S'il y a de nombreuses femmes qui combattent dans le monde, notamment dans des

armées occidentales, il n'y a vraiment que chez les Kurdes de Syrie qu'il existe des unités constituées uniquement par des femmes et commandées par des femmes. C'est d'ailleurs le point d'incandescence des islamistes qu'elles combattent, puisqu'affronter des groupes de femmes, et se faire battre par elles, c'est tout à fait intolérable pour eux. Depuis sept ans que je vais en Syrie, sur le terrain, au plus proche des combats, j'ai pu saisir la force de ces unités féminines très rudes, ces petites amazones de feu comme je les appelle.

Ces unités de combattantes se retrouvent-elles en première ligne ?

Tout à fait. Et elles sont même terriblement efficaces. J'étais avec elles lors de la dernière grande

bataille contre Daech en Syrie, celle de Raqqa, qui a duré cinq mois. Les quelques mois que j'ai passés là-bas, c'était surtout aux côtés des bataillons féminins car je savais que ce serait la dernière grande bataille et je voulais la faire à leurs côtés. Elles étaient au premier rang face à Daech. Et si vous regardez les cimetières militaires kurdes, vous verrez un nombre très impressionnant de noms féminins. Elles ont payé le prix du sang ! Depuis le début de la guerre contre Daech, il y a eu, du côté kurde, 36.000 tués et blessés dont à peu près 20% de femmes. Elles ont consenti un énorme sacrifice.

Au sein de l'organisation militaire des Kurdes de Syrie, ces femmes combattantes occupent-elles également des postes de commandement ?

Elles sont même très nombreuses dans l'état-major ! Un simple exemple : toute la bataille de Raqqa a été supervisée par une femme, Héval Tuline. Et les quatre fronts, nord, sud, est et ouest, étaient gérés par des femmes. L'état-major avait confié cette bataille à des commandantes femmes. Ils souhaitaient notamment donner une dernière leçon aux islamistes : vous allez être vaincus par des femmes et selon vos propres principes, ce sera votre honte suprême ! L'efficacité militaire de ces cheffes militaires et des troupes de terrain a permis de faire clairement passer le message aux islamistes.

Sans cette organisation, et cette présence massive de femmes, pensez-vous que les Kurdes de Syrie auraient eu la même capacité de résistance, de conquête également, sur les éléments de Daech ?

C'est un apport primordial. La présence des femmes, non seulement au combat mais dans toutes les institutions mises en place sur le terrain et dans le mouvement révolutionnaire des Kurdes de Syrie, a permis de mobiliser l'intégralité de la société. Et ça, c'est un fondement très important. Les Kurdes de Syrie considèrent le projet de société qu'ils portent comme une révolution écologique et féministe. Deux termes qui sont dans leurs statuts. L'égalité homme-femme également, la laïcité, la démocratie sont les piliers de leur révolution, avec l'écologie et le féminisme.

Si nous abandonnons les Kurdes de Syrie, nous assisterons à une tragédie équivalente à ce qu'ont connu les Arméniens avec les Turcs.

Il ne faut pas oublier que leur combat est un combat pour leur liberté face à Daech mais aussi pour une révolution de société, avec un projet politique dans lequel les femmes sont totalement impliquées et pour lequel elles ont accepté de souffrir et mourir. C'est ce que traduit avec beaucoup de justesse le film de Caroline Fourest.

Vous qui avez croisé un certain nombre de ces combattantes, quelles étaient leurs motivations pour prendre les armes ?

Bien avant les exactions de Daech sur les populations civiles qui ont poussé des hommes et des femmes à rejoindre les rangs des Kurdes de Syrie, ces femmes voulaient sortir de l'état d'infériorité dans lequel les sociétés arabes, et moyen-orientales en général, les tiennent. Lorsque les Kurdes ont récupéré des territoires



Dans son film "Soeurs d'armes", Caroline Fourest met en scène le parcours de combattantes engagées dans les rangs des Kurdes de Syrie. - Delil SOULEIMAN / AFP

dans le nord de la Syrie, ils ont aboli la polygamie, la peine de mort, l'apostasie. C'est donc pour ces raisons-là qu'elles ont fait la révolution, bien avant l'émergence de Daech. Quand Daech est arrivé, ça a été une raison supplémentaire de se battre pour certaines, notamment après la tentative d'extermination des Yezidis.

Ce dimanche 6 octobre, Donald Trump a annoncé que les troupes américaines stationnées en Syrie allaient se retirer des abords de la frontière turque, laissant le champ libre aux troupes turques pour déclencher une offensive contre les Kurdes de Syrie. Lundi, face aux nombreuses critiques, le président américain a semblé rétro-pédaler sans pour autant interdire l'entrée de l'armée turque en Syrie. Que vous inspire la position de la Maison-Blanche ?

Les hasards de l'histoire font que le film "Soeurs d'armes" va sortir au moment où nous abandonnons ces femmes aux mains des Turcs. Comme nous les avons abandonnées il y a un an et demi à Afrin (ville du nord-ouest de la Syrie, ndlr), avec pour seul résultat le massacre d'un nombre important de ces combattantes. Maintenant, nous allons les abandonner sur la totalité du territoire du nord de la Syrie. Et ça, c'est à la fois une tragédie humaine, une lâcheté morale invraisemblable - c'est la honte de l'Occident - et une faute

politique très grave ! Quand les combattantes et combattants kurdes de Syrie auront été éliminés par l'armée turque - c'est une aviation, une artillerie et une force blindée énormes, les Kurdes ne tiendront pas -, les djihadistes auront toute latitude pour se réinstaller dans ces territoires.

Résultat, nous risquons de repartir à zéro dans notre combat contre Daech. Tout le nord de la Syrie sera repeuplé par des groupes djihadistes. Le gouvernement turc les a aidés pendant sept ans et il va les réinstaller alors que nous avons réussi à nous en débarrasser grâce aux Kurdes. Comment Donald Trump ne peut-il pas voir que les Turcs ont été l'appui de Daech durant toutes ces années ? Heureusement, cette décision a provoqué, dans l'armée américaine et dans la société plus largement, un tollé pour dire : on ne peut pas faire un truc pareil, ce n'est pas digne. On a demandé aux Kurdes de Syrie de nous débarrasser de notre ennemi commun qui était Daech, et une fois qu'ils ont rempli le job, on les jette à la poubelle et on les laisse entre les mains du gouvernement turc qui a promis de les massacrer jusqu'au dernier. Car c'est ça, la réalité ! Si nous abandonnons les Kurdes de Syrie, nous assisterons à une tragédie équivalente à ce qu'ont connu les Arméniens avec les Turcs il y a exactement un siècle.



08 octobre 2019

Gazprom Neft publishes the world's first encyclopaedia on the history and culture of the Kurdish people

Gazprom Neft has presented the leadership of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) with a book, "The Kurds: Legends of the East", published at the company's initiative, and funded by it. The book contains unique materials and rare illustrations from collections at Russian and international universities. This is the first book — in terms of the scale of its content, almost an encyclopaedia — to comprehensively cover the history and culture of the Kurds.

Alexander Dyukov, CEO, Gazprom Neft and Chairman of the Management Board, presented the book to the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) HE Nechirvan Barzani personally during Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergei Lavrov's working visit to the Republic of Iraq and the KRI.

"The Kurds: Legends of the East" contains maps, original illustrations and infographics, rare photographs and images sourced from private collections and collections at the State Hermitage, Oxford University's Bodleian Library, the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, and archives at the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (Russian Academy of Sciences) and the State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia. The book covers the origin and history of the Kurds, their religious life, traditions and festivals, language, folklore and literature. Individual chapters highlight the Kurds' historic relationships with the Russian Empire, the USSR and the Russian Federation, as well as the history of Kurdish national movements.

Work on the publication has been ongoing for



three years, with the involvement of leading experts from the Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS (Moscow) and the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS (St Petersburg), as well as a project group including a total 17 Kurdish specialists and researchers and a 14-person editorial team. Production of the book was supervised by Vitaly Naumkin, Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS, and Irina Popova, Director of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS. The project curator was the "Russian Humanitarian Mission", which manages humanitarian cooperation initiatives throughout the Middle East, Central Asia and the Balkans.

The book has been published at Gazprom Neft's initiative, with the company's financial and administrative support, as part of a project to preserve the cultural and historical heritage of the Kurdish people. Russian- and English-language copies of the book will be supplied to the most important libraries and universities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and in Russia.

"The Kurds: Legends of the East" is the second

book to be published at Gazprom Neft's initiative: "Storied Land: Kurdish Culture through the Eyes of Russian Explorers" having been published in 2015.

"The Kurdistan Region of Iraq is a key region in Gazprom Neft's international business development. In working here, we are not just focussed on the technological inventiveness and safety of our oil-producing assets, but also act as a partner to local government in implementing social projects. One such project has involved publishing

'The Kurds: Legends of the East.' We developed the concept for this book, involving leading Russian Orientalists and academics in its publication. I have no doubt that this work has made a major contribution to preserving and popularising the history and culture of the Kurdish people."

Alexander Dybal Deputy CEO for Corporate Communications and a member of the Management Board, Gazprom Neft

Reference

Gazprom Neft Middle East is developing the Garmian block at the Sarqala field in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), as well as working on the Shakal block. The publication of "The Kurds: Legends of the East" marks a major contribution to preserving the historical and cultural heritage of the Kurdish people, and highlights the company's role as a responsible social investor and a reliable partner to the government of the KRI.



09 octobre 2019
Pierre Alonso

Retrait de Syrie : « L'initiative américaine met en danger tous nos espoirs »

Réprésentant en France de l'administration du nord et de l'est de la Syrie, Khaled Issa réagit à l'annonce du retrait américain de la zone frontalière, décidé par Donald Trump et ouvrant la voie à une offensive de la Turquie.

Comment réagissez-vous à l'annonce du retrait des forces américaines ?

Cette annonce aura un impact très dur sur la population et sur les Forces démocratiques syriennes. Ensemble, avec la coalition internationale, nous avons pu mener le combat contre Daech. Des cellules dormantes existent toujours, des milliers de prisonniers sont dans des camps. Le régime d'Ankara avait de bonnes relations avec Daech. La décision américaine est

donc un choc énorme pour nous. Rien ne la justifie, elle n'aidera pas à stabiliser la région, ni même l'Europe, car les terroristes qui ont commis des attentats sont passés sous les yeux du régime turc.

Redoutez-vous une offensive prochaine de la part de la Turquie ?

Le communiqué de la Maison Blanche et les menaces pressantes d'Erdogan laissent penser que l'invasion serait imminente. Elle serait catastrophique pour la population kurde. A Afrin, la vie était paisible. Lorsqu'Erdogan a attaqué, il a installé des terroristes venus d'Alep et des faubourgs de Damas. Nous avons recueilli un millier de plaintes de civils qui ont subi des exactions. Jusqu'ici, la stabilité dans le Nord-Est était à peu près assurée. Toutes les communautés pouvaient vivre en paix. Je suis surpris qu'on confie l'avenir de cette région à la Turquie.

Qu'attendez-vous désormais de la France ?

La France est la première à nous avoir soutenus, notamment à Kobané. Nous avons ensemble obtenu des résultats remarquables, même si ce fut au prix du sang de nos fils et de nos filles. L'initiative américaine met en danger tous nos espoirs. La France est une grande puissance, membre permanent du Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies et de l'Otan. Nos liens historiques peuvent faire la différence pour nous défendre. Ce serait dans l'intérêt de la France et de l'Europe qui ont été touchés par des attentats organisés depuis la Syrie. Nous espérons que notre relation privilégiée avec la France se poursuivra pour que la population du nord-est de la Syrie



Des combattants des Forces démocratiques syriennes, à domination kurde, dans l'est de la Syrie, le 24 février. Photo Felipe Dana. AP

connaisse la paix et la stabilité. Nous devons terminer le travail commencé en allant jusqu'au bout d'une solution démocratique pour la Syrie. L'occupation turque serait une violation de la charte des Nations Unies, et on sait que la Turquie ne se retire jamais. Nous espérons que la communauté internationale fera pression sur la Turquie.

Quelles seraient les conséquences d'une offensive sur les camps de prisonniers ?

Quand Daech est en difficulté, Erdogan vient à son secours. Le communiqué de la Maison Blanche dit qu'ils seront confiés à la Turquie. Ankara veut récupérer et utiliser les prisonniers jihadistes comme un moyen de chantage avec les Européens. Il y a des milliers de terroristes dans ces camps. Nous voulons les maintenir en détention et les juger,

parce qu'ils se sont battus contre nous. On espérait un plus grand soutien de la communauté internationale, qui a été minime pour l'instant. Aujourd'hui, je suis surpris que l'on parle de les confier à l'islamiste d'Ankara.



09 octobre 2019

Syrie: Philippe réaffirme «la nécessité de préserver les forces démocratiques kurdes»

Edouard Philippe a réitéré mardi «la nécessité de préserver les forces démocratiques syriennes» (FDS), s'inquiétant des «très lourdes incertitudes» que font peser sur les combattants kurdes les menaces d'offensive turque dans le nord-est de la Syrie.

«Le combat contre Daech (...) ne s'est pas terminé avec la fin de l'emprise territoriale de ce groupe terroriste et il se poursuit aux côtés des forces démocratiques syriennes», a affirmé le Premier ministre devant l'Assemblée nationale.

Qualifiant ce combat de «première priorité» pour la France, M. Philippe a estimé qu'il ne faisait que «renforcer la nécessité de préserver les forces démocratiques syriennes, en particulier dans un contexte où les menaces d'offensive turque font peser de très lourdes incertitudes sur le nord-est de la Syrie».

Interpellé par la présidente du groupe socialiste Valérie Rabault, le Premier ministre a assuré que «seule une solution politique peut assurer dans la durée (...) la place en Syrie des Kurdes et des autres minorités», notamment les «chrétiens»



Syrie: Philippe réaffirme "la nécessité de préserver les forces démocratiques kurdes" © AFP / Delil SOULEIMAN

«Nous veillerons bien sûr à ce que soient pris en compte les intérêts des Kurdes dont le courage et les sacrifices nous obligent», a-t-il encore lancé.

Après avoir annoncé dimanche que les militaires

américains stationnés dans le nord-est de la Syrie seraient retirés en vue d'une opération turque, Donald Trump a réorienté lundi son discours en affirmant qu'il «anéantirait complètement l'économie de la Turquie» si celle-ci «dépassait les bornes».

«Nous sommes en train de quitter la Syrie, mais nous n'avons absolument pas abandonné les Kurdes qui sont des gens formidables et de merveilleux combattants», a renchéri le président américain mardi dans un tweet.

M. Philippe a ironisé mardi sur cette communication en soulignant que le gouvernement préférerait «dire les choses avec constance et cohérence», «plutôt que de réagir au gré d'hésitations manifestes de certains acteurs, notamment de nos amis américains».

Factbox : The Kurdish struggle for rights and land

Turkish forces are poised to advance into northeast Syria after U.S. troops began vacating the area, in an abrupt policy shift by President Donald Trump widely criticized in Washington as a betrayal of America's Kurdish militia allies.

Ankara says it plans to create a "safe zone" to resettle millions of refugees currently living on Turkish soil. This would then serve as a buffer against what Turkey sees as its main security threat in Syria - Kurdish YPG fighters who Ankara says are linked to militants waging an insurgency inside Turkey.

Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran all have large Kurdish minorities seeking varying degrees of autonomy from central governments after decades of repression.

This is an overview of their status.

HISTORY

The Kurdish ethnic minority, mainly Sunni Muslims, speaks a language related to Farsi and lives mostly in a mountainous region straddling the borders of Armenia, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey.

Kurdish nationalism stirred in the 1890s when the Ottoman Empire was on its last legs. The 1920 Treaty of Sevres, which imposed a settlement and colonial carve-up of Turkey after World War One, promised them independence.

Three years later, Turkish leader Kemal Ataturk tore up that accord. The Treaty of Lausanne, ratified in 1924, divided the Kurds among the new nations of the Middle East.

SYRIA

Before Syria's popular uprising erupted in 2011, Kurds formed 8-10 percent of the population.

The Baathist state, championing Arab nationalism, had deprived thousands of Kurds of citizenship rights, banned their language and clamped down on Kurdish political activity.

During the war, President Bashar al-Assad focused on crushing mainly Sunni Arab rebels with the help of Russia and Iran, turning a blind eye as Kurdish fighters carved out self-rule across the north and east.

Kurdish forces have emerged among the biggest winners, controlling about a quarter of the country — territory rich in oil, water and farmland. It is the biggest chunk of Syria not in state hands, now with its own forces and bureaucracy.

Assad has said he will recover the northeast, but the two sides have kept some channels open.

The Kurdish YPG militia's power grew after joi-



FILE PHOTO: Supporters of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) wave party flags during a peace day rally in Diyarbakir, Turkey, September 1, 2019. REUTERS/Sertac Kayar/File Photo

ning forces with U.S. troops to seize territory from Islamic State. While the U.S. deployment has provided a security umbrella that helped Kurdish influence expand, Washington opposes the autonomy plans.

Syrian Kurdish leaders say they do not seek partition but rather regional autonomy as part of Syria. Faced with the threat of a Turkish attack, the Kurdish-led authority in northern Syria has declared a state of "general mobilization" across north and east Syria.

TURKEY

Kurds form about 20 percent of the population. The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) took up arms against the state in 1984, waging an insurgency for autonomy in Turkey's largely Kurdish southeast. Since then, more than 40,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan was captured in 1999, tried and sentenced to death. That was later reduced to life in prison after Turkey abolished the death penalty.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan has removed restrictions on using the Kurdish language. The government held talks with Ocalan, who is in jail on an island near Istanbul, in 2012, but they broke down and the conflict has revived.

The United States, the European Union and Turkey classify the PKK as a terrorist organization.

Turkey's military has often struck targets in Iraq's Kurdish region near the PKK's stronghold in the Qandil mountains.

Erdogan has said he will crush Syria's YPG, which Ankara sees as a branch of the PKK, and has sent troops into northern Syria to mount offensives rolling back the Kurdish fighters.

IRAQ

Kurds form 15-20 percent of the population, mainly inhabiting the three northern provinces of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Late President Saddam Hussein's rule targeted Iraqi Kurds in the late 1980s when chemical gas was used, villages were razed and thousands of Kurds were forced into camps.

Their region has been semi-autonomous since 1991, has its own regional government and armed forces, but still relies on the Baghdad central government for its budget.

When Islamic State militants swept through much of northern Iraq in 2014, Kurdish fighters exploited the collapse of central authority to take control of Kirkuk, the oil city they regard as their ancient regional capital, as well as other territory disputed by Baghdad and the Kurdish north.

Iraqi government forces and Kurdish Peshmerga fighters, with U.S. backing, defeated Islamic State which had captured swathes of northern Iraq.

Iraq's Kurds held a referendum on independence in September 2017, which backfired and triggered a regional crisis in the face of opposition from Baghdad and regional powers.

The vote prompted military and economic retaliation from Baghdad, which retook the territory seized by Kurdish forces since 2014. Ties have since improved, but tensions remain over oil exports and revenue-sharing.

IRAN

Kurds form about 10 percent of the population.

In 2011, Iran pledged to step up military action against the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan, a PKK offshoot that has sought greater autonomy for Kurds in Iran.

Rights groups say Kurds, along with other religious and ethnic minorities, face discrimination under the ruling clerical establishment.

The elite Revolutionary Guards have put down unrest in the Kurdish community for decades, and the country's judiciary has sentenced many activists to long jail terms or death. Iran's military has demanded Iraqi authorities hand over separatist Kurdish dissidents stationed there and close their bases.

What did Lavrov discuss in Baghdad and Erbil?

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Baghdad on Oct. 7. Since his last trip more than five years ago, the situation in Iraq and the region has changed dramatically. Lavrov also visited Erbil, the first time the top Russian diplomat has visited Iraqi Kurdistan.

The visit to Iraq took place during a period of unrest and hardships for the country's population. Weeklong protests saw more than 100 killed and over 6,000 injured. The violence disrupted the foreign minister's visit as he had to cancel his stay in the capital. Nevertheless, Lavrov's agenda, though cut down to one day, included meetings with all key figures of Iraq's government: President Barham Salih, Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi, parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Halbusi and Foreign Minister Mohammed al-Hakim, who also co-chairs the Inter-Governmental Russian-Iraqi Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation from the Iraqi side.

Lavrov avoided mentioning the protests in his public statements, adhering to Moscow's principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of its allies in the Middle East. The visit's agenda emphasized trade and economic cooperation. Lavrov was accompanied by a delegation of entrepreneurs, among them Gazpromneft Director Alexander Dyukov, Soyuzneftegaz CEO Yuri Shafrannik, representatives of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation and officials from Russia's oil giant Rosneft and Technopromexport, a Russian engineering company that builds energy facilities in Russia and abroad, including power plants, power lines and electricity substations. The Russian Foreign Ministry said no particular contracts were discussed and the negotiations were mostly dedicated to a "demonstration of intentions."

Although the trade volume between the countries is hardly sufficient (it rose to \$1.4 billion in 2017 but fell to around half that in 2018), Iraq is one of Russia's key economic partners in the Middle East, mostly due to military-technical cooperation and energy contracts. Despite pressure from the United States, in 2014 Iraq ranked second as a global purchaser of Russian weapons with about 11% of all Russian arms exports. Nor did American influence hamper cooperation in the oil and gas trade.

A source in Russian diplomatic circles who spoke with Al-Monitor not for attribution said Russia has managed to win the contracts with Iraq that Moscow deemed to be the most important. Russia's relations with Iraq are a unique case where regime changes and government shifts are not hindering political and economic



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Iraq to discuss a broad range of issues, with economy and security dominating the agenda. REUTERS/Brendan McDermid

cooperation between the nations. Yet the Russians are not resting on their laurels, explaining why a large group of entrepreneurs and business officials accompanied Lavrov even though most of them had visited Baghdad in April for the latest session of the Inter-governmental commis-

sion. Russian investments into Iraq's oil and gas industry may increase up to \$40 billion by 2025. Lukoil and Gazpromneft are currently active in the country, and the Bashneft and Stroytransgaz corporations are planning their own projects there. As recently as mid-September, Gazpromneft expressed interest in the Mansouria oil field and was invited to take part in a tender for this facility. Iraq has signed an agreement with Stroytransgaz on the development of a gas field in Anbar province, though the project has not been yet implemented.

Even before the Arab Spring, Stroytransgaz had planned to build an oil pipeline from Kirkuk to Syrian ports through Iraqi and Syrian territory. Currently, the company has a 49-year lease to manage the Syrian port of Tartus.

Gazpromneft also plans to take part in a tender for production in Iraq's Mansouria gas field that the company said would be innovative. Following Lavrov's visit, Gazpromneft chief Alexander Dyukov told journalists that his company is "not going to stop here" and has been developing new projects for Iraq's energy industry. Dyukov said the work in Mansouria would allow the production of more gas needed for the generation of electric power, which suffers from an energy deficit. He reiterated that the company tries to carry out socially significant enterprises in the territories in which it operates. For instance, Gazpromneft has contributed to mine clearing and electricity grid expansion as well as hospital and school construction in Iraq. Dyukov said that the corporation is also planning projects in Kurdis-

tan and that the government in Baghdad has been informed about this and has made no objections.

Rosneft's petroleum-related ventures, though, brought about a different response. A few years ago, the company signed agreements with Iraqi Kurdistan, ignoring the objections of the national government and causing concern in Baghdad. This issue is believed to be in the process of being settled now; knowledgeable sources told

Al-Monitor that the matter dragged along for almost two years, even though the disputes between Iraqi national leaders and the Kurdish administration over the subject became less sensitive.

Lavrov said during his meeting with Iraqi Kurdish leaders, "The relationships between Baghdad and Erbil are tending to improve." He added, "We expect that all current issues will be solved, facilitating social and economic development" and addressing other problems.

In Erbil, Lavrov negotiated with President of Iraqi Kurdistan Nechirvan Barzani and Prime Minister Masrour Barzani. Lavrov held a separate meeting with former President Massoud Barzani, who resigned two years ago. During the talks in Erbil, the Russian foreign minister expressed his support and appreciation for the reestablishment of good relations between the national and Kurdish administrations. Iraq's ambassador to Russia, Haidar Mansour Hadi, also attended the meetings in Kurdistan, indicating Moscow's willingness to maintain transparency in its relations with Baghdad. Hadi was appointed ambassador to Russia by the Iraqi central government in 2016.

Lavrov touched upon a broad range of political issues from Syria to Palestine and security in the Gulf region. Russian diplomats have commended the Iraqi government for striving to adopt a multidirectional foreign policy in spite of Baghdad's inevitable dependence on the United States and Iran. Moscow also has supported Iraq's efforts to mediate between Washington and Tehran, although Russian officials have come to the conclusion that this is basically impossible at this stage. Summing up the talks at the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, Lavrov said uniting the efforts of all regional actors is "necessary, but not at the expense of bullying others," in a subtle poke at current American policy against Iran in the region.

US Defense Secretary: I Can't Put Forces Between Turks and Kurds

I can't explain why they did what they did. Clearly President Erdogan felt the need at this point in time," he said. He insisted that "nobody greenlighted" the Turkish operation.

The Pentagon has told Turkey that it does not support the operation, Esper said, on the grounds that it threatens the defeat-ISIS mission and endangers U.S. service members and their Kurdish allies. But Esper said that he had spoken with his Turkish counterpart on Thursday, and had seen "no indication they are willing to stop."

Esper and Milley emphasized that the United States would not offer any kind of air support or no-fly-zone to the SDF, which has asked urgently for both.

"There is no SDZ that I'm aware of that allows us to conduct military operations in support of the Kurds against the Turks, a 70-year NATO ally," Milley said.

Esper and Milley insisted that the U.S. is still working with the SDF in other parts of Syria to continue the fight against ISIS. (U.S. officials privately say that the counter-ISIS campaign has effectively ground to a halt as SDF fighters have rushed to the Syrian-Turkish border to defend their territory.)

"Right now, we do have forces co-located [with the SDF] and we're asking them to continue their partnership with us and continue their — a lot of it is force protection of our forces, and so on," Mil-



Defense Secretary Esper and Gen. Mike Milley address the press at the Pentagon briefing room on Fri., Oct. 11, 2019.

ley said. "We're encouraging them not to over-react at this point and to try to tamp things down in order to try to allow some sort of diplomatic resolution."

The United States and Turkey over the summer had established a so-called "security mechanism," designed to address Turkish concerns about the SDF and prevent an attack. The U.S. and Turkish militaries conducted joint patrols and fly-overs on the border of Syria and Turkey, and established a coordination center in southern Turkey. "We were doing all the things we agreed to do," Esper said.

As part of that security deal, the SDF had complied with U.S. requests to pull back its own defensive fortifications — leaving them vulnerable when Turkey attacked.

The fifty redeployed troops, whose job was to participate in joint patrols with Turkey as part of

the security mechanism, were seen as a deterrent against Turkish invasion — not because they would have exchanged fire with Turkey but because Turkey would not want to risk accidentally harming NATO-allied American service-members in the course of their assault.

Trump has said that his decision to pull back the fifty troops is part of his effort to end the U.S.'s "endless wars" in the Middle East.

"Look, we have no soldiers in Syria," Trump said, falsely, on Thursday. "We've won. We've beat ISIS. And we've beat them badly and decisively. The last thing I want to do is bring thousands and thousands of soldiers in and defeat everybody again. We've already done that."

The U.S. still has a thousand soldiers in Syria, who have been conducting ground operations, stabilization efforts and the occasional airstrike on ISIS targets.

"Right now the policy of the United States is to continue with our counter-ISIS campaign, and we are continuing with our operations — except in that one area of the incursion," Milley said

Erdogan Plays Refugee Card as Criticism Mounts Over Turkey's Kurdish Offensive

ISTANBUL - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is threatening to "open the gates" to millions of refugees to enter Europe as criticism grows over Turkey's ongoing military operation against a Syrian Kurdish militia.

"Hey, European Union! Pull yourself together," Erdogan said at a meeting of party supporters Thursday. "I repeat it: If you try to describe our operation as an invasion, we will do what's easy for us: we will open the doors and send 3.6 million refugees to you," he added, to rapturous applause.

Erdogan's threat comes as the European Union



FILE - In this June 14, 2015 file photo taken from the Turkish side of the border between Turkey and Syria, in Akcakale, Sanliurfa province, southeastern Turkey, thousands of Syrian refugees walk in order to cross into Turkey.

and individual leaders in Europe are voicing criticism and calls for an end to Turkey's major military offensive against the YPG Kurdish militia.

Ankara launched the offensive Wednesday against the YPG, which it designates as a terrorist organization linked to Kurdish insurgents inside Turkey. The second day of fighting saw an intensification of airstrikes and artillery barrages against the militia.

Tens of thousands of people are reported to have already fled the fighting, with growing numbers of civilian casualties.

"Turkey is putting millions of people at humanitarian risk," French President Emmanuel Macron said Wednesday at a news conference.

Blunt message

Analysts suggest what provoked Erdogan's migrant threat to Europe, however, were comments by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. On Wednesday, he called the Turkish operation a "catastrophe" and sent a blunt message to the Turkish president.

"If the plan [in Syria] involves the creation of a so-called 'safe zone,' don't expect the EU to pay for any of it," Juncker said.

That threat, some analysts say, will start alarm bells ringing in Ankara.

Turkey's military operation is seeking to create what Erdogan has called a "safe zone" 30 kilometers deep into Syria.

Ankara plans to use the "safe zone" to resettle up to 2 million Syrian refugees currently living in Turkey. On Thursday, Erdogan declared that a million new homes would be built in the planned zone.

Turkish media reported last month the project would cost more than \$20 billion. Ankara reportedly is looking to the EU to foot much of the bill.

FILE - In this June 14, 2015 file photo taken from the Turkish side of the border between Turkey and Syria, in Akcakale, Sanliurfa province, southeastern Turkey, thousands of Syrian refugees walk in order to cross into Turkey.

The project is seen as a political lifeline for Erdogan. "For Turkey to send even 1 million refugees back will be a great success," said Huseyin

Bagci, professor of international relations at Ankara's Middle East Technical University.

"In the sense of not keeping the refugees here and paying for them," he added, "everyday tensions in the country are growing over the refugees."

Erdogan asserts that hosting the 3.6 million Syrian refugees has cost nearly \$40 billion. The massive construction program required to house the returning refugees in the proposed Syrian "safe zone" also would provide a significant boost to Turkey's floundering economy, which has been another headache for Erdogan.

Critics accuse Ankara of seeking to change the demographic makeup of the region, however, replacing Kurds with Sunni Arab Syrians, who are considered more loyal to Turkey.

"There is zero chance of the EU funding this project. No decent country can consider this proposal," political scientist Cengiz Aktar said. "To expect the EU to support a project involving the changing of demographics is madness."

Refugees and Migrants disembark on a ferry with destination the port of Piraeus, on the northeastern Aegean island of Lesbos, Greece, Sept. 30, 2019.

Accusations against Syrian Kurds

Ankara counters, accusing the Syrian Kurdish militia of ousting the local Arab population in the region, insisting it is seeking to redress those changes.

Given the high stakes, Erdogan is using what is widely seen as his most potent leverage over Europe — the threat of a new refugee exodus. On Thursday, the Turkish president gave Europe a stark choice: face "catastrophe" if you do not "fall into line" with Turkey's plans.

In the past few months, there has been a surge in refugees entering the Greek Islands from nearby neighboring Turkey.

Several Greek refugee centers warned of being overwhelmed. The rise in refugees stirred memories of the massive exodus in 2015 from Turkey when nearly a million people entered Greece.

A 2016 migrant deal between Ankara and the EU markedly reduced the number of migrants, with Turkey becoming Europe's gatekeeper.

Some analysts question the power of Erdogan's refugee card over Europe, though, given that since 2016, migration routes from Greece to western Europe are now closed.

"I can see Greece being sunk by any new exodus," said Soli Ozel, international relations lecturer at Istanbul's Kadir Has University. "But I don't see any refugees going to anywhere else from Greece. Therefore, this can turn out to be a bluff by Erdogan, something that will devastate Greece but not anybody else."

The recent increase in migrants entering Greece from Turkey and threats by Erdogan to end the migrant deal prompted a flurry of European diplomats and ministers rushing to Ankara seeking to assuage Turkish government concerns.

"The primary concern of all European countries — from Spain to Portugal to Italy — they are all afraid of another wave of migrants to Europe. The European chemistry is completely destroyed over migration," Bagci said.

Analysts claim Ankara likely will be banking on such European migration fears in its efforts to get the EU to pay for its Syrian initiative.



11 October, 2019

100,000 flee as Turkish offensive pushes into Syria

Turkey has remained defiant in the face of international criticism, insisting the military will push forward with its incursion. The UN has warned of an impending humanitarian crisis as thousands flee to safety.

The United Nations on Friday said 100,000 people have been displaced by Turkey's incursion into northeastern Syria. Turkey has vowed to push forward with its offensive targeting Kurdish forces in Syria despite continued international criticism.

Some half-million people are thought to be at risk in the two countries' border region. The World Food Program (WFP) has warned of an impending

humanitarian crisis, something Ankara has dismissed as "fabricated in order to discredit Turkey's counterterrorism efforts."

The provinces of al-Hassakeh and al-Raqqa were expected to be the hardest hit by the shelling.

Dozens of Kurdish fighters killed

Some 32 Kurdish militiamen have been killed in the Turkish campaign, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said on Friday, while Ankara claimed it had killed 342 fighters.

At least six Syrian civilians, seven Turkish civilians

and four Turkish soldiers have also been killed in the three-day offensive.

"The operation is going as planned," said Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar on Friday. "We are being extremely careful to ensure no civilians are harmed."

The UN's World Food Program (WFP) said that 70,000 people have been forced to flee the provinces of al-Hassakeh and al-Raqqa due to the Turkish onslaught. Turkey had slammed the warning of an impending humanitarian crisis as "fabricated in order to discredit Turkey's counter-terrorism efforts."



On Friday morning, thick columns of black smoke could be seen billowing out of the Syrian border town of Tal Abyad as Turkish forces bombarded the area. The Turkish border town of Suruc was also hit by shelling.

Trump under fire over US withdrawal

US President Donald Trump has been accused of greenlighting Turkey's campaign against the Kurds when he made the sudden decision to withdraw American troops from the border region, effectively abandoning the Kurdish allies that played a major role in defeating "Islamic State" (IS) terrorists.

Trump's move has been criticized not only by opposition Democrats, but by his own Republican

party, and many other countries around the world. The decision has also threatened to seriously damage the US' reputation as a military ally.

The Pentagon has also cautioned that the withdrawal could allow IS to once again build up strength. Today, the Defense Department

added that there is "no indication" Turkey would be willing to stop the offensive.

Fighting back against accusations that they left allies in the lurch, Defense Secretary Mark Esper told reporters: "We have not abandoned the Kurds, let me be clear about that. Nobody green-lighted this operation by Turkey, just the opposite. We pushed back very hard at all levels for the Turks not to commence this operation."

The US president said he was entrusting Turkey with the fight against terrorism, allowing Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to fulfill his longstanding desire to crush the Kurdish forces, all of whom Ankara labels as "terrorists."

In Turkey, government forces have been engaged in an on-and-off conflict with armed Kurdish Turks

for decades, and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is banned as a terrorist organization.

However, many doubts have been raised over Turkey's capacity to handle the terrorist problem in neighboring Syria, despite President Trump voicing his confidence. On Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he simply did not believe Ankara had the necessary resources and know-how, which he worried would embolden remaining IS fighters.

Car bomb kills civilians

The fears of both Putin and the Pentagon were realized on Friday, when a car bomb killed three people in the Syrian city of Qamishli. IS later claimed the attack, one of several it has carried out in the Kurdish city in recent months.

Friday's attack occurred as many Kurdish guards were forced to leave their posts in parts of the city to defend themselves against Turkish forces.

The car bomb targeted a restaurant at a time when civilians, including journalists who came to cover the offensive, were inside, according to the Kurdish internal security services, known as Asayish, in a statement.

There were also reports on Friday that five IS prisoners had managed to escape a Syrian prison due to Turkish shelling.

L'OB 11 octobre 2019

En Syrie, l'offensive de la Turquie a déjà fait 39 morts côté kurde, un soldat tué côté turc

Sept civils, dont un bébé, ont en outre été tués en Turquie par des projectiles lancés de Syrie.

Un soldat turc a été tué et trois militaires ont été blessés dans des combats lancés par la Turquie contre la milice kurde YPG en Syrie, a annoncé vendredi le ministère turc de la Défense.

« Notre frère d'arme est tombé en martyr le (jeudi) 10 octobre dans un affrontement contre des terroristes des YPG dans la zone de l'opération "Source de Paix" », a affirmé le ministère turc de la Défense dans un communiqué.

Trois soldats ont par ailleurs été blessés, a indiqué le ministère, sans autre précision.

Sept civils tués en Turquie

Il s'agit des premières victimes annoncées par la



Akcakale, à la frontière entre la Syrie et la Turquie ce 10 octobre. (BULENT KILIC / AFP)

Turquie dans le cadre de son opération « Source de Paix » déclenchée mercredi dans le nord-est de la Syrie. Cette offensive vise la milice kurde des YPG, soutenue par les Occidentaux dans la lutte contre le groupe Etat islamique (EI), mais qu'Ankara considère comme un « groupe terroriste » en raison de ses liens avec un groupe armé

kurde qui livre une guérilla sur le sol turc, le PKK.

Jeudi, de violents affrontements ont opposé les militaires turcs et leurs supplétifs syriens aux YPG. Plusieurs villes frontalières turques ont par ailleurs été touchées par des salves de roquettes et d'obus tirées par les YPG. Selon les autorités locales turques, sept civils, dont un bébé, ont été tués et environ 70 blessés par ces projectiles dans les provinces turques de Sanliurfa et Mardin, frontalières de la Syrie.

L'offensive turque contre les YPG ouvre un nouveau front dans un conflit qui a fait plus de 370 000 morts et des millions de réfugiés depuis 2011.

39 morts côté kurde

Les forces turques ont conquis onze villages près de ces deux villes, d'après une ONG, l'Observatoire syrien des Droits de l'Homme (OSDH), qui a rapporté aussi des raids aériens turcs.

Au moins 29 combattants des forces kurdes et 10 civils ont été tués par les frappes aériennes et les

tirs d'artillerie de l'armée turque depuis mercredi, selon l'OSDH.

Sans aviation, il semble difficile pour les FDS de résister à l'armée turque. « Les FDS ne peuvent pas défendre toute la frontière », estime Nicholas Heras, analyste au Center for New American Security.

L'offensive turque a en outre entraîné la fuite de plus de 60 000 personnes depuis mercredi, quittant les secteurs frontaliers, d'après l'OSDH. De nombreux déplacés sont arrivés dans la ville de Tall Tamer, plus au sud, épargnée par les combats, selon un correspondant de l'AFP sur place.



11 october, 2019
By Tess Bonn

Tulsi Gabbard rips Trump's Syria decision : 'Kurds are now paying the price'

Democratic presidential hopeful Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D-Hawaii) on Friday ripped President Trump over his decision to withdraw troops from northern Syria and turn operations over to Turkey.

Gabbard, an Iraq War veteran, told Hill.TV said that even though she supported Trump's initial decision in December 2018 to move troops from the region, she said he has failed to do so in a responsible way.

"All that he has done is remove them from the northern border of Syria — really laying out a red-carpet, a green light for [Turkish President Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan and Turkey to launch an ethnic cleansing and offensive against the Kurds," Gabbard told Hill.TV.

"Because of Trump's failure to end the regime change war in Syria — the Kurds are now paying the price," she added.

The Hawaii Democrat previously criticized Trump and other Republicans over the move in

a series on tweets on Tuesday.

"The hypocrisy of war-mongers like Nikki Haley, Senator Graham & others who have demanded that we continue our regime change war in Syria, who are now crying crocodile tears for the Kurds, is nauseating," she tweeted.

Gabbard's latest comments came after Turkey this week launched a military offensive against U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish forces in northern Syria following a withdrawal of U.S. troops from the area.

The Syrian Democratic Forces have long been U.S. allies in the fight against the Islamic State, or ISIS, and Trump's move to relocate U.S. troops in advance of Turkey's attack prompted lawmakers in both parties to accuse Trump of betraying American allies.

Several of the Trump's most vocal allies, including Sen. Lindsay Graham (R-S.C.), pushed back against the pullout, saying it could be the "biggest mistake" of Trump's presidency.

But Trump stood by his decision to move the troops, arguing that the U.S. could "take a victory."

"We don't have any soldiers there because we left, we won, we left, take a victory United States," Trump said at a campaign rally on Thursday. "Bring our troops back home."

Since launching her presidential bid, Gabbard has faced renewed scrutiny on her own relationship with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. In 2017, the Hawaii congressman faced backlash after revealing that she met with the Syrian leader, who has also been accused of human rights abuses against his own people.

In response to criticism from her opponents, including Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), Gabbard has since sought to distance herself from Assad, describing him as a "brutal dictator."

"He's a brutal dictator. Just like Saddam Hussein. Just like Gadhafi in Libya," Gabbard told CNN's Chris Cuomo following her breakout performance in the August debate.



12 october, 2019
By Barbara Starr & Ryan Browne

Exclusive: Military leader of Syrian Kurds tells US 'you are leaving us to be slaughtered'

(CNN)The commander of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces told a senior US diplomat, "You are leaving us to be slaughtered," demanding to know whether the US is going to do anything to protect Syrian Kurds as Turkey continues its military operation targeting America's Kurdish allies in Syria.

"You have given up on us. You are leaving us to be slaughtered," Gen. Mazloum Kobani Abdi told the Deputy Special Envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, William Roebuck, in a

meeting Thursday, according to an internal US government readout that has been obtained exclusively by CNN.

"You are not willing to protect the people, but you do not want another force to come and protect us. You have sold us. This is immoral," Mazloum added.

He insisted the US either help stop the Turkish attack or allow the Syrian Dem-



ocratic Forces to strike a deal with the Assad regime in Damascus and their Russian backers, allowing Russian warplanes to enforce a no-fly zone over northeast Syria, thereby denying Turkey the ability to carry out airstrikes. The US does not want the Kurds turning to the Russians, administration officials say.

"I need to know if you are capable of protecting my people, of stopping these bombs falling on us or not. I need to know, because if you're not, I need to make a deal with Russia and the regime now and invite their planes to protect this region," Mazloum said.

Turkey launched its long-threatened incursion into Syria after President Donald Trump ordered a small contingent of about 50 US troops to be pulled back from the border area amid a belief that a Turkish incursion was imminent. Before that, as a confidence building measure with Turkey, the US convinced Kurds to dismantle their defensive fortifications along the border and pull their fighters back. The US said Turkey had agreed to the arrangement which sought to prevent unilateral Turkish military action.

Senior members of the Trump administration have insisted Turkey would have invaded regardless of whether US troops had remained and that the US has not deserted the Syrian Kurds, however the US government has not taken action yet to stop the Turkish incursion.

Secretary of Defense Mark Esper said Friday the US is not abandoning its Kurdish allies, although he made it clear the US military will not intervene in the fight.

"We are not abandoning our Kurdish partner forces and US troops remain with them in other parts of Syria," Esper told reporters at the Pentagon.

"We remain in close coordination with the Syrian Democratic Forces who helped us destroy the physical caliphate of ISIS, but I will not place American service members in the middle of a longstanding

conflict between the Turks and the Kurds, this is not why we are in Syria," Esper said.

Lawmakers scoff as White House threatens Turkey with sanctions but won't 'activate' them

In an interview with The Tennessean on Friday, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the Trump administration "has been incredibly supportive of the Kurds" and that they had been good partners to the US. "I am very confident this administration will continue to support these people who have been good friends of the United States of America," he said.

Trump signed an executive order Friday giving the Treasury Department "very significant new sanctions authorities" against Turkey over its actions in Syria, but the US doesn't have any immediate plans to use them, Treasury Secretary Stephen Mnuchin said.

The Treasury statement had said that Trump's threat of sanctions was meant to dissuade Turkey from actions that included "the indiscriminate targeting of civilians, targeting of civilian infrastructure, targeting of ethnic or religious minorities."

Trump, who has a well-established affinity for authoritarian leaders, invited Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to the White House in November.

Mazloum told Roebuck Thursday that "I've been holding myself for two days from going to the press and saying that America abandoned us and that I would like you to get out of our areas now so that I can invite Russian and regime planes to take over this airspace. Either you stop this bombing on our people now or move aside so we can let in the Russians."

Roebuck told Mazloum "not to take any immediate decisions," saying he would communicate the Kurdish leaders' messages to the State Department, and saying the US was working to stop

Turkey's offensive and broker a ceasefire.

Pentagon claims it's not abandoning Kurds while admitting it won't help them

CNN has reached out to the State Department and White House on Saturday for comment.

Asked what message the US was communicating to the Kurdish-led SDF, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark Milley, said Friday that "we're encouraging them not to overreact at this point, and to try to tamp things down in order to allow some sort of diplomatic resolution to some of this."

Several US military and defense officials who have spoken to CNN expressed dismay over how the Trump administration has handled the situation.

One US official said it is well known that some senior US military officials are livid at how the Kurds have been treated.

Another senior US defense official told CNN, "We are just watching the second largest Army in NATO attack one of our best counter-terrorism partners."

A US official familiar with the situation in Syria tells CNN there is growing concern that Turkey's operation in Syria has grown in ambition and that Ankara seeks to control an area stretching from the Iraq border all the way to areas in northwest Syria already under Turkish control -- an area inhabited mostly by Kurds and other minorities. Turkish officials had previously communicated to the US that the scope of the operation was narrower, focusing in the area where the now defunct US-Turkish safe zone was to be located.

The official said Friday's artillery strikes near US troops around Kobani are evidence Turkey is operating beyond the areas it had indicated to the US.

Europe 1

12 octobre 2019
Ugo Pascolo

INTERVIEW

"L'abandon des Kurdes est insupportable, c'est d'une lâcheté terrible", dénonce le docteur Raphaël Pitti

Il a fait une vingtaine de missions humanitaires en Syrie. Alors que l'offensive turque contre les Kurdes dure depuis désormais trois jours, le docteur Raphaël Pitti, dénonce samedi sur Europe 1 l'abandon de ce peuple "que nous avons armé" pour lutter contre Daech.

Les Kurdes "sont abandonnés", dénonce Raphaël Pitti. "C'est insupportable, c'est d'une lâcheté terrible, c'est honteux ce que fait Trump", s'empare-t-il, alors que le président américain refuse



D'après les Nations Unies, 100.000 personnes ont déjà fui les combats (photo d'illustration) © DELIL SOULEIMAN / AFP

pour l'heure de hausser le ton contre la Turquie. Véritable tollé sur la scène internationale, cette offensive de la part d'Ankara doit être punie "par des sanctions économiques" pour empêcher "les bombardements contre ces populations et ces forces qui se sont battus pour nous", insiste Raphaël Pitti.

"Les Kurdes ne méritent pas ça"

En contact avec des soignants sur place qui "sont

prêts à donner leur vie parce que la liberté n'a pas de prix". le docteur laisse exprimer son ressenti au micro d'Europe 1 : "Je suis très en colère, je suis allé six fois dans cette zone-là [le nord de la Syrie, ndlr] et c'était une zone stabilisée. Tout rebascule, et on plonge dans l'urgence, cette population qui a tant souffert depuis huit ans ne mérite pas ça, les Kurdes ne méritent pas ça". Une situation d'autant plus préoccupante que "Daech

réapparaît", affirme le médecin. "Il y a déjà eu une attaque sur un village, deux voitures piégées. Il y a un risque de résurgence de ces forces que les Kurdes contenaient jusqu'à présent".

"Daech est parti de Raqqa, mais est toujours présent en Syrie, ils vivent dans la clandestinité, ils se mélangeaient à la population en attendant leur heure, et ils ont l'impression qu'elle est arrivée",

analyse-t-il. Une préoccupation également partagée par Emmanuel Macron, qui a réclamé l'arrêt de l'offensive turque "au plus vite" et "a souligné la nécessité avant toute chose d'empêcher toute résurgence de Daech dans la région, de soutenir ceux qui se sont battus sur le terrain à nos côtés contre les terroristes et de protéger les populations civiles".



12 october, 2019
by Karzan Sulaivany

Turkey's offensive in Syria threat to security, stability of region: Masoud Barzani

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The President of the leading Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Masoud Barzani, released a statement on Saturday about the recent Turkish offensive against the Kurds in northeastern Syria.

The Kurdish leader lamented the previous efforts "to evade war and instability against the Kurdish people in Syria," reminding that the Kurds in northeastern Syria have "faced a dangerous assault and threatening situation," a statement on Barzani's official website read.

Barzani described the severe outcomes of the Turkish offensive and warned that it would affect the entire region.

"The continuation of the fight and



President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Masoud Barzani. (Photo: Archive)

threatening conditions poses a serious threat to people's lives, security, and stability of the whole area," the statement said.

The KDP leader also called for all relevant sides not to take advantage

of the situation for political gains. Barzani, who served as the former president of the Kurdistan Region, urged all parties to take initiative and end the war.

"Now is the time to utilize our ef-

forts by every means possible to end this war and prevent innocent people from paying the price for this grave situation and prevent any demographic changes in the area."

The statement was made following Turkey's ongoing operation against Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria.

Turkish warplanes and artillery began shelling Syria's predominantly Kurdish northeastern town of Serekaniye on Wednesday in an offensive Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has called "Operation Peace Spring."

The number of civilians displaced from the border towns to the south has reached 190,000, according to the Syria-based Kurdish Red Crescent (KRC).



12 october, 2019
by Karzan Sulaivany

Senior female Kurdish political leader killed in ambush in Syria

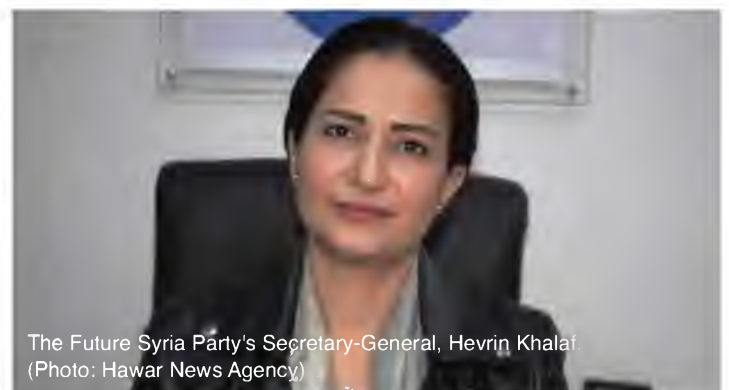
ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The Future Syria Party's Secretary-General, Hevrin Khalaf, was killed on Saturday when Turkish-backed groups tried to take control of a point on the international M4 road.

"With utmost grievance and sadness, the Syria Future Party mourns the martyrdom of engineer Havrin Khalaf, the General Secretary of Syria Future Party, while she was

performing her patriotic and political duties," the Future Party said in a statement.

Khalaf was reportedly killed when a Turkish-backed group ambushed her on the road to the city of Qamishlo.

"A group of Turkish mercenaries tried to control the M4 road and killed many people, and Hevrin was one of them," one senior official told Kurdistan 24.



The Future Syria Party's Secretary-General, Hevrin Khalaf. (Photo: Hawar News Agency)

Nobahar Mustafa, the deputy of the co-head of the Future Party in Ain Issa, said the Kurdish politician was traveling from the Jazeera canton to Ain Issa and then to Raqqa before the mercenaries blocked the way at a checkpoint and killed all the people there.

"All the passengers they captured were martyred," Mustafa told Kurdistan 24.

According to a statement released later in the afternoon by the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), Khalaf was dragged out of the vehicle she was in and summarily executed on the spot.

"She was taken out of her car during a Turkish-backed attack and executed by Turkish backed mercenary factions on the International Road between Qamishlo and Manbij, where her driver who was also martyred," it read.

"This is a clear evidence that the Turkish state is continuing its criminal policy towards unarmed civilians."

During a press conference in the city of Qamishlo on Oct. 5, Khalaf stated that the Turkish attempts "to occupy this land in order to defend the Turkish people don't adjust to reality," reminding that Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) had liberated northeast Syria from terror groups.

"We – all the political forces – reject these threats, especially because they impede our campaign to create a solution for the Syrian crisis," she stated.

"For this reason, the international community should support the people living on Syrian land to keep the security and not allow the Turkish forces to occupy Syrian land."

LCI 12 octobre 2019
Yohan ROBLIN

Les Kurdes "ne nous ont pas aidés" pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale : pourquoi Trump se trompe

A LA LOUPE - Lors d'un échange avec des journalistes, Donald Trump a affirmé que les Kurdes n'avaient pas "aidé" les États-Unis et leurs alliés pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Une réécriture de l'histoire.

La petite phrase a interloqué, parfois choqué. Pour justifier l'absence de réaction américaine à l'offensive turque dans le nord-est de la Syrie, Donald Trump a expliqué que les Kurdes n'avaient "pas aidé" les États-Unis pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale et le "D-Day" en Normandie. Affirmant s'appuyer sur "un article très très puissant", une tribune de Kurt Schlichter, un ancien militaire, publiée sur le site "conservateur" Townhall, le président américain a développé son argumentaire... mais en réécrivant l'histoire.

"Les Kurdes se battent pour leurs terres, il faut que vous compreniez", a-t-il lâché, avant d'expliquer pourquoi il n'envisageait pas de leur apporter un soutien militaire. "Ils ne nous ont pas aidés pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Ils ne nous ont pas aidés en Normandie, par exemple". Certes, Trump a raison de dire que les Kurdes n'ont pas pris part au débarquement en Normandie le 6 juin 1944. En revanche, la première partie de sa justification, elle, est erronée. Contrairement à ce qu'a énoncé le président des États-Unis, des soldats kurdes ont

bien participé à des opérations fomentées par les Alliés pendant ce conflit mondial.

"Les Kurdes se sont battus du côté des Alliés durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Ils ont aidé à briser le siège à la suite du coup d'État pro-nazi de 1941 en Irak et faisaient partie des légions irakiennes pro-Alliés. En 1942, les Kurdes représentaient 25% de cette force. En 1943, 10 des 44 compagnies étaient kurdes", a certifié sur Twitter l'historien britannique Akil Awan, membre de l'Université Royal Holloway de Londres.

Peuple sans État propre, pourtant prévu dans le traité de Sèvres en 1920, les Kurdes ne sont officiellement souverains sur aucun territoire. Ils se sont retrouvés dispersés sur une vaste région transfrontalière répartie entre la Turquie, l'Iran, l'Irak sous protectorat britannique et la Syrie sous protectorat français.

Engagés dans les campagnes d'Irak et d'Italie

Au printemps 1941, le Royaume d'Irak, indépendant mais maintenu sous la tutelle britannique, bascule. Le Premier ministre irakien, Rachid Ali al Gaylani, renverse le roi régent Abdul Illah. Il prône alors un rapprochement vers l'Allemagne nazie. À l'époque, le Troisième Reich se présente dans sa propagande comme le libérateur des peuples arabes. Soutenu par un groupe

 **George Kerevan** 
@GeorgeKerevan

Many Kurds served with British RAF Levies in WW2, defending RAF bases during pro-Axis coup in Iraq in 1941. Their parachutists served with Royal Marines in Italian campaign.



♥ 2,960 10:08 AM - Oct 10, 2019

d'officiers pro-nazis, le Carré d'or, le coup d'État diligenté par Ali al Gaylani aboutit. Les Alliés réagissent rapidement avec les "légions", une force militaire irakienne créée en 1921 et composée de Kurdes et d'Assyriens. Le conflit est éclair. En deux mois, malgré l'appui aérien de la Luftwaffe, la guerre anglo-irakienne tourne à la déroute pour le régime pro-nazi.

Mais leur contribution à l'effort collectif durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale va plus loin. Dans un article du 9 septembre

1943, le correspondant de The Scotsman "quelque part en Palestine" relate une discussion avec le sergent-major britannique Ronald Fritchley lors de la visite d'une base alliée. Dans leur échange, le militaire lui confirme que des Assyriens et des Kurdes ayant gardé les aérodromes de la Royal Air Force (RAF) en Irak se sont portés volontaires pour devenir parachutistes. Dans les mois qui ont suivi, une partie de ce contingent de parachutistes a servi auprès des Royal Marines lors de la campagne d'Italie.

Des Kurdes manifestent à Montréal contre l'offensive turque

Quelque 200 manifestants se sont rassemblés samedi au centre-ville de Montréal pour protester contre l'offensive turque dans le nord-est de la Syrie. Selon des membres de la communauté kurde de Montréal, l'attaque pourrait bouleverser la stabilité d'une région fragile, freiner les progrès réalisés contre Daech (groupe armé État islamique) et être l'amorce d'opérations de nettoyage ethnique contre les Kurdes de la région.

L'offensive militaire turque contre la milice kurde intervient après que le président américain Donald Trump eut brusquement décidé, la semaine dernière, que les troupes américaines n'interviendraient pas, un changement radical de la politique étrangère américaine.

La décision de M. Trump de se retirer de la Syrie, qui a suscité de nombreuses condamnations à l'échelle internationale et aux États-Unis, est largement considérée comme un abandon des combattants kurdes syriens qui ont été les seuls alliés des États-Unis pour combattre Daech sur le seul syrien.

Selon Beritan Oerde, organisatrice à la Fondation kurde du Québec, la manifestation pourrait contribuer à faire pression sur les gouvernements et les institutions internationales pour qu'ils agissent plus fermement.



Photo: Graham Hughes La Presse canadienne Selon Beritan Oerde, organisatrice à la Fondation kurde du Québec, la manifestation pourrait contribuer à faire pression sur les gouvernements et les institutions internationales pour qu'ils agissent plus fermement.

« On se sent parfois très éloignés, mais cela importe peu, a-t-elle souligné. Toutes les voix rassemblées autour du monde peuvent parfois exercer des pressions sur les institutions et les gouvernements. »

Mme Oerde a été particulièrement marquée par les reportages faisant état de plusieurs dizaines de morts depuis l'invasion turque. « C'est une dure réalité. Cela aurait pu être moi », a-t-elle dit.

La foule a scandé divers slogans comme « arrêtez la guerre » lors du rassemblement qui s'est

déroulé au carré Phillips.

Des manifestants portaient des pancartes sur lesquelles on pouvait lire « La Turquie ranime l'État islamique » ou « L'Occident a trahi les Kurdes ». Sur une autre, on pouvait voir une caricature du président de la Turquie Recep Tayyip Erdogan portant une épée ensanglantée qui lâchait des chiens contre une mère kurde et son enfant.

Zozan Akdenyz était présente pour « défendre l'humanité ». « Toute l'humanité, pas seulement le peuple kurde », a ajouté sa soeur Mizgin Akdenyz.

Les opérations de l'armée turque pourraient favoriser la libération de milliers de combattants de Daech, ont-elles fait craindre.

« Ils tuent des enfants, des femmes, des civils. Le monde devrait avoir peur », s'est exclamé Zozan Akdenyz.

Le Canada figure parmi les pays qui ont condamné l'attaque. « C'est très apprécié, mais on doit faire beaucoup plus, observe Hovig Tufenkjian, un membre du Comité national arménien du Canada. Tout crime demeuré impuni est sujet à se répéter. »

Le syndrome kurde

C'est une foule d'incertitudes que suscite l'expédition turque en Syrie, et il en est deux qui devraient nous interpellier avec le plus d'autorité, de brutalité. La première a trait à cet hallucinant transfert de population appelé à suivre et parachever les opérations militaires en cours dans le nord-est de ce pays. À la lumière de la malédiction géopolitique qui poursuit les Kurdes, la seconde porte irrésistiblement à méditer sur la valeur réelle des garanties et protections étrangères : surtout quand par manque de cohésion nationale et de gouvernance responsable, elles tiennent lieu d'assurance-vie pour les peuples assistés.

Clairs – et même d'ailleurs claironnés bien à l'avance – sont les objectifs de cette équipée

guerrière, ironiquement baptisée Source de paix. En ouverture de spectacle, on provoque, à coups de bombes, l'exode massif de la population kurde syrienne, concentrée dans ce secteur ; ainsi serait aménagée une bande de territoire longeant la frontière et large de plusieurs dizaines de kilomètres, qu'Ankara estime indispensable à sa propre sécurité. Cette saucisse frontalière allégée – car vierge désormais de tout ingrédient kurde –, on la farcirait alors de centaines de milliers de ces Syriens arabes qui avaient trouvé refuge en Turquie et qui pourraient ainsi retrouver un foyer, même s'il n'est pas le leur. Gagnants sur les deux tableaux, les Turcs se retrouvent alors en position idéale pour menacer d'ouvrir les vannes, de noyer l'Europe sous un raz-de-marée de migrants si elle persiste à crier au scandale de

l'invasion. Chantage pour chantage, voilà toutefois les Kurdes qui menacent de lâcher dans la nature les milliers de combattants islamistes qu'ils détenaient en captivité.

Sans verser dans ce nombrilisme à tout vent fréquemment reproché aux Libanais, il est évident que ces deux éventualités ne devraient pas alarmer les seuls Européens. Le pays du Cèdre, qui est aussi celui des minorités religieuses,

se trouve aujourd'hui cruellement rattrapé, pénalisé par sa proverbiale tradition de terre d'asile. Abritant déjà près de deux millions de réfugiés entre Syriens et Palestiniens (plus du tiers de sa population), le Liban a déjà bien du mal à gérer une situation absolument unique au

monde. encore aggravée par la crise économique et financière qu'il endure. Plus que jamais, et dans le cadre des réformes exigées, s'impose donc un contrôle total de la frontière avec la Syrie où foisonnent les passages illégaux : chemins de traverse que les contrebandiers ne sont évidemment pas seuls à emprunter...

Si la tragédie du Rojava ne manque pas de déranger, troubler ou même préoccuper, c'est aussi parce qu'elle vient rappeler avec quel froid cynisme les grandes puissances peuvent, au gré de leurs intérêts, accorder ou retirer leurs faveurs aux nations qui en auraient pourtant bien besoin. Dispersés dans quatre pays de la région, périodiquement encouragés à s'affirmer puis inva-

riablement abandonnés, les Kurdes offrent la pathétique image d'un peuple sans Etat. Il y a là ample matière à réflexion pour nous qui, à l'ombre d'un Etat en perpétuel chantier de reconstruction, n'avons pas encore réussi à faire de nos tribus sectaires un peuple. Jusqu'à quand le fameux miracle libanais pourra-t-il opérer à la demande ?



12 octobre 2019

Kurds In Iran Hold Multiple Protests Against Turkey's Incursion Into Syria

Iranian Kurds have come out into streets on Saturday protesting Turkey's incursion into Syria's Kurdish populated and controlled northeast, multiple social media images show.

Turkey decided to send its army into northeastern Syria in a large military operation to carve out a "safe zone", accusing Kurdish forces who fought with the United States against the Islamic State group as "terrorists".

One social media user posted a video showing people in Piranshahr, near the Iraqi border protesting on a main thoroughfare.

Other social media posts show demonstrations in Sanandaj, Baneh and Marivan; all in Western Iran, where the Kurdish population lives. The hashtag #Resistance is being used on Persian Twitter accounts.



Protest in Marivan, Iran against Turkey's military operation in Syria. October 12, 2019

All images received by Radio Farda show these protests were held peacefully, without any interference from authorities, who are sensitive to pu-

blic gatherings and usually order security forces to disperse crowds.

As a result of Turkish shelling and air attacks there are many civilian casualties among Kurds in Syria. The United States adopted a tough tone against Turkey's operation on Friday, threatening sanctions if Ankara continues to use overwhelming force.

Earlier, President Donald Trump had signaled his agreement or neutrality for the Turkish attack.



12 octobre 2019
James Tapper

Boris Johnson urges Turkey to end offensive against Syrian Kurds

Boris Johnson has urged the Turkish president to halt military operations against Syrian Kurds, as the major European powers began efforts to end the conflict.

The prime minister told Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of his "grave concern" at the attacks in northern Syria in a phone call on Saturday, after Germany and France announced that they had suspended all arms exports to Turkey.

"He expressed the UK's grave concern about Turkey's military operation in northern Syria, which he said could further worsen the humanitarian situation there and undermine the progress made against Daesh (so-called Islamic State)," a No 10 spokesman said.

"The prime minister underlined that Turkey is



Boris Johnson has urged Turkey to enter dialogue and cease their offensive. Photograph: Henry N cholls/Reuters

an important partner for the UK and a Nato ally. He recognised Turkey's role at the forefront of the fight against [Isis] and its generosity in sup-

porting refugees who've fled the civil war in Syria.

"But the prime minister was clear that the UK cannot support Turkey's military action. He urged the president to end the operation and enter into dialogue, and said the UK and international partners stand ready to support negotiations towards a ceasefire."

Since the attacks began last Wednesday, aid agencies estimate that 100,000 people have already fled their homes near the Turkey-Syria border. Some reports estimate that between 20 and 40 people had been killed, fighters and civilians and another suggests five Islamic

State suspects have escaped from prison in Qamishli after Turkish shelling. Hundreds more Isis suspects are being guarded by Kurdish forces.

Several European cities saw protests against the attacks on Saturday, as Germany's foreign minister said the country was suspending arms sales to Erdogan's forces. "Against the background of the Turkish military offensive in northeastern Syria, the government will not issue any new permissions for any weapons that can be used by Turkey in Syria," Heiko Maas told Bild am Sonntag on Saturday. Germany is one of Turkey's main suppliers of weapons.

Hours later, France's defence and foreign ministries made an announcement stating their opposition to the Turkish military operation, and said they too had suspended all planned exports of "war materials" to Turkey.

The EU's foreign affairs committee will meet in Luxembourg tomorrow to decide a co-ordinated, "Europe-wide" approach, the French ministries said.

Finland, Norway and The Netherlands have already announced that they are stopping arms exports to the country. Since the failed coup against Erdogan in July 2016, the UK has approved £723m of arms exports to Turkey, according to the Campaign Against Arms Trade.

Erdogan has justified the attacks as an attempt to remove a terrorist threat posed by elements of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, which led the fight against Isis with the help of military personnel from the US, during which operations it lost 11,000 fighters. The attacks began after Donald Trump pulled US forces out of the area last week.

Earlier, Dominic Raab, the foreign secretary, faced criticism from a Turkish representative at the Nato Parliamentary Assembly in London on Saturday, after he said Turkey should show "maximum restraint".

The Turkish member told him that Turkey's operation was "not an invasion" but a "counter-terror operation" but Raab replied: "I just don't agree. The risk is with the counter-terrorism operation you describe, taking on the SDF (Syrian

Democratic Forces) and the broader objectives, is that it is weakening the overarching counter-terrorism goal of countering Daesh."

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ARAB NEWS
The Voice of a Changing Region

12 octobre 2019
Paul Iddon

Why Erdogan wants to remake northeast Syria's demographics

ERBIL, Iraqi Kurdistan: Turkey's incursion into northeast Syria has given rise to fears that its military will commit another major atrocity against the war-torn country's Kurdish minority.

The UN has warned that 1.7 million people in northeast Syria are at risk as a result of Operation Peace Spring, and that up to 300,000 could soon be displaced, which would create a new humanitarian crisis.

Turkey has targeted urban centers with airstrikes and shelling, sending civilians fleeing en masse from their homes.

Ankara has said its military operation is justified since the Syrian-Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) group has links to the Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which Ankara has been fighting since 1984 in a conflict that has killed more than 40,000 people. The US and the EU have also designated the PKK as a terrorist organization.

But the YPG has not sent its forces to help the PKK in its operations in either southeast Turkey



Arab and Kurdish civilians flee the town of Tal Tamr amid Turkey's military assault on Kurdish-controlled areas in northeastern Syria, which has attracted widespread international condemnation. (AFP)

or Iraqi Kurdistan, instead focusing its efforts on the war against Daesh in Syria.

HIGHLIGHTS

64,000 - People displaced in NE Syria
300,000 - People likely to be displaced
40,000 - Number of SDF fighters
\$300 million - Fall in US humanitarian aid to

Syria from 2017 to 2019
3.6 million - Syrian refugees in Turkey

After the US military partnered with the YPG, which later formed the larger, multi-ethnic Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), against Daesh in 2014, Ankara said Washington was making a mistake by using "one terror group to eliminate another."

Nevertheless, the SDF proved the only capable and reliable ally the US had on the ground in its campaign against Daesh in Syria.

Today, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has not concealed his goal for the future of northeast Syria.

Besides insisting that the YPG must be completely neutralized, he has outlined his goal of resettling millions of Syrian refugees currently residing in Turkey in Syria's Kurdish-majority areas.

“We intend to establish initially a peace corridor with a depth of 30 km and a length of 480 km, and enable the settlement of 2 million Syrians there with the support of the international community,” Erdogan told the UN General Assembly on Sept. 24.

He intends to do this through a \$27 billion project to build new cities and towns in Syrian Kurdistan that will be repopulated with Syrian refugees currently residing in Turkey.

Ossama Muhammad, a Syrian-Kurdish interpreter and translator, lamented the situation in a Facebook post, writing: “Now families of those who were killed to defend the world, will keep behind alone to wait for new genocide and demographic change, the Kurds will never trust the humanity or the world or human rights again.”

Muhammad was referring to the immense sacrifices made by Kurds to stop Daesh in Syria.

Erdogan has also threatened to send millions of Syrian refugees to Europe if it opposes the settlement project or criticizes the military operation.

This would not be Turkey’s first assault on the Syrian Kurds. In early 2018, it entered the northwestern enclave of Afrin with the help of the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

At the time, Erdogan openly spoke of returning Afrin to its “rightful owners.” By this, he meant resettling non-Kurds in a Kurdish-majority region.

Before Turkey’s invasion, Afrin stood out as an oasis of stability that had welcomed displaced

Syrians regardless of ethnicity from across the war-weary country.

After the invasion, which displaced well over 100,000 Kurdish civilians, the FSA rapidly sought to resettle displaced Syrians in the enclave, encouraging them to occupy vacated Kurdish homes, and even giving them Turkish-issued residency permits, in a clear bid to cement the demographic changes caused by the invasion.

Many groups within the FSA have destroyed symbols of Afrin’s Kurdish and Yazidi cultural heritage. The FSA has also committed human rights violations against Afrin’s civilian population.

Amnesty International said these violations included “arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, and confiscation of property and looting to which Turkey’s armed forces have turned a blind eye.”

The YPG has also been accused of human rights violations in northeast Syria. In August 2018, Human Rights Watch (HRW) criticized the group for recruiting children into its ranks from displaced-persons camps. The SDF promptly issued a decree to end this practice, which was welcomed by HRW.

The Syrian Democratic Forces proved the only reliable ally the US had in the fight against Daesh in Syria. (Shutterstock)

In 2015, Amnesty International reported that the YPG destroyed entire villages that it had captured from Daesh.

The report said there was no justification or military grounds for destroying these Arab villages.

Amnesty suspected that the YPG was motivated by a desire to collectively punish civilians from villages previously occupied by Daesh, or to settle land disputes with Arabs going back decades.

Kurds fear that Turkey will carry out a large-scale campaign of ethnic cleansing in its current operation.

They feel betrayed by US President Donald Trump for countenancing the Turkish invasion, because the SDF was the predominant ground force in Syria that destroyed Daesh’s “caliphate.” The SDF says it sacrificed approximately 11,000 men and women in that fight.

Mohammed Salih, a Kurdish journalist and doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania’s Annenberg School for Communication, sees the latest Turkish foray into Syria as Erdogan’s “final solution of the Kurds.”

Salih told Arab News: “Erdogan and his Syrian jihadi proxies are planning and interested in nothing less than ethnic cleansing of not only the Kurdish people in northeast Syria, but based on what we’ve seen in Afrin, of Christian and Yazidi populations there as well.”

He said: “This isn’t a matter of conjecture and speculation. The ongoing example of Afrin supports these fears without a shred of doubt.

“Turkish government officials have unequivocally made clear that they plan to resettle ... non-Kurdish Syrian refugees in the narrow strip of land populated by the Kurds.

“The world needs to act and stop Erdogan’s genocidal designs.”

The New York Times 13 October, 2019
By Eric Schmitt & Helene Cooper

Pullback Leaves Green Berets Feeling ‘Ashamed,’ and Kurdish Allies Describing ‘Betrayal’

WASHINGTON — American commandos were working alongside Kurdish forces at an outpost in eastern Syria last year when they were attacked by columns of Syrian government tanks and hundreds of troops, including Russian mercenaries. In the next hours, the Americans threw the Pentagon’s arsenal at them, including B-52 strategic bombers. The attack was stopped.

That operation, in the middle of the American-led campaign against the Islamic State in Syria, showed the extent to which the United States military was willing to protect the Syrian Kurds, its main ally on the ground.

But now, with the White House revoking protection for these Kurdish fighters, some of the Special Forces officers who battled alongside the Kurds say they feel deep remorse at orders to abandon their allies.

[Follow our live updates: Assad’s army moves into a strategic border town.]

“They trusted us and we broke that trust,” one Army officer who has worked alongside the Kurds in northern Syria said last week in a telephone interview. “It’s a stain on the American conscience.”

“I’m ashamed,” said another officer who had also served in northern Syria. Both officers spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid reprisals from their chains of command.

And the response from the Kurds themselves was just as stark. “The worst thing in military logic and comrades in the trench is betrayal,” said Shervan Darwish, an official allied with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

The next flurry of orders from Washington, as some troops had feared, will pull American troops out of northern Syria altogether. Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper said on Sunday that Pre-

sident Trump had ordered the roughly 1,000 American troops in the country's northeast to conduct a "deliberate withdrawal" out of the country in the coming days and weeks.

The defense secretary's statement came after comments on Friday pushing back on complaints that the United States was betraying allies in Syria — "We have not abandoned the Kurds" — even as he acknowledged that his Turkish counterpart had ignored his plea to stop the offensive.

Army Special Forces soldiers — mostly members of the Third Special Forces Group — moved last week to consolidate their positions in the confines of their outposts miles away from the Syrian border, a quiet withdrawal that all but confirmed the United States' capitulation to the Turkish military's offensive to clear Kurdish-held areas of northern Syria.

[Follow our live briefing as the Syrian Army raced northwest to help battle Turkish-led forces.]

But as the Americans pulled back, the Kurds moved north to try to reinforce their comrades fighting the offensive. The American soldiers could only watch from their sandbag-lined walls. Orders from Washington were simple: Hands off. Let the Kurds fight for themselves.

The orders contradicted the American military's strategy in Syria over the past four years, especially when it came to the Kurdish fighters, known as the Y.P.G., who were integral to routing the Islamic State from northeastern Syria. The Kurds had fought in Manbij, Raqqa and deep into the Euphrates River Valley, hunting the last Islamic State fighters in the group's now-defunct physical caliphate. But the Syrian Democratic Forces, or S.D.F., as the Kurdish and their allied Arab fighters on the ground are called, are being left behind.

American Special Forces and other troops had built close ties with their Kurdish allies, living on the same dusty compounds, sharing meals and common dangers. They fought side by side, and helped evacuate Kurdish dead and wounded from the battlefield.

"When they mourn, we mourn with them," Gen. Joseph L. Votel, a former head of the military's Central Command, said on Thursday at the Middle East Institute.

The Kurdish forces and American military have survived previous strains, including Mr. Trump's sudden decision in December to withdraw all American troops from northern Syria, a decision that was later walked back somewhat.

This time may be different, and irreversible. "It would seem at this particular point, we've made it very, very hard for them to have a partnership relationship with us because of this recent policy decision," General Votel said.

As part of security measures the United States brokered to tamp down tensions with Turkish troops, Kurdish forces agreed to pull back from the border, destroy fortifications and return some heavy weapons — steps meant to show that they posed no threat to Turkish territory, but that later made them more vulnerable when Turkey launched its offensive.



Kurdish troops in the Syrian town of Manbij, near the border with Turkey, at a front-line position last year. Credit: CreditLvor Prickett for The New York Times

Special Forces officers described another recent operation with Kurds that underscored the tenacity of the group. The Americans and the Kurdish troops were searching for a low-level Islamic State leader in northern Syria. It was a difficult mission and unlikely they would find the commander.

From his operations center, one American officer watched the Kurds work alongside the Americans on the ground in an almost indistinguishable symmetry. They captured the Islamic State fighter.

"The S.D.F.'s elite counterterrorism units are hardened veterans of the war against ISIS whom the U.S. has seen in action and trust completely," said Nicholas A. Heras, a fellow at the Center for a New American Security, who visited the S.D.F. in July to advise them on the Islamic State, or ISIS.

During the battle against ISIS, coordination between the United States military and the Syrian Democratic Forces has extended from the highest levels to rank-and-file fighters, according to multiple interviews with S.D.F. fighters and commanders in Syria over the course of the campaign.

S.D.F. commanders worked side by side with American military officers in a joint command center in a defunct cement factory near the northern Syrian town of Kobani, where they discussed strategy and planned future operations.

The battle of Kobani that began in 2014 gave birth to the United States' ties to the Kurds in northeastern Syria. ISIS fighters, armed with heavy American-made artillery captured from retreating Iraqi army units, surrounded Kobani, a Kurdish city, and entered parts of it.

Despite the Obama administration's initial reluctance to offer help, the United States carried out airstrikes against advancing ISIS militants, and

its military aircraft dropped ammunition, small arms and medical supplies to replenish the Kurdish combatants.

That aid helped turn the tide, the Kurds defeated ISIS, and American commanders realized they had discovered a valuable ally in the fight against the terrorist group.

[Sign up for the weekly At War newsletter to receive more stories about the American withdrawal from Syria.]

Thousands of S.D.F. fighters received training from the United States in battlefield tactics, reconnaissance and first aid. Reconnaissance teams learned to identify Islamic State locations and transmit them to the command center for the American-led military coalition to plan airstrikes.

Visitors to front-line S.D.F. positions often saw Syrian officers with iPads and laptops they used to communicate information to their American colleagues.

"For the last two years, the coordination was pretty deep," said Mutlu Civiroglu, a Washington-based Kurdish affairs analyst who has spent time in northeastern Syria. "The mutual trust was very high, the mutual confidence, because this collaboration brought enormous results."

"They completed each other," he said of the S.D.F. and United States-led coalition. "The coalition didn't have boots on the ground and fighters didn't have air support, so they needed each other."

That coordination was critical in many of the big battles against the Islamic State.

To open the battle in one town, S.D.F. fighters were deposited by coalition aircraft behind the Islamic State's lines. At the start of another bat-

tle, United States Special Operations forces helped the S.D.F. plot and execute an attack across the Euphrates River.

Even after the Islamic State had lost most of its territory, the United States trained counterterrorism units to do tactical raids on ISIS hide-outs and provided them with intelligence needed to plan them.

Even in territory far from the front lines with the Islamic State, S.D.F. vehicles often drove before and after American convoys through Syrian towns and S.D.F. fighters provided perimeter security at facilities where United States personnel were based.

The torturous part of America's on-again, off-again alliance with the Kurds — one in which the United States has routinely armed the Kurds to fight various regimes it viewed as adversaries — emerged in 1974, as the Kurds were rebelling against Iraq. Iran and the United States were al-

lies, and the shah of Iran and Henry A. Kissinger encouraged the Kurdish rebellion against the Iraqi government. C.I.A. agents were sent to the Iraq-Iran border to help the Kurds.

The Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani did not trust the shah of Iran but believed Kissinger when he said that the Kurds would receive help from the Americans.

But a year later, the shah of Iran made a deal with Saddam Hussein on the sidelines of an OPEC meeting: In return for some territorial adjustments along the Iran-Iraq border, the shah agreed to stop support for the Kurds.

Kissinger signed off on the plan, the Iraqi military slaughtered thousands of Kurds and the United States stood by. When questioned, Kissinger delivered his now famous explanation: "Covert action," he said, "should not be confused with missionary work."

In the fight against ISIS in Syria, Kurdish fighters followed their hard-fought triumph in Kobani by liberating other Kurdish towns. Then the Americans asked their newfound Kurdish allies to go into Arab areas, team up with local militias and reclaim those areas from the Islamic State.

The American military implored the S.D.F. to fight in the Arab areas, and so they advanced, seizing Raqqa and Deir al-Zour, winning but suffering large numbers of casualties.

The American-Kurdish military alliance against the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq "began with us helping them," said Peter W. Galbraith, the former American diplomat who has for years also been a senior adviser to the Kurds in both Syria and Iraq. "But by the end, it was them helping us. They are the ones who recovered the territory that ISIS had taken."



13 October, 2019
Bu Fazel Hawramy

Kurdish WWII veterans : Trump wasn't born when we fought the Nazis

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region – Ahmad Mustafa Delzar may be frail nowadays, but his mind is sharper than ever as he approaches his 100th birthday. On Wednesday, when US President Donald Trump justified his Syria withdrawal by claiming the Kurds never helped the US in the Second World War, Delzar, a veteran of that very war, was outraged.

"Trump was not born then – that is why he does not know that the Kurds participated in the war," Delzar told Rudaw's Hiwa Jamal on Saturday.

Trump was accused of abandoning the Kurds of northern Syria, a critical ally in the war against the Islamic State (ISIS), when he greenlighted the ongoing Turkish offensive.

In an attempt to justify his withdrawal of US troops, seen as the guarantors against a Turkish invasion, Trump said: "They didn't help us in the Second World War. They didn't help us with Normandy."

Trump's comments raised doubts about the reliability of the United States as a partner in the region, with many Kurdish politicians rethinking their long-held faith in the superpower as their protector.

Delzar, who was born in 1920 and is a well-known Kurdish poet, became a member of the Iraq Levies,



Ahmad Mustafa Delzar, a Kurdish veteran of the Iraq Levies, holds a photograph of himself in uniform as he speaks to Rudaw from his bed in Erbil, October 12, 2019. Photo: Fazel Hawramy / Rudaw

a minority scout force established by the British during the First World War to control Iraq, in 1943.

"The levies were mainly Assyrians and Kurds and a smaller number of Arabs," Delzar told Rudaw. "I was the 8,000th Kurd who joined the levies during the Second World War. I joined the levies on February 28, 1943."

Delzar went through intense training at Habbaniyah airbase in western Baghdad and then transferred to Palestine via Syria in December 1944. Delzar and a number of other Kurdish levies stayed on in Haifa in Palestine until the war ended.

"There were around 40 Kurds who participated on

the northern Italy front and one of them was Karim Abdulwahid Haji Aziz," Delzar recalled. "Karim was a paratrooper and I remember he parachuted twice in Habbaniyah."

The veteran, who spoke to Rudaw from his bed in Erbil, still wears a Kurdish hat known as klaw, with the word Kurdistan embroidered on it.

He's not alone in speaking out against Trump's false claims. Several families have come forward with photographs of their fathers and grandfathers proving they were on America's side in World War Two.

"I heard Trump saying that the Kurds did not take part in the war. He is lying," 69-year-old Mam Fareq Sadeq Ahmad, originally from Kirkuk, told Rudaw, showing a photo of a young, clean-shaven man in green uniform.

Sadeq Ahmad, father of Mam Fareq. Photo: submitted / Rudaw

"My father was a machine-gunner and used to talk about his adventures in Cyprus, Greece," Mam Fareq said of his father, who died at the age of 85.

"He was in Cyprus for four years and spoke very

good English," Ramziya Mustafa told Rudaw of her late husband Karim Mustafa Sinjawi, another member of the levies who fought the Nazis in Cyprus alongside the Royal Air Forces (RAF).

"When he was recruited, he was too young [15] so he had to place a stone under his feet to look taller

to the British recruiting officer."

A photo of Karim Mustafa, taken in 1946, still takes pride of place at her home in Erbil, with his distinct curly hair parted down the middle, clean shaven cheeks and well-trimmed moustache.

Pressure is mounting on the US president to halt

the Turkish attack on the Kurdish areas, known as Rojava, in northern Syria.

"The president of the United States is not stable, he changes his mind very quickly," Delzar told Rudaw. "He said if Turkey attacks Syria, we would destroy its economy but he did nothing."



14 October, 2019

Turkey's Syria offensive explained in four maps

Turkey's military launched a cross-border operation against Kurdish-led forces in Syria in early October, after US troops who had been allied to the Kurds withdrew.

After four days of fighting, the Kurds agreed a deal with the Syrian government for the Syrian army to be deployed on the border to help repel the Turkish assault.

These maps help explain the offensive and what is happening on the ground.

Who are the Kurds?

Between 25 and 35 million ethnic Kurds inhabit a mountainous region straddling Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran and Armenia. But they have never had a widely-recognised permanent nation state of their own.

Kurds make up between 7% and 10% of Syria's population. For decades, they were suppressed and denied basic rights by President Bashar al-Assad and, before him, his father Hafez.

Before the uprising against Mr Assad began in 2011 most Kurds lived in the cities of Damascus and Aleppo, and in three northern areas near the Turkish border - Afrin in the west, Kobane (Ain al-Arab) in the centre, and Qamishli in the east.

When the uprising evolved into a civil war, the main Kurdish parties avoided taking sides. In 2012, government forces withdrew from Kurdish areas to concentrate on fighting rebel factions elsewhere, and Kurdish militias took control in their wake.

Image copyright Reuters Image caption The People's Protection Units (YPG) is the biggest militia in north-east Syria

In late 2014, the jihadist group Islamic State (IS) launched an assault on Kobane. The battle sparked alarm across the world and a US-led multinational coalition against IS intervened by carrying out air strikes. After the militants retreated, the Kurds became the coalition's most critical partner on the ground in Syria.

The biggest Kurdish militia, the People's Protection Units (YPG), formed an alliance with local Arab militias called the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in 2015. With the help of coalition airpower, weaponry and advisers, SDF fighters drove IS out of a quarter of Syria and captured its last pocket of territory in the country in March 2019. They also set up an "autonomous administration" to govern the region.

Why did Turkey launch an offensive?

Turkey had long threatened to launch an operation in SDF-held territory to create a 32km (20-mile) deep "safe zone" running for 480km (300 miles) along the Syrian side of the border.

It wants to push back members of the YPG, which it views as an extension of a Kurdish rebel group that has been fighting in Turkey for decades and is designated a terrorist organisation - the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Turkey also hopes to resettle, in the zone, up to two million of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees it is hosting.

In an attempt to avert an offensive, the US and Turkish militaries agreed in August to set up a "security mechanism" on the Syrian side of border - an area that would be free of YPG fighters, but pointedly avoided using the term "safe zone". US and Turkish troops carried out joint patrols in the area and the YPG co-operated, withdrawing fighters and heavy weapons and dismantling fortifications.

But on 6 October, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told US President Donald Trump that a cross-border operation would "soon be moving forward", according to the White House. Mr Trump responded by saying US troops based in the area would not support or be involved in the operation, it said.

Image copyright AFP Image caption President Donald Trump has ordered US troops to withdraw from northern Syria



Source: Conflict Monitor by IHS Markit, Reach, 16 October 2019



Three days later, Mr Erdogan announced the start of "Operation Peace Spring" by the Turkish military and allied Syrian rebel factions. He said they aimed "to prevent the creation of a terror corridor across our southern border, and to bring peace to the area".

The SDF said it was determined to defend its territory "at all costs", but Turkish-led forces were able to steadily push their way into a sparsely populated, mostly Arab area between the towns of Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ain in the first five days of the assault. Turkish air and artillery strikes affected a much larger area, including predominantly Kurdish towns and villages to the west and east.

Amid growing chaos, US officials said on 13 October that Mr Trump had decided to begin withdraw all its troops from northern Syria.

Hours later, the SDF said an agreement had been reached with the Syrian government - which considers the US an enemy - for the Syrian army "to enter and deploy along the length of the Syrian-Turkish border" and repel the Turkish assault.

What has been the humanitarian impact?

The area falling within Turkey's "safe zone" is fertile plain that once served as Syria's breadbasket. It is dotted with dozens of villages and towns, unlike the barren, desert regions to the south.

When the Turkish offensive began, the UN said

the potentially affected area included SDF-controlled territory that was home to 2.2 million people, including 1.3 million in need of humanitarian assistance, and two government-controlled cities where 450,000 people live - Qamishli and Hassakeh.

By 13 October, air strikes, shelling and fighting on the ground had reportedly killed dozens of civilians and forced more than 150,000 others to flee their homes.

The UN said most of the displaced were from the towns of Ras al-Ain and Tal Abyad, which were the initial targets of the Turkish assault.

Some 5,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) living at the Mabruka camp, west of Ras al-Ain, had to be evacuated towards Hassakeh city after the surrounding area came under artillery fire on 10 October.

Could detained IS fighters and their families escape?

The UN also expressed grave concern for the population of the two IDP camps at Ain Issa, south of Tal Abyad.

The area around the camps was hit by shells on 13 October as Turkish forces advanced, prompting some of the 13,000 residents to flee, it said. SDF officials reported that dozens of women and children being held at the camps because of suspected links to IS, including British nationals, were among those who fled.

Meanwhile, there were reports of unrest at al-Hol camp, which is about 60km from the Turkish border and so would not be in Turkey's proposed "safe zone".

Some 68,000 people linked to IS are being detained at al-Hol. More than 94% of them are women and children, and 11,000 are foreign nationals.

The SDF says it is also holding more than 12,000 men suspected of being IS members in seven prisons. At least 4,000 of the prisoners are foreign nationals.

Image copyright Reuters Image caption Some 70,000 people suspected of links to the Islamic State group are detained at al-Hol camp

Some of the prisons are in areas close to the Turkish border, including Ain Issa, Qamishli and Derik.

On 11 October, the SDF said five IS militants had escaped from a prison in Qamishli after Turkish shelling nearby and that a car bomb had exploded next to the wall of a prison in Hassakeh, causing damage.

Mr Trump told Mr Erdogan before the offensive that Turkish troops would be responsible for securing detained IS fighters in areas they captured. The SDF has said its fighters will continue to guard the prisons and camps, but there is a concern they could be called away to other areas or be forced to flee if attacked.

CyprusMail

14 October, 2019
By Staff Reporter

Demonstration to support Kurds to be held at Ledra Palace

A demonstration in support of the Kurdish people will be held at Ledra Palace checkpoint on Tuesday at 7pm, the Kurdish cultural centre 'Theofilos' said in an announcement on Monday.

The Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the Kurdish Cultural Centre will take part in the demonstration being held to protest Turkey's invasion of northern Syria.

"Turkey is invading Syria's territory, which was freed by the Syrian Democratic Forces," the cultural centre said in their announcement.

They added there were harsh crimes enacted against unarmed people, which the Syrian Democratic Forces reacted to, in order to protect Syria's sovereignty.

"However, Turkey is continuing its attack," the centre said.



Kurds protesting last month (Christos Theodorides)

Esquire 14 October, 2019
By Charles P. Pierce

We Have All Betrayed the Kurds—Every American, Not Just the President*

I stopped by Joy Reid's show on Saturday and, in the course of our discussion, Malcolm Nance made a very important point. The betrayal of the Kurds doesn't just fall on El Caudillo del Mar-a-Lago, and it doesn't just fall on the people who carry out his whims. (To call them "orders" is to dignify them beyond all reason.) It doesn't just fall on his idiot enablers in Congress. It falls on this country. Period. It falls on you and me and every American citizen, in or out of uniform. It falls on every president, every administration, and every American government for the foreseeable future. And so, because we are a self-governing republic, we will have to carry our president*'s treachery and ignorance for the foreseeable future, too.

How deeply we should be involved in the apparently endless violence in that part of the world is a discussion for serious people. Certainly, it's time for a profound re-examination of what in the hell we're still doing in Afghanistan. But that's not what we're seeing here. We are seeing betrayals and atrocities that are occurring at the whim of a know-nothing president*, and on the



AAREF WATAD/Getty Images

authority of a Turkish autocrat with whom the president* has business ties. It's also true that selling out the Kurds has been something of a tradition with American presidents—Poppy Bush, most notably. Why they ever trusted us again after that debacle I'll never know. But now I'm fairly sure they'll never trust us again.

NATO is, for the moment, a dead letter. Prior to allowing a member of NATO to initiate a blood-

bath among the people who fought ISIS to a standstill on our behalf, the president* tried to blackmail another fragile NATO ally into helping him ratfck the 2020 election. All three of the Baltic republics also are member states. In 2007, Estonia was the victim of a massive cyberattack from sources with Russian IP addresses. How secure do you think that country feels about relying on NATO these days? How does Latvia feel about it, and Lithuania? You think they might be looking over their shoulders to the east right now? That's on all of us, too.

Nothing Congress cobbles together with regard to sanctions will help now—first, because the slaughter is too far advanced to reel back and, second, because the president* won't sign off on anything that costs him a lira in Istanbul. Anything they pass will be a Band-Aid on a decapitation. And all of our fingerprints are on the ax.

The REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE 14 October, 2019
By Andie Fontaine

Iceland Condemns Turkish Incursions On Kurds, Will Still Visit Turkey For Football Match

While the Icelandic government has issued a strongly-worded written statement condemning the Turkish invasion of northern Syria, the Icelandic national men's team will still be visiting Turkey to play a football match against that country's national men's team next month.

"Iceland strongly criticises the Turkish military offensive against Kurds in Northern Syria," the statement begins. "This position has been formally communicated to the Turkish authorities. As this military offensive is not in accordance with international law, Iceland calls on Turkey to immediately cease its operations and respect international law. Iceland further condemns military operations that, as reported, targets civilians and inflicts casualties."

While Minister of Foreign Affairs Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson (seen above) has also condemned the attacks on Twitter, not every Minister in the government is willing to back those words with actions.

Writer and journalist Illugi Jökulsson has pointed out that not only is Iceland's national men's football team slated to play against and in Turkey; the Turkish national men's football team displayed great praise for the Turkish military incursion only days ago. As such, Illugi has suggested that Iceland boycott the match—a sentiment shared by many, judging by the comments.

However, Minister of Culture Lilja Alfreðsdóttir is of the opinion that a boycott would not be a

good idea, on the grounds that "we should not mix sports and politics", Vísir reports, despite the Turkish national men's team already making the matter political.

"I am of the opinion that sports can instead bring people together, and disputes can be resolved through arts, sports, and related matters," she told reporters. "I have never liked it when sports and politics are mixed together."

US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw US forces from northern Syria has also provoked strong criticism from Iceland's Kurdish community, just as it is also carving stronger divisions with the US Senate.

Turkish forces press ahead despite Kurdish-Syria deal

Turkish-backed Syrian rebels will press ahead with a plan to take a key town in northern Syria, Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed on Monday, in a sign that a deal between Kurdish forces and Damascus may fail to halt the Turkish assault in the region.

The Turkish president said Ankara was in discussions with Moscow, the most important foreign backer of Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, about the fate of the strategic Arab-majority town of Manbij. It needed to be “emptied” of the Kurdish “terrorist organisations” that control it, he said, adding: “The true owners, our Arab brothers . . . they will enter there.”

Mr Erdogan’s remarks came amid reports of Syrian forces mobilising close to Manbij as they headed north to the border frontline, underscoring the uncertain and fast-changing lines of control in northeast Syria after the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced on Sunday that they had reached a military agreement with the Assad regime under Russian sponsorship.

Kamal Akif, spokesman for the SDF foreign affairs department, confirmed that under the memorandum of understanding, the Syrian army and SDF “will be in any border region under threat, Russia will oversee the movements of the Syrian army, wherever they are needed”.

“Our priority now is to stop the Turkish attacks,” he added, referring to a Turkish assault that began last week. The operation, which Ankara says is aimed at establishing a 32km “safe zone” in a stretch of Syrian territory that adjoins the border with Turkey, triggered an international outcry and warnings that it could lead to a resurgence of Islamic State (Isis).

Ankara, which has faced mounting warnings of US sanctions over its incursion into Syria, argues that it is targeting Kurdish terrorist groups linked to a militia that has fought a 35-year insurgency inside Turkey. But scores of civilians have reportedly been killed in the assault, which has forced an estimated 200,000 people to flee.

‘Every inch’

Syrian regime forces moved quickly after striking the initial deal with Kurdish leaders, which appears to bring Mr Assad much closer to his aim of retaking “every inch” of the country as he strives to quash a crushing civil war now in its ninth year.

Syrian army units have entered at least three cities across the northeast, including Ain Issa where the SDF is headquartered, Syrian state media reported.

While analysts say Turkey would be keen to avoid direct clashes with the Syrian army, which is backed by Russia and Iran, they say Ankara is likely to want to consolidate its gains and push on in the Arab-majority areas that have been the main focus of its campaign.

Clashes continued on Monday in and around the towns of Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ayn, where the first week of the Turkish ground offensive has been concentrated, according to the London-based monitoring group the Syrian Observatory for Human rights.

US troops, who guided and bolstered the SDF as they spearheaded the fight against Isis jihadis, have previously been stationed in Manbij, a frequently contested border city. It was unclear if they remained in the town after the Trump administration announced on Sunday that it would evacuate all 1,000 remaining American forces in Syria’s north.

Mark Esper, the US defence secretary, said that the Turkish invasion had dug deeper into northeast Syria than expected, putting American soldiers at risk.

Manbij, to the west of the Euphrates river, has long held symbolic significance for Mr Erdogan, who insists it “belongs to the Arabs”. The town has been under the control of Kurdish forces since 2016, when they pushed out the Isis jihadis who had seized it in 2014.

Haid Haid, a consulting research fellow at the Chatham House think tank, said it was important to Turkey to push the militia “back across the river” to consolidate and extend

its influence in Syria’s northwest. “The only area they [Kurdish forces] control beyond that line is Manbij, that’s why it’s become the central fixation, he said.

‘First come, first served’

Murat Yesiltas, director of security studies at the Ankara-based think tank Seta – which has close links to the Turkish government – said Turkey would be eager to see its proxies gain a foothold in Manbij before the Syrian army arrived in the region. “It’s first come, first served,” he said.

Mr Erdogan said on Monday that there were “a lot of rumours” about the agreement between Kurdish groups and Damascus, which came just four days after the launch of the Turkish assault.

He said Turkey was having “positive” discussions with Russia about the future of Kobani, a Kurdish-majority border town that is highly symbolic to Syria’s Kurdish population. “On Manbij we are at the stage of implementing our decision,” he added.

Discussions between Russian and Turkish political and military officials were “ongoing”, Russian president Vladimir Putin’s spokesman said on Monday. He declined to comment on the content of any conversations.

Yet Moscow, which helped broker the deal to move Syrian troops into the Kurdish-held areas, has steadily sharpened its rhetoric against the Turkish operation.

“By trying to solve its problem by military means, Turkey creates a new one and exacerbates the old ones,” Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the foreign affairs committee in Russia’s upper house of parliament, said on Monday.

“Whatever the motives of the Turks, it is a clear fact that they invaded a neighbouring country, and this does not contribute to the solution of our common task: countering terrorism.” – Copyright The Financial Times Limited 2019

Los Angeles Times 14 October, 2019
By Jonah Goldberg

Opinion: In his unconscionable betrayal of the Kurds, Trump was winging it — again

In one sense, the Syria debacle is a singular moment in the Trump presidency, and arguably in American history. I can't think of another momentous decision by a commander-in-chief that was instantly recognizable as a disaster for which the president was entirely to blame.

Even if you think the Iraq war was a catastrophic blunder, it wasn't immediately and universally recognizable as such. And President Bush could point to support from both parties in Congress, his advisors, the intelligence community and even his predecessor. The Bay of Pigs was backed by the Pentagon and CIA. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed Congress, unanimously in the House and 88-2 in the Senate.

But here the cheese stands alone.

And yet, in another sense, this all feels so familiar. How many times has Trump made a glandular, impulsive decision without heed to the facts, consequences or advice of his own hand-picked advisors? Then, when criticism mounts, he and his defenders grab a sloppy paint pot of ideological buzzwords and campaign slogans in an attempt to camouflage the move as part of some grand theoretical framework or electoral mandate.

Trump and the handful of surrogates willing to defend this grotesquerie are quite comfortable arguing about "endless wars" and "Trump's mandate" as an abstract matter. I think they're wrong in nearly every particular. But even engaging in debate on those terms is a gift to the president.

Talk of "realism," "America First" and "endless war" is a rhetorical safe harbor that works well on Twitter and cable news because it gives the impression that this is a serious conflict of philosophical perspectives. It overlooks the fact that even if you agree with all of that stuff, the fact remains this was a scandalously incompetent and reckless action. Fighting about the "policy" lets Trump off the hook for the bungled implementation. It's like Democrats defending



President Trump with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2015. (Tatyana Zenkovich / AP)

the botched Bay of Pigs operation by invoking the Monroe Doctrine.

Trump may indeed have campaigned on getting out of Syria, he didn't campaign on potentially freeing thousands of Islamic State fighters, greenlighting ethnic cleansing or empowering Syrian President Bashar Assad and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

A serious policy of disengagement from the Middle East would require working with our allies in the region and elsewhere. It would involve intense planning by the Pentagon and State Department. And, most importantly, it would necessitate very tough negotiations with the Turks to minimize our betrayal of a people who lost some 11,000 troops fighting at our side.

Trump went a different way. According to reporting by Jennifer Griffin of Fox News – not normally a target of Trump's "fake news" broadsides – Trump "went off script from what his national [security] team gave him as talking points for his phone conversation with the Turkish president."

In an instant, Trump blew up months of negotiations with Turkey to establish a Kurdish safe zone that would satisfy both Turkey's concerns and make sure that Islamic State wasn't given a lifeline.

Whether Trump was trying to ingratiate himself

with Erdogan — he does like strongmen — or whether he was intimidated by the Turkish despot remains unknown. Either way, in a phone call last week he in effect encouraged Erdogan to go for it. Within days, the Turks rolled across the border. Arab militias began the initial stages of what could turn into ethnic cleansing. When the Kurds begged for air cover, Trump ordered our planes to stay on the tarmac. Already, there are videos — authenticated by U.S. officials — of roadside executions of Kurds. The Turks have even rained artillery around an American outpost, requiring a full U.S. retreat from northern Syria and forcing Kurdish forces to ally themselves with the Syrian government.

After the call, Trump claimed that Erdogan promised to take responsibility for guarding Islamic State prisoners. The Turkish government quickly announced there was no such commitment. The Turks might be lying, though Trump's silence suggests they aren't. Either way, they put one over on the self-proclaimed world's greatest negotiator.

The cycle wouldn't be complete without Trump doing his best to humiliate his defenders desperately trying to squeeze square facts into the round holes of some theory. The same week he said we must disengage from the Middle East and its conflicts, he sent thousands more American troops to Saudi Arabia. He said he opposed Turkey's incursion, but instructed his United Nations ambassador to vote with Russia to block condemnation of it. He'd said the Turks were making a mistake, but tweeted, "Let them fight." And now, he's approving sanctions on Turkey for the "destabilizing actions in northeast Syria" he greenlit. He might as well put the sanctions on himself.

These events aren't the result of a serious policy of American withdrawal from "endless wars," they're the inevitable and familiar by-product of a president simply winging it.

Syrie: la France va protéger ses forces spéciales engagées aux côtés des Kurdes

L'Élysée a annoncé vouloir prendre des mesures pour protéger les centaines de membres des forces spéciales françaises qui opèrent dans la région en collaboration étroite avec les milices kurdes, lesquels sont la cible de l'offensive lancée mercredi dernier par la Turquie. Des travailleurs humanitaires français sont aussi présents dans la zone. Par ailleurs, la présidence française s'inquiète des multiples risques liés aux évasions de djihadistes français.

La France va prendre "dans les prochaines heures" des mesures pour garantir la sécurité des personnels français militaires et civils présents dans le nord-est de la Syrie, où l'armée turque a intensifié son offensive, a déclaré l'Élysée à l'issue d'un conseil restreint de défense organisé dimanche soir.

Cette annonce survient quelques heures après que les États-Unis, dont la France est l'un des principaux alliés dans la lutte contre le groupe Etat islamique (EI) en Syrie et Irak, ont annoncé le retrait de 1.000 soldats supplémentaires du nord-est syrien.

Les risques pour les forces spéciales françaises engagées aux côtés des Kurdes

Plusieurs centaines de membres des forces spéciales françaises opèrent dans la région en collaboration étroite avec les milices kurdes, qui sont la cible de l'offensive lancée mercredi dernier par la Turquie. Des travailleurs humanitaires français sont aussi présents dans la zone.



Les forces françaises sont engagées aux côtés des Kurdes depuis plusieurs années dans la lutte contre l'État islamique. (Photo d'illustration: soldats français au Kurdistan, lors de la visite de François Hollande à un avant-poste à la périphérie de Mossoul contrôlée par l'État islamique, le 2 janvier 2017) (Crédits : Reuters)

La France condamne "dans les termes les plus fermes" l'offensive turque et va accentuer ses efforts diplomatiques pour en obtenir la cessation, a déclaré l'Élysée.

Ankara veut créer une "zone de sécurité" dans la région frontalière turco-syrienne pour en écarter les miliciens kurdes et y transférer plusieurs millions de Syriens réfugiés sur son territoire.

Des représentants français avaient indiqué que le retrait des troupes américaines du nord-est de la Syrie contraindrait les forces françaises à quitter eux aussi la zone, du fait de l'importance du soutien logistique américain.

Une source diplomatique régionale avait déclaré jeudi à Reuters que la France se préparait à reti-

rer ses forces spéciales.

L'offensive menée par l'armée turque est proche de la zone dans laquelle sont détenus, par des groupes kurdes, des dizaines de combattants français de l'EI et leurs familles.

Ce que craint l'Élysée si des djihadistes français parviennent à s'enfuir

Paris craint que les djihadistes français s'enfuient en

marge des combats dans la région frontalière turco-syrienne et rentrent sur le territoire français pour y mener des attaques, ou qu'ils soient capturés par le régime de Damas et servent alors de monnaie d'échange.

"La priorité absolue doit être d'empêcher la résurgence de Daech dans la région", souligne l'Élysée dans le communiqué diffusé dans la nuit de dimanche à lundi.

La présidence française ajoute:

"Le risque d'évasion, en raison de l'offensive de la Turquie, des terroristes de Daech faits prisonniers, est pleinement pris en compte. Des mesures ont également été adoptées pour renforcer la sécurité du territoire national dans ce contexte."

In supporting the Kurds in Syria, US has been playing fast and loose with the law

The longer you play fast and loose with the law, the more you delude yourself into believing that what you're doing is OK.

The fast-moving events in Syria and Turkey have made for head-spinning headlines and sometimes personal anguish for many U.S. soldiers who have fought in that region. The outpouring of emotion at the plight of the Syrian Democratic Forces' People Protection Units (YPG), a prima-

rily Kurdish militia, has ignited nationwide debate as to the U.S. governments' loyalty to allies. Soldiers – indeed, officers, have openly questioned the motives of the commander in chief (CINC) and disparaged his order to withdraw up to 1,000 troops from areas of direct conflict in northeastern Syria.

Here we find ourselves in 2019, partnered with the YPG, itself affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has been declared a ter-

rorist organization by the U.S., European Union and Turkey. Chasing al-Qaida through Iraq, which begat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or al-Sham or Syria (ISIS), we found ourselves on the other side of the Iraq-Syria border, teamed up with YPG Kurds who wanted to kill ISIS as much as we did. They were willing partners in the fight against a common enemy, but they had geopolitical baggage. The enemy of my enemy is my friend, right? Not so fast.

Let's review how we got here. There has only been one authorization for the use of military force (AUMF), since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and we've been deploying forces under its auspices ever since. It's just 60 words long, so we should take a moment to review it again — for many of you, perhaps for the first time:

[T]he President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons.

Everybody got that? If you planned, authorized, or committed the 9/11 attacks, or aided or harbored those that did, you're in the U.S. crosshairs. Bin Laden's al-Qaida in Afghanistan? Yup. Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI)? It was a stretch, but the CINC said yes, so onward! ISIL? The next CINC said they were the offspring of AQI, so again, here we go! ISIS? Again, son-of-a-son, so Charlic Mike!

Does it matter that not likely a living soul in the current ISIS planned, authorized, or committed the 9/11 attacks, nor aided or harbored 9/11 perpetrators? Apparently, not a wit. Does it matter that the last administration recognized the 2001 AUMF had outlived its shelf-life and offered a new one, including ISIS language, to Congress? Nope; rejected. Does it matter that a bipartisan



group of senators subsequently authored a similar AUMF, to accomplish the same thing? Nope; never left the starting blocks.

We've been playing fast and loose with the law ever since 2003, when we connected AQI with the 9/11 perpetrators and now, the chickens have come home to roost and we don't like it.

We partnered with the enemy-of-my-enemy in Syria to fight the son-of-a-son and we made some friends. We confused that partnership with an alliance and that partnership grew to be as strong as an alliance.

But the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs reminded everyone on Thursday that our actual ally, Turkey, had been a NATO ally for the past 70 years. On Sunday, the new secretary of defense gently corrected his Sunday news show host, when she casually referred to our YPG partners

as allies. "The Kurds have been very good partners," the secretary affirmed. There's a difference between a 70-year ally and a regional partner, no matter how distasteful you find your ally's actions to be or how loyal you believe your partner to be.

In 2001, the commander in chief declared, "You are either with us, or with the terrorists." NATO invoked Article 5, which states that an attack on one member of NATO is an attack on all of its members, for the first time, in response to the 9/11 attacks. NATO allies, including Turkey, aided the coalition effort in Afghanistan.

What if Turkey should invoke Article 5 now, in response to what it sees as a terrorist threat? US forces are withdrawing from areas of combat in northeastern Syria now, but can we see ourselves obligated to a fight on the sides of the allied Turks, against partner Kurds?

Rather than threatening sanctions, Congress should update an AUMF they've been dithering on for 16 years. Better still, let Congress declare war on Turkey, on behalf of the Kurds, as Article I, Section 8, Clause 11 of the Constitution authorizes them to do.

Don't bet on either. We'll just continue to play fast and loose with the law.

NATIONAL
REVIEW

14 October, 2019
By Jim Geraghty

We Betrayed the Kurds. Now Captured ISIS Fighters Are Escaping

Making the click-through worthwhile: The weekend brought an absolute disastrous reversal in the United States' battle to ensure ISIS stays defeated; Joe Biden makes a campaign promise that includes an inherent admission; and Tulsi Gabbard decides not to stay home on debate night, surprising no one.

While Betraying the Kurds, America Gives Away a Hard-Won Victory over ISIS

As the situation on the border between Turkey and Syria gets worse, defenders of the president's decision have shifted to hand-washing that would impress Lady Macbeth.

"This isn't our fight!"

The battle against ISIS certainly is our fight, and any comprehension of the interests of the United States would require keeping captured ISIS pris-



A Turkish military convoy is pictured in Kilis near the Turkish-Syrian border, Turkey, October 9, 2019. (Mehmet Ali Dag/ Ihlas News Agency/Reuters)

oners behind bars. Whatever else you think of the Turkish government, Erdogan, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces or YPG (“People’s Protection Units,”), the primary objective of the U.S. presence in that region had to be to ensure that dangerous Islamic State fighters stayed behind bars and were not let loose to either reconstitute the Islamic State or restart the ISIS campaign of terror against everybody they deem an infidel or apostate.

The fallout from Trump’s decision to give Turkey the green light to attack across the border is a mass breakout of captured ISIS prisoners.

At this point, out of the 11,000 or so captured Islamic State fighters, the U.S. military can guarantee the continued detention of . . . two. Not even the 60 worst-of-the-worst that they had initially hoped to transfer to American custody.

Trump has said repeatedly that the United States has taken the worst ISIS detainees out of Syria to ensure they would not escape. But in fact the American military took custody of only two British detainees, half of a cell dubbed the Beatles that tortured and killed Western hostages, American officials said.

The Kurds refused, the American officials said, to let the American military take any more detainees from their ad hoc detention sites for captive ISIS fighters, which range from former schoolhouses to a former Syrian government prison. Together, these facilities hold about 11,000 men, about 9,000 of them Syrians or Iraqis. About 2,000 come from 50 other nations whose governments have refused to repatriate them.

The fighting has raised concerns that jihadists detained in the battle to defeat ISIS could escape, facilitating the reconstitution of the Islamic State. Five captives escaped during a Turkish bombardment on a Kurdish-run prison

in Qamishli on Friday, Kurdish officials said.

After a Turkish airstrike, female detainees connected to the Islamic State rioted in a camp in Ain Issa, lighting their tents on fire and tearing down fences, according to a camp administrator, Jalal al-Iyaf.

In the mayhem, more than 500 of them escaped, Mr. al-Iyaf said.

Most of the camp’s other 13,000 residents are Syrian, but there are also refugees from Iraq who sought safety in Syria because of violence at home. By nightfall, some of those people had left the unguarded camp, too, fearing that it was no longer safe, Mr. al-Iyaf said.

Everybody’s loose. We had ISIS bottled up. We had victory. And then we gave it away.

The United States military might have been able to

transfer more prisoners to more secure facilities if U.S. policy, set by the commander in chief, hadn’t abandoned the Kurds so suddenly and completely. “After the Kurds acquiesced to those two transfers, they stopped cooperating with the United States in anger at what they saw as Mr. Trump’s betrayal, according to American officials.”

And no, we’re probably not going to get another chance to transfer those prisoners. “The Pentagon’s decision on Sunday to pull American forces out of northern Syria means the opportunity to take custody of additional ISIS prisoners — even if the Kurds were to decide to start cooperating again — is rapidly evaporating, the officials said.”

Maybe you’re the kind of hardline nationalist who thinks that terrorist attacks in other countries are their problem, not ours — even if Americans are getting killed in those attacks. Maybe you have the ability to shrug at bombings, stabbings, and other attacks in Brussels metro stations, trains in France and Germany, the Jewish Museum in Belgium, the Canadian War Memorial in Ottawa, hostage-taking and stabbing during a mass in Normandy, France. Maybe you remember all of that and think it’s a problem for our allies to deal with, not us.

But surely you recall Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik opening fire on people in San Bernardino, California, killing 14 and injuring 24.

You remember Omar Mateen killed 49 people and wounded 53 others in the Pulse nightclub attack in Orlando.

On November 28, 2016, Abdul Razak Ali Artan stabbed people and tried to run over them with his car on the campus of Ohio State University.

I do recall everybody on the right side of the aisle being justifiably furious when Obama went golfing right after the beheading of James Foley. I also remember a whole lot of us being furious when Obama declared that the Islamic State was “contained” several days before the dreadful ISIS attacks in Paris.

How many of the same people will reflexively defend President Trump’s decision now?

Franklin Graham — son of Billy Graham, one of the most influential voices in Evangelical Christian circles, and usually a staunch ally of President Trump — is calling for U.S. sanctions on Turkey. Last week he tweeted:

“The Kurds are the ones who have been leading the fight against ISIS in Syria. Also pray for the Christians who the Kurds have been protecting. They could be annihilated. Would you pray w/me that President Trump will reconsider? Thousands of lives hang in the balance.”

Last week, Mike Huckabee tweeted:

“a HUGE mistake to abandon Kurds. They’ve never asked us to do THEIR fighting—just give them tools to defend themselves. They have been faithful allies. We CANNOT abandon them.”

We did.

Joe Biden: If Elected, I Will Not Continue That Arrangement That I Insist Was Ethical

Spot the inadvertent admission in the announcement from Joe Biden this past weekend:

Biden promised to bar his family members from occupying any office within the White House and said they won’t “sit in meetings as if they are a Cabinet member.” That was a jab at Trump, who taps daughter Ivanka and her husband, Jared Kushner, as advisers. Biden did not say if his pledge meant that his wife, Jill Biden, would not get the office traditionally assigned to first ladies, should he win.

He further vowed that no one in his family will have “any business relationship with anyone that relates to a foreign corporation or foreign country.”

A few sentences earlier, Biden declared, “No one has asserted my son did a single thing wrong, except a lying president.”

Er, no, Mr. Vice President. It might be accurate to say, “no one has yet shown evidence that your son broke the law.” But going all the way back to MBNA hiring him right out of law school and him forming his own lobbying firm, wealthy people and institutions who needed government policy steered in a particular direction hired him. Other Obama administration officials were uncomfortable about the arraignment; at some point the administration would inevitably make some decision that benefited one of Hunter Biden’s clients, and critics of the administration could contend the decision was reached to benefit the client instead of whatever greater good it was supposed to serve.

If having a business relationship with anyone that relates to a foreign corporation or foreign country is ethical, there’s no need for Joe Biden to make this pledge now. And if having a business relationship with anyone that relates to a foreign corporation or foreign country is unethical . . . then the Bidens have to account for that now.

Tulsi Gabbard Ends Her Bluff

The least surprising announcement in a while: “Four days after announcing that she was considering boycotting the next debate, Tulsi Gabbard says she’s going to go.”

Gee, you mean she didn’t choose to give up a hard-earned moment in the national spotlight? Go figure! The “I may not participate in order to protest the DNC and corporate media” was always an implausible threat and something of a cheap gimmick.

Republican Rep says Kurds allying with Syrian government "not an ideal outcome," but blames Congress over Trump

Republican Congressman Michael Burgess classified the Kurds' decision to ally with the Syrian government as "not the ideal outcome," but argued that Congress was responsible, not President Donald Trump, who last week ordered U.S. troops to withdraw from northeastern Syria.

The U.S. considers the Syrian government, which is led by President Bashar al-Assad, to be an enemy. American foes Russia and Iran also back Assad, who is also supported by the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, which the U.S. classifies as a terrorist organization. Until last week, the Kurds – or the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) – were allied with the U.S., which was backing the group in the fight against the Islamic State (or ISIS).

However, Trump's decision to withdraw the U.S. military left the group feeling abandoned and exposed to Turkey. Turkish forces quickly advanced into Syria after the American withdrawal, which came after Trump spoke with the country's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan last Sunday. Turkey has long viewed the Kurds as an adversary, and Turkish-backed forces reportedly began attacking and killing Kurdish fighters and civilians.

Pressed on these developments in a Monday interview with CNN, Burgess attempted to shift blame away from Trump and onto Congress. "It's not an ideal outcome but look, this was not just the president," the GOP representative from Texas argued. "The Congress had a role here and didn't step up and fulfill it."

Throughout his interview, Burgess argued correctly that Congress had never formally authorized an American offensive in Syria. But he also lamented that the Turkish advance came while Congress was on a recess, suggesting that was the reason—not Trump's withdrawal—that the Kurds had been attacked and decided to ally with Assad's government.

"I support the president in his effort to re-



Turkish soldiers and Turkey-backed Syrian fighters gather on the northern outskirts of the Syrian city of Manbij near the Turkish border on October 14, as Turkey and its allies continue their assault on Kurdish-held border towns in northeastern Syria ZEIN AL RIFAI/AFP/Getty

move the United States from entanglements abroad that have diminished our treasury and sacrificed United States lives," Burgess asserted.

Despite Burgess's defense of the president, many leading Republicans in Congress have slammed Trump for withdrawing U.S. troops from Syria. The move has allowed hundreds of ISIS affiliates and several ISIS fighters to escape from detention camps. ISIS has also appeared to ramp up attacks in the wake of the American pull-out.

- Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump)
October 14, 2019

After defeating 100% of the ISIS Caliphate, I largely moved our troops out of Syria. Let Syria and Assad protect the Kurds and fight Turkey for their own land. I said to my Generals, why should we be fighting for Syria....

.... and Assad to protect the land of our enemy? Anyone who wants to assist Syria in protecting the Kurds is good with me, whether it is Russia, China, or Napoleon

Bonaparte. I hope they all do great, we are 7,000 miles away!

"Frankly it's weak," Republican Representative Adam Kinzinger of Illinois said during an interview with CBS' Face the Nation on Sunday. "I don't see how it follows through on the president's promise, his biggest promise in the campaign, to defeat ISIS. Because I think it's going to resurge," he said.

Although a large number of Republican lawmakers have lobbed similar criticism at Trump's decision, GOP Congresswoman Liz Cheney of Wyoming argued on Monday in an interview with Fox News that Democrats are somehow responsible for Turkey's aggression against the Kurds.

"I also want to say that the impeachment proceedings that are going on and what the Democrats are doing themselves to try to weaken this president is part of this," Cheney, the daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney, argued. "It was not an accident that the Turks chose this moment to roll across the border."



14 octobre 2019
By Jamie Dettmer

Trump: US Will Impose 'Big Sanctions' Against Turkey for Onslaught on Kurds

U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday promised "big sanctions" against Turkey for its invasion into northern Syria against Kurdish fighters, but again defended his withdrawal of American troops who had been fighting alongside the Kurds against Islamic State terrorists.

"Do people really think we should go to war with NATO Member Turkey?" Trump said on Twitter. "Never ending wars will end! The same people who got us into the Middle East mess are the people who most want to stay there!"

Two key congressional leaders, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, leader of the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives, and Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump Republican ally, agreed in a phone conversation on the need for quick action condemning Turkey's attacks on the Kurdish fighters.

Pelosi called for a congressional resolution "to overturn the president's dangerous decision in Syria immediately." Graham said he would work with Democrats to "draft sanctions and move quickly."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he was "gravely concerned" about the Turkish offensive, contending that it will jeopardize "years of hard-won progress" in destroying Islamic State's self-declared caliphate in northern Syria. McConnell said he would hold talks with other lawmakers and Trump administration officials this week on how "to avoid a strategic calamity" in the region.

Trump pledged Sunday to work with congressional leaders, including opposition Democrats, to impose the economic sanctions on Ankara.

The U.S. leader contended that the Kurdish fighters "may be releasing some" Islamic State prisoners in an effort "to get us involved." But Trump said they could be "easily recaptured by Turkey or European Nations from where many came."

Syrian forces entered a town near the Turkish border Monday, a day after reaching an agreement with Syrian Kurds to move into the region in an attempt to counter the Turkish onslaught.

Turkey-backed Syrian rebel fighters ride on a vehicle at the border town of Tel Abyad, Syria, Oct. 14, 2019.

Syria's state-run SANA news agency reported Monday's troop movement in Tal Tamr, about 20 kilometers from the border, saying it was done to "confront the Turkish aggression" and was welcomed by the people there.



President Donald Trump speaks to members of the media on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, Oct. 10, 2019, before boarding Marine One.

The extraordinary deal between the Kurds, Syria, and Russia — Syria's main ally — comes four days after Turkish forces moved against the Kurds in northern Syria after Trump withdrew nearly all U.S. forces.

Turkey regards the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces as terrorists aligned with separatists inside Turkey, although Western countries have viewed them as a key ally in the fight against Islamic State.

A Kurdish statement said, "In order to prevent and block this assault, agreement has been reached with the Syrian government whose duty is to protect the borders and Syrian sovereignty, for the Syrian army to enter and deploy along the length of the Syrian-Turkish border."

Syrian Kurds say they feel totally forsaken by the United States after fighting side-by-side with U.S. forces. They also believe much of the Arab world and the U.N. Security Council are ignoring them.

"We had to find a solution... now you see what has happened to us and they don't want to support us," the defense minister of the Kurdish city of Kobani, Ismat Sheikh Hassan, said Sunday. "Again, we should not trust anybody. We should rely on ourselves. Every Kurd should carry a gun and prepare himself."

With the United States moving to withdraw all of its remaining troops from northern Syria, Trump said Sunday, "Very smart not to be involved in the intense fighting along the Turkish Border, for a change."

"The Kurds and Turkey have been fighting for many years," he wrote on Twitter. "Turkey considers the PKK the worst terrorists of all. Others may want to

come in and fight for one side or the other. Let them!" U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper addresses reporters during a media briefing at the Pentagon in Arlington, Va., Oct. 11, 2019.

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper told Fox News Sunday there will be a "deliberate withdrawal" of the last 1,000 U.S. troops from northern Syria.

"We pushed back on Turkey to not do this operation," Esper said. But he said Turkey was "fully committed to do this no matter what we did."

"This is part of the terrible situation that Turkey has put us in," Esper said, adding that the U.S. "didn't sign up to fight Turkey, a long-time ally, on behalf of the Kurds."

French president Emmanuel Macron welcomes German Chancellor Angela Merkel prior to their meeting at the Elyse Palace in Paris, Sunday, Oct. 13, 2019. (AP Photo/Francois Mori)

French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel said at a joint news conference that Turkey is risking an "unbearable humanitarian situation."

The World Health Organization said Monday it is "gravely concerned about the humanitarian health situation in northeast Syria."

It said the military operations have already displaced 200,000 people since last week, and that there are fewer health workers able to provide services due to displacement and health providers suspending operations.

The Washington Post 14-10-2019
By Siobhán O'Grady and Miriam Berger

Who are the Kurds, and why is Turkey attacking them?

Kurdish fighters in northern Syria have served as a crucial U.S. ally in the fight against the Islamic State. But U.S. troops stepped aside last week as [Turkey launched an offensive](#) against the U.S.-backed Kurdish forces.

[President Trump has faced pressure](#) even from Republicans as he has defended his decision not to intervene against the Turkish incursion, which many see as abandoning an ally in the face of extreme danger. Kurdish forces have described the U.S. departure as “a stab in the back.”

“Some want us to send tens of thousands of soldiers to the area and start a new war all over again,” Trump [tweeted Thursday](#). “Others say STAY OUT and let the Kurds fight their own battles. I say hit Turkey very hard financially with sanctions if they don’t play by the rules.”

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had threatened to move into northeastern Syria for months. Here’s why he went ahead with it.

Who are the Kurds?

The Kurds are members of a large, predominantly Muslim ethnic group. They have their own cultural and linguistic traditions, and most speak one of two major dialects of the Kurdish language. After World War I, Western powers promised Kurds their own homeland in the agreement known as the Treaty of Sèvres. But a later agreement instead divided them among Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran.

Today, there are about 30 million Kurds living across the region, with about half of them in Turkey. Iraq is the only country in the region to have established an autonomous Kurdish region, known as Iraqi Kurdistan. Its parliament was founded in 1992.

“The Kurds have been suppressed in all sorts of ways, often very violently,” said Henri Barkey, a professor of international relations at Lehigh University and adjunct senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. “They have really suffered at the hands of the four states.”

Omer Taspinar, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, said that for decades Turkey has had a policy of “assimilating the Kurds into Turkish ethnic identity, denial of Kurdish ethnic identity and denial of Kurdish linguistic rights.”

Kurds in Turkey are free to be Kurds, he said, only if they accept that they’re Turkish citizens. “The problem begins when they want a hyphenated identity,” Taspinar said.

Why is the United States allied with Syrian Kurds?

The United States needed a reliable ally in northeastern Syria in the fight against the Islamic State. In 2015, with Washington’s support, Kurdish forces belonging to the Kurdish People’s Protection Unit, or YPG, joined forces with Arab groups and created the Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF. The United States, Britain, France and other countries provided the SDF with weapons. Since then, Kurdish fighters have led the alliance, which was crucial in toppling the Islamic State.

Why did Erdogan launch the offensive now?

As the SDF became crucial to the U.S. mission to defeat the Islamic State, Turkey grew fearful that the Kurdish forces were gaining influence close to the Turkish border, establishing institutions and gaining clout with the Americans, experts said.

Inside its own borders, Turkey has for years tried to counter the threat of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK, a militant group that has regularly launched attacks across the country in the name of Kurdish nationalism. Tens of thousands of people have been killed in that conflict over the past few decades.

For Erdogan, countering the PKK takes precedence over fighting the Islamic State. “There is no real nationalist anger against ISIS, but there is nationalist anger against PKK,” Taspinar said. (The Islamic State is also known as ISIS.) Erdogan sees the Kurdish fighters in northeastern Syria as terrorists linked to the PKK.

For years, Turkey has hosted millions of refugees from the Syrian civil war. Now, as Turkey faces a severe economic crisis, Erdogan is facing pressure to resolve the refugee and unemployment crises in one go.

Erdogan has pledged to clear this corner of Syria of Kurdish fighters and then set up a “safe zone” to which Turkey will return at least a million Syrian refugees. That plan has raised alarm in humanitarian circles, where advocates fear that refugees will be forcibly returned to a conflict zone in violation of international law. Kurdish forces are guarding a network of Islamic State prisons in the region, raising fears that if they were to abandon their posts to escape the Turkish offensive, those prisoners could escape.

What about the Syrian government?

Until now, the Kurdish forces had restricted their military action to fighting the Islamic State and rebel groups in an effort to avoid clashes with

the Syrian government -- another foe. But on Sunday, the Kurds struck a deal with the Syrian government after finding themselves unable to stop the Turkish onslaught. On Monday, forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad took up positions in previously Kurdish-controlled towns across northeastern Syria.

The deal was reached only after Russia intervened and held three days of negotiations between the Syrian government and SDF -- a major coup for Russia-backed Assad and a blow to Kurdish and U.S. influence.

It’s also significant as Kurdish groups had struggled against the authoritarian rule of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for years before.

When popular uprisings swept across Syria in 2011, the Kurds saw an opportunity. In July 2012, Kurdish-led forces drove the regime out of their areas. After that, Syrian Kurds created local councils to replace government establishments, and promoted public ownership of land, water, and other resources, as well as gender equality. Many Kurdish fighters are women.

They have also faced some accusations of abuse. In 2014, Human Rights Watch [reported that arbitrary arrests and killings](#) were taking place in Kurdish-controlled areas. And last year, the advocacy group said Kurdish forces were [forcibly recruiting children](#) to join their ranks. The SDF has repeatedly denounced these accusations.

What has happened so far?

Thousands of civilians have fled their homes on both the Syrian and Turkish sides of the border, with the United Nations reporting Thursday that at least 70,000 Syrians were already displaced because of the latest escalation in the conflict. Days into the Turkish offensive, dozens of civilians and fighters have reportedly been killed on both sides.

On Saturday, the official SDF Twitter account stated that more than 200 people had been killed and wounded since Wednesday. “Today we are fighting on two fronts, one against the Turkish invasion and one against the ISIS mercenaries,” the group said.

Then on Sunday, a Turkish air strike hit a convoy in the Syrian border town of Ras al Ain, killing at least 14 people and wounding 10 more, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The SDF said the convoy included civilians and journalists.

Asser Khattab contributed to this report from Beirut.

Russian shadow falls over Syria as Kurds open door for Assad

The moment that changed the Middle East arrived with a sudden silence. Just before 7pm on Sunday, the internet was cut across north-eastern Syria where, for half an hour, the Kurds of the region had been digesting a news flash. The Syrian government was returning to two towns, Manbij and Kobane. The implication quickly sunk in.

The regional capital, Qamishli, soon emptied; streets that had bustled with minibuses and shoppers became eerie and still. With the internet down phones were no help and nor were officials who had vanished along with the traffic. Air seemed to be suddenly vacuumed from the city, and the few people still around knew exactly what it meant: this was the moment power changed hands. It was a time to be scared.

“You must leave now,” one man said, avoiding eye contact. “There are regime checkpoints to the east and it isn’t safe to stay.” He, and other Kurds had lived all their lives, except for the past seven years, under the control of the government in Damascus, and the prospect of their return left him pale and worried.

The Syrian army had maintained a presence in central Qamishli ever since Bashar al-Assad gave the Kurds semi-autonomy in 2012. They had always been toothless next to a larger and better armed rival. But could they be emboldened now? Their base was only 200 metres away.

A black sky covered the road to the border, the sparkling white lights of Turkey to the left and the Syrian army somewhere in the darkness to the right. Usually diligent Kurdish checkpoint guards had left their posts, or were preoccupied. Lone speeding cars and belching lorries without headlamps rumbled through the night, perhaps the last to make the journey before the conquerors arrived.

A day later, the ramifications of the momentous week that preceded the Kurds allowing the Assad regime to retake the province is still sinking in, across Syria and far beyond in Riyadh, Baghdad, Cairo and the Gulf.

Something far bigger was at play here; the end of US influence in Syria and the plunge in its status elsewhere. The public handover on show was that between the Assad regime and the Kurds, but the real power shift was between Washington – whose fighting troops have all but left the region, 16 years after invading Iraq – and Moscow, whose reach and influence across the Middle East has now been cemented.

As if to celebrate the moment, Vladimir Putin arrived in Riyadh for a state visit on Monday, his first in 12 years, hosted by Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, who three weeks earlier had similarly felt the humiliation of abandonment by US allies.



Syrian Arab civilians flash the victory sign as Turkish armoured personnel carriers and tanks gather in the village of Qlrata near Manbij on Monday. Photograph: Aaref Watad/AFP via Getty Images

After Iran launched an attack against the kingdom’s oil production centres, the crown prince was expecting a US retaliation. None was forthcoming, and he felt abandoned by an ally that had sworn to protect Saudi interests. “Did you see what they [the US] did to us?” the crown prince asked Iraqi leaders in Riyadh a fortnight ago. “It was unbelievable.”

In northern Syria, the US decision to abandon the Kurds, who had helped lead the global fight against Isis, had bewildered locals and left them with very few options. “It’s better to go for compromise than genocide,” said Muzlum Abdi, commander in chief of the US-raised force, formerly known as the SDF.

Kurds, led by leaders of the Kurdistan Workers party (the PKK) had held talks with Russian officials in Qamishli in recent days about the terms of their pact with Damascus. Fighting Turkey to the north, and left without a protector after Donald Trump ordered the US military to leave, the Kurds held a very weak hand.

“The Russians have been accusing us of allowing the Americans into the region in the first place,” said Arshan Mizgin Ahmed. “We have paid a heavy political price for that.”

She added: “We will do whatever is in our best interests.”

As the US withdrew, what remained of its authority was increasingly tested. A jet buzzed a US base near Ain Issa – the US military won’t say who it was. Up the road, Turkish Arab proxies, who had executed a Kurdish politician on a highway a day earlier were setting up base.

As time ticked away on the last vestige of Kurdish rule, the Syrian military arrived – packed into cattle

trucks – in the town of Tal Tamir, where Kurdish fighters had been bringing their wounded only hours earlier.

Their arrival would have likely heartened one of the country’s most recent refugees, Ahmad Mahmoud Hussein, who a day before had raged against Turkey’s proxies – Arabs from elsewhere in Syria, who had just forced him from his home in the town of Ras al-Ayn. “They are mercenaries, hired guns,” he claimed. “They are all ex-convicts and drug addicts and they have no honour or mercy. Those who fall for what Turkey are offering them will do anything for money. I don’t care if I’m sleeping on this school floor for one year, two years, or 10. I’m not going back while they’re still there.”

The dying days of the war in all its horror and contradictions played out on television screens across the Kurdish north, where normal transmissions had resumed after Sunday’s Big Brother-like shutdown. In the border town of Derik, drivers watched with looks of resignation as Kurdish families threw rice at the feet of Assad’s soldiers. “He’s acting,” said one of the men watching another Kurd on the television. “No he isn’t, he’s relieved,” said another.

Past scorched brown hills, along undulating roads to the border, the faces of the vanquished showed a similar mixture of resignation, and confusion. For the Kurds the dream of autonomy has ground to a halt. The new alliances taking shape on the ruins of their ambitions will be felt for generations in what remains of Syria.

“Iran and Russia are the dominant foreign powers now,” said Arshan. “They will dictate terms in this region. Things have really changed.”



October 15, 2019

Turkey's Syria offensive explained in four maps

Turkey's military launched a cross-border operation against Kurdish-led forces in Syria in early October, after US troops who had been allied to the Kurds withdrew.

After four days of fighting, the Kurds agreed a deal with the Syrian government for the Syrian army to be deployed on the border to help repel the Turkish assault.

These maps help explain the offensive and what is happening on the ground.

Who are the Kurds?

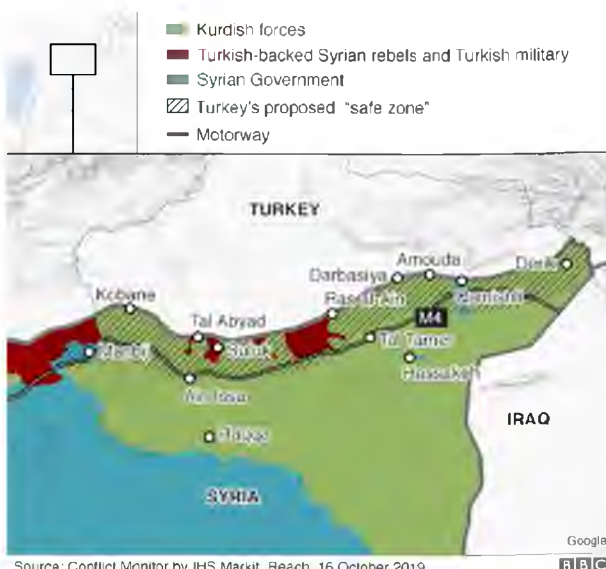
Between 25 and 35 million ethnic Kurds inhabit a mountainous region straddling Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran and Armenia. But they have never had a widely-recognised permanent nation state of their own.

Kurds make up between 7% and 10% of Syria's population. For decades, they were suppressed and denied basic rights by President Bashar al-Assad and, before him, his father Hafez.

Before the uprising against Mr Assad began in 2011 most Kurds lived in the cities of Damascus and Aleppo, and in three northern areas near the Turkish border - Afrin in the west, Kobane (Ain al-Arab) in the centre, and Qamishli in the east.

When the uprising evolved into a civil war, the main Kurdish parties avoided taking sides. In 2012, government forces withdrew from Kurdish areas to concentrate on fighting rebel factions elsewhere, and Kurdish militias took control in their wake.

In late 2014, the jihadist group Islamic State (IS) launched an assault on Kobane. The battle sparked alarm across the world and a US-led multinational coalition against IS intervened by



Source: Conflict Monitor by IHS Markit, Reach, 16 October 2019



Image copyright AFP Image caption Turkey's president says it aims to "prevent the creation of a terror corridor"

carrying out air strikes. After the militants retreated, the Kurds became the coalition's most critical partner on the ground in Syria.

The biggest Kurdish militia, the People's Protection Units (YPG), formed an alliance with local Arab militias called the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in 2015. With the help of coalition airpower, weaponry and advisers, SDF fighters drove IS out of a quarter of Syria and captured its last pocket of territory in the country in March 2019. They also set up an "autonomous administration" to govern the region.

Why did Turkey launch an offensive?

Turkey had long threatened to launch an operation in SDF-held territory to create a 32km (20-mile) deep "safe zone" running for 480km (300 miles) along the Syrian side of the border.

It wants to push back members of the YPG, which it views as an extension of a Kurdish rebel group that has been fighting in Turkey for decades and is designated a terrorist organisation - the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Turkey also hopes to resettle, in the zone, up to two million of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees it is hosting.

In an attempt to avert an offensive, the US and Turkish militaries agreed in August to set up a "security mechanism" on the Syrian side of border - an area that would be free of YPG fighters, but pointedly avoided using the term "safe zone". US and Turkish troops carried out joint patrols in the area and the YPG co-operated,

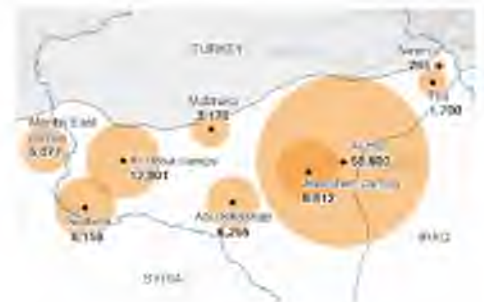
withdrawing fighters and heavy weapons and dismantling fortifications.

But on 6 October, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told US President Donald Trump that a cross-border operation would "soon be moving forward", according to the White House. Mr Trump responded by saying US troops based in the area would not support or be involved in the operation, it said.

Three days later, Mr Erdogan announced the start of "Operation Peace Spring" by the Turkish military and allied Syrian rebel factions. He said they aimed "to prevent the creation of a terror corridor across our southern border, and to bring peace to the area".

Populations of camps for displaced people

IS suspects' families are detained at al-Hol, Roj and Ain Issa



Sources: UN OCHA, 29 September 2019; REACH, April/May 2019; ReliefWeb

The SDF said it was determined to defend its territory "at all costs", but Turkish-led forces were able to steadily push their way into a sparsely populated, mostly Arab area between the towns of Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ain in the first five days of the assault. Turkish air and artillery strikes affected a much larger area, including predominantly Kurdish towns and villages to the west and east.



Image copyright Reuters Image caption The People's Protection Units (YPG) is the biggest militia in north-east Syria

Amid growing chaos, US officials said on 13 October that Mr Trump had decided to begin withdraw all its troops from northern Syria.

Hours later, the SDF said an agreement had been reached with the Syrian government - which considers the US an enemy - for the Syrian army "to enter and deploy along the length of the Syrian-Turkish border" and repel the Turkish assault.

What has been the humanitarian impact?

The area falling within Turkey's "safe zone" is fertile plain that once served as Syria's breadbasket. It is dotted with dozens of villages and towns, unlike the barren, desert regions to the south.

When the Turkish offensive began, the UN said the potentially affected area included SDF-controlled territory that was home to 2.2 million people, including 1.3 million in need of humanitarian assistance, and two government-controlled cities where 450,000 people live - Qamishli and Hassakeh.



Source: REACH



ulation of the two IDP camps at Ain Issa, south of Tal Abyad.

The area around the camps was hit by shells on 13 October as Turkish forces advanced, prompting some of the 13,000 residents to flee, it said. SDF officials reported that dozens of women and children being held at the camps because of suspected links to IS, including British nationals, were among those who fled.

Meanwhile, there were reports of unrest at al-Hol camp, which is about 60km from the Turkish border and so would not be in Turkey's proposed "safe zone".

Some 68,000 people linked to IS are being detained at al-Hol. More than 94% of them are women and children, and 11,000 are foreign nationals.

The SDF says it is also holding more than 12,000 men suspected of being IS members in seven



Image copyright AFP Image caption President Donald Trump has ordered US troops to withdraw from northern Syria

By 13 October, air strikes, shelling and fighting on the ground had reportedly killed dozens of civilians and forced more than 150,000 others to flee their homes.

prisons. At least 4,000 of the prisoners are foreign nationals.

Some of the prisons are in areas close to the Turkish border, including Ain Issa, Qamishli and Derik.

On 11 October, the SDF said five IS militants had escaped from a prison in Qamishli after Turkish shelling nearby and that a car bomb had exploded next to the wall of a prison in Hassakeh, causing damage.

Mr Trump told Mr Erdogan before the offensive that Turkish troops would be responsible for securing detained IS fighters in areas they captured. The SDF has said its fighters will continue to guard the prisons and camps, but there is a concern they could be called away to other areas or be forced to flee if attacked.

The UN said most of the displaced were from the towns of Ras al-Ain and Tal Abyad, which were the initial targets of the Turkish assault.

Some 5,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) living at the Mabruka camp, west of Ras al-Ain, had to be evacuated towards Hassakeh city after the surrounding area came under artillery fire on 10 October.

Could detained IS fighters and their families escape?

The UN also expressed grave concern for the pop-



By Ryan Browne, CNN | October 15, 2019

US troops express anger at Trump's Syria policy: 'We betrayed' the Kurds

Washington (CNN) - A wide range of American military personnel and defense officials are expressing a deep sense of frustration and anger at the Trump administration's refusal to support **Syrian Kurds** facing a **Turkish military assault**. Over half a dozen US military and defense officials have told CNN.

Several US military and defense officials, including personnel deployed to Syria, expressed dismay at how the Trump administration has handled the situation.

One US official said it is well known that some senior US military officials are livid at how the Kurds have been treated given their role in helping the US fight ISIS.

Another senior American defense official told CNN that Trump's failure to more forcefully oppose the invasion or do anything to stop the attacks on the Kurds meant Trump had given Turkey a green light, despite the administration's public stance that it had consistently opposed the operation.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces "are fighting a force that intends to eliminate their people because we green lighted their operation," a senior US defense official told CNN referring to the Turkish operation.

Another US military official involved in operations in Syria said he was "ashamed" of his country's actions with regards to the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, saying the US had failed to defend its one-time ally in the fight against ISIS.

Loss of trust

There's also a concern that allies and potential partners won't trust the US in the future.

"How do we expect anyone to partner with us now?" one US defense official told CNN.

"They did everything we asked them to do," said another. "This is really not good for us."

Turkey launched its long threatened incursion into the country after Trump ordered a small contingent of about 50 US troops to be pulled back from the border area amid a belief that a Turkish assault was imminent.

While Trump administration officials have argued that Turkey would have attacked the Kurds even if US troops had remained, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces and a large bipartisan group of US lawmakers have slammed Trump for not opposing the Turkish operation more forcefully and for taking no concrete action to stop it.

Republican lawmakers in particular have harshly denounced Trump's decision as a betrayal of the Kurds and a strategic blunder that will weaken American credibility, reverse gains against ISIS, make it harder for the US to build alliances and give a boost to Russia and Iran.

The Trump administration belatedly sought to halt the Turkish advance Monday, announcing a **series of sanctions** targeting Turkey's Defense, Energy and Interior ministers as well as the Defense and Energy ministries.

Vice President Mike Pence also revealed that Trump had spoken with both Turkey's President Erdogan and the Kurdish-leader of the Syrian Democratic Forces, Gen. Mazloum Kobani Abdi, adding that Trump had "received a firm commitment" from Erdogan not to attack the Syrian Kurdish city of Kobani, a location considered to be critical to the SDF.

Pence said the US was also working to set up a ceasefire between the warring factions. However, given Trump's order to withdraw all US troops from the area, the US will find it hard to monitor much less enforce such a ceasefire and it's unclear how much leverage the US will have to impact the situation on the ground with one official calling it "too little, too late."

Some of the frustration among US personnel is based on the fact that in order to appease Turkey, the US convinced the Syrian Kurds to dismantle their defensive fortifications along the border and pull their fighters back. The US said Turkey had agreed to the arrangement which sought to prevent unilateral Turkish military action and also provided Turkey with US intelligence about the border area.

Cognizant of Turkey's enmity towards Syrian Kurdish groups, the US also resisted arming Kurdish elements of the SDF, only doing so in 2017. The US also only provided both Arabs and Kurds in the SDF with light arms such as Ak-47 rifles and did not arm them with heavy weapons that could be used against a modern military equipped with tanks, artillery and warplanes like Turkey's.

But despite those efforts to appease Ankara, Turkey launched its invasion.

Senior members of the Trump administration have insisted that the US has not deserted the Syrian Kurds.

Secretary of Defense Mark Esper claimed Friday that the US is not abandoning its Kurdish allies who are now under attack from Turkey's military offensive into Syria, even as he made clear the US will not intervene in the fight.

A 'betrayal'

However, troops on the ground have described it as an abandonment and a "betrayal."

"It's pretty messed up what's happening out here," one US Special Forces soldier on the ground in Syria told CNN when news of the US withdrawal was announced.

"We want to offer support," the soldier said, adding "We do not want to leave them in this situation."

Several US military officials expressed disappointment that the Pentagon and State Department were not acting with a greater sense of urgency to protect the Kurds.

On Friday the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley said he had told the SDF not to "overreact" to the Turkish operation.

Asked about the widely publicized criticism from US Special Operations Forces about the Syria policy, Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy said Monday that while such "candor" was "important," he said, "When national policy decisions are made, we salute and move out."

"I like candor. It's important to have that. Obviously, you don't want to have disobedience, but you, it's definitely, they have to have opinions. Everybody has opinions, you have a war of ideas, but ultimately that they, when national policy decisions are made, we salute and move out," he told reporters.

"They should be extremely proud of what they've done. and there are higher level strategic politics involved, but as far as what our soldiers have done, what our special forces have done, they've done an incredible job over there and they ought to be very, very proud of it," Gen. James McConville, the chief of staff of the Army, said Monday while appearing beside McCarthy.

In the absence of US assistance in the face of the Turkish attack the Kurds have sought protection from the Assad regime in Damascus and their Russian military backers, something Trump tweeted Monday that he was OK with.

Trump had earlier Monday cited uncorroborated reports that Kurdish officials had released some of the 10,000 ISIS prisoners being held by the SDF, a notion that was immediately rejected by a member of his own administration.

"Falsely claiming that the SDF Kurds are letting ISIS prisoners out of prison is wrong," a senior defense official said.



100,000 flee as Turkish offensive pushes into Syria

Turkey has remained defiant in the face of international criticism, insisting the military will push forward with its incursion. The UN has warned of an impending humanitarian crisis as thousands flee to safety.

The United Nations on Friday said 100,000 people have been displaced by [Turkey's incursion into northeastern Syria](#). Turkey has vowed to push forward with its offensive targeting Kurdish forces in Syria despite continued international criticism.

Some half-million people are thought to be at risk in the two countries' border region. The World Food Program (WFP) has warned of an impending humanitarian crisis, something Ankara has dismissed as "fabricated in order to discredit Turkey's counterterrorism efforts."

The provinces of al-Hassakeh and al-Raqqa were expected to be the hardest hit by the shelling.



Kurdish Syria refugees

Dozens of Kurdish fighters killed

Some 32 Kurdish militiamen have been killed in the Turkish campaign, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said on Friday, while Ankara claimed it had killed 342 fighters.

At least six Syrian civilians, seven Turkish civilians and four Turkish soldiers have also been killed in the three-day offensive.

"The operation is going as planned," said Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar on Friday. "We are being extremely careful to ensure no civilians are harmed."

The UN's World Food Program (WFP) said that 70,000 people have been forced to flee the provinces of al-Hassakeh and al-Raqqa due to the Turkish onslaught. Turkey had slammed the warning of an impending humanitarian crisis as "fabricated in order to discredit Turkey's counter-terrorism efforts."

On Friday morning, thick columns of black smoke could be seen billowing out of the Syrian border town of Tal Abyad as Turkish forces bombarded the area. The Turkish border town of Suruc was also hit by shelling.

Trump under fire over US withdrawal

US President Donald Trump has been accused of greenlighting Turkey's campaign against the Kurds when he made the sudden decision to

The Pentagon has also cautioned that the withdrawal could allow IS to once again build up strength. Today, the Defense Department added that there is "no indication" Turkey would be willing to stop the offensive.

Fighting back against accusations that they left allies in the lurch, Defense Secretary Mark Esper told reporters: "We have not abandoned the Kurds, let me be clear about that. Nobody greenlighted this operation by Turkey, just the opposite. We pushed back very hard at all levels for the Turks not to commence this operation."

The US president said he was entrusting Turkey with the fight against terrorism, allowing Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to [fulfill his longstanding desire to crush the Kurdish forces](#), all of whom Ankara labels as "terrorists."

In Turkey, government forces have been engaged in an on-and-off conflict with armed Kurdish Turks for decades, and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is banned as a terrorist organization.

However, many doubts have been raised over Turkey's capacity to handle the terrorist problem in neighboring Syria, despite President Trump voicing his confidence. On Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he simply did not believe Ankara had the necessary resources and know-how, which he worried would embolden remaining IS fighters.

Car bomb kills civilians

The fears of both Putin and the Pentagon were realized on Friday, when a car bomb killed three people in the Syrian city of Qamishli. IS later claimed the attack, one of several it has carried out in the Kurdish city in recent months.

Friday's attack occurred as many Kurdish guards were forced to leave their posts in parts of the city to defend themselves against Turkish forces.

The car bomb targeted a restaurant at a time when civilians, including journalists who came to cover the offensive, were inside, according to the Kurdish internal security services, known as Asayish, in a statement.

There were also reports on Friday that five IS prisoners had managed to escape a Syrian prison due to Turkish shelling.



October 15, 2019

By Melissa Leon

Turkey holding 50 US nuclear bombs 'hostage' at air base, report says

Officials are reviewing plans to evacuate up to 50 U.S. nuclear bombs that have long been stored at [Incirlik Air Base in Turkey](#) in the wake of Ankara's military offensive in northern [Syria](#), according to a report.

The weapons are now essentially being held "hostage" by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a senior official [told](#) The New York Times on Monday.

The Cold War-era B61 nuclear bombs are said to be located 100-250 miles from the Syrian border, [according](#) to The Guardian. A former U.S. official told the outlet that Turkish diplomats responded to suggestions about moving the bombs by saying Turkey would start to develop its own.

"The potential problems have been discussed for over a decade," the former official said. "And now we've finally gotten to a point where this is a problem that we can't ignore anymore."

TURKISH-BACKED FORCES COME 'VERY CLOSE' TO US TROOPS IN SYRIA, OFFICIAL SAYS

Erdogan has previously expressed a desire to boost Turkey's nuclear arsenal.

"Some nations have missiles with nuclear warheads — not just one or two. But [they say] I should not have missiles with nuclear warheads. I don't accept this," Erdogan said last month, according to the state-run Anadolu Agency.

[President Trump](#) announced on Oct. 6 that the U.S. would pull all troops from northeast Syria, clearing the way for a Turkish air and ground incursion. Erdogan's troops launched an assault on Wednesday and ground forces invaded later that day.

The Pentagon said Friday that [U.S. troops near the border town of Kobane in northern Syria came under artillery fire](#) from Turkish positions. No American troops were injured.

In an interview with Fox News, a senior adviser to Erdogan [denied that Turkey had fired at U.S. troops](#).

"I think this is a first — a country with U.S. nuclear weapons stationed in it literally firing artillery at U.S. forces," said Jeffrey Lewis, from the California-based James Martin Center for Non-proliferation Studies, The Times reported.

Trump said Monday that U.S. troops [in north-](#)



In this image provided by Hawar News Agency, ANHA, U.S. military vehicles travel down a main road in northeast Syria on Oct. 7. U.S.-backed Kurdish-led forces in Syria said American troops began withdrawing Monday from their positions along Turkey's border in northeastern Syria, ahead of an anticipated Turkish invasion that the Kurds say will overturn five years of achievements in the battle against the Islamic State group. (ANHA via AP)

eastern Syria will be withdrawn from the country as planned and redeployed "in the region to monitor the situation and prevent a repeat of 2014," when the Islamic State terrorist group (ISIS) made major territorial gains.

TRUMP SAYS US TROOPS IN SYRIA TO BE WITHDRAWN, REDEPLOYED IN REGION

"After defeating 100% of the ISIS Caliphate, I largely moved our troops out of Syria. Let Syria and [President Bashar al] Assad protect the Kurds and fight Turkey for their own land," the president tweeted Monday. "I said to my Generals, why should we be fighting for Syria [...] and Assad to protect the land of our enemy? Anyone who wants to assist Syria in protecting the Kurds is good with me, whether it is Russia, China, or Napoleon Bonaparte. I hope they all do great, we are 7,000 miles away!"

A "small footprint" of American forces will remain at a garrison in southern Syria to continue to disrupt remnants of ISIS, the president said in a [statement](#). It wasn't clear when the roughly 1,000 U.S. troops in Syria would be pulled back.

[Russian](#) military forces on Monday went to patrol near the Syria-Turkey border, indicating that Moscow is looking to fill a security vacuum following U.S. troops' withdrawal from the region last week.

RUSSIAN MILITARY PATROLLING SYRIA-TURKEY BORDER AS US TROOPS OFFICIALLY WITHDRAW

Trump said in his statement Monday that the U.S. would "aggressively use economic sanctions to target those who enable, facilitate and finance these heinous acts in Syria."

"I am fully prepared to swiftly destroy Turkey's economy if Turkish leaders continue down this dangerous and destructive path," he said.

On Monday, [European Union](#) member countries vowed to suspend weapons exports to Turkey over its military operations in Syria. The move falls short of a formal arms embargo but halts arms export licenses to the Middle Eastern nation.

EU COUNTRIES PLEDGE TO SUSPEND ARM EXPORTS TO TURKEY OVER SYRIA INCURSION

E.U. member countries denounced Ankara's incursion into northern Syria, which has [killed hundreds and displaced thousands](#).

Fox News' Lucas Tomlinson, Lucia I. Suarez Sang and Louis Casiano contributed to this report, as well as The Associated Press.

Foreign aid in northeast Syria fully halted: Kurds



The week-old Turkish invasion of northeastern Syria has forced all international non-governmental organisations to leave the area, a statement from the Kurdish authorities said Tuesday.

"The humanitarian plight of the displaced in areas targeted by the aggression has worsened with all humanitarian aid being cut and all international organisations ceasing their activities," the statement said.

Turkey and its Syrian rebel proxies launched a cross-border operation on Wednesday against Syrian Kurdish fighters on the other side of the frontier.

Almost a week of deadly bombardment and fighting has killed dozens of civilians, mostly on the Kurdish side, and prompted at least 160,000 to flee their homes.

On Monday, international non-governmental organisation Mercy Corps said it was suspending its operations in the area and evacuating international staff.

"We just cannot effectively operate with the heavy shelling, roads closing, and the various and constantly changing armed actors in the

areas where we are working," said Made Ferguson, Mercy Corps' deputy country director for Syria.

"This is our nightmare scenario. There are tens of thousands of people on the run and we have no way of getting to them," he said.

Mercy Corps says it has been operating in northeastern Syria since 2014, and helping with emergency relief efforts including providing fresh water since the start of the Turkish invasion.

The organisation would be exploring alternative options to deliver aid to those in need, Ferguson said.

On Monday, the UN humanitarian agency OCHA said "more NGO staff had to withdraw and suspend operations".

"As of 14 October, international staff of cross-border NGOs are primarily relocating to Arbil and Dohuk in Iraq," it said.

"The United Nations and its partners remain extremely concerned about the safety and security of all of their -? hundreds of ?- Syrian staff," OCHA said.

The World Food Programme said its operations were ongoing.

"We are continuing to send emergency food supplies as well as the food we usually send each food," the UN agency's spokesman Herve Verhoosel said, despite a few security concerns.

The UN children's fund UNICEF was also continuing to work in camps in Hassakeh province, a spokeswoman said.

The UN refugee agency UNHCR said it had assisted more than 30,000 people since the start of the escalation, but had no access since Tuesday to a camp for the displaced in Ain Issa.

The Kurds said around 800 relatives of Islamic State group fighters have escaped the camp after Turkish bombardment nearby, but Ankara claims they were freed.

The Kurds have been a key US ally in fighting IS in Syria, and run camps for the displaced in areas they control housing tens of thousands of people including alleged IS family members.

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15/10/2019
Berlin (AFP)

Germany urges 'restraint' after Turks and Kurds clash on streets

German authorities on Tuesday appealed to Turkish and Kurdish communities to avoid echoing the Middle Eastern conflict, after clashes between the two groups over Ankara's offensive in northeastern Syria.

Police said at least five people had been injured in fights between the two communities late on Monday.

"We have a responsibility to prevent the conflict in the region becoming a conflict in our society... in Germany," integration commissioner Annette Widmann-Mauz told the Funke newspaper group.

"I expect all sides, especially migrant organisations and religious communities, to take responsibility and contribute to restraint."

The commissioner advises the government on integration and serves as a point of contact for migrants and community organisations.

The clashes happened as around 350 people marched through the western city of Heme on Monday protesting Turkey's offensive in Kurdish-controlled areas of Syria, police said in a statement.

They were "provoked with hand signals" by people drinking at a nearby kiosk, the statement added.

"Some of them stormed into the kiosk, attacked two people inside and injured them" and they also broke a window.

The demonstration continued and someone threw a bottle at the marchers from a Turkish-owned cafe as they passed.

"The reaction was very emotional and angry" as several participants again rushed into the cafe, breaking windows and furniture and injuring at least one person inside, as well as a police officer who intervened.

Nevertheless, "the police were able to calm the situation".

Among the five people hurt was the organiser of the march. He, too, was attacked when he tried to stop the violence.

Of the roughly three million people with Turkish nationality or roots living in Germany, around one million are Kurds.

Politicians regularly warn of tensions between the two communities, which have been stoked by Turkey's offensive against Kurdish fighters inside Syria.

- Call for calm -

"According to the 30-year-old Turkish citizen, the men had assaulted him because of the jacket he was wearing, which had a Turkish national flag on it," a Berlin police statement said.

The leader of the Kurdish community in Germany, Ali Ertan Toprak, called Tuesday for calm.

"Our message is: do not let yourself be provoked. Do not react to provocations from the Turkish nationalist side," he told Funke.

"If there are riots, it will harm our cause," Toprak said. Kurds had "no interest in violence spreading on German streets".

Turkish troops moved last Wednesday into the Syrian border zone controlled by Kurdish militias, which helped a Western-led coalition fight Islamic State (IS) jihadists but are accused of terrorism by Ankara.

Germany, along with European allies such as France, has condemned the offensive and halted arms exports to Turkey.



15/10/2019
Beirut (AFP)

Syria Kurds keep Turkey at bay in border town: monitor

Syria's Kurds put up stiff resistance Tuesday around an ethnically divided border town that is a key goal of Ankara's nearly week-old invasion, a war monitor reported.

The Syrian Democratic Forces, the de-facto army of the Kurdish administration in northeast Syria, "launched a major counterattack overnight against Turkish forces and their Syrian proxies near Ras al-Ain," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The Britain-based monitor said "fortifications, tunnel networks and a continuous supply of reinforcements" had enabled the SDF to hold off Turkish efforts to take the town.

An AFP correspondent in the area said clashes continued on Tuesday, despite repeated claims by Ankara in recent days that it had captured the area.

The Turkish invasion has already killed 70 civilians and 135 SDF fighters since its launch on October 9, according to the Observatory.

The monitor has put the number of pro-Turkish Syrian fighters killed at 120.

The United Nations says 160,000 people have fled their homes.

Further west, Ankara's Syrian proxies battled pro-Kurdish fighters around the strategic city of Manbij overnight, the monitor said.

The Observatory said that pro-Ankara fighters were battling forces loyal to Manbij's Military Council, a governing body linked to the Kurdish administration in northeastern Syria.

This came after Damascus said it had dispatched troops to the city as part of an agreement with the

Kurds announced on Sunday to contain Ankara's advance.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said he expects Kurdish forces to withdraw from Manbij, which lies some 30 kilometres (20 miles) south of the Turkish border.

Turkey wants to create a 30 kilometre wide buffer zone along the border to keep away Kurdish forces it regards as "terrorists" and provide a resettlement area for some of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees currently on its soil.

The United States said it was withdrawing all of its 1,000 troops in northeastern Syria, keeping only a residual contingent of some 150 troops in the south at the Al-Tanf base near the borders with Jordan and Iraq.

The Guardian October 10, 2019
By Dan Sabbagh

UK suspends arms exports to Turkey to prevent use in Syria

Foreign secretary condemns Turkish invasion as reckless and counterproductive

The UK is suspending the granting of arms export licences to Turkey for weapons that might be used during military operations in Syria, the foreign secretary has said.

Dominic Raab also condemned Turkey's invasion of Syria, saying it risked worsening the humanitarian crisis and undermined the international effort to focus on defeating Islamic State terrorism. "This is not the action we expected from an ally. It is reckless. It is counterproductive and plays straight into the hands of Russia, and indeed the Assad regime," he told MPs.

Turkish troops entered north-east Syria last week in an offensive against the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which Ankara has long maintained is an offshoot of the militant Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK). The assault was triggered by Donald Trump's announcement that US troops would withdraw from the Kurdish-held area.

The UK has supplied £1.1bn of arms to Turkey since 2014 and it is not clear how UK trade officials will be able to determine if the arms could be used in Syria.

Raab also said the UK would consider possible economic sanctions against Turkey, but said the balance of opinion within the EU at this stage was that it was doubtful whether they would achieve the goal of ending the Turkish offensive. He ruled out a no-fly zone in northern Syria as impractical.

Trump's announcement just over a week ago that he was withdrawing US troops has been widely viewed as a historic foreign policy blunder.

Raab implicitly criticised Trump, saying the withdrawal had sent the wrong message to the US's allies and destabilised broader efforts to fight Isis.

A threat by the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to flood Europe with refugees was totally unacceptable and "not the kind of language we expect from a Nato ally", Raab added.

Raab also said the UK was looking to give safe passage back to the UK for unaccompanied British children and orphans of Isis fighters, but conceded the British policy of seeking to prosecute foreign fighters in the region had been made more difficult by the arrival of Syrian regime forces.

The government was criticised by Labour and Scottish National party MPs for initially resisting a push at the EU foreign affairs council on Monday to condemn the Turkish offensive. He countered that the British aim had been to produce a balanced EU statement that



Turkey-backed Syrian opposition fighters fire a heavy machine gun towards Kurdish fighters in Syria. Photograph: AP

acknowledged Turkish security concerns about the presence of Kurds belonging to the PKK – which Turkey, the UK, the US and others consider a terrorist group – in Kurdish-administered north-east Syria.

He also warned against "doing anything that might drive Turkey further into the arms of Russia and President Putin".

The British stance at the EU has been seen by some as a glimpse of a post-Brexit British foreign policy in which the search for markets, and trade deals, will need to be put ahead of solidarity with any European human rights foreign policy.

The exchanges in parliament on Tuesday were remarkable for the degree of Conservative backbench criticism of Trump. Tom Tugendhat, the chair of the foreign affairs select committee, asked Raab if he could think of any decision by an ally that "has so exposed our troops in combat, weakened our alliances in the region, undermined our essential security partnership in Nato and empowered our enemies in Russia and Iran".

The former defence minister Tobias Ellwood said Trump's action had triggered a tragic chain of events that could change the ethnic makeup of Syria and give Russia and Iran ever greater leverage. Direct conflict between Russia and Turkey was coming ever closer, he warned.

The former cabinet minister David Davis described the episode as a geo-strategic disaster.

Earlier Jeremy Hunt, the former foreign secretary, said Trump had made a profound strategic mistake by abandoning the Kurds.

"We are probably looking at an end game where Assad has much more territory, Russia has another vassal state and the west's role – particularly America's – is dramatically reduced," he said.

Arms trade campaigners welcomed the British move, and said the UK had "clearly been shamed" into action after other European countries made a similar decision.

Andrew Smith from the Campaign Against Arms Trade said any suspension could not only be limited to future arms sales and must also affect the hundreds of millions of pounds worth of arms that have been licensed over recent years.

"This should also mark a turning point in UK foreign policy in Turkey," Smith said. "In 2018 Turkish forces bombed Afrin and it made no difference to arms sales or military collaboration. If this move is to be more than symbolic then there can be no return to business as usual. It's time that the rights of Kurdish people were finally put ahead of arms company profits."

America must protect the Kurds from the Turkish tyrant

There are three unpardonable sins in modern society. I'm not talking about sins from the Bible, although these are indeed violations of universal Jewish values. I am referring specifically to a phenomenon that goes beyond the fundamental commandment, "Thou shalt not kill."

The first and most abominable sin is to commit genocide, defined in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." Mass murder has become all too familiar in the last century:

- In 1915, the Turks slaughtered perhaps 1.5 million people.
- Six million Jews were murdered during the Holocaust.
- From 1975-1979, Pol Pot killed as many as three million Cambodians.
- More than 800,000 Tutsi were massacred in Rwanda in 1994.
- The ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims by Serbs in 1995.

The second sin is to be a bystander as these slaughters take place. Genocide would not be possible if world leaders acted to prevent mass murder and acted against those who ignore their warnings. Ethnic cleansing does not occur in secret. Despite the lengths to which they went to conceal their crimes, the world knew the Nazis were exterminating the Jews. The pope, Franklin Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill all were aware of the Holocaust and failed to stop it before nearly all European Jewry was destroyed.

The third sin is to in any way facilitate or give even the impression of approval of genocide. Knowingly allowing someone who has threatened genocide to carry out their plan is unforgivable. Failing to speak out when leaders threaten to exterminate a people or act against them is equally indefensible. Worst of all is to allow them to acquire the means to fulfill their threats. When the Iranians repeatedly vowed to wipe Israel off the map, it was unforgivable for then-president Barack Obama to reward them with a \$150 billion windfall and sign a nuclear agreement that did not prevent them from engaging in terrorism, developing ballistic missiles or pursuing their goal of building a nuclear weapon. It was his support for this deal and his failure to speak out against Iran's plans to annihilate the Jewish people over which [Sen. Cory Booker](#) – once my closest friend – and I suffered a serious rupture in our relationship.

President [Donald Trump](#) reversed Obama's catastrophic Iran policy and has been a staunch defender of Israel. He has also defended Arab life by firing cruise missiles at the arch-butcher Bashar Assad after the President of Syria gassed innocent Muslims in Aleppo and other parts of the country, something President Obama refused to do, which is why the president must commit to protecting our Kurdish allies from the Muslim extremist tyrant of Turkey.

The Syrian government, with the help of Russia and Iran, has been engaged in what meets the definition of genocide against the people of Syria since 2011. The massacres have included the use of chemical weapons by Assad on his own people, sparing no one, including women and

President Trump's decision to fire missiles at Syria following a chemical weapons attack early in his term showed a moral conviction that president Obama – for all his talk – lacked. But we must now do more as the use of chemical weapons has continued.

Obama's failure to enforce his red line emboldened Assad to continue his genocidal campaign. Now it's Erdogan of Turkey who wants to take it further, using the withdrawal from Syria of US troops – who, though only fifty in number, served as a tripwire against Turkish aggression – to decimate our Kurdish allies who are unprotected from the Turkish Army. We cannot betray our ally and acquiesce to the wishes of the Turkish autocrat. President Trump was right to



KURDS LIVING in Greece shout slogans while burning a poster depicting Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan during a demonstration against Turkey's military action in northeastern Syria, in Athens, Friday. (photo credit: ALKIS KONSTANTINIDIS / REUTERS)

children. The entire Western world is guilty of the second sin of standing by and allowing this to go on for the last eight years.

President Obama gave his own green light to these mass atrocities when he said that the use of chemical weapons was a red line, and then did nothing when the Syrian government crossed it and continued to gas its own people. The rest of the world never bothered establishing any red lines, giving the murderers the freedom to kill tens of thousands of innocent civilians and create a massive refugee problem.

threaten Erdogan with the most severe sanctions if his aggression continues, but Erdogan took the president's withdrawal of US troops as a signal, in the first place, that his aggression would go unchallenged.

The removal of these troops has been criticized by the president's staunchest Republican allies as well as military leaders and Middle East experts. The president may wish to extricate America from endless Middle East wars. But as many of these critics noted, this action has several negative consequences. Besides potentially rejuvenating ISIS, the most serious is to make our allies

not only in the Middle East but around the world question whether the United States will stand by them.

One of those allies is Israel. This president has been the most pro-Israel US president in history. But Israel is rightly alarmed by unchecked Turkish aggression.

ERDOGAN IS an antisemite. His hatred of the Jewish people and Israel is not transactional but ideological. He has accused Israelis of being Nazis and has repeatedly and falsely accused Israel of genocide. He has also destroyed Turkey's democracy. He must be stopped from destroying the Kurds.

Turkey's aggression also harms Israel by hurting one of its allies – the Kurds – and giving new confidence to the Iranians that the United States will not take military action to prevent their hegemonic activities and consolidation of forces inside Syria. It was Obama's withdrawal of US

troops from Iraq that first emboldened the Iranians. That mistake should not be repeated by a president who has proven himself to be Israel's staunchest ally.

While the American withdrawal of troops has been the focus of critics, let us not ignore the continued complicity of the Europeans who have stood on the sidelines throughout the mass slaughter in Syria. They are doing nothing now to prevent Turkey from conducting its own campaign of ethnic cleansing.

Perhaps the only silver lining is the betrayal of the Kurds is a validation of Zionism. I agree with Yossi Alpher, who wrote in the Forward, "For anyone who has entertained doubts about the need for a state for the Jewish people, the Kurds represent a tragic reminder. They are consistently being abandoned to an ugly fate because they don't have a country."

Mr. President, you have shown your commit-

ment to protecting innocent Arab life with your attack on Assad when he gassed his people. Now the United States must show the same commitment in making it clear to Erdogan that slaughtering the Kurds is a red line that he dare not cross lest he incur American wrath. Set up a no-fly zone and tell Erdogan in no uncertain terms that his atrocities against the Kurds will be punished. Europe is feckless, Mr. President. Only the United States can stand for morality and serve as the defender of all people against the threat of genocide.

You did it with Assad. Now do it with Erdogan and Turkey.

The writer, 'America's Rabbi,' whom The Washington Post calls 'the most famous Rabbi in America,' is the author of Judaism for Everyone and Renewal: The Seven Vital Values of the Jewish Faith. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram @RabbiShmuley.

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POST [IPOST.com](http://POST.com)

For Kurds, Trump's era was a complete betrayal

Two years ago ,when Trump took office. Kurds wondered, like the rest of the world who will be the new president of the United States .The Kurds, who have given great human sacrifices in their fight against Islamic State (ISIS), were observing anxiously the positions and new policies of the new administration.

The Kurdish issue at that time was in a critical stage in light of the huge changes that hit the Middle East region because of the fight against ISIS and the Arab spring .The Kurds always remember how the super powers were unfair to them in the 1920s, when Kurdistan was divided and Kurdish demands were abandoned to satisfy Turkey's desire. And since then, with almost a century of oppression and injustice ,the Kurdish uprisings did not stop to achieve the aspirations of the Kurdish nation in all parts of Kurdistan .

Kurdish hopes

In the early months of Trump presidency, there were Kurdish hopes ,and a sense of optimism in the Kurdish street with the arrival of the new administration. The Kurdish people hoped that President Trump will correct the historical mistake made by the West which prevented the formation of a Kurdish state in the twentieth century and to recognize the map of the Kurdish state. They hoped that the Trump administration will put an end to a chapter of abandonments and disappointments in the history of relations between the Kurds and Americans ,wishing that these bitter memories will be vanished forever, so eventually they will be able to determine their future.

As a sign of their love to the new president, new Kurdish babies and restaurants were named Trump .

I was among those people who were optimistic about Trump and argued that he might be the godfather of the Kurdish state in an article I wrote two years ago.

Kurdish disappointments

After Two years of Trump presidency ,the Kurds are disappointed again and facing a complete betrayal in all parts of Kurdistan .The great human sacrifices that the Kurds have given in the battle against ISIS were not enough for Trump to side with them in many fundamental issues. Most recently, The Kurdish areas in Syria are under attacks of the forces of darkness, where there is a war of ethnic cleansing and demographic changes by the Turkish army and its proxies. The Syrian Kurds have been sidelined in any plans for Syria's future.

Under Trump administration ,the Kurds lost control of two key Kurdish cities in Kirkuk and Afrin .Civilians suffer from demographic changes and displacement after they living in stability and peacefulness under the Kurdish administration .

Trump did not support the biggest Kurdish dream of independence, the referendum of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, which was very successful with a very high percentage of Kurdish votes.

In Kurdish regions of Turkey, Kurdish leaders,

politicians and parliamentarians are in the jails of the tyrant Erdogan .

Kurdish citizens in Iran are still subject to executions and arrests and do not have any national and cultural rights .

It worth to mention that despite of all these disappointments ,there have been no single cases of retaliation and assault on the U.S forces not even by throwing a stone on American soldiers ,and the American flag has not been burned anywhere in the Kurdish areas .

The Kurdish people are peaceful and respect the honor of friendship ,but they are victims of Geography which put them among wolves and bloody thirst vampires ,and the broken American promises.

To the Kurdish civilians who are the target of Turkish invasion due to president Trump wrong decisions and policies, they will remember Trump as a man who left them to be slaughtered, and his era was a complete betrayal , for them Trump is a traitor.

The best Kurdish message that he can receive are the words of the Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani "The blood of the Kurds is far more valuable than money and weapons"

The author is a Syrian Kurd journalist and Kurdish affairs analyst based in Erbil ,Iraqi Kurdistan.

Offensive turque contre les Kurdes : «Que la France nous envoie des armes ou des soldats»

Les Kurdes de Syrie ont commencé à enterrer leurs morts, victimes de l'offensive militaire turque déclenchée mercredi 9 octobre. Au prix de combats acharnés, ils tentaient ce mardi de résister à l'assaut des hommes d'Ankara sur la ville frontalière de Ras al-Aïn. Face à eux, les tirs d'artilleries et les frappes n'ont pas faibli. Recep Tayyip Erdogan reste en effet déterminé à poursuivre cette intervention destinée à établir une zone tampon avec le nord de la Syrie, n'en déplaise à Donald Trump. Le président des Etats-Unis a toutefois semblé changer de pied sous la pression de l'opinion américaine. Après avoir annoncé le retrait de ses « boys » du nord syrien, laissant les Kurdes à la merci de leurs ennemis, « The Donald » s'est dit prêt à « détruire l'économie turque ».

En attendant, sur le front diplomatique, les Européens tentent de donner de la voix. Plusieurs pays, à l'instar de la France, ont annoncé la suspension de leurs exportations d'armes vers la Turquie. A la demande de l'Union européenne, une nouvelle réunion du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU devrait se tenir mercredi, à New York. Même la Chine, rétive à toute forme d'ingérence dans les affaires étrangères, a appelé Ankara à stopper le massacre. Les Kurdes, eux, appellent la communauté internationale à l'aide. En particulier la France, avec qui ils ont combattu les djihadistes de l'organisation terroriste Etat islamique.

Responsable des relations extérieures du Conseil démocratique kurde en France (CDKF), qui représente le Rojava -le Kurdistan syrien, autonome de facto-, Murat Polat lance un appel à Emmanuel Macron et propose que des soldats français remplacent les « boys » américains.

Qu'attendez-vous comme réponse forte internationale, que demandez-vous à la France ?

MURAT POLAT. Nous demandons à la France de prendre la tête de nos alliés, pour nous protéger contre l'agression de la Turquie. La France est une voix forte, a un énorme poids international. Nous attendons qu'elle aille plus loin que des déclarations, que des coups de fil au président Trump, à la chancelière Merkel ou à la Turquie.



Les forces kurdes combattent les Turcs dans la ville frontalière clé de Ras al-Aïn, dans le nord-est de la Syrie, ce mardi. AFP/Ozan Kose

Concrètement, quoi faire ?

Elle doit agir de façon directe. Soit en nous fournissant des armes, soit en envoyant des soldats sur le terrain, pour remplacer les Américains et s'interposer entre les populations kurdes et les forces turques.

Cela pourrait être efficace ?

Bien sûr. Tant qu'il y avait des forces de l'Otan au Rojava (*NDLR : le territoire kurde autoproclamé autonome au nord-est du pays*), la Turquie ne prenait pas le risque d'attaquer ses alliés (*elle est membre de l'Otan*).

Mais Macron vient au contraire d'ordonner le retrait des forces spéciales présentes en Syrie...

C'est pour une question de sécurité, liée au retrait des Américains, puisque ce sont eux qui assuraient la logistique sur le terrain. Jusqu'à leur départ, les militaires alliés conseillaient les combattants kurdes sur le plan militaire. C'était une mission de formation et de renseignement. Aujourd'hui nous demandons à la France d'intervenir avec sa propre logistique et avec d'autres alliés européens.

Quelle logistique, des avions de transports, des drones ?

Je ne peux pas rentrer dans le détail, il y a des éléments secrets, internes à l'Otan. Disons que, jusqu'ici, pour se rendre sur place, les Français avaient recours à l'aviation américaine.

De quel type d'armes avez-vous besoin ?

Si cette guerre doit durer, on a besoin d'armes anti-aériennes et anti-chars. Ce sont les bombardements qui créent le plus de dégâts et permettent à ces milices djihadistes pro-turques sur le terrain de profiter de la situation en nous attaquant. Sans cette aviation, les Kurdes sont en mesure de se défendre, on l'a bien vu lors de la guerre contre Daech.

Vous avez des contacts avec les autorités politiques françaises, l'Elysée ?

Des délégations du Rojava ont été reçues et écoutées par des conseillers du président Macron. Il n'y a aucun problème sur la compréhension de la situation, mais il y en a un sur les actions concrètes à mener contre la Turquie. Nous attendons de la France -et de l'Europe- qu'elles prennent ses responsabilités, ne reste pas indexée sur la politique américaine. Il faut qu'elle montre son indépendance.

Los Angeles Times 15-10-2019
By Tracy Wilkinson

News Analysis: Trump's rash exit from Syria emboldens Russia and horrifies Israel

For the last 2½ years of haphazard foreign policy under President Trump, the refrain of reassurance was that at least the unconventional leader had not been faced with a major international crisis.

Now, Trump faces one of his own making — something he started and might not be able to stop.

Until now, the consequences of Trump's foreign policy decisions usually unfolded in slow motion, such as the withdrawals from the Paris climate accord and the Iran nuclear deal, and the subjugation of Palestinians in the Mideast peace process.

By contrast, his rash decision to withdraw the last U.S. troops in northeastern Syria has been the most immediately consequential — and lethal — of his presidency.



Syrian Kurds rest after crossing the border between Syria and Turkey near the town of Suruc on Friday. (Ilyas Akengin / AFP/Getty Images)

It quickly led to the slaughter of Syrian Kurds — U.S. allies who helped defeat Islamic State militants — and a brutal Turkish invasion across Syria's border that put retreating U.S. troops at risk and still threatens to spiral into a broader conflict, despite Trump's frantic attempts now to contain it.

It has been a gift for Russia, which stepped into the vacuum left by the United States, and to Syrian President Bashar Assad, a U.S. foe who im-

mediately agreed to a Russian-brokered deal with the Kurds to help them confront Turkish incursions.

The escape of Islamic State militants in the ensuing chaos is raising fears that the terrorist group that Trump often boasts of defeating could come roaring back to life.

And U.S. allies in the region such as Israel, which reportedly received no warning of Trump's plans, now must quickly adjust to the shifting dynamics within its longtime enemy Syria while wondering: If Trump can so easily betray the Kurds, might he do the same to Israel?

Critics say Trump ignored all the warnings — as well as counsel from advisors — about how vulnerable the Syrian Kurds were and of the inevitably dire fallout.

The debacle with Syria encapsulates many of the characteristics that have propelled Trump as a politician but are potentially hazardous for a world leader: impetuosity; a contempt for expertise, especially that of the State Department's career foreign-service officers; a focus on narrow, short-term, transactional interests; an absolute trust in his own instincts; and a penchant to flip-flop and finger-point.

“This has been building for 2½ years, and even-

tually the chickens come home to roost,” said William Burns, former deputy secretary of State and president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in an interview.

“The only surprise is that it took this long to have such a serious crisis,” he added.

Trump, in pursuing what he calls an “America first” policy in the world, has prided himself on shaking up the status quo. Now he is witnessing what can go so wrong in such a practice.

“This has been really illustrative, in the most graphic way we have seen, of the dangers of a president going with his gut,” said Hal Brands, a former Pentagon analyst now at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington. Trump “junked the balancing act” that had sustained U.S. operations in Syria, while angering both Turkey and its enemy, the Syrian Kurds, Brands said. “It's the worst of both worlds, a scenario one would imagine is not easy to achieve.”

Trump last week announced he was withdrawing the estimated 1,000 U.S. troops from small bases in northeastern Syria, where for the last several years they trained, equipped and fought alongside Syrian Kurdish militias to take back territory from Islamic State and stave off forces of Assad, who is backed by Russia and Iran.

His decision, Trump said, came after a single phone call with Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's president, who has long sought to wipe out Syrian Kurds he considers terrorists. Erdogan appeared to take Trump's mild admonitions to tread carefully as a green light to invade northern Syria — where he would align with Russia.

Within 72 hours, a reported 200 Kurds had been killed, terrified refugees were fleeing once again to avoid Turkish bombardment, and Islamic State detainees were reportedly escaping by the hundreds. Trump's action has triggered a cascade of presumably unintended consequences that will roil the Middle East and beyond for years.

Even fellow Republicans were taken aback. “Abandoning this fight now and withdrawing U.S. forces from Syria would re-create the very conditions that we have worked hard to destroy and invite the resurgence of” Islamic State, said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.).

McConnell warned that the withdrawal, and the betrayal of the Kurds, would create “a broader power vacuum in Syria that will be exploited by Iran and Russia, a catastrophic outcome for the United States’ strategic interests.”

Indeed, the U.S. exit was celebrated by Moscow and Tehran — along with Assad, who Washington once vowed must be deposed but now, thanks to Russia and Iran, has all but won an 8-year-long Syrian civil war that has cost hundreds of thousands of lives.

In addition to backing Assad, Russia struck a bargain with Erdogan, and now believes its goal has been achieved: driving the United States out of Syria and securing its expansive footprint in the region, regaining status as a major player in the Middle East. Russia rushed in to fill the void left by the U.S., moving in some cases into abandoned U.S. facilities, according to reports from the region. Iran, too, was eager to see the Americans out of Syria.

Trump is the unsuspecting tourist in a Middle Eastern bazaar. Trump may think he struck a great deal. But he’s now the joke of the souk

Aykan Erdemir, former Turkish parliamentarian

Trump fell for whatever empty promises Erdogan might have made to him, and Erdogan in turn was a pawn of Moscow, said Aykan Erdemir, a former Turkish lawmaker who is now a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies in Washington.

“Erdogan delivered enormous dividends for his investors” Russia and Iran, Erdemir said in an

interview. “And Trump is the unsuspecting tourist in a Middle Eastern bazaar. Trump may think he struck a great deal. But he’s now the joke of the souk.”

No single act by Trump has so starkly illustrated his rejection of diplomatic norms and deliberative policy, and his embrace of erratic execution, as has the Syria withdrawal, current and former officials say. The Kurds who were U.S. allies have been forced to turn to their enemy, Assad, and Russia for protection from Turkey, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

And the abandonment of the Kurds has caused allies to doubt U.S. trustworthiness.

“It causes doubt about our reliability and drift, while adversaries and rivals see an opportunity,” said Burns, a 33-year veteran of American diplomacy. Potentially dangerous countries such as Iran and North Korea “may be tempted to call Trump’s bluff” and take ever-more-bellucose actions, he warned.

Another big loser is Israel.

Until now, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has enjoyed extraordinarily **close and unquestioningly loyal relations with Trump**. The U.S. president seemed willing to grant Netanyahu’s every wish: He recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and moved the U.S. Embassy to the contested holy city, then put icing on the cake by also recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, captured from Syria in the 1967 Middle East War. Both steps contravened international law and decades of U.S. policy.

More recently, Trump seems to have cooled on Netanyahu, who has suffered crippling blows in two national elections — twice failing to win the parliamentary majority that would allow him to form a government.

As far as is known, Trump did not give Netanyahu advance warning of his decision to pull out of northern Syria. Israelis, who have long viewed their northern neighbor as a threat because of Syria’s volatility and the heavy presence of Iranian proxies, reacted in horror.

“Israel came face to face with the cold, hard reality of the damage caused by Trump’s isolationist instincts, and chaotic, impulsive decision-making,” Daniel Shapiro, a former U.S. ambassador to Israel, wrote on Twitter.

Stung by the domestic backlash over Trump’s actions, especially among Republicans, the administration is now trying to find a way to resolve the crisis by calling for a cease-fire and slapping economic sanctions on Ankara. Trump’s advisors also have sought to blame the chaos on others.

“This was not caused by any action of President Trump,” a senior administration official told reporters Monday evening. The official demanded anonymity to discuss policy. “Nothing we did was going to deter the Turks from what they wanted to do. President Erdogan was going to act regardless.”

Few elsewhere seemed satisfied with that explanation. Said Brands of Johns Hopkins: “We are witnessing in real time the collapse of American influence in key parts of the Middle East.”

The Washington Times Lauren Meier
15 octobre 2019

Loss of major ally a familiar refrain for Kurds.

They are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East, one of the world’s most populous stateless peoples, and a geopolitical headache in every country where they have settled.

President Trump’s decision to withdraw U.S. forces providing a security umbrella in northern Syria has once again put the global spotlight on the tortured history of the Kurds, who once again find themselves scrambling for allies and a place to call their own in the face of a powerful Turkish offensive.

It’s a familiar story.

In Turkey itself, the government in Ankara has been waging a decades-long battle with a Kurdish separatist movement. In Iraq, the government in Baghdad has clashed with the independence leanings of the country’s Kurdish enclave in the north. Even in Iran, the government in Tehran has nervously watched Kurdish independence movements



Syrian Kurdish fighters of Turkey-backed Free Syrian Army enter Turkey from Syria to join fighting alongside Turkish forces against US-backed Kurds, in Syria, Friday, Oct. 11, 2019. Turkish forces pushed deeper into northeastern Syria on Friday, the third day of Ankara’s cross-border offensive against Syrian Kurdish fighters that has set off another mass displacement of civilians and met with widespread criticism from the international community.(Ugur Can/DHA via AP)

across the region for fear they could spread to Iran's small Kurdish population as well.

The lands dominated by the Kurds span about 74,000 square miles divided straddling southeastern Turkey, northern Iraq, northeastern Syria and northwestern Iran, and are home to an estimated 25 million to 35 million Kurds. Although they are so populous, the Kurds have never been given their own internationally recognized country.

A promised homeland in the settlement just after World War I was quickly reversed in 1922, and the Kurds were relegated to a problem minority status in their traditional homelands.

"Since the settlement of 1922 a lot has happened to the Kurds, but not always one where they've been able to chart their own destiny," Thomas Warrick, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council specializing in the region, said in an interview.

He added that at times the Kurds have been party to various resistance movements that have in some cases led to "open warfare."

Like the Syrian Kurds, Kurdish activists have long appealed to outside powers in their quest for greater autonomy and protection from local rivals. And the local rivals have long been on the alert to quash the Kurds' nationalist ambitions whenever they arise.

Turkey began restricting the use of the Kurdish language in an effort "to build a Turkish identity," said Mr. Warrick, who for nearly two decades prior worked on Middle East issues at the State Department.

While Kurdish politicians have served in past Turkish governments and served as mayors, the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is just the latest to condemn the militant Kurdish

separatist movement PKK as a terrorist organization. This month's military operation is part of a long-held dynamic to keep Kurds in different countries for linking together.

"Mainstream Turkish political thought has always looked upon the ethnic Kurds as a potential separatists movement," Mr. Warrick explained.

One tragic aspect of modern Kurdish history is that the Kurds have been useful as a tactical weapon in the region's endless conflicts, but never have enough clout to demand statehood as the price of their cooperation.

"Despite a wellspring of mutual respect between Kurds and the West, the one constant has been disappointment and betrayal of the former by the latter," analyst Sebastien Roblin wrote recently in the journal *The National Interest*.



Sarah Moran Garcia
16/10/2019

L'association culturelle kurde de Verviers victime d'une attaque de vandales

Des vandales ont brisé plusieurs vitres du local de l'Association des Peuples du Kurdistan et d'Ailleurs de Verviers. Si l'identité du ou des individus est toujours inconnue, il ne fait aucun doute que l'attaque a été commise par un Turc, selon Hasan Acar.

Les tensions sont grandes entre Turcs et Kurdes depuis l'annonce du président turc Recep Tayyip Erdoğan d'envoyer une offensive chez son voisin. Des tensions qui sont visibles chez nous depuis quelques années. Mais il semblerait que l'annonce d'Erdogan ait mis de l'huile sur le feu. Du moins, c'est ce que l'on peut penser en voyant l'état du local de l'Association des Peuples du Kurdistan et d'Ailleurs, à Verviers.

Elle a en effet été victime d'un acte de vandalisme, dans la nuit du mardi 15 au mercredi 16 octobre, vers 3h. Des individus ont fait exploser trois des vitres de l'APKA. La police est rapidement arrivée sur place et une plainte a été déposée. Si l'identité et l'origine des malfaiteurs n'est pas encore connue, cela ne fait aucun doute pour Hasan Acar, président de l'association : "C'est un acte de la communauté turque. On avait déjà eu un problème de vandalisme du genre, il y a plusieurs années. Un Turc avait lancé des objets sur notre association avant de s'excuser, une fois attrapé. Il disait qu'il avait agi sous influence de l'alcool". Cela faisait un moment qu'aucune attaque du genre n'avait été dirigée contre le local de l'APKA. Son président pense sincèrement que celle-ci fait suite à l'actualité à la frontière entre la Turquie et le Kurdistan.



Ce n'est pas la première fois que des centres sont visés par ce genre d'attaque, en Belgique. En 2007, un cocktail molotov avait été balancé sur le centre culturel kurde de Saint-Josse. Celui-ci avait été ravagé par les flammes et des affrontements entre les communautés du Kurdistan et de Turquie avaient alors éclaté. En 2013, c'est à Genk qu'a eu lieu un attentat à la bombe incendiaire contre les Kurdes.



Marturin S. ATCHA
16/10/2019

Turquie: quatre maires pro-kurdes arrêtés dans le Sud-Est du pays

En Turquie, le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan est décidé à continuer la purge. Loin du champ de bataille dans le nord de la Syrie, c'est dans son propre pays qu'il a procédé à l'arrestation des élus pro-Kurdes.

Quatre maires turcs ont été arrêtés mardi pour leur supposé lien avec les Kurdes, ennemis premiers d'Ankara. Selon Hespess, il s'agit des maires des villes de Hakkari, Yuksekova, Ercis et Nusaybin dans le sud-Est du pays. Pour les autorités, ces élus entretiennent des liens « terroristes » avec le parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie. Ces nouvelles arrestations confirment les ambitions du président turc à en finir avec les Kurdes.

Depuis le mercredi dernier, il a lancé une opération dénommée « source de paix » dans le nord de la Syrie. Cette offensive contre les forces kurdes provoque de vives réactions à travers le monde. Les Etats-Unis, pour faire reculer Ankara, a sanctionné trois ministres du régime turc. Ce qui n'a pas encore fait réagir les autorités.



Police Turquie@France 24



16/10/2019

De l'allié au « traître »: comment les Kurdes et la coalition internationale ont vaincu Daesh ensemble

Alliés des Occidentaux le temps de la lutte contre Daesh, les forces de combat kurdes ont perdu le soutien militaire américain en Syrie, après cinq années de lutte au sol contre le groupe terroriste.

Après l'annonce du retrait des troupes américaines du nord syrien, le 9 octobre la Turquie a lancé [une opération militaire contre la milice kurde des Unités de protection du peuple \(YPG\)](#) dans cette zone. Le désistement américain a été taxé de "trahison" par les Kurdes, qui ont participé aux côtés de la coalition internationale à la lutte contre l'organisation terroriste Daesh, dans laquelle ils ont perdu des milliers d'hommes et de femmes.

Les Forces Démocratiques Syriennes (FDS), composées de milices kurdes, ont accusé les Américains [de les avoir "abandonnés" en retirant leurs troupes](#) de la frontière, évoquant "un coup de couteau dans le dos". En près d'une semaine,

au moins 154 combattants des forces kurdes ont été tués dans les affrontements, selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme.

"Les Kurdes ont constitué les forces au sol"

Les membres de "la coalition internationale ont eu très peu de morts au sol lors de leurs interventions contre Daesh", explique Wassim Nasr, journaliste à France 24 et auteur de *État Islamique, le Fait Accompli*, interrogé par BFM TV.com. "Ce sont les Kurdes qui ont constitué les forces au sol de la coalition".

Des membres des forces spéciales de la coalition étaient [et sont encore au sol](#), mais en plus petit nombre et dans un but tactique, de renseignement. Leurs pertes se comptent en dizaines d'hommes, alors que des milliers de combattants kurdes sont tombés sous les balles du groupe terroriste. Dans [un communiqué de mars 2019](#), les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS) parlent de 11.000 morts et de 21.000 blessés dans leurs rangs.

"Ils étaient nos principaux points d'appui au sol pour lutter contre Daesh" a déclaré [au Parisien](#) François Hollande, président en exercice lors de l'offensive de la coalition. "Nos avions ont pu manœuvrer grâce à cette action

conjointe. Et par cette coopération discrète, sur le terrain, nous avons contribué avec les Kurdes à l'éradication de Daesh dans le nord du pays".

Les combattants kurdes ont été "payés, armés, équipés et entraînés par les pays occidentaux, ce qui leur a évité d'envoyer des troupes au sol", explique Wassim Nasr.

"Les Kurdes, sans l'aide de la coalition, n'auraient pas pu avancer"



"Ceci dit, les Kurdes, sans l'aide de la coalition, n'auraient pas pu avancer", continue le spécialiste des mouvements djihadistes. **En 2014 "à Kobané.** [nord de la Syrie], les Kurdes se sont battus contre Daesh, ils ont perdu. Puis la coalition internationale est arrivée, et la force de frappe de leurs avions a permis de reprendre la ville".

Cette alliance entre les combattants kurdes et la coalition, unis contre Daesh, était alors la meilleure solution tactique pour les deux bords. "La coalition n'avait pas de bottes sur le sol, et ces combattants n'avaient pas de soutien aérien, ils avaient besoin l'un de l'autre", rappelle un analyste des affaires kurdes au *New York Times*. ajoutant "cette collaboration a apporté des résultats énormes".

Le quotidien américain rappelle notamment que l'armée a "supplié" les FDS d'aller se battre dans les zones arabes, où ils ont repris par exemple la ville de Raqqa. Mais cinq ans après le début du conflit avec le groupe terroriste, il semble

difficile pour les groupes kurdes de transformer leurs victoires militaires en victoires politiques.

Le Kurdistan syrien,

"un rêve fou"

Car une fois Daesh débouté et les acteurs internationaux repartis, les anciens conflits territoriaux refont surface, avec les envies, pour les Kurdes syriens, de former leur région autonome. Selon Wassim Nasr, "la

reconnaissance d'un Kurdistan syrien, à l'image du Kurdistan irakien, est un rêve fou", qui s'est envolé avec le départ des Américains. "A Qamishli [ville syrienne du nord] l'espoir d'un Kurdistan syrien s'est écroulé sous les bombes turques", titre un reportage du *Figaro*.

"Très clairement, les forces kurdes se sont dits que c'est dans la surenchère militaire contre Daesh qu'ils obtiendraient un parapluie occidental", explique Boris James, maître de conférence en histoire à l'université de Montpellier III, spécialiste du Proche-Orient, interrogé par BFMTV.com.

La prise de Raqqa par les FDS n'était par exemple "pas du tout nécessaire pour les Kurdes", explique l'historien. "C'est une ville difficile à défendre, mais aussi à garder parce qu'elle n'est pas acquise à la cause kurde". Il s'agissait de remporter des victoires militaires, "d'y aller très fort et de prendre des risques, de forcer le destin".

L'épuisement de la convergence des intérêts

Mais l'épuisement de la convergence des intérêts, soit la lutte contre Daesh, a provoqué la fin de l'alliance entre la coalition internationale et les forces Kurdes. Pour les Américains, mais aussi pour l'Europe, "il est très difficile de manoeuvrer dans un borborygme pareil", déclare Boris James, "ils se retrouvent avec un groupe qui est leur allié, face à un pays qui est censé être leur allié [la Turquie, membre de l'OTAN]". D'autant que la Turquie **menace de rompre ses accords sur l'immigration** avec l'Union Européenne.

"Il n'est de toute façon pas question de remettre en cause les frontières internationales", rappelle l'historien, en particulier dans cette région déjà en proie à l'instabilité.

Plus que la trahison de l'occident brandie par les Kurdes, ce qui inquiète actuellement l'Europe, c'est le relâchement de centaines de jihadistes qui étaient tenus jusque-là par les forces kurdes. Mais face à l'attaque turque, la population kurde fuit, et certains camps sont restés sans garde. Le ministre des Affaires Étrangères français **Jean-Yves Le Drian a dénoncé** "une porte ouverte à Daesh". Dimanche, les autorités kurdes ont par exemple communiqué sur la **fuite de près de 800 proches de jihadistes** étrangers de Daesh. Ce mercredi soir, les forces kurdes ont en parallèle annoncé le "gel" de leurs opérations contre Daesh.

Offensive turque en Syrie: Le Drian dénonce une « porte ouverte à Daesh »

Jean-Yves Le Drian, ministre des Affaires étrangères, était l'invité de BFMTV-RMC ce mercredi matin. Il a évoqué l'offensive turque contre les Kurdes en Syrie.



Jean-Yves Le Drian - BFMTV

Daesh n'est pas vaincu, prévient Jean-Yves Le Drian. Invité de BFMTV-RMC ce mercredi matin, le ministre des Affaires étrangères a déploré, en des termes très nets, l'offensive turque contre les Kurdes dans le nord-est syrien: "Pour Daesh, c'est une porte ouverte, c'est une possibilité de résurgence!" Il a poursuivi, évoquant, en plus de l'opération menée par Ankara, le retrait des troupes américaines de la zone:

"La concomitance entre l'offensive turque et le retrait américain, concomitance qui n'est

apparemment pas fortuite, met la région dans une situation dramatique et met en cause notre propre sécurité. On a considéré Daesh battu, ce n'est pas le cas ! Cette double attitude offre toutes les possibilités pour une résurgence de Daesh."

Le Drian va se rendre en Irak

Sur le terrain, l'offensive turque fait craindre des évasions de jihadistes étrangers détenus par les Kurdes syriens. Ils sont environ 12.000 combattants, dont 2.500 à 3.000 étrangers, selon

des chiffres de sources kurdes. Interrogé à ce sujet, le ministre se veut rassurant:

"À l'heure actuelle et à ma connaissance, les camps où sont des jihadistes sont toujours tenus par les Kurdes. Notre souci est que la sécurité ne soit plus assurée et que les Kurdes abandonnent la garde de ces camps. Il y a là un danger majeur, c'est pourquoi je vais partir prochainement en Irak."

Jean-Yves Le Drian souhaite discuter de la création dans ce pays d'un "dispositif" international pour juger les jihadistes de Daesh, "y compris a priori les combattants français". La France et six autres pays européens - Royaume-Uni, Belgique, Allemagne, Pays-Bas, Suède et Danemark - discutent depuis plusieurs mois de la possible mise en place de ce tribunal international en Irak.

La France "toujours en relation avec les Kurdes"

En parallèle, le ministre des Affaires étrangères que la France était "toujours en relation avec les Kurdes, même aujourd'hui". Alors que les Turcs ont annoncé leur intention de repousser les unités de protection du peuple (YPG) kurdes loin de leur frontière, les considérant comme des "terroristes" notamment du fait de leur lien avec le PKK, le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, Jean-Yves Le Drian a commenté: "Les YPG doivent être suffisamment autonomes avec le PKK et le dire."

Offensive turque en Syrie : "Nous aurons de nouveau des attentats de masse en France", alerte Patrice Francheschi

Au micro d'Europe 1, l'écrivain et aventurier Patrice Francheschi, engagé depuis plusieurs années aux côtés des Kurdes, s'est inquiété mercredi du risque de résurgence terroriste en Occident

si l'armée turque poursuit son offensive dans le nord de la Syrie.

L'offensive turque dans le Kurdistan, au nord de la Syrie, aurait déjà fait plus de 300 morts selon l'Observatoire syrien des Droits de l'Homme. Mardi, le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan

a écarté l'hypothèse d'un cessez-le-feu, en dépit des appels des Occidentaux, notamment des Etats-Unis et de la France, à mettre fin à cette opération militaire d'envergure.

"Ce qui va arriver, si nous Français et Européens ne réagissons pas, c'est que dans un an ou deux,

lorsque les réseaux seront remontés par les djihadistes, nous aurons de nouveau des attentats de masse en France", a voulu alerter mercredi matin, au micro de Julien Pearce sur Europe 1, l'écrivain et aventurier Patrice Francheschi.

Cet officier de réserve, auteur de *Mourir pour Kobané*, combat depuis sept ans aux cotés des Kurdes. "Nous commettons, en abandonnant nos amis et nos alliés, à la fois une faute morale – parce qu'ils ont fait le boulot à notre place contre l'ennemi commun qu'était l'Etat islamique [...] –, et une faute politique", estime Patrice Francheschi. "En abandonnant ce bouclier anti-djihadiste que nous avons installé avec les Kurdes, dans le nord-est de la Syrie sur une surface grande comme quatre fois le Liban, nous retournons sept ans en arrière, avec la réinstallation de djihadistes qui seront recyclés sous un autre nom que Daech, mais qui seront les mêmes."

Pour cet aventurier, les questions de sécurité intérieure en Europe, et notamment en France, sont donc intimement liées au sort des Kurdes. "Pourquoi pensez-vous qu'il n'y a pas d'attentat de masse en France depuis trois ans ? Tout simplement parce que les Kurdes, avec notre aide, ont liquidé les organisations pratiques et tactiques des djihadistes."

"Notre problème, c'est le manque de volonté", fustige celui qui a remporté en 2015 le prix Goncourt de la nouvelle. "On ne sait plus comment faire la guerre, on ne sait plus très bien si on veut la faire, on ne sait plus comment prendre des coups en faisant la guerre, et l'on préfère repousser à plus tard les mesures indispensables que l'on devrait prendre maintenant pour notre sécurité."

Le courage des Kurdes

Patrice Francheschi tient également à saluer la ténacité de ses amis kurdes, seuls face aux forces d'Ankara, alors que les Etats-Unis ont annoncé le retrait de 1.000 de leurs soldats jusqu'à présent stationnés au nord de la Syrie. "Les Kurdes résistent et la défaite apocalyptique que l'on nous présente n'est pas encore tout à fait jouée", relève-t-il.

"Le nord-est de la Syrie est une immense plaine. Une plaine c'est facile à prendre et difficile à défendre. Les Turcs disposent d'une aviation importante, de blindés lourds, d'une artillerie très puissante. Pour l'instant, ils ont écrasé les Kurdes sous le feu", constate Patrice Francheschi. "Cela dit, mes camarades s'étaient préparés depuis longtemps. Tout l'été, on a creusé des tunnels, des remblais, tout ce qu'il fallait pour préparer la défense. Les Kurdes s'attendaient à cette offensive et résistent farouchement."

Europe 1

INTERVIEW

16/10/2019

Bruno Retailleau : "Je pense que nous serions bien inspirés de prendre des sanctions économiques contre la Turquie"

Mardi soir, un meeting transpartisan, "sauvons nos alliés kurdes", était organisé par des élus de différents bords politiques. Des élus de la droite et de gauche ont exprimé leurs soutiens aux populations kurdes en Syrie, visées par une offensive turque lancée la semaine dernière. Invité ce mercredi matin, Bruno Retailleau, sénateur LR de la Vendée présent au meeting, a demandé à ce que des sanctions soient prises contre la Turquie d'Erdogan.

"On est en train de lâcher les Kurdes"

"Il faut utiliser les moyens diplomatiques que nous avons à disposition. Par cette funeste décision de Trump, on est en train de lâcher les Kurdes", a-t-il dénoncé au micro d'Europe 1. "Ce sont pourtant eux qui ont fait le sale boulot. Ce sont eux qui ont accueilli à Erbil, dans le Kurdistan syrien, les minorités persécutées par Daech. J'y étais, moi, en août 2014. Ce sont eux qui ont résisté, notamment avec des femmes combattantes, des Antigone de la liberté".

L'élue LR a estimé qu'il fallait prendre des mesures pour condamner la politique du président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan : "Je pense que nous serions bien inspirés de prendre des sanctions économiques. Quand Vladimir Poutine a envahi la Crimée, on a mis en place des sanctions économiques... Pourquoi ne le fait-on pas avec la Turquie ?" Deuxième proposition



avancée par le sénateur de la Vendée : "Il faudrait décréter une zone d'exclusion aérienne au dessus du nord-est de la Syrie pour que les combattants kurdes puissent être au même niveau d'égalité face à l'envahisseur".

"Il faut être ferme avec la Turquie"

Interrogé sur le chantage exercé par Erdogan, qui a menacé l'Union européenne "d'ouvrir ses portes" et de lui envoyer "3,6 millions de migrants", Bruno Retailleau s'est montré ferme. "L'histoire montre qu'on ne peut pas transiger sur ce chantage, sinon on a le déshonneur mais aussi la guerre. Il faut être très ferme avec la Turquie d'Erdogan parce qu'il ne comprend que

le rapport de force. Ce n'est pas seulement pour les Kurdes que nous devons le faire mais aussi pour nous, parce que cette action est en train de favoriser la résurgence de l'Etat islamique. Tous les observateurs le disent et le voient".

Evoquant la situation des djihadistes français détenus dans des prisons gardés par les Kurdes, Bruno Retailleau a estimé qu'il fallait "envoyer les djihadistes les plus dangereux en Irak". Il a toutefois estimé que les terroristes étrangers devaient être jugés à l'endroit où ils avaient commis leurs crimes : "Je suis allé à plusieurs reprises en Irak et j'ai reçu les témoignages des exactions de l'Etat islamique. Quand le crime est commis sur une terre, il faut que les crimes soient jugés sur cette terre-là".

Trois interpellations après des dégradations sur le consulat de Turquie à Nantes

Deux hommes et une femme, suspectés d'avoir commis des dégradations sur le consulat de Turquie à Nantes, ont été interpellés dans la nuit de mardi à mercredi, a appris l'AFP de sources policières.

La police est intervenue mercredi vers 02H00 après de le déclenchement d'une alarme du consulat de turquie, 20 quai François Mitterrand à Nantes. Sur place, ils ont interpellé deux hommes qui ont refusé de donner leur identité et une femme de 23 ans.

De la peinture verte avait été aspergée sur les murs du bâtiment et de l'essence répandue de long des grilles. Les suspects étaient maculés de peinture verte et l'un d'entre eux essayait d'allumer l'essence, selon la police.

Ils ont été placés en garde à vue au commissariat de Nantes.

La nuit précédente, les pompiers étaient intervenus vers 01H50 après l'appel d'un



témoin signalant un début d'incendie au même endroit, selon la même source.

Le témoin avait indiqué avoir entendu une explosion puis vu des flammes sur le balcon du consulat. Plusieurs tags avaient été apposés tels que «soutien aux kurdes» «dictateur fasciste» ou «Erdogan assassin» avec le A entouré. Un objet incendiaire avait été retrouvé sur le balcon.

Le vice-consul de Turquie à Nantes avait déposé plainte mardi auprès de la police nantaise.

Opération turque en cours

Recep Tayyip Erdogan a annoncé le 9 octobre

le début de l'opération Source de paix dans le nord de la Syrie, menée contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), interdit en Turquie, et le groupe terroriste Daech*. Le même jour, Ras al-Aïn et d'autres villes frontalières syriennes ont été bombardées par l'aviation turque.

Ankara a ensuite annoncé le début de l'opération au sol. Le ministère turc de la Défense nationale a déclaré le 11 octobre avoir pris le contrôle de Ras al-Aïn. Selon l'agence Anadolu, l'armée turque s'est emparée le 13 octobre de la ville de Tall Abyad.

Les militaires français se sont retirés de Minbej, où ils étaient stationnés, tout comme les USA. La police militaire russe et l'armée syrienne occupent désormais la ville.

* Organisation terroriste interdite en Russie

16/10/2019

HUFFPOST

Tribune : Nicolas Dupont-Aignan

Député de l'Essonne, Président de Debout La France

BLOG - Pourquoi la France humiliée ne peut pas jouer son rôle en faveur des Kurdes

La France paye au prix fort au Moyen-Orient une politique étrangère et de défense de soumission à l'OTAN, engagée il y a maintenant plus de 10 ans.

En réintégrant le commandement militaire intégré en 2009, notre pays s'est aligné systématiquement sur la politique étrangère et militaire américaine ainsi que sur les intérêts de certains pays du Golfe, au détriment de tout bon sens et surtout de notre indépendance nationale. Ce faisant, la France ne peut plus jouer son rôle historique de nation championne d'un ordre international multipolaire et humaniste.

La disparition récente de [Jacques Chirac](#) a rappelé aux Français la fierté que représentaient notre liberté et notre diplomatie héritées du Général de Gaulle et de 1000 ans d'Histoire. Le Général ne disait-il pas qu'il existait un "*pacte vingt fois séculaire entre la grandeur de la France et la liberté du monde*"?

La France avait honoré ce pacte en tentant d'empêcher l'invasion de l'Irak et la seconde guerre du Golfe, cataclysme qui produit encore et toujours ses effets les plus terribles sous nos yeux.

Le Général ne disait-il pas qu'il existait un "*pacte vingt fois séculaire entre la grandeur de la France et la liberté du monde*"?

Hélas, force est de constater que notre pays n'honore plus ce pacte au mépris de notre identité et de nos valeurs, en particulier au [Moyen-Orient](#).

Les gouvernements successifs ont eu tout faux [en Syrie](#). En fermant notre ambassade à Damas, en armant des opposants syriens soi-disant modérés, en menaçant le régime d'Assad sans bien sûr jamais passer aux actes, en étant faibles vis-à-vis d'une [Turquie](#) qui joue double jeu avec l'État Islamique, nous avons favorisé notre pire ennemi, celui qui a assassiné 250 innocents sur notre sol par ses ignobles attentats.

Puis les gouvernements ont envoyé des troupes spéciales auprès des Américains dans

le Kurdistan pour réparer les erreurs précédentes.

Aujourd'hui, nous trahissons de fait nos plus fidèles alliés, en étant obligés d'abandonner **les Kurdes** à la suite de la volte-face des États-Unis.

La France qui représentait quelque chose dans cette région du monde s'est ridiculisée et se retrouve prisonnière des faiblesses américaines. Le bilan est catastrophique.

Non seulement le gouvernement français et ses "partenaires" européens manquent à la morale élémentaire, en laissant massacrer un peuple qui nous a aidés à affaiblir considérablement l'État islamique, mais ils continuent à creuser notre tombeau en redonnant de l'air aux jihadistes tout en laissant la Turquie imposer à nouveau son double jeu permanent avec les islamistes! Voyons les choses en face pour une fois!

Les Américains se fichent complètement des conséquences de leur politique sur notre sécurité! Ils ne nous ont jamais remerciés de notre aide pour réparer leurs multiples erreurs!

Les Russes sont devenus les faiseurs de roi dans cette région, alors que nous les avons méprisés pour satisfaire... les Américains!

Les jihadistes qui étaient détenus dans les prisons kurdes s'éparpillent dans la nature et vont revenir sur notre sol pour commettre de nouveaux Bataclan.

La Turquie nous menace ouvertement de laisser déferler sur les côtes européennes des millions de migrants alors que nous leur versons des milliards d'euros d'aides et que leur économie dépend de nos importations!

En réintégrant le commandement militaire intégré en 2009, notre pays s'est aligné sur la politique étrangère américaine ainsi que sur les intérêts de certains pays du Golfe. Ce faisant, la France ne peut plus jouer son rôle historique de nation championne d'un ordre international multipolaire et humaniste.

Il est donc bien loin le temps du Général de



NurPhoto via Getty Images

En soutien au peuple kurde contre l'offensive turque au nord de la Syrie, des manifestants se sont rassemblés Place de la République à Paris, le 12 octobre 2019.

Gaule où la France avait une politique étrangère et de défense aussi bien indépendante qu'intelligente, capable de défendre de vraies valeurs tout en assurant les intérêts de la France! Mais aujourd'hui il ne sert à rien de se lamenter, il faut proposer. Reconnaître ses erreurs est le préalable à tout.

Voilà pourquoi il faut rouvrir notre ambassade à Damas, acter un soutien clair au régime syrien. Il ne s'agit en rien de tout céder à Bachar Al Assad, mais de reprendre pied avec les réalités de la région pour trouver la moins pire des solutions pour la paix de la région et notre sécurité collective!

À cet égard, il est vital de lever les sanctions à l'encontre de la Russie pour, avec Poutine, tout faire afin de protéger les combattants kurdes qui ont permis la victoire contre Daech.

Il faut ensuite cesser de chercher un consensus européen qui ne viendra jamais, qui paralyse tout et enfin rassembler nos partenaires volontaires pour prendre de vraies mesures de sanction à l'égard du régime d'Erdogan:

- Augmentation des droits de douane sur les produits importés de Turquie
- Suspension de toutes nos aides financières

- Gel des avoirs européens des dirigeants turcs
- Interdiction des financements de lieux de culte sur notre sol par la Turquie.

Enfin, rien ne sera possible sans renouer avec l'indépendance militaire qui passe par la reconquête de notre liberté scientifique dans les domaines de pointe, sans dépendre ni des Américains, ni des Chinois et ni des Allemands.

Il faut d'urgence racheter la tranche d'Alstom à General Electric pour maîtriser nos turbines nucléaires. Il faut investir massivement dans les drones, l'intelligence artificielle, le numérique. En un mot, avoir une vraie stratégie de puissance.

Comme toujours dans notre histoire, la soumission aux "partis de l'étranger" mène à la déroute et à l'humiliation. Ce qui arrive au Nord de la Syrie nous concerne tous car le monde est tout petit et la Syrie terriblement proche.

Les terroristes du Bataclan étaient venus de cet Orient où nous avons commis tant d'erreurs, réagissons avant que d'autres terroristes menacent notre peuple.

Gérard Chaliand : « La revendication d'autonomie kurde s'est affirmée tardivement »

Les Kurdes ont longtemps disposé de principautés relativement autonomes au sein de l'Empire ottoman. Quelle place tenaient-ils dans cette configuration politique ?

Gérard Chaliand Comme les Albanais, les Arabes, les Turcs, ils étaient considérés comme une composante de l'oumma, la communauté des croyants ; il n'y avait pas vraiment d'antagonismes. Les choses ont fonctionné ainsi jusqu'au XIXe siècle. Avec le déclin de l'Empire et l'affirmation de l'idée nationale, le sultan de la recentralisation, Abdülhamid II, tenta d'éliminer toutes les principautés kurdes, soupçonnées de vouloir s'émanciper. L'une des plus importantes et des plus organisées, celle de Botan, dirigée par Bedir Khan, fut démantelée en 1848. Ce tournant signa l'émergence d'une conscience nationale encore vague.

Kurdes, en 1920, n'ont pas compris ce qui se passait : la moitié de leur tête était ottomane, l'autre musulmane. Ils se sont battus aux côtés des Turcs contre les Grecs, des tribus ont été enrôlées dans le génocide des Arméniens, ils ont pris part à la création de la Turquie moderne. Les échanges des populations grecques et turques entérinés par le traité de Lausanne en 1923 ont encouragé Mustafa Kemal à décréter un an plus tard que la Turquie était le pays des seuls Turcs.

Comment expliquer l'enterrement par le traité de Lausanne, qui dessine les frontières de la Turquie issue du démantèlement de l'Empire ottoman, de la promesse d'un Kurdistan autonome, inscrite trois ans plus tôt dans le traité de Sévres ?

Gérard Chaliand Tout simplement parce que la guerre a été gagnée par Mustafa Kemal, ce que n'avait pas prévu le traité de Sévres. Celui-ci plaçait une partie de la Turquie du Sud-Est sous

donc levé l'étendard de la révolte. Il l'a emporté contre les Arméniens à l'est et contre les Grecs à l'ouest. La France s'est alors trouvée contrainte de se replier sur la Syrie. Mustafa Kemal l'a emporté. Le traité de Sévres s'en trouvant nul et non avenu, le traité de Lausanne redessina la région en fonction de ces rapports de forces, au profit de cette Turquie nouvelle.

Le centralisme dominant la construction de l'État-nation moderne dans la Turquie kémaliste contribue-t-il à consolider le fait national kurde ?

Gérard Chaliand Oui, mais avec retard. Les Kurdes pâtissent en fait du retard historique qu'ils ont pris au XXe siècle. Il faut dire qu'ils ne pouvaient s'appuyer, comme les Turcs ou les Persans, sur une tradition étatique. D'où les divisions, les querelles de minarets, le tribalisme qui ont longtemps entravé l'affirmation d'un fait national.

Des contraintes externes ont-elles aussi fait obstacle, tout au long du XXe siècle, à la naissance d'un État kurde unifié. Comment les revendications d'autonomie, d'indépendance, dans leur expression moderne, ont-elles pris corps dans ce peuple dispersé sur quatre États ?

Gérard Chaliand Ces revendications sont relativement récentes. En Turquie proprement dite, le PKK, le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, fondé en 1978, prend les armes en 1984, soit plus de soixante ans après la naissance de la Turquie moderne. Les Kurdes d'Irak, eux, ont pris part à plusieurs révoltes à l'époque du mandat britannique : toutes ont été écrasées. C'est en 1961 seulement que Mustafa Barzani a exprimé la revendication d'une région autonome kurde à l'intérieur de l'Irak, lequel s'était constitué en État en 1920. En Iran, aussi, les Kurdes sont inscrits dans une longue histoire. En 1514, l'armée du sultan ottoman Sélim Ier, sunnite, affronta à Tchaldiran (actuelle Cadiran, près du lac de Van, en Turquie - NDLR) celle du chah de Perse Ismaïl Ier, fondateur de la dynastie des Séfévides, chiite. La bataille fut perdue de peu par les Perses, les Ottomans s'emparèrent du pays des deux fleuves. L'Anatolie orientale et le nord de l'actuel Irak, c'est-à-dire l'actuel Kurdistan, furent annexés à l'Empire ottoman. Les chiites y furent chassés du pouvoir au profit des sunnites. Les tribus kurdes, bien que proches des Iraniens par l'origine indo-européenne et la langue, sont restées, depuis cette époque, fidèles au sunnisme. Téhéran leur a toujours laissé des droits linguistiques. D'une certaine façon, ils



En 1920, le général turc Hadi Pasha signait le traité de Sévres qui prévoyait l'autonomie du Kurdistan. Granger NYC/Rue des Archives

Plus tard, lorsque l'effondrement est apparu inévitable, Mustafa Kemal, qui s'était nourri d'idées modernes en fréquentant le carrefour intellectuel que représentait alors Salonique, comprit seul qu'il fallait, pour sauver le cœur de l'Empire, le transformer en État-nation. Les

mandat français, une partie du Sud-Ouest sous mandat italien et confiait les détroits aux Britanniques. Les Grecs voulaient, eux, étendre Smyrne : il ne restait aux Turcs, dans cette configuration, qu'un petit tiers de l'Anatolie. Pour Mustafa Kemal, il n'en était pas question. L'armée turque n'avait pas été désarmée, il a

étaient moins brimés qu'ailleurs, sauf quand ils étaient trop à gauche. En 1979, le chef du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan d'Iran, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, a soutenu la révolution qui a conduit à la chute du chah, tout en portant la revendication – vite étouffée – d'une région autonome kurde dans un Iran démocratique. Finalement, seuls les Kurdes d'Irak ont réussi à asseoir avec succès leur autonomie. En 1991, au moment de la première guerre du Golfe, une zone autonome était créée pour les protéger de l'écrasement que leur promettait Saddam Hussein. Puis, en 2003, quand les Américains ont trouvé en eux des alliés, ils ont profité de l'aide et de la couverture de Washington. Ils sont devenus les bénéficiaires marginaux de cette intervention, ils tirent aujourd'hui seuls leur épingle du jeu.

Pourquoi la greffe de ce modèle d'autonomie régionale n'a-t-elle pas pris dans les pays voisins ?

Gérard Chaliand En Turquie, Abdullah Öcalan, le chef du PKK, ne demandait pas au départ l'autonomie, mais l'indépendance. Dans le cadre d'un État centralisé, c'était s'engager sur la voie de la guerre civile. Par la suite, il s'est rallié à la perspective de l'autonomie, mais les Turcs ne sont absolument pas disposés à concéder quoi que ce soit au PKK, qu'ils tiennent pour un mouvement terroriste, alors que c'est surtout un mouvement de guérilla. En Iran, l'ayatollah Khomeini a opposé aux demandes d'autonomie des Kurdes une fin de non-recevoir, au nom de l'unité des musulmans et surtout par crainte de voir les Baloutches ou les Arabes de la province pétrolière du Khouzistan emprunter le même

chemin. En Irak enfin, il faut rappeler que le pouvoir central a repris le contrôle de la province pétrolière de Kirkouk après la victoire du oui lors du référendum sur l'indépendance organisé le 25 septembre au Kurdistan irakien. Le message était : « Tenez-vous tranquille dans votre coin. » L'actuel président de la région autonome Nechirvan Barzani s'en tient aujourd'hui à une normalisation des relations avec Bagdad.

Dans ce contexte, quelle est la singularité de l'expérience d'autonomie initiée au Rojava, au nord-est de la Syrie ?

Gérard Chaliand Les Kurdes du PYD, la branche syrienne du PKK, s'y réclament du « communalisme démocratique », dont se revendique désormais Abdullah Öcalan, en référence à l'Américain Murray Boockin. Ce mouvement reste toutefois très centralisé, très discipliné, voire autoritaire. Ils auraient voulu créer une zone autonome dans ce Nord-Est syrien. Bachar Al Assad s'y opposait : il était décidé à reprendre le contrôle de la plus vaste partie possible du territoire. Grâce à l'alliance avec la Russie et l'Iran, il a presque atteint cet objectif. D'autre part, la création d'une administration autonome dominée par les Kurdes dans le Nord-Est était contestée par la Turquie, qui voyait là une base arrière du PKK, une extension de sa zone d'influence. Erdogan est dans une logique d'affrontement avec ce mouvement, dont il veut la disparition : c'est le sens de cette offensive.

L'accord conclu avec Damas par les Kurdes de Syrie pour stopper l'invasion turque enterre-t-il leur projet d'autonomie durable ?

Gérard Chaliand Certainement. La conclusion de cet accord est motivée par une question de survie.

Quel peut-être l'avenir des Kurdes dans la région ?

Gérard Chaliand La seule entité stable, c'est le Kurdistan d'Irak. Aucune menace sérieuse ne plane sur cette région autonome. Elle est protégée par Washington, n'est pas antagonique aux intérêts russes, est acceptée par Bagdad. C'est une région enclavée, sans accès à la mer : son pétrole transite par la Turquie grâce à l'oléoduc qui relie l'Irak à Ceyhan, ce qui place Ankara en position de force. Les intérêts croisés ne s'arrêtent pas là : plus d'un millier d'entreprises turques sont implantées au Kurdistan d'Irak. Quant aux Barzani, qui dominent la vie politique dans cette région, ce sont des adversaires du PKK. Ce statu quo a donc toutes les chances de perdurer. Au Rojava voisin se joue au contraire une opération de survie. Avec le retrait des troupes américaines, Donald Trump y a semé le chaos. Cette décision est critiquée jusque dans son camp. L'ancien secrétaire à la Défense James Mattis (qui avait démissionné en 2018 après l'annonce par Donald Trump d'un retrait des troupes américaines de Syrie – NDLR) y voit l'opportunité, pour l'« État islamique », de « renaître ». Cette situation désastreuse profitera d'abord aux survivants des divers mouvements islamistes, ravis de cette occasion de prendre leur revanche sur les Kurdes qui les avaient vaincus.



16/10/2019

Baghdad council elects new governor following violent, nationwide protests: report

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The provincial council in Iraq's capital Baghdad has elected a new governor after the previous one was sacked last week following nationwide protests, according to reports on Wednesday.

The Baghdad Provincial Council reportedly elected Mohammed Jabar al-Atta as the city's new governor, Anadolu Agency said. Atta, a member of the State of Law coalition in the Iraqi Parliament, replaces Falah al-Jazairi.

The change follows a recent wave of violent, nationwide protests which began in early October. The demonstrations have reportedly led to the deaths of at least 100 people and thousands more injured.

Security forces cracked down on protesters, with many accusing them of using excessive force and gunfire to prevent the demonstrations from spreading.

The central government in Baghdad also imposed a curfew and cut internet connections in many southern provinces where the unrest was taking place.

Violence permeated protests since they began in Baghdad and spread to major southern cities, marking the worst instance of instability since the so-called Islamic State was defeated nearly two years ago. Many were killed by direct sniper fire.

Shortly after the protests began, Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi attempted to calm demonstrators with promises of reform and a cabinet shuffle. They failed to quell the anger of the public, who continue to call for a complete governmental overhaul amid shortages of public services, high rates of unemployment, and chronic corruption.

On Saturday, Iraq's Joint Operations Command (JOC), which coordinates the nation's many military and police forces, announced the formation of an investigative committee to probe reported use of force by the security forces.

États-Unis : les représentants s'opposent à Trump sur la Syrie

La Chambre des représentants a adopté mercredi à une très vaste majorité une résolution non-contraignante condamnant la décision de Donald Trump de retirer les troupes américaines du nord de la Syrie, signe du malaise grandissant que cette politique a provoqué jusque chez ses alliés républicains.

Présentée par des élus démocrates et républicains, cette résolution «s'oppose à la décision de mettre fin aux efforts des Etats-Unis pour empêcher les opérations militaires turques contre les forces kurdes syriennes dans le nord de la Syrie». Elle a été adoptée par 354 voix contre 60, avec l'approbation de 129 républicains sur les 197 siégeant à la chambre basse.

Le texte appelle en outre le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan à «cesser immédiatement» ses opérations dans le nord de la Syrie et à «respecter les accords existants». Il exhorte «les Etats-Unis à maintenir le soutien aux communautés kurdes syriennes à travers un soutien humanitaire», à «s'assurer que l'armée turque agisse avec retenue» et la «Maison Blanche à présenter un plan clair et précis pour vaincre durablement» le groupe Etat islamique (EI).

trop tard pour arrêter cette agression», a déclaré McConnell sans toutefois annoncer de date pour un vote.

«Politicienne de bas étage»

Si cette résolution est plus symbolique que contraignante, elle n'est pas du goût du locataire de la Maison Blanche, qui a reçu sans ménagement une délégation de parlementaires venus peu après le vote évoquer avec lui la situation en Syrie. L'entretien a tourné court, Donald Trump n'hésitant pas à qualifier la chef démocrate

elle n'aime tout simplement pas notre grand pays», a tweeté dans la soirée le milliardaire républicain. «Elle a totalement craqué à la Maison Blanche aujourd'hui. C'était très triste à voir. Priez pour elle, c'est une personne très dérangée!», a-t-il ajouté après avoir publié une photo montrant son opposant debout, un doigt accusateur pointé vers lui. Il s'agissait de leur première rencontre officielle depuis que la démocrate a lancé, le 24 septembre, une procédure explosive de destitution à son encontre.



Loin de dévier de sa trajectoire, Donald Trump a par la suite défendu bec et ongles le retrait des troupes américaines de Syrie lors d'une conférence de presse. «Nous n'avons pas besoin d'être engagés dans des guerres sans fin, nous ramenons nos soldats», a-t-il martelé. «J'ai gagné l'élection sur cette base. Que ce soit bien ou mal, c'est comme ça! Je suis prêt à parier - c'est mon

«Le président a déchaîné une escalade vers le chaos et l'insécurité en Syrie lorsqu'il a donné à la Turquie le feu vert pour attaquer nos partenaires kurdes», a affirmé la présidente de la Chambre, la démocrate Nancy Pelosi. Le large soutien républicain apporté à ce texte accentue la pression sur le chef de la majorité républicaine au Sénat, Mitch McConnell, pour qu'il organise à son tour un vote sur la résolution. Le retrait du nord de la Syrie annoncé par Donald Trump «était une erreur. Et j'espère qu'il n'est pas

du Congrès, Nancy Pelosi, de «politicienne de bas étage», selon les témoins sur place. «Nous avons vu le président craquer, c'est triste à dire», a commenté cette dernière en quittant la Maison Blanche. «Il a été insultant, particulièrement envers» Mme Pelosi, a affirmé Chuck Schumer, chef de la minorité démocrate au Sénat.

Donald Trump s'est ensuite déchaîné contre son adversaire politique. «Nancy Pelosi a besoin d'aide et vite! Soit il y a quelque chose qui ne tourne pas rond 'là haut', soit

instinct politique qui me le dit - que c'est ce que l'Amérique veut.» «Si la Turquie pénètre en Syrie, c'est une affaire entre la Turquie et la Syrie, ce n'est pas une affaire entre la Turquie et les Etats-Unis comme beaucoup de gens stupides voudraient vous le faire croire», a-t-il encore justifié, n'hésitant pas à qualifier le PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), qui mène une sanglante guérilla contre la Turquie depuis des décennies, de «menace terroriste» «probablement» plus grande que l'Etat islamique (EI).

Syrie: les troupes du régime entrent dans la ville kurde de Kobané

Les troupes du régime syrien ainsi que des soldats russes sont entrés mercredi à Kobané, une ville kurde syrienne à la frontière turque, en vertu d'un accord conclu entre Damas et les autorités kurdes pour contenir une offensive d'Ankara, selon une ONG.

«Les forces du régime sont entrées dans la ville de Kobané accompagnées de troupes russes», a indiqué à l'AFP le directeur de l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH), Rami Abdel Rahmane. Un habitant de la ville a indiqué à l'AFP avoir vu pénétrer un convoi militaire arborant le drapeau syrien et formé, entre autres, de huit camions.

Ce déploiement a lieu à la faveur d'un accord conclu dimanche par Damas avec les Kurdes du nord-est de la Syrie, soucieux de contrecarrer l'offensive lancée le 9 octobre par les forces

turques. Ankara mène cette opération contre la principale milice kurde syrienne des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG), un allié de Washington dans la lutte antidjihadistes mais qui est considéré comme un groupe «terroriste» par la Turquie.

La décision des Etats-Unis de retirer leurs troupes - un millier de soldats - a ouvert la voie à l'opération d'Ankara et poussé les Kurdes, qui ont instauré une région «fédérale» dans le nord du pays à la faveur du conflit, à demander l'aide du régime syrien.

Ville symbolique

Hautement symbolique, la ville de Kobané avait été le théâtre en 2015 d'une des premières batailles livrées contre le groupe Etat islamique (EI) par les forces kurdes qui en avaient pris le contrôle. Au cours des dernières 48 heures,

l'armée syrienne s'est déjà déployée à Minbej, une autre ville clé du nord syrien, située à une trentaine de kilomètres de la frontière turque, ainsi qu'aux abords de Ain-Issa et Tal Tamr. Les troupes de Damas et les forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), dominées par les combattants kurdes, ont pris le contrôle également d'une ancienne base américaine près de Kobané.

Craignant des heurts armés entre forces turques et syriennes, Moscou, allié du régime, a annoncé mardi que sa police militaire patrouillait désormais dans les alentours de Minbej. L'objectif affiché de l'opération turque est de créer une «zone de sécurité» d'une trentaine de km de profondeur séparant la frontière turque des zones contrôlées par les YPG. L'offensive d'Ankara a ouvert un nouveau front dans la guerre complexe en Syrie qui a fait plus de 370.000 morts depuis 2011.

Syrie : «inacceptable» que les Kurdes restent à Minbej «sous drapeau russe»

La Turquie a prévenu mercredi qu'elle n'accepterait pas que les forces kurdes syriennes restent dans la ville de Minbej sous la protection des Russes qui ont commencé mardi à patrouiller dans ce secteur après le retrait des troupes américaines.

«Que le drapeau russe soit hissé au lieu du drapeau américain et que les YPG (y restent) sous le contrôle d'une autre puissance est une chose inacceptable», a déclaré le porte-parole du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Ibrahim Kalin. Les forces du régime syrien se sont déployées mardi à Minbej, située à environ 30 km de la frontière turque dans le nord de la Syrie, à l'appel des Kurdes qui font face à une offensive de la Turquie.

Patrouilles «le long de la ligne de contact» de la part de la police militaire russe

La coalition internationale luttant contre les djihadistes a confirmé mardi le retrait de ses militaires, notamment américains, jusque-là présents dans cette ville où la présence des combattants kurdes irrite la Turquie. Afin d'éviter tout affrontement d'envergure entre les forces d'Ankara et celles du régime, la police militaire russe a commencé à patrouiller «le long de la ligne de contact» entre les deux camps, a annoncé Moscou.

«Les groupes qui jusqu'à ce jour ont pillé et imposé leur loi sous la protection américaine, sous le drapeau américain, ne retrouveront plus

jamais cette tranquillité. La Turquie est déterminée à ce sujet», a ajouté Ibrahim Kalin.

La Turquie a déclenché la semaine dernière une offensive contre la milice kurde des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG), un groupe soutenu par les pays occidentaux mais qualifié de «terroriste» par Ankara. La Turquie insiste depuis plusieurs mois pour que les combattants kurdes se retirent de Minbej, menaçant plusieurs fois de lancer ses troupes à l'assaut de cette ville.

Dans des propos reproduits mercredi par la presse, Recep Tayyip Erdogan a estimé que le retour à Minbej des troupes du régime de Damas n'était pas un événement «très, très négatif». L'important pour lui, a-t-il souligné, est que «les YPG en sortent». Kalin a par ailleurs confirmé qu'une rencontre entre le président Erdogan et son homologue russe Vladimir Poutine aurait lieu «dans un avenir proche».

Syrie : ce qu'implique l'accord entre les Kurdes et l'armée de Bachar al-Assad

Sauver la population. Les Forces démocratiques syriennes - le nom officiel des forces armées kurdes - se sont résolues à signer un accord historique avec l'armée syrienne de Bachar al-Assad dans un seul et unique but : empêcher que les populations kurdes ne pâtissent de l'offensive turque à l'est du pays, dans les territoires jusqu'ici détenus par les FDS.

Le contenu de l'accord entre la SAA, l'armée arabe syrienne, et les FDS a fuité ce mardi soir. Il trace les lignes d'un choix plus que symbolique du mouvement kurde, qui donne accès aux troupes loyalistes syriennes à un territoire chèrement conquis, au prix de nombreuses pertes en vies humaines lors des combats contre Daech.

« Les FDS ont accepté l'entrée de l'armée arabe syrienne et son contrôle s'étendra à toute la région, depuis Ayn Diwar à l'Est, jusqu'à Jarablus à l'Ouest », précise l'accord entre les deux ex-belligérants. En clair, les Kurdes ont ouvert les



Les troupes régulières de Bachar al-Assad se déploient pour contrôler l'offensive turque contre les zones jusque-là occupées par les forces kurdes. Delil SOULEIMAN/AFP

Le deuxième axe ira « de Manbidj en direction de Kobané sur la frontière syro-turque jusqu'à Tell Abyad et vers l'Ouest » (NDLR, l'accord ne mentionne que le nom arabe d'Ayn al Arab, qui est appelé en kurde : Kobané). Enfin le troisième axe de progression prévu par l'accord ira de « Hassaké jusqu'à Ras al Aïn et vers l'Est, puis à l'Ouest jusqu'à Kamechlyié, puis Al Malikiyah au Sud ».

« Les forces de la SAA se déploieront dans la région de Manbidj, à partir d'Arima et le long de la rivière Sajur, s'en tenant aux accords précédents concernant la répartition des forces dans Arima », précise encore ce texte.

Le contenu de l'accord fait que l'armée du régime de Bachar al-Assad étendra sa souveraineté dans toute la région à l'est et au nord de l'Euphrate mais, détail d'importance, « en coordination avec les conseils militaires locaux ». La zone située entre Ras al Ayn et Tell Abyad est définie comme la zone de combat principale « en attendant sa libération », précisent encore les deux parties.

L'accord militaire entre les kurdes et le régime syrien



LP/Infographie

portes d'accès à tout leur territoire à leurs anciens ennemis. Un séisme politique - mais aussi militaire - pour les Turcs. Le cadre de ce futur déploiement tactique a été fixé très précisément par les deux nouveaux alliés de circonstance.

L'armée syrienne va donc se déplacer dans le territoire kurde via trois axes. Un premier axe « depuis Tabqa en direction du Nord vers Ayn Issa et sa campagne ». Également en direction du Nord vers la frontière syro-turque à Tell Abyad et vers l'Ouest.

Retour de la souveraineté de Bachar al-Assad

Les mots les plus importants de ce texte, finalement assez court, sont ceux qui ont trait à la souveraineté sur le territoire. Ceux qui ont dû coûter le plus cher aux responsables kurdes. « Les FDS confirment qu'elles sont prêtes à préserver l'unité territoriale de la République arabe syrienne et qu'elles le font sous le drapeau de la République arabe syrienne », définit ainsi

l'accord. « Les FDS se tiendront aux côtés de la SAA pour faire face aux menaces turques contre la terre syrienne sous la direction du président Bachar al-Assad », conclut le texte. Des mots qui redonnent au raïs syrien la souveraineté sur un territoire qui échappait à son contrôle depuis 2011.

Il y a deux manières d'analyser cette décision. C'est, pour certains, la fin du rêve d'un « Kurdistan syrien ». Pour d'autres, les victoires militaires kurdes du passé leur garantiront peut-être un avenir sous la souveraineté de Bachar al-Assad.

« Tout s'est écroulé comme un château de cartes pour les Kurdes »

« Avec le retrait américain, tout s'est écroulé comme un château de cartes pour les Kurdes. En réalité, les populations arabes sont majoritaires dans cette région, et les Kurdes n'en avaient qu'un contrôle militaire », explique [Fabrice Balanche, maître de conférences à l'université Lyon-2](#), contacté par Le Parisien. Le géographe, spécialiste de la région, revient tout juste de la zone.

« Les Kurdes n'ont plus le choix que d'être loyaux car, sans l'intervention syrienne, un million de Kurdes auraient été déplacés par les Turcs, sans l'ombre d'un doute. Les populations ont très peur des supplétifs arabes d'Erdogan, car ils égorgent, ils pillent, ils violent, ce sont pour certains [des anciens de Daech](#) ou d'Al-Qaida. Le but avant tout c'était d'éviter un massacre », analyse encore le chercheur associé au Washington Institute.

« Les YPG (les unités de protection du peuple kurde) ont été largement surestimées par certains médias. La réalité est tout autre. Les forces kurdes se sont écroulées en quelques jours, sans le soutien des Etats-Unis », constate encore le spécialiste de la région. « Les FDS ont été surestimées car on oublie que les Arabes qui les constituent largement se battaient parce que des salaires étaient versés. Il fallait nourrir les familles. La principale motivation était là. Elle n'était pas idéologique », décrypte encore [Fabrice Balanche](#).

« Ils devraient obtenir beaucoup plus que leur sort dans le passé »

« Les Kurdes ont préféré faire des concessions au régime syrien plutôt qu'aux Turcs », confirme

Karim Pakzad, chercheur à l'IRIS (l'Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques). « Les Kurdes n'arrivaient plus à faire face aux forces d'Erdogan. Ils ont donc logiquement perdu leur souveraineté gagnée sur le terrain », constate-t-il.

« C'est faux de dire que les Kurdes dans leur ensemble sont des indépendantistes. La plupart étaient réalistes, car ils savaient que c'était impossible d'avoir trois Etats indépendants kurdes en Turquie, en Syrie et Irak », précise celui qui enseigne à l'université de Kaboul. « Mais je ne pense pas que les Kurdes ont tout perdu. Les Kurdes ont réagi dans l'urgence, pour se sauver du massacre », enchaîne l'enseignant.

« Après-demain, à mon avis, dans le cadre du processus d'Astana (NDLR, un ensemble de rencontres multipartites entre différents acteurs de la guerre civile en Syrie), les Kurdes obtiendront des concessions pour gérer de manière plus ou moins autonome une partie de la région. C'est aussi l'intérêt des Russes, le nouvel acteur fort de la région. À cause de la guerre en Syrie, les Kurdes sont tout de même apparus comme une force importante. Ils devraient obtenir beaucoup plus que leur sort dans le passé », tempère l'enseignant-chercheur.

LE TEMPS 16/10/2019

Les Kurdes, toujours trahis

OPINION. Michaël Flaks, ancien secrétaire du Comité suisse d'aide humanitaire au peuple kurde, livre ses souvenirs de 1975 et de sa rencontre avec le général Mustapha Barzani, à la tête des peshmergas. Un récit qu'il met en résonance avec l'actualité syrienne



J'avais 20 ans. Au Kurdistan, le 31 mars 1975, le vieux général m'offre une plume. Pour écrire sur le peuple kurde. Dans la

boue, le froid, la neige, au travers des montagnes kurdes, c'était l'exode dans toute son horreur. Des enfants morts d'épuisement sur la route, des

réfugiés par milliers qui tentaient de rejoindre la frontière iranienne déjà fermée ou la frontière turque depuis toujours hermétiquement close,

l'abandon des villages, d'une terre. A nouveau, le peuple kurde était menacé d'une disparition forcée, d'une disparition sociale et culturelle, condamné à mourir de faim et de froid.

J'avais 20 ans, j'étais membre de la mission de la Fédération internationale des droits de l'homme (FIDH) au Kurdistan irakien. C'était en 1975. Dans la nuit du 31 mars au 1er avril, les représentants des organisations humanitaires et témoins des événements ont assisté à la frontière irano-irakienne à la dernière séance du bureau politique du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), avant son refuge en Iran. Tel était l'effet d'une accolade orientale: le 6 mars 1975, le shah d'Iran et Saddam Hussein, alors vice-président de l'Irak, immolent à Alger, sur l'autel du pétrole, le peuple kurde, soutenu jusqu'à ce moment par le shah, le Koweït, l'Arabie saoudite et Israël. L'armement kurde hétéroclite consistait en vieux fusils tchécoslovaques, en armes provenant des Etats-Unis, en fusils-mitrailleurs chinois, copiés sur des modèles soviétiques et vendus par les Palestiniens aux Kurdes, en quelques missiles sol-air, de fabrication britannique.

Le général Mustapha Barzani

Selon la légende, on dit qu'ils sont les descendants des Médes; la quarantaine de millions de Kurdes sont aujourd'hui écartelés entre l'Irak, la Turquie, l'Iran, la Syrie, soit le Grand Kurdistan historique; d'autres sont disséminés en Arménie, en Russie, en Géorgie, en Azerbaïdjan, au Turkménistan, en Kirghizie, au Kazakhstan, en Israël et près de 1 million en Europe.

Dès 1924, l'histoire kurde n'est qu'une succession ininterrompue de rébellions et de révoltes sanglantes

Pourtant, le traité de Sèvres de 1920 reconnaissait au peuple kurde, au lendemain de la Première Guerre mondiale, son droit à l'autodétermination. Ce traité n'a jamais été appliqué, anéanti par le traité de Lausanne de 1923. Le démembrement de l'Empire ottoman écartèle en fin de compte le peuple kurde entre l'Iran, l'Irak, la Syrie, l'Union soviétique et la Turquie. Dès 1924, l'histoire kurde n'est qu'une succession ininterrompue de rébellions et de révoltes sanglantes. En Iran, les Kurdes connaissent le seul Etat indépendant du XXe siècle: l'éphémère République de Mahabad, proclamée en 1946 sous l'égide de l'URSS. Elle est écrasée après quelques mois d'existence par le shah d'Iran. Ses dirigeants, dont le président de la République, Quazi Mohammed, sont pendus. Le général Mustapha Barzani, commandant des forces kurdes de Mahabad, réussit à s'enfuir à la tête de quelques partisans (peshmergas). Il conduisit jusqu'en 1979 les révoltes et révolutions kurdes en Irak.

Responsabilité commune

J'ai rencontré le Général Barzani dans la nuit du 31 mars au 1er avril 1975 à son état-major, au camp de Nakhuda, près de la frontière irakienne.

Quelques jours auparavant, il devait apprendre à Téhéran, le 6 mars, qu'une offensive générale irakienne venait d'être lancée pour réduire la rébellion kurde, d'entente avec l'Iran. Venant d'Alger, le shah reçoit le vieux général et lui propose la «mort douce» de la révolution kurde, ne lui offrant que deux possibilités: soit la reddition inconditionnelle, soit le refuge en Iran, où les populations kurdes «seraient reçues comme des hôtes et nourries comme des frères». Barzani refuse et fait part de l'abandon de l'Iran au comité central du PDK, qui se réunit en hâte. Il décide de poursuivre la lutte, sous forme de guérilla. Le 13 mars, l'Iran et l'Algérie persuadent le gouvernement irakien de cesser le feu. Saddam Hussein renouvelle l'offre d'amnistie aux «Kurdes rebelles» et limite la trêve à trois semaines: le 1er avril, les troupes irakiennes investirent les territoires contrôlés par le PDK. Le 30 mars, le général Barzani, suivi de l'état-major kurde au complet, se réfugia à quelques kilomètres de la frontière irakienne, dans le camp de Nakhuda, enfoncé dans le Kurdistan iranien. Le lendemain, le comité central du parti décide de ne pas poursuivre le combat, une longue phase de la lutte kurde pour la liberté s'achève là, le 1er avril 1975.

Mon souvenir, de ce moment terrible, était accompagné d'une grande leçon, celle de voir les Kurdes, notamment sunnites, juifs, yézidis, chrétiens, hommes et femmes, au commandement pour décider. Comme aujourd'hui, une fois de plus trahis, utilisés, martyrisés, notre responsabilité commune est entière.

Michaël Flaks est ancien secrétaire du Comité suisse d'aide humanitaire au peuple kurde.



Par Hala Kodmani
16-10-2019

Trump et Erdogan jouent au ping-pong diplomatique, l'armée syrienne avance

A la veille d'une rencontre à Ankara entre le président turc et les vice-président et secrétaire d'Etat américains, les deux chefs d'Etat ont enchaîné les déclarations contradictoires après un regain de tension.

“**L**orsque nous regardons les déclarations publiées par M. Trump sur Twitter, nous en sommes arrivés au point où nous n'arrivons plus à suivre.” Ce constat, fait mardi par Recep Tayyip Erdogan, sonnait comme la découverte tardive d'un phénomène qui donne le vertige aux dirigeants du monde depuis trois ans. Le président turc exprimait alors son étonnement après la dernière sortie de son homologue américain, imposant des

sanctions économiques à la Turquie en raison de son offensive en Syrie.

Tout au long de la journée de mercredi, Erdogan a pourtant semblé imiter Trump, avec une succession de déclarations et annonces contradictoires. Aux dernières nouvelles, il va bien rencontrer jeudi le vice-président américain Mike Pence et le secrétaire d'Etat Mike Pompeo, dépêchés à Ankara pour tenter d'arracher un ces-

sez-le-feu en Syrie. Les services de la présidence turque l'ont confirmé dans l'après-midi, peu après qu'Erdogan ait déclaré qu'il ne les recevrait pas. Un camouflet qui n'avait pas empêché la Maison Blanche de confirmer la venue de Mike Pence.

Volte-face

Dans cette partie de ping-pong entre les deux dirigeants, difficile de savoir si l'heure de la diplomatie

a sonné ou si une rupture profonde se profile. Les relations entre Ankara et Washington sont «à un tournant critique», a reconnu mercredi le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères. Mevlut Cavusoglu s'exprimait devant le Parlement, juste avant de recevoir le conseiller à la sécurité nationale de Donald Trump, Robert O'Brien, arrivé le même jour à Ankara pour préparer la rencontre entre Erdogan, Pence et Pompeo.

La tension est montée d'un cran mardi, après l'annonce par Trump de sanctions économiques (certes symboliques) contre la Turquie, accompagnée d'une injonction à mettre fin à l'offensive contre les milices kurdes du YPG dans le nord-est de la Syrie. Ankara, qui a fait savoir mercredi soir qu'elle préparait à son tour des sanctions, y a vu une volte-face de Donald Trump, qui avait ouvert la voie à l'opération turque en annonçant le retrait des forces spéciales américaines présentes dans la région. Erdogan affirme que Trump avait approuvé son plan d'établir une zone de sécurité de 30 kilomètres le long de la frontière syro-turque. Le président américain, de son côté, assure ne pas endosser le projet turc, tout en martelant que les Américains ne veulent plus jouer les gendarmes dans la région.

«Ils nous disent de déclarer un cessez-le-feu. Nous ne déclarerons jamais de cessez-le-feu», a tonné Recep Tayyip Erdogan mardi, rejetant toute cessation des hostilités tant que l'armée turque n'aurait pas fini de chasser «l'organisation terroriste» kurde des abords de sa frontière. «Les sanctions ne nous inquiètent pas et notre objectif est clair», a-t-il ajouté, soulignant sa détermination à la veille de la visite des responsables américains. «Certains dirigeants essayent de mener une médiation. Il n'y a rien de tel dans l'histoire de la République turque que de s'asseoir à la table des terroristes», a aussi déclaré Erdogan devant les parlementaires du parti au pouvoir.

Cartes rebattues

En dépit de son intransigeance, Erdogan a posé ses propres conditions à l'arrêt de l'offensive turque. En exigeant que «tout de suite, ce soir



Des soldats de l'armée syrienne traversent la ville d'Ain Issa, lundi. Photo Reuters

[mercredi soir], tous les terroristes déposent leurs armes et leurs équipements, détruisent toutes leurs fortifications et se retirent de la zone de sécurité que nous avons fixée». Faut-il y voir une fenêtre diplomatique, ouverte en amont des discussions de jeudi avec Mike Pence et Mike Pompeo ? Les Américains peuvent-ils obtenir de leurs anciens alliés kurdes qu'ils retirent leurs forces à 30 kilomètres de la frontière turque ? Les termes de la proposition de cessez-le-feu de Washington n'ont pas été précisés. Seul le sort de la ville emblématique de Kobané, où s'est nouée en 2014 la première alliance entre les Etats-Unis et les forces kurdes contre les jihadistes de l'EI, a été mentionné comme une préoccupation essentielle de Washington.

Mais pendant qu'Américains et Turcs se chahouillaient avant d'entamer leurs entretiens à Ankara, les cartes ont déjà été rebattues ces derniers jours par d'autres acteurs déterminants. Abandonnées par les Occidentaux, les milices kurdes ont fait appel au régime de Bachar al-Assad pour

contrer l'avancée de l'armée turque. Grand artisan de cet accord, Moscou s'empresse d'occuper le vide laissé par Washington. Mercredi soir, selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme, l'armée syrienne, accompagnée de soldats russes, est ainsi entrée dans Kobané, ville frontalière de la Turquie, tenue par les Kurdes et où les Américains, jusqu'à lundi, détenaient une base militaire.

Moscou semble d'ailleurs désormais avoir l'agrément de tous, à commencer par Erdogan et Trump. Après avoir dénoncé la veille le «sale marché» conclu entre les Kurdes et le régime d'Assad, le président turc a déclaré mercredi que peu lui importait «qui des Russes ou du régime» faisait «sortir les YPG de la ville stratégique de Minbej», dont Damas a repris le contrôle. Quant à Trump, il a déclaré mercredi que l'aide de la Russie à Damas n'était «pas un problème», que Washington allait «aider à négocier» et que les Kurdes, qui «savent se battre», n'étaient «pas des anges».

Pour Trump, les Kurdes du PKK sont "probablement" une plus grande "menace terroriste" que l'EI

Donald Trump a estimé mercredi que le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, le PKK, qui mène une sanglante guérilla contre la Turquie depuis plusieurs décennies, était "probablement" une plus grande "menace terroriste" que le groupe jihadiste Etat islamique (EI). "Le PKK, qui fait partie des Kurdes, comme vous le savez, est probablement pire en

termes de terrorisme et un plus grande menace terroriste en bien des aspects que l'EI", a déclaré le président américain lors d'une conférence de presse à la Maison Blanche. "Ce ne sont pas des anges, ce ne sont pas des anges", a martelé le milliardaire républicain, accusé par de nombreuses voix aux Etats-Unis d'avoir abandonné les Kurdes.

La Turquie a lancé la semaine dernière une offensive dans le nord de la Syrie contre la milice kurde des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG), soutenue par les pays occidentaux mais qualifiée de "terroriste" par Ankara. "Les Kurdes sont plus en sécurité aujourd'hui", a affirmé M. Trump. "Les Kurdes savent se battre", a-t-il ajouté. "Ils se sont battus avec nous, nous avons payé

beaucoup d'argent pour qu'ils se battent avec nous et c'est OK", a-t-il encore dit.

Donald Trump a également nié mercredi avoir donné un "feu vert" à son homologue turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan pour envahir le nord de la Syrie en retirant les troupes américaines de la région, comme lui reprochent de nombreux critiques. "Je ne lui ai pas donné de feu vert. Quand vous dites ça, c'est très trompeur", a-t-il déclaré lors de sa conférence de presse. "C'était l'inverse d'un feu vert. D'abord, nous n'avions quasiment pas de soldats là-bas. Ils étaient partis pour la plupart", a appuyé le milliardaire républicain.

Donald Trump a en outre promis des sanctions dévastatrices à la Turquie si M. Erdogan refuse de suspendre son offensive, lors de son entrevue prévue jeudi avec le vice-président américain Mike Pence.



Le président américain, Donald Trump, le 16 octobre 2019 à la Maison Blanche. Photo REUTERS/Jonathan Ernst

Le locataire de la Maison Blanche a par ailleurs une nouvelle fois défendu sa décision de retirer les soldats américains stationnés dans le nord-est de la Syrie. "Si la Turquie pénètre en Syrie, c'est une affaire entre la Turquie et la Syrie, ce n'est pas une affaire entre la Turquie et les Etats-Unis comme beaucoup de gens stupides voudraient vous le faire croire", a-t-il martelé quelques heures avant le départ de son vice-président. "Il y a beaucoup de pays là-bas qui détestent le

groupes guerres cessent, d'un point de vue humanitaire."

Le sénateur républicain Lindsey Graham, un soutien de poids de M. Trump au Congrès, a vertement critiqué ces déclarations, estimant qu'elles "coupaient l'herbe sous le pied" de Mike Pence avant son déplacement. "Au président Trump: c'est maintenant le moment pour vous d'agir comme Ronald Reagan, et non Obama. Il faut vous améliorer", a-t-il mis en garde.

groupe Etat islamique autant que nous, parfois plus", a-t-il martelé, estimant que ces derniers devaient prendre le relais des Etats-Unis.

"La Syrie peut avoir l'aide de la Russie, ce n'est pas un problème. Il y a beaucoup de sable là-bas, il y a beaucoup de sable avec lequel ils peuvent s'amuser", a-t-il ironisé. "Nous sommes dans une position stratégique très bonne" a-t-il ajouté. "C'est brillant d'un point de vue stratégique", a-t-il insisté, soulignant que tous les soldats américains avaient été retirés de la zone. "Nous aiderons à négocier", a-t-il ajouté. "Nous voulons que les

The New York Times

15/10/2019
By Neil Vigdor

Kurds in Syria Were Sold Out by President Trump, 2020 Democrats Say

It was an unusual juxtaposition for Democrats — calling a Republican president weak militarily.

That's how the contenders for the party's nomination framed the recent withdrawal of American troops from northern Syria under President Trump, who they said during Tuesday night's debate had created turmoil with his impulsive foreign policy decision making.

"It's been the most shameful thing any president has done in modern history in terms of foreign policy," former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. said.

While Democrats have been consumed with the Trump administration's dealings with Russia and Ukraine, the emerging foreign policy crisis in Syria presented a delicate test for the party's presidential hopefuls on the debate stage.

It followed Mr. Trump's decision this month to [withdraw American troops from northern Syria](#), one that has been sharply criticized by Republicans and now Democrats, who said it would endanger Kurdish allies in the region. Mr. Trump said he was trying to ["end the endless wars."](#)

Mr. Biden, a former chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, [called the move a betrayal](#) and said it would throw Syria into chaos and embolden Islamic State militants. The issue appeared to give Mr. Biden an opening to burnish his foreign policy credentials and contrast himself with his main rivals, Senator Elizabeth Warren and Senator Bernie Sanders.

"They lost their lives," Mr. Biden said of the Kurds. "This is shameful."

Pete Buttigieg, the mayor of South Bend, Ind., who served as an intelligence officer in the Uni-

ted States Navy Reserve and was deployed to Afghanistan, admonished Mr. Trump over the withdrawal.

"What we were doing in Syria was keeping our word," Mr. Buttigieg said. "Part of what makes it possible for the United States to get people to put their lives on the line to back us up is the idea that we will back them up, too."

"When I was deployed, not just the Afghan national army forces but the janitors put their lives on the line just by working with U.S. forces," he continued. "I would have a hard time today looking an Afghan civilian or soldier in the eye after what just happened over there."

Ms. Warren and Mr. Sanders both assailed Mr. Trump's abrupt withdrawal declaration, but both have long opposed American intervention in the conflict.

“So, look, I think we ought to get out of the Middle East,” Ms. Warren said. “I don’t think we should have troops in the Middle East, but we have to do it the right way, the smart way.”

Mr. Sanders said Mr. Trump’s credibility was completely undermined.

“Now you tell me what country in the world will trust the word of the president of the United States?” Mr. Sanders said. “In other words, what he has done is wreck our ability to do foreign policy, to do military policy, because nobody in the world will believe this pathological liar.”

And then there was Representative [Tulsi Gabbard](#), whom Senator [Kamala Harris](#) had called an apologist for Syria’s president, Bashar al-Assad. In 2017, Ms. Gabbard visited Mr. Assad, whose government [used chemical weapons against rebels during a May 2018 attack in Syria’s civil war](#), the United States concluded. Ms. Gabbard, who was deployed to Iraq, criticized the presence of American troops in Syria and the Trump administration’s handling of their withdrawal, both of which she said contributed to the killing of Kurds by Turkish-backed forces.

“First of all, we’ve got to understand the reality of the situation there, which is that the slaughter of the Kurds being done by Turkey is yet another negative consequence of the regime change war we’ve been waging in Syria,” Ms. Gabbard said.

Despite the shared military service of Ms. Gabbard and Mr. Buttigieg, the two veterans split over whether to keep American troops in Syria. Mr. Buttigieg said that Ms. Gabbard was “dead wrong,” and that the slaughter was not caused by



The Democratic candidates offered differing views on U.S. involvement in Syria. CreditCreditTamir Kalifa for The New York Times

the presence of American troops but by the abrupt withdrawal of troops by the Trump administration.

Ms. Gabbard responded:

“So what you’re saying, Mayor Pete, you would continue to have U.S. troops in Syria for an indefinite period of time to continue this regime change war that has caused so many refugees to flee Syria, that you would continue to have our country involved in a war that has undermined our national security, you would continue this policy of the U.S. actually providing arms in support to terrorist groups in Syria like Al Qaeda, H.T.S., Al Nusra because they have been the ground force in this regime change war? That’s really what you’re saying?”

Mr. Buttigieg said Ms. Gabbard had aligned herself with the Trump administration on the issue.

“You can put an end to endless war without embracing Donald Trump’s policy, as you’re doing,” Mr. Buttigieg said.

Ms. Gabbard said Mr. Buttigieg’s stance didn’t make sense.

“What is an endless war if it’s not a regime change war?” Ms. Gabbard said.

Isabella Grullon Paz contributed reporting. Neil Vigdor is a breaking news reporter on the Express Desk. He previously covered Connecticut politics for the Hartford Courant.



16/10/2019

Students in Sulaimani village studying in tents due to Turkish bombs targeting PKK

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region — Students in a mountainous Sulaimani village are studying in tents due to cross-border Turkish airstrikes. The strikes targeting Kurdish militants are happening as the war between Turkish and Kurdish forces in Syria next door continues.

Residents in Zewka village, situated in Zharawa town 142 kilometers north of Sulaimani in the eponymous province, fled in fear because of the Turkish jets.

“Over the past 24 hours, Turkey has bombed Zewka ten times,” Zharawa mayor Abdulla Abbas told Rudaw on Wednesday. “This has

sparked fear among the villagers, forcing them to flee and seek shelter elsewhere.”

Turkey frequently targets Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) positions in Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) territory near the border with Turkey. The **PKK has fought Turkey** for decades for greater autonomy in Turkey’s largely Kurdish southeast. Both the KRG and Iraqi federal government have called on Turkey to stop the bombings, and have also told the PKK to stop using its territory.

The total 15 households in the village are living in tents at Sarchomi Serkhan in the town of Qaladize near the Iranian border.

“In coordination with the Sulaimani governor and some volunteers, we managed to provide tents for them,” the mayor said.

This move has forced students to study in makeshift schools in tents in order not to miss their studies.

“In the past, we did not manage to continue teaching at the village. Now that they have fled, we are teaching them in tents,” Zewka school principal Awat Osman told Rudaw.

“We are six teachers coming every day from Qaladize to teach the 15 students here,”

Osman said. "Our classes range from grades one to six."

Osman urges the KRG to find a solution as winter is around the corner and they cannot continue in this way, as the region is already becoming cold.

"It is very cold. We cannot continue in this way," he said. "Relevant authorities must find a solution, otherwise the teaching will stop."

Turkey is also currently fighting Kurdish-led forces known as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeast Syria, utilizing a powerful air and artillery campaign against SDF positions.

Turkey's incursion began on October 7, after US President Donald Trump informed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan he was withdrawing US troops from the border, green-lighting Ankara's long-threatened offensive. Turkey considers the main Kurdish group in the SDF, the People's Protection Units (YPG), an extension of the PKK.

Despite mounting pressure from the EU, UK, US and Arab states, Erdogan is determined to



Students displaced by Turkish bombings in their village near the Iraq-Turkey border study in Qaladize in the Kurdistan Region's Sulaimani province on October 15, 2019. Photo: Rudaw

continue the military operation as deep as 35 kilometers into Syria to create a "safe zone." The operation seeks to remove the YPG from the border and resettle nearly four million Syrian refugees currently in Turkey, a move described as forced demographic change.

More than 300,000 people have been displaced since the fighting began in northern Syria, according to Kurdish authorities.

Translated by Zhelwan Z. Wali

SWI swissinfo.ch 16/10/2019

Ankara appelle les forces kurdes à désarmer et exclut toute trêve

Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a sommé mercredi les forces kurdes de déposer les armes et se retirer du nord de la Syrie. Il a rejeté l'appel au cessez-le-feu de Donald Trump qui a dépêché en Turquie son vice-président pour arracher un accord.

Une semaine jour pour jour après son déclenchement, l'offensive turque contre la milice kurde des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG) a déjà rebattu les cartes dans le nord de la Syrie, nouvel épice du conflit qui déchire ce pays depuis 2011.

A la faveur d'un accord avec les forces kurdes, le régime est en effet revenu dans des régions qui lui échappaient depuis des années. Moscou a commencé à remplir le vide laissé par le retrait des forces américaines, alliées ces dernières années aux forces kurdes dans leur combat contre le groupe djihadiste Etat islamique (EI).

Le président américain Donald Trump a nié mercredi avoir donné son feu vert à l'offensive turque, ce qui avait été interprété ainsi avec le retrait des troupes dans le nord syrien. Il a par ailleurs estimé que le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui mène une sanglante guérilla contre la Turquie et qui est considéré comme proche des YPG, était "probablement" une plus grande "menace terroriste" que l'EI.

Pour tenter d'obtenir un cessez-le-feu, M. Trump a décidé d'envoyer en Turquie son vice-président Mike Pence et son secrétaire d'Etat Mike Pompeo. M. Erdogan doit les rencontrer jeudi, selon la présidence turque.

Condamnation de la Suisse

En ce qui concerne une trêve, M. Erdogan a d'ores et déjà exclu de "s'asseoir à la table des terroristes", expression désignant les YPG. Il a soutenu que pour que l'offensive prenne fin, il faudrait que les forces kurdes désarment et reculent.

"Tout de suite, ce soir, que tous les terroristes déposent leurs armes et leurs équipements, détruisent toutes leurs fortifications et se retirent de la zone de sécurité que nous avons fixée", a-t-il déclaré.

La Suisse a condamné l'intervention militaire de la Turquie et appelle Ankara à cesser immédiatement les combats. Le Conseil fédéral s'est dit très préoccupé par les conséquences des combats, notamment sur les populations civiles.

Tonnerre d'artillerie

Sur le terrain, les combats font rage, en particulier aux abords de Ras al-Aïn, ville située à la frontière turque. Les combattants kurdes tentent d'y repousser l'assaut des forces d'Ankara.

Un reporter de l'AFP près de Ras al-Aïn a vu des colonnes de fumée s'élever de la ville pendant que l'écrasant tonnerre de l'artillerie turque emplissait l'air. Afin d'aveugler les avions d'Ankara, les combattants kurdes brûlaient des pneus.

Un membre des supplétifs syriens des troupes turques a indiqué que les forces d'Ankara tentaient de couper les voies d'approvisionnement des combattants kurdes depuis Hassaké, une autre ville du nord-est de la Syrie.

En sept jours, 72 civils, 185 combattants des FDS, 164 combattants pro-turcs et trois soldats syriens ont été tués, d'après l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH). Ankara a fait état de la mort de six soldats en Syrie ainsi que de 20 civils par des tirs de roquettes des combattants kurdes sur des villes turques. L'offensive a provoqué l'exode de 160'000 personnes dans le nord de la Syrie, d'après l'ONU.

L'objectif affiché de l'opération turque est la création d'une "zone de sécurité" de 32 km de profondeur le long de sa frontière, qui permettrait de séparer celle-ci des zones YPG et de rapatrier une partie des 3,6 millions de réfugiés syriens installés en Turquie. Ankara considère les YPG comme une "organisation terroriste" pour ses liens avec le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) qui livre une sanglante guérilla en Turquie.



17/10/2019

Offensive turque en Syrie: une semaine de volte-face de Donald Trump

"On se souviendra de ma politique étrangère." En 2017, Donald Trump se vantait déjà de sa manière d'appréhender la géopolitique "avec ses tripes", au détriment des conseils des experts et cadres de son administration, de son propre camp politique, du rôle majeur des Etats-Unis sur la scène internationale et parfois, tout simplement, en dépit du bon sens.

L'épisode de l'[offensive turque en Syrie](#) a une nouvelle fois montré le comportement atypique du président des Etats-Unis en termes de diplomatie: appel diplomatique impromptu, tweets virulents, lettre quasi-enfantine adressée à Erdogan...

Donald Trump gouvernant "avec ses tripes", cet épisode a une nouvelle fois donné l'occasion au président américain de faire volte-face sur plusieurs volets, de l'élément déclencheur de l'offensive turque au rôle des Kurdes dans la lutte contre Daesh, en passant par la raison-même du retrait des troupes américaines de la frontière turco-syrienne.

Sur l'offensive turque

Tout a commencé par un communiqué de la Maison Blanche dimanche 6 octobre annonçant le retrait des troupes américaines.

"La Turquie va bientôt procéder à son opération prévue de longue date au nord de la Syrie. (...) Les forces de l'armée américaine ne soutiendront pas ou ne seront pas impliquées dans cette opération et elles, fortes de leur victoire sur le califat de Daesh, ne seront plus dans les parages". [peut-on lire](#).

Un communiqué ne faisant aucune mention des Kurdes, alliés des Occidentaux dans la lutte contre Daesh, et qui a attiré les foudres des Démocrates comme des Républicains. Donald Trump [a promis le lendemain](#) "d'anéantir" l'économie turque si Ankara "dépassait les bornes", sans préciser lesquelles.

"La Turquie, l'Europe, la Syrie, l'Iran, l'Irak, la Russie et les Kurdes devront se débrouiller de la situation", a-t-il ajouté. Au vu des fortes critiques, notamment des Républicains, l'administration Trump et le président ont martelé que leur retrait n'était pas "un feu vert" à l'opération turque. Même si le communiqué d'origine la mentionne et la décision prise à l'issue d'un coup de téléphone entre Donald Trump et Recep Tayyip Erdogan.



Le 9 octobre, après avoir téléphoné au président turc, annoncé le retrait des troupes américaines, menacé d'enterrer l'économie turque, dit que les Kurdes étaient "spéciaux", rappelé que la Turquie était "un allié de l'Otan" puis estimé que les forces en puissance sur place devaient régler la question elles-mêmes, [Donald Trump a envoyé une lettre](#) au chef de l'Etat turc. Dans cette missive au ton pour le moins surprenant, il encourage Erdogan à "conclure un bon accord", "ne pas jouer au dur à cuire" et "ne pas être idiot".

Sur les Kurdes

"J'anéantirai l'économie turque s'ils frappent les Kurdes." Ces mots, Donald Trump les a prononcés lui-même pas plus tard qu'en janvier dernier. Par le passé, il les a décrit comme "d'incroyables guerriers" et des "personnes formidables". Revirement ces derniers jours, quelques jours après le début de l'offensive turque.

En effet, si au début l'administration américaine ne mentionnait même pas ses alliés de longue date contre Daesh, Donald Trump n'a pas tardé à commencer à casser du sucre sur le dos des Kurdes.

"Ce ne sont pas des anges, ce ne sont pas des anges", lance-t-il depuis quelques jours. "Les Kurdes savent se battre", ajoute-t-il affirmant même qu'ils "sont plus en sécurité aujourd'hui".

[Lors d'une conférence de presse](#), Donald Trump est même allé plus loin. Il a affirmé que le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui mène une sanglante guérilla contre la Turquie depuis plusieurs décennies, était "probablement" une plus grande "menace terroriste" que Daesh, "sous bien des aspects".

"Nous leur avons donné beaucoup d'argent. De grosses sommes d'argent. Nous leur avons donné des fortunes considérables", a-t-il ajouté. Le président américain a même estimé que les Forces démocratiques syriennes à majorité

kurde, responsables des centres de détention de combattants jihadistes, "en laissent probablement échapper quelques-uns pour avoir un impact politique plus important".

Il a même été dit que les Kurdes n'avaient pas aidé les Alliés pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, notamment en Normandie. Une affirmation pour le moins anachronique, mais surtout fautive: les Kurdes [ont bien combattu contre des Irakiens](#) alliés des Nazis, aux côtés des Britanniques.

Sur les raisons du retrait des troupes américaines

Donald Trump a assuré que le travail des Américains était terminé en Syrie, notamment [car le califat de Daesh](#) était tombé. En occultant la possibilité d'une résurgence de l'organisation terroriste, notamment avec la possible évasion de combattants jihadistes étrangers dans les prisons surveillées par les Kurdes.

Dans un débat contre Hillary Clinton en 2016, rappelle le *New York Times*, celui qui n'était encore qu'un homme d'affaires avait critiqué Barack Obama pour la même stratégie. "Le président Obama et la secrétaire d'Etat Clinton ont créé un vide en partant d'Irak. Ils n'auraient pas dû y aller, mais une fois là-bas, la manière de se retirer était un désastre. Et l'Etat islamique est né", [avait-il analysé](#).

Un autre argument martelé par le président américain, ce sont les "guerres sans fin". Arguant qu'il avait été élu pour faire rentrer les soldats américains, il a incité à "les laisser combattre leurs propres guerres, ils se battent depuis 1000 ans". D'où le déploiement de 1800 soldats supplémentaires en Arabie saoudite [en fin de semaine dernière](#).

Cette fois-ci, la classe politique américaine n'a pas pardonné ses volte-face à Donald Trump. La Chambre des représentants a adopté ce mercredi à une très vaste majorité une résolution non-contraignante condamnant la décision de retirer les troupes américaines du nord de la Syrie. Elle a été adoptée par 354 voix contre 60, avec l'approbation de 129 républicains sur les 197 siégeant à la chambre basse.

"Je ne vais pas m'impliquer dans une guerre entre la Turquie et la Syrie", martèle toujours le président américain, alors même que son vice-président Mike Pence est à Ankara ce jeudi pour tenter d'obtenir une "fin à l'invasion" turque et un "cessez-le-feu immédiat".



17/10/2019
Avec AFP et Reuters

Washington et la Turquie annoncent un cessez-le-feu temporaire dans le nord-est syrien

Ankara va suspendre son offensive en Syrie pendant cinq jours pour que les forces kurdes se retirent de la zone. Le cessez-le-feu provisoire a été annoncé par le vice-président américain et la Turquie. Les Kurdes sont prêts à le respecter.

"C'est un grand jour". Sur Twitter, [Donald Trump](#) s'est félicité de l'accord trouvé jeudi 17 octobre entre son vice-président Mike Pence et la [Turquie](#), qui prévoit un cessez-le-feu de 120 heures dans le nord-est syrien pour permettre un retrait des forces kurdes.

Lors d'une conférence de presse après un entretien de quatre heures avec le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Mike Pence a précisé que l'armée turque allait suspendre ses opérations le temps du retrait des forces kurdes dans la région. Les États-Unis ont déjà commencé à sécuriser le retrait, a-t-il précisé.

Les forces kurdes en Syrie sont prêtes "à respecter le cessez-le-feu", a annoncé pour sa part le chef des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS) Mazloum Abdi, lors d'une intervention téléphonique sur la chaîne de télévision kurde "Ronahi".

Les Turcs ont promis aux Américains que cette "zone de sécurité" serait temporaire et ne provoquerait pas de déplacements massifs de populations, a déclaré jeudi soir le représentant spécial américain pour la Syrie, James Jeffrey.

L'offensive turque s'arrêtera quand le retrait sera terminé

Les forces kurdes devront se retirer d'un secteur d'une profondeur de 32 km censé se transformer à terme en "zone de sécurité". L'offensive turque "s'arrêtera complètement lorsque ce retrait aura été terminé", a ajouté Mike Pence. L'accord prévoit également



Le vice-président américain Mike Pence (droite) et le secrétaire d'État américain Mike Pompeo, le 17 octobre. Huseyin Aldemir, Reuters

que la Turquie s'abstienne de toute opération militaire dans la ville syrienne de Kobané.

Le chef de la diplomatie turque Mevlut Cavusoglu a confirmé la suspension des opérations militaires dans le cadre de l'opération Source de Paix, lancée le 9 octobre. "Nous suspendons l'opération, nous ne l'arrêtons pas", a-t-il déclaré à la presse. "Nous pourrions arrêter l'opération seulement lorsque (les forces kurdes) se seront retirées complètement de la région", a-t-il ajouté.

Le président américain Donald Trump a remercié sur Twitter le président Erdogan, estimant que cet accord allait "sauver des millions de vies".

Les dirigeants de l'Union européenne ont pris note jeudi soir de la suspension de l'opération et ont appelé une nouvelle fois Ankara à l'abandonner et à retirer ses

troupes.

Levée des sanctions

Les Occidentaux soutiennent les YPG pour leur rôle crucial dans la lutte contre les jihadistes de l'organisation de l'État islamique (EI), mais Ankara les qualifie de "terroristes" en raison de leurs liens avec le Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui mène une guérilla sanglante en Turquie depuis 1984.

Donald Trump avait paru donner son feu vert à l'offensive mais [face au tollé dans les pays occidentaux et au sein de son camp](#), le président américain a exhorté Ankara à y mettre fin et a autorisé des sanctions contre la Turquie. Mike Pence a annoncé que ces sanctions seraient levées lorsque la Turquie aura mis fin à l'offensive conformément à l'accord conclu jeudi.



17/10/2019

Syrian Kurds welcome KRG aid to civilians fleeing Turkish military incursion

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – In a statement on Wednesday, Syrian Kurdish officials extended their gratitude to the neighboring Kurdistan Region for receiving refugees displaced by the current crisis in northern Syria caused by a Turkish military incursion begun one week earlier.

“We thank the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) for providing humanitarian and relief support to our people who were forced to leave as a result of the heavy Turkish bombardment,” said the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), the political wing of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

According to the KRG’s Joint Coordination Centre (JCC), 930 people have so far arrived in the Kurdistan Region, already hosting close to a million internally displaced persons and Syrian refugees. The JCC said it was preparing for a large influx of new arrivals as Turkish attacks on northern towns in Syria continued.

The SDC reiterated condemnations of the Turkish military “invasion” as an “unprovoked attack” on their territories. Ankara’s long-threatened campaign, which has been largely denounced internationally, began eight days ago with the purported aim of confronting the Kurdish military leadership of the SDF, the Peoples’ Protection Units (YPG), whom Ankara considers terrorists for alleged connections with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK).

Ankara also says it seeks to settle close to 3.5 million Syrian refugees, many from other parts



The Debaga refugee camp in southern Erbil governorate. (Photo: ITV News)

of the country, in a so-called “safe zone” it seeks to establish south of its border. The depth of the region Turkey seeks is unclear since it has increased it on multiple occasions, confident of the strength of its bargaining chips.

In its military push into the areas—similar to previous operations—Ankara is employing Syrian Islamist militant groups whom the UN has said may have committed war crimes after gruesome details emerged of how one such group’s members killed a female Kurdish politician from the region. A recent video also appeared to show militants summarily executing a number of SDF detainees.

In Wednesday’s statement, the Autonomous Administration—as it is officially known—“reaffirms that what Turkey is doing amounts to genocide.”

Abandoned by the US following the decision of President Donald Trump to withdraw American forces from the region, the SDF sought a deal with the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad, brokered by Moscow. Damascus has deployed national army troops to the north to confront the Turkish military and the militias it backs.

Editing by John J. Catherine

LADEPECHE.fr

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DDM - Emilie Cayre

Albi : 150 personnes disent "halte aux massacres des Kurdes en Syrie"

Il s’étaient environ cent cinquante personnes à avoir répondu présent, ce jeudi soir, place du Vigan au rassemblement pour la cause kurde en Syrie initié par plusieurs organisations politiques, syndicales et autres associations. «Défendons le peuple kurde du Rojava contre l’agression militaire turque », «Erdogan assassin», tels étaient certains des leitmotiv repris par l’ensemble des manifestants présents.

Un représentant de la famille kurde albigeoise a dénoncé «l’invasion turque. Elle est synonyme

de massacres, de nettoyage ethnique, de drames humanitaires... L’invasion de cette région par la Turquie crée les conditions propices à la réactivation de Daesh qui redeviendra une menace grave pour le Moyen Orient, l’Europe et le monde entier.»

“Seuls contre Daesh”
Et les organisateurs de rappé-



150 personnes ont manifesté ce soir contre l’offensive turque en Syrie DDM - Emilie Cayre

ler que «les Kurdes ont été les seuls à se battre au sol contre Daesh, ils ont déjà perdu 11 000 combattantes et combattants. Ils ont développé dans la région un système politique fondé sur la démocratie, le pluralisme et l'égalité des genres,

ils ne représentent une menace pour personne, ils ne demandent qu'à vivre libres en paix. Nous demandons donc aux organisations internationales et européennes de prendre contre le régime d'Erdogan toutes les sanctions diploma-

tiques et économiques nécessaires pour le faire renoncer à l'invasion et au nettoyage ethnique au Nord de la Syrie.»

Le Point

17 octobre 2019

En Irak, des Kurdes syriens trouvent refuge loin du "sang" et des "roquettes"

Zoueida pensait vivre une soirée normale, heureuse, en famille. Mais, soudain, la rumeur a couru que les Turcs arrivaient et "cinq minutes plus tard, on a vu des roquettes voler", raconte cette Kurde de Syrie tout juste arrivée en Irak.

Comme elle, près d'un millier de Kurdes syriens ont trouvé refuge au Kurdistan irakien voisin, loin du "sang" et des "roquettes", depuis le lancement le 9 octobre par la Turquie d'une offensive contre la milice kurde syrienne des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG), alliée des Occidentaux dans la lutte antijihadiste.

L'une des cibles de l'opération turque dans le nord de la Syrie, est Ras al-Aïn, la ville de Zoueida sur la frontière turque.

"Tout était normal et soudain, on a entendu qu'il y avait y avoir des frappes. On a quitté la maison et cinq minutes après, on a vu des roquettes voler", raconte à l'AFP cette femme qui préfère ne pas donner son nom, en évoquant cette soirée du jeudi 10 octobre.

Alors, avec son mari, leurs enfants et quelques maigres bagages en main, elle prend la route. Direction la frontière syro-irakienne, à environ 200 km plus loin.

Au bout de quatre jours de marche, la famille arrive à destination. Là, elle est escortée vers des bus affrétés par les autorités du Kurdistan irakien autonome qui offre une issue de secours cruciale aux Kurdes de Syrie depuis le début de la guerre dans leur pays en 2011.

Elle est ensuite installée dans un camp de déplacés irakiens dans la localité de Bardarach, près de la frontière, reconverti ces derniers jours en camp pour réfugiés venus de Syrie.

Femmes, enfants, sang

Sur leur chemin, "des gens fuyaient, des petits enfants étaient sous les frappes, des femmes dormaient dans les rues. On a vu le sang couler de nos propres



yeux", raconte Zoueida dans un débit mitraillette.

Elle dit s'inquiéter pour le reste de sa famille dont elle ignore le sort. "On est partis sous les bombes, on n'a ni téléphone ni rien".

Plus de 800 Kurdes syriens ayant fui l'offensive sont arrivés ces derniers jours dans des camps de la province irakienne de Dohouk, où se trouve le camp de Berdarach et où les autorités kurdes irakiennes leur distribuent des vivres.

Parmi eux, Rosine Omar, qui a elle aussi fui avec sa famille Ras al-Aïn, où les combattants kurdes tentent de repousser les forces turques et leurs supplétifs syriens.

"A Ras al-Aïn, la situation devenait intenable, on entendait des tirs de roquettes et on a eu peur", dit à l'AFP cette kurde syrienne de 29 ans, installée également dans le camp de Bardarach.

Des dizaines de civils ont été tués et plus de 300.000 personnes ont été déplacées depuis le 9 octobre, selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH). Mais la Turquie est déterminée à poursuivre contre vents et marées son opération visant à instaurer une "zone de sécurité" dans le nord syrien pour éloigner les YPG de sa frontière.

"Aidez-nous" !

Et dans cette explosion de violences, Rosine Omar met en avant les différentes forces impliquées dans

le conflit syrien: les troupes turques, leurs supplétifs syriens, les forces du régime syrien et d'autres... Sans oublier les "cellules dormantes" du groupe jihadiste Etat islamique (EI).

"On a eu peur que l'EI" ou les supplétifs syriens "viennent nous occuper. On a préféré partir parce qu'il fallait sortir nos enfants de cette guerre", martèle-t-elle.

Sauver ses enfants, c'est aussi ce qui a poussé Zanjabil, originaire de la ville syrienne d'Afrine conquise en 2018 par les forces turques et leurs supplétifs syriens, à payer des passeurs pour arriver au Kurdistan irakien.

Il y a un an et demi, il avait quitté Afrine "sous les bombes turques" pour se réfugier dans la province syrienne de Hassaké, plus à l'ouest.

Mais après la nouvelle offensive turque, il a repris la route la semaine dernière en direction du Kurdistan irakien, où il s'est installé dans le camp de Bardarach. "On a vu des enfants démembrés par les bombes" sur le chemin, raconte Zanjabil avant de dire être sans nouvelles de son père et de ses soeurs, restés à Afrine.

"L'exode permanent va durer jusqu'à ?" se lamentait-il. "Les Kurdes n'en peuvent plus: on ne fait la guerre à personne, c'est eux qui nous bombardent (...)" Il faut que les pays européens nous aident. Il nous faut une aide d'urgence".

Syrie : les Kurdes accusent Ankara d'utiliser des armes non conventionnelles

Les autorités kurdes accusent les soldats turcs d'utiliser du phosphore blanc et du napalm lors de leurs attaques, une pratique interdite par le droit international

Les autorités kurdes en Syrie ont accusé ce jeudi la Turquie de recourir à des armes non conventionnelles telles que le phosphore blanc ou le napalm, dans son offensive dans le nord du pays en guerre. Ces accusations visant les forces d'Ankara ou les supplétifs syriens n'ont pas pu être vérifiées.

Depuis le lancement le 9 octobre de leur offensive contre une milice kurde syrienne, les troupes turques et leurs supplétifs syriens ont conquis une bande frontalière de 120 kilomètres dans le nord syrien, et les combats se concentrent désormais dans la ville de Ras al-Aïn.

"En violation flagrante du droit et des traités internationaux, l'agression turque contre (Ras al-Aïn) est menée avec tout type d'armes", a fustigé ce jeudi dans un communiqué l'administration semi-autonome kurde. "Face à l'échec évident de son plan, (le président turc Recep Tayyip) Erdogan a recours aux armes interdites internationalement, comme le phosphore ou le napalm", souligne le communiqué.

Des blessés souffrant de brûlure

L'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH), qui dispose d'un vaste réseau de sources sur le terrain, ne pouvait pas confirmer l'usage de ces armes.

Mais l'ONG "a recensé des blessés souffrant de brûlures qui sont arrivés à l'hôpital de Tal Tamr ces deux derniers jours", a indiqué le directeur de l'Observa-



Les troupes turques et leurs supplétifs syriens se rassemblent à l'entrée de la ville syrienne de Ras al-Aïn, le 12 octobre 2019 [afp.com/Nazeer Al-khatib](http://afp.com/Nazeer-Al-khatib)

toire, Rami Abdel Rahmane, évoquant une localité proche de Ras al-Aïn.

L'armée turque et les supplétifs syriens ont avancé ce jeudi dans Ras al-Aïn, qu'ils contrôlent désormais à moitié, a par ailleurs rapporté l'Observatoire.

Tout au long du conflit qui ravage la Syrie depuis 2011, le terme napalm a été utilisé pour décrire les bombes incendiaires fabriquées à base de substances similaires au napalm. Le phosphore blanc peut être utilisé notamment pour créer un écran de fumée, mais il peut aussi servir à la fabrication d'armes incendiaires meurtrières, une utilisation interdite par le droit international.

L'appel aux organisations internationales

Des responsables kurdes ont posté sur les réseaux sociaux une vidéo montrant des enfants souffrant de brûlures qui, selon un médecin de la province de Hama, peuvent corroborer l'usage de telles armes.

"Nous appelons les organisations internationales à envoyer leurs équipes pour examiner les blessures", a indiqué Moustafa Bali, un porte-parole des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), principale coalition dominée par les forces kurdes.

"Les installations médicales dans le nord-est syrien ne disposent plus d'experts après le retrait des ONG causé par l'invasion turque", a-t-il dit.

L'offensive turque a fait depuis le 9 octobre au moins 72 morts parmi les civils en Syrie et 203 parmi les combattants FDS, selon un dernier bilan de l'OSDH.

Au Rojava kurde, on attaque aussi une manière de vivre libre

L'attaque de l'armée turque contre la Fédération autonome de Syrie du Nord et de l'Est fait craindre le pire pour les civils, livrés aux milices, mais aussi pour l'avenir de l'expérience politique inédite et originale menée au Kurdistan syrien. Explication par Corinne Morel Darleux dans cet entretien.

Reporterre — Depuis plus d'une semaine, l'armée turque bombarde et envahit le Kurdistan



syrien, autrement nommé Rojava. Vous vous êtes rendue au Rojava à deux reprises. Pouvez-vous nous présenter cette région autonome et les fondements de son expérience de la démocratie ?

Corinne Morel Darleux — Le Rojava est situé en Syrie du Nord et s'étend sur une bande qui longe la frontière avec la Turquie. On devrait aujourd'hui l'appeler « Fédération autoadministrée de Syrie du

Nord et de l'Est », puisque sa zone géographique s'est considérablement étendue au gré des victoires sur Daech [l'organisation État islamique]. C'est désormais un territoire grand comme le Danemark, et où vivent cinq à six millions d'habitants.

Parmi ces habitants, beaucoup étaient venus s'y réfugier car c'était l'un des rares espoirs de paix et de coexistence multiculturelle dans cette partie du monde. Ce territoire regroupe des ethnies et des religions très différentes, dans un principe d'égalité entre toutes ces cultures.

Tout ce territoire s'était, il y a quelques années, déclaré autonome par rapport au régime de Bachar el-Assad. Ses membres sont en train — hélas, je ne sais plus s'il faut en parler au présent ou au passé — d'y mettre en œuvre une administration autonome, c'est-à-dire un système démocratique fondé sur deux concepts : le municipalisme libertaire et le confédéralisme démocratique.

Ces tentatives d'expérimenter une autre forme de démocratie, plus directe, ont comme unité de base « la commune ». Pas « la commune » au sens municipal, comme chez nous, mais au sens de plusieurs dizaines de foyers regroupés pour prendre les décisions qui les concernent directement, et qui, ensuite, sont représentés dans des assemblées de quartiers, de cantons ou de régions pour ce qui nécessite d'être coordonné à échelle plus large.

L'un des piliers du Rojava est également le féminisme. Dans cette organisation démocratique, les différents niveaux de décision sont paritaires et les femmes — qui jusqu'à peu n'avaient même pas le droit de sortir de chez elles — sont entrées en politique. Elles siègent dans les administrations, dans les différentes assemblées citoyennes, elles ont la possibilité de créer leurs emplois, de monter des coopératives paysannes ou économiques. Elles ont aussi pris les armes contre Daech et, encore aujourd'hui, font partie des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG) au même titre que les hommes.

Pourquoi est-il crucial, à vos yeux, de défendre le Rojava ?

D'abord, le peuple kurde est un peuple sans État, dont les droits ont été bafoués pendant de longues décennies. Cette population a toujours été opprimée, elle n'avait même pas le droit de parler sa propre langue.

Ensuite, le projet politique mené au Rojava est inédit, il fait partie des rares poches d'expérimentation, dans le monde, d'autres manières de vivre loin du capitalisme et de ces sociétés avec

des États autoritaires tels qu'on en connaît, de plus en plus, en Occident. Ce n'est d'ailleurs pas pour rien, à cet égard, qu'il y a eu beaucoup de messages de sympathie et de soutiens croisés entre la Zad de Notre-Dame-des-Landes et le Rojava. Ce sont des lieux qui ouvrent des brèches.

Il y a aussi une logique de loyauté vis-à-vis de nos anciens alliés, puisque les Kurdes se sont battus contre Daech en notre nom et ont payé un très lourd tribut, avec 11.000 tués, au moment où Daech frappait en Occident et notamment en France. On sait aussi que la Turquie a favorisé le développement de Daech en Syrie. Or, l'armée turque bombarde à proximité des lieux où sont détenus les anciens combattants de Daech et provoque des troubles qui ont déjà permis à plusieurs centaines de prisonniers de s'échapper. La Turquie occupe aujourd'hui Afrin, une ancienne ville du Rojava, avec l'appui de milices djihadistes. Donc, si la Turquie arrive à prendre le contrôle de ce territoire, il y a un énorme risque de résurgence de Daech. On en voit les prémices depuis une semaine avec des attaques de cellules dormantes de Daech du côté de Raqqa et ailleurs en Syrie du Nord. C'est inquiétant pour la suite, et pas seulement en Syrie, mais aussi dans tous les pays qui ont déjà été frappés, dont la France

Comment s'explique la vague de sympathie de l'extrême gauche française envers les Kurdes ?

Il y a, dans la gauche française, une adhésion au projet politique révolutionnaire qui est mené en Syrie du Nord. Je me suis toujours gardée d'encenser l'expérience au Rojava et j'ai tenté de conserver un esprit critique, mais j'ai été très impressionnée par l'ambition du projet, le courage dont faisaient preuve les femmes et les hommes qui le mettent en place là-bas, et par sa solidité politique et humaine.

Les seuls vrais freins à la mise en œuvre de ce projet, en réalité, sont plutôt de nature géopolitique : tout est très difficile dans un pays qui fait face à des conflits armés en permanence, qui était déjà menacé par l'armée turque, qui sortait tout juste des affrontements terribles contre Daech, et qui devait faire face à des blocus récurrents. Le Rojava vit une situation de pénurie généralisée, avec la plupart des foyers privés d'eau courante, des coupures d'électricité... Dans ces conditions hostiles, il est difficile ne serait-ce que de tenir des élections. Ce qui a été réalisé là-bas est vraiment phénoménal.

Quels étaient les projets en cours de réalisation en matière d'écologie ?

Il y a un très beau projet de reforestation, « Make Rojava Green Again », mené par la commune internationaliste, des volontaires internationaux

qui travaillent avec les populations locales et les collectivités pour planter des arbres dans cette zone qui était auparavant dédiée par le régime syrien à la monoculture intensive de céréales. Quand on y est allé, il n'y avait quasiment que des champs jaunes à perte de vue, avec tout ce que ça pose comme problème en matière de lutte contre la sécheresse et d'alimentation vivrière. Ce projet de reforestation était donc extrêmement bienvenu. Il y a aussi un fleurissement de coopératives paysannes, notamment de femmes, qui réapprennent la polyculture, l'agriculture vivrière, l'agriculture biologique avec un souci de l'environnement qui est inscrit dans les piliers du projet politique.

Dans un tweet publié en début de semaine, vous disiez « Des hôpitaux sont bombardés, des convois civils ciblés, des puits détruits, des camps pilonnés, on en est à 130.000 déplacés, des fous de Daech en fuite... »

Je vois en permanence défiler dans ma tête les lieux, les projets, les visages des gens sur place... On est actuellement dans la phase de bombardement, qui précède une invasion terrestre. Celle-ci devrait être menée par des milices, les supplétifs d'Erdogan, qui ont participé à déloger les Unités de protection du peuple (YPG) de l'enclave d'Afrin. Ils ont alors commis de nombreuses exactions sur les populations civiles. Et on ne peut pas oublier ce qu'a été Daech : enlèvements, tortures, viols, lapidations, personnes réduites en esclavage. Ce qui m'inquiète terriblement pour la suite est le moment où les personnes qui n'auront pas pu fuir, ou seront rattrapées par l'avancée des djihadistes, vont se retrouver dans des situations abominables. Quand on parle de guerres et de géopolitique, c'est souvent abstrait, mais très concrètement, il s'agit des hommes, des femmes et des enfants qui se retrouvent pris au piège avec des brutes dont on a déjà vu ce qu'elles étaient capables de faire.

Vous finissez cette publication par : « Et la réponse de la France à tout ça, c'est le retrait face à la Turquie ? » En voulez-vous au gouvernement français ?

J'en veux beaucoup à Donald Trump, déjà. Je ne comprends pas comment il est possible, en 2019, d'avoir à la tête des États-Unis quelqu'un d'aussi inconséquent, qui en une semaine provoque quasiment à lui tout seul un tel désastre humanitaire et géopolitique. J'en veux au président turc, j'en veux aussi au gouvernement français, et à tous les autres. Je ne sais pas ce qui se passe dans les couloirs diplomatiques, mais qu'il n'y ait pas eu de réaction virulente. Le Conseil européen a mis une semaine à se réunir, il a fallu plusieurs jours pour demander une convocation du conseil de sécurité de l'ONU.

La France, elle, ne s'interroge toujours pas sur son appartenance à l'Otan [Organisation du traité de l'Atlantique Nord], dont sont membres à la fois les Etats-Unis et la Turquie. Il n'y a pas de réflexion de fond sur les questions de sécurité et de défense, et ça ne date pas de Macron. C'est un héritage plus ancien. Mais je crains qu'on ne finisse par payer très cher l'absence de réflexion géopolitique autonome et sensée de la part de la France.

Que peuvent faire les citoyens français ?

Notre pouvoir est relativement limité, parce que nous sommes face à des cadres de géostratégie internationale compliqués à faire bouger. Mais il est très important de dire et de redire que tous les gestes de soutien comptent. Un texte, publié par la commune internationaliste et le projet Make Rojava Green Again, dit que toute l'information

qui est relayée rend la révolution immortelle et permet de graver ce moment dans l'histoire pour qu'il ne soit jamais oublié.

Il faut passer par tous les biais possibles d'information : dans des médias, auprès des voisins, de la famille, des amis... Rien n'est anodin. Ça n'arrêtera peut-être pas la guerre, mais ça donne du courage aux Kurdes, à toutes celles et ceux qui vivent là-bas, de sentir que tout le monde ne les abandonne pas. Il y a des rassemblements, souvent appelés par le Conseil démocratique kurde en France (CDK-F), il y a aussi des actions qui commencent à se multiplier, dans des aéroports vis-à-vis de Turkish Airlines, ou via des appels à boycotter des produits turcs. Make Rojava Green Again propose de planter des arbres devant les ambassades turques pour en bloquer

l'entrée. Une banderole a aussi été déroulée au Stade de France, lundi 14 octobre, lors du match France-Turquie. Tout ce qui permet de montrer notre désaccord avec cette offensive est bon. On peut aussi aider financièrement les victimes via Roja Sor-Soleil rouge.

La seule vigilance que j'ai est de ne pas attiser les tensions entre les communautés ici. Rien ne serait pire que d'importer le conflit en France. Il faut qu'on y fasse attention, parce qu'une des choses qui fait la beauté et la grandeur du projet de Syrie du Nord, c'est précisément de permettre aux uns et aux autres de vivre ensemble, de manière fraternelle. Et je veux croire qu'il y a aussi beaucoup de personnes d'origine turque, en France, qui n'approuvent pas la situation.



17 octobre 2019
Kosar Newzad

KRG welcomes Syria ceasefire, rejects forced demographic change

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region Masrour Barzani on Friday welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire that purported to halt a Turkish-led incursion into northern Syria but rejected any moves by Turkey to forcibly change the demography of the area, a statement from the top official's office said.

The comments were made during a meeting in Erbil between Barzani and French Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian, according to the statement.

The two officials expressed their concern about the current precarious situation in northern Syria, under attack by Turkey and Turkish-backed Islamist militias after an abrupt US withdrawal from the area paved the way for Ankara's long-threatened assault.

On Thursday, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) welcomed a US-brokered temporary ceasefire which President Donald Trump hailed as a great success and Ankara praised as "everything" it wanted.

Turkey, however, appears to be already violating the deal as their warplanes started pounding the same day a town where the ceasefire was to be in effect, targeting residential areas as well as hospitals.

Abandoned by their longtime US allies in the fight against the Islamic State in Syria, the SDF sought a deal with American adversaries, the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad and Russia,



Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region Masrour Barzani meets with French Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian in Erbil, Oct. 18, 2019. (Photo: Prime Minister's Office)

to bolster defenses against Turkey. Damascus has deployed national army troops to the north to confront the Turkish army and the militias it backs.

One of Ankara's stated goals in its military offensive, now in its second week, is to establish a so-called peace corridor—which is a sizable portion of the region the SDF control in Syria—to resettle Syrian refugees currently residing in Turkey. It also aims to confront Kurdish SDF fighters known as the People's Protection Units (YPG) whom Ankara considers terrorists.

Many displaced Syrians in Turkey—who fled Damascus' forceful crackdown on its citizens and the ensuing civil war from 2011 onwards—are not from the same areas of Syria that Ankara plans to settle. They also have different ethnic

backgrounds from the local populations in northern Syria, sparking fears of intentional demographic change by resettling Syrians with different ethnicities there.

Turkey has already been accused of ethnic cleansing in the Kurdish town of Afrin, also near the Turkish border,

since its forces and allied militias took over the city and nearby towns in March 2018. The region was previously controlled by the SDF and has since seen increased rates of violence and ethnic tension, amid claims of forced displacement and ethnically-motivated attacks on the local Kurdish-majority population. Many who left the area fearing for their lives have also had their property seized by the militias.

The current Turkish attack in northern Syria has also led to an exodus into stable areas outside of Syria. The Kurdistan Region has already welcomed close to 2,000 people, nine days since the Turkish assault began.

Barzani and Le Drian, according to Friday's statement, stressed the international community's

key role and responsibility to assist the Kurdistan Region in sheltering refugees fleeing violence.

Le Drian arrived in the Kurdistan Region on Thursday following a visit to Baghdad, where he met with top Iraqi leaders to discuss, among other issues, a suitable mechanism to take foreign Islamic State militants imprisoned in Iraq to trial.

Prime Minister Barzani also briefed the French

minister on the ongoing talks between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the federal Iraqi government.

"We have repeatedly expressed our full readiness to reach an agreement with Baghdad. We have made a number of proposals for this. We hope the federal government will take more serious steps to resolve outstanding problems based on the constitution," said Barzani.

For his part, Le Drian said, "I have come to

renew France's support for the people of the Kurdistan Region, which played a major role and made great sacrifices in the war against ISIS, and I saw with my own eyes the heroism and valor of the Peshmerga."

The foreign minister stressed the need to focus efforts to prevent the re-emergence of the so-called Islamic State, which remains a serious threat in several provinces of Iraq.

REPORTERS
SANS FRONTIÈRES

17 octobre 2019

Well-known TV host's death in Iraqi Kurdistan – murder or suicide? | Reporters without borders

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls on the authorities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to do everything possible to clarify the circumstances of yesterday's deaths of a well-known TV host, his wife and their baby son, in Sulaymaniyah. Reports say they were shot by gunmen but the police say it was a suicide.

Amanj Babany, a presenter for the Kurdish TV channel NRT, his wife, Lana Muhammad (herself a Kurdsat journalist), and their young son were all killed when gunmen opened fire on the car and then fled, witnesses reportedly said. But a few hours after they died, the Sulaymaniyah police reported their deaths as a suicide following an argument between Babany and his wife.

The police version is contradicted by the eyewitness accounts gathered by an NRT reporter. Several other journalists, politicians and commentators also disputed the police version, sharing a video on social networks showing the car with bullet impacts. Deputy Prime Minister Qubad Talabani has promised to conduct a "personal" investigation.

"The Kurdistan Region's government must find the time to conduct a thorough investigation to



establish the real circumstances of what may have been a triple murder," said Sabrina Ben-noui, the head of RSF's Middle East desk. "If it proves to have been murder, it shows that media personnel are still in danger in Iraqi Kurdistan, even in a place that is supposed to be 'relatively safe' such as Sulaymaniyah, and that the practice of killing journalists in public hasn't ended." Babany hosted a programme called "Without Borders" that tackled such sensitive subjects as marriages with minors, violence against women and other societal issues that are controversial in Kurdistan.

If confirmed, yesterday's murders would not be isolated. Roj News journalist Wedat Hussein was found dead, bearing the marks of torture, shortly after being abducted in Dohuk in August 2016. Freelancer Sardasht Osman was found dead in Mosul two days after being abducted in Erbil in May 2010. Moreover, Lvin Magazine reporter Soran Mama Hama was gunned down outside his home in Kirkuk in July 2008 and founder of Royal Magazine Kawa Germyani was gunned down in similar circumstances in Kalar in December 2013. No one has been convicted of any of these murders.



17 octobre 2019
Nisan Ahmado Wed

Turkey Agrees to Halt in Offensive on Kurdish Fighters in Northern Syria

Turkey agreed Thursday to a 120-hour cease-fire in its assault on Kurdish fighters in northern Syria, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence announced in Ankara, after extensive talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Fighting continued Friday morning despite the cease-fire, according to news reports from the Associated Press of shelling and gunfire in and near Ras al-Ayn. Elsewhere along the border, calm prevailed.

Pence said the pause in Turkey's weeklong offensive would give Kurdish YPG fighters a window to leave the 32-kilometer-wide buffer zone just south of the Turkish border with Syria. He said the halt in hostilities was aimed at ensuring "peace and security is the order of the day" in the volatile region, and it came after five hours of discussions between Turkish and U.S. officials. Smoke billows from burning tires to decrease visibility for Turkish warplanes on the outskirts

of the town of Tal Tamr, Syria, along the border with Turkey in the northeastern Hassakeh province.

But local Kurdish news outlets reported that a longtime Syrian Kurdish politician, Aldar Xelil, who often speaks for Syrian Kurds, said, "We've previously stated that the proposal of Turkey's entering a depth of 30 km inside Syrian territories is rejected." He said Kurds would defend

themselves if attacked during the cease-fire.

Pence said Turkey and the United States "mutually agreed" to hold peace talks on the fate of the territory and how the two countries could continue to fight Islamic State insurgents, some of whom have escaped since Turkey started its attacks on the Kurds after Trump unilaterally withdrew nearly all American troops from the region.

Trump said that as a result of Turkey's agreement to pause its offensive, planned U.S. economic sanctions against Ankara were no longer necessary.

On Twitter, Trump said:

The U.S. leader had come under withering political criticism, from both Republican and Democratic lawmakers in the U.S., for withdrawing American troops.

But Trump declared:

Pence was accompanied by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and White House national security adviser Robert O'Brien in meeting with Erdogan and other Turkish officials.

The meeting came a day after Trump dismissed the importance of the outcome of the fighting, saying it "has nothing to do with us," even as the House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved a resolution condemning his troop withdrawal. Trump instead disparaged the Kurdish fighters, who had fought alongside U.S. troops against Islamic State terrorists, as "no angels."

U.S. Senate leaders announced plans for legislation with wide-ranging sanctions against NATO member Turkey, for the offensive against the Kurdish fighters and also its purchase of a Russian-made defensive missile system against the wishes of the U.S. and other NATO governments. It was not immediately clear whether the lawmakers would continue to try to advance the legislation in the wake of the cease-fire announcement.

FILE - Senator Lindsay Graham (R-SC) speaks during a hearing of the Senate Appropriations State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Subcommittee on Capitol Hill in Washington.



Smoke billows from burning tires to decrease visibility for Turkish warplanes on the outskirts of the town of Tal Tamr, Syria, along the border with Turkey in the northeastern Hassakeh province.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a Trump political ally but also a critic of his Syrian troop withdrawal, said, "We believe that Erdogan's decision to go into Syria puts our allies at risk. We believe that the rise of ISIS is imminent if this continues."

Trump, in a letter last week to Erdogan, warned the Turkish leader against carrying out the onslaught against the Kurdish fighters, saying, "Don't be a tough guy. Don't be a fool!" But reports from Turkey said Erdogan threw the short note "in the bin."

Trump said Erdogan risked being branded in history as a "devil" by carrying out the attack on the Kurdish fighters, whom he views as allied with Kurdish separatists who have been battling for autonomy inside Turkey for three decades. But Erdogan on Wednesday vowed to continue the offensive. With the U.S. troops withdrawn, Kurdish forces struck a deal with Syrian forces to return for the first time in years to northern Syrian outposts, with allied Russian soldiers entering the border town of Kobane.

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18 October, 2019

Turkey Syria offensive: Trump likens conflict to playground fight

US President Donald Trump has compared the deadly conflict between Turkish forces and Kurds in north-eastern Syria to a fight between children.

"Like two kids in a lot, you have got to let them fight and then you pull them apart," he told a rally in Texas.

Turkey has agreed to a US request to suspend operations so long as Kurdish fighters leave the border area.

But fighting appeared to continue on Friday despite a denial by Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

On Friday, French President Emmanuel Macron complained he had only learned about the US withdrawal from Syria via a tweet from Mr Trump.

"I understood that we were in Nato, that the United States and Turkey were in Nato," Mr Macron told reporters at an EU summit.

"Like everyone else, I learned by tweet that the United States had decided to withdraw its troops."

Mr Erdogan moved against Kurdish forces in Syria after Mr Trump announced he was pulling US forces out of Syria's border region.

The Turkish leader's aim is to push Kurdish fighters - regarded by Turkey as terrorists - away from northernmost Syria and create a "safe zone" for resettling up to two million Syrian refugees currently in Turkey.

Between 160,000 and 300,000 people were reported to have fled their homes since the fighting started, and there were fears that the Turkish operation may lead to the ethnic cleansing of the local Kurdish population.

Concern was also growing about possible war crimes committed by Turkey and allied militias since the offensive began on 9 October - with unconfirmed reports suggesting that Turkish forces used white phosphorous in Syria.

What exactly did Trump say ?

As well as alienating the Kurds, who were instrumental in defeating the Islamic State group in Syria, Mr Trump has faced withering criticism from Republican allies over his decision to move US troops aside ahead of Turkey's invasion.

Earlier this week an extraordinary letter from Mr Trump to Mr Erdogan telling the Turkish leader not to "be a fool" emerged, with Turkish sources telling the BBC that Mr Erdogan binned the letter.

But on Thursday, in Texas, Mr Trump defended his handling of the crisis.

"It was unconventional what I did," he told his supporters. "I said they're going to have to fight a little while... They fought for a few days and it was pretty vicious."

What is the situation on the ground ?

President Erdogan dismissed reports of continuing clashes on Friday as "misinformation" but international news media recorded explosions in the flashpoint border town of Ras al-Ain during the morning.

The Kurds had agreed to cease firing in the area between Ras al-Ain and Tal Abyad, where combat had been fierce, but they said other areas had not been discussed.

The Turkish-declared pause followed talks in Ankara between Mr Erdogan and Mr Trump's Vice-President, Mike Pence, on Thursday.



Source: Conflict Monitor by IHS Markit, Reach, 16 October 2019

All fighting was to halt for five days and the US was to help facilitate the withdrawal of Kurdish-led troops from Turkey's "safe zone" along the border.

Mr Erdogan also said on Friday that Syrian Kurdish fighters had begun to withdraw but Turkish forces would stay in north-eastern Turkey to make sure they "truly leave".

The Turks get what they wanted

The agreement brokered by the Americans does not define a "pause" in Turkish military operations but the US special envoy for Syria, James Jeffrey, said it meant no forward movement of troops on the ground, and no military action other than self-defence.

This applies to the swathes of Syrian land the Turks have invaded in the last week, about a quarter of the territory they ultimately want for a safe zone. Already they have forced some of the Kurdish fighters out but there are still pockets of strong resistance.

The Kurdish commander, General Mazloum Kobani, said the rest of his forces would retreat from this zone. But, he added, a ceasefire for other parts of the border would have to be discussed. Syrian soldiers have moved into much of it because the Kurds turned to Damascus for help after their US allies left.

The Syrians and their Russian backers were not at the negotiating table, so how they respond will help determine whether the agreement is sustainable. But for now it has essentially given the Turks what they were trying to achieve with the military operation: a zone on the Syrian side of the border, clear of Kurdish militias, that they control with their armed forces.

The Turks have agreed to make the "pause" per-

manent if the Kurdish fighters leave, but there is no demand for their soldiers to pull out.

Were war crimes committed ?

Nearly 500 people have been killed since the offensive started, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), a UK-based monitoring group.

They included 224 members of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and 183 Turkish-backed rebels, but also 72 civilians, according to the SOHR. The dead reportedly included at least 20 Turkish civilians.

Reports in some newspapers alleged that Turkish forces used white phosphorous in Syria. People exposed to the chemical are badly burned, as moisture on the body makes the chemical burn more vigorously while the heavy smoke it emits damages the lungs.

Turkey insisted it did not have the weapon in its arsenal, but some Kurds forces accused militias fighting on behalf of Ankara of deploying it.

A spokesman for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons said on Friday the group had "not yet determined the credibility of these allegations", but it is aware of the situation and is collecting information.

Amnesty International says it has gathered "damning evidence of war crimes and other violations by Turkish forces and their allies".

It accuses them of carrying out summary executions and attacking civilians indiscriminately.

Hevrin Khalaf, a Kurdish female politician killed on 12 October, was dragged out of her car, beaten and shot dead by Turkish-backed Syrian fighters, Amnesty says.

In other attacks, children were killed by Turkish air strikes or mortars, Amnesty says.

Turkish-backed fighters have denied responsibility for Khalaf's death. President Erdogan insists his operation is aimed at bringing peace to the region and should be welcomed internationally.

What is being done for those who fled?

Nearly 1,700 people from north-eastern Syria, most of them women or children, sought refuge in neighbouring Iraq in recent days, the UN reports.

Image copyright Reuters Image caption Some families fleeing the fighting in Syria have found shelter in Kurdish parts of Iraq

They are being brought from the border to Bardarash refugee camp, near Dohuk.

One unnamed man told AFP news agency he had already moved to Iraq three years previously but had returned to Syria after the situation improved.

"If there had not been a Turkish attack, I would not have come here," he said in the camp. "If the situation improves, I will immediately return from where I came in Ras al-Ain."

Hamida Ali described the horror of the Turkish bombardments which had led her to flee Syria with her children.

"We couldn't even tell where the bombs were coming from anymore," she told Reuters news agency. "The children couldn't sleep, we were so afraid."



18 octobre 2019

Olivier Peguy

Syrie : pause dans l'offensive turque, Amnesty évoque des "crimes de guerre"

Un convoi de civils kurdes est arrivé la nuit dernière à Bardarash, une ville du Kurdistan irakien, en provenance de Syrie. Ils ont franchi la frontière pour fuir l'offensive militaire turque. Une offensive pour le moment stoppée, à la faveur d'un cessez-le-feu.

"Je suis vraiment content qu'il y ait ce cessez-le-feu, dit un réfugié kurde. J'espère qu'on pourra bientôt rentrer chez nous. Pour le moment, la situation est trop instable. Mais dès que la sécurité sera vraiment rétablie, alors, on rentrera."

"Comme deux gamins"

Le président américain s'est félicité de ce cessez-le-feu obtenu ce jeudi à Ankara sous la pression de Washington. "C'est un grand jour" pour les Etats-Unis, la Turquie et les Kurdes, a estimé Donald Trump.

« C'est un résultat incroyable. Et quoi qu'en disent les médias, c'est un résultat auquel personne n'était arrivé en 10 ans. Cela permet de sauver la vie de millions de personnes. Ils n'y seraient pas arrivés s'il n'y avait pas eu un peu d'"amour brutal", comme je l'ai appelé » Donald Trump, Président américain.

Au cours d'un meeting à Dallas, au Texas, il a indiqué avoir sciemment décidé de laisser les Turcs et les Kurdes se lancer dans cette bataille parce qu'ils étaient "comme deux gamins" qui avaient besoin de se bagarrer.



Un cessez-le-feu, ça ne peut être conclu qu'entre deux parties légitimes. Nous suspendons l'opération, afin de permettre aux groupes terroristes, ceux qui sont nos cibles, de se retirer de la zone ». Mevlut Cavusoglu, Ministre turc des Affaires étrangères.

C'est le vice-président américain Mike Pence qui a annoncé ce jeudi soir la suspension de l'offensive turque. Une suspension pour une durée de 5 jours, le temps que les forces kurdes se retirent du secteur concerné, soit une bande de 32 kilomètres de large, censée se transformer à terme en "zone de sécurité".

« Avec la mise en place de ce cessez-le-feu, les Etats-Unis n'imposeront pas de nouvelles sanctions à la Turquie. Et une fois qu'un cessez-le-feu permanent sera instauré, le président Trump est d'accord pour lever les sanctions économiques décidées lundi dernier ». Mike Pence,

vice-président américain.

"Une simple pause"

« C'est une simple pause, pas un cessez-le-feu.

"Crimes de guerre"

L'offensive turque a été lancée le 9 octobre. Le bilan humain est difficile à établir de manière indépendante.

L'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme (OSDH) avance une centaine de civils tués.

De son côté, l'ONG Amnesty international affirme que les forces turques et leurs supplétifs syriens se sont rendus coupables de "crimes de guerre", dont des "exécution sommaires" et des attaques meurtrières contre des civils.

"Les informations recueillies fournissent des preuves accablantes d'attaques sans discriminations contre des zones résidentielles", selon l'ONG.

"Les Kurdes se sont sacrifiés pour nous, nous ne pouvons pas les laisser", estime Manuel Valls

Au micro d'Europe 1, l'ancien Premier ministre de François Hollande a estimé que la France devait agir pour venir en aide à ses alliés kurdes contre le terrorisme, alors que la Turquie a lancé contre eux une offensive militaire dans le nord de la Syrie.

INTERVIEW

En première ligne dans la lutte contre le terrorisme quand il était chef du gouvernement, alors que la France subissait la vague d'attentats sans précédent, Manuel Valls a pris vendredi la défense des Kurdes, alliés de la France contre le

groupe Etat islamique, et désormais la cible d'une offensive turque d'envergure au nord de la Syrie. "Les Kurdes se sont sacrifiés pour nous, nous ne pouvons pas les laisser. C'est une question morale et politique", a déclaré au micro de Matthieu Belliard, sur Europe 1, l'ancien Premier ministre de François Hollande.

"Les Kurdes [...] ont combattu d'une manière tellement extraordinaire le terrorisme et les djihadistes. Ils détiennent encore aujourd'hui des terroristes français et d'autres pays", rappelle Manuel Valls, désormais conseiller municipal de

Barcelone. "Les Kurdes ont combattu pour nous, sans eux nous aurions connu d'avantage d'attentats."

"C'est une faute terrible qu'est en train de commettre Donald Trump", estime encore Manuel Valls, alors que les Etats-Unis ont annoncé le retrait d'un millier de leurs hommes stationnés jusqu'à présent au Kurdistan. "Je ne doute pas qu'Emmanuel Macron fait, au niveau international, tous les efforts pour empêcher cette intervention turque", conclut-il, toujours au micro d'Europe 1.



18 octobre 2019

Washington et la Turquie annoncent un cessez-le-feu temporaire dans le nord-est syrien

Le vice-président américain Mike Pence (droite) et le secrétaire d'Etat américain Mike Pompeo, le 17 octobre. Huseyin Aldemir, Reuters

Ankara va suspendre son offensive en Syrie pendant cinq jours pour que les forces kurdes se retirent de la zone. Le cessez-le-feu provisoire a été annoncé par le vice-président américain et la Turquie. Les Kurdes sont prêts à le respecter.

"C'est un grand jour". Sur Twitter, Donald Trump s'est félicité de l'accord trouvé jeudi 17 octobre entre son vice-président Mike Pence et la Turquie, qui prévoit un cessez-le-feu de 120 heures dans le nord-est syrien pour permettre un retrait des forces kurdes.

Lors d'une conférence de presse après un entretien de quatre heures avec le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Mike Pence a précisé que l'armée turque allait suspendre ses opérations le temps du retrait des forces kurdes dans la région. Les Etats-Unis ont déjà commencé à sécuriser le retrait, a-t-il précisé.

Les forces kurdes en Syrie sont prêtes "à respecter le cessez-le-feu", a annoncé pour sa part le chef des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS) Mazloum Abdi, lors d'une intervention téléphonique sur la chaîne de télévision kurde "Ronahi".

Les Turcs ont promis aux Américains que cette "zone de sécurité" serait temporaire et ne provoquerait pas de déplacements massifs de popula-



tions, a déclaré jeudi soir le représentant spécial américain pour la Syrie, James Jeffrey.

L'offensive turque s'arrêtera quand le retrait sera terminé;

Les forces kurdes devront se retirer d'un secteur d'une profondeur de 32 km censé se transformer à terme en "zone de sécurité". L'offensive turque "s'arrêtera complètement lorsque ce retrait aura été terminé", a ajouté Mike Pence. L'accord prévoit également que la Turquie s'abstienne de toute opération militaire dans la ville syrienne de Kobané.

Le chef de la diplomatie turque Mevlut Cavusoglu a confirmé la suspension des opérations militaires dans le cadre de l'opération Source de Paix, lancée le 9 octobre. "Nous suspendons l'opération, nous ne l'arrêtons pas", a-t-il déclaré à la presse. "Nous pourrions arrêter l'opération

seulement lorsque (les forces kurdes) se seront retirées complètement de la région", a-t-il ajouté.

Le président américain Donald Trump a remercié sur Twitter le président Erdogan, estimant que cet accord allait "sauver des millions de vies".

Les dirigeants de l'Union européenne ont pris note jeudi soir de la suspension de l'opération

et ont appelé une nouvelle fois Ankara à l'abandonner et à retirer ses troupes.

Levée des sanctions

Les Occidentaux soutiennent les YPG pour leur rôle crucial dans la lutte contre les jihadistes de l'organisation de l'Etat islamique (EI), mais Ankara les qualifie de "terroristes" en raison de leurs liens avec le Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui mène une guérilla sanglante en Turquie depuis 1984.

Donald Trump avait paru donner son feu vert à l'offensive mais face au tollé dans les pays occidentaux et au sein de son camp, le président américain a exhorté Ankara à y mettre fin et a autorisé des sanctions contre la Turquie. Mike Pence a annoncé que ces sanctions seraient levées lorsque la Turquie aura mis fin à l'offensive conformément à l'accord conclu jeudi.



18 octobre 2019

Lucas Menget

Vladimir Poutine, maître du jeu au Kurdistan

La planète tourne et vendredi nous posons le doigt à Moscou, d'où Vladimir Poutine contrôle la situation à la frontière entre la Turquie et la Syrie.

Nous allons à Moscou, parce que c'est de là que Vladimir Poutine tire les ficelles du théâtre de guerre syrien. Un petit retour en arrière : on se disait il y a trois jours à quel point Bachar El Assad, le dictateur syrien, jouait une carte maîtresse, sous contrôle de Moscou, en redéployant ses troupes à la frontière turque. Mais qui accompagnait les troupes syriennes ? Les soldats russes. Tout s'est joué à Manjib il y a 48 heures. Cette petite ville était tenue depuis trois ans par les forces kurdes des fameux YPG, les unités de protections du peuple. L'armée turque se rue vers la ville, devenue un symbole. Dans le même temps, l'armée syrienne s'y dirige aussi, ayant passé un accord de dernière minute avec les Kurdes. Bref, l'affrontement va avoir lieu. Et puis, Vladimir Poutine, quasi silencieux depuis le début de l'invasion turque, parle. Il est à Abu Dhabi, pas loin, en voyage officiel. Il dit : "Cet affrontement serait inacceptable". Traduction immédiate : les soldats russes qui sont présents de-



Le président russe Vladimir Poutine est le véritable arbitre du conflit Syrie / Turquie. (ALEXEY NIKOLSKY / SPUTNIK)

puis 2015 en Syrie investissent la ville. Les forces turques reculent. Le bain de sang n'a pas lieu. Le maître Poutine a gagné. Il a imposé sa loi.

Donald Trump et son vice-président Mike Pence peuvent bien faire les fanfarons et expliquer à quel point ils ont réussi à imposer un cessez-le-feu, c'est Vladimir Poutine qui a eu gain de cause. Et sur tous les plans. Dès que les Américains ont annoncé leur retrait de cette région, laissant les Kurdes à leur sort, Moscou a vu l'op-

portunité de renforcer son poulain Bachar al-Assad : en dix jours, non seulement la tentative de Kurdistan a été écrasée et balayée, mais la Russie a imposé son agenda. Le régime syrien redevient maître de la région, avec l'appui essentiel des soldats russes, et de la stratégie redoutable de Poutine. Il peut laisser Trump à ses tweets, Poutine n'a pas besoin de faire de bruit.

Ce Kurdistan gênait ses deux alliés, l'Iran et la Syrie. Il n'existe plus. Bachar El Assad croit avoir remporté une victoire : c'est en fait celle de Poutine. Plus que jamais, il domine et contrôle le président syrien qui ne peut plus rien faire sans lui. Les Américains quittent la région, les Russes s'y installent durablement. Même le président turc a compris la leçon magistrale. Il ira à Moscou rencontrer le maître du jeu dans moins d'une semaine. Ça s'appelle "échec et mat".



18 octobre 2019

SDF leadership says it will accept a Turkish-US ceasefire deal in 'war region'

The Commander-in-Chief of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Mazlum Abdi, on Thursday announced on public television that the group was accepting the ceasefire deal in the area between Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ain, but not for any other areas in the northeast of Syria.

His statement on Ronahi TV came shortly after a US delegation, led by Vice President Mike Pence, announced they had secured a ceasefire in northeastern Syria between the attacking Turkish forces and the Kurdish-led SDF. The military command of the SDF announced the ceasefire went into effect at 22:00 local time.

"It's true, a ceasefire has been set up between the Turkish occupiers and our forces. It's true that this has been worked on for the last three days," SDF leader Abdi said. However, he stressed that the ceasefire was only for the regions between Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ain, where "there is now war."



"As you know, President Trump has himself worked on this. He sent a letter to Erdogan, and finally the American vice-president went and met with them. We were part of this whole pro-

cess, and we can say that we were connected to the American delegation which travelled to Turkey," Abdi continued. The SDF leader also stated that, in the last nine

days of this bitter war, “many of our civilians lost their lives, and thousands of people have been driven out as refugees.”

That is why, he added, that the ceasefire was intended for this specific region. “Whatever we can do as the SDF to make this ceasefire work, we will do. America has led [brokered] this ceasefire, and is responsible for ensuring that it is carried out in the correct way.”

However, the SDF commander warned that against demographic change in the areas between Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ain. “The people of this region must be able to return to their own homes and land.”

“Nothing has been discussed for the other regions. Our forces remain there. Maybe there will be discussions over these other regions in the future. But this agreement is for that region,” he emphasized.

Abdi affirmed the ceasefire was the result of the “heroic struggle carried out by the soldiers of the SDF, Kurds, Arabs, Assyrian Christians and others, together.”

He also indirectly thanked those across the globe who supported the SDF, saying none of this would have been possible without the support of “all the forces of the world.”

Following Turkey’s attack on northern Syria on October 9, many world leaders, the US congress, and EU nations spoke out against the unilateral military operation. Kurds and supporters also held marches in many cities around the world, condemning the attacks.

“Everybody, every state, apart from the client states of Turkey, apart from them, all the states of the world created pressure on Turkey so this ceasefire could be set up. As a result of this great pressure, and the struggle of our people and our soldiers, this ceasefire was achieved

LE FIGARO

18 octobre 2019

Syrie: la trêve est «du cinéma à destination des électeurs américains»

La trêve entre la Turquie et les Kurdes, qui laisse à ces derniers cinq jours pour quitter la zone de conflit, est «du cinéma à destination des électeurs américains», a estimé vendredi 18 octobre Jean-Christophe Lagarde, président de l'UDI.

L'accord arraché à Ankara par le vice-président américain Mike Pence prévoit un cessez-le-feu pendant ces cinq jours à l'issue desquels les Kurdes devront avoir quitté une zone de 32 kilomètres dans le nord de la Syrie, à la frontière avec la Turquie. «Je vous fais le pari que, comme à Chypre, (les Turcs) y seront encore dans 50 ans», a dit sur Cnews le député de Seine-Saint-

Denis, président du groupe d'études sur les Kurdes à l'Assemblée nationale. L'offensive turque dans le nord syrien «est un message que l'Occident lance au monde: être nos alliés pendant une guerre, c'est quasiment avoir la garantie d'être trahi et lâché après la guerre», a-t-il aussi regretté. Les Kurdes, «nos amis et nos alliés (...), ceux qui ont battu Daesh», «c'est eux que les Etats-Unis viennent de trahir, que les Européens n'ont pas su défendre», a-t-il insisté.

Selon lui, il est «déjà trop tard» pour prendre des sanctions contre la Turquie. «C'est dans les premiers jours que l'Europe avait les moyens de faire une pression très forte sur la Turquie, sur

Erdogan», a-t-il assuré. Cependant, «il n'y a pas un pouvoir qui permette de le faire, il n'y a pas une Europe fédérée», selon Jean-Christophe Lagarde. En Europe, «on continue à vivre comme si le monde était un monde de bisounours (...). Nous restons là, spectateurs, victimes, et donc dans la dépendance de tout le monde». Fustigeant la «faiblesse» de l'Union européenne, Jean-Christophe Lagarde a jugé Donald Trump «responsable» du possible retour en Europe de djihadistes prisonniers des Kurdes et libérés à cause de ce conflit. «Vous avez déjà des djihadistes qui sont dans la nature et qu'on risque de voir revenir sur nos territoires nous attaquer», a-t-il regretté.

The
New York
Times

18 octobre 2019

Trump Compares Turks and Kurds to 'Two Kids' Fighting

Hours after his vice president and secretary of state brokered a cease-fire, President Trump said he was right to let Turkey attack America's Kurdish allies because it eventually led to a deal. DALLAS — President Trump insisted on Thursday night that he was smart to let Turkey attack America's Kurdish allies in northern Syria, comparing the two warring sides to children on a playground who need to slug it out before settling their differences.

Speaking at a campaign rally hours after Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo brokered a cease-fire, Mr. Trump defended his decision to withdraw American forces from Syria, effectively clearing the way for a brutal Turkish assault on Kurdish fighters who had fought for years alongside the United States against the Islamic State.

The president's decision to pull out drew re-

bukes from both Democrats and Republicans, who accused him of abandoning America's friends. But Mr. Trump said the violence of the past week was useful. “It was unconventional what I did,” he acknowledged. “Sometimes you have to let them fight a little while. Sometimes you have to let them fight like two kids,” he added. “Then you pull them apart.”

While he has previously denied giving Turkey

the green light to attack the Kurds, Mr. Trump implied on Thursday night that actually he had done so in order to persuade the two sides to come to terms. "Without a little tough love, they would never have made this deal," he said.

The president arrived in Dallas after days of roiling events and damaging developments. Republicans blistered him for his Syria decision while current and former government officials provided House investigators evidence for Democrats seeking to impeach him for abuse of power. His own acting chief of staff earlier on Thursday confirmed that there was a quid pro quo in Mr. Trump's effort to pressure Ukraine for dirt on Democrats before then trying to take it back.

The rally gave the president a chance to vent his frustrations and pique with more than 20,000 cheering supporters packed in American Airlines Center in Dallas. In his third campaign rally in just over a week, Mr. Trump again complained that Democrats were seeking to impeach him out of partisan animus and political ambition.

"They are destroying this country, but we will never let it happen," he told the crowd. "These radical Democrats have been trying to overthrow the results of a great, great election — maybe, maybe the greatest election in the history of our country. They want to impose their extreme agenda."

He added, "You know, I really don't believe any more that they love our country."

A day after a sharp blowup with Speaker Nancy Pelosi at the White House resulted in Democrats' walking out of a meeting, he singled her out for criticism. "Crazy Nancy," he called her. "She is crazy."

And he lashed out again at the unidentified C.I.A. officer who filed the whistle-blower complaint revealing that Mr. Trump pressed Ukraine to investigate Democrats, including former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., while withholding \$391 million in congressionally approved assistance.

"Who's the whistle-blower?" Mr. Trump demanded. "Who's the whistle-blower? Who is the whistle-blower? Is the whistle-blower a spy?"

Former Representative Beto O'Rourke, who represented El Paso in Congress and is now running for the Democratic presidential nomination next year, staged a counterprogramming rally at a concert hall in Grand Prairie about 13 miles to the west.



President Trump defended his decision to withdraw American forces from Syria at a rally in Dallas on Thursday. Credit: Anna MoneyMaker/The New York Times

Mr. O'Rourke condemned "the fabricated fear of the president, who wants us to be afraid of one another," and blamed Mr. Trump's language for the August mass shooting in El Paso and for a slew of other hate crimes.

"That fear that Donald Trump, the man in the White House, who holds the highest position of public trust in the land — that fear that he's trying to use against us, that fear that he directed and drove down to El Paso, Texas, that fear that claimed the lives of 22 Americans — we, those of us here together, standing to be counted, are the answer to that fear," Mr. O'Rourke said.

Mr. Trump hit back at Mr. O'Rourke at his own rally, calling the Democrat "a very dumb presidential candidate" and attacking him for proposing a mandatory buyback of assault rifles and the revocation of tax exemptions for contributions to churches that oppose same-sex marriage.

"Got rid of guns and got rid of religion," Mr. Trump said mockingly. "I will never allow the federal government to punish Americans for their religious beliefs."

He also singled out other favorite Democratic targets, including former President Barack Obama, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Representative Adam B. Schiff of California, Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Mr. Biden.

Mr. Trump's trip to Texas stirred interest among political strategists because the state has long been a bedrock for Republican presidential candidates and is therefore not a battleground that attracts as much campaigning. In devoting a day here headlining a fund-raiser in Fort Worth and cutting the ribbon on a new Louis Vuitton workshop in Keene, Mr. Trump prompted Democrats to declare that he must be worried about losing the state.

For Democrats, Texas has been the elusive holy grail for years, always supposedly close to flipping from red to blue yet remaining out of reach. Texas has not supported a Democrat for president since 1976 or for any statewide office since 1994. But as the state's demographic makeup shifts, Democrats insist change is inevitable. Mr. Trump won the state in 2016 by nine percentage points, the first single-digit margin at the presidential level in 20 years, and Mr. O'Rourke came within 2.6 points of unseating Senator Ted Cruz last year.

A poll last month showed that Mr. Trump could be in trouble this time around. Forty-eight percent of Texans surveyed by Quinnipiac University said they would definitely not vote for him next year while only 35 percent said they would definitely support him and 14 percent said they would consider it.

But the president's campaign team scoffed at what it called Democratic wishful thinking, saying that the only reason Mr. O'Rourke came close last year was because Mr. Trump was not on the ballot. Tim Murtaugh, his campaign spokesman, said the president made the trip on Thursday not out of concern but to connect with his strongest backers.

"You've got to campaign and go show love to the people who got you there," Mr. Murtaugh said. Rather than be turned off by the impeachment battle, he said, Mr. Trump's base has been energized. "I didn't think it was possible for the president's supporters to be more engaged, but impeachment has achieved that," he said.

Mr. Trump declared that Texas would remain in his column. "Texas is not in play," he said.



18 octobre 2019

Une association kurde vandalisée à Verviers: "Il y a des caméras des deux cotés de la rue"

La nuit de lundi à mardi, les locaux d'une association kurde ont été vandalisés à Verviers. Trois vitres ont été brisées à l'aide de pavés. C'est une première dans cette ville où les populations kurdes et trucs s'enten-

dent généralement bien selon les autorités locales. Les autorités ont commencé leur enquête pour définir qui est à l'origine des dégradations. "Il y a des caméras des deux cotés de la rue", affirme Hasan Acar, le président de l'association

des peuples du Kurdistan et d'ailleurs. "On assiste en direct à des vies qui se perdent au nord-est de la Syrie. C'est ça qu'il faut voir. Les trois vitres cassées, ce n'est pas grave", conclut Hasan.



19 octobre 2019

Foreign ISIS wives in Syrian camp: 'Our men are waiting for us in Turkey'

AL-HOL, Syria (Kurdistan 24) – Female Islamic State suspects living in al-Hol Camp in northeast Syria told Kurdistan 24 on Saturday that they welcomed the Turkish assault on the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and called on Ankara to invade the area and free them.

"God willing, Turkey will help us to flee from here and go to Turkey," said a French woman known as Um Mustafa.

"We heard that the Turkish army attacked Ain Issa, and our sisters who were detained there have escaped and they fled to Turkey," she said.

A Russian woman who preferred to be unidentified complained that Kurdish fighters had been preventing her from leaving the camp, saying, "We want Turkey to attack here."

"If the Turkish army comes to this area, I will be able to flee and meet my husband, who I know well is in Turkey."

Since the beginning of the Turkish assault on northern Syria almost two weeks ago, disobedience and disorder have grown dramatically among the families in al-Hol, camp administrators told Kurdistan 24.

They added that 11,000 women in the camp are trying to take advantage of the security vacuum left as a result of most SDF troops who were guarding the camp heading toward the border to join in the fight against the Turkish army and its allied Syrian militias.

"900 fighters of the People's Protection Units (YPG) used to guard this camp, but now only 300 fighters guard it," sources from the camp ad-



The Russian wife of an Islamic State fighter held in al-Hol Camp speaks to Kurdistan 24, Hassakeh province, Syria, Oct. 19, 2019. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

ministration told Kurdistan 24, explaining further that humanitarian and rescue organizations also left the camp after Turkey launched its assault on the region.

"Demonstrators usually chant the slogans of Islamic State and the Caliphate," a camp administrator said.

Last week, about 800 individuals with Islamic State affiliation escaped from Ain Issa Camp in northern Syria after Turkish artillery and warplanes struck the camp's vicinity. Displaced people in the open section of the camp fled in fear, but many were able to escape from restricted sections as well, among them Islamic State sympathizers.

The SDF holds thousands of foreign militants in several camps who it is feared may use the Turkish incursion as an opportunity to launch new Islamic State attacks and regroup.

Human Rights Watch recently reported that local officials estimate that the SDF currently has custody of 12,000 prisoners suspected of membership in the Islamic State, including 4,000 foreigners, in seven detention centers in northeastern Syria.

Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in September called on his supporters to free those who were detained after SDF anti-ISIS operations came to an end in March when they took control of the last land held by the extremist group.

LE FIGARO 19 octobre 2019

France: nouvelle manifestation de Kurdes à Paris pour « défendre le Rojava »

Des centaines de Kurdes et sympathisants - plusieurs milliers selon les organisateurs - ont manifesté samedi après-midi à Paris pour soutenir les Kurdes de Syrie face à l'offensive turque contre leurs positions, a constaté une journaliste de l'AFP.

Ils étaient 1700, selon la préfecture de police, au moins 5000 selon les organisateurs, noyés dans un flot de drapeaux du YPG (Unités de protection du peuple), venus appeler à « défendre le Rojava », la zone kurde autoproclamée autonome dans le nord-est de la Syrie.

De nombreux drapeaux réclamaient également la libération d'Abdullah Öcalan, le chef historique du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), emprisonné en Turquie, ou célébraient « Hevrin, l'avenir et l'espoir de la Syrie exécutée par la Turquie », en référence à l'exécution d'une responsable politique syrienne Hevrin

Khalaf, imputée à des rebelles syriens qui soutiennent la Turquie dans son offensive contre les Kurdes.

Des pancartes dénonçaient « Erdogan = Daech », d'autres à l'inverse honoraient « les femmes en lutte, de Paris à Rojava » dans cette foule qui a scandé à plusieurs reprises en kurde « La femme, la vie, la liberté », entre deux slogans « Rojava résistance ».

Pour Bevivan Firat du Conseil démocratique kurde en France (CDK-F qui dit fédérer 24 associations de la diaspora en France) « il est important » de manifester en France pour que Monsieur et Madame tout-le-monde sache que ce n'est pas seulement la guerre des Kurdes. Il n'y a pas que les Kurdes visés, mais la France, l'Europe aussi. 11.000 des nôtres sont morts dans la lutte contre Daech. Nous n'avons pas demandés à être remerciés; c'était notre devoir.

Mais les mêmes barbares (les djihadistes du groupe Etat islamique, NDLR) menacent l'occident et Erdogan leur donne une autre vie », a-t-elle dénoncé auprès de l'AFP. Pour elle, après avoir menacé les Européens de leur envoyer les réfugiés, le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan pourrait très bien « menacer d'envoyer les daechiens « dès que de nouvelles dissensions apparaîtront avec l'UE.

La Turquie a entamé la semaine dernière une incursion dans le nord-est de la Syrie contre les YPG, un groupe soutenu par les pays occidentaux en raison de son rôle dans la lutte contre les jihadistes de l'EI, mais qualifié de « terroriste » par Ankara.

Samedi dernier des milliers de Kurdes avaient manifesté dans plusieurs villes françaises, mais aussi européennes, contre cette offensive.

L'Orient LE JOUR 19 octobre 2019

Syrie : une victoire à court terme pour le reïs

« **L**es États-Unis sont les grands perdants car ils quittent le nord-est du pays, le laissant à la Russie et ses alliés, l'Iran et le régime syrien », estime Soner Cagaptay, du Washington Institute of Near East Policy.

L'accord destiné à mettre fin à l'offensive turque contre les forces kurdes en Syrie offre une victoire au président Recep Tayyip Erdogan, mais elle pourrait être de courte durée faute d'une entente avec la Russie, alliée du régime syrien, selon des analystes.

L'accord, arraché jeudi par le vice-président américain Mike Pence lors d'une visite à Ankara, prévoit la suspension pour cinq jours de l'offensive lancée le 9 octobre, et d'y mettre fin si les forces kurdes des YPG, considérées comme « terroristes » par Ankara, se retirent pendant cette période des zones frontalières de la Turquie dans le nord-est de la Syrie. M. Erdogan a obtenu gain de cause sur ses principales exigences, à savoir le retrait des YPG et la mise en place d'une « zone de sécurité » de 32 km de largeur en territoire syrien, même si la longueur de cette bande, que le président turc veut à terme étendre sur 480 km, reste à définir. L'opération avait été lancée

après que le président américain Donald Trump avait paru y donner son feu vert, avant de faire marche arrière devant le tollé suscité dans le monde en raison du rôle crucial des YPG dans la lutte contre les jihadistes du groupe État islamique (EI). Pour tenter de stopper l'offensive, les YPG ont fait appel aux forces du régime de Bachar el-Assad qui se sont déployées dans des zones qui échappaient à leur contrôle depuis plusieurs années.

« Monnaie d'échange »

« La Turquie semble avoir obtenu une victoire à court terme, notamment du fait qu'Ankara a pu saper les liens entre Washington et les YPG », estime Soner Cagaptay, du Washington Institute of Near East Policy. « Les États-Unis sont les grands perdants car ils quittent cette zone en Syrie, la laissant à la Russie et ses alliés, l'Iran et le régime syrien », ajoute-t-il. Anthony Skinner, du cabinet de consultants en risques Verisk Maplecroft, estime lui aussi que l'accord « est une victoire pour le président Erdogan ».

La déclaration conjointe officialisant l'accord «

confirme par écrit l'acceptation par la Maison-Blanche d'un contrôle de l'armée turque de territoires dans le nord-est de la Syrie », note-t-il. Il souligne que l'accord, à la grande satisfaction d'Ankara, engage aussi Washington à récupérer « les armes lourdes des YPG et neutraliser leurs fortifications et positions de combat ». Mais les analystes estiment que ces gains turcs pourraient être anéantis faute d'un arrangement avec la Russie, acteur-clé du conflit, et par son truchement avec le régime d'Assad.

M. Cagaptay note ainsi que le régime syrien pourrait instrumentaliser les YPG, considérées comme la branche syrienne du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) qui livre une sanglante guérilla sur le territoire turc depuis 1984.

« Le PKK a été fondé dans les années 1970 avec le soutien du régime syrien, et dans les années 1980 et 1990, il a lancé des attaques contre la Turquie depuis la Syrie, explique-t-il. Je pense que le régime va se servir du PKK comme monnaie d'échange dans des négociations avec Erdogan. » Selon lui, M. Assad pourrait par exemple proposer de « museler le PKK en

échange d'un retrait de la Turquie des territoires qu'elle contrôle dans le nord de la Syrie ».

« Au meilleur moment »

« Erdogan dira oui probablement si Assad accepte de reprendre une partie des réfugiés » installés en Turquie, estime M. Cagaptay. L'accord turco-américain « ne comptera pour rien si le président Assad et la Russie décident de le torpiller », convient M. Skinner, l'analyste de Maplecroft.

« Les accords sur la Syrie qui excluent les autres acteurs majeurs, notamment Moscou, Damas mais aussi Téhéran, peuvent s'avérer futiles », ajoute-t-il. Par conséquent, la visite prévue de M. Erdogan en Russie le 22 octobre pour rencontrer son homologue russe Vladimir Poutine « tombe au meilleur moment ». Les journaux turcs, acquis pour la plupart au gouvernement, ont salué

l'accord comme « une grande victoire » pour la Turquie, où des dizaines de personnes ayant critiqué l'offensive sur les réseaux sociaux ont été interpellées. « Cet accord va probablement doper la popularité d'Erdogan qui était en déclin. Mais cela risque d'être de courte durée puisque, à un moment donné, la Turquie sera amenée à mettre fin à son opération sans avoir réalisé tous ses objec-



Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan à Istanbul, hier
Photo Press Office /Handout via Reuters

tifs», estime Gareth Jenkins, analyste à l'Institute for Security and Public Policy.



19 octobre 2019

Lettre du PKK au peuple américain et au Président Trump

« Nous ne sommes pas des terroristes; nous sommes les victimes du terrorisme d'Etat. Cependant, nous sommes coupables de défendre notre peuple », a déclaré le PKK dans une lettre adressée au peuple américain et au Président Trump.

Le Comité des Relations Extérieures du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a rédigé une lettre à l'attention du peuple américain et du président Donald J. Trump, en réponse à sa récente déclaration dans laquelle il compare le mouvement kurde à l'EI (Etat Islamique), en plein contexte de campagne génocidaire de l'Etat turc contre le peuple kurde.

La lettre s'annonce comme suit :

« Au peuple américain
et au Président Donald J. Trump ;

Nous refusons les comparaisons faites entre notre mouvement et les voyous inhumains de l'EI. Notre réponse est la suivante : il y a plus de 40 millions de Kurdes qui vivent au Moyen-Orient aujourd'hui. A la fin de la Première Guerre Mondiale, les puissances étrangères les ont divisés parmi quatre Etats autocratiques : l'Iran, l'Irak, la Syrie et la Turquie, où notre mouvement est né.

Des années durant, le peuple kurde a demandé à ces gouvernements ni plus ni moins que les



droits démocratiques fondamentaux dont vous jouissez chaque jour : le droit d'exister, de parler leur propre langue, de jouir de leur propre culture, de participer à la vie politique en tant que citoyens libres et égaux.

« LE PKK A ETE CREE POUR RESISTER
A LA VIOLENCE DE L'ETAT TURC »

A chaque fois, ils ont été violemment subjugués : bombardés avec des armes de pointe, déracinés

de leurs maisons en pleine nuit et disparus, emprisonnés et torturés, leurs villages rasés, et leurs langue et culture bannies. Jusqu'au jour où nous avons fondé le PKK en 1978 pour résister à la violence de l'Etat turc contre le peuple kurde, qui avait déjà massacré des centaines de milliers de Kurdes dans les régions kurdes de Turquie. Inutile d'aller trop loin dans le passé ; dans les années 90, l'Etat turc a détruit 4,000 villages kurdes et tué extrajudiciairement pas moins de 17,000 Kurdes.

« NOS EFFORTS ONT ÉTÉ IGNORÉS »

Les leaders turcs croyaient, comme de nombreux tyrans au cours de l'histoire, pouvoir écraser le désir humain fondamental pour une vie libre par la violence et la terreur. Ils nous ont étiquetés comme terroristes et criminels et ont dépensé des centaines de millions de dollars pour que d'autres pays comme les États-Unis d'Amérique fassent de même, alors même que leurs forces commettaient d'épouvantables atrocités en violant les principes du droit international. Nous avons signé la Convention de Genève et avons demandé des négociations de paix à plusieurs reprises depuis 1993, en sachant que la guerre pourrait prendre fin dès l'instant où les droits des Kurdes seraient institutionnalisés. Ces efforts furent ignorés.

« LE PKK N'A JAMAIS PRIS POUR CIBLE LES USA OU QUELCONQUE AUTRE PAYS »

Le PKK n'a jamais pris pour cible les USA ou quelconque autre pays. Nous n'avons jamais reculé devant une table de négociation pour résoudre ce conflit de manière pacifique et politique. En réalité, nous avons déclaré pas moins de huit cessez-le-feu depuis 1993 pour ouvrir la voie des négociations. Le projet politique du PKK est fondé sur les droits humains fondamentaux et les libertés, la libération des genres, le pluralisme religieux et les droits écologiques.

Quand l'EI a commencé sa campagne de terreur à travers la Syrie et l'Irak, nous savions que nous devions agir. Ce groupe ne menaçait pas seulement les idéaux pour lesquels nous nous battons depuis tant d'années, mais aussi la sécurité de dizaines de millions de personnes. Les États bien armés et bien financés de la région, et le reste du monde, furent très lents à réagir, occupés à chiffrer le coût d'une éventuelle action, pendant que des millions étaient victimes de l'assujettissement extrémiste.

En août 2014, nous avons lancé une campagne humanitaire à Sinjar, en Irak, où l'EI commettait des atrocités contre la communauté Yézidie, atrocités reconnues par la suite par les Nations Unies comme « génocide ». Les Yézidis avaient été abandonnés, qui plus est sans défense, par le monde entier et faisaient face à un ennemi que les forces régionales n'avaient jusque-là pas pu stopper. Notre première unité militaire fut déployée sur place avec seulement 7 personnes. Dès le début, nous fumes capables d'ouvrir un couloir humanitaire vers le nord-est de la Syrie, permettant à plus de 35,000 civils assiégés sur le Mont Sinjar de retrouver leur sécurité. Ensuite, nous sommes allés rejoindre d'autres forces pour libérer la région du contrôle de l'EI.

« LA TURQUIE N'A RIEN FAIT POUR STOPPER LES EXTREMISTES »

Alors que notre mouvement et notre peuple ont sacrifié des milliers de vies dans ces combats, l'État turc qui nous traite de « terroristes » n'a rien fait pour stopper les extrémistes de l'EI qui terrorisaient des milliers de civils innocents à travers le monde. L'État turc a attaqué aujourd'hui le nord-est de la Syrie avec une férocité accrue qu'elle n'a jamais démontrée quand l'EI commettait des attentats à l'étranger depuis des territoires qui se situaient juste le long de ses frontières. Ils ont envoyé des groupes terroristes affiliés à Al-Qaïda pour torturer et massacrer tous ceux qui ont vaincu l'EI. Ils considèrent la simple idée de l'identité kurde comme étant une plus grande menace que les groupes qui ont visé des innocents, pas seulement à Sinjar et à Kobané, mais aussi à Paris, à Manchester ou encore à New York.

d'Américains ont vu au mois de mai 2017 comment le Président turc Erdogan a ordonné à ses gardes du corps d'attaquer violemment les manifestants kurdes pacifistes dans leur capitale, Washington. Nous ne sommes pas des terroristes ; nous sommes victimes du terrorisme d'État. Cependant, nous sommes coupables de défendre notre peuple. Nous sommes convaincus que les Américains sauront juger par eux-mêmes qui sont les dangereux terroristes de ce monde. »



19 octobre 2019

Syrian boy wounded by Turkish bombs to be treated in Erbil

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region — A child suffering from severe burns he allegedly sustained during Turkish bombardment in northeast Syria is set to be brought to Erbil by the Barzani Charity Foundation (BCF) for treatment.

Mohammed Hamid, 13, was injured during the Turkish offensive to take Sari Kani from the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Local medical officials have accused Turkey of using unconventional and banned weapons in the battle, allegations which Turkey denies.

Hamid's father described the circumstances under which his son was hit.

"I returned to him and saw an artillery shell had hit our neighbor while Mohammed was laying on the ground outside," the elder Hamid told Rudaw. "I rushed him to Tel Tamr hospital. And yesterday we came here [Qamishli]. The doctors have informed us that he is not doing well."

Rudaw's Halkawt Aziz in Qamishli said that Hamid will be taken to the Kurdistan Region-northeast Syria border later today by an ambulance, and from there to Erbil by the BCF, which

was established by the family that leads the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

"The [BCF] called us and said that they are coming to the border in order to take him and today we will go there," the father said.

Hamid is in considerable pain due to the wounds, according to his father.

"Due to the incident, his psychological state has deteriorated," he said. "And when the physicians ask him whether he has pains, he just says 'yes.'"

A Kurdish Red Crescent team was set to visit Sari Kani on Friday in a bid to evacuate the injured, but has been prevented from entering the city by Turkish-backed forces.



Mohammed Hamid is suffering from severe burns after he was injured during the Turkish offensive to take Sari Kani. Photo: Rudaw

According to the UK-based war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), 300,000 civilians have already been displaced due to Turkey's operations. As of Friday, 235 people have died in the fight between Turkey and the SDF, according to the latter.



Mon, Oct 21 2019
By Tucker Higgins

Pompeo, asked about Turkey crisis, says Trump is 'fully prepared' to take military action if needed

"We prefer peace to war," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tells CNBC's Wilfred Frost. "But in the event that kinetic action or military action is needed, you should know that President Trump is fully prepared to undertake that action."

Pompeo declines to lay out a red line for what action would prompt a U.S. military response.

Trump is under heavy criticism for his decision to withdraw American forces from northern Syria, abandoning the Kurds, who led the ground war against ISIS.

See the full interview with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

President Donald Trump is prepared to use military force if "needed," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Monday when he was asked about Turkey's attack on Kurds in northern Syria.

"We prefer peace to war," Pompeo told CNBC's Wilfred Frost in a taped interview that aired on "Closing Bell" on Monday. "But in the event that kinetic action or military action is needed, you should know that President Trump is fully prepared to undertake that action."

The president is [under heavy criticism](#) for his decision to [withdraw American forces from northern Syria](#), abandoning the Kurds, who led the ground war against ISIS. The withdrawal precipitated Turkey's incursion into the border zone earlier this month, which has left more than 120 civilians dead, according to the U.K.-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

US pulls troops out of Northern Syria, exposing Kurds to potential attack

Pompeo declined to lay out a red line for what action would prompt a U.S. military response, saying he did not want to "get out in front of the president's decision about whether to take the awesome undertaking of using America's military might."

"You suggested the economic powers that we've used. We'll certainly use them. We'll use our diplomatic powers as well. Those are our preference," Pompeo said.

The State Department declined comment on Pompeo's remarks.



Trump told reporters at a Cabinet meeting on Monday that the U.S. "never agreed to protect the Kurds for the rest of their lives."

"We're not going to take a position. Let them fight themselves," Trump said.

The [U.S. imposed sanctions on Turkey last week](#) following the country's incursion into Syria's northern border area, which has been occupied by Kurdish allies in America's fight against the Islamic State group. Turkey views the Kurds as terrorists.

On Thursday, Vice President Mike Pence announced that Turkey [agreed to a five-day pause in attacks](#) as the U.S. facilitated the withdrawal of Kurdish fighters in the region. Following the completed withdrawal, the U.S. will eliminate its sanctions on the country, Pence said.

The cease-fire agreement was immediately criticized even by the president's Republican allies in Congress, who said it gave Turkey everything it wanted while abandoning U.S. allies. In the interview, Pompeo defended the agreement, saying he was "fully convinced that that work saved lives."

"Not only the lives of the [Syrian Democratic Forces] fighters, but the ethnic minorities in the region," Pompeo said, referring to the Kurdish-led military force.

"Our allies see it the same way. We got real commitments to protect ethnic minorities throughout the region from the Turks in the course of negotiating that statement. I think the work that we did saved lives," Pompeo said.

Pompeo also sought to distance Trump's actions in the Middle East with those of his predecessor.

The former Kansas congressman was sharply critical when President Barack Obama appeared to violate his 2012 "red line" in Syria by not authorizing a threatened military strike against the country despite evidence that its forces had used chemical weapons.

Trump had pressed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan not to invade northern Syria before the Turks moved into the country. In an extraordinarily undiplomatic letter sent Oct. 9, Trump told Erdogan [not to be a "tough guy."](#) But Erdogan reportedly threw the letter in the trash, and the country's military operation began that day.

Asked whether Trump's actions mimicked Obama's, Pompeo said: "It's fundamentally different."

He added: "Turkey didn't — the country that Turkey invaded, they conducted an incursion into, is Syria, a sovereign nation. We worked with Kurdish friends, the SDF up and down the Euphrates River."

"We jointly took down the threat of the Caliphate of ISIS," Pompeo added. "It was to the benefit of the SDF, it was to the benefit of the United States of America, and indeed, to the benefit of the world. The commitment that we made to work alongside them we completely fulfilled."



October 21-2019

Kurdistan Alliance set for Iraqi provincial elections; list of candidates settled



People fleeing from Kirkuk to Erbil following the attack by Iraqi forces and Shia militias on the province, Oct. 16, 2017. (Photo: Reuters/Ako Rasheed)

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – An alliance of Kurdish parties has settled on their list of candidates for the upcoming Iraqi provincial elections, the head of the alliance said during a press conference on Monday.

The vote is set to be held on April 1, 2020, to elect local governments for all provinces except the four within the Kurdistan Region, which holds its own local elections.

Named the Kurdistan Alliance, the coalition of Kurdish political parties was first announced by the spokesperson of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in late September. The alliance contains 30 political parties and entities.

The alliance will be participating in provincial council elections for three provinces that have a large Kurdish population, including Kirkuk, Nineveh, and Diyala. Each have areas that are disputed between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the federal Iraqi government.

The logo of the Kurdistan Alliance has also been decided upon, Abdul Rahman Mustafa, the head of the alliance, said during the press briefing. He added that for each province, they have twice as many candidates as there are seats on the local council.

As per the number of council seats in each province, the Kurdistan Alliance will have 26 candidates for Kirkuk and Diyala and 48 names contending the race in Nineveh Province.

The press conference also brought up the recent controversial amendment to the provincial election law, which prevents internally displaced persons (IDPs) from voting at camps where they reside or anywhere other than their original hometowns, many of which they say are still unsafe or lack basic services.

The amendment was approved after the Iraqi Parliament voted on and passed the bill in July and was opposed by Kurdish parties.

Mustafa said Supreme Court is set to review the

many appeals on the bill brought forth by Kurdish parties, as well as the Kurdistan Region Parliament, on November 18.

The last provincial election took place in 2013. The next one was planned for 2016 but was canceled after the so-called Islamic State took control of over a third of the country. Iraqi authorities eventually agreed to hold them on April 1, 2020.

Most of the disputed territories have been under the control of the federal government since in October 2017 when Iraqi forces and Shia militias attacked and took over Kirkuk and other contested areas, driving out the Kurdish Peshmerga forces. This came in response to the Kurdistan Region's independence referendum held the month before.

The upcoming provincial election will be the first to be held since the military defeat of the Islamic State.

Editing by Nadia Riva

En secret, le transfert des djihadistes de Syrie vers l'Irak a commencé

Alors que le ministre des Affaires étrangères négocie avec les autorités irakiennes la judiciarisation des djihadistes français et de leurs familles, un nouveau transfert a été effectué au début de l'offensive turque contre les Kurdes.

C'est l'une des zones d'ombre de la guerre qui ravage cet Orient si compliqué, entre Turquie, Syrie, Irak et Kurdistan. **Quel avenir pour les djihadistes**, jusqu'alors détenus par les Kurdes dans les camps situés au nord-est de la Syrie? **L'offensive** déclenchée par Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, le 9 octobre dernier, a aussi bousculé le sort de ces combattants de l'Etat islamique. Un seul exemple : à Ain Issa, **des femmes de Daech (des Françaises notamment) se sont enfuies**.

Les savoir dans la nature, échappant à tout contrôle est la hantise des officiels français. La semaine dernière, Jean Yves Le Drian, ministre des Affaires étrangères, s'est ainsi précipité à Bagdad **dans le but de trouver les bases d'un accord pour juger et garder sous contrôle les djihadistes français en Irak**. Or la plupart d'entre eux (environ 200 adultes) se trouveraient dans le Nord syrien. A-t-il été question de leur transfert? Le patron de la diplomatie française jure que non, même s'il semble évident que pour juger à Bagdad des djihadistes qui se trouvent en Syrie... il faut bien les déplacer.

«Des leaders, des prisonniers de haute valeur» Le procédé a déjà été mis en place en début d'année, pour 13 d'entre eux, avant que la situation sécuritaire du Kurdistan syrien ne se dégrade. Les Français se trouveraient désormais dans 11 camps (prisons). « Il nous est impossible d'accepter le transfert des détenus français à un autre endroit », insiste Hesen Sahoz, coprésident du PYD, le parti kurde syrien visé par l'offensive, considéré comme terroriste par la Turquie. Pourtant, selon nos informations, un nouvel acheminement de prisonniers a été effectué au début de l'assaut turc.

Hussein Ali Allawi, expert de la sécurité nationale irakienne, nous assure que ce convoi était composé de 50 Européens et Asiatiques. « Des leaders, des prisonniers de haute valeur » précise notre source. En clair, des cadres combattants. Un chef du renseignement de l'Union Patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) irakien abonde : « En effet il y a eu un transfert de leaders, et il comprenait des djihadistes français ». Interrogé, le Quai d'Orsay n'a pas souhaité s'exprimer.

«Toujours le résultat d'une collaboration avec Américains et Français»

Un transfert a-t-il été effectué avant un possible



Baghouz (Syrie), février 2019. Les Forces démocratiques syriennes attendent un convoi de femmes de djihadistes qui viennent de se rendre. Stéphane Kenech

accord officiel entre la France et Bagdad ? « Nous savons que les Américains de la coalition ont acheminé 50 hauts cadres vers Erbil. Ils seront convoyés à Bagdad pour être jugés. Les transférés sont gérés par la coalition. La France a des forces dans la zone, en Syrie et en Irak. Les transferts sont toujours le résultat d'une collaboration avec Américains et Français » témoigne au Parisien Hicham Al Hachemi, proche des renseignements irakiens, et du Premier ministre Al-Mahdi.

Le procédé est-il légal? En août, la rapporteuse spéciale de l'ONU contre les exécutions extrajudiciaires, Agnès Callamard, avait déjà alerté dans un courrier adressé au gouvernement français sur la présumée illégalité (au regard du droit international et du droit humanitaire) du transfert de **13 djihadistes français, dont 11 ont été condamnés à mort à Bagdad** - les peines n'ont pour l'instant pas été exécutées - sans preuves officielles d'assurances et d'assistances diplomatiques.

«Un territoire juridique extrêmement complexe»

La donne est quelque peu différente avec la nouvelle situation du Kurdistan syrien, en état de guerre. Quel est le statut des prisonniers d'origine française sur place ? « C'est un territoire juridique extrêmement complexe. Les implications juridiques des transferts et des Etats qui les organisent sont difficiles à cerner. Mais il y aura

de nombreuses conséquences », souligne Agnès Callamard. « Il est évident que les familles de Daech étrangères et les membres présumés de Daech doivent être transférés loin de la ligne de front. »

Mais où ? « Au vu des nombreuses incertitudes liées à la légalité de ces procédés et des conséquences comme la peine de mort en Irak, je demeure persuadée que dans le court terme la seule option est le rapatriement vers la France, insiste-t-elle. Afin que les membres présumés de Daech soient jugés dans des conditions ne violant pas les standards internationaux des droits humains, et le droit des victimes. »

«Un paiement entre 1 et 2 millions de dollars par prisonnier»

Une grande majorité de l'opinion publique irakienne ne souhaite pas un « nouveau Guantanamo ». La visite de Jean Yves Le Drian a visé le sort de 400 à 450 djihadistes français et des familles.

« Les discussions sont en cours pour des aides technologiques, un paiement entre 1 et 2 millions de dollars par prisonnier, pas encore défini. Ce qui est confirmé c'est que la Cour suprême irakienne va les juger en échange d'armements, d'entraînement militaires, et de services diplomatiques » affirme Hicham Al Hachemi.

Que sont devenues les soldates kurdes qui ont combattu Daech ?

Entre 2003 et 2017, les combattants kurdes ont aidé à renverser le régime de Saddam Hussein, lutté contre Al-Qaïda et chassé Daech du nord de l'Irak et de la Syrie. Les femmes ont largement participé à ces combats. Elles sont aujourd'hui en danger à cause de l'offensive turque.

Les combattants kurdes qui font face à l'offensive turque – dont on vient d'apprendre la suspension temporaire – ont comparé la décision de Donald Trump de retirer les troupes américaines du nord de la Syrie à un « **coup de poignard dans le dos** ».

Depuis le début des bombardements, le 9 octobre, les opérations militaires menées par l'armée turque dans le nord de la Syrie contre les Forces démocratiques syriennes – qui sont les alliés les plus déterminés et les plus efficaces de Washington dans la guerre contre Daech – ont fait au moins 72 morts parmi la population et plusieurs autres dans les rangs des combattants kurdes, au sein desquels les pertes pourraient se compter en dizaines, voire en centaines.

Les combattants kurdes sont des partenaires majeurs des États-Unis au Moyen-Orient. Entre 2003 et 2017, ils ont contribué à renverser le régime de Saddam Hussein, lutté contre Al-Qaïda et chassé Daech du nord de l'Irak et de la Syrie.

Les femmes ont largement participé à ces combats, comme c'est le cas depuis le XIX^e siècle, période à laquelle la commandante kurde Kara Fatma dirigea un bataillon ottoman de 700 hommes et 43 femmes contre l'Empire russe.



Une combattante kurde, lors des funérailles du leader politique Hevrin Khalaf, de civils et de combattants kurdes, à Derik, dans le Kurdistan syrien, le 13 octobre dernier.
(Photo : Delil Souleiman / AFP)



Les forces démocratiques syriennes dirigées par les Kurdes sur le champ pétrolier d'al-Omar à Deir Al Zor, en Syrie, lors de l'annonce qu'elles avaient mis fin au contrôle de l'État islamique sur les terres de l'est du pays, 23 mars 2019. (Photo : Rodi Said / Reuters)

C'était certes inhabituel à l'époque, mais les femmes kurdes font depuis longtemps figure d'exceptions dans un Moyen-Orient en général très conservateur.

Qui sont les Kurdes ?

Le Kurdistan, où je suis né, est l'une des plus grandes nations du monde à ne pas avoir d'État propre. Quelque 35 millions de Kurdes occupent une région montagneuse qui s'étend sur une partie de la Turquie, de l'Irak, de l'Irak, de la Syrie et de l'Arménie.

Le peuple kurde a été divisé une première fois sur le plan politique au XVII^e siècle, quand son territoire a été réparti entre les empires ottoman et safavide. Lorsque l'érudit romain Pietro Della Valle se rendit dans la région, il s'étonna d'y croiser « **des femmes kurdes qui se déplaçaient en toute liberté, sans porter le hijab** ». Il précisa par ailleurs dans son carnet de voyage de 1667 qu'elles « **s'entretenaient avec les hommes, Kurdes comme étrangers, sans la moindre difficulté** ».

Après la Première Guerre mondiale, les accords Sykes-Picot, conclus entre la Grande-Bretagne et la France, ont conduit au tracé de frontières arbitraires au sein du Moyen-Orient et à la création de protectorats coloniaux. Ce partage a de nouveau divisé le peuple kurde, en quatre pays distincts : la Turquie, l'Irak, l'Irak et la Syrie tels

que nous les connaissons aujourd'hui.

Depuis, les Kurdes n'ont eu de cesse de se battre pour leur indépendance. Au cours des dernières décennies, ils sont parvenus à établir des régions autonomes en Irak et en Syrie.

En revanche, leur lutte armée se poursuit en Iran et en Turquie. Les deux pays considèrent que cette minorité ethnique représente une menace terroriste et oppriment les populations kurdes en toute impunité.

Cette configuration a placé le Kurdistan – qui se trouve être, sur son territoire, une nation plutôt pacifique et prospère, car dotée d'importantes réserves pétrolières – au cœur d'un véritable bourbier sur le plan géopolitique.

Jusqu'à la récente volte-face de Donald Trump, les États-Unis ont apporté leur concours aux Kurdes en Syrie, en Irak et en Iran, ce qui s'est révélé essentiel dans le cadre de la lutte contre Daech, puisque pas moins de 11 000 membres de l'organisation terroriste ont été capturés.

Or la Turquie, alliée des États-Unis, estime que les Forces armées syriennes sont intimement liées au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, le PKK, lequel se bat en faveur de l'autonomie kurde en Turquie depuis les années 1980.

En mai 2018, plus de 250 personnes ont été tuées lorsque la Turquie a bombardé la ville syrienne d'Afrin, à majorité kurde, considérée par l'armée turque comme un « corridor terroriste ».

Les féministes du PKK

Si le PKK, mouvement marxiste-léniniste fondé en 1978, fait sans conteste figure d'adversaire de l'État turc, il s'agit aussi de l'un des mouvements les plus féministes de tout le Moyen-Orient.

L'organisation politique a tenu son premier congrès sur les droits des femmes en 1987. À cette occasion, Sakine Cansiz, cofondatrice du parti assassinée en 2013, faisait valoir que le principe fondateur du PKK, à savoir « l'émancipation de tous », s'appliquait aussi aux femmes.

Aujourd'hui, l'une des priorités politiques du parti consiste en la reconnaissance expresse de la place essentielle des minorités religieuses, des dissidents et des femmes au sein de la vie démocratique.

Dans les régions autonomes kurdes d'Irak et de Syrie, les femmes jouissent des mêmes droits que les hommes. Par ailleurs, le gouvernement régional kurde irakien compte une plus forte proportion de femmes que le gouvernement du Royaume-Uni, par exemple (30 % contre 20 %).

La charte de la Fédération syrienne semi-autonome du Kurdistan, établie en 2012, prévoit que les femmes occupent au moins 40 % des postes dans la fonction publique. Chaque institution publique syrienne kurde doit en outre être coprésidée par un homme et par une femme.

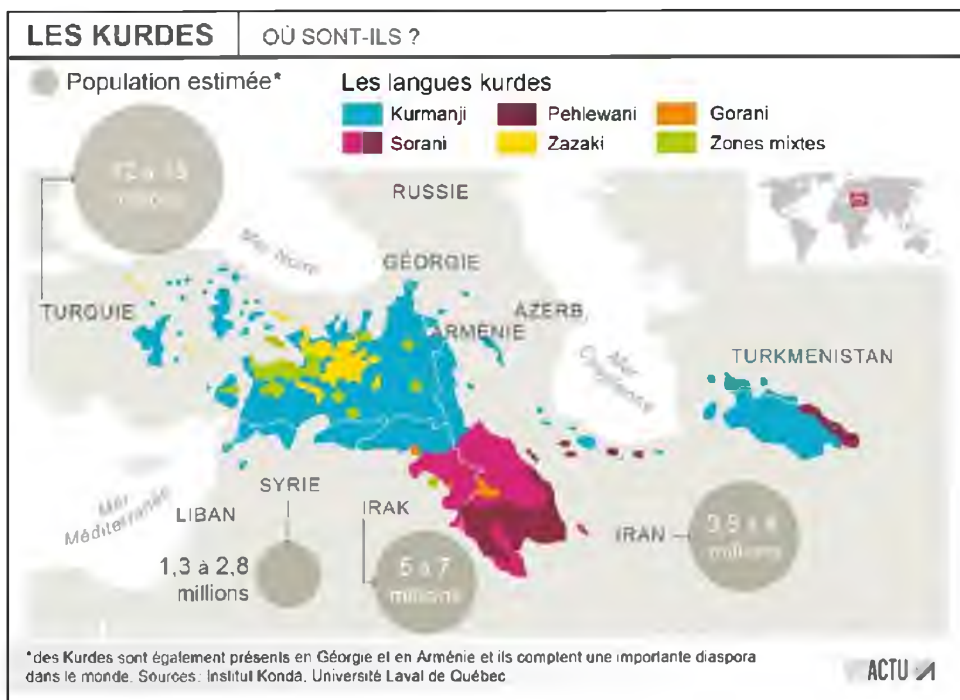
Les femmes représentent par ailleurs 30 % des combattants kurdes déployés au Moyen-Orient. Plus de 25 000 Kurdes sont par ailleurs mobilisées en Syrie au sein des Unités de protection des femmes, brigades exclusivement féminines reflétant les principes d'émancipation des femmes du PKK. À titre de comparaison, l'armée américaine ne compte que 14 % de femmes dans ses rangs.

Ce sont des troupes kurdes féminines qui ont sauvé des milliers de Yazidis pris au piège par Daech sur le mont Sinjar en Irak en 2014, et ont participé à la libération de la ville de Raqqa du joug de l'organisation terroriste en 2017.

Égalité au front, mais pas sur tous les fronts

Malgré la relative liberté dont jouissent les femmes au Kurdistan par rapport à d'autres régions du Moyen-Orient, l'égalité des sexes n'est pas un fait accompli dans la société kurde.

En 2014, au Kurdistan irakien, seuls 12 juges sur 250 étaient des femmes, et le gouvernement ne comptait qu'une ministre. Les mutilations génitales féminines, les mariages d'enfants et les crimes d'honneur – l'assassinat de femmes accusées d'avoir déshonoré la famille d'un



homme – persistent, notamment dans les zones rurales du territoire kurde. De plus, à ma connaissance, les préoccupations féministes telles que l'égalité salariale ou le mouvement #MeToo ne sont pas d'actualité dans la région.

Il apparaît par ailleurs clairement, d'un point de vue historique, que de nombreuses dirigeantes kurdes de renom n'ont réussi que dans la mesure où leur émancipation ne remettait pas en cause l'autorité masculine. Au cours de la Première



Une photo de 2003, montrant une combattante irakienne membre des Peshmergas, l'armée kurde, en train de nettoyer son arme (2003). (Photo : Caren Firouz / Reuters)

Guerre mondiale, Lady Adela Khanum, alors à la tête de la province kurde d'Halabja, a sauvé la vie de nombreux officiers de l'armée britannique sur le champ de bataille, ce qui lui a valu d'être surnommée la « Princesse des braves ».

Il se trouve qu'elle n'avait accédé au pouvoir à la mort de son mari. Bien qu'elle ait gouverné la province de 1909 à 1924, elle n'a rien fait de particulier en faveur des droits des femmes.

Une liberté durement acquise

Bien souvent, lorsque les femmes kurdes ont été perçues comme défiant l'autorité masculine, elles l'ont payé très cher, parfois de leur vie.

C'est ce qui est arrivé à la toute première femme à avoir combattu au sein de l'armée kurde. Margaret George Malik a rapidement gravi les échelons d'une hiérarchie exclusivement masculine dans les années 1960, ce qui l'a amenée à diriger les troupes kurdes au cours de la guerre d'indépendance contre l'Irak.

Elle a été assassinée en 1969 dans des circonstances non élucidées. Certains historiens pensent qu'elle a été tuée par son amant pour avoir rejeté sa demande en mariage, tandis que d'autres sont convaincus qu'elle a été assassinée par les autorités kurdes, qui voyaient d'un mauvais œil son influence croissante. Quoi qu'il en soit, le meurtre de Margaret Malik témoigne des combats que doivent encore mener les femmes kurdes aujourd'hui.

Il est intéressant de noter que, dans la langue kurde, le mot « femme », *jin*, a la même racine que le terme utilisé pour désigner la vie, *jiyan*. *Jin* et *jiyan* sont par ailleurs tous deux liés au mot *jan*, qui renvoie aux contractions de l'accouchement.

Dans une région où de multiples menaces pèsent sur elles – qu'il s'agisse des frappes de la Turquie, des actes terroristes perpétrés par Daech ou des multiples manifestations du patriarcat – les femmes du Kurdistan se battent pour rester en vie et demeurer libres, au prix d'efforts considérables et courageux.

Traduit de l'anglais par Damien Allo pour Fast ForWord.



REUTERS October 21, 2019
Ulf Laessing - Raya Jalabi

Displaced by war, Kurdish families stuck at Syria-Iraq border point

SEMALKA, Syria/ERBIL, Iraq (Reuters) - Made homeless when Turkish shells slammed into his house in northern Syria, Kurdish day labourer Suleiman Mohamed and his family spent 10 days in desperate search of shelter nearby.

Now all they want is to reach neighbouring Iraq.

They are among at least 160,000 Syrian Kurds that the United Nations says fled their homes following the start of a Turkish assault on northeastern Syria. His hometown of Ras al-Ain was one of the targets hit in Turkish air strikes.

The advance began shortly after U.S. President Donald Trump announced his forces were withdrawing from the area, giving Ankara more room to pursue its Syrian Kurdish militia enemies without the risk of clashing directly with the Americans.

Mohammed has been moving from town to town in the northeast, sleeping in schools packed with other displaced people. At one point he tried to rent a house before giving up and heading to the border with Iraq.

Some 5,000 have made it across the border in the past week, aid groups said on Monday.

Many use smugglers paying up to \$1,500 per family, some of those who made to camps on the Iraqi side of the border told Reuters last week.

But those lacking cash like Mohamed got stuck, sitting with a dozen other displaced people on the road next to the border checkpoint of Semalka. The Kurdish force controlling the area was only letting through the wounded, not families in general.



Displaced Kurds stuck at a border after a Turkish offensive in northeastern Syria, wait to try cross to the Iraqi side, at the Semalka crossing, next Derik city, Syria, October 21, 2019. REUTERS/Muhammad Hamed

“Our house is gone. We tried to stay in schools in Tel Tamir but there is no space, while renting an apartment in Qamishli cost 50,000 Iraqi dinars (\$42 a month) which I don’t have,” the 40-year old said, standing next to his wife and two young children.

“Smugglers take \$500 which I cannot pay,” he said. “I’m ready to go anywhere, Europe, abroad. We don’t have a place to stay here anymore.”

“OUR FUTURE IS GONE”

Syrian Kurds on the Iraqi side have said passage was being made difficult by the YPG Kurdish militia, the main component of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which is still largely in control of areas in the northeast it has administered for years.

Authorities have kept the border crossing open for humanitarian shipments, trade, diplomats and journalists, but when the offensive started they stopped private trips to visit relatives on the other side of the border, said Kami-ran Hassan, head of the local Kurdish immigration and passport department.

“We took the measure to avoid a crisis among trav-

ellers, to avoid the crossing getting too busy,” he said, adding that the border would be reopened again for families at some point.

A 39-year old man who gave his name as Fuad said he was travelling with his wife and two sons.

“What should I do?” he said. “We want to escape, but where should we go? We don’t have a solution, where should we go? Nothing is left.”

Mohamed and a dozen of other displaced people were ready to spend the night in the open next to their bags at the crossing, hoping they will be eventually allowed through to the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

Refugees there have been housed by authorities in the Bardarash refugee camp, originally set up in 2013 initially for Iraqis fleeing Islamic State.

“I have no idea where we will go. Our future is gone,” said 24-year old Zainab Rassul, sitting next to her mother in the dust of an unpaved road next to the border crossing frequented by trucks.

“I’m in my final year of studies of Arabic language but I don’t think I will be able to complete my studies,” she said, almost crying.

Turkey views the YPG as a terrorist organisation linked to Kurdish separatist insurgents at home.



Displaced Kurds stuck at a border after a Turkish offensive in northeastern Syria, wait to try cross to the Iraqi side, at the Semalka crossing, next Derik city, Syria, October 21, 2019. REUTERS/Muhammad Hamed



REUTERS

October 21, 2019

Reporting by Ahmed Aboulenein;

Editing by Rosalba O'Brien and Lisa Shumaker

Iraqi Kurds appreciate U.S. forces despite Syria pullout, president says

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - Iraqi Kurdish President Nechirvan Barzani said on Monday that the United States pulling out of Syria was "undesirable" but that the semi-autonomous region appreciated the U.S. historical role in protecting it.

The statement underscored the cautious reaction from Iraqi Kurdish leaders who did not condemn neighboring Turkey for an assault on northeastern Syria that has sent thousands of Kurds fleeing. Iraqi Kurdistan relies on Turkish pipelines to export oil and the countries have close political ties.

The Turkish border offensive, following a U.S. troop pullback that in effect gave Turkey a green light, ended Syrian Kurdish rule of "Rojava" - their name for northeastern Syria - and left Iraqi Kurdistan as the Kurds' only self-governed land.

U.S. President Donald Trump's abrupt decision earlier this month to withdraw troops from northern Syria has been criticized in Washington and elsewhere as a betrayal of loyal Kurdish allies who had fought for years alongside U.S. troops against Islamic State.

"We understand the high emotions of our people but the appreciation for the role and contribution of the coalition forces, especially the United States military, should not be affected by unde-



Kurdish region's Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani speaks during a news conference in Erbil, Iraq October 20, 2017. REUTERS/Azad Lashkari

sirable political decisions," Barzani said in a statement.

Outraged that their Syrian kin were betrayed by another U.S. policy decision, protesters in Iraqi Kurdish cities burned Turkish flags last week and some said that America had betrayed the Kurds yet again.

Iraqi Kurds are still reeling from a failed independence bid in 2017. They say the attempt was wrecked by U.S. criticism of their referendum on full Kurdish self-rule, a stance they see as a betrayal by Washington.

The U.S. criticism, plus Turkish and Iranian condemnation, paved the way for Iraqi government forces to retake areas under Kurdish control since Islamic State seized vast parts of Iraq.

U.S. troops had "played a major role" protecting the Kurdistan region over the past three decades, Barzani said.

"They have fought and bled alongside the Peshmerga forces in defending the Kurdistan region."

NEWS

October 22, 2019

Kurdish civilians throw potatoes, stones at US military vehicles leaving Syria

Space to play or pause, M to mute, left and right arrows to seek, up and down arrows for volume.

US military vehicles have been pelted with potatoes and stones while passing through two Kurdish-dominated cities, apparently on their way out of Syria.

Key points:

- Residents also shouted anti-US insults at the troops as they left
- US President Donald Trump has defended his decision to withdraw troops from Syria
- He said the US never promised to protect the Kurds forever

A video posted by a Kurdish news agency on Monday shows angry residents hurling potatoes at a convoy of armoured vehicles driving through Qamishli in Syria.



Video: US forces pulling out of Qamishli were shouted at and hit with potatoes. (ABC News)

The residents are shouting "No America" and "America liar" in English.

Another man shouts in Arabic, "Like rats, America is running away."

One vehicle backs up over a footpath in an attempt to get away from the people.

Another video, filmed in the city of Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan, shows young people throwing stones at a convoy and yelling expletives as it drives past.

In another video a man holds a sign saying, "Thanks for US people, but Trump betrayed us".

[The bulk of American troops in Syria are pulling out](#) after US President Donald Trump ordered a withdrawal.

The move has cleared the way for a Turkish offensive against [Kurdish forces who fought alongside the US against Islamic State](#).

The withdrawal has been criticised by US politicians, including some of Mr Trump's fellow Republicans, as a betrayal of Kurdish allies.

Mr Trump on Monday defended the withdrawal decision saying, "we never agreed to protect the Kurds for the rest of their lives".

"We helped the Kurds. And we never gave the Kurds a commitment that we'd stay for the next 400 years and protect them," he said. Mr Trump, who is seeking re-election next year,



Photo: Under the current withdrawal plan, all US troops leaving Syria are heading to western Iraq. (AP)

also said he was fulfilling a campaign promise to disengage from international conflicts as part of his "America first" agenda.

"I want to bring our soldiers back home," he said.

"I have to do what I got elected on, and I have to do what I think is right."

He said he did not want to leave any American troops in Syria, however US forces leaving the country now would be deployed elsewhere before eventually returning to the United States.

On Monday, US Defence Secretary Mark Esper said the Pentagon was considering keeping some troops near oil fields in north-eastern Syria, alongside Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), to help deny oil to Islamic State militants.

Mr Esper said all US troops leaving Syria would go to western Iraq, and the American military would continue operations against Islamic State.

AP/Reuters



October 22, 2019

By Jennifer Hansler, Ryan Browne and Nicole Gaouette

Trump's special envoy on Syria wasn't consulted on Syria decision

(CNN)US special envoy for Syria and the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS Jim Jeffrey said Tuesday that he was not consulted or advised in advance on President Donald Trump's decision to [pull US troops](#) from northeastern Syria.

"I was not personally consulted," Jeffrey said in response to a question from Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey. Asked by Utah Republican Sen. Mitt Romney if he was "advised about the decision to withdraw all US troops following that (Turkish President Recep Tayyip) Erdogan call," Jeffrey said: "That specific decision, I was not, in advance."

Jeffrey reiterated that the US had told Turkey not to proceed with the incursion against America's Kurdish allies in the fight against ISIS, saying

the operation was not "inevitable" and that Turkey's subsequent incursion into the area has been "really tragic."

'Really tragic'

"Turkey has not really gained all that much from this, as I said, but in the process has scrambled the entire northeast, undercut our efforts against ISIS and brought in the Russians and the Syrian regime forces in a way that is really tragic for everybody involved," Jeffrey told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Jeffrey testified in the face of unusually united bipartisan anger about Trump's decision on Syria and a push by the GOP leadership to reverse the decision. Lawmakers questioned the impact Trump's decision has had on America's allies, US

global standing and on the relationship with Turkey -- a NATO ally that some lawmakers described as more like a foe.

The envoy's testimony came as the 120-hour "pause" period negotiated between the US and Turkey came to a close. US officials have indicated that the SDF and Turkey have upheld their obligations to the agreement. Jeffrey also spoke shortly after Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a [wide-ranging agreement](#), including joint patrols.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell announced Tuesday that he will [introduce a resolution](#) urging Trump "to end the drawdown," citing the "grave consequences of US withdrawal." He spoke shortly before a US-brokered



Vice President Mike Pence meets with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the Presidential Palace for talks on the Kurds and Syria, Thursday, October 17, in Ankara, Turkey.

ceasefire between Turkish and Kurdish forces ended.

McConnell's resolution condemns the Turkish invasion into Syria, asks Trump to rethink his invitation to Erdogan to visit Washington and recognizes the Kurds for their role in fighting for the US against ISIS.

At the hearing, senators on both sides of the political divide described the President's decision as precipitous. Some described it as a "blunder" and a "stain" on the US reputation. Virginia Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine noted that 176,000 Kurds have been displaced, half of them children.

Sen. Ted Cruz, a Texas Republican, raised fears of the "risk of a genocide" if Turkey decides to move more aggressively against the Kurds.

Lawmakers also pointed to the damage to the fight against ISIS, the danger that more than 10,000 ISIS prisoners could escape. Jeffrey appeared to confirm that about 14,000 to 18,000

ISIS fighters remain at large in Iraq and Syria, despite administration claims of victory over the terrorist group.

Asked how many hardened ISIS fighters had escaped, Jeffrey said the numbers were in the dozens, "but that could change." He said that for now, the US has no idea how those escaped ISIS fighters will be tracked, accounted for and recaptured.

'Not believable'

Florida Republican Sen. Marco Rubio pointed out that the Trump administration's three major priorities in Syria -- preventing an ISIS resurgence, gaining US leverage in any political solution in Syria and pushing for the withdrawal of all Iranian forces -- have all been undermined by the decision to pull back troops.

Republicans and Democrats questioned Jeffrey about the erosion of US standing in light of what some lawmakers described as a betrayal of the Kurds. Jeffrey said the US would work to maintain a relationship with the Kurds. Many asked

about the benefits to Russia and Iran, who now stand to wield even greater influence in Syria.

After Jeffrey stressed that the US position is that the future of Syria is up to the Syrian people, not actors like Iran, Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire pushed back. "We're not there anymore," she said. "Russia and Iran are."

Jeffrey repeatedly refuted arguments linking the withdrawal of US troops from northeastern Syria to Turkey's decision to attack the Kurds, saying it would have happened regardless. Senators were incredulous.

Maryland Democratic Sen. Ben Cardin asked Jeffrey if he really believed that "Turkey was going to do this current engagement even if American troops were in the region, making it very likely there would've been a conflict between two NATO allies in northern Syria? That's not believable!"

Jeffrey said, "If US troops had been given the order to stand and fight against a NATO ally, I think you're right, the Turks may have thought twice. They have never been given that order."

Pressed by Cardin on Turkey's potential war crimes, Jeffrey said that "Turkish-supported Syrian opposition forces who are under general Turkish command in at least one instance did carry out a war crime and we have reached out to Turkey to demand an explanation."

Earlier Tuesday, a senior administration official told reporters that the Turkish supported forces "seem to be following orders because all of them have highly professional Turkish advisers with them making sure they're not doing anything wrong."

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Matthew Palmer and Jeffrey both denied that anyone had ever discussed the Trump Organization's business interests in Turkey with them.

LE FIGARO

Le Figaro avec Reuters,
le 22 octobre 2019

Syrie: près de 500 djihadistes se sont évadés de prison, selon Moscou

Pprès de 500 personnes détenues dans les prisons pour djihadistes de l'Etat islamique (EI) dans le nord-est de la Syrie se sont échappées après le lancement de l'offensive turque, a annoncé mardi le ministre russe de la Défense.

La Turquie a lancé cette opération le 9 octobre pour chasser les mi-

lices kurdes qui ont joué un rôle décisif dans la lutte contre l'EI. Le retour dans leur pays des djihadistes qu'elles ont faits prisonniers est l'une des principales craintes exprimées par les puissances occidentales depuis le début de cette offensive, qu'Ankara a accepté jeudi de suspendre pour cinq jours.



October, 22/2019

Kurdish boy who suffered burns from Turkish attack to receive treatment in France



Mohammed Hamid, 13, suffered significant burns to half of his body during a Turkish assault on the northern Kurdish town of Serekaniye on Oct. 18, 2019. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – With the help of Masoud Barzani, the President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), a young Kurdish boy who was severely burned in Turkey's northern Syria offensive will travel to France for further treatment.

Mohammed Hamid, 13, suffered significant burns to half of his body during a Turkish assault on the northern Kurdish town of Serekaniye on Oct. 18.

Reports suggest the burns are from banned

chemical weapons, a charge Turkey denies.

For days, Hamid was being treated at a hospital in Qamishli before he was taken to the Kurdistan Region by the Barzani Charity Foundation (BCF).

Barzani phoned Hamid's father on Monday to express his grief for the boy and shared "his readiness to do everything necessary to treat Mohammed," a statement the Kurdish leader's press office released said.

On Tuesday, Barzani said preparations were ar-

ranged for the boy to be sent to France for further treatment.

The Turkish incursion in northern Syria began on Oct. 9. The offensive has left at least 235 people dead and displaced over 300,000 others, according to Syrian Kurdish officials.

A controversial 120-hour US-brokered ceasefire, which began on Friday, has temporarily paused heavy clashes.

The truce is expected to end on Tuesday.

REUTERS October, 22 / 2019

Turkey replaces four more pro-Kurdish mayors as crackdown widens

ISTANBUL (Reuters) - Turkey has replaced four mayors from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) with state officials, the offices of two provincial governors said on Tuesday, part of a widening crackdown on local councils controlled by the party.

Ankara accuses the HDP of links to militants of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). It has now replaced a total of 12 mayors from the HDP on alleged links to terrorism since municipal elections in March.

The mayors in the towns of Kayapinar, Bismil and Kocakoy in the southeastern Diyarbakir province and the mayor of Ercis in the eastern province of Van were suspended and replaced by local administrators, the offices of the two regional governors said.

Authorities later formally arrested the mayors of Kayapinar, Kocakoy and Ercis, security and judicial sources said. Bismil's former mayor was released under judicial control, the Diyarbakir prosecutor's office said.

The HDP said six of its other candidates who won a majority of votes in the March mayoral elections were not given their election certificates because they had previously been dismissed from public office by decree.

In August, Turkey first removed the mayors of Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van, three metropolitan cities won by the HDP.

Selcuk Mizrakli, who was removed from his office in Diyarbakir, was jailed pending trial on Tuesday, the provincial prosecutor's office said.

Prior to the March municipal polls, around 100 mayors in towns held by the HDP had been replaced by state officials.

The former co-leaders of the pro-Kurdish HDP have both been jailed since 2016 on terrorism charges, with several other prominent members accused of supporting terrorism over what the government says are links to the PKK.

The HDP denies links to the PKK but does not consider it a terrorist organization.

The moves against the HDP coincide with a Turkish military offensive in neighboring Syria against the YPG Kurdish militia, which Ankara also accuses of ties to the PKK. A five-day, U.S.-brokered pause in the offensive was due to expire later on Tuesday.

The HDP is the only party in the Turkish parliament that opposed Operation Peace Spring in northeast Syria.

Reporting by Ali Kucukgocmen, Daren Butler and Ece Toksabay; Editing by Gareth Jones and Jonathan Spicer

LE FIGARO

22/10/2019

Alain Barluet, *Envoyé spécial à Sotchi*

Syrie: Erdogan et Poutine imposent leur paix dans le nord du pays

C'est sur son terrain, à Sotchi, que Vladimir Poutine a reçu mardi Recep Tayyip Erdogan, dans la cité balnéaire de la mer Noire où le président russe se sent chez lui. La rencontre entre les deux dirigeants, la septième depuis le début de l'année, intervenait à un moment crucial, quelques heures avant l'expiration, dans la soirée, de la «pause» de cinq jours à laquelle le président turc a consenti dans son offensive engagée le 9 octobre contre les miliciens kurdes dans le nord-est de la Syrie.

À l'issue de plusieurs heures d'entretien, la Russie et la Turquie sont parvenues à un accord qualifié d'«historique» par le président turc. Un compromis qui recouvre «la lutte contre le terrorisme, l'intégrité territoriale et l'unité politique de la Syrie ainsi que pour le retour des réfugiés», a déclaré M. Erdogan.

Considérés par Ankara comme des terroristes liés aux séparatistes dans le sud-est de la Turquie, les combattants des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG) «doivent quitter» la «zone de sécurité», avait prévenu M. Erdogan avant la rencontre de Sotchi. «Tous devront partir, le processus ne prendra pas fin tant qu'ils ne seront pas partis», a-t-il martelé. Ce point fixe du dirigeant turc, paramètre obsédant au cœur d'une complexe équation politique et sécuritaire, explique la longueur et l'âpreté des discussions qui se sont déroulées hier.

Car pour Vladimir Poutine, il ne pouvait être question que l'offensive turque contre les Kurdes ne vienne contrarier les plans de Moscou en Syrie. Le président russe a d'ailleurs

condamné hier «toute présence étrangère» sur le territoire de son allié syrien. «Nous comprenons les préoccupations de la Turquie pour sa sécurité mais nous espérons que ses actions resteront proportionnées et ne compliqueront pas le processus de règlement politique en Syrie», a souligné le porte-parole du Kremlin.

Néanmoins, selon le ministre des Affaires étrangères russe, Sergueï Lavrov, les deux dirigeants russe et turc seraient convenus mardi de l'«intégrité» du territoire syrien. Lavrov a assuré que la Russie veillera à ce que les combattants kurdes et leurs armes se retirent à 30 kilomètres de la frontière syro-turque. Et d'ajouter que les milices kurdes ont «150 heures» pour quitter la zone. La Russie et la Turquie lanceront des patrouilles communes dans le nord-est de la Syrie, après le désarmement des milices kurdes dans la région. Ce mécanisme est destiné à éviter la reprise de l'opération militaire turque dans le nord-est de la Syrie.

Bachar el-Assad s'en est pris avec force à Recep Erdogan en l'accusant de « voler le territoire syrien ».

Si le retrait militaire américain de Syrie, entamé le 6 octobre, a placé Vladimir Poutine en position de force, il l'a aussi mis au défi d'assumer cette prééminence diplomatique, partagée avec l'Iran, «co-parrain» du soutien à Bachar el-Assad. À Sotchi, l'enjeu était d'amener Erdogan à accepter l'amorce d'une solution qui préserve les intérêts de la Russie en rétablissant la stabilité et en permettant au régime de Damas de recouvrer, autant que

possible, la souveraineté sur son territoire. Cette piste, vue de Moscou, passerait idéalement par un dialogue direct entre les présidents turc et syrien.

Proposée mardi à son interlocuteur turc, cette perspective, si elle se concrétisait, permettrait à Vladimir Poutine de se présenter en faiseur de paix. «Cela renforcerait encore son influence dans la région et poursuivrait le rétablissement de la Russie dans son statut de grande puissance aux dépens de Washington», comme le souligne Anna Borshchevskaya, du think tank Washington Institute. Piste hypothétique à ce stade: Bachar el-Assad, lors d'un déplacement mardi sur la zone frontalière, dans le nord-ouest du pays, s'en est pris avec force à Recep Erdogan en l'accusant de « voler le territoire syrien ».

La «zone de sécurité», dont Poutine sait qu'elle est un gage incontournable pour son interlocuteur turc, était au cœur des décalages d'approche entre Moscou et Ankara. La Turquie disait vouloir une «zone de sécurité» le long des 440 kilomètres de frontière avec la Syrie. Son offensive s'était toutefois concentrée jusqu'à présent sur deux localités dans le centre de cette bande de territoire, Ras al-Aïn et Tall Abyad, soit 120 kilomètres. Mardi, la Russie et la Turquie ont réaffirmé l'accord d'Adana passé en 1998 entre Ankara et Damas. Ce texte prévoit un droit de poursuite accordé aux forces turques pour pénétrer à 5 kilomètres à l'intérieur du territoire syrien afin de faire la chasse aux «terroristes».

L'OBS 22 octobre 2019
avec l'AFP

Réfugiés en Irak, les Kurdes de Syrie maudissent Trump et Erdogan

Camp de réfugiés de Bardarach (Irak) (AFP) - "Que Dieu nous venge de Trump et d'Erdogan": le ressentiment est grand chez les plus de 7.500 Kurdes de Syrie désormais réfugiés en Irak après "la trahison" américaine et la "tragédie" de l'offensive turque.

Depuis qu'Ankara et ses supplétifs syriens ont lancé une opération contre la milice kurde des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG) le 9 octobre dans le nord-est syrien, le nombre de réfugiés n'a cessé d'enfler au Kurdistan irakien frontalier.

Les tentes du camp de déplacés de Bardarach, plantées dans la province de Dohouk (nord-ouest) pour accueillir dans le passé les Irakiens fuyant le groupe Etat Islamique (EI), abritent aujourd'hui un nombre croissant de Kurdes de Syrie ayant échappé à l'offensive turque.

- "Morts dans les rues" -

Le président turc Recep Tayyip "Erdogan a envoyé ses supplétifs nous attaquer et il nous a fermé la porte au nez", se lamente l'une de ces réfugiées kurdes, préférant ne pas donner son nom.

Quant à "la coalition internationale contre l'EI, elle nous a trahis par surprise et nous a abandonnés", poursuit cette femme originaire de Ras al-Aïn, ville frontalière avec la Turquie et parmi les premières touchées par les bombardements turcs.

"Les avions bombardaient nos maisons, alors tout le monde est parti", dit-elle, évoquant une "tragédie". "Il y avait plein de morts dans les rues et personne pour les enterrer".

Sous son foulard bleu nuit, elle lance: "que Dieu nous venge de Trump et d'Erdogan qui ont tant fait souffrir notre peuple!", maudissant le président américain Donald Trump qui a ordonné le retrait de ses soldats de Syrie, ouvrant la voie à l'offensive turque.



Une jeune Kurde de Syrie réfugiée dans le camp de Bardarach, dans la province irakienne de Dohouk (nord-ouest), le 20 octobre 2019 ((c) Afp)

Lundi, quand des blindés américains ont quitté la Syrie pour rejoindre une base américaine dans le nord de l'Irak, ils ont d'ailleurs été accueillis par les Kurdes des deux pays par des insultes et des fruits lancés sur leurs véhicules.

"Il faut arrêter le tyran Erdogan", s'emporte de son côté Mohammed Ali, tout juste arrivé avec ses cinq enfants de la ville syrienne de Qamichli (nord-est). Il raconte à l'AFP qu'il a laissé derrière lui "la discorde, le mal, les bombardements et les destructions" et en appelle "à l'ONU et aux Etats-Unis".

- "Jusqu'à 50.000 réfugiés" -

Chaque jour, des centaines de Kurdes de Syrie arrivent au point de passage frontalier informel d'al-Walid, où les attendent des combattants kurdes irakiens, les peshmergas.

Ces derniers les escortent vers des bus qui les emmènent vers le camp de Bardarach, non loin du nord-est syrien où les Kurdes jouissaient depuis le début de la guerre en Syrie en 2011 d'une semi-autonomie.

"Durant le premier jour passé sur place, la plupart des personnes dépistées par notre équipe de santé mentale présentaient des signes d'anxiété et de dépression", explique dans un communiqué Marius Martinelli, responsable de projet de l'ONG Médecins sans frontière (MSF) dans la zone.

L'ONU et les humanitaires prévoient d'accueillir en Irak jusqu'à 50.000 Syriens au cours des prochains mois, assure l'ONG Conseil norvégien pour les réfugiés (NRC).

"Non seulement à cause des combats, mais aussi de la peur de ce qui va advenir ensuite", affirme dans un communiqué Rishana Haniffa, directrice du NRC en Irak.

Plus de 7.500 Kurdes syriens ont traversé la frontière vers l'Irak, selon ONG locales et internationales. Ce nombre risque d'augmenter, assurent les ONG, alors que la trêve négociée entre Washington et Ankara expire mardi à 19H00 GMT.



22/10/2019

Mohammed Rwanduzy

Two senior PKK leaders killed in Sulaimani by Turkish drone

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region- Two senior Kurdistan Communities Group (KCK), under whose umbrella Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) falls, were killed while on Mount Azmar overlooking the city of Sulaimani, Kurdistan Region's Asayesh (Security) announced on Tuesday following an investigation.

On October 15, Rudaw reported an **explosion** occurring atop Mount Azmar, which is a popular destination for tourists and spot to drink alcohol and take photos.

Initially, Sulaimani's security forces labeled it an explosion and did not allow media to go to the scene. On Tuesday, they provided more details, stating that it was a targeted killing of senior PKK members.

"On October 15, 2019, between hours 17:10 to 17:15, two senior cadres of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) named Jameel and Demhat, atop Mount Azmar in a tourist location among civilians, were barbarically targeted," Kurdistan Region's Asayesh Agency announced in a statement on Tuesday.

Following "sophisticated and dense investigations" on the "crime scene", they uncovered the identity of the targeted to be members of the KCK, an umbrella group under which PKK and its affiliated groups fall.

"While they had gone into that area without notifying the relevant authorities of the Kurdistan Region, they were targeted by a Turkish drone while among civilians and in the city of Sulaimani at a tourist location," added the Asayesh.

"This is a dangerous violation, initiative and development that in no way serves shared security and co-existence," it added.

While condemning the transgression, Asayesh also called on everyone not to use the Kurdistan Region's or Iraq's soil to attack neighboring countries.

Kurdistan Region's airspace is controlled by Iraq's civil aviation authority, and even radars stationed in the region belong to Iraq. The security agency, however, vowed to keep protecting the people.

After the Asayesh statement, KCK released their own, confirming the assassination of its members, identified as Demhat Ageed (born Sayidxan Ayaz) and Jameel Ahmed (Asar Ermak).

"The Turkish state, through this genocide, at-



Senior PKK members Demhat Ageed (born Sayidxan Ayaz) and Jameel Ahmed (Asar Ermak) were killed in a Turkish attack on October 15, 2019 in Sulaimani. Photo: ANF

tacked the will and spirit of national unity in all the four parts of Kurdistan. Both of our comrades, through their national and political work, always tried to strengthen the unity between Kurdish forces," KCK said.

It claimed that international and regional forces, and their "despicable partners" including spies in the area, were responsible for the assassination.

KCK called on the Sulaimani and regional governments to "reveal" the plot against its members and "reject and condemn" Turkey's actions.

"This genocide is in parallel with the attacks on Rojava [northern Syria]. This indicates that the Turkish occupier attacks the Kurdish nation wherever it is," added the KCK.

Turkey's defense ministry **announced** on the day the airstrike took place that they had killed two PKK members in the Gara Region.

"As a result of a coordinated action between the Turkish Armed Forces and National Intelligence Agency [MIT] in northern Iraq's Gara region, two members of the PKK terrorist organization were neutralized in an airstrike," Turkey's National Defense Ministry had said on October 15.

On March 21 of this year, KCK spokesperson Serhat Armanos Varto was **killed** in a Turkish airstrike alongside 4 other PKK members.

This follows a series of successful Turkish oper-

ations against high ranking members. On July 5, senior PKK official Diyar Ghareeb was also **killed** in a Turkish airstrike.

Turkey has been increasingly employing its own domestic made drones to target the Kurdish guerrilla organization PKK, engaged in a four decade-long struggle with the Turkish state for greater Kurdish political and cultural rights.

Turkey considers the PKK to be a terrorist organization.

Since the beginning of the year, Turkey has launched **Operation Claw**, now in its third phase, in the mountainous regions and border areas of the Kurdistan Region. The operation targets members of the PKK and its bases.

Last July 17, a Turkish diplomat, named Osman Kose and two Kurdish civilians, were shot dead at a Turkish restaurant in the upmarket Empire complex in Erbil.

While PKK never claimed responsibility and **denied** it carried out the assassination, Turkey did claim that it has started "**neutralizing**" those responsible, calling it a terror attack that it attributed to the PKK.

Turkey also considers the People's Protection Units (YPG) Kurdish forces in Northern Syria an extension of the PKK, and it has waged a campaign it has termed "Operation Peace Spring" since October 9 to have Kurdish forces evicted from the border area.



By Heather Murdock Tue,
10/22/2019

Kurdish Dreams Fade After Russia-Turkey Deal Ends Fighting

QAMESHLI AND DIRIK, SYRIA - A mournful song was heard on the streets of Qameshli on Wednesday, as about a hundred people rallied in support of northeastern Syrian Kurdish forces.

The fighting is over along the Syrian border with Turkey, for now, but no one we spoke to could picture what will happen next.

"Fighters, take revenge for mothers who lost their sons," the man's voice sang in Kurdish, before an organizer picked up the microphone to announce funerals taking place the next day.



Abdulwakeel, a 51-year-old mason, says the dream of a self-governing Kurdish lead state has died amid recent battles, in Dirik, Syria, Oct. 23, 2019. (Yan Boechat/VOA)

On Tuesday night, a five-day pause in hostilities between Turkey and Kurdish-led forces ended in a deal between Turkey and Russia. The deal requires the main Kurdish fighting force, the YPG,



Haval Heline, 34, says her troops will never give up, despite recent losses. "We will fight for it until our last drop of blood," she says. (Yan Boechat/VOA).



Kurdish soldiers stand guard at a rally in support of the Kurdish forces, in Qameshli, Syria, Oct. 23, 2019. (Yan Boechat/VOA)

to pull all troops and weapons 30 kilometers back from the border with Turkey.

Syrian government and Russian troops already are moving throughout the region, which has been a semi-autonomous zone, governed by the Kurds since 2011.

"We dreamt of a country where everyone would live together like brothers," said Abdulwakeel, a 51-year-old mason, leaning on his motorcycle. "This dream is over."

Unclear future

At the rally, though, some security officers displayed stoic optimism as one reporter described the events as a crushing defeat.

"We are the owners of this land," said Haval Heline, 34. "We will fight for it until our last drop of blood."

But on a shady curb nearby, Layla, a 40-year-old mother of three, said that for her, the future is entirely unclear. Kurdish forces cannot beat Turkey, Russia and the Syrian government. At the same time, she cannot imagine what life will be like if Damascus takes over local governance, with the support of Russia.

In 2018, Layla and her family fled Afrin, as Turkish-backed Syrian fighters took the then-Kurdish-controlled city. Like many people we spoke to, she said the Syrian government is less frightening to her than Turkey or its proxies.

And like every other person we spoke with, she blamed the United States for the loss of lives,



Tens of thousands of Islamic State fighters and their families are detained in camps and prisons secured by Kurdish-led forces, in al-Hol Camp, Syria, Oct. 17, 2019. (Yan Boechat/VOA)

homes, and self-determination over the past two weeks.

The fighting began after U.S. President Donald Trump suddenly announced he would be pulling troops out of Syria less than two months after promising to patrol a buffer-zone between the enemy forces.

"We never believed that America would abandon us," Layla said. "They betrayed us."

WATCH: Kurds in Syria Mourn Loss of Lives, Territory

IS attack

Roughly an hour after Layla spoke, a car bomb exploded in a nearby neighborhood, believed to be the work of Islamic State (IS) militants. Since Turkey began its military incursion, some militants have escaped prisons, while the families of IS fighters have rioted in camps.

Kurdish-led forces have warned repeatedly they need international support to control the camps and prisons holding tens of thousands of fighters and their families.

"If things get worse outside, we won't be able to stop them," said Layla Rezgar, at al-Hol, a refugee camp that is detaining 71,000 people, mostly women and children related to IS fighters.

The section she heads, she added, holds 9,000 people from 58 countries. They are families that retreated with IS for years before the "Caliphate" fell, and many are among the most extreme among the extremists.

A large number of countries have refused to repatriate their nationals and experts say the resurgence of IS is the likely outcome of further chaos in Syria.

"The children here throw stones at school teachers who are not veiled," Rezgar told us. "They call them infidels."

'Rojava dream'

As Syrian government and Russian troops spread throughout north-eastern Syria, locals told us that the question of who will be in charge of what cities and towns is on everyone's minds.

At a small cafe in Dirik (or Malikeya, as it is known in Arabic), men played cards and drank tea on Wednesday,

saying they don't have a guess as to what will happen next.

"We cannot imagine what Russians and government forces will be like," said Turkey Hussain, 60.

When the U.S. was still on the ground near the borders, it deterred Turkish military operations. The Turks, however, regarded those operations

SDF and YPG officials have long held they have no interests outside of Syria, but they share supporters and icons with the PKK.

A man sits at a garden memorializing deceased Kurdish fighters in Dirik, Syria, Oct. 23, 2019. (Yan Boechat/VOA)

Despite this connection, Kurdish fighters captured the imagination of the Western world as they battled IS in 2014. They retook land overrun with militants, promising to turn the region — called Rojava in Kurdish — into a self-determined, self-sufficient region that supports gender equality and ethnic diversity.

This idea became known as the "Rojava dream," drawing foreign fighters and aid workers, as well as the support of many inside northeastern Syria. And while some people lament the end of this dream, the men at the tea shop said perhaps it has just paused.

"Where there are good people, there is always hope," Hussain told us.

In the past two weeks, hundreds of people have died and hundreds of thousands of people have



At a tea shop, Turkey Hussain, right, says Kurdish forces cannot win in a fight against Turkey without international support, in Dirik, Syria, Oct. 23, 2019. (Yan Boechat/VOA)

as necessary for national security. Turkey sees the YPG as a terrorist organization akin to the PKK, which has been attacking Turkey for decades.

Before the withdrawal, the U.S. officially supported an umbrella organization called the Syrian Democratic Forces against IS militants. By default, that meant the U.S. was supporting the YPG.

been displaced in a lop-sided war Kurdish forces could never have won without international support, the men said.

"If we had fighter planes like that we could fight them, but we are fighting with AK-47s," Hussain explained. "At least for now the shelling has stopped and our children can sleep."

Turkey and Russia strike deal over Syria's border

Turkey and Russia have agreed what they say is a "historic" deal aimed at keeping Kurdish forces away from Syria's border with Turkey.

It comes during a pause in Turkey's offensive to drive Kurdish forces out, creating a "safe zone" in the area.

Under the deal, Syrian and Russian forces will immediately oversee a withdrawal of Kurdish forces.

There is no word from the Kurdish fighters, whom Turkey regards as terrorists.

The deal sets out plans for joint Turkish-Russian patrols along the border next week.

The agreement was announced after six hours of talks on Tuesday between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Russian host, Vladimir Putin, in the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

A ceasefire brokered by the US was set to expire on Tuesday evening and Turkey had threatened to re-launch its offensive against the Kurdish fighters. It said there was now "no need".

The Turkish offensive began after the US announced a sudden and unexpected withdrawal of its troops from northern Syria. The US troops had been supporting the Kurdish fighters, who have been allies in the fight against the Islamic State (IS) group in the region.

What was agreed in Sochi?

In its offensive, Turkey seized a 120km-long strip of land between the towns of Ras al-Ain and Tal Abyad - part of its attempt to create a "safe zone" to resettle up to two million refugees currently in Turkey and remove the Kurdish fighters.

Under the deal, Russia has agreed to allow Turkish troops to remain in the area they have taken and to retain sole control.

Kurdish fighters have been given 150 hours from midday on Wednesday (09:00 GMT) to pull back 30km (18 miles) along almost the whole frontier from the Euphrates, just east of Manbij, to the Iraqi border.

Russian and Syrian forces will move in immediately to oversee the Kurdish pullback.

The area around Qamishli, which has a large Kurdish population, is not included and no immediate details were given as to what would happen there.

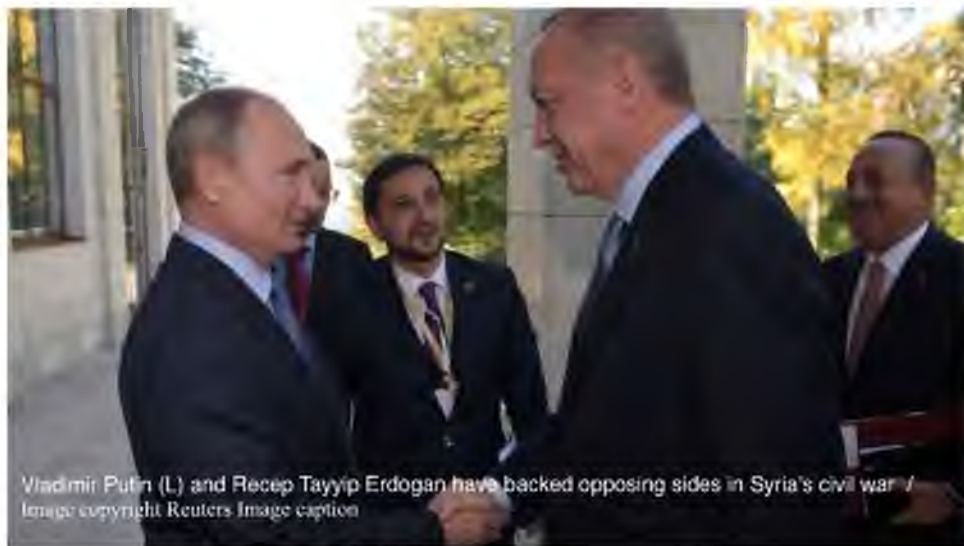
After the 150-hour deadline expires on 29 October, Turkish and Russian troops will begin joint patrols in areas described as "in the west and the east of the area" of the Turkish offensive.

The statement from Russia and Turkey also says Kurdish forces "will be removed" from Manbij and the town of Tal Rifat, 50km to the west of Manbij - both of which lie outside the operation area.

Russia stationed troops near the border over concerns that Syria's territory was being encroached upon by a foreign power.

Turkey agreed to pause the assault last week at the request of the US to "facilitate the withdrawal of YPG forces from the Turkish-controlled safe zone".

Media playback is unsupported on your device



Vladimir Putin (L) and Recep Tayyip Erdogan have backed opposing sides in Syria's civil war / Image copyright Reuters Image caption

Kurdish militias and political leaders have made no immediate comment on whether they will agree to the demands.

Syria's President Bashar al-Assad has raised concern about foreign interference in Syria but the Kremlin said he had thanked President Putin and "expressed his full support for the results of the work as well as the readiness of the Syrian border guards, together with the Russian military police, to reach the Syrian-Turkish border".

Image copyright AFP Image caption Families have been fleeing in the Syria-Turkey border region

Iran's foreign ministry said the deal was a positive step and that it backed any move to restore stability in the region.

How did we get here?

A US-led coalition relied on Kurdish led forces to battle IS militants in northern Syria over the past four years, but they are dominated by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia, which Turkey sees as a terrorist organisation.

Just over two weeks ago President Donald Trump announced that he would be withdrawing US troops from Syria. Soon after, Turkey launched an offensive on the Kurds.

Media caption Civilians pelt with potatoes US troops leaving the Kurdish-majority city of Qamishli

The ceasefire largely held, despite what US officials have described as "some minor skirmishes".

What has the cost been?

The UN says more than 176,000 people, including almost 80,000 children, have been displaced in the past two weeks in north-east Syria, which is home to some three million people.

Media playback is unsupported on your device

Media caption The BBC's Alccm Maqbool hears from a grieving mother, a frustrated fighter and fleeing families

Some 120 civilians have been killed in the battle, along with 259 Kurdish fighters, 196 Turkish-backed Syrian rebels and seven Turkish soldiers, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), a UK-based monitoring group.

Twenty civilians have also been killed in attacks by the YPG on Turkish territory, Turkish officials say.

Trump lifts Turkey sanctions, says Kurds 'thankful'

Washington (AFP)

President Donald Trump on Wednesday announced the lifting of US sanctions against Turkey and defended his abrupt pullout from Syria, saying "let someone else fight" over the "blood-stained" country.

In a White House speech that formalized ceding of US and Kurdish control in northern Syria to Turkey and Russia, Trump insisted that Kurdish guerrillas who had fought alongside US troops were happy.

The president, whose Syria policy has come under withering criticism from his own Republican party, said he'd just spoken with the Kurdish commander in the country, Mazloum Abdi, and he was "extremely thankful."

Trump touted a "major breakthrough," referring to a ceasefire that allowed Turkish troops to occupy a swath of northern Syria mostly unopposed, with US troops and Kurdish fighters abandoning their previous strongholds.

Ankara ordered the invasion of the Syrian territory on October 9 because it said it wanted to create a security cordon free of Kurdish armed groups that it considers to be terrorists, linked to Kurdish rebels inside Turkey.

The long-planned operation started only after Trump announced the exit of a small, but politically significant US military force which had until then been closely allied with the Kurds in a joint fight against Islamic State jihadists in Syria.

Trump said he didn't want the US troops caught in the middle of a Turkish-Kurdish fight.

Accused of betraying the Kurds by both Republicans and Democrats, Trump imposed sanctions on Turkey on October 14 and sent a delegation to persuade Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to order a brief ceasefire, allowing the Kurds to withdraw.

In a tweet from a spokesman on Wednesday, Mazloum thanked Trump "for his tireless efforts that stopped the brutal Turkish attack and jihadist groups on our people."

As US troops and the Kurds exited areas near Turkey's border, Turkish troops and Russian troops, who have propped up Syrian President Bashar Assad through his country's multi-sided civil war, moved in.



The first Russian patrol in northern Syria got underway on Wednesday, the defense ministry in Moscow announced.

Trump insisted this power shift is a win for Washington and that he is fulfilling a campaign promise by washing his hands of "ancient sectarian and tribal conflicts."

"Let someone else fight over this long blood-stained sand," he said.

- Islamic State escapees -

Trump said there was no risk that the turmoil in the area could lead to a reconstitution of Islamic State, which has lost its once sizeable territories and has thousands of members and their relatives kept in camps controlled by the Kurds.

With concerns that the Kurds may no longer be able to monitor the Islamic State prisoners, Trump said he expects Turkey to "abide by its commitment" to act as a "back-up to the Kurds."

"Should something happen, Turkey is there to grab them," he said.

He was speaking shortly after a US State Department official, James Jeffrey, testified in Congress that "over 100" Islamic State prisoners had escaped so far and "we do not know where they are."

Trump said that a "small number" of US soldiers would remain nearby, but purely to guard oil facilities.

His central message was clear: that the United States has no business in Syria and that there was never any question of trying to stop NATO member Turkey from carrying out its invasion.

"We have spent \$8 trillion on wars in the Middle East, never really wanting to win those wars," Trump said.

"But after all that money was spent and all those lives lost, the young men and women gravely wounded, so many -- the Middle East is less safe, less stable and less secure than before these conflicts began."

However, the isolationist policy grates on many Republicans, whom he is depending upon to save him from a Democratic push to impeach and remove him from office over allegations that he abused his office.

Immediately after the speech, powerful Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said the United States had to stay engaged.

Graham said he agreed "that America is not the policeman of the world."

But he said that US air power must "continue to control the skies over Syria" and the military should "have a small ?- but capable ?- military partnership" with the Kurds to prevent Islamic State from reemerging.

Pour Havrin Khalaf

Syrienne, Havrin Khalaf fut ingénieure, fondatrice du Mouvement pour une science et une pensée libre, secrétaire générale du parti Avenir de la Syrie, lancé en 2018. Elle cherchait un chemin de traverse pour son peuple, coincé entre les terreurs du régime de Bachar Al Assad et celles des djihadistes. Elle appelait à un pouvoir décentralisé, ouvert et multiconfessionnel. Elle militait pour le droit des femmes et était une des interlocutrices des Kurdes auprès des États-Unis. Elle est morte suppliciée, le 12 octobre, aux premiers jours de l'intervention turque, sous les balles et les coups d'une milice djihadiste ragaillardie par l'attaque contre les Kurdes, qui les tenaient.

Je n'avais jamais entendu parler de Havrin Khalaf. Comme moi, Twitter n'a connu son nom qu'à sa mort dont les djihadistes, à leur habitude, ont fait un spectacle. Terreur et Twitter : même phonétiquement, ils marchent ensemble. Une femme libre est tombée, massacrée. Ils rendent cela normal. Banal. Affaire suivante.

Les femmes libres sont dangereuses

Comme les forces rétrogrades qu'elle combattait, Havrin Khalaf savait, voire l'incarnait : les femmes libres sont dangereuses. Ce sont elles qui éduquent les filles et les garçons, changent les familles et les destins. L'émancipation des filles est le seul rempart contre l'ultra-pauvreté et l'obscurantisme. Elles s'autonomisent, loin des rôles assignés, elles contestent la tradition, l'ordre et l'oppression. Une femme libre ou qui aspire à l'être rend ses enfants libres.

J'ai croisé ces femmes courage sur la route de nos tournages auprès des jeunes qui agissent pour leur communauté. Du Malawi au Colorado, ils partagent nombre de similitudes. Leur plus petit dénominateur commun, le cœur de leur réacteur, c'est un parent, le plus souvent à les entendre, une maman, qui leur a transmis aspiration à la liberté, sens des responsabilités et juste dose de confiance en soi.

Havrin Khalaf et Mohamad

Je ne sais si Havrin Khalaf avait des enfants. Mais elle aurait pu être la tante de Mohamad dont je vous ai parlé la semaine passée. Mohamad est ce réfugié syrien qui arrive au Liban à 12 ans, et comprend que sa vie s'arrête car il n'a



Le 19 octobre 2019, à Cologne en Rhénanie du Nord-Westphalie, une manifestation de Kurdes contre l'offensive militaire turque dans le nord de la Syri. Il brandissent des affiches avec une photo de Havrin Khalaf. Fabian Strauch/dpa/picture-alliance

plus accès à l'école. Qui en invente donc une pour lui et ses semblables déplacés de guerre, échoués à la frontière libano-syrienne, dans une faille spatio-temporelle : les camps qu'ils traversent en guenille, oubliant l'heure, les jours. Leur âge et leur passé. Pour ces enfants, une école, celle de Mohamad, c'est un lieu sûr, propre, en dur. Des adultes bienveillants pour les accueillir. C'est un rythme, une raison de se lever et de croire que demain sera mieux, différent. L'école alors est un havre de paix. Le petit miracle de normalité.

Mohamad m'a beaucoup parlé de sa maman. Elle a bien voulu me rencontrer. C'est une femme libre et donc à risque. Je l'appellerai B. Elle est de la même trempe que Havrin Khalaf. De la même graine.

Universitaire, en 2012, elle participe aux premières manifestations contre le régime. Arrêtée, elle est emprisonnée deux fois de suite. Torturée, elle doit livrer des noms. Elle résiste comme elle peut, me dit : « *En prison, j'ai dû apprendre à oublier mon corps pour préserver ce qu'il me restait de dignité.* » Interprétation libre ; son regard me suggère de choisir la plus terrible. À sa seconde « libération », les services secrets la préviennent : s'ils la coffrent de nouveau, elle ne sortira plus. La mort dans l'âme, elle demande à ses petits d'assembler quelques affaires. Elle prétexte une visite surprise à un oncle, par-delà la

frontière, au Liban. Les enfants pensent partir pour le week-end. Ils ne comprennent pas très bien pourquoi elle leur demande de prendre leurs bulletins scolaires. Les réfugiés emportent toujours leur diplôme, comme une attestation d'un droit de cité. C'est, croient-ils, mieux qu'un passeport. Ils n'ont rien à perdre, le passeport syrien ne vaut rien. Ils partent à l'aube. À l'un des check-points, ces endroits de terreur où d'ailleurs s'arrêtera la vie de Havrin Khalaf, B. tremble tellement qu'elle a du mal à tenir le volant. Ils passent la frontière. Ils ne reviendront pas.

Elle ne cessera pas le combat

Toute la famille a trouvé asile en Europe et au Canada. B. n'a jamais quitté le Liban : « *Entre mon pays et moi, il y a une heure et un dictateur.* » Elle travaille auprès des femmes, des mères réfugiées. Elle leur enseigne leurs droits, des rudiments de contraception, un peu de comptabilité. Elle veut les sortir du décor dans lequel elles semblent se fondre si vite, qui se referme sur elles. Elle les convainc d'envoyer leurs enfants à l'école plutôt que de les laisser vendre des paquets de mouchoirs au carrefour des rues. C'est le seul moyen d'espérer un jour voir le rêve de Havrin Khalaf. Sans doute, depuis le 12 octobre, B. pleure-t-elle. Elle ne cessera pas le combat. Une mère sait qu'elle bataille pour plus grand qu'elle. Et c'est pour cela, comme cela, qu'elle tient.

Syrie : Vladimir Poutine se porte garant du retrait des forces kurdes à la frontière turque

Après plus de six heures de discussions en tête à tête à Sotchi, la ville balnéaire russe du littoral de la mer Noire, les présidents russe, Vladimir Poutine, et turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, sont parvenus à un accord en dix points visant à sécuriser les territoires situés au nord-est de la Syrie. Des « décisions cruciales » ont été prises afin d'aider à « résoudre la situation plutôt critique qui s'est développée à la frontière syro-turque », a déclaré Vladimir Poutine, à l'issue de la rencontre.

C'est là que l'armée turque et ses supplétifs syriens ont lancé, le 9 octobre, une offensive contre les combattants kurdes considérés comme « terroristes » par Ankara qui craint, à terme, la formation d'un Kurdistan sur ses marches sud, susceptible de donner des idées aux 15 millions de Kurdes de Turquie.

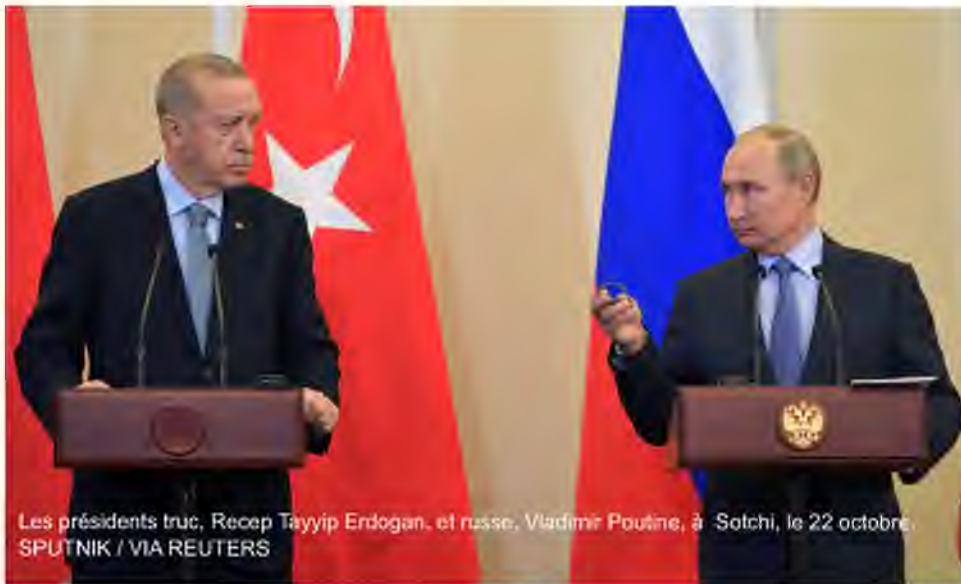
Lâchées par les Etats-Unis, leur principal partenaire dans la lutte contre l'organisation Etat islamique (EI), les forces kurdes syriennes se sont entendues avec Moscou et Damas pour éviter d'être massacrées par les Turcs et leurs affidés syriens connus pour leurs exactions, pillages, exécutions sommaires, enlèvements contre rançon.

Pour contrer l'avancée turque, l'armée de Bachar Al-Assad et la police militaire russe ont occupé les territoires tout juste évacués par les forces américaines. L'accord de Sotchi vient renforcer cet attelage.

Mercredi 23 octobre à midi, la police militaire russe et les gardes-frontières syriens commenceront à patrouiller la zone ensemble sur une profondeur de trente kilomètres. Il s'agit de « faciliter le retrait » des combattants kurdes YPG et de leurs armes, conformément aux exigences de la partie turque. Le retrait doit être achevé dans un délai de cent cinquante heures, soit d'ici à mardi 29 octobre.

Avant tout, l'accord marque la fin de l'offensive turque contre les Kurdes, baptisée « Source de paix » par Ankara. « A ce stade, il n'existe pas de besoin de mener une nouvelle opération », a fait savoir le ministère turc de la défense dans un communiqué publié mardi soir.

« S'il est suivi, l'accord peut être une solution de long terme pour clore cette crise. Il y a quand même une sérieuse incertitude sur les développements à venir dans les prochaines heures et sur le retrait des forces kurdes. Si ce retrait a été négocié en amont entre Damas et les représentants kurdes, c'est un gros coup de la part de Moscou. S'il n'a pas été encore négocié, ce sera plus délicat », estime Maxime Soutchkov, expert



pour le Moyen-Orient au Conseil russe pour les affaires internationales.

Patrouilles conjointes

M. Poutine s'est montré soucieux de ménager les intérêts turcs, sécuritaires avec l'assurance du retrait kurde, et territoriaux avec la reconnaissance écrite de la zone récemment conquise par Ankara. « Le statu quo établi par l'opération "Source de paix" entre Tall Abyad et Ras Al-Aïn sur une profondeur de 32 kilomètres sera préservé », stipule le troisième point de l'accord.

A partir du 29 octobre, les forces turques et russes mèneront des patrouilles conjointes à l'ouest et à l'est de cette zone, sur une profondeur de 10 kilomètres pour s'assurer que les combattants kurdes n'y sont plus. Ces derniers devront également quitter les villes frontalières syriennes de Manbij, reprise par l'armée de Bachar Al-Assad à la faveur du retrait américain, et de Tal Rifaat, située au nord-ouest de la Syrie, à 40 kilomètres au nord d'Alep.

« Erdogan a obtenu ce qu'il voulait, le retrait des forces kurdes. Il l'a obtenu d'abord des Américains puis des Russes. Les grands perdants, ce sont les Kurdes. Ils vont devoir se plier à l'accord, ils n'ont pas vraiment le choix », explique Alexandre Choumiline, directeur du Centre d'études sur le Moyen-Orient de l'Académie des sciences de Russie.

« Nous avons signé un accord historique avec Poutine sur l'intégrité territoriale et politique de la Syrie et le retour des réfugiés »

Le président turc, qui menaçait avant la rencontre de reprendre l'offensive, s'est radouci au

contact du maître du Kremlin. A Sotchi, il s'est montré conciliant, parlant de « paix », de « stabilité » et de « respect de l'intégrité territoriale de la Syrie ». « Nous avons signé un accord historique avec Poutine sur l'intégrité territoriale et politique de la Syrie et le retour des réfugiés », s'est-il félicité.

Le retour des réfugiés syriens, sa nouvelle marotte, est pourtant évoqué en termes très vagues par l'accord. « Des efforts conjoints seront entrepris pour faciliter le retour des réfugiés sur la base du volontariat », dit le point 8. Le numéro un turc compte toujours installer, dans une zone non précisée, « un million de réfugiés dans un premier temps » et « un autre million » un peu plus tard, comptant sur la « communauté internationale » pour assurer le financement des infrastructures.

M. Poutine, qui sait ménager son « ami » Erdogan, est parvenu à ses fins. Il l'a convaincu de se rapprocher de Bachar Al-Assad, le président syrien honni, avec lequel le numéro un turc est au plus mal. Pour y parvenir, le Kremlin s'appuie sur un ancien accord sécuritaire signé entre Ankara et Damas à Adana (sud de la Turquie) en 1998 et dont la validité est rappelée au point 4 de l'accord.

A plusieurs reprises ces dernières semaines, le président Erdogan, principal protecteur de la rébellion syrienne anti-Bachar Al-Assad, n'a pas exclu la possibilité de discussions directes avec Damas. La réconciliation s'annonce toutefois difficile. Mardi, le président syrien, qui rendait visite à ses soldats sur le front d'Idlib, le dernier fief de la rébellion, a qualifié M. Erdogan de « voleur de territoires », en référence à l'invasion turque au nord-est de la Syrie.

LE FIGARO

23/10/2019
avec Reuters

Syrie: les Turcs écraseront les Kurdes s'ils refusent de se retirer, avertit Moscou

Les Kurdes syriens des Unités de protection du peuple (YPG) seront taillés en pièce s'ils ne quittent pas la zone frontalière de la Turquie, a averti

mercredi 23 octobre le porte-parole du Kremlin, jugeant que les États-Unis les avaient trahis.

Washington semble les encourager à rester dans ce secteur et à combat-

tre les forces turques, a ajouté Dmitri Peskov, qui est cité par les agences de presse russes. Ankara et Moscou se sont entendus mardi pour exiger le retrait des YPG d'une

zone de 30 km de profondeur le long la frontière entre la Turquie et la Syrie, ce qui devrait permettre d'éviter une reprise de l'offensive des forces turques.

LE FIGARO

23/10/2019
avec AFP

Syrie: l'Allemagne critique vis à vis de l'accord russo-turc

Le gouvernement allemand a critiqué mercredi l'accord russo-turc destiné à faire partir les combattants kurdes du Nord de la Syrie, prônant une solution internationale impliquant aussi l'Europe pour régler le conflit.

«Il est important que l'action internationale pour régler cette crise ne se limite pas à la Turquie et la Russie», a déclaré Steffen Seibert, porte-parole d'Angela Merkel lors d'une conférence régulière à Berlin. «L'Europe doit s'occuper des événements actuels qui se déroulent à la frontière de notre continent, car ce sont des questions qui affectent directement de nombreux États de l'UE», a-t-il insisté.

La ministre de la Défense Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer a elle salué le maintien du cessez-le-feu prévu dans l'accord, tout en le jugeant globalement hautement insuffisant. «Nous sommes toujours confrontés au fait qu'un pays, la Turquie,

notre partenaire de l'OTAN, (...) a annexé un territoire en violation du droit international, que des populations sont expulsées, et nous ne pouvons pas laisser les choses en état», a-t-elle martelé avant son départ pour Bruxelles à la réunion des ministres de la Défense de l'OTAN qui a lieu jeudi.

La ministre conservatrice a réitéré sa récente proposition de créer, sous l'égide de l'ONU, une zone de protection internationale dans le nord de la Syrie. «Je vais profiter demain de l'occasion (de la réunion) pour mener des discussions à ce sujet avec mes collègues des ministères de la défense européens et d'autres pays de l'OTAN et voir si cet objectif est réalisable», a-t-elle ajouté.

Réserves

Ce projet, dévoilé lundi par la ministre et soutenu par Angela Merkel, suscite toutefois des réserves

parmi les partenaires de l'Allemagne et au sein même du gouvernement fédéral. L'initiative allemande n'a pas été prise en compte mardi soir par les présidents russe Vladimir Poutine et turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Les deux dirigeants ont convenu d'un retrait des forces kurdes du nord-est de la Syrie, avec prise de contrôle en commun de la majeure partie de cette zone où Ankara et combattants kurdes s'affrontent. Aucune implication internationale, au-delà de la Russie, de la Turquie et de la Syrie, n'est à ce stade envisagée.

L'offensive turque avait commencé à la suite de l'annonce du retrait militaire des États-Unis du Nord-Est syrien, dénoncé par de nombreux élus démocrates comme républicains comme un abandon des Kurdes, alliés de Washington dans la lutte contre l'EI.

Ahval

Oct 25 2019

Trump may recognise independent Kurdish state - analyst

U.S. President Donald Trump has a plan to recognise a sovereign Kurdish state in Iraq to counter Iran in the region, Middle East analyst and founding member of the Trump Evangelical Faith Initiative Mike Evans said on Friday.

The Kurdistan Region Government (KRG) had an independence refer-

endum in 2017, with 92.7 percent of the 3.3 million votes cast in favour of secession. However, Iraqi government responded severely, including a military campaign to retake much of the disputed areas, including the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, that had been under Kurdish control since the emergence of ISIS in 2014, as well as shutting down the two in-

ternational airports in Erbil and Sulaimani.

"President Trump loves to say 'Merry Christmas,' so don't be surprised if he announces a Christmas gift for the Kurds. A sovereign Kurdish state on Iran's border, coupled with US military might, would be checkmate – not only to Iran but also to the Iraqi government, which

has treated America with such disdain," Evans said in an article for Jerusalem Post.

With the decision to withdraw U.S. troops from northeast Syria which paved the way for a Turkish offensive in the region, Trump "has given Turkey what they wanted before he recognizes a sovereign Kurdish state," the analyst said.

La Russie met en garde les YPG kurdes syriens contre l'armée turque

MOSCOU (Reuters) – La Russie a averti mercredi les forces YPG kurdes syriennes de faire face à un nouveau conflit armé avec la Turquie si elles ne respectaient pas un accord russo-turc appelant à leur retrait de toute la frontière nord-est de la Syrie.

L'avertissement de Moscou intervient peu de temps avant que les forces de sécurité russes et syriennes commencent à superviser le retrait des combattants et des armes des YPG à au moins 30 km de la Syrie, dans le cadre de l'accord conclu entre les présidents Vladimir Poutine et Tayyip Erdogan.

Un retrait total des YPG marquerait une victoire pour Erdogan, qui a lancé le 9 octobre une offensive transfrontalière pour chasser les milices kurdes de la frontière et créer une "zone de sécurité" pour le retour des réfugiés syriens.

L'accord, qui s'étend sur un accord négocié par les États-Unis la semaine dernière, souligne également l'influence dominante de Poutine en Syrie et scelle le retour des forces de son allié, le président Bachar al-Assad, dans le nord-est de la Syrie pour la première fois depuis des années, en approuvant le déploiement de l'armée syrienne. Les gardes-frontières à partir de midi (09h00 GMT) mercredi.

Six jours plus tard, les forces russes et turques commenceront à patrouiller conjointement une bande de terre de 10 km dans le nord-est de la Syrie, où des troupes américaines ont été déployées pendant des années avec leurs anciens alliés kurdes.

Ces changements reflètent le rythme vertigineux des changements en Syrie depuis que le président Donald Trump a annoncé le retrait des forces américaines du nord de la Syrie plus tôt ce mois-ci, bouleversant l'équilibre militaire dans un quart du pays après huit années de conflit et un gel prolongé des lignes de front.

Les commandants de la milice kurde n'ont pas encore réagi à l'accord conclu dans la ville russe de Sochi, une station balnéaire de la mer Noire, et on ne savait pas tout de suite comment leur retrait pourrait être appliqué.

AVERTISSEMENT RUSSE

Une déclaration conjointe turco-russe publiée après six heures de pourparlers entre Poutine et Erdogan a annoncé qu'ils créeraient un "mécanisme conjoint de suivi et de vérification" pour superviser la mise en œuvre de l'accord.



Le président russe Vladimir Poutine et le président turc Tayyip Erdogan assistent à une conférence de presse après leur entretien à Sochi en Russie le 22 octobre 2019. Sputnik / Alexei Druzhinin / Kremlin via REUTERS

Le porte-parole du Kremlin, Dmitry Peskov, a été plus direct. Si les forces kurdes ne se retirent pas, les gardes-frontières syriens et la police militaire russe devront se replier. "Et les formations kurdes restantes tomberaient alors sous le poids de l'armée turque", a-t-il déclaré.

Peskov a déclaré que les États-Unis avaient été le plus proche allié des combattants kurdes, mais qu'ils les ont maintenant trahis.

"Maintenant (les Américains) préfèrent laisser les Kurdes à la frontière et les obliger presque à se battre contre les Turcs", a-t-il déclaré à des agences de presse russes.

Les SDF dirigés par les Kurdes étaient les principaux alliés de Washington dans la lutte pour le démantèlement du califat autoproclamé de l'État islamique en Syrie. La décision de Trump de retirer ses troupes a été critiquée par des législateurs américains, y compris des compatriotes républicains, comme une trahison.

Les relations entre Ankara et Moscou, qui ont alarmé l'administration américaine, ont été citées mercredi par l'agence de presse Interfax, qui a déclaré mercredi à Moscou que Moscou pourrait fournir davantage de systèmes de défense anti-missile S-400 à la Turquie.

Des soldats turcs à bord d'un véhicule de combat d'infanterie (VFI) conduisent près de la frontière turco-syrienne à Ceylanpinar, en Turquie, le 22 octobre 2019. REUTERS / Huseyin Aldemir

La Turquie, membre de l'OTAN, a déjà été bloquée dans un programme d'achat et d'aide à la production d'avions à réaction F-35 et est sous le coup d'une éventuelle sanction américaine pour l'achat des systèmes S-400, ce qui, selon Washington, est incompatible avec les défenses de l'OTAN et menace le F-35. si utilisé près du chasseur furtif.

Dans la nuit, le ministère turc de la Défense a déclaré que les États-Unis avaient annoncé à Ankara que les YPG avaient achevé leur retrait de la zone d'offensive militaire turque.

Il n'est pas nécessaire de lancer une autre opération en dehors de la zone d'opération actuelle à ce stade, a déclaré le ministère, mettant ainsi fin à son offensive militaire commencée il y a deux semaines, suscitant de nombreuses critiques.

Édité par Gareth Jones

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By Ulf Laessing,
October 23, 2019

As Syria's war mutates, Kurds worry that Damascus will return

QAMISHLI, Syria (Reuters) - An uneasy, defiant mood hangs over this Kurdish-controlled city, as rapid shifts in Syria's war place a question mark over the future of Kurdish self-rule in the country's northeast.

Pharmacist Ali Walid breathed a deep sigh of relief this week when Turkey agreed to halt a military thrust into northeastern Syria aimed at pushing back Kurdish fighters.

But like many other Syrian Kurds in Qamishli, Walid worries that Damascus will try to reimpose control over the areas where Syrian Kurds have carved out self-rule.

"Today, things look more stable than yesterday, but you don't know what the future will bring. God willing things will be better," said the 40-year-old.

"We've had self-rule, but we fear we will lose this if the (Syrian) regime comes back," said Walid, standing in front of his small pharmacy. "They never recognized our rule."

Turkey launched its offensive this month after President Donald Trump pulled U.S. forces out of northeastern Syria. Ankara's aim was to rout the Kurdish YPG militia, which Turkey considers terrorists for its ties to insurgents at home.

Syrian Kurds see the offensive as a threat to the self rule they developed in the largely Kurdish northeast during Syria's eight years of civil war.

Scrambling for protection, the Kurds invited the Syrian army and its ally Russia to help in their defense against Turkey.

Turkey then agreed on Oct. 17 to pause its offensive for five days to let Kurdish forces withdraw from a "safe zone" Ankara had sought to capture.

In a further shift, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday agreed that their forces would start overseeing the removal of YPG

fighters and weapons at least 30 km (19 miles) into Syria.

UNEASY RELATIONSHIP

That accord also seals the return of President Bashar al-Assad's forces along the northeastern border for the first time in years, by endorsing the deployment of Syrian border guards from Wednesday.

On the minds of many were worries that Syrian forces will come further into Kurdish-controlled areas.

"Why do they want to come in and instill the pre-revolution system, which was all about oppression and the annihilation of an entire people," said Nora Hassan.

"For us, for the Kurdish people, it was annihilation."

When a plane was heard overhead, many glanced anxiously to the sky.

"I don't know," said a 56-year old man who gave his name only as Hassan, when asked what will happen.

In six days time, Russian and Turkish forces will jointly start to patrol a 10 km strip of land in northeast Syria where U.S. troops for years deployed with their former Kurdish allies.

Qamishli is outside of the Syria-Russia patrol area, but on Tuesday rumors engulfed the town that government forces might expand their grip or take over the roads to neighboring Iraq.

So far, life remains normal.

More than 1,000 Kurds marched through the city to a U.N. base to denounce Erdogan and demand international protection in a demonstration called by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), to which the YPG belongs.

The region has enjoyed relative stability

since the U.S.-backed SDF defeated Islamic State militants, which had controlled several towns in northeast Syria.

MILITARY BALANCE

But this month's rapid changes have shaken up the military balance across a quarter of the country, renewing fears of a possible resurgence of the militant Islamist group.

Shortly after the protest, a car bomb went off in central Qamishli on Wednesday, wounding one civilian, witnesses said. Syrian soldiers and Kurdish fighters rushed to the scene but hardly talked to each other, witnesses said.

On Wednesday, Trump said he had been told by Ankara that a ceasefire in northern Syria is now permanent. And SDF commander Mazloum Kobani said Trump had promised to maintain long-term support for Kurdish-led forces in the northeast.

Despite their enmity, Kurdish and Syrian government forces rarely fought each other in the war. While Damascus has pledged to reclaim YPG territory, the two have kept channels open.

The Syrian government has largely left the northeast to self-rule but kept paying public salaries and maintained a presence in Qamishli, controlling part of the city center.

Kurds who skipped Syrian army service or opposed Assad fear persecution should their areas come back under government control. But many still prefer Damascus over Ankara.

"What concerns us currently is that the Turkish invasion stops," said Talaat Younes, a SDF official. "The (our) self-rule administration is ready for dialogue with the Syrian regime."

Editing by William Maclean REUTERS.

Ce que contient l'accord entre la Turquie et la Russie sur la Syrie

Les présidents russe et turc se sont accordés sur une prise de contrôle en commun de la majeure partie du nord-est de la Syrie en proie à un conflit entre Ankara et les combattants kurdes.

Pour éviter un conflit turco-kurde exacerbé, Vladimir Poutine et Recep Tayyip Erdogan **se sont accordés** sur un retrait des forces kurdes du nord-est de la Syrie et le contrôle en commun d'une large partie de la frontière turco-syrienne.

Voici les principaux points de ce « mémorandum » qui vise à mettre fin à l'offensive turque contre les forces kurdes des YPG, considérées comme des « terroristes » par Ankara.

Différentes zones

Ankara garde la haute main dans une zone de 120 kilomètres le long de la frontière syro-turque et de 32 kilomètres de profondeur, entre la ville de Tal Abyad, que la Turquie a prise au début de l'offensive, et **celle de Ras al-Ain**, dont les derniers combattants kurdes se sont retirés dimanche 20 octobre.

L'accord parle d'un maintien du « *statu quo* » dans cette région, et n'évoque aucune date de retrait pour les Turcs.

Pour les secteurs frontaliers bordant cette zone où l'armée turque est présente, un autre régime a été décidé. Ici, les forces des YPG doivent se retirer avec leurs armes dans un délai de « *150 heures à partir de 12 heures (11 heures en France) le 23 octobre* », au-delà de 30 kilomètres de la frontière turco-syrienne. La police militaire russe et les gardes-frontières devront « *faciliter* » ce retrait, y compris de Manbij où les Russes et les Syriens sont déjà présents.

A l'issue de ce délai, des patrouilles communes turques et russes vont circuler dans une zone « *de 10 kilomètres de profondeur* » depuis la frontière, à l'ouest et à l'est du secteur pris par la Turquie lors de son offensive baptisée « Source de Paix ».



Des soldats syriens pro-Erdogan, le 22 octobre 2019. (BAKR ALKASEM / AFP)

Dans le cadre de cet accord, des forces russes ont franchi ce mercredi l'Euphrate, en Syrie, en direction de la frontière avec la Turquie. La police militaire russe a franchi cette rivière à midi (11 heures en France) et « *avance vers la frontière syro-turque* », ont indiqué l'agence Tass et la chaîne Rossia 24, citant un message du ministère de la Défense.

Terrorisme et réfugiés

Dans l'accord, la Russie et la Turquie réitérent leur volonté de « *lutter contre le terrorisme dans toutes ses formes* », de « *résister aux aspirations séparatistes sur le territoire syrien* », et s'engagent à prendre des « *mesures nécessaires pour empêcher une infiltration des éléments terroristes* ».

Vladimir Poutine a explicitement fait référence au risque de résurgence de l'organisation Etat islamique (EI), dont des milliers de vétérans sont détenus par les Kurdes. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui a salué un accord « *historique* », avait en tête la menace que représente, selon lui, pour son pays le séparatisme kurde.

L'accord prévoit par ailleurs des efforts russo-turcs « *pour faciliter le retour volontaire et sécurisé de réfugiés* ». Sans plus de précisions.

La Turquie, qui accueille sur son territoire 3,6 millions de réfugiés, a demandé que 2 millions d'entre eux retournent en Syrie dans la zone de sécurité qu'elle est en passe de mettre en place.

Règlement politique

La Russie et la Turquie, bien que soutenant différents camps de la guerre civile, ont insisté sur la préservation de l'intégrité territoriale de la Syrie.

Moscou et Ankara assurent poursuivre leurs efforts visant à trouver une « *solution politique durable* » au conflit syrien dans le cadre du processus de paix d'Astana, l'ancien nom de Nur-Sultan, la capitale du Kazakhstan, où les négociations se tiennent depuis 2017.



REUTERS 23-10-2019
By Daren Butler

Syria offensive feeds disenchantment among Turkey's Kurds

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (Reuters) - Kurdish lawmaker Musa Farisogullari says he has been targeted by water cannon, tear gas and blows from riot shields while trying to protest this month against Turkey's military offensive in northeast Syria.

Mothers hold pictures of their children who joined the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militant group, during a sit-in protest outside the local headquarters of Pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in Diyarbakir, Turkey, October 17, 2019. REUTERS/Sertac Kayar

The incursion, targeting the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia, has deepened a sense of alienation among people in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast, which is being further fueled by a crackdown on the country's main pro-Kurdish party.

Dozens of people have been arrested and mayors ousted in anti-terrorism investigations since the operation began on Oct. 9, while police have prevented public statements by officials of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), including Farisogullari.

"Oppression of our people has reached the point where even stepping outside to make the most democratic reaction faces a very harsh response," he said in the HDP building in the largest southeastern city Diyarbakir, as dozens of police stood outside.

The HDP is the only party in Turkey's parliament to oppose the offensive, and Farisogullari said locals he spoke to had expressed solidarity with Syria's Kurds.

"They are our brothers. Kurds are suffering in this," said Mehmet Kesim, an unemployed man sitting in a tea house in Diyarbakir, 100 km (62 miles) north of the Syrian border.

Turkey agreed under a deal clinched with Russia on Tuesday to halt its offensive [here](#) Russian military police and Syrian border guards will start removing the YPG 30 km (19 miles) from the Turkish border on Wednesday and next week Russian and Turkish forces will launch joint patrols in a narrower, 10 km "safe zone" Ankara has long sought in northeast Syria.

Ankara views the YPG as terrorists because of their links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has waged a 35-year insurgency in southeast Turkey, in which more than 40,000 people have died. Turkey also accuses the HDP of close links to the PKK. The HDP, the second biggest opposition party in parliament, denies ties to the PKK but does not view it as a terrorist group.

"EMOTIONAL FRACTURE"

Vahap Coskun, a law academic at Diyarbakir's Dicle University, said most Turkish Kurds opposed Ankara's strategy in Syria, seeing it as part of a broader anti-Kurdish policy.

"These policies which the state is implementing are

seriously wearing away at people's sense of belonging, their feelings are hurt, there is an emotional fracture," he said.

President Tayyip Erdogan has dismissed suggestions that his ruling AK Party is out of touch with Turkey's Kurds, who make up 18% of the country's 82 million people.

"Of our 291 (AKP) members of parliament, 50 are of Kurdish origin," he said soon after the operation began.

But the AKP lags behind the HDP in much of southeast Turkey, winning 31% in the city of Diyarbakir in March municipal elections, about half of what its rival got.

The top AKP official in Diyarbakir, Serdar Budak, insisted that Turkish Kurds support the government's efforts to combat terrorism at home and across the border in Syria.

"For three years there has been an atmosphere of peace in Diyarbakir. It is the same in the countryside. The fight against terrorism has created this atmosphere of peace," he said, sitting beneath a large photograph of Erdogan.

Dicle University's Coskun said the clampdown on HDP officials was exacerbating Kurds' disenchantment.

"An atmosphere is being created which restricts freedoms. This atmosphere does not benefit Turkey," he said.

On Tuesday Ankara replaced four elected HDP mayors with state officials, bringing to 12 the number of mayors it has unseated over alleged links to terrorism since the March elections.

The HDP links that clampdown to the Syria operation, saying its offices across the southeast are subject to a blockade and that the right to freedom of expression and assembly has been suspended.

Hundreds of people have also been detained due to social media posts critical of the military offensive.

"If Turkey was really thinking about peace, it would first solve the problems at home," said a young teacher in a Diyarbakir tea house, declining to give his name



Mothers hold pictures of their children who joined the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militant group, during a sit-in protest outside the local headquarters of Pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in Diyarbakir, Turkey, October 17, 2019. REUTERS/Sertac Kayar

for fear of losing his job. "The operation is aimed at intimidating Kurds in Turkey, to punish the Kurds here."

PROTEST AGAINST HDP

While the HDP has been unable to demonstrate against the offensive and crackdown on the party, a sit-in protest against the HDP has been continuing on the doorstep of its Diyarbakir headquarters since early September.

Some 20 mothers and fathers gathered there accuse the HDP of having sent their children to join PKK fighters.

"We don't know if he is alive or dead," said Suleyman Aydin, 39, clutching a photo of his son Ozkan adorned with a Turkish flag.

Ozkan was 15 when he left home to join the PKK at the time of a peace process between Ankara and the militants in 2015 - the same year a ceasefire collapsed, unleashing some of the worst fighting since the insurgency began.

More than 4,600 people have been killed in Turkey and northern Iraq since the conflict resumed, according to the latest International Crisis Group tally.

Aydin, himself Kurdish, said his house in the Diyarbakir district of Sur was destroyed in that fighting and blamed the HDP for his plight: "We gave them a chance by voting for them, but they made use of that chance to take our children away."

The HDP denies the allegations and says the protests are orchestrated by the state to demonize the party.

Reporting by Daren Butler; Editing by Gareth Jones

La société civile turque priée de se taire pendant l'intervention militaire en Syrie

Des élus pro-Kurdes démis de leur mandat, des intellectuels sous le coup d'enquêtes judiciaires : le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan ne laisse aucune place à la critique.

LETTRE D'ISTANBUL

L'écrivaine turque d'origine kurde Nurcan Baysal était en voyage à Londres lorsqu'une escouade de policiers a investi son domicile à Diyarbakir, la grande ville kurde du sud-est de la Turquie, samedi 19 octobre à 5 heures du matin, semant l'effroi parmi les membres de sa famille.

« Je suis actuellement à l'étranger, donc pas détenue, mais mes deux enfants sont terrifiés. Il n'y a plus de droits de l'homme en Turquie. Quel qu'en soit le prix, je vais poursuivre ma lutte en faveur des droits humains et de la paix », a réagi la jeune femme depuis la capitale britannique sur son compte Twitter.

Militante des droits de l'homme, journaliste, auteure, Nurcan Baysal a vu son domicile perquisitionné à trois reprises en dix-huit mois. En cause, ses appels à la paix sur les réseaux sociaux, assimilés à un crime.

Au moment où l'armée d'Ankara est en pleine offensive au nord-est de la Syrie, la société civile turque est plus que jamais sommée de se taire. L'intervention, lancée le 9 octobre, vise les combattants kurdes syriens. Après avoir été les fers de lance de la coalition occidentale contre l'organisation Etat islamique (EI), ils sont devenus, depuis le retrait des forces américaines de la région, des « terroristes » auxquels le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan promet d'« écraser la tête ».

La purge continue

A son retour à Diyarbakir, la jeune mère de famille encourt une mise en examen pour « propagande terroriste » ou « incitation à la haine ». Et peut-être aussi la garde à vue ; 121 personnes qui s'étaient enhardies à émettre des doutes ou, pire, à critiquer l'intervention militaire sur leurs comptes Twitter, Facebook, leurs blogs ou dans leurs articles ont ainsi passé quelques nuits

au commissariat. C'est le cas du journaliste Hakan Demir, rédacteur en chef du quotidien d'opposition *Birgun*. Actuellement, plus de 500 personnes sont sous le coup d'enquêtes judiciaires, où critique rime avec terrorisme.

Mais les tourments des internautes, des journalistes, des écrivains ne vont peut-être pas durer éternellement. Le pouvoir islamo-conservateur songe à s'amender. Selon un projet de réforme judiciaire voulu par le président Erdogan, l'expression d'une opinion ne sera bientôt plus un crime. C'est ce que dit l'article 7 de la première mouture de la loi présentée aux députés le 1^{er} octobre. Un toilettage pris au sérieux par Ankara, soucieux de rapprocher le pays des critères européens, afin d'obtenir la libéralisation du régime des visas promise dans le cadre de l'accord signé en mars 2016 avec l'Union européenne (UE) pour bloquer les migrations vers l'Europe.

En attendant, la purge continue. Sezgin Tanrikulu, député du Parti républicain du peuple (CHP, opposition kémaliste) pour la ville d'Istanbul, l'a découvert à ses dépens. Le parquet a ouvert une enquête contre lui le 14 octobre à cause d'un tweet évoquant « la guerre injuste faite aux Kurdes ».

« Pourquoi ceux qui posent des questions sur la guerre et défendent la paix sont-ils réduits au silence ? », a interrogé récemment Canan Kaftancıoğlu, la dirigeante du CHP pour la province d'Istanbul. Un questionnement audacieux quand on sait que la jeune politicienne a été condamnée le 9 septembre à dix années de réclusion pour des propos tenus sur son compte Twitter en... 2013. Lâchée en liberté jusqu'à son procès en appel, cette médecin légiste de formation est une des rares responsables de son parti à ne pas mâcher ses mots. Sa parole est bien plus libre que celle de la plupart des députés du CHP qui, patriotisme oblige, ont largement voté en faveur de l'intervention en Syrie.



Sur la terrasse d'un café d'Istanbul, le 10 septembre. OZAN KOSE / AFP

Maires révoqués

Le Parti de la démocratie des peuples (HDP, pro-kurde), troisième formation au Parlement, a voté contre, ce qui lui vaut de se retrouver une fois de plus dans le viseur des autorités. M. Erdogan répète à l'envi que cette formation est la vitrine du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), la bête noire d'Ankara depuis plus de trente ans. L'argument sert d'habillage à la purge politique en cours au sud-est du pays. L'étau se resserre chaque jour davantage sur les maires HDP, démis de leurs mandats, arrêtés, inculpés pour « propagande terroriste », « collusion avec une organisation terroriste » ou « incitation à la haine ».

Elus démocratiquement au printemps, les maires (HDP) de Diyarbakir, Mardin, Van, Hakkâri, Yüksekova, Nusaybin ont récemment été révoqués et remplacés par des administrateurs nommés par le gouvernement. A chaque fois, l'arrivée de ces administrateurs s'accompagne d'une reprise en main du mobilier urbain. Bardés de grilles, gardés par des policiers en armes, entourés par des camions à eaux et des véhicules antiémeutes, les locaux des municipalités ont désormais l'allure de camps retranchés.

Lundi 21 octobre, les maires (HDP) de trois localités du Sud-Est, Kezban Yilmaz à Kayapınar, Orhan Ayaz à Bismil, et Rojda Nazlier à Kocaköy ont été placés en garde à vue dans le cadre d'une enquête liée au « terrorisme ». Ce même jour, le maire (HDP) déchu de Diyarbakir, Selçuk Mizrakli, a été interpellé sous le même chef d'accusation. Celui de Mardin, Ahmet Türk, est en liberté mais son passeport lui a été confisqué. Il ne peut plus voyager à cause des enquêtes judiciaires ouvertes contre lui. L'intervention en Syrie l'inquiète, il l'a fait savoir. Sa plus grande crainte est de voir « la Turquie entraînée dans le borborygme moyen-oriental ».

A 77 ans, ce chef de clan, vétéran du mouvement politique kurde, a effectué plusieurs séjours en prison, dont un tout récemment. Elu maire de Mardin en 2014, il a été arrêté pour « soutien au terrorisme » en janvier 2016, libéré un an et un mois plus tard pour raisons de santé. Elu une nouvelle fois maire de Mardin lors des municipales de mars 2019, il a été révoqué le 19 août. Il serait souhaitable qu'il parvienne, cette fois-ci, à éviter l'incarcération.

Kurdish female fighters are once again pawns in a bigger political game

In August 2014 Marie Claire published an [unusual photo shoot](#). The women in the stylised images were not in fancy haute couture, but instead wore khaki jumpsuits and held machine guns. These were the female fighters of the YPG – the main Kurdish group of the Syrian Democratic Forces – in Rojava, a de facto autonomous region in northern Syria.

These women were praised for their bravery in fighting against the most unfathomable evil of our times, Isis. The world championed them as an antidote to the death cult originating from the Middle East, which spread its ideas to Europe and the US. At the same time, the women remained quite invisible to Turkish audiences, because of their connection to the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' party) which has been designated a terrorist group by [Turkey](#), the US and the EU.

Last week when the US president decided to [tacitly back](#) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Turkish president, in his military operation in northern Syria, there was much talk of the plight of the Kurds – the word “betrayal” circulated in the higher echelons of Washington political circles, mostly as a domestic political tool against the president. But many around the world genuinely felt the burden of what had happened. This time the death toll from the ongoing war somewhere in the Middle Eastern dust with ever changing names and extremely complex details had come with recognisable female faces – those of the beautiful, young YPG fighters.

The international reaction against the Turkish incursion into Syria was a rare instance of unhesitant moral outcry since the outbreak of war in 2011. It wasn't just because of the Kurdish fighters, but also because the western countries embroiled in the conflict were aware of their own moral responsibility for having opened up a Syrian Pandora's box to Donald Trump's mesmerising vulgarity and Erdoğan's madman politics.

Every actor in the conflict may have had their own expectations for an exit strategy from this mess, but the general idea seemed to be to make it up as you go along – or, to put it in a more Middle Eastern fashion: “The caravan gets in line once it hits the road.” The betrayal of the [Kurds](#) didn't simply come from Trump's impulsive actions, leaving a US ally alone in the region, but rather because there was an international consensus of disregard.

As footage of military action in northern Syria began appearing last week, pro-Kurdish politicians in Turkey were first to respond. Since the beginning of war several years ago, this group have been split between responding to Erdoğan's massive [oppression of dissent](#) in national politics, and the developments beyond their borders. But Turkey's nationalist war-on-terror narrative has invaded the media, and as it became clear that these are extremely dangerous times in Turkey, even the strongest opposition voices were scared into silence, out of fear of finding themselves in prison for a tweet. Yet whether fear is the only reason for this silence is another matter.

For many years, there has been a cold war between Kurdish political activists and the Turkish left – despite being natural allies in the fight against human rights violations and towards democratisation. This conflict crystallised in 2003, just before the Iraq war. While the Turkish left was organising anti-war demonstrations, Kurdish politicians seemed reticent: some of them were beguiled by the potential for a Kurdish state in Northern Iraq once the US invasion began – a long-term aspiration for some Kurds.

The complicated battle flared up again in 2013 when the Turkish government began peace talks with the Kurds and Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the PKK. The conventional left criticised Kurdish politicians for falling for Erdoğan's false promises – but



Female Kurdish soldiers at a funeral, 13 October 2019. Photograph: Delil Souleiman/AFP via Getty Images

Kurds did not want to miss a historic chance for a peaceful settlement.

The irreparable damage on all sides came with the Syrian war. While the US-backed YPG, and Kurdish armed forces in general, earned international recognition for their brave fight against Isis, the broader Kurdish question appeared dramatically different to the Turkish one. Until then, it was a more narrow question of democratisation and human rights in Turkey – but with Syria it became a Middle Eastern conflict. Ordinary, progressive Turkish people were barely able to follow the storyline of complex international power struggles. The Kurds were now playing the big game with big players on the world stage, they thought, and the Turkish left's plate was full taking on Erdoğan's repressive regime anyway.

The left believed that the Kurds betrayed the democracy struggle in Turkey – while the Kurds believed that the left abandoned them in their battle for existence. Meanwhile, the only political figure who could have helped mend the broken ties between these sides, Selahattin Demirtaş, co-leader of the HDP – the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic party – [has been in prison since 2016](#).

This all goes to explain the silence in Turkey among the Kurds' natural allies and supporters.

The only character who seems to have a plan in this sorry story is Russian president Vladimir Putin, [who met with Erdoğan on Tuesday](#). In a new world where global decisions are made not by transparent democratic institutions but by a few men behind closed doors, they will decide the destiny of the Kurdish people.

I am stuck with the image of a Kurdish female fighter in Rojava today who is facing the disgusting banality of history being made in mafioso fashion. Some Americans will use her betrayal by Trump as a means to pursue their desire to topple the president. For Putin and Assad, she is a precious bargaining chip. Erdoğan has already used her as a tool for the most effective consolidation of power in domestic politics for a decade.

As the daughter of a people who for centuries have been swept back and forth through a viciously contested location, continually facing death in the hope of being recognised, this YPG fighter will wonder if her fight against Isis will really be remembered at all.

• Ece Temelkuran is a Turkish journalist and political commentator, and author of [How to Lose a Country: The 7 Steps from Democracy to Dictatorship](#)



By Daniel De Simone BBC News
24 October 2019

Aidan James: The British man who was put on trial after fighting IS

Aidan James, a British man who fought with a Kurdish militia against the Islamic State group, has been convicted of attending a place used for terrorist training following a retrial.

He was the first British anti-IS fighter to be convicted of such an offence.

But a number of people - including two fellow Britons who fought in Syria - have asked why James was charged at all, when the group for which he ultimately fought - the YPG - had been a central Western ally in the battle against IS.

This issue - and how his actions could be defined as terrorism - loomed large over the case.

In remarks ahead of the first trial, which can be reported for the first time, Mr Justice Edis - who presided over both trials - said he was "uneasy" about the prosecution.

He added that no one had explained why James was treated differently to other Britons who joined Kurdish militias.

Half-way through his first trial, James was cleared of the main terrorism offence - that he prepared for acts of terrorism by training in the UK, acquiring equipment, communicating with others and travelling to Iraq.

The judge said he had "no case to answer", leaving two charges relating to camps in Iraq and Syria.

James was charged in February last year after returning from the Middle East and has been remanded in custody ever since, spending time in a wing at the maximum security HMP Belmarsh housing IS supporters.

Before flying home, a police officer had told James that "nobody is going to accuse you of being a terrorist".

The officer had assured him: "There are loads of people like you



Image copyright CPS. Image caption. Aidan James posted this photo of himself in Iraq to Facebook in August 2017

who have come back from Syria and to the best of my knowledge none of them have been charged."

James, who has a history of mental illness, travelled to the region in August 2017 after deciding he wanted to combat the "evil" IS.

He first spent time at an Iraqi refugee camp, at which Kurdish militia the PKK was present, and later at a Syrian YPG training facility.

Unlike the YPG militia for which he ended up fighting, the PKK is classed as a terrorist organisation by the UK. Fellow NATO member Turkey regards both as terrorist groups.

The YPG is the principle component in the Syrian Democratic Forces, which received direct sup-



Image copyright CPS/PA Image caption James flew from Manchester airport to Iraq in August 2017

port from Western special forces and the RAF during the struggle against IS.

Earlier this year, the then-foreign secretary praised the "incredible courage" of its Kurdish fighters,



Image copyright Facebook Image caption James denies terrorism offences

saying that success would "not have been possible" without them.

Shortly before the retrial, which ended on Thursday, Donald Trump announced the US was pulling out of northern Syria and no longer supporting Kurdish forces, leading to an invasion by Turkey.

Why was he charged?

Permission to charge James came from the attorney general, as is re-

quired in cases of this kind.

In a pre-trial ruling, the judge alluded to the ultimately political nature of what is classed as terrorism.

Mr Justice Edis said selecting who in foreign conflicts should be charged often involves "political decisions" in that a choice can be made to prosecute opponents and not allies.

While allowing the case to proceed to trial, the judge said he was "uneasy about the prosecution of a man who is able to say that at least some of the acts of terrorism for which [he] was preparing or trained were carried out with the support of the RAF".

Half-way through the first trial, the judge directed that James should be

acquitted of the charge alleging he prepared for terrorism by taking the steps he did to travel to the region.

On that count, prosecutors were not seeking a conviction if he had been solely preparing to fight IS - since they did not regard that as terrorism - and the judge said there was "no evidence" of any other intention.

The prosecution case was that James had joined a wider struggle



Image copyright Facebook Image caption James spent time at a Syrian YPG training facility

than the battle against IS - namely advancing the "political and ideological cause" of the Kurdish people - which placed it within the legal definition of terrorism in UK law, as set out in the Terrorism Act 2000.

But there has been no explanation about why James was put on trial when other Britons who fought with Kurdish forces have not been.

A Whitehall source said fewer than 30 Britons joined Kurdish forces in the battle against IS, but two sources who spent time in the region put the number between 50 and 100. Eight were killed during the fighting.

It is understood that, of the more than 900 people from the UK who joined jihadist groups in Syria, around 450 have since returned, with around 40 being charged with criminal offences, although fewer than half with terrorism offences.

During preliminary hearings, the prosecution declined to say what set James apart from other YPG fighters.

This led the judge to say "no explanation for the apparent difference in the treatment of the defendant as against those other cases has been offered", adding: "I do not think that I have been assisted by the

Crown as much as I might have been."

A Briton who fought with the YPG and met James in Syria - known by the pseudonym Macer Gifford - is critical of the decision to prosecute when so many former IS recruits have not been charged.

He told the BBC: "There's a big difference between those who joined the YPG and those who joined the Islamic State," adding those who fought against IS were motivated by compassion for the Syrian people.

Last year, the Crown offered no evidence against the only man who had faced similar charges to James. Jim Matthews told the BBC there has still been no explanation about

why he was prosecuted or why the charges were then dropped.

The former soldier, who has written a book called *Fighting Monsters* about his time in Syria, said that "in the absence of an official explanation it's hard for theories not to abound" and that one theory is "that these charges are being brought as a kind of gesture of support for the Turkish state, with whom we do a lot of business".

He said Western countries "always had this juggling act of wanting to stay friends with Turkey" while combating IS alongside Kurdish forces, which Turkey regards as enemies.

"It's quite an absurd and dirty polit-



Image copyright PA Image caption Jim Matthews was accused of attending training camps runs by the YPG

ical dynamic, which - when that filters down to little minnows like me, who really aren't particularly significant or important at all - it produces odd results".

In response to questions from the BBC, a spokesman for the Attorney General's Office denied the prosecutions were politically motivated.

"The CPS is operationally independent and makes its decisions to prosecute independently of government," they said.

They added: "We do not comment on discussions between UK government and its international partners but can confirm that the attorney general has not discussed these cases with the Turkish government."

Jurors in James's first trial could not reach verdicts over the training camp charges.

The defendant was convicted by a second jury on Thursday of the PKK camp charge, but cleared of the charge relating to the YPG one.

The training camp charges faced by James - referred to by the defence as "technical" - did not need to show that James trained at either location, but rather that he was present as weapons training occurred while knowing there was a terrorist connection.

After thanking jurors, Mr Justice Edis said "I regard this as a highly unusual terrorist case" and that the verdicts showed the defendant's actions were "not intended to promote any acts of terrorism by him".

Before delivering their verdicts, jurors sent the judge a note - which was not read to the court - apparently expressing something about their thoughts on the case.

The judge told them: "From your note you have a certain degree of sympathy with Mr James's motives."

HUFFPOST 24/10/2019

Appel des parlementaires françaises en soutien aux femmes kurdes

Nous exigeons que la Turquie cesse immédiatement son attaque, que la France et l'Europe dénoncent son offensive favorable à Daech.

Nous, parlementaires françaises, souhaitons apporter notre soutien plein et entier aux femmes kurdes qui, au Rojava, se battent pour leur droit et une société égalitaire. Elles se sont battues pour les principes universels que nous défendons. Alors que l'armée turque attaque lâchement les populations du Rojava, encouragée par le désengagement américain, notre devoir est de les soutenir.

La lutte pour une société égalitaire n'est pas le seul combat que ces femmes ont mené courageusement. Nombre d'entre elles ont également pris les armes contre les forces militaires et idéologiques profondément obscurantistes de Daech. L'attaque turque prend aujourd'hui le risque de faire renaître ce monstre, en libérant des centaines de combattants de Daech.

Comme l'écrivent les femmes du Rojava: "Nous avons défendu la révolution des femmes avec nos sacrifices. Nous menons notre combat au nom des femmes du monde entier". Nous le savons et les en remercions. Nous adressons à toutes ces femmes un salut profond venu de la République française, dont la vocation égalitaire nous tient particulièrement à cœur.

Nous pensons également à ces milliers de femmes mises en esclavage, y compris sexuel par Daech, et libérées par les forces kurdes.

À l'heure du combat qui se livre à présent, nous exigeons que la Turquie cesse immédiatement son attaque, que la France et l'Europe dénoncent son offensive favorable à Daech. Nous nous battons inlassablement pour la liberté des femmes et la continuation de l'expérience féministe de transformation sociale et politique menée au Rojava.

Dans l'immédiat, nous demandons une zone d'exclusion aérienne et la mobilisation d'une force internationale, sous l'égide de l'ONU, pour protéger la frontière et le peuple kurde. Face à



Des combattantes kurdes de Syrie membres des Peshmergas et des YPG (unités de protection du Rojava) lors d'exercices militaires dans le nord de l'Irak à Dohuk, le 29 mars 2018.

COHEN Laurence, sénatrice CRCE

FAUCILLON Elsa, députée GDR

FIAT Caroline, députée LFI

FILLEUL Martine, sénatrice PS

GAILLOT Albane, députée apparentée LREM

GARRIAUD-MAYLAM Joëlle, sénatrice LR

JASMIN Victoire, sénatrice PS

KRIMI Sonia, députée LREM

l'entêtement irresponsable d'**Erdogan**, nous appelons la France et l'Europe à prendre des sanctions politiques et financières lourdes contre la Turquie.

Depuis la France, nous envoyons un salut fraternel et solidaire aux peuples de Syrie, et tout particulièrement aux femmes du Rojava, dont nous partageons les combats.

Les signataires de cette tribune sont:

PANOT Mathilde, Députée LFI, Vice-présidente du groupe LFI à l'Assemblée nationale

AUBRY Manon, eurodéputée LFI

AUTAIN Clémentine, députée LFI

BATHO Delphine, députée Génération écologie

BENBASSA Esther, sénatrice EELV

BILLON Annick, sénatrice Union centriste

BLONDIN Maryvonne, sénatrice PS

BUFFET Marie-George, députée GDR

CHAIBI Leïla, eurodéputée LFI

LEPAGE Claudine, sénatrice PS

LIENEMANN Marie-Noëlle, sénatrice GRS

LUBIN Monique, sénatrice PS

MEUNIER Michelle, sénatrice PS

MONIER Marie-Pierre, sénatrice PS

MÖRCH Sandrine, députée LREM

OBONO Danièle, députée LFI

PELLETIER Anne-Sophie, eurodéputée LFI

PRÉVILLE Angèle, sénatrice PS

RIVASI Michèle, eurodéputée EELV

ROSSIGNOL Laurence, sénatrice PS

RUBIN Sabine, députée LFI

TAILLÉ-POLIAN Sophie, sénatrice Génération.s

VANCEUNEBROCK-MIALON Laurence, députée LREM

À voir également sur *Le HuffPost*: huffingtonpost.fr

Turkish ministers condemn U.S. invite to Syrian Kurd commander

Turkish ministers on Friday condemned a proposed visit to the United States by the leader of Syrian Kurdish forces that led the fight against Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria, and called on him instead to be extradited to Turkey to face terrorism charges.

U.S. Senators Lindsey Graham, Chris Van Hollen and a bipartisan group of senators sent a letter to the State Department on Wednesday demanding the speedy expedition of a visa to allow Mazloum Kobani, the commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), to travel to the United States and brief the U.S. government on the situation after Turkey's cross-border offensive in Syria.

The Oct. 9 military operation targeted the SDF, which Ankara views as a terrorist organisation for its links to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Kobani himself fought with the PKK in Turkey in the 1990s, a period of heavy conflict. The group began an armed struggle for Kurdish self-rule in the country in 1984. Some 40,000 people have been killed in the conflict, most of them Kurds.

Turkey has issued a red notice for Kobani, and on Thursday Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called on Washington to hand the commander over.

Following Erdoğan's lead, Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gül said on Friday there were outstanding warrants for Kobani's arrest in Turkey and the United States was obliged to abide by the red notice.

"The necessary correspondence will be delivered requiring (U.S. authorities) to detain

Kobani as soon as he arrives," said Gül. "The Foreign Ministry has been in contact with the relevant U.S. authorities since Thursday," he said.

Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu strongly criticised the invitation to Kobani, saying it was unacceptable that Washington

verifying official accounts of people and organisations.

Kobani's account, registered under the name Mazloum Abdi, quickly accrued more than 40,000 followers.

The verification came on the same week Kobani was both featured on Russia's state-



should host the commander for a high-level visit and that this amounted to legitimising terrorists.

Meanwhile, Turkey's media was up in arms over the notion of an SDF commander in the White House, with one pro-government columnist, Hakkı Öcal, calling on Turkish intelligence to "neutralise" Kobani within 48 hours.

Kobani "should be neutralised one way or another. If this can happen while he is under U.S. protection, that would be all the more chic," Öcal said in a tweet.

"Another scandal from Twitter," Turkish pro-government daily Sabah said in the headline of a report on Friday complaining that the social media company had granted Kobani a blue tick – the network's way of

funded news network RT holding a video call with Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoygu, and when U.S. senators called on President Donald Trump to host the SDF leader in Washington.

Halk TV, a Turkish opposition-aligned news channel, called Shoygu's conversation with Kobani a "scandalous move", while other news sources reported the video call as a meeting between the Russian defence minister and a "terrorist chief".

The United States lists the PKK as a terrorist organisation, but does not extend the same designation to the SDF and its affiliates, which U.S. troops fought alongside in the global coalition against ISIS. Russia has not declared the PKK to be a terrorist organisation.



Oct 25 2019

Turkey's Erdogan sues French magazine over 'eradicator'

Le Point accuses the Turkish president of ethnic cleansing in northeastern Syria.

Turkish President [Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#) has filed a criminal complaint against a French magazine after it accused him of conducting "ethnic cleansing" in northeastern [Syria](#) in a cover story entitled "The Eradicator".

State-owned Anadolu Agency said on Friday that Erdogan had asked prosecutors to open a case against Etienne Gernelle, the managing editor of Le Point magazine, and Romain Gubert, the author of the story.

Erdogan's lawyer Huseyin Aydin said the cover was "publicly insulting" to the president - a crime in [Turkey](#) carrying a prison sentence up to four years and eight months.

A source in the Ankara public prosecutor's office told AFP news agency that an investigation had been launched after the complaint.

Le Point's cover uses a photo of Erdogan giving a military salute with a tagline reading: "Ethnic cleansing, Erdogan style" and another asking "Will we let him massacre [Kurds](#) (and threaten [Europe](#))?".

On October 9, Turkey launched an offensive aimed at carving out a "safe zone" cleared of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which Ankara considers "terrorists", as well as at repatriating some of the 3.6 million refugees currently residing on its soil.

The SDF is spearheaded by the People's Protection Units (YPG), which Ankara sees as an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been fighting against the Turkish state for decades in demand of autonomy.

Under a ceasefire plan, now in force, the YPG is required to withdraw from an area within 30km (19 miles) of the Turkish border.

The refugees will change the demographic composition of the border area, much of which has a Kurdish majority. Turkey denies the allegations.

Turkey's Western allies - which saw Kurdish forces as an effective tool in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant ([the ISIL group](#) or [ISIS](#)) - condemned its offensive.



Agency]

«**Va-t-on le laisser massacrer les Kurdes (et menacer l'Europe) ?**

#Erdogan, l'éradicateur : notre dossier de la semaine »

[@RTErdogan pic.twitter.com/OFB17RWnd7](https://t.co/N3Qbnxa4qy)

— Le Point (@LePoint) October 23, 2019

Turkish presidential aide Ibrahim Kalin hit out at the magazine on [Twitter](#) on Thursday, saying, "It is clear why they [the French] attack our president. They are in panic as their game was spoiled and their pawn in Syria, PKK, suffered a heavy blow."

He said France's [colonial history](#) had led to the slaughter of thousands of people, and noted the country's past involvement in the slave trade.

"They [[France](#)] are trying every way to protect their puppets but to no avail," he said, referring to the YPG. "Kurds are not your contractors and they will not be. Your colonising days are over."

French President [Emmanuel Macron](#) has been one of the leading Western critics of Turkey's operation in Syria, describing it as "crazy". He has also expressed frustration at [NATO's](#) inability to check Turkey, an alliance member.

Le Point's Gernelle said Erdogan's reaction to the article proved a point the magazine had made in

a May 2018 cover story about the Turkish president.

"He's accusing us of the crime of lese-majeste, which confirms our earlier cover that called him a dictator. We're free to write what we want. Evidently he has a problem with freedom".

Le Point said it had suffered harassment and intimidation by Erdogan's supporters after labeling him "The Dictator" on a 2018 cover, and Macron was [rebuked by Turkey's foreign minister](#) for rallying behind the magazine.

Turkey says the YPG does not represent the Kurds and that its operation in Syria only targets fighters. Kurds make up about 18 percent of Turkey's own population of 82 million.

Erdogan has also accused the YPG of conducting its own ethnic cleansing against Arabs living in the border area.

The Turkish president, who often files lawsuits against those critical of him or his policies, said on Thursday it was better for Arabs to live in the area, pointing at a map of northeastern Syria.

"These are not suitable for the lifestyle of Kurds ... because they are virtually desert regions," he said in an interview with state broadcaster TRT.

SOURCE : News agencies

Le président turc poursuit le magazine français *Le Point*

(Paris) Visé par le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan, l'hebdomadaire français *Le Point* a assuré vendredi par la voix de son directeur qu'il «ne lâcherait rien».

La une du *Point* publié cette semaine qualifie le président turc d'«éradicateur» et demande : «Va-t-on le laisser massacrer les Kurdes (et menacer l'Europe)?».

Suite à cette une, l'avocat de M. Erdogan, Hüseyin Aydın, a déposé une plainte auprès du bureau du procureur général d'Ankara pour «insulte au chef de l'État». Cette plainte vise le directeur du magazine Étienne Gernelle ainsi que le rédacteur en chef de la rubrique «International», Romain Gubert.

Dans un éditorial publié sur le site du magazine, M. Gernelle juge que le président turc poursuit *Le Point* «pour crime de lèse-majesté». «Recep Tayyip Erdogan a décidément un problème avec la liberté», écrit le directeur du magazine.

«Nous ne retirons pas un mot de ce que nous avons écrit», insiste M. Gernelle. L'enquête du *Point* évoque «le nettoyage ethnique» à l'encontre des Kurdes de Syrie et affirme que le pouvoir turc a «pactisé avec d'anciens de Daech [EI] et d'Al-Qaïda qui se chargent pour lui des sales besognes».

M. Gernelle rappelle que dans un précédent numéro (en mai 2018), le magazine avait qualifié M. Erdogan de «dictateur». À l'époque des affichées et des kiosquiers menacés. «Notre journal avait reçu des menaces de mort directes»,



PHOTO AP. L'enquête du *Point* évoque «le nettoyage ethnique» à l'encontre des Kurdes de Syrie et affirme que le pouvoir turc a «pactisé» avec des groupes terroristes.

rappelle-t-il encore.

«Erdogan a fait emprisonner de nombreux journalistes en Turquie et pense peut-être que ses pulsions de censure peuvent s'exercer aussi dans

des pays où la presse est libre», poursuit le journaliste.

«L'hubris du maître d'Ankara connaît visiblement peu de limites. Il sera déçu : nous ne lâcherons rien», conclut-il.

Syrie : envoi de 300 militaires russes basés en Tchétchénie

Près de 300 militaires russes déployés en Tchétchénie ont été envoyés en renfort dans le Nord-Est de la Syrie, dans le cadre de l'accord russo-turc sur le retrait des Kurdes, a annoncé vendredi 25 octobre l'armée russe.

Ils doivent y «effectuer des opérations spéciales», a indiqué un communiqué du ministère russe de la Défense. Le communiqué précise que les militaires seront déployés dans la zone de 30 kilomètres de large à la frontière syro-turque définie par l'accord entre Ankara et Moscou sur le retrait des milices kurdes. L'armée russe ajoute

que 20 véhicules blindés supplémentaires ont été envoyés en Syrie. Depuis l'intervention militaire russe pour soutenir le régime syrien de Bachar al-Assad en 2015, des troupes de Tchétchénie ont été déployées à plusieurs reprises, notamment après le siège d'Alep en 2016.

Le dirigeant tchétchène, Ramzan Kadyrov, a même assuré mi-octobre que la majorité des membres de la police militaire russe patrouillant en Syrie était d'origine tchétchène. «La population syrienne épuisée est reconnaissante à notre police militaire», a affirmé ce fidèle du président

russe Vladimir Poutine, lors d'un voyage en Arabie Saoudite, cité par l'agence Interfax. Il évoquait également l'envoi de «membres du clergé» et d'associations.

République russe du Caucase, la Tchétchénie a été le théâtre dans la décennie 1990 et au début des années 2000 de deux guerres entre Moscou et une rébellion indépendantiste qui s'est progressivement islamisée. Plusieurs centaines de Tchétchènes et leurs familles avaient par ailleurs rejoint les rangs du groupe djihadiste Etat islamique (EI) en Syrie.

En lieu dans l'actu : l'Institut kurde de Paris

Cette fondation abrite une bibliothèque petite mais réputée, qui reçoit un soutien considérable depuis le début de l'offensive turque dans le nord de la Syrie.

Un pic d'intérêt

Les coups de fil se sont multipliés ces derniers temps, reconnaît Gérard Gautier, le bibliothécaire de l'Institut kurde de Paris, situé au fond d'une cour du 10^e arrondissement, quartier historique d'immigration turque et kurde. Depuis l'offensive décidée par Recep Tayyip Erdogan contre les Kurdes en Syrie le 9 octobre, Gérard Gautier reçoit aussi bien des messages de soutien que des appels de chercheurs et de journalistes de tous les pays. « *Il y a un pic d'intérêt quand quelque chose se passe et qu'il y a des morts* », note-t-il de façon résignée.

Un catalogue fourni

Fondé en février 1983, sous Mitterrand, l'institut est aujourd'hui réputé pour sa collection d'ouvrages. On dit qu'il abrite la plus importante bibliothèque kurde du monde occidental. La pièce ne fait qu'une dizaine de mètres carrés, mais l'établissement dispose d'un entrepôt en région parisienne pour répartir ses 10 000 monographies en 25 langues, ses 2 000 brochures, 10 000 périodiques et 300 cassettes VHS. Certains ouvrages ont plus de 150 ans. Impossible donc de les emprunter. « *Si on ne nous les rapporte pas, on ne les retrouvera jamais* », explique Gérard Gautier.

Un lieu de rencontres

Chercheurs, étudiants ou peintres qui viennent puiser l'inspiration dans de vieilles illustrations doivent consulter sur place. L'occasion de créer des rencontres qui font vivre la culture kurde. Le défi ? Que les jeunes puissent lire dans leur



Située dans le 10^e arrondissement de Paris, cette bibliothèque kurde serait la plus importante du monde occidental. Elise Toidé pour M Le magazine du Monde

langue et s'intéressent à leurs origines. Sur les étagères, la plupart des œuvres sont des dons de particuliers ou de libraires inquiets. « *Beaucoup de personnes nous en envoient par peur qu'elles soient détruites dans leur pays* », indique le bibliothécaire. Il pointe du doigt *Le Mouvement national kurde*, de Chris Kutschera (1979). Sa traduction en turc a été interdite en 2018.

Une institution encore fragile

En difficulté en 2015, l'Institut kurde a survécu grâce aux subventions publiques. Aujourd'hui, il

reçoit de l'argent de la Mairie de Paris et des ministères des affaires étrangères et de l'éducation nationale, qui complètent les divers dons. Pas de quoi régler tous les problèmes. Il manque de place pour stocker ses livres et ne dispose pas de conditions optimales pour conserver des pages vieilles de plus d'un siècle. Seule la numérisation permet d'éviter des pertes. L'institut aimerait aussi avoir un stand à la prochaine Semaine des cultures étrangères. « *Mais c'est sûr que, face à l'Institut Goethe, on ne fait pas le poids* », souffle le bibliothécaire.

Turkey is 'forcibly' deporting hundreds of Syrian refugees to hellish 'war zone', Amnesty says

TURKEY has been accused of forcibly deporting hundreds of refugees back to Syria even though the fighting there is continuing.

Some 3.6 million refugees who fled Syria's eight-year-long civil war currently live in Turkey but it

hopes to resettle up to two million in a planned safe zone in northeast Syria.

Turkey and its local allies began a military operation across the border after Donald Trump withdrew US

forces in a bid to crush Kurdish YPG forces.



Some of the 3.6 million Syrians living in camps in Turkey / Credit: Getty - Contributor

A plan agreed between Turkey and Russia this week envisages YPG fighters being removed from a 19 mile strip of territory along the Turkish border and refugees being allowed to return there “in a safe and voluntary manner”. But Amnesty International has spoken to refugees who complained of being threatened or physically forced by Turkish police to sign documents stating that they were voluntarily returning to Syria.

“In reality, Turkey put the lives of

for hosting so many Syrians over many years.

“But it cannot use this generosity as an excuse to flout international and domestic law by deporting people to an active conflict zone.” she added.

Ankara says more than 350,000 Syrian refugees have already voluntarily returned to their country.

Addressing world leaders at the United Nations in September, Pres-



Syrian children living in a refugee camp in Syria Credit: Getty - Contributor

Syrian refugees under serious danger by forcing them to return to a war zone,” the human rights group said. Amnesty said it believed the number of forced returns in recent months to be in the hundreds, based on interviews it conducted between July and October.

Anna Shea, Amnesty’s Researcher on Refugee and Migrant Rights, said Turkey deserved recognition

ident Erdogan set out proposals to build dozens of new villages and towns in the planned safe zone along the Turkish border. Russia urged the Kurds to fully withdraw from the entire length of Syria’s northeastern border as per the shock deal agreed between Moscow and Ankara - or be mauled by the Turkish army.

Syrian and Russian forces will deploy in the northeast of the country



to remove Kurdish fighters and their weapons from the border.

It endorses the return of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s forces to the border alongside Russian troops.

They will replace the Americans who had patrolled the region for years with their former Kurdish allies.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based war monitor, said that 300,000 people have been displaced by Turkey’s incursion and 120 civilians have so far been killed.

Turkey has been accused of **banned white phosphorus** bombs against Kurds, which it has denied.

What was the deal struck between Russia and Turkey over northeastern Syria?

Russian and Syrian security forces are to start overseeing the removal of Kurdish fighters and weapons at least 30km (19 miles) into Syria under the deal struck by presidents Vladimir Putin and Tayyip Erdogan.

Turkey will maintain control over the areas it holds since its incursion of northeastern Syria on October 9 to drive the Kurdish militia from the border.

It also lets Russian and Syrian troops control the rest of the border.

Syrian border guards will be deployed from noon on October 23 - when Turkey’s five-day cease-fire expired.

Six days later, Russian and Turkish forces will jointly start to patrol a narrower, 10km strip of land in the “safe zone” that Ankara has long sought in northeast Syria.

Kurdish fighters completed their pullout from areas Turkey invaded this month.

A Kremlin spokesman warned that if Kurdish forces don’t fully retreat from the entire northeastern Syrian border, they will face the Turkish army.

Under the deal with Moscow, the length of border which the Kurds would be required to pull back from is more than triple the size of the territory covered by the US-Turkish accord.

In a victory for Turkey, this covers most of the area it had wanted to initially include in its ‘safe zone’.

The agreement achieves Turkey’s long-held goal of a border strip cleared of the US allies, which Ankara regards as a terrorist organisation because of their links to insurgents inside Turkey.

Syriens et Russes accélèrent leur déploiement à la frontière syro-turque

Le régime syrien et son allié russe ont accéléré vendredi le déploiement de leurs troupes à la frontière syro-turque, au moment où les Américains ont annoncé l'envoi de renforts militaires dans une zone pétrolière plus à l'est sous contrôle kurde.

Selon un photographe de l'AFP, un long convoi de transports de troupes, avec à bord des centaines de soldats agitant des drapeaux syriens, a fait son entrée dans la ville de Kobané, à l'extrême nord du pays en guerre depuis 2011.

Ils ont paradé dans les rues en chantant: "Un, un, un, le peuple syrien n'est qu'un !"

Près de la ville à majorité kurde de Qamichli, dans le nord-est, des véhicules blindés arborant des drapeaux russes ont quitté une base du régime syrien en direction de l'ouest pour une nouvelle journée de patrouilles près de la frontière turque, conformément à un accord conclu entre Moscou et Ankara.

Conclu pour permettre un arrêt définitif d'une offensive turque contre les forces kurdes, l'accord s'est traduit par l'abandon de positions tenues depuis des années par les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS, dominées par les combattants kurdes).

Il signe aussi la fin du rêve d'autonomie des Kurdes syriens dans cette région frontalière de la Turquie.

Selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH), environ 180 véhicules de l'armée du président syrien Bachar al-Assad sont arrivés vendredi à Kobané.

L'OSDH a par ailleurs fait état vendredi d'affrontements sporadiques dans la zone sous contrôle turc, malgré le cessez-le-feu en vigueur depuis le 17 octobre entre les FDS et les forces d'Ankara. Une attaque de drone turc a blessé cinq membres d'une même famille dans leur voiture près de la ville d'Ain Issa.

L'évolution du conflit en Syrie profite largement au régime Assad, qui récupère sans combattre de larges portions d'un territoire qui lui échappaient depuis des années.



Syriens et Russes accélèrent leur déploiement à la frontière syro-turque © AFP / -

Soldats russes venus de Tchétchénie

Selon Moscou, près de 300 militaires russes basés en Tchétchénie ont été envoyés en renfort dans le nord-est de la Syrie.

Ils appuieront les troupes russes déjà présentes sur le territoire, Moscou prêtant main forte depuis 2015 à Assad, son allié, dans la guerre.

Ces renforts seront déployés dans la zone de 30 km de large à la frontière syro-turque définie par l'accord russo-turc sur le retrait des forces kurdes. Selon l'armée russe, 20 véhicules blindés supplémentaires ont été envoyés en Syrie.

L'offensive turque avait été déclenchée le 9 octobre après un feu vert de facto du président américain Donald Trump qui avait alors spectaculairement lâché les FDS, forces qui avaient été déterminantes pour vaincre sur le terrain le groupe jihadiste Etat islamique (EI).

Les Américains se sont retirés de plusieurs bases du nord de la Syrie, mais M. Trump a annoncé jeudi l'envoi de renforts militaires dans une zone pétrolière dans l'Est toujours sous contrôle kurde. Quelque 200 soldats américains y sont actuellement postés.

L'opération se fera en coopération avec les FDS, qui restent présentes dans l'Est au delà de la zone frontalière "neutralisée" par les Turcs.

"L'objectif est d'empêcher que les champs pétro-

liers tombent aux mains de l'EI ou d'autres groupes déstabilisateurs", a expliqué un responsable militaire. "Nous devons interdire à l'EI cette source de revenus pour prévenir toute résurgence" du groupe jihadiste.

Civils renvoyés par la force

Washington, largement critiquée par les capitales occidentales à propos de l'offensive turque dans le nord-est de la Syrie, où les Kurdes assuraient la garde de camps de détenus de l'EI, a reconnu que plus de 100 prisonniers du groupe jihadiste s'étaient échappés depuis le lancement de l'opération turque.

L'offensive visait à éloigner de son territoire les milices kurdes -que la Turquie qualifie de "terroristes"- et à faciliter le retour dans leur pays d'une partie des 3,6 millions de réfugiés syriens présents sur son sol.

Pour les Kurdes, cela impliquera d'importants déplacements de populations à leur détriment. Selon l'OSDH, quelque 300.000 civils ont été chassés depuis le 9 octobre.

Les ONG Amnesty International et Human Rights Watch ont accusé Ankara d'avoir déjà renvoyé par la force des civils syriens dans leur pays en guerre pendant les mois ayant précédé le déclenchement de l'offensive turque.

Déclenché en 2011 par la répression de manifestations prodémocratie, le conflit syrien s'est complexifié au fil des ans avec l'implication de puissances étrangères et de groupes jihadistes et a fait plus de 370.000 morts.



25/10/2019
Robert Edwards

10,000 Syrians cross into Kurdistan Region fleeing Turkish offensive

BARDARASH CAMP, Kurdistan Region – More than 10,000 refugees have now crossed into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq fleeing the Turkish offensive in northeast Syria, according to the UN refugee agency **UNHCR**.

Many Syrian refugees have been moved to Bardarash camp in Duhok province, where local and international aid agencies are providing food and shelter.

“Many of our people and relatives are still there [in northeast Syria],” Aya Ibrahim, a mother of four, told Rudaw in the camp on Thursday. “We plead to countries and the United Nations to assist Kurds, Arabs, and Assyrians. We are all one.”

Assisting the fresh influx of refugees is not an easy task, says Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, the UN Secretary-General’s special representative for Iraq.

“For now we have people coming in high numbers. We are cooperating, the UN family in Iraq is closely cooperating with the KRG authorities, in this case with the Duhok authorities, to make sure we can offer tents, food and certain facilities to the people arriving here. This is our first priority, for people to come in and to give them shelter,” she told Rudaw.

“Obviously, we are trying to look into possibilities for other camps and facilities. Not on our own, but together with authorities. But it is not easy, I can tell you.”



Ayn Faiz, a mother displaced from Darbasiyah, says although life in a tent is miserable, she is grateful her family is safe.

“We fled from Rojava along with my four little children. We fled explosions and conflict. We have only this tent but we are grateful. There is no fear here,” she said.

The Barzani Charity Foundation (BCF), a local aid agency which supervises Bardarash camp, is expecting many more arrivals in the coming days and weeks, despite a shaky ceasefire agreement.

Botan Mohammed, a BCF aid worker, urged international organizations to extend assistance.

“We prepare hot food to give them three meals a day. We have provided heating oil. Whenever new groups of refugees arrive, we are here to give them [what they need],” he said.

Bardarash camp was established in 2014 to house people fleeing the Islamic State (ISIS) rampage across northern Iraq.

Some 180,000 people have been displaced across Syria’s north-east since Turkey launched Operation Peace Spring on October 9, according to the latest UN estimates. The majority of the displaced are women and children.

With reporting by Mahdi Faraj, translations by Zhelwan Z. Wali

24heures

26/10/2019
Par Kurt Pelda

Quelque 2000 personnes à la manif pro-kurde

BernePlusieurs centaines de personnes ont défilé dans la capitale helvétique pour dénoncer l'offensive turque en Syrie.

Quelque 2000 personnes ont dénoncé samedi après-midi à Berne l'opération militaire turque dans le nord de la Syrie. La manifestation avait pour slogan «Solidarité avec Rojava», du nom d'une zone kurde autoproclamée autonome.

Les participants ont condamné «l'offensive de la Turquie contraire au droit international» et manifesté leur solidarité avec les populations des régions en guerre. Le rassemblement était soutenu

par de nombreuses organisations suisses, des syndicats et des partis dont le PS et les Verts. Selon les organisateurs, 8000 personnes ont pris part au défilé.

Les manifestants attendent de la Suisse une action diplomatique afin que l'ONU décide d'un cessez-le-feu immédiat ainsi que d'une zone d'exclusion aérienne dans le nord de la Syrie. Berne devrait en outre suspendre l'accord de libre-échange négocié avec la Turquie et que les

Chambres viennent d'approuver cette année, édicter des sanctions économiques et stopper les livraisons de matériel de guerre.

La manifestation s'est tenue sur la Place fédérale et a évolué ensuite en cortège dans la vieille ville. Quelques pétards et fumigènes ont fusé. Quelques activistes cagoulés ont défilé. Des manifestations pro-kurdes se déroulent quasiment chaque jour en Suisse depuis le début de l'offensive, le 9 octobre. (ats/nxp)



26/10/2019

Kurdish female militia says its fighter captured by Turkey-backed Syrian fighters

Women's Protection Units (YPJ), a constituent of the majority-Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), issued a statement calling for urgent intervention for Çiçek Kobane, who it said was wounded and captured by Turkey-backed Syrian militia, pro-Kurdish news agency [Rudaw reported on Saturday](#).

Çiçek Kobane was captured in Tel Abyad with wounds on her leg, the statement said.

A video published on Telegram channels related to the Turkey-backed Syrian rebels, which has been subject to accusations of war crimes, showed a militia member carrying her, while others called her a pig to be taken to slaughter, Rudaw said.

"We call on all the women of the world and international human rights organisations to speak up against this brutality of Turkish-backed gangs," the statement said.

The date of recording is not known, however, the video was made public at least 24 hours ago, Rudaw said.

Kobane was captured on Oct. 21, according to the YPJ statement.

Turkey's military incursion into northern Syria, which was launched on Oct. 9 with the aim to establish a safe zone in Syrian territory along the



shared border, was paused for 120 hours in compliance with a deal the country made with the United States.

At the end of the pause period, Turkey made another deal with Russia for the removal of Kurdish forces from a 30 km deep and 120 km long stretch along the border.

The fighter was captured after the pause started, Rudaw quoted the YPJ as saying.

Another video had emerged earlier in the operation that showed a female Syrian Kurdish politician's car being targeted by Turkey-backed

militia groups, and the politician Hevrin Khalaf was killed on Oct. 12.

"We've seen several incidents which we consider war crimes," Washington's Syria envoy [James Jeffrey had said](#) during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Wednesday.

"If (the reports) are accurate, I assume that they are accurate, they would be war crimes, as best as I know the law of land warfare," Rudaw quoted U.S. Secretary of Defence Mark Esper as saying in an interview on Tuesday.



26/10/2019

Are the US and Turkey resurrecting ISIS in Syria?

What will happen after the United States practically gave Turkey the green light to invade Syrian Kurdistan (Rojava)?

President Donald Trump's decision to pull troops from northern Syria surprised many. But why the sudden decision? What are the motives behind Trump's choice? Has the US suddenly turned its back on the Kurds? A more sinister question would be: does the US want the Islamic State to come back to life?

Trump claims he is meeting his election campaign pledge of reducing the presence of American troops abroad, but that is not a legitimate excuse. The US military presence in Syria is relatively small. The two military posts (out of a total of 15 posts in Syria) that US troops have evacuated contain only 1,000 soldiers, which is

around 0.05 percent of the total US military presence abroad. Keeping or evacuating these 1,000 troops does not really make a significant difference for the US. However, the location of these evacuated posts is critical; they are near the border between Rojava and Turkey.

The US government, under Trump's leadership, has demonstrated time and again that it cannot be trusted. Its foreign policy has been erratic and unstable at best. It has failed to maintain permanent allies, especially in the Middle East. The Kurds have been at the forefront of the fight against the so-called Islamic State. It has spearheaded a successful campaign to fight ISIS, which was one of Washington's main objectives. However, the US government thinks the Islamic State's threat is over, which is a strategic mistake. The terror group is already beginning to re-surface in parts of Iraq and Syria.

Now that the Turkish military operation appears to be over, what will Turkey do next, especially regarding the thousands of Islamic State prisoners?

There are around 12,000 Islamic State prisoners in Syria, which the Kurdish troops have guarded. There are also 58,000 families accused of Islamic State affiliation at the al-Hol camp in northeastern Syria. How will Turkey deal with this problem? It is important to remember that Turkey's stance on the Islamic State has been unclear with some foreign policy experts claiming Ankara has not opposed the extremist group, but rather the opposite.

The Trump administration may be deluded in thinking the Islamic State's threat is over. It may deeply regret its decision to pull out of Syria when the Islamic State is resurrected with the

help of the former Ottoman Empire, Turkey.

One thing is for sure; there is a change in the balance of power in Syria. With the US pulling out of Rojava, it is now apparent that the main player calling the shots is Russia. Russia has its own agenda in Syria, and eliminating the Islamic State is not one of its priorities. Rather, it wants to expand its international influence in the Middle East and stand as a legitimate alternative superpower to the US. By pulling out of Syria, Washington has just handed over the scepter of power to Moscow and helped it fulfill one of its main aims.

The US' long term foreign policy plan is to try to reduce the presence of its military abroad and keep them where it serves its best interest. Apparently, the original purpose of sending US troops to Syria was to eliminate the Islamic State, with the help of Syrian Kurdish fighters.

Has the Islamic State been eliminated, though?

The problem lies in the short-sightedness of Trump's foreign policy. The US or, rather, Trump and his followers think the Islamic State has been eliminated. However, many people believe the terror group's resurrection is near and will re-

turn with a vengeance. Trump has just given the Islamic State a kiss of life by pulling out of Syria!

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The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of Kurdistan24.

Editing by Karzan Sulaivany

The
Guardian

26/10/2019

By Martin Chulov

Middle East correspondent

Syria: videos of Turkey-backed militias show 'potential war crimes'

Arab forces have allegedly been filmed torturing Kurdish fighters and mutilating bodies

Turkey-backed fighters have taken over an area along the border after a weeklong operation to push Kurds further into Syria. Photograph: Bakr Alkasem/AFP via Getty Images

Calls for war crimes investigations into the conduct of militias used by [Turkey](#) in Syria are mounting after a spate of new videos depicting Ankara-linked fighters torturing captives and mutilating dead bodies.

Footage of atrocities allegedly committed by Arab forces in northern Syria is circulating widely across Kurdish regions of the country, sparking fears of renewed fighting and a deepening ethnic divide in the region, even as a [tenuous ceasefire](#) begins to settle.

A video purportedly posted earlier this week by one Turkish-supported group shows a captured Kurdish fighter being dragged by the neck as his captors threaten him with beheading. Another shows dead Kurdish fighters being cut with a knife as Arab combatants jeer.

Kurdish officials, along with the US special envoy for Syria, James Jeffrey, have condemned the videos, with the latter describing them as ["potential war crimes"](#) while the Kurds insist they represent ethnic cleansing. Up to 170,000 Kurds have fled a battle zone along the Turkish border after a weeklong operation to push [Kurds](#) further into Syria.

Ankara has openly stated that it aims to send up to a million Syrians, who are currently living in exile in Turkey, into the area it has since dubbed a safe zone. Where the newly displaced – most of whom are Kurds – will settle remains uncertain, as does whether the recent spate of ethnic violence can be contained.

"One of our main challenges is to contain the emotional reaction," said a senior Kurdish official, Arshan Mizgen Ahmad. "Those who killed here are not from this part of [Syria](#). We are trying as an administration to calm them down.

"It is not a blood dispute in the usual sense of the term. This has been a cultural move that has been prevailing for centuries. We are trying another approach. We have made great efforts not to see it as a blood dispute, but as a political manoeuvre," she said.

Ankara's proxies are comprised of Syrians who fought against the Assad regime, and other groups who have since been recruited as hired hands. They also include several extremist units, who were responsible for the execution of the Kurdish female politician, Hevrin Khalaf, who was hauled from her car two weeks ago and shot dead by a roadside along with her bodyguards.

Elizabeth Tsurkov, a fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute who has studied the Turkish proxies, said: "The factions fighting on Turkey's behalf are largely made up of young men displaced from their towns and villages from across Syria and particularly eastern Syria.

"In 2016, it was clear to many Syrians that Turkey has altered its position regarding the Assad regime and will no longer attempt to topple it, and hence, those who joined this force after 2016 were often individuals willing to fight, in exchange for money, to advance Turkey's interests."

Ankara has denied sanctioning any atrocities in Syria amid [reports it has used white phosphorus](#). Turkish military officials say they are investigating reports of executions.

"Turkey retains control over all strategic decision-making," said Tsurkov. "It decides when and where to start and end offensives. Turkey pays the salaries of these fighters, trains them in Turkey and in northern Aleppo, provides them free medical care when they are injured, and oversees all operations. Turkey is ultimately responsible for the conduct of these factions."

Meanwhile, Kurdish officials were struggling to make sense of [Donald Trump's announcement that he was sending US tanks to secure oil fields in Deir Azzour](#), in far eastern Syria. The surprise move came after his widely condemned decision to withdraw all US forces who were working alongside the Kurds on Turkey's border, ahead of the operation in early October.



27/10/2019
By Jiyar Gol
BBC Persian, Northern Syria

'The world has closed its eyes on us'

On our way to Qamishli, the largest Kurdish city in northern Syria, we see a US military convoy escorted by fighter jets heading east towards the Iraqi border. They are leaving the Kurdish region.

The first time I saw an American in Syria was in 2016. He was part of US special forces, sent to support the Kurds fighting the Islamic State (IS) group. Locals were excited to see them arriving.

But it was in stark contrast this time around. Now you could see the fear and anxiety in the faces of on-lookers.

We were only a few kilometres from the Turkish border as one of the jets circled overhead, leaving a trail of white smoke as it passed in and out of Turkish airspace.

One of our guides sighed. "Trump binamoose," he said to me in Kurdish. "Trump has no honour."

Trump on Syria: "Let someone else fight over this long, blood-stained sand."

The Kurds have every reason to be worried. On one side they face neighbouring Turkey, on the other, Syrian government forces.

Now the US is leaving, Kurds here are convinced they have no friends other than the mountains they inhabit.

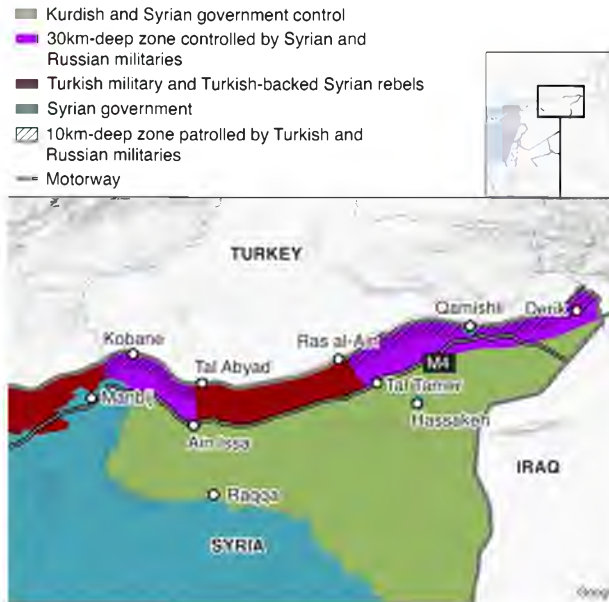
'Trump sold us'

From the moment we arrived in Qamishli, ordinary Kurds from baker to waiter asked, "why did Trump sell us out?" This is a traditional society that prides itself on a code of honour and does not understand why it has effectively been cut loose.

"America stabbed us in the back... Trump sold us... we were betrayed," we heard, again and again.

Qamishli's squares and electricity poles are decorated with the pictures of the fallen - men and women killed in the war against IS.

Turkey and Russia's deal on north-east Syria



Source: Russian defence ministry, 23 Oct 2019

Every day there are funerals somewhere in this tiny region. It has been this way since IS attacked the Kurds in 2014. But now the victims are those who have been killed since Turkish and allied forces launched their cross-border attack earlier this month.

Turkey v Syria's Kurds explained

Russia and Turkey on same page - but for how long?

Who supplies weapons to Turkey?

At the funerals, many mourners hide their tears. Instead they lead the caskets to graveyards with dances and chants.

At one such ceremony, for a fallen fighter of the Kurdish YPG, a tall man in his 60s approaches me and calmly says: "Erdogan doesn't like the Kurds. He wants us to leave," referring to the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who regards the YPG as terrorists.

The Kurds lost 11,000 men and women battling against IS. "The fight wasn't ours only, we fought on behalf of humanity," the man says. "Where is the international community? Why don't they stop Erdogan?"

'What's the point?'

In a bakery sits a pile of bread, baked for fighters on the front line. Bahouz, a 16-year-old boy who is cutting dough, asks me my opinion of Americans and Europeans.

"Do you think they will stop Erdogan from massacring us?" An older boy shouts: "Trump sold us - oil is more important than our lives."

The young boys are clearly frightened. They know if the pro-Turkish Islamist militias arrive here, they would be prime targets. Already videos have emerged apparently showing Turkish-backed militias shouting "Allahu Akbar" ("God is greatest") and shooting handcuffed young men just like them.

At a hospital treating wounded YPG fighters, a doctor, Rojda, runs from one operating theatre to another. Rojda, a petite woman in her 30s, is also the director of the facility.

"What's the point of filming?" she asks wearily. "Don't waste your time. The world has closed its eyes on us."

'We were by the gate when a shell hit'

One of the patients I meet there is 23-

year-old Jiyar. She sits on her bed, staring into the distance. There are dark circles around her eyes. Her head has been surgically pinned, her skull fractured; a hand and both legs are injured.

She laughs derisively. "I survived fighting IS in Kobane, Manbij, and Raqqah, but it was the Turks who almost killed me!"

Jiyar was in Ras al-Ain when Turkey attacked the border town. Her unit came under extensive Turkish artillery and bombardment.

"We put up a good fight against Turkish-backed thugs, but we couldn't match Turkish firepower," she tells me, adding: "I lost many friends."

'They are coming for us'

On our way out of Syria, I meet Kino Gabriel, spokesperson for the SDF, the Kurdish-led alliance of militias.

A tall man with a big smile, he is the founder of the Christian Syriac Military Council, part of the SDF. He avoids criticising President Trump, hoping, it seems, that the US will change course and come back to the SDF's aid.

"Those jihadists backed by Turkey are not only coming for our land, they see us as infidels. They are coming for us," he says.

As US troops withdrew from Qamishli last week on Donald Trump's orders, one picture in particular - of a US soldier in his armoured vehicle wearing YPJ (the Kurdish women's fighting force) insignia on his sleeve - resonated with the Kurdish allies they were leaving in haste.

"The American soldiers are just like us - shocked and disappointed with this political decision," Kino Gabriel says. "But it is not their fault. We honour their sacrifices too."



27/10/2019

Kurdish officials: Death of Baghdadi does not mean the end of ISIS



Masoud Barzani, President of Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). (Photo: Archive)

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Top officials in the Kurdistan Region warned on Sunday that the world's governments still need to use as much vigilance as ever in facing the remnants of the Islamic State despite the US announcement earlier in the day that the group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, had been

killed the night before during a military operation in the northern Syrian province of Idlib. Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) leader Masoud Barzani said in a statement that the death is indeed a victory over terrorism, "however, it does not mean the end of terrorism."

"The international community must be aware that the death of the ISIS leader Baghdadi is not necessarily the end of ISIS. Every concerned party needs to be alert and continue with their coordination in the fight against terrorism and of ending it."

At the same time, Kurdistan

Region President Nechirvan Barzani expressed similar sentiments in another statement, saying, "The Kurdistan Region, as a crucial part of the international coalition against ISIS, finds the death of Baghdadi an important step in ending terrorism," as he praised United States' role and all of those who contributed to the success of the operation.

"The risk of an ISIS reemergence still exist and the groups' activity in the area is increasing and still poses a threat to the region and the world," he continued. "That is why the international community needs to continue their cooperation and coordination in order to cut off its terrorist ideology."

"This must be carried out not only through military means, but also by promoting and advancing education, culture, co-existence, forgiveness, and an end to the system that nurtures the emergence of people like Baghdadi."

The statement concluded by mentioning the Kurdistan Region's sacrifices in its fight against terror.

"As Christians, Yazidis (Ezidis), Muslims, and all minorities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq have been subjected to the crimes of ISIS, [the Kurdistan Region] is currently continuing its cooperation with the international community in the fight against ISIS and will carry on fighting its ideology to ensure security and peace in the region and the world."

Editing by John J. Catherine



Nechirvan Barzani, president of the autonomous Kurdistan Region. (Photo: Archive)

Syria's Kurds dreamt of a 'Rojava revolution' Assad will snuff this out

Three hundred thousand people **displaced**. Villages and infrastructure destroyed. **Allegations** of white phosphorus use. The costs of the Turkish invasion of northern Syria to create a "safe zone" arc immense, the latest twist in the seemingly intractable Syrian war.

Beyond the immediate human costs, there lies also a deeper loss. Rojava, the Kurdish name for the autonomous region of northern Syria, into which the Turkish army is advancing, is more than a geographic area. It is also an experiment in democracy and equality. It is, in fact, one of **many such experiments** that have flourished during the years of the Syrian war, shaped by the work of thinkers such as the late Omar Aziz. Most have been crushed either by Bashir al-Assad's regime or by Islamic State, which once controlled large areas of Syria. Now Rojava, too, is threatened with destruction.

It was out of the turmoil of the early years of the Syrian war that Rojava was born. In 2013, the Democratic Union party (PYD), the main political force in the region, established a coalition called the Movement for a Democratic Society (TEV-DEM) and declared autonomy for the region. Many no longer refer to it as Rojava but as the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria, to acknowledge that it is home not just to Kurds but to Arabs, Christians and other minorities.

Central to the success of Rojava has been the People's Protection Units, or YPG, a militia established to protect Kurds, and the YPJ, the women's militia set up in 2013. In 2015, the YPG and the YPJ joined with non-Kurdish militias to form the Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF. The YPG, the YPJ and the SDF led the struggle against Isis at great cost to themselves. Their courage won **much admiration**. Less noticed has been the internal trans-



Syrian Kurds queue to buy food at a refugee camp in northern Iraq. Photograph: Byron Smith/Getty Images

formation of Rojava, carved out in the face of a ferocious war.

In a region that has become almost a byword for tyranny and oppression, Rojava is an embodiment of a different kind of politics. Its style of direct democracy allows local communities, from the village level up, to make many of the decisions and take on **as much self-government** as they can.

Even more striking has been **the pursuit of gender equality**. Traditional reactionary practices, such as polygamy and sharia courts, have been swept away. New rights, such as abortion and equal pay, have been enforced. Every public organisation is required to have at least 40% of both men and women. There is also a policy of "co-governance" – every office in government is led by both a man and a woman.

The PYD draws many of its political ideals from Abdullah Öcalan, a founder of the Turkish PKK (Kurdish Workers' party), which has long

leveraged violence in the pursuit of Kurdish independence. Captured and imprisoned by the Turkish authorities in 1999, Öcalan has in recent years transformed from a Maoist to a libertarian. Influenced by the American environmentalist and libertarian socialist **Murray Bookchin**, he has rejected the idea of a separate Kurdish nation state, arguing instead for "direct democracy without a state" and for the centrality of women's rights in any social change.

The PYD's adoption of this approach, and its abandonment of the goal of a Kurdish state, has created tensions with other Kurdish groups. "We don't want separation," the YPJ's Nesrine Abdullah told me. "We want to establish a non-central, multicultural and multi-language Syria."

There is a danger of romanticising the Rojava revolution. There have been credible **allegations of ethnic cleansing** and of the **silencing of dissent**. A **report from Chatham House**, the international affairs

thinktank, suggests that, for all the talk of decentralisation, the PYD still ensures it retains access to power.

Such allegations are worrying and need to be addressed. One must also remember, however, that the "Rojavan revolution" has flowered in the most trying of circumstances, in the midst of a brutal war.

So what now? The American betrayal of the Kurds has forced the Rojava authorities, in the face of the Turkish assault, to make a deal with Damascus, allowing Syrian troops back into Rojava. It is unlikely that Assad will countenance the continuation of the Rojavan experiment in democracy and equality.

It will be a tragedy if Rojava is crushed, the latest in a **long history of the betrayal of Kurds**. Rojava was not, however, the first spark of freedom in the region and it will not be the last. As mass protests in Iraq and Lebanon reveal, it's a spark that refuses to be extinguished.



October 28, 2019

Dr. Adnan Selçuk Mızraklı

Turkish opposition's complicity on clear display over Syria incursion

Those who threw us behind bars will realise their mistake, because they cannot stop our hope from blooming in the jail cells and flowing out.

They thought they could solve their problems by arresting us, but if they knew history, they would see that their efforts will not work.

A people gains invincibility through resistance. We have not been defeated. We will continue walking even taller from the place we fell.

A wind of terror began sweeping Turkey in 2015. Those who believed they could prosper through oppression began terrorising their own people that year. The detentions, arrests, torture and death they perpetrated gathered pace like an avalanche.

Even while they were ratcheting up the oppression in 2018, we took a sliver of hope from the elections that June. This took root even deeper with our victories in the local elections this year in March. Within months, the government began its attempts to drown our hopes.

The moment the government saw the opposition begin to come together to organise and form a democratic bloc, it set to work using all means at hand to destroy this unity.

The dismissal of democratically elected mayors in August and appointment of government-endorsed replacements was the beginning of a coup. The governors and interior ministry began corresponding on how to replace our mayors before votes in the March 31 elections had even been counted.

They chose this method the moment they realised they would lose at the ballot box, seeing it as a way of imposing martial rule on the region.

While any form of democratic protest against this coup has been prohibited, the government has brought protesters to the headquarters of my party, the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP).

But the truly saddening aspect of this period is that the democratic bloc that began to form with great sacrifice before the local elections has remained silent.

The main opposition Republican

People's Party (CHP) in particular has shown how statist and conservative it is with its silence.

The government replaced our mayors, but it was unable to quell the dissent from within its own party. Pinning the blame for its waning power on the Kurds, it directed all its violence their way.

The latest example of this is in Rojava – the autonomous administrations in northeast Syria that Turkey attacked in its military operation. The government found an excuse to launch its offensive without provocation, seeking to destroy the gains made by Kurds who paid a great price in the campaign against the Islamic State.

The decision to go to war was taken in the Turkish parliament.

Every party but the HDP agreed to this war. The CHP, too, endorsed the operation, despite professing to honour Turkish Republic founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's motto urging "peace at home, peace in the world."

The CHP leader said his party's decision to support the incursion was "agonising," but this is a great deception. The party's nationalist and statist wings routinely ignore human rights and the law – all the more so when Kurds are involved. Yet it also includes and protects a handful of social democrats and other opposing voices, as if to convince itself and others that it is an inclusive party for leftists and minorities, in this way also tying some sections of the opposition to itself.

This is the situation today, as well – the CHP as always has acted almost as a spokesman for the government's policies while the few democrats in its ranks give messages to opposition segments.

In this way they prevent an anti-government front from being formed. Sadly, the few opposing voices and valuable people within the CHP do not have the power to shape policy and change this.

We have seen this in the clearest possible terms in the party's agreement to authorise the war.

A democratic bloc is an absolute necessity, as the only way to allow this country to breathe. Thus it has turned

into an indispensable need to form such a bloc above parties.

The creation of such a formation, in which all can express themselves and form a resistance to injustice, lawlessness, fascism and war, would bring hope to this country. For that reason, it is an unquestionable necessity.

Thus our efforts must go towards strengthening this bloc. The Kurds are both the cornerstone of this structure and a litmus test for Turkey's democracy.

Besides this, as Kurds we are forced to form our own national unity. The experiment of Rojava has shown this all the more clearly.

While the international public went no further than condemning the operation and Turkey's Justice and Development Party government, the Kurds as ever were left alone.

Because the Kurds are divided into parts in four different countries, Kurds in each part have been under constant attack and have been unable to establish internal unity. This has prevented us from developing into a nation.

We saw this two years ago, when Turkey, Iran and Iraq quashed the hopes of the Kurdistan Regional Government to establish an independent state after holding a referendum in Southern Kurdistan. And we saw this again in Rojava, where the attack by Turkey was not directly solely against Syrian Kurds. They knew that if the Rojava experiment had been successful in northern Syria, then the Kurds in other countries could be successful, too.

The head of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Massoud Barzani, has seen this more clearly than most, and after Turkey's attack spoke of the necessity for Kurdish unity as soon as possible. He called on Kurdish intellectuals, writers, artists and political leaders around the world – and most importantly, on the Kurdish people themselves – to develop this unity. This was a very significant and meaningful statement.

Before the local elections the HDP led the drive for unity at the ballot box. We gathered the support of many Kurdish parties, but this alone was not enough. What we need is a supra-party

unity that encompasses all parts of the Kurdish world.

Kurdish politicians and thinkers should come together, discuss this point and take immediate steps toward a national unity without appropriating this movement for their own parties.

If not, we Kurds, among the oldest inhabitants of the Middle East, will forever face the possibility of genocide.

The AKP was unable to find the approval it sought for its operation abroad, but it did find it from the operation at home, at least for a time.

The ruling party wanted the opposition, which had drawn together, to lose its power, it wanted to silence the voices rising against it, and it wanted to continue its one-man regime.

The government wished recapture Kurdish cities it lost in the local elections by dismissing HDP mayors and appointing its own people to replace them, granting its supporters wealth through public tenders to build its own power base in these regions.

In doing this, it wished to throttle the hopes that had begun to bloom in Turkey.

Sadly, in many senses it has succeeded in destroying many of these in the space of a single week.

The AKP was unable to achieve its aims on the global political level, but it got what it wants from the public in Turkey.

Segments of Turkey's opposition helped it achieve this. Those who carried water for the AKP are to the highest degree responsible for the pain that the ruling party has wrought.

Yet we still refuse to give up hope despite this, and will continue to resist by declaring national unity and rebuilding a democratic bloc.

** Dr. Adnan Selçuk Mızraklı was elected as mayor of Dirarbakır on March 31.*

On Aug. 19, Turkish authorities removed him from his position for alleged terror links. He was formally arrested on Oct. 21.

Analyse. Offensive en Syrie : la Turquie malade de son nationalisme

En Turquie, même l'opposition kémaliste laïque soutient la guerre lancée par Ankara contre les Kurdes. Cela fait d'elle une pâle copie du parti islamiste au pouvoir, s'insurge ce journaliste turc installé à Hambourg.

Lors des débats à l'Assemblée nationale précédant le vote de l'intervention militaire en Syrie, un parlementaire brode sur le thème de la "nation éternelle" et des grandes batailles de notre histoire. En l'absence du bandeau télévisé attestant son appartenance au parti d'opposition kémaliste CHP [Parti républicain du peuple], impossible de le distinguer d'un membre de la majorité [AKP, islamiste].

La lutte contre le terrorisme, l'union sacrée pour défendre le pays... À croire que la Turquie est menacée d'invasion. D'ailleurs, en amont des débats parlementaires, le secrétaire général du CHP, Kemal Kılıçdaroglu, avait annoncé la couleur en déclarant approuver l'intervention en Syrie, avant même que les instances du parti aient pu en débattre, afin de faire taire d'éventuelles protestations et de ramener tout le monde dans le rang.

Et c'est ainsi que le principal parti d'opposition en Turquie s'en est allé en guerre, flanqué des formations de droite nationaliste MHP [Parti d'action nationaliste] et İyi Parti [Le Bon Parti, extrême droite laïque], pour soutenir l'armée turque sur le point de bombardier les zones frontalières du nord de la Syrie.

"Nous votons oui, mais la mort dans l'âme et à condition que personne ne touche au moindre cheveu de nos soldats." Voilà l'argument imparable lancé par Kılıçdaroglu pour justifier son vote. A-t-il seulement conscience du fait que des centaines de personnes vont mourir ? Si tant est bien sûr qu'il s'autorise à compter les Kurdes parmi les pertes humaines !

Une idéologie prônant la répression sanglante

Avec ce vote, le voilà une nouvelle fois intronisé dans la confrérie des politiciens aux mains pleines de sang. Est-ce une surprise ? Certes non. Le kémalisme est une idéologie du pouvoir. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk lui-même a participé en personne aux réunions d'état-major préparant la sanglante répression de la révolte de Dersim [région de l'est de la Turquie à majorité kurde-alévie] en 1937-1938.

Dès qu'il est question des Kurdes, ces gens-là voient rouge. Dans toute l'histoire des partis kémalistes successifs, on compte bien deux ou trois déclarations porteuses d'espoir, mais celles-ci furent toujours rapidement démenties. Si ce n'est pas une surprise, c'est aussi parce que l'opposition turque est au diapason de la majorité au pouvoir.



A la frontière turco-syrienne, le 10 octobre 2019. Photo AFP/ Bulent Kilic

Le CHP, qui se targue de dater de la création de la République turque, a le virus de l'étatisme dans le sang. Mais faut-il s'en étonner de la part d'un parti qui porte haut et fort les valeurs du nationalisme et du souverainisme ? S'est-il seulement interrogé une seule fois sur les raisons pour lesquelles les Kurdes ruent depuis toujours dans les brancards ?

L'une des principales initiatives de l'Internationale socialiste (dont le CHP est membre) fut précisément d'empêcher la candidature du parti prokurde HDP [Parti démocratique des peuples]. Et lors d'un vote en assemblée plénière au Conseil de l'Europe, le CHP, de concert avec la droite nationaliste, a tenté de faire accroire – en pure perte – qu'il n'y avait aucune violation des droits de l'homme en Turquie.

Les dirigeants de ce parti, dès qu'ils passent les frontières nord ou sud du pays, se prennent pour des ambassadeurs turcs et font de leur mieux pour défendre le régime. Remarquez, ils se prennent également pour des fonctionnaires quand ils sont en Turquie.

Le Kurde et le Syrien sont les figures de l'ennemi

Ce qui est étrange, c'est que la base du parti fourmille de véritables sociaux-démocrates. Ce sont même les militants les plus actifs. Mais cela ne sert à rien, car les valeurs cardinales du CHP restent profondément étatistes, nationalistes voire racistes. L'opposition n'arrivera à rien tant qu'elle s'évertuera à singer la majorité. Ce qu'elle doit faire, c'est de s'opposer au pouvoir en proposant une véritable alternative. S'il est besoin d'un modèle, pensons par

exemple au leader travailliste Jeremy Corbyn, qui, si l'on met de côté son attitude ambiguë sur la question du Brexit, a su convaincre aussi bien par son mode de vie que par sa manière de s'adresser aux jeunes, par son usage des réseaux sociaux et par ses soutiens militants à l'intérieur du parti.

Mais la question du leadership dans l'opposition est peut-être le moindre de nos problèmes. Le pays tout entier est dans un état alarmant, en proie au nationalisme, à l'étatisme, au militarisme et à la haine anti-kurde. Notre ministre des Armées prend la pose en uniforme de troufion. Les branches féminines du parti néonazi Vatan se prennent en photo en faisant le salut militaire. Lors des cérémonies de circoncision, on donne des armes (en plastique) aux enfants déguisés en soldats. Un célèbre journaliste d'opposition, Yılmaz Özdil, fait ami-ami avec Erdogan tandis que le leader d'un parti de gauche enchaîne les analyses sur la Syrie sans même évoquer les Kurdes.

Quant à l'ancien candidat à la présidentielle investi par l'opposition, il campe sur les mêmes positions qu'Erdogan et répond du tac au tac aux tweets de Trump sans évoquer la guerre. L'homme de la rue, d'autant plus s'il est pauvre, peut faire du Kurde et du Syrien les figures de l'ennemi. L'idéologie ambiante mine toute approche un tant soit peu humaniste. Le nationalisme, c'est bel et bien la guerre, comme disait Mitterrand. Et, pour reprendre Brecht, une fois que la guerre est passée, ne restent plus que l'armée des morts, l'armée des endeuillés et celle des voleurs.



Editing by Nadia Riva
28/10/2019

Turkish offensive is a second hit to Ezidis and minorities living in northern Syria

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Hundreds of Yezidi (Ezidi) families who escaped the brutality of the Islamic State in Syria are once again forced into displacement and religiously prosecuted following the Turkish offensive in northeastern Syria.

Since the beginning of Ankara's military offensive supported by Syrian Islamist groups on Oct. 9, hundreds of Ezidi families, from the area or having fled there from Iraq to start a new life in northeastern Syria, have been displaced. Many have since been forced to take refuge in the Kurdistan Region, other areas in Syria, and some are hoping to get into Europe.

Orivan Abdo, a Ezidi journalist who is following the case of the Ezidis living in Gera-Spi and Serekaniye which are now under the control of the Turkish-backed militias and Turkish forces, reported that "in Gera-Spi alone, the first territory the Turkish assault targeted, out of 50 Ezidi families, more than 30 were displaced."

"In the villages and surrounding territories on the Turkish-Syrian border, 200 Ezidi families have either been displaced or migrated to Europe," he explained, adding that Christian and Muslim families are also being displaced.

The emergence of the Islamic State and its violent assault on Iraq's Ezidi-majority city of Shingal in August 2014 led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of members of the Ezidi community and the killing of scores more, now recognized by the United Nations as an act of genocide.



Yezidi children, fleeing violence from Islamic State militants in Shingal, make their way toward the town of Elierbeh of Al-Hasakah Governorate, near the Syrian border, Aug. 10, 2014. (Photo: Reuters)

Most of them fled to the Kurdistan Region while others resettled in neighboring countries or Western states.

Some of the Ezidi families who have been liberated from the Islamic State's rule in Syria by the Kurdish forces settled in northeastern Syria, choosing not to return to Iraq in fear of their security and social rejection.

Mustafa Nabo, the Ezidi representative in the de-facto autonomous administration in northeastern Syria, told local media that "the Ezidis living in Afrin and its surrounding villages, which are

under the control of Turkish-backed militias, are facing the same treatment as they received under ISIS-rule, where the girls are forced to wear scarves (Hijab) and black clothing, and Mosques are being built in Ezidi-populated areas."

Turkey and Turkish-backed armed groups captured the region of Afrin on March 18, 2018, in a campaign that lasted over two months. "Following the seizure in 2018 and the recent Turkish assault, only 15,000 of a total of 50,000 Ezidis in northeastern Syria now remain," according to the Kurdish administration in Syria.

Los Angeles Times By Patrick J. McDonnell
Oct. 28, 2019

Kurdish, Turkish forces jockey for position in Syria ahead of a deadline for Kurds to withdraw from border

TAL TAMR, Syria — The roar of warplanes and the thud of distant artillery provided an ominous soundtrack on Monday as various military forces appeared to be jockeying for position in this strategic corner of northeastern Syria.

The now mostly abandoned town of Tal Tamr lies just outside the Turkish-controlled "safe zone" that Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, agreed last week to create.

Much of Tal Tamr's population has fled, fearing that clashes occurring closer to the Syrian-Turkish border will spread here. Tens of thousands of displaced people from towns and villages farther north have descended on Tal Tamr or passed through en route to safer areas farther south.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces leadership has said it would respect the Russian-Turkish deal hammered out last week and withdraw its troops to points about 20 miles south of the Syrian-

Turkish border by Tuesday. Kurdish forces have been seen pulling back in recent days.

On Monday, skirmishes between Kurdish-led forces and fighters allied with Turkey were reported about six miles north of here. Kurdish forces appeared to be digging in and were setting up observation posts and earthen berms near the line that is to divide Kurdish and Turkish-backed factions.

During the day, pickup trucks brought at least four wounded Kurdish fighters to a small hospital here. Several wounded Syrian government soldiers were also treated here before being transferred to a larger hospital in Hasakah, about 20 miles to the south.

Turkey launched cross-border offensive attacks on Oct. 9 across a broad swath of northern Syria, following President Trump's announcement of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the area. The United States had previously been in a military coalition with Syrian Kurdish forces against Islamic State militants.

The protracted military campaign to oust Islamic State from northeastern Syria resulted in the deaths of 11,000 Kurdish Syrian fighters and left 24,000 injured, the Kurds say. Posters with images of Kurdish "martyrs" lost in the campaign adorn roads and buildings throughout the region.

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But Turkey, a U.S. NATO ally, views the Syrian Kurdish militias as "terrorists" because of their close ties to Kurdish insurgents in southeastern Turkey. The Syrian Kurds, in turn, accuse Turkey of using Al Qaeda and Islamic State-linked Arab militants as its proxy forces in Syria.

Ankara seeks to create a security cordon along Turkey's southern border and a Turkish-controlled zone inside Syrian territory for the future relocation of Syrian refugees now residing in Turkey. A U.S.-brokered cease-fire was supposed to end the fighting between Turkish-allied forces and Kurdish-led troops.

However, clashes between Kurdish forces and Ankara's proxy fighters have been ongoing in the zone designated to be controlled by Ankara.

Meanwhile, some Syrian government forces have been arriving in the border area and appear to be coordinating with the Kurdish fighters. Damascus pulled most of its forces out of northeastern Syria in July 2012, as the government of President Bashar Assad was facing threats from rebel forces on various fronts.

Now, the Russian-Turkish deal envisions a return of Damascus' troops to northeastern Syria. The agreement calls for Syrian government forces and Russian military police to partner in patrolling certain border zones.

Displaced people — both Kurds and Arabs — continued to stream into this town. Kurdish authorities say the fighting has displaced more than 200,000 people, who have fled to the south or



An injured Syrian Arab girl is carried away after receiving medical treatment last week at a hospital in Tal Tamr. (Delil Souleiman / AFP/Getty Images)

into neighboring Iraq.

Schools here and in nearby towns were packed with people who fled from the Syrian border town of Ras al-Ayn and from nearby villages. Turkish-backed forces now control Ras al-Ayn, which has a majority-Kurdish population.

The Kurds accuse Ankara of carrying out ethnic cleansing in the border zone, forcing out traditional Kurdish populations and replacing them with Syrian Arab militants aligned with Ankara. Turkish officials deny the charge.

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"The Turks are bringing in the same Al Qaeda and Islamic State fighters; they are just changing their names," said Mohammed Bakr, 39, an ethnic Kurd blacksmith who fled with his wife and five children from Ras al-Ayn and was staying in a school here with his family. "They are stealing everything from the Kurds' homes and burning them to the ground," Bakr said. "And, if they catch us," he added, swiping his forefinger across his neck, "we are all dead."

Meanwhile, Syrian Kurdish forces killed the right-hand man and spokesman for the Islamic State group in a joint operation with U.S. troops in northern Syria, just hours after U.S. special forces killed the extremist group's leader Abu Bakr Baghdadi, a Kurdish commander said Monday.

Syrian locals near a destroyed truck where Abu Hassan Muhajir, the Islamic State group's spokesman, was reportedly killed in a raid in the northern Syrian village of Ayn al-Bayda near Jarabulus.

(Aref Tammawi / AFP via Getty Images)

The comments came a day after President Trump announced the killing of Baghdadi, a development that left Islamic State without an obvious leader — a major setback for a terrorist organization that in March was forced by American troops and Kurdish forces out of the last portion of its self-declared "caliphate," which once spanned a swath of Iraq and Syria.

Mazloun Abdi, the commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces, said his group's intelligence cooperated with the U.S. military Sunday to target Baghdadi's aide, Abu Hassan Muhajir, in a village near Jarabulus, a town in northwestern Syria. It was part of ongoing operations to hunt down Islamic State leaders, Abdi said.

If confirmed, the death would be another blow to Islamic State. U.S. officials had no immediate comment on the Syrian Kurdish claim or on the fate of Muhajir.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.



28/10/2019
By Morning Joe staff

Humanitarian Crisis Looming for the Kurds in Northern Syria

Dr. Dave Campbell

The Kurdish population in northern Syria faces the existential risk of displacement, harm and death. As large numbers of those living in Kurdistan along the Syrian-Turkish border are moved out of their homes by Turkish, Russian and Syrian forces, hundreds of thousands of Kurdish civilians are facing a humanitarian crisis of dramatic proportions. This is not the Kurds first encounter with forced expulsion from their homeland. Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's regime forced many to flee from cities to the mountains many years ago. This time the Kurds expulsion has been triggered by the abrupt withdrawal of United States military forces, after President Trump's announcement October 7. They are leaving regions of northern Syria they have called home for years.

In the expulsion process, Kurdish men, women and children are evacuating as refugees without a country to call home. As refugees they are non-combatants, with profound risk of inadequate food, lack of safe drinking water, scant if any medical care and marginal if any housing.

South Florida Sun Sentinel this Thursday reported the observations of a group of South Florida physicians just returned from the affected areas of Kurdistan, where they were providing both medical care and training to local doctors to create a sustainable improvement of health-care delivery once they vacated the region. Dr. Aaron Epstein who founded the humanitarian organization on the ground in Kurdistan, Global Surgical and Medical Support Group in 2014, was in Kurdistan when President Trump's abrupt military withdrawal caught everyone by surprise. He is now back at his emergency medicine residency training program in Buffalo, New York. He said, "Unfortunate timing in that we're all training and treating the Kurds when Trump made the decision to pull out."

The Sun Sentinel had previously reported on Turkey's President Erdogan staging the military offensive called, "Operation Peace Spring", that aimed to take control of the region which heretofore was home to hundreds of thousands of ethnic Kurds.

On Twitter, Mustafa Bali, the spokesman of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) wrote, "Turkish warplanes have started to carry out airstrikes on civilian areas. There is a huge panic among people of the region." The Sun Sentinel reported that the SDF, which has been the

main partner allied with the United States in defeating Islamic State, had controlled this homeland of the Kurds, in a large region along the north-eastern regions of Syria, along the Turkish border to the north.

As United States troops have departed Syria for other posts in the Middle East, the Kurds living in the northern reaches of Syria have come under increasing pressure to leave or face combat forces threatening sniper fire, bombs and incendiary devices.

Last Friday, The Guardian reported the United Nations (UN), is investigating alleged use of burning white phosphorus in Syria. The Kurdish Red Crescent has reported six people, some civilians, and children, hospitalized with mysterious burns. The UN has stated their chemical weapons inspectors are gathering information. The Guardian reported one chemical weapons expert that looked at the photographs of one victim and said it was likely they showed chemical burns.

Peter Beaumont with Guardian's Global Development desk reported white phosphorus to be a chemical weapon used in the past as part of the targeting of civilians in the Syrian civil war. He wrote, "WP is a chemical that burns fiercely in contact with air, producing thick acrid smoke and a white light... International humanitarian law allows the use of white phosphorus in munitions for making smoke to mask troop movement and for illumination purposes. Its use as an incendiary weapon is generally understood to be forbidden in all circumstances where there is a risk to civilians, i.e. against military targets located amid concentrations of civilians."

President Trump's U.S. brokered temporary ceasefire between the Kurdish people of northern regions of Syria and Turkey and now the promise of a permanent ceasefire is a fragile safety net for thousands looking for safety and the basic-necessities of life.

Representative Ted Lieu said on Twitter Wednesday, "Trump told the American people he was bringing our great soldiers and military home from Syria. Today in @HouseForeign, Ambassador Jeffrey confirmed that's not exactly true. Sadly, Trump's disastrous decision has resulted in a great loss for America, and a win for our enemies." He said in Congress, to Ambassador Jeffrey, "Turkish forces are slaughtering our allies the Kurds." The Washington Times (WT) reported on Wednesday that while Kurdish offi-

cials publicly remain grateful for the U.S. role in the ceasefire, neighboring Turkish and Syrian government forces, and those from Russia, are driving hundreds of thousands of Kurds, with no state of their own, from the regions they call home along the Turkish-Syrian border. WT also reported the combat offensive waged by the Turkish military against the Kurds has resulted in dozens of civilians being killed.

Since the start of Erdogan's Operation Peace Spring started, other reports place the number of injured and killed much higher. The New York Review (NYR) reported Wednesday some 235 civilians have been killed, including twenty-two children, with a further 677 people injured.

WT reports humanitarian observers saying that the fighting in the homelands of the Kurds in northern Syria has driven more than 200,000 people from their homes. This number of displaced Kurds in just the most recent refugee crisis of the long-standing Syrian civil war and has been independently confirmed by the NYR.

The New York Times (NYT) reported on Wednesday that since the humanitarian and refugee crisis began to unfold in Syria in 2011, Turkey, the large country to the north, a United States ally, has absorbed 3.6 million Syrian refugees and is host to the world's largest refugee population. This is compared to only one million Syrian refugees in all of Europe. While the current crisis may seem small in comparison, it is a humanitarian crisis early in its development. Many are concerned that it will get worse before it gets better.

Besides reports of incendiary devices, intentional targeting of journalists, humanitarian workers and other civilians, including Kurdish civilians, has caused an exodus from the regions. CNN reports international humanitarian workers with Doctors Without Borders, Mercy Corps and Save the Children all said that they had evacuated foreign staff.

Refugees fleeing northern Syria, besides the risk of burns, bullets and bombs, face the stress-related mental health illnesses of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and others. Uncertainty of when or how the next meal will arrive will be hovering like clouds over the refugees. And winter is rapidly approaching. Blankets, clothing and shelter are sure to be in short-supply as Kurdish refugees see the number of aid workers dwindle.

The mental health consequences of war and displacement from home are under-reported. On October 23, CBS This Morning presented Former President George W. Bush discussing how The Bush Center is working to address the problem on American soil. It's not a stretch to relate President Bush's message to the Kurdish civilian refugees, as thousands endure horrendous circumstances that will create long-lasting mental health consequences. Anxiety and fear of the unknown will be pervasive. Where will they go? Who will house them? How can the children be provided with enough food, water, healthcare, clothing and shelter? Will they be targeted by snipers, bombs or incendiary devices?

"The first step to addressing mental or brain health is also the bravest- asking for help," said President Bush. "In the time I have spent with men and women in the military, I have learned that the invisible wounds of war like post-trau-

matic stress can have a stigma." Kurds has been allies in the U.S. fight against ISIS. The atrocities committed by ISIS extremists against not just ethnic Kurds, but others that do not share their ideology created a bond between the United States troops and Kurdish people. Kurdish civilians are more like average American civilians going about their everyday lives than they are different.

President Trump this week announced from the White House that the cease-fire in Syria has held. "Over the last five days you have seen that a cease-fire that we established along Syria's border has held, and it has held very well, beyond most expectations," he said. "Early this morning the government of Turkey informed my administration that they would be stopping combat and their offensive in Syria and making the cease-fire permanent. I have therefore instructed the Secretary of the Treasury to lift all sanctions im-

posed on October 14 in response for Turkey's original offensive moves against the Kurds in Syria's northeast border region."

The White House @WhiteHouse this week reported, "Eight long years after President Obama's ill-fated push at regime change, U.S. troops are still on the ground in Syria. More than half a million people are dead, hundreds of thousands are terribly injured, and millions more Syrians are displaced."

It's important to humanize the Kurdish people victimized by the geo-political machinations of Syria, Turkey, Russia and the United States. Even though they are on the other side of the world from the United States, they are men and women striving for a country of their own, raising their children in a hostile environment with love, compassion and, above all, concern for the well-being of their loved ones.

 28/10/2019

Alors que les forces kurdes se retirent, la Turquie décide de réinstaller les Arabes syriens dans des régions évacuées

Alors que les forces kurdes abandonnent le nord de la Syrie, la Turquie entreprend rapidement de réinstaller des réfugiés syriens arabes dans la région, parfois avec force.

Les forces kurdes syriennes (SDF) continuent d'évacuer la région nord de la Syrie dans le cadre d'un accord négocié avec la Russie.

La Turquie a accusé jeudi les forces kurdes de rompre sporadiquement le cessez-le-feu. Le chef militaire SDF **Mazloum Abdi** insiste sur le fait que la milice SDF se retire et que ce sont les mandataires djihadistes turcs qui ont attaqué en premier. Des combats ont eu lieu à l'extérieur de la ville de Tal Tamr.

Jeudi, Abdi a félicité le gouvernement Trump pour avoir mis fin à "la brutale avance turque" et se prépare à se rendre à la Maison Blanche et au Congrès. Depuis mardi, l'armée russe patrouille à la frontière turco-syrienne.

Dans le même temps, Amnesty International rapporte que la Turquie transporte des réfugiés syriens de Turquie à destination de la Syrie sans la prétendue "zone de sécurité". La Turquie affirme que son déménagement est volontaire. "... Nos recherches montrent que les gens sont trompés ou obligés de revenir," **Anna Shea** des rapports du groupe Amnesty International. Les archives turques indiquent que 315 000 per-

sonnes sont rentrées volontairement en Syrie.

Amnesty International affirme que des personnes ont été battues ou menacées de violence ou d'emprisonnement à moins de signer des déclarations de «retour volontaire». Ces reportages font écho aux préoccupations exprimées précédemment par la fondation allemande Heinrich Böll à Istanbul, rapporte DW.

Selon des sources onusiennes, près de 200 000 personnes sont devenues des personnes déplacées à l'intérieur de leur propre pays depuis le lancement de l'offensive turque le 9 octobre, dont beaucoup ont cherché refuge au Kurdistan irakien.



28/10/2019
Nicolas Cheviron

Derrière l'intervention militaire en Syrie, la Turquie réprime ses Kurdes

Pendant que l'armée turque prend pied dans le nord-est de la Syrie pour mettre fin à l'expérience de l'entité kurde autonome du Rojava, la police et la justice mettent les bouchées doubles en Turquie pour démanteler l'opposition politique kurde.

Diyarbakir (Turquie), de notre envoyé spécial.

– « Elle est où la démocratie ? On vote aux élections, et puis on nous dit que notre choix ne compte pas. Elle est où la fraternité ? À la télé, ils disent que les Turcs et les Kurdes sont frères, mais en même temps on nous tue au Rojava. » Mahmut, le gardien d'immeuble, est amer. Après un silence, il entonne les slogans du sit-in : « Amed, réveille-toi, défends le Rojava ! » « Résistons, résistons, nous vaincrons ! »

Pour la première fois depuis le déclenchement, le 9 octobre, de l'opération militaire turque Source de paix, la police a autorisé vendredi une manifestation au pied des murailles de basalte de la vieille ville de Diyarbakir – Amed en kurde –, la plus grande municipalité kurde de Turquie, avec 1,7 million d'administrés.

Les autorités n'ont pas jugé bon de réprimer un défilé conduit par l'ensemble des députés du Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP, gauche et kurde), venus à Diyarbakir pour réclamer l'arrêt de l'intervention turque contre l'entité autonome à prédominance kurde du nord-est de la Syrie, mais aussi pour exiger la libération du maire HDP de la ville, Selçuk Mizrakli, arrêté et placé en détention provisoire trois jours plus tôt.

Elles ont en revanche affiché leur puissance en enfermant les 500 manifestants environ, dans un carré hermétique de boucliers des unités anti-émeutes. « Nous ne courberons pas l'échine, nous ne nous mettrons pas à genoux, a prévenu la coprésidente du parti Pervin Buldan, défiant les agents. Vous pouvez bien livrer nos villes à l'oppression, envoyer les élus kurdes en prison, essayer de voler les gains du peuple kurde, mais dès les prochaines élections, le peuple de Diyarbakir affirmera à nouveau sa volonté. »

À l'instar des édiles HDP des deux autres grandes villes du sud-est anatolien, Mardin et Van, Selçuk Mizrakli a d'abord été chassé de sa mairie sur ordre du ministre de l'intérieur, le 19 août, puis remplacé dans sa fonction par préfet de Diyarbakir. Chirurgien de 56 ans et père de trois enfants, il a ensuite été arrêté à son domicile lundi dernier à l'aube, avant d'être écroué le jour suivant pour des liens supposés avec la rébellion kurde du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Selon les informations données par ses

avocats, la procédure lancée contre le maire repose sur le témoignage d'un membre repent du PKK, arrêté en 2016 et à l'identité tenue secrète, qui l'accuse dans une déposition en date du 20 mars 2019, soit 11 jours avant les élections municipales remportées haut la main par Mizrakli (63 % des voix), d'avoir soigné un rebelle blessé dans la clinique où il officiait.

Les juristes pointent les incohérences apparentes du témoignage – blessé au ventre, le guérillero aurait quitté l'hôpital au lendemain de l'opération –, ainsi que son caractère indirect – le repent n'a pas directement assisté aux faits. Le timing des révélations pose également question. « Pourquoi le repent témoigne-t-il trois ans après son arrestation ? Pourquoi la justice a-t-elle attendu si longtemps pour arrêter Mizrakli ? Pourquoi lui a-t-on permis de participer à l'élection ? », interroge Mustafa Altıntop, président de la Fondation des droits de l'homme (TIHV) pour Diyarbakir. « Tout ce que veut l'État, c'est atteindre le HDP et légitimer la mise sous tutelle des villes », résume-t-il.

Selçuk Mizrakli rejoint ainsi en prison Gültan Kisanak, la précédente maire de Diyarbakir, incarcérée depuis trois ans. La première vague d'évictions-arrestations remonte en effet à l'automne 2016. Le DBP, parti apparenté au HDP, avait alors été dépossédé de 95 des 102 municipalités qu'il administrait, pour le même motif de collusion supposée avec le PKK.

Les élections municipales du 31 mars dernier lui ont permis de reconquérir 51 des mairies placées sous tutelle, et d'en remporter 64 au total. Mais plus du quart (18) lui ont depuis été reprises, soit par décision du Conseil électoral suprême (YSK), qui est revenu sur l'éligibilité qu'il avait pourtant prononcée pour six candidats victorieux du HDP, soit sur ordre du ministre de l'intérieur. Et l'intervention militaire contre le Rojava semble avoir précipité le mouvement, puisque sept mairies ont été placées sous tutelle depuis le 9 octobre.

Les réactions de la population à l'éviction de leurs maires ont été sévèrement réprimées par la police, faisant plusieurs blessés, dont deux députés HDP de Batman, hospitalisés après avoir été frappés à coups de matraque. 418 manifestants ont été placés en garde à vue dans la zone

kurde pour la seule journée du 19 août, selon le ministère de l'intérieur. Quatre jours plus tard, le nombre d'interpellations dépassait le millier, selon l'Association des droits de l'homme (IHD). Son président à Diyarbakir, Abdullah Zeytun, dénonce les graves atteintes à la liberté d'expression qui sont devenues le quotidien de la région depuis la rupture des négociations de paix entre l'État turc et le PKK, à l'été 2015, et les violents affrontements qui se sont ensuivis pendant un an au cœur des villes kurdes.

« Comme la plupart des organisations professionnelles, syndicales ou de défense des droits, nous ne pouvons plus organiser d'activités ou faire de déclarations en extérieur. L'état d'urgence a officiellement été levé à l'été 2018, mais dans la pratique, il est toujours là », commente-t-il. L'IHD était notamment responsable de manifestations hebdomadaires de mères réclamant que la lumière soit faite sur le sort de leurs enfants disparus, principalement dans les années 1990, et probablement victimes d'exécutions extrajudiciaires. Une récente tentative de rassemblement de ces « mères du samedi » a été empêchée par la police. « Quatre d'entre elles sont venues nous voir à la fondation après avoir été battues », indique Mustafa Altıntop, soulignant qu'il s'agissait de personnes âgées.

« Ce n'est pas la fin du Rojava, c'est maintenant que son avenir est en train de prendre forme »

Toutes les manifestations ne sont pourtant pas interdites à Diyarbakir. Depuis début septembre, un groupe de femmes assiege le quartier général du HDP, sous la protection bienveillante de la police. Venues des quatre coins du pays, Turques ou Kurdes, elles réclament la restitution de leurs enfants – un groupe hétéroclite composé de jeunes policiers et soldats faits prisonniers par le PKK, mais aussi de lycéens ou d'étudiants selon elles kidnappés par les rebelles, ou du moins subjugués par eux et convaincus de rejoindre la guérilla. « Mekiye était en deuxième année de lycée, ce sont ses camarades de classe qui l'ont trompée. Je ne sais pas comment ils ont fait, s'ils l'ont droguée ou quoi », témoigne ainsi Hüsnüye Kaya, une mère au foyer originaire de Diyarbakir, dont la fille a disparu quatre ans plus tôt. « Le HDP a rassemblé les jeunes ici, dans ce bâtiment, et le PKK les a emmenés », assure-t-elle.



Plusieurs centaines de manifestants kurdes dénoncent la détention du maire de Diyarbakir et l'intervention de l'armée turque au Rojava, le vendredi 25 octobre 2019 à Diyarbakir. © NC

Si Mustafa Altintop ne met pas en doute la douleur éprouvée par ces femmes, il dénonce l'exploitation de leur peine par le gouvernement à des fins de propagande. « Après la nomination des administrateurs judiciaires, l'État, pour donner une légitimité à ces derniers, a éprouvé le besoin de criminaliser encore davantage le HDP. Pour y parvenir, le meilleur recours qu'il a trouvé a été de convoquer la figure de la mère », explique-t-il, soulignant que le groupe avait refusé tout contact avec le HDP.

Criminalisation, éviction, répression : le HDP est à nouveau dans la ligne de mire du gouvernement depuis les élections municipales de mars. Pas seulement en raison des mairies qu'il a reconquises, mais aussi à cause de sa consigne de vote en faveur de tout parti pouvant vaincre la formation du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan, le parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, islamo-conservateur).

Le vote des Kurdes a ainsi permis au Parti républicain des peuples (CHP, social-démocrate) de conquérir plusieurs grandes villes – Adana, Antalya, Mersin, et surtout Istanbul, le centre économique du pays et la ville où le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan a bâti sa carrière. Selon l'homme d'affaires kurde Sah Ismail Bedirhanoglu, bien introduit dans les milieux conservateurs, c'est cette insistance à vouloir faire chuter l'AKP à Istanbul, alors que le gouvernement était allé jusqu'à faire fuiter une lettre du leader emprisonné du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, recommandant l'abstention aux Kurdes, qui est à l'origine de la vague actuelle de répression anti-HDP. « Öcalan a écrit cette lettre, ça veut dire que Erdogan était prêt à négocier. Il n'aurait pas placé des villes sous tutelle, il aurait libéré les prisonniers. Mais il a utilisé la carte Öcalan pour rien, et son charisme en a pris un coup, commente Bedirhanoglu. Au bout du

compte, qu'est-ce qu'on a obtenu ? Ekrem Imamoğlu [le nouveau maire d'Istanbul – ndlr] a gagné, d'accord, et il est venu nous offrir un poster d'Atatürk. Pour ça, on a sacrifié nos villes et nos politiciens. »

En dépit des coups qui lui sont portés, le HDP n'a pas l'intention d'infléchir sa ligne du « tout sauf Erdogan ». « Nous n'avons pas changé de stratégie. Ce qui comptait lors des dernières élections, c'était que les candidats de l'AKP et du MHP [son allié d'extrême droite – ndlr] ne gagnent pas, parce que ces deux partis soutiennent un régime autoritaire, affirme le coprésident du HDP, Sezai Temelli, interrogé à Diyarbakir par Mediapart. Le pouvoir persiste dans ses politiques belliqueuses, et nous, nous renouvelons notre appel. »

Encore faudra-t-il que la direction du HDP parvienne à convaincre sa base, passablement refroidie depuis que les autres partis d'opposition ont voté au Parlement la motion gouvernementale autorisant l'intervention militaire contre le Rojava. « En ce moment, les Kurdes sont en colère contre tous les partis. Erdogan a traité les Kurdes de terroristes et l'opposition a dit la même chose en votant cette motion, affirme Kader Uzun, conseillère municipale HDP de l'arrondissement de Sur. Ils nous ont laissés en plan pour suivre l'appel de la raison d'État. »

Le parti a jusqu'en 2023, date prévue des prochaines élections législative et présidentielle, pour resserrer les rangs. Sezai Temelli, en tout cas, ne croit pas dans la possibilité d'élections anticipées. « Erdogan maintient le pays dans une atmosphère d'urgence permanente, comme si des élections étaient imminentes. Mais il n'a aucune intention d'en organiser parce qu'il sait qu'au premier scrutin, il sera défait, estime le politicien. Tout l'enjeu pour lui est de s'assurer,

à coups d'ingénierie sociale, qu'il obtiendra 50 % des voix plus une en 2023. »

Entre le risque d'extinction du Rojava et leurs propres misères, l'avenir semble bien blafard pour les habitants de Diyarbakir. « Cela fait trente ans que je vis ici, et je n'ai jamais vu les gens aussi déprimés et désespérés, affirme Mustafa Altintop. Ils ne croient plus dans la justice, ils n'ont plus confiance dans les médias, leur foi dans les institutions est ébranlée et ils se sentent impuissants. » Ce sentiment d'impuissance est particulièrement vif concernant le Rojava, une région avec laquelle les habitants de Diyarbakir ont tissé des liens de solidarité au rythme des batailles – Kobané en 2014, Afrin en 2018 – et se sont découverts une communauté de destin. « Le Rojava, c'est un endroit qui signifie beaucoup de choses pour nous, estime ainsi Cenk, un jeune universitaire chassé de son poste en 2016 pour avoir signé une pétition demandant la paix dans le Sud-Est. C'était l'endroit où nous pourrions enfin être nous-mêmes, sans avoir à subir de pression. Je connais nombre de gens qui envisageaient de s'installer là-bas, des chercheurs victimes des purges qui projetaient d'y créer une université. J'y ai pensé aussi. »

Au vu de l'accord conclu le 22 octobre par Ankara et Moscou, qui ouvre la voie au maintien de troupes turques sur certaines portions du territoire du Rojava et la reprise en main d'autres secteurs frontaliers par les troupes de Damas, l'autonomie de la région semble sérieusement menacée. Pourtant, Sezai Temelli voit dans cette nouvelle situation des raisons d'espérer. « Ce n'est pas la fin du Rojava, c'est maintenant que son avenir est en train de prendre forme, affirme le leader du HDP. Jusque-là, le Rojava se développait de manière isolée, en marge du jeu des relations internationales. Désormais, il est au centre des attentions du monde entier. » « États-Unis, Russie, Damas, tout le monde est à présent convaincu qu'au moment de décider de l'avenir de la Syrie, les Kurdes doivent être à la table des discussions », poursuit le politicien, qui dit croire dans la possibilité d'une solution fédérale pour le Rojava.

Souvent critique du HDP, Sah Ismail Bedirhanoglu partage cette fois l'optimisme mesuré de Temelli : « Mazlum Kobani [le chef des troupes du Rojava – ndlr], qui n'était qu'un commandant que rien ne distinguait, est maintenant appelé général dans le monde entier. Il est respecté. Les sénateurs américains et Trump l'invitent aux États-Unis. Je pense que les Russes vont faire de même. » Et l'homme d'affaires de commenter : « Si les Kurdes parviennent à bien pratiquer la realpolitik, s'ils ne se laissent pas emporter par leurs idéaux et leurs rêves fantastiques, ils peuvent sortir gagnants de la situation. »

Turkey dismisses 14th Kurdish mayor over terror-related charges

Turkish authorities on Monday dismissed the mayor of Cizre district in the south-eastern province of Şırnak citing terror-related charges, pro-Kurdish Mezopotamya news agency [reported](#).

Turkey's Interior Ministry turned over pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) mayor Mehmet Zırığ's duties to the government-appointed district governor.

Zırığ was dismissed over an ongoing trial in which he is accused of being a member of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and an investigation over his social media posts, Mezopotamya said.

The Turkish government has dismissed and arrested numerous HDP mayors from Turkey's predominantly Kurdish regions since the March 31 local elections this year over alleged links to the PKK, which has been fighting for Kurdish self-rule in Turkey since 1984 and which Ankara considers a terrorist group.



Last week, the courts ruled for the arrest of Cihan Karaman, the mayor of the eastern province of Hakkari, and Remziye Yaşar and İrfan Sarı, the co-mayors of the province's Yüksekova district.

The mayors of three predominantly-Kurdish eastern provinces, Van, Mardin and Diyarbakır

were ousted on terrorism charges and replaced with state-appointed governors [in August](#).

Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) government has taken aim at the HDP since talks to solve a 30-year conflict with the PKK failed in 2015.

Turkish court acquits dismissed Kurdish mayor Ahmet Türk

A Turkish court on Friday has acquitted Kurdish politicians Ahmet Türk, dismissed mayor of the southeastern Mardin province, and Necla Yıldırım, former mayor of Mardin's Mazıdağı district, pro-Kurdish news agency Mezopotamya reported on Friday.

The case had been cited as one of the reasons for dismissal in the interior ministry's decision to remove Türk from his seat as mayor in 2016 and again in 2019 after his re-election. The decision to dismiss Yıldırım in 2016 also referred to the same case.

Türk and Yıldırım, as well as other members of the pro-Kurdish opposition Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), faced charges of terrorist propaganda for attending the funeral ceremony of a member of the Syrian-Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which Turkey considers to be the Syrian wing of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

All charges against Türk were politically motivated, Türk's lawyer Erdal Kuzu was quoted by Mezopotamya as saying during the hearing.



Türk's attendance to the funeral did not constitute any act of violence or praise of the YPG, and served the purpose of offering condolences to the family who were Türk's constituents, Kuzu said. "A prison sentence could lead to the punishment of all people in the region."

The interior ministry has removed from office 23

of the 65 HDP mayors since the local elections in March 2019, on allegations of terrorism ranging from propaganda to leadership, while a total of 95 mayors elected from HDP's sister Democratic Regions Party (DBP) were removed from office following the breakdown of a peace process between Turkey and the PKK in 2015.

HUFFPOST 29/10/2019

C'est grâce à un sous-vêtement volé qu'al-Baghdadi a pu être identifié avant le raid

TERRORISME - Un agent des forces kurdes en Syrie a dérobé un sous-vêtement appartenant au **chef du groupe État islamique (EI)** pour effectuer des tests ADN et confirmer son identité avant le raid américain qui l'a tué, a indiqué lundi un haut responsable kurde.

Le président **Donald Trump** a annoncé dimanche la mort du chef de l'EI, Abou Bakr al-Baghdadi, dans un raid américain qui a pris pour cible la maison où il se trouvait dans le nord-ouest de la Syrie.

Les forces kurdes en Syrie, alliées de Washington dans la lutte antijihadistes, avaient déjà indiqué que le raid était "le résultat d'un travail conjoint des renseignements avec les États-Unis".

Polat Can, un haut conseiller des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), alliance dominée par les combattants kurdes, a donné lundi les détails de cette collaboration.

"Depuis le 15 mai, nous travaillions avec la CIA pour suivre Baghdadi et le surveiller de près", a-t-il dit sur son compte Twitter. "Une de nos sources a été capable d'atteindre la maison où Baghdadi se cachait", a-t-il poursuivi.

"Notre propre source, qui avait été capable d'arriver jusqu'à Baghdadi, a ramené un de ses sous-vêtements pour mener un test ADN et vérifier à 100% que la personne en question était bien Baghdadi", selon lui.



Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

Photo prise d'un drone de l'endroit où s'est déroulée l'opération qui a mené à la mort d'al-Baghdadi en Syrie.

Le conseiller a assuré que l'offensive lancée par la Turquie le 9 octobre contre les forces kurdes dans le nord syrien avait retardé l'opération, soulignant toutefois que son succès était largement dû au travail de renseignement des forces kurdes.

"Notre source de renseignement était impliquée dans l'envoi des coordonnées (...), participant à

l'opération jusqu'à la dernière minute pour en faire un succès", a-t-il ajouté.

En annonçant la mort d'Abou Bakr al-Baghdadi, le président Trump a remercié les forces kurdes pour le rôle qu'elles avaient joué, sans élaborer. Le corps du chef de l'EI a été immergé en mer, a indiqué un responsable du Pentagone lundi.

L'OBS 29/10/2019
avec l'AFP

Des combats éclatent dans le nord de la Syrie entre forces du régime et de la Turquie

Après le départ des Kurdes, les troupes de Bachar al-Assad se retrouvent désormais à proximité de soldats turcs.

De « violents combats » ont opposé mardi dans le nord de la Syrie les forces du régime de Damas à celles de la Turquie, pour la première fois depuis le déclenchement le 9 octobre d'une offensive turque dans la zone frontalière, a rapporté une ONG.

Des tirs d'artillerie des forces d'Ankara ont visé les troupes du régime syrien et des « combats à la mitrailleuse » se déroulaient dans la matinée

aux abords du village d'Al-Assadiya, près de la frontière syro-turque, selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH), qui rapporte six blessés parmi les forces du régime.

Il s'agit des « premiers combats » entre les deux camps depuis le lancement de l'offensive d'Ankara pour chasser de la zone les forces kurdes, d'après l'OSDH.

Combats sporadiques

Cette offensive a contraint les forces kurdes à amorcer un rapprochement avec le régime de Bachar al-Assad, lui-même soutenu sur le terrain par la Russie.

Les derniers développements ont largement profité à Assad, qui a pu déployer des troupes dans des parties du nord qui lui échappaient depuis des années.



Des soldats turcs à la frontière syrienne, le 27 octobre 2019. (NAZEER AL-KHATIB / AFP)

Celles-ci se retrouvent désormais à proximité de soldats turcs. Ces dernières semaines, des affrontements sporadiques avaient déjà opposé les forces du régime aux supplétifs syriens participant à l'offensive d'Ankara.

Ces supplétifs entraînés et financés par la Turquie sont d'anciens rebelles qui se concentraient autrefois dans la lutte contre Assad.

Officiellement, l'offensive d'Ankara est à l'arrêt depuis un accord entre la Russie et la Turquie le

22 octobre, même si des combats sporadiques ont été signalés depuis autour de la ville frontalière de Ras al-Aïn.

L'Obs avec AFP

LE FIGARO

29/10/2019
avec l'AFP

La Turquie condamnée pour violation de la liberté d'expression d'une pro-kurde

La Turquie a violé la liberté d'expression d'une responsable du parti pro-kurde modéré DTP en la condamnant pour un discours évoquant le PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), sans vérifier son contenu exact, a estimé mardi 29 octobre la Cour européenne des droits de l'Homme.

Les juges de la CEDH avaient été saisis par cette membre du conseil d'administration du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), Hatice Çoban, qui avait été condamnée à une peine de prison pour propagande en faveur d'une organisation terroriste à la suite d'un discours prononcé en 2007 au cours d'une manifestation. Hatice Çoban avait souligné que les policiers qui surveillaient

la manifestation avaient déformé ses propos et signalé la divergence entre le contenu de son discours publié dans les journaux et celui retransmis dans leur procès-verbal. Elle assurait que son discours portait sur «*la nécessité de la résolution du problème kurde par des moyens démocratiques et pacifiques*», relate la CEDH dans un communiqué. Les juges de la CEDH ont estimé que la justice turque n'avaient pas examiné sérieusement le contenu du discours, principal élément de preuve dans cette affaire, et avaient donc violé la liberté d'expression de Hatice Çoban.

Organisation classée «*terroriste*» par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne,

le PKK mène une sanglante guérilla contre Ankara depuis 1984. En janvier 2016, la CEDH avait déjà condamné la Turquie pour la dissolution fin 2009 du parti DTP, principale formation politique pro-kurde, qu'elle jugeait trop proche du PKK. Cette dissolution, ordonnée par la Cour constitutionnelle turque, avait enfreint le droit d'association garanti par la Convention européenne des droits de l'Homme, avait estimé à l'unanimité la CEDH. Quelques mois avant sa dissolution, en mars 2009, le DTP avait remporté 5,70% des voix aux élections locales, devenant la 4^e force politique du pays, et la première dans le Sud-Est du pays.



29/10/2019
Par Julie Salabert

Les Kurdes d'Irak s'organisent pour le Rojava

Loin de l'agitation médiatique des puissances qui s'arrangent entre elles, les Kurdes irakiens organisent une collecte nationale pour apporter l'aide nécessaire aux 300000 réfugiés du Rojava. Pour eux, il n'a jamais été question que la guerre cesse.

Depuis le début de l'offensive turque, la cour d'Amna Suraka, la Prison rouge, ne désemplit pas. Camionnettes, voitures et taxi déversent des denrées alimentaires et de premières nécessités, de manière régulière et ininterrompue, aux portes du musée. Prises en charge par la centaine de bénévoles présents, les marchandises transitent de bras en bras. Elles sont d'abord comptabilisées, sommairement stockées et enfin acheminées vers des camions. « Une vingtaine sont déjà partis » annonçait dès le début de l'opération, Adji Afrini, responsable des réfugiés kurdes du Rojava de Sulaymaniah, la capitale culturelle du Kurdistan irakien.

Représentant élu depuis 7 ans par ses compatriotes, il représente les 40000 réfugiés kurdes syriens auprès des autorités locales. Depuis le début de l'offensive turque contre le Rojava, M. Afrini collabore étroitement avec plusieurs organisations de la société civile dans une opération humanitaire d'envergure. Initiée par KurdSat, l'une des plus importantes chaînes de télévision de la région, elle rassemble plusieurs organisations phares – et malheureusement aguerries – de l'aide envers les réfugiés et les populations en difficultés. « Toutes sont réunies pour transmettre un message de paix », insiste M. Alain, directeur de l'université polytechnique de Sulaymaniyah et invité de KurdSat. La télévision lancée en 2000 par Hero Ibrahim Ahmed, veuve du très aimé Jalal Talabani, chef historique du PUK et ancien président d'Irak, a installé un studio dans la cour du musée afin de faire des appels aux dons en direct. Les personnalités politiques et culturelles du Kurdistan se relaient ainsi au micro des journalistes. « Hier, nous avons demandé aux entreprises de nous aider, et aujourd'hui par exemple une entreprise de nettoyage de la ville a envoyé ses salariés ici », expose une bénévole de l'association humanitaire irakienne CDO, le visage tiré par la fatigue accentuée par la chaleur déjà intense de la matinée.

Malgré l'annonce du cessez-le-feu



Des unités féminines et masculines de Peshmergas sont venues prêter main forte pour transporter les marchandises dans les camions.

annoncé en grande pompe par l'administration américaine mi-octobre, le ballet incessant de l'aide humanitaire n'a pas cessé. « Les Américains ne sont pas nos alliés », expose brièvement Baktyiar Kadir Mirza, guide au musée. M. Afrini poursuit : pour lui, aucun espoir ne réside dans l'accord américain. La guerre va continuer, cela ne fait pas de doute. D'autres personnes sont plus virulentes, comme cet ancien peshmerga pour qui Erdogan et Trump travaillent main dans la main pour chasser les Kurdes en évitant les pertes militaires turques. « Il y a eu beaucoup de mort de leur côté. Mais de notre côté, nous ne capitulerons pas », prévient-il. Qu'en est-il de leurs positions sur l'accord signé entre la Russie et Ankara ? Tous s'accordent à dire que le conflit va s'enliser, les grands perdants de ces accords étant les Kurdes, ils ne sont pas acceptables.

Symbole de la résistance du peuple kurde, la Prison rouge est une ancienne prison du régime de Saddam Hussein, aujourd'hui musée et haut lieu culturel de la ville. Des milliers de Kurdes y ont été torturés et exécutés lors de l'opération génocidaire

Anfal entre 1986 et 1989. Les Peshmergas, milice kurde formée de résistants à l'oppression du régime baasssiste, l'ont libérée en 1991. C'est donc tout un symbole que tous se retrouvent ici, avec un sentiment partagé d'appartenir à une seule et même entité : le Kurdistan. On trouve ainsi l'association humanitaire irakienne CDO, l'association *Self Children*, les anciens prisonniers et résistants de *Friadass* et enfin la *fondation Ibrahim Ahmad*, du nom du père de l'ancienne première dame d'Irak, initiateur du PUK avec Jalal Talabani, son beau-fils. Sous la houlette du directeur des lieux, le caricaturiste Ako Ghareb, tous travaillent de concert pour pallier l'urgence que vivent les déplacés.

Fief du PUK, Sulaymaniah, au Sud du Kurdistan irakien, est une base arrière pour la lutte qui se joue actuellement au Rojava. Sans que le parti de Jalal Talabani, mort l'année dernière, ne prennent officiellement de position, la population, elle, soutient la lutte armée en Syrie. « Nous ne pouvons pas faire de déclaration officielle comme les pays européens », explique sous le sceau de l'anonymat un homme politique de la

région. « Notre État n'est pas assez fort pour se heurter à la Turquie ». Pour preuve, les bombardements turcs désormais quasi quotidiens dans la région de Qandil, au Nord du Kurdistan, base arrière du PKK, parti kurde turc contre lequel Erdogan mène une lutte féroce depuis des années. Les idées développées par son leader charismatique Abdullah Öcalan sont à la base du système politique mis en place au Rojava : le communalisme. Il s'agit d'un pouvoir décentralisé transcendant les divisions basées sur le sexe, l'origine ethnique et la religion. D'où l'intervention de la Turquie au Rojava : elle considère le Parti de l'union démocratique (PYD) et ses branches armées – les Unités de protection du peuple (YPG) et les Unités de protection de la femme (YPJ) – comme des mouvements terroristes qu'il faut éradiquer. Turquie, Syrie, Irak, là où le PKK égraine, le régime d'Erdogan intervient militairement.

Les positions diamétralement opposées des deux partis historiques du Kurdistan irakien, le PDK et le PUK brouillent un peu plus les pistes. Partisan d'Ankara, le PDK soutiendrait la Turquie dans sa lutte anti-PKK en autorisant l'armée à accéder au Nord du Kurdistan irakien, son fief. Le PUK, lui, basé au Sud, aurait envoyé de manière officieuse des peshmergas des unités spéciales, en soutien aux YPG. Des jeunes volontaires sont également partis au front, comme en attestent les nombreuses publications sur les réseaux sociaux. Mais aucune voix officielle ne s'aventure à faire des annonces. C'est donc la société civile qui se mobilise et émet de virulentes dénonciations de la nouvelle entrave faite à la liberté du peuple kurde.

À l'heure des négociations avec les puissances turques, américaines et russes, les Kurdes d'Irak ne croient pas à une résolution du conflit. « Les Kurdes ne lâcheront pas leur territoire. Le risque est l'enlèvement dans une guérilla, comme ce qui se passe à Afrin », prévient un ancien combattant des YPG.

Russia to mediate deal between Syrian Kurds and Damascus

After leaving locals in northeastern Syria in the dark until two days before the end of a six-day day cease-fire, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) released a statement on Oct. 27 agreeing to the most controversial term of a Turkish-Russian agreement worked out in Sochi and signed Oct. 22: The SDF would withdraw 30 kilometers (18 miles) from the Turkish border. Immediately after the announcement, the SDF began to redeploy from positions along the 273-mile Turkey-Syria border to make room for joint Russian-Turkish patrols 10 kilometers (6 miles), inside Syrian territory, while Damascus took control along the border.

The decision to withdraw came as a surprise. Only one day before, Fanar al-Gait, deputy co-chair of foreign relations for the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (NES), had told Al-Monitor. "The Turkish-Russian deal includes a number of conditions we refuse to fulfill, such as the withdrawal of our security forces 30 kilometers from the border."

When initially faced with the threat of renewed Turkish aggression, the SDF had put the need to prevent Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's further expansion into Syrian territory first, Nisren Abdullah, commander and spokesperson for the Kurdish Women's Protection Unit, told Al-Monitor. "It was a difficult decision, as we were not consulted when Russia struck the Sochi deal with Turkey," she said. "However, we have to protect our people and chose diplomacy over war."

Gait added, "Now that we have agreed on the military aspects of the deal, Russia is to facilitate a new round of negotiations between the Autonomous Administration and the Syrian regime. We expect them to start once the SDF's withdrawal is complete."

NES has for now made sure that local administrations and Asayish, the Kurdish internal security force, remain in place within the area evacuated by the SDF. For residents, this means that their daily lives have not been significantly disrupted thus far. In the long run, however, Damascus wants to reestablish its authority over the totality of Syrian territory.

Negotiations between Damascus and the Autonomous Administration have been ongoing, but inconclusive, said Gait. "During our attempts, we submitted a number of concrete proposals for a decentralized Syria, but Damascus did not take us seriously. This is why we need an intermediary," he asserted.

Since US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw American troops from northeastern Syria, Russia has emerged as the main mediator

in the Autonomous Administration's conflicts with Ankara and with Damascus. The Kurdish leadership, however, remains cautious about Russia's new role as sole mediator. The Kurds regard the Sochi deal negotiated by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Erdogan as highly detrimental to their goals — for instance, maintaining a certain degree of internal autonomy within Syria and liberating areas currently occupied by pro-Turkish militias (Ras al-Ain, Tell Abyad — and Moscow remains Damascus' closest ally.

"We would prefer to include more parties in the negotiations, such as the United Nations," said Gait. "We consider this a safer and more stable option, but although we have been in contact with a number of countries over the last two weeks, they did not take any substantial action."

The most concrete effort came from Germany, where on Oct. 22 Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer proposed establishing an international security zone along the Syrian-Turkish border. Her idea was met with resistance both at home and abroad and was ultimately put on ice after German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas visited Ankara on Oct. 26. The Autonomous Administration's main objective remains to avoid losing internal autonomy.

"Although we are accepting the regime's mandate to protect the integrity of its borders, we do not agree with direct interference in our affairs" Hikmet Habib, deputy co-chair of the Syrian Democratic Council, told Al-Monitor. "We want the democratic autonomous administration to stay in place, as a part of the Syrian nation."

Meanwhile, Abdullah asserted, "The government has to enshrine the rights of the country's minorities in the constitution. During the war, we protected our country's borders. Our martyrs are Syrian, and the Syrian government should acknowledge their sacrifice."

The launch of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva on Oct. 30 represents a disappointment for the Kurdish leadership. The Autonomous Ad-



Sputnik/Mikhail Klimentyev/Kremlin via REUTERS
Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomes Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Sochi, Russia, May 17, 2018.

ministration has, so far, been excluded from the political process to amend Syria's constitution.

"Millions of Syrians are excluded from the debate, which is led by Ankara, Moscow and Damascus," Gait remarked. "But to secure peace, the constitution should be a consensual text."

"To this day," Gait added, "[Syrian President] Bashar al-Assad is pushing for the return of the central administration to northeast Syria pretty much as it was before the war started in 2011. To reach that objective, we are afraid that certain decision-makers in Damascus still favor the military solution over the political one. We hope that they are not strong enough to go down that road and that we will avoid an armed conflict."

According to Abdullah, at the moment, the regime's military strength is being tested by Turkish-backed forces in the northeast. Since the SDF's decision to withdraw as per the Sochi agreement, the regime's military has been struggling to resist assaults by the militias trying to expand beyond Ras al-Ain and Tell Abyad.

"The Syrian regime is now in charge of protecting our borders, however, Turkish-backed militias continue to take over more Syrian territory," said Abdullah. "This shows that Ankara doesn't respect the regime's military forces."

For the last two days, the Syrian army has suffered a lot of casualties given the superior military equipment of the pro-Turkish militias. Abdullah remarked, "Russia brokered the deal with Turkey. The Assad regime agreed to come in and take over the border. Now we will see if Russia is able to guarantee that the deal works on the ground."

Le Monde 30/10/2019
Par Marie Jégo et Allan Kaval

Dans le nord-est de la Syrie, l'intervention de la Russie n'évite pas les accrochages

Conformément à l'accord entre Moscou et Ankara, les forces kurdes ont achevé leur retrait, mardi. Mais des affrontements ont opposé l'armée turque aux forces de Damas, causant la mort de six soldats syriens.

L'officier de la police militaire russe a l'air préoccupé. Dans l'habitacle de son tout-terrain blindé, portière ouverte, sa voix s'agace au téléphone. Le convoi de trois véhicules qui comprend un autre blindé léger et un transport de troupes, drapeau russe dans le vent d'automne, s'est arrêté dans une rue de la petite ville kurde de Derbassiyé.

Cette localité, que les pluies de la nuit ont recouverte de boue et que l'offensive menée par Ankara – lancée dans le nord du pays – a privée d'une partie de ses habitants, abrite un poste-frontière avec la Turquie. Au bout de la rue où les militaires russes se sont arrêtés, au-dessus du no man's land, flotte le rouge du drapeau turc. On distingue là-bas, à quelques centaines de mètres, des silhouettes gris et vert, tendues sur leurs armes, des soldats de l'armée turque.

Quelques membres des forces de sécurité intérieure kurdes accompagnent le convoi, semblant tout ignorer de sa destination finale.

« Les Russes nous ont ramené la paix »

La présence des véhicules russes attire des habitants de la petite ville kurde qui vivent dans l'angoisse d'une reprise des combats. « Cela fait des semaines qu'on ne pouvait plus approcher de ce quartier sans se faire tirer dessus par des snipers turcs ! Les Russes nous ont ramené la paix, on est vraiment rassurés de les voir ici ! », confie dans un sourire un jeune trentenaire kurde, gérant d'un bureau de change, bras dessus bras dessous avec un ami.

Leur fait-il plus confiance qu'aux Américains ? « Tout ça nous dépasse. Le principal, c'est que les Turcs ne tirent plus ! » Dans le nord de la Syrie, un jour de paix, c'est toujours ça de pris. A chaque jour suffit sa peine.

Le délai imparti aux forces kurdes syriennes pour quitter les zones frontalières sous peine d'une reprise de l'offensive – tel qu'il a été prévu le 22 octobre par les accords de Sotchi entre la Russie et la Turquie – a expiré. La police militaire russe, qui a été renforcée mardi dans le nord-est de la Syrie par de nouveaux contingents tchéchènes, patrouille désormais sur la frontière dont les environs sont aussi ponctués de nouveaux postes de l'armée syrienne.



Patrouille de la police militaire russe accompagnée par les forces de sécurité intérieure kurdes, à Derbassiyé (Syrie), le 29 octobre. LAURENCE GEAI POUR « LE MONDE »

Le long de la route qui relie les localités limitrophes de la Turquie au sud du mur de béton érigé par Ankara entre les deux pays, le drapeau du régime de Damas a fait son retour après plus de sept années d'absence.

Mais au poste-frontière vers lequel le convoi russe a repris son parcours, les drapeaux du mouvement kurde, les portraits de son chef emprisonné en Turquie, Abdullah Öcalan, sont toujours là. L'officier de la police militaire est accompagné de ses hommes, qui se parlent en



En face de la petite ville kurde de Derbassiyé, la Turquie. Des soldats turcs sont en position. LAURENCE GEAI POUR « LE MONDE »



Un blessé est pris en charge dans l'hôpital de Derbassiyé, le 29 octobre. D'autres sont transférés vers l'hôpital d'Hassaké. LAURENCE GEAI POUR « LE MONDE »

tchéchène, et des membres des forces kurdes de sécurité, foulards à fleurs autour du cou.

Lourdes pertes pour les forces de Damas

Il a ouvert la barrière et entre à présent dans la zone frontalière. Dans son uniforme sable, l'officier en fin de carrière, lesté d'un embonpoint respectable, marche d'un pas assuré vers le territoire turc, signalé par une dizaine de paires de bottes militaires.

Mais derrière lui une détonation retentit. Grenade venue du côté turc ? L'explosion est limitée, mais la confusion règne et le bruit brûlant du projectile fait place aux cris des blessés. Un homme saigne à la tête, un autre, pantalon en sang, est porté par deux comparses. Quatre civils ont reçu des éclats de projectile. Ils recevront les premiers soins à l'hôpital de la ville.

Les officiers russes devaient rencontrer les militaires turcs et comparer leurs cartes militaires dans le cadre de l'effort conjoint de surveillance de la frontière. L'incident, bien que léger, signale une mise en œuvre pour le moins heurtée...

Au même moment, à une cinquantaine de kilomètres, les forces du régime, alliées de Moscou, essayaient, elles, des pertes importantes lors de leurs premiers affrontements directs avec les forces turques.

Cinq soldats syriens ont été tués mardi par des « tirs d'artillerie » turcs, et un sixième a été « exécuté » par les rebelles pro-Turcs près du village d'Al-As-sadiya, à moins de dix kilomètres de la frontière, selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme (OSDH). Des faits d'années attribués à la Brigade Sultan Murad, composée de djihadistes turkmènes armés, entraînés et payés par la Turquie. Au cours

de ces affrontements, quatorze soldats syriens ont été capturés par les supplétifs pro-Turcs. L'information a été divulguée par un Tweet du ministère turc de la défense, selon lequel dix-huit soldats syriens au total sont actuellement retenus en otages par les rebelles.

Les affrontements meurtriers de mardi n'ont suscité ni déclaration ni commentaire, même pas une ligne dans les médias, à Ankara comme à Moscou.



Une détonation retentit, faisant des blessés parmi les civils à Derbassiyé, le 29 octobre. LAURENCE GEAI POUR « LE MONDE »

Sur le terrain, les accrochages sont légion

En pleine réalisation de leur « partenariat stratégique », les présidents russe Vladimir Poutine et turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan veulent croire en l'accord scellé le 22 octobre à Sotchi. La rencontre avait pourtant d'emblée démarré sur une fausse note, M. Poutine demandant à M. Erdo-

gan de remballer la carte du nord-est de la Syrie que celui-ci venait de lui mettre sous le nez, mais, après d'après discussions, un accord avait fini par voir le jour.

Les forces kurdes l'ont respecté à la lettre. Le Kremlin a informé mardi le palais présidentiel à Ankara que leur retrait avait bien eu lieu. « Il s'est terminé plus tôt que prévu », s'est même félicité le ministre de la défense russe Sergueï Choïgou.

Il s'agit de contenter l'allié turc, ulcéré par le contact que M. Choïgou a dû établir ces derniers jours, via Skype, avec Mazloum Kobane Abdi, le responsable des forces kurdes de Syrie, pour discuter du retrait. La séquence a été montrée par les télévisions russes, suscitant l'ire des commentateurs de la presse turque, dépités par cette prise de contact « avec un terroriste ».

Des pourparlers russo-turcs ont débuté lundi à Ankara, où les patrouilles conjointes sont discutées entre militaires. « Elles vont bientôt commencer », s'est réjoui mardi soir Hulusi Akar, le ministre de la défense turc.

Leur efficacité reste à démontrer. Sur le terrain, les accrochages sont légion malgré l'arrêt, annoncé mais jamais vraiment réalisé, de l'offensive turque en cours depuis le 9 octobre. Au fur et à mesure que les forces loyalistes syriennes avancent, elles se retrouvent au contact de l'armée turque et de ses mercenaires syriens, avides d'en découdre avec elles.

Et alors que les Turcs et leurs alliés syriens ont à leur disposition de l'artillerie lourde, un appui aérien, des drones, les forces de Damas – des « gardes-frontières » selon les termes de l'accord de Sotchi – apparaissent bien démunies. La Russie ne leur offre aucune couverture aérienne, laissant la pleine maîtrise des airs à la Turquie.

Erdogan l'éradicateur, Le Point ne lâche rien

Dans son numéro du 24 octobre 2019, *Le Point* a sorti un dossier sur le président turc Erdogan et ses agissements à l'encontre des Kurdes en Syrie, en particulier depuis le lancement de l'opération "Source de paix" le 9 octobre. Pour illustrer son dossier, le journal a tiré sa Une, "l'éradicateur", déplaçant fortement au principal intéressé. Le retour du crime de "lèse-majesté"

En réponse, son avocat a déposé plainte auprès du bureau du procureur général d'Ankara, pour "insulte au chef de l'Etat". Plusieurs milliers de personnes ont déjà été poursuivies en Turquie pour ce motif depuis son élection en 2014.

En France, où la liberté d'expression n'est cependant pas toujours au goût du jour (voir la sinistre loi Avia), le délit d'offense au chef de l'Etat a été supprimé depuis 2013.

Par cette plainte, sont visés plus précisément le rédacteur en chef "international" du *Point*, Romain Gubert, et Etienne Gernelle, le directeur de l'hebdomadaire. Après les attaques de Français contre la liberté d'expression comme cela a été le cas récemment avec Zemmour, c'est maintenant un pays étranger qui s'en prend à elle.

Cette attaque n'est pas une première, puisqu'en mai 2018, suite à la Une du *Point* qualifiant Erdogan

de "dictateur", l'arrachage d'archives du journal ainsi que des menaces envers les kiosquiers avaient eu lieu.

La rhétorique fumeuse du porte-parole du président Erdogan

Le porte-parole du président, Ibrahim Kalin, s'en est pris sur Twitter à la "La France qui a colonisé de nombreux pays africains comme l'Algérie et le Maroc, qui a massacré des milliers de personnes, pratiqué le commerce des esclaves et qui a regardé le génocide au Rwanda".

Un peu culotté, après l'esclavage massif sous l'Empire ottoman, la colonisation de nombreux pays par ce dernier et le génocide arménien. La repentance à sens unique est devenue une véritable arme de guerre idéologique.

Le Point ne lâche rien

Le Point assure cependant ne rien

lâcher face aux "pulsions de censure" d'Erdogan, déjà réputé pour son manque de respect de la liberté de la presse dans son propre pays. La Turquie a d'ailleurs été classée 157e sur 180 dans le classement mondial de la liberté de la presse 2019 de Reporters sans frontières.

Le Syndicat des éditeurs de la presse magazine (SEPM) a aussi fait part de son soutien et annoncé se tenir "indéfectiblement aux côtés du *Point* et de toute sa rédaction". Il dénonce aussi un "acte qui, au mieux relève d'une procédure bâillon, au pire d'un véritable acte d'intimidation en vue de tarir tout discours critique sur le régime du président Erdogan".

Cette fois, la presse ne semble donc pas se dégonfler pour défendre la liberté d'expression. On peut regretter que cela ne soit pas plus souvent et uniquement face à des ennemis extérieurs, éditeurs encore un effort !



Ni censure, ni shadow banning, pas d'algorithme alambiqué, et nous ne revendrons pas vos données : le meilleur moyen de ne rater aucune de nos publications. Essayez !

États-Unis. Génocide arménien : la colère de la presse turque

Le Congrès américain a voté coup sur coup deux résolutions reconnaissant le génocide arménien et demandant des sanctions contre la Turquie pour la guerre qu'elle mène contre les Kurdes en Syrie. La reconnaissance du génocide par la Chambre des représentants américaine, advenue le jour même du 96^e anniversaire de la commémoration de la création de la République turque, est perçue comme une provocation par Ankara et déchaîne la colère de la majorité de la presse. Une décision qui intervient dans un contexte de tension entre la Turquie et son allié américain autour de l'invasion turque contre les Kurdes de Syrie. Un éditorialiste du quotidien islamo-nationaliste *Yeni Safak* assène :

Ce n'est pas un hasard du calendrier si ce mensonge vieux d'un

siècle ressurgit maintenant que la Turquie enregistre des succès dans la région. [...] On essaye de punir la Turquie en utilisant l'histoire, mais cette décision n'est pour nous qu'un abolement dans le lointain." La presse d'opposition nationaliste n'est pas en reste : "Erdogan, ne va pas aux Etats-Unis", titre ainsi un éditorialiste du quotidien laïque d'extrême droite *Yeniçag*, qui estime que le président turc devrait annuler son voyage prévu pour le 13 novembre. L'auteur s'indigne : Notre soi-disant allié, l'Amérique, nous a trahis une fois de plus, ils avaient promis de lever les sanctions, et au lieu de cela, ils votent une loi sur le prétendu génocide arménien et décident par ailleurs d'adopter de nouvelles sanctions." Ces sanctions qui punissent l'intervention turque en Syrie doivent

néanmoins encore être ratifiées par le Sénat, puis par Donald Trump pour être effectives.

Parmi la vague de mesures votées par la Chambre des représentants, "une enquête sur les biens du président Erdogan et de sa famille", souligne le journaliste, qui enchaîne, malicieux : "Nous n'avons bien sûr aucune information sur les placements et les possessions d'Erdogan et de sa famille à l'étranger, mais il semble qu'ils se soient beaucoup enrichis en dix-sept ans de pouvoir."

"Bon flic-mauvais flic"

Les autorités turques ont répondu en convoquant l'ambassadeur américain. "Notre opération militaire est victorieuse, ceux qui pensent se venger de nous de la sorte font erreur, cette décision qui fait de l'his-

toire une arme politique est pour nous nulle et non avenue", a déclaré le ministre des Affaires étrangères, cité par le quotidien *Hürriyet*.

Mais la réaction reste mesurée, l'ambassadeur turc à Washington n'a pas été rappelé, et le président Erdogan n'a pas annulé son voyage aux États-Unis. En effet, le Sénat ou le chef de l'État américain peuvent encore faire obstacle à ces deux votes, comme le souligne le journal progouvernemental *Türkiye* :

Il est habituel que, face à la Turquie, le Congrès et l'exécutif jouent aux bon flic-mauvais flic. [...] Tout cela n'aura d'autre conséquence que de renforcer notre détermination."

Kurds: Turkey 'Occupying Christian Villages' in Syria for 'Ethnic Cleansing'

The general commander of the majority Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) accused Turkish soldiers and their allies Thursday of "occupying Christian villages" in northern Syria, where Turkish officials claimed this week their military operation had ended.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan launched "Operation Peace Spring" this month, an invasion of northern Syria Erdogan claimed necessary to return some of the 4 million Syrian refugees in Turkey to their homeland. Turkey declared its objective to be the creation of a "safe zone" made out of Kurdish territory through the removal of the indigenous Kurdish population, who Turkey would replace with mostly Arab Syrian refugees.

Kurdish forces condemned the invasion as an attempt at "ethnic cleansing," one they alleged continued after an agreed-to ceasefire ended on Wednesday.

America, whose withdrawal precipitated the Turkish invasion, and Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad's close ally Russia brokered the deal.

"Turkey has not adhered to the ceasefire agreement with USA and is continuing its war," Mazloum Abdi, the general commander of the SDF, said on Twitter Thursday. "Turkey with Jihadists, began to occupying [sic] Christian villages and trying to break into Tall Tamir predominantly Assyrians [sic], threatened with annihilation. USA must fulfill its obligations."

Syrian Kurdistan (Rojava), the main target of Turkey's invasion, is home to a growing population of Christians who fled the Islamic State when the terrorist group established a caliphate centered south of the region in Raqqa. In the aftermath of the SDF, with American help, defeating ISIS in Raqqa, Christians in Rojava have been taking advantage of arable land and the absence of Sunni Arab jihadists in Kurdish territory to rebuild their lives.

As aid groups have warned, "Operation Peace Spring" is a direct threat to these communities. SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali warned in a statement similar to Abdi's that Tal Tamir [Til Temir], home to one of Rojava's resurging Christian communities, is under fire.

Bali added that Turkish forces had been using Syrian airspace controlled by American forces to attack civilian areas. "People are undergoing an ethnic cleansing campaign by [Turkey]," he said, describing Washington and Moscow as "responsible" for the attack because they had helped broker the ceasefire.

Reuters reported Thursday that locals had spotted American military vehicles patrolling the Syrian-Turkish border for the first time since President Trump announced this month that he would withdraw American troops from the region. A Kurdish source told Reuters the patrol would not be the last of its kind.

Videos circulating on social media from Tal Tamir show heavy clashes and fleeing civilians.

The Kurdish news service Rudaw noted on Wednesday that Tal Tamir was also home to civilians that had already fled the Turkish invasion from the town of Ras al-Ain, which Kurds refer to as Sare Kani. Locals in Tal Tamir described the situation as "not good."

Assad's official news service, the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA), corroborated the news of "Erdogan's terrorists and mercenaries" attacking villages in Rojava. The "terrorists" in question are members of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), a coalition of anti-Assad forces that includes al-Qaeda and other jihadist elements. Videos from the battlegrounds in Rojava show FSA members shouting "Allahu akbar," the classic jihadist battle cry, and desecrating the corpses of Kurdish fighters. The SDF has referred to the FSA as "the new ISIS."

The ceasefire agreement was in part contingent upon Assad's forces entering Rojava and securing areas against Turkish invasion. The Kurdish forces have operated largely independent of Assad, neither attacking nor cooperating with his troops. "Operation Peace Spring" forced the SDF to accept Assad troops' presence in its territory. SANA reported "fierce clashes" between Turkish soldiers and Assad troops in Ras al-Ayn on Wednesday.

Following the end of the ceasefire Wednesday and renewed Turkish attacks, reports from SDF members on the ground indicate that Assad's army began to withdraw from the Turkish battle lines, leaving local civilians exposed to attack.

Assad's defense ministry asked the SDF to become an official arm of the Syrian military on Wednesday.

"We in Syria are facing a common enemy, and we must sacrifice as the people of unified Syria from the Arabs and Kurds to restore every inch of the beloved Syrian territories," the defense ministry pleaded.

The SDF rejected the invitation:

The Syrian Democratic Forces with all its components and members, and in front of the world, have been the best Syrian fighters for years who have fought ISIS and destroyed its so-called caliphate defending Syria and the world. Therefore, they are heroes who deserve praise and honor and not settle the status and do not need pardons or forgiveness like those issued against criminals and terrorists.

We also stress that the Syrian Democratic Forces members are disciplined fighters and a systematic military organizations with an institutional body. We absolutely reject this language of speech directed to our members. While it was better for the Syrian Ministry of Defense to address its speech to the General Command of the Syrian Democratic Forces in order to open the door of a dialogue ex-

pressing a sincere desire to unify efforts and not circumvent the reality and disclaim its responsibilities.

Erdogan made clear Wednesday that, despite his government claiming "Operation Peace Spring" had no reason to restart after the ceasefire, Turkey's work was "not finished yet" in Syria.

"We will continue our pursuit until the last terrorist is gone. Neither threats, nor blackmail, nor insidious games will be able to hold us back," Erdogan said, using his preferred epithet for Kurdish people.

Erdogan considers the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) a wing of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The YPG and YPJ (the women's forces) make up most of the SDF and are U.S. allies pivotal in the fight against ISIS; the SDF delivered intelligence necessary to capture ISIS chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The PKK is a U.S.-designated Marxist terrorist organization.

"The only reason we launched Operation Peace Spring is our intention to destroy those terror corridors and those who want to establish that terrorist state," Erdogan said.

Turkish National Defense Minister Hulusi Akar echoed the sentiment, saying Thursday that "nothing is finished here yet, anything could happen," speaking to Turkish soldiers Tal Abyad, Syria. Akar claimed that Turkey's "Euphrates Shield" operation made Turkey the "only army that fought Daesh/ISIS directly," according to the state-run Anadolu Agency.

The 2016 "Operation Euphrates Shield" similarly targeted only Syrian Kurds and their allies with the intention of repopulating their areas with Arab Syrian refugees.

Follow Frances Martel

US troops arrive back in Syria as Kurds warn of mounting pressure to hand control of northeast to Assad

‘Damascus is trying to take advantage of the Turkish attacks to use it pressurise the SDF and the autonomous Kurdish authorities to give up its rights’ says commander

US troops arrived back in northeast Syria on Thursday, raising tensions for the Kurds who warn they face mounting pressure to hand control of the area to Assad.

Sources within Syria reported a significant deployment of US troops near the border town of Kobani, as well as several troops and armoured cars moving towards Deir ez-Zor.

Washington announced last week it would send troops back into Syria to guard the oil fields from the Isis, in another U-turn on President Trump’s original promise to “bring soldiers home”.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) were left outgunned when Donald Trump initially said that US forces – deployed in the area to support the Kurds in their fight against Isis – would pull back and not intervene in Ankara’s imminent attack. The SDF described the president’s decision as a “stab in the back”, having lost 11,000 of their fighters in the years-long battle.

A ceasefire was then agreed between Ankara and Moscow that ordered SDF troops to withdraw from the border regions as well as joint Russian-Turkish patrols of the area.

The Kurds, forced to turn to Damascus for protection, also signed a military deal with the Syrian government that deployed forces to protect the border. They are expected to stay there under a Russia-brokered ceasefire.

Turkey launches offensive into Syria

But on Thursday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights’ (SOHR) Rami Abdurrahman said at least 150 US armoured cars and trucks were seen heading towards the military’s Sarin base near Kobani.

US network NBC, citing US coalition sources, also reported Bradley fighting vehicles, and troops from South Carolina’s 30th Armoured Brigade Combat team, arriving in the oil-rich Deir ez-Zor region.

The final destination of both deployments has yet to be confirmed but the US had been expected to deploy hundreds of troops and tanks to guard oil facilities.



There are added concerns after Mr Trump announced Isis chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had been killed in a US raid in Idlib, Syria.

The change in plan was confirmed in part by US defence secretary Mark Esper last Friday, who admitted that Washington aims to keep a “reduced presence” in Syria.

“We are now taking some actions ... to strengthen our position at Deir ez-Zor, to ensure that we can deny Isis access to the oil fields,” Mr Esper had said.

“We are reinforcing that position, it will include some mechanised forces,” he added.

But the Kurdish-led SDF say they are under increasing pressure to hand over control of the northeast to forces loyal to president Bashar al-Assad.

In a statement on Thursday they said they had turned down Syrian Defence Ministry calls for them to merge with the Syrian national army, saying they want to preserve their autonomy.

SDF commanders separately told *The Independent* that the regime had been using ongoing Turkish attacks to force the Kurds to also relinquish control of the land.

Kurdish commanders now say that the regime is looking to take back the whole of northeast Syria.

“The regime does not only want us to join the army, but the debate now concerns the independence of the SDF within the Syrian defence system,” a top SDF commander told *The Independent*.

“The regime is trying to erase all the achievements of our self-administration. It is trying to take advantage of the Turkish attacks to use it pressurise the SDF, and the autonomous Kurdish authorities, to give up its rights,” he added.

Mr Abdurrahman, from the SOHR, said that a different high-ranking SDF commander claimed Syrian government forces had even deliberately withdrawn from the area around Tal Tamer, allowing Turkish-backed Syrian rebels to take at least five villages yesterday.

Tal Tamer, located just 30km from the border, has been on the cusp of the battle frontline and the so-called Turkish safe zone.

“They let Turkish-backed forces take some villages and I was told this was done deliberately to pile pressure on the Kurdish forces to agree to give up control of northeast Syria,” he said.

“I was also told that Russia has delayed launching its patrols along the border for the same reason.”

Syrie/Kurdistan : «Envoyez-nous une force internationale pour nous sauver du génocide»

Au cœur de la bande d'une trentaine de kilomètres imposée par Ankara comme «zone de sécurité», Dirbasiyê vit les conséquences de l'invasion turque. Son maire témoigne.

Entre Serekaniyê (Ras al-Aïn en arabe), bombardée à l'ouest, et Qamishlo, à l'est, capitale de feue l'autonomie kurde du Nord-Est syrien, Dirbasiyê borde elle aussi la Turquie. Ce samedi à Erbil, son maire Mihned Sahlê est au téléphone... On devait le rencontrer jeudi dernier à la frontière irako-syrienne avec Pascal Troadec, maire adjoint de Grigny, commune de l'Essonne ayant noué un partenariat avec cette ville de 30 000 habitants et venu porter un message de solidarité aux Kurdes du Rojava. Un grain de sable diplomatique en a décidé autrement. Mais à l'autre bout de la ligne, le débit rapide de Mihned traduit toujours l'urgence à témoigner.

Sahlê. «Une partie de la population a quitté notre ville pour se réfugier dans des villages alentour, d'autres ont pris des tentes. Leur situation est catastrophique et ils pensent que du jour au lendemain l'armée turque et ses jihadistes vont les attaquer, ici.»

Des centaines de morts, 300 000 déplacés sur une population de 3 millions de Kurdes syriens dont plus de 12 000 sont déjà en Irak... «Les gens sont paniqués, certains qui ont fui vers la campagne dorment sous les tentes mais d'autres n'ont rien et dorment à la belle étoile. Les rares qui sont restés à Serekaniyê sont en contact avec nous pour suivre la situation, car

tout ce qu'ils peuvent pour le vendre. Mais la douleur, c'est surtout de voir tous ces civils touchés. On a vraiment eu du mal à identifier les morts car certains étaient complètement brûlés et d'autres mutilés dans les bombardements. Les premières victimes sont les enfants et on l'a vu de nos propres yeux puisque Dirbasiyê est proche de Serekaniyê.»

Jihadistes recyclés

Dans la pièce, la télé – son coupé – est branchée sur Ronahi, chaîne kurde. Les images d'atrocités et d'exactions – filmées par des portables non sourcés – ponctuent en boucle le propos. Avec un visage : celui de çiçek Kobane, combattante des YPJ (Unités de défense de la femme) portant le nom emblématique de la première victoire des Kurdes du YPG (Unités de protection du peuple) contre Daech. Blessée, capturée, elle est cernée par des soudards hilares lui promettant le pire (1).

Damas dénonçant l'agression turque, «l'armée de Bachar al-Assad est arrivée» autour de Dirbasiyê, confirme Mihned Saleh, «mais ni leur armement ni leur force ne montrent qu'ils sont là pour nous défendre. C'est comme à Afrin... On avait sollicité le régime pour venir défendre l'unité territoriale de la Syrie mais finalement, ils n'ont rien fait de concret», estime-t-il. Les Russes ? «Il y a des patrouilles qui sont arrivées de Qamishlo. Elles sont passées par Derbasiyê (...) et puis elles se sont retirées puisque ce samedi l'armée turque avec les supplétifs jihadistes fait encore des attaques de villages entre Serekaniyê et Derbasiyê malgré le cessez-le-feu.»

Selon les spécialistes l'hétéroclite «Armée nationale syrienne» d'An-

kara rassemble des restes de l'Armée syrienne libre, mais surtout de groupes radicaux comme Ahrar al-Charkiya ou Jaich al-Islam. «Il y a des gens de Daech qui ont participé aux batailles de Raqqa et Baghouz» assure pour sa part le maire. «La Turquie les recycle sous d'autres appellations pour nous attaquer. Ils commettent des atrocités, mutilent et décapitent les cadavres. C'est ce qu'on a vu à Serekaniyê.»

Crimes de guerre, crimes contre l'humanité... «On a entendu des mots de la communauté internationale mais pas vu d'actes. Nous, ce que nous demandons, c'est une force internationale qui vienne nous sauver du génocide. Si elle n'intervient pas, ce sera une politique d'épuration ethnique. Elle a déjà débuté avec des semaines terribles à venir pour les déplacés car l'hiver, ici, est très rude.»

(1) Selon un site kurde, elle aurait été emmenée en Turquie.



Portrait de çiçek Kobane diffusé sur la chaîne Ronahi./ Photo DDM, P.C.

«Ici, les gens ont très très peur. Ils redoutent qu'il se passe à Dirbasiyê ce qui s'est passé à Serekaniyê et Afrin...», commence Mihned

c'est vraiment très près. Ils nous racontent que les groupes jihadistes de l'armée turque mènent le pillage. Ils pillent, pillent, pillent... volent

Condamnation unanime à l'Assemblée

Alors qu'hier Tel Tamer, à 20 km de Dirbasiyê, était encerclé et que les Forces démocratiques syriennes se battaient pour ouvrir un couloir humanitaire pour les civils en danger, les députés ont adopté à l'unanimité la proposition de résolution condamnant l'offensive militaire turque en Syrie. «Un geste rare et solennel d'unité», a souligné Marielle de Sarnez, présidente de la commission des Affaires étrangères, qui a dénoncé les «exactions insoutenables que continuent à perpétrer (...) les supplétifs de l'armée turque» dans ce «Nord-Est de la Syrie (qui) était devenu un espace de stabilité (...) tranchant avec l'obscurantisme dans la région».

LE FIGARO31/10/2019
avec AFP

Syrie: la Turquie condamne la résolution française contre son offensive

La Turquie a «fermement» condamné jeudi l'adoption par le Parlement français d'une résolution critiquant son opération militaire contre une milice kurde dans le nord-est de la Syrie.

«Nous rejetons et condamnons fermement les décisions prises en France par le Sénat et l'Assemblée nationale au sujet de l'opération Source de Paix», a déclaré le ministère turc des Affaires étrangères dans un communiqué. L'Assemblée nationale française a adopté mercredi à l'unanimité une proposition de résolution non-contraignante condamnant l'offensive militaire turque dans le Nord-Est syrien.

Par cette résolution, l'Assemblée «affirme son indéfectible soutien aux Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS)», principalement composées des Unités de protection du Peuple (YPG), une milice considérée comme «terroriste» par Ankara. La semaine dernière, le Sénat français avait déjà adopté une proposition de résolution demandant «l'engagement résolu de la France» en faveur de toute initiative au niveau européen ou international visant à mettre un terme à l'offensive turque.

«La perception de la réalité» des autorités françaises «est paralysée par un soi-disant romantisme du YPG, et elles restent aveugles aux persécutions perpétrées par cette organisation

terroriste qui prétend représenter les Kurdes», a dénoncé le ministère turc dans son communiqué. Ankara a interrompu son opération à la faveur de deux accords négociés séparément avec les Etats-Unis et la Russie.

Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan accuse régulièrement les pays occidentaux de soutenir les milices kurdes qu'Ankara considère comme des groupes «terroristes» au même titre que l'organisation Etat islamique (EI). Mais les pays occidentaux soutiennent les combattants kurdes qui ont été le fer de lance dans la lutte contre les djihadistes en Syrie.

Le Parisien31/10/2019
Par Nelly Terrier

L'appel de rescapés des attentats de Paris : «Nous devons notre paix au combat des Kurdes»

À quelques jours de l'hommage anniversaire aux [victimes des attentats de Paris](#), et alors que depuis trois semaines l'offensive turque [déstabilise le nord de la Syrie](#), 44 rescapés de la folie islamiste du 13 Novembre, regroupés en collectif, prennent la plume et signent une lettre ouverte dans Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui en France : un appel « aux populations du monde » pour qu'elles se mobilisent, « aux chefs d'Etat » pour qu'ils agissent. Voici leur texte.

L'appel du Collectif des 44

« Nous, 44 survivants du terrorisme, déclarons notre soutien et notre solidarité aux populations du nord de la Syrie, qui subissent depuis plusieurs jours les attaques de l'armée turque d'Erdogan et ses supplétifs djihadistes.

Quand en 2015 nous avons été attaqués, dans nos villes et dans nos rues, quand nous comptons nos morts, ces Kurdes, Arabes, Yézidis, Turkmènes, Assyriens, luttait ensemble contre Daech, ennemi de l'humanité.

Ils sont devenus nos alliés et premier rempart humain contre la haine et l'obscurantisme. Ils étaient en première ligne, au sol,

à Raqqa d'où avaient été organisés les attentats de Paris, ainsi qu'à Kobané, et dans toute cette région gangrenée, pour mettre hors d'état de nuire nos assassins et vaincre l'Etat Islamique.

Des milliers d'entre eux sont morts. Dans leur lutte, ils ont défendu fièrement des valeurs universelles de liberté, d'égalité et de solidarité, communes à celles de notre République. Notre paix, quelle qu'elle soit, nous estimons la devoir à leur combat. Depuis le 9 octobre, ils sont attaqués et envahis, en totale violation du droit international. Lâchement abandonnés de tous, ils font face seuls aux massacres, aux viols, aux crimes de guerre et à l'exode.

En tant que survivants du terrorisme, il nous est impossible de rester silencieux et indifférents à l'attentat permanent que vivent ces populations, envers lesquelles nous avons une dette inestimable. Nous sommes indignés par la passivité de la France et de la communauté internationale, qui, après les attentats de Paris, n'avaient pourtant pas hésité à intervenir aux côtés des Kurdes contre nos assassins. Passivité qui permet aujourd'hui l'évasion de centaines de terroristes et, parmi eux, nous le craignons, les djihadistes français les plus dangereux.

Combien de temps leur faudra-t-il pour frapper à nouveau ? Toutes ces années de combats et d'efforts acharnés contre le terrorisme sont maintenant mises en péril. Et le Rojava, seule tentative de démocratie sociale au milieu d'un océan de dictatures, risque d'être anéanti.

Il ne peut en être ainsi.

Nous appelons tous les survivants du terrorisme à nous rejoindre et à partager notre message de solidarité internationale. Nous appelons toutes les populations du monde sans exception, qui n'ont pour intérêt que de vivre en paix, nos amis, qui au lendemain des attaques de Paris étaient tous unis contre la barbarie, à soutenir maintenant les peuples du Rojava. Nous appelons tous les journalistes, qui en 2015 relayaient notre effroi, à porter aujourd'hui notre message au-delà des frontières. Nous appelons tous les chefs d'Etat d'Europe et du monde, qui en 2015 avaient dit ensemble *Plus jamais ça !*, à prendre à nouveau ensemble, et avec le plus grand discernement, leurs responsabilités face à l'Histoire, qui ni n'oublie, ni ne pardonne.

Les peuples du monde n'ont rien à craindre les uns des autres, mais ont tout à redouter



Qamishli (Syrie), le 9 février (2019). Les Forces démocratiques syriennes, dont les bataillons de femmes du YPJ (ici lors des funérailles de l'une des leurs), estiment avoir perdu plus de 11 000 combattants contre Daech. AFP/Delil souleiman

d'être les instruments d'intérêts qui ne sont pas les leurs. En ces temps inouïs, toutes nos pensées et nos actes doivent se tourner vers celles et ceux qui, où qu'ils soient, combattent, fuient ou sont victimes de la barbarie et de l'oppression.

Vers nos amis, par-delà les montagnes. »

Collectif de survivants du terrorisme en soutien aux peuples du Rojava

Ce que disent ces survivants du terrorisme islamique est simple : leur effroi face au réveil de cellules du groupe Etat islamique, la crainte que les populations de la région du Rojava et les forces qui ont combattu Daech ne soient abandonnées après nous avoir protégés.

Sur la menace djihadiste, la mort le week-end dernier de Baghdadi et d'un de ses bras droits, dans une opération conjointe des forces spéciales américaines avec le renseignement kurde des FDS, ne peut masquer

que de nouvelles exactions sur place ont déjà repris. À ceci, il faut ajouter qu'une **centaine de djihadistes prisonniers ont réussi à s'évader** selon le dernier décompte rendu public par l'émissaire américain pour la Syrie.

« Tout cela m'a pris aux tripes, je pense à mes enfants, s'inquiète une des signataires, qu'est-ce que c'est que ces dizaines de terroristes qui s'échappent ? » Une anxiété soulignée par Me Gérard Chemla, l'avocat de certains signataires, parties civiles dans le dossier judiciaire en cours : « L'opération turque déstabilise la région, certains djihadistes ont pris la fuite, il y en aura certainement d'autres. La France doit absolument faire quelque chose. C'est pourquoi j'avais demandé qu'ils soient ramenés en France et jugés ici. »

Echo à d'autres mobilisations

Ce qui a décidé les « 44 » à prendre la parole, c'est aussi, et surtout, « la dette ines-

timable » que les pays occidentaux doivent aux 11 000 morts qui se sont battus pour terrasser Daech, dette à laquelle nos pays, disent-ils, font défaut. Une défaillance dans la reconnaissance et le soutien dus à ces communautés qui ont inventé dans une région minée par les troubles un espace pacifique aux valeurs universelles. « Pourquoi nous avoir sauvés, nous, si c'est pour les abandonner, eux », explique un des signataires à l'origine de l'appel.

Cette mobilisation inédite fait écho à d'autres. Il y a une semaine, 31 parlementaires femmes de tous les partis ont posté un texte de soutien aux femmes kurdes, sur le [Huffington Post](#) : « Nous, parlementaires françaises, souhaitons apporter notre soutien plein et entier aux femmes

kurdes qui, au Rojava, [...] se sont battues pour les principes universels que nous défendons. » Et les élues de demander « une zone d'exclusion aérienne et la mobilisation d'une force sous l'égide de l'ONU ».

L'EI confirme la mort d'Al-Baghdadi et nomme son successeur

Après cinq jours de silence, le groupe Etat islamique a confirmé jeudi la mort de son fondateur et dirigeant Abou Bakr Al-Baghdadi, tué samedi soir lors d'un raid de l'armée américaine au nord-est de la Syrie. Dans un message audio posté sur l'application de messagerie Telegram, l'EI a par ailleurs désigné le successeur du «calife» autoproclamé : Abou Ibrahim Al-Hachimi Al-Qourachi, de son nom de guerre.

Dans cet enregistrement d'une durée de sept minutes, l'organisation terroriste a appelé à venger la mort de son chef, en menaçant spécifiquement les Etats-Unis de représailles. Elle a également confirmé la mort de son porte-parole officiel, Abou Hassan Al-Moujahir, un successeur potentiel d'Al-Baghdadi, tué dimanche lors d'une frappe américaine près du village d'Aïn al-Bayda, non loin de la ville frontalière avec la Turquie, Jarablous.

Selon le *Washington Post*, la traque du chef de Daech a abouti grâce à la présence, dans son cercle rapproché, d'un informateur «*extraordinairement bien placé*» qui a joué un rôle central dans sa localisation. L'*immense paranoïa d'Abou Bakr Al-Baghdadi* n'a donc pas empêché une infiltration de ses rangs.

Le quotidien décrit cette taupe comme un «*membre de l'Etat islamique qui facilitait les déplacements [d'Al-Baghdadi] en Syrie et avait même aidé à superviser la construction de sa planque en Syrie*». Aucun détail sur l'identité de cette source n'est connu, sinon qu'il s'agit d'un arabe sunnite qui s'est retourné contre le groupe terroriste quand celui-ci a tué un membre de sa famille. Il devrait recevoir tout ou partie de la prime de 25 millions de dollars (22 millions d'euros) que Washington avait mise sur la tête d'Al-Baghdadi.

Tests ADN

Ce sont initialement les forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), la principale faction opposée aux jihadistes de l'EI et dominée par les Kurdes, qui l'ont déniché, puis l'ont mis en relation avec les services de renseignement américains. L'affaire a néanmoins pris du temps, les responsables américains redoutant un piège. En 2009, la CIA avait été décimée en Afghanistan lors de l'attentat-suicide commis par un médecin jordanien soi-disant infiltré au sein d'Al-Qaeda (en fait un agent triple).

Al'issue d'un long processus d'examen et de validation, les agents américains ont compris que les renseignements livrés leur permettraient d'atteindre Al-Baghdadi, ennemi public numéro 1 introuvable depuis plus de cinq ans malgré les



Diffusion au Pentagone, mercredi, d'une vidéo du raid lors duquel Al-Baghdadi est mort. Photo Andrew Harnik. AP

moyens considérables déployés. Les forces spéciales françaises présentes en Syrie auraient participé à la localisation au cours de l'été, d'après le *Washington Post*. Selon le général à la tête des FDS, Mazloum Abdi, la présence d'Al-Baghdadi a été confirmée grâce à des tests ADN effectués à partir de ses sous-vêtements. Les Etats-Unis conservaient son ADN depuis sa détention dans la prison militaire de camp Bucca, en Irak, en 2004. Une note de la direction du renseignement militaire français, citée par le *Canard enchaîné*, assure que la maison dans laquelle il vivait avait été «*sonorisée*» grâce à la pose clandestine de micros.

Arrangements financiers

Al-Baghdadi vivait secrètement – *depuis le mois de juillet d'après le New York Times* – dans cette habitation proche de la ville de Barisha, à 6 kilomètres de la frontière avec la Turquie dans le nord-ouest de la Syrie. Une zone dans laquelle l'Etat islamique n'était plus implanté, contrairement à d'autres groupes jihadistes, hostiles à l'organisation d'Al-Baghdadi. Le quotidien de New York révèle que des arrangements financiers ont permis de dépasser les oppositions idéologiques. Selon des reçus retrouvés en Syrie, des membres de l'Etat islamique ont payé leur concurrent et ennemi supposé de Hurras al-Din, proche d'Al-Qaeda, pour bénéficier de leur protection et soutien logistique. Les documents exhumés couvrent la période allant de début

2017 à mi-2018, sans désigner Al-Baghdadi personnellement.

La localisation du chef de l'EI dans cette région infestée de groupes jihadistes, où l'espace aérien est contrôlé par la Russie et le régime syrien, rendait l'opération beaucoup plus complexe. Quoique les responsables américains démentent publiquement, le retrait du nord-est syrien décidé brutalement par Donald Trump, abandonnant les alliés kurdes à l'offensive de la Turquie, aurait précipité le raid.

Mercredi, le Pentagone a diffusé des vidéos de l'assaut, 100% américain selon les autorités militaires. Trois extraits, très courts, qui montrent les différentes phases : le tir de riposte des hélicoptères américains, pris pour cible lorsqu'ils sont arrivés à proximité de l'enceinte abritant Al-Baghdadi, les forces Delta progressant au sol par petits groupes, ainsi que la frappe aérienne qui a entièrement détruit le bâtiment après le raid.

Le général à la tête du commandement central, qui supervise les opérations au Moyen-Orient, a corrigé le bilan humain. Deux enfants, et non trois comme il le croyait, sont morts lorsque Al-Baghdadi a déclenché sa ceinture explosive. Avant de quitter les lieux, les commandos ont emporté quantité de supports électroniques, ainsi que l'avait annoncé Donald Trump : une demi-douzaine de téléphones, entre deux et quatre ordinateurs portables et une poignée de clés USB, qu'il s'agit maintenant d'exploiter.

The Guardian Oct. 31, 2019
Julian Borger

Kurds call on US to block Turkish military drones from Syrian air space

- Unmanned weapons ‘targeting anything they wish to’
- Kurds say Turks have killed 509 civilians and 412 troops

Syrian Kurds are asking the Pentagon to block US-controlled air space over north-eastern Syria to Turkish armed drones which they claim are causing significant civilian casualties.

Ilham Ahmed, the head of the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), said the Kurds would hold the Pentagon responsible for Turkish war crimes if they did nothing to guarantee protection from the air.

She told reporters during a visit to Washington that armed Turkish drones were a constant presence in the air above north-eastern Syria, striking at will against both military and civilian targets.

“We have been promised by the United States on a couple of occasions that areas that have US forces will never be attacked by Turkey,” Ahmed said through a translator “However, we saw that the US did not fulfill its promise after the Turkish incursion.

“Armed Turkish drones are still flying over our region and targeting anything they wish to,” Ahmed said.

“We call on the Pentagon go to stop allowing Turkey to use Syrian air space,” she added. “We hold the Pentagon responsible for all the crimes committed by Turkey if they don’t block the air space.”

Ahmed said said the SDC, which is the political arm of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), had appealed to the Pentagon for help or an explanation but had heard nothing back.



A member of the Kurdish internal security services known as Asayish stands guard during a demonstration by Syrian Kurds against the Turkish assault on north-eastern Syria in Qamishli on 28 October. Photograph: Delil Souleiman/AFP via Getty Images

The SDC leader rejected claims by US officials that the ceasefire was holding in north-eastern Syria in the wake of a US troop withdrawal from the border area and a subsequent Turkish incursion.

She said attacks by drones, artillery and Turkish-backed militias were continuing, and that since the start of the Turkish incursion, 509 civilians and 412 SDF soldiers had been killed in the area.

The Turkish government justifies its incursion as a counter-terror operation, pointing to close links between the SDF and the Kurdish insurgents in Turkey, the Kurdistan Workers’ party (PKK).

The SDF accuse the Turkish government of sending in jihadists in proxy militias to carry out ethnic cleansing of the border area. Ahmed said elements in those militias could help the Islamic State regenerate in the region.

From her meetings with US officials, Ahmed said she had statements saying “there is a will to stay” on the part of US forces. “But until when, why and for what we have no clear answer yet,” she said.

Ahmed added that the deployment of US troops and armour to the oilfields around Deir Ezzor would do nothing for her people.

“If the US forces are going to be remaining in the oilfields in the south when the Turks are attacking us from the north-west, where is the stability?” she asked. “How can we achieve security for the people?”

The head of the regime in Damascus, Bashar al-Assad, said on Thursday that his government would eventually restore control of the north-east in the wake of the Turkish invasion, and an subsequent agreement with the SDF that allowed regime forces to take up positions along the border, on condition that Kurdish fighters not be asked immediately to hand over their weapons.

Asked about the status of SDF talks with Damascus, Ahmed replied: “Reaching a political solution about the future of north-east Syria ... is the key to our discussion with the regime and for our forces integrating into the Syrian army.”



31/10/2019
REUTERS Suleiman Al-Khalidi

Syria's Assad says Kurdish controlled northeast Syria must return to state authority

AMMAN (Reuters) - Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said on Thursday that his government's ultimate goal was to restore state authority over Kurdish controlled areas in northeast Syria after an abrupt U.S. troop withdrawal but he expected it to happen gradually.

In a state television interview Assad also said that a deal between Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin to drive out the Kurdish-led YPG militia from a 30 km (19 mile) "safe zone" along the border was a "positive" step that would help Damascus achieve its goal.

"It might not achieve everything ... it paves the road to liberate this area in the near future we hope," said Assad, who has remained in power in Damascus through a more than eight-year-long civil war with the backing of Russia and Iran.

The U.S.-allied Kurdish YPG militia reached a deal with Damascus to take up positions near the border after U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement in early October that he was withdrawing American forces from northeast Syria. The YPG is the main fighting element of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) that has beaten back Islamic State in the region.

The withdrawal paved the way for a Turkish offensive against the Kurds and left them feeling abandoned by the United States and forcing them to work a deal with Damascus to help them resist Turkish forces. Ankara views the YPG as a terrorist organization because of its links to Kurdish militants in southeastern Turkey.

Assad also said Trump's decision to keep a small number of U.S. troops in the Kurdish-held areas of Syria "where they have the oil" showed that Washington was a colonial power that was doomed to leave once Syrians resist their occupation as in Iraq.

But he said his country could not stand up to a great power such as the United States and that ending the presence of American troops on Syrian soil was not achievable soon.

Assad said Trump was the "best American president" for his "complete transparency" about intentions to maintain control of Syria's main oilfields in Deir al-Zor province.



FILE PHOTO: Syria's President Bashar al-Assad speaks during a meeting with heads of local councils, in Damascus, Syria in this handout released by SANA on February 17, 2019. SANA/Handout via REUTERS

U.S. troops have begun deployment in the province in coordination with the SDF to increase security and continue the fight against remnants of Islamic State, a U.S. military spokesman said on Thursday.

Diplomats say the U.S. decision to prevent oil fields from falling back to government control would deny Damascus millions of dollars of much needed revenues and ensure its Kurdish ally a main source of income to govern areas it controls.

The Kurds would not be asked to immediately hand over their weapons when the Syrian army enters their areas in a final deal with them that brings back state control to the large swathe of territory they now control, Assad said in the interview.

"There are armed groups that we cannot expect they would hand over weapons immediately but the final goal is to return to the previous situation, which is the complete control of the state," he said.

The commander of the Kurdish-led forces Mazloum Kobani has said the agreement with Damascus could pave the way for a political solution to be worked out later with the Syrian government, that could guarantee Kurdish rights in Syria.

But he insisted at this stage it was only to allow the deployment of Syrian troops across SDF stronghold areas along the border with Turkey in a move to thwart Ankara's plan to create a "safe zone."

Syria had a right to defend its territorial integrity against separatist Kurds who aspired to create a Kurdish state and rule over Arabs and other ethnic groups, Assad said.

Resentment against Kurdish dominated rule in eastern Syria has grown among the predominantly Arab population, residents say.

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